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EMPOWERMENT FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE: A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY OF SOCIAL WORK FIELD INSTRUCTION STRATEGIES

A Dissertation

presented to

the Faculty of the Graduate School

at the University of Missouri-Columbia

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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by

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled,

EMPOWERMENT FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE: A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY OF SOCIAL WORK FIELD INSTRUCTION STRATEGIES

presented by Kirsten K. Havig, a candidate for the degree of doctor of philosophy, and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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This work is dedicated to my great aunt Nina LaRosa, a social worker, my supporter, and a true believer in social justice.

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Abstract

This study examines the process of student empowerment for social work practice that promotes social justice as it occurs in field education. Seventeen in-depth interviews were conducted with qualified field instructors and a model was constructed using grounded theory methodology. The model reflects perceptions of the meaning of social justice among field instructors. It also provides concrete practice and pedagogical strategies aimed at equipping future social workers to engage in the promotion of social justice, a foundational professional value. Environmental supports and barriers are also presented that significantly impact the process. Implications are provided for social work education, practice and research.

Chapter 1

Social workers claim the concept of social justice as a defining value of the profession and as a guide for practice, research, and education. Despite a rich history and contemporary focus on social justice, a limited amount of empirical evidence exists with regard to how the educational process empowers students to actively engage in its promotion. Set within the context of the field practicum as the point of activation of student knowledge, this study examines the strategies utilized by field instructors that focus on social justice. By facilitating exposure to injustice, supervision-based discussion, and role modeling, field instructors play a critical role in student empowerment for the promotion of social justice in social work practice.

Social Work Perspectives on Social Justice

Social work claims social justice as its organizing value and guidepost for practice (Marsh, 2005). The idea of social justice emerged as a critical concern in American life during the Progressive Era, roughly the same time that social work itself was in its infancy as an organized profession (Miller, 1999). Historically, social justice is evident in social work starting with the aims of the Settlement House Movement in the early 20th century and has maintained a significant role in the current framing of social work professional standards. It is clear that social justice is vital to social work practice, but it is not always clear which factors create our vision of justice, what tools we use for its promotion in education and practice, and how to build the future on this foundation.

In 1998, the social work profession celebrated its centennial, an opportunity to mark the achievements of the prior 100 years and to ponder the future. Some applauded social work's important role in human services, politics, health, and mental health while

others looked back with some measure of disillusionment regarding a perceived collective failure to truly challenge injustice. There is a historical amnesia concerning the rich history of social workers as political actors, ethical resisters, activists, and organizers (Abramovitz, 1998; Reisch & Andrews, 2001) and this forgetting greatly impedes the ability to build upon the past and may steer the profession further away from the course of social justice.

Although extraordinarily diverse, the profession of social work is collectively represented by two key national organizations. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) incorporate social justice within policy and mission statements that directly impact social work education, practice, and research. The nature of this context is important to the current study as it serves as the backdrop for field instructors' translation of social work values and standards for students.

NASW puts forth a *Code of Ethics* that sets standards for professional practice and guidelines for ethical decision-making. The purpose of the *Code of Ethics* is to articulate the profession's basic values. It does not prescribe beliefs or actions at the level of a particular issue, but provides widely applicable principles meant to facilitate such decision-making according to generalized professional standards. Importantly, ethics also provide the profession and the general public with tools of accountability against which practical decisions may be measured. The preamble establishes social worker responsibility for the promotion of social justice and outlines that the overarching mission of the profession is, "to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of

people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty" (NASW, 1999, para.1). The preamble clearly indicates that social justice may occur within, "direct practice, community organizing, supervision, consultation, administration, advocacy, social and political action, policy development and implementation, education, and research and evaluation" (NASW, 1999, para.1); in other words, across all existing intervention points.

Despite its essential inclusion in the *Code of Ethics,* many diverse interpretations of social justice exist in the literature (Banerjee, 2005; Mitchell & Lynch, 2003). In attempting to define social justice, it is helpful to first understand injustice, those who are impacted by it, and how. In delineating the core principle of social justice, the *Code of Ethics* indicates that it is social workers' duty to challenge injustice. It states that, "social workers' social change efforts are focused primarily on issues of poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and other forms of social injustice" (NASW, 1999, Ethical principles section, para. 2). This passage suggests a methodology of social justice that encompasses advocacy for and partnership with clients; empowerment of people to meet their own needs, assisting others in achieving economic security; learning about and appreciating diversity; and facilitating access and recognition for those impacted by forces that disempower and marginalize.

The Social Work Dictionary, published by NASW, indicates that social justice is related to bringing about a society in which all members share the same rights, opportunities, protections, privileges, and obligations (Barker, 1995). In contrast to the *Code of Ethics* which is intentionally broad, NASW also periodically publishes *Social Work Speaks*, with the expressed purpose of outlining the organization's stance on specific issues. The purpose of these policy statements is multifold: to define at the

national level the profession's stance on critical social issues, to clarify the role that individual social workers can take in addressing them, and to establish a basis for activism and legislative advocacy rooted in social work values (Kelly & Clark, 2009).

NASW's 2010-2012 professional and public policy statement, "Peace and Social Justice", contained in this work, frames the issue in the context of war, poverty, racism, sexism, and homophobia as intertwined forces of injustice (Kelly & Clark, 2009). The statement describes social work's role as central in combating these injustices through advocacy for the protection of rights and equity among all people. They indicate that grassroots participation on social and environmental issues, involvement in policy, and community development that supports violence prevention, are appropriate strategies. They also recommend that issues of peace and justice "permeate social work education on all levels" (p. 246). Early social work figures like Jane Addams (1910) focused on the promotion of peace and called for social justice, or the absence of violence and oppression, as its prerequisite (Klosterman & Stratton, 2006). *Social Work Speaks* (Kelly & Clark, 2009) also contains an entry on "Poverty and Economic Justice" that traces social work's historical commitment to economically vulnerable persons. The statement draws special attention to the critical economic realities evident in America today including poverty and wealth disparities tied to racism and gender-based inequity. Within the publication are also entries on justice-related topics such as discrimination based on transgendered status, gender, race, and sexuality.

Only about one fourth of social workers are official members of NASW (van Wormer, 2002). The relationship between professional organization participation, perceptions of social justice, and its manifestation in practice is in need of further

investigation. At the same time, NASW policy statements and professional resources are used throughout social work curricula and are explicitly tied to CSWE accreditation standards. As a result, the policies of both NASW and CSWE inarguable influence the profession.

Accreditation standards for social work education are set in place and overseen by CSWE. The introductory section of the newly revised Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) states that, "social work's purpose is actualized through its quest for social and economic justice, the prevention of conditions that limit human rights, the elimination of poverty, and the enhancement of the quality of life for all persons" (CSWE, 2008, p. 1). To meet this purpose, CSWE mandates that all accredited schools provide students with knowledge regarding diversity and the dynamics of social justice. The standards set by CSWE mold the knowledge and value base communicated to students that they bring to professional practice and set the context for instruction in both the classroom and field.

Also important to this study of field instructors is the mission of the school with which they are affiliated. A mission statement is meant to capture a vision that inspires and guides the work of people invested in that vision. It sets a context for its agency or organization and also reflects broader professional goals and values. The University of Missouri's School of Social Work (2007) seeks to "develop and disseminate knowledge that promotes leadership for social and economic justice through educational programs, scholarship, and service activities of faculty, administration, staff, and students" and acknowledges that, "social workers have a professional, ethical, and moral obligation to use their skills and knowledge to challenge social inequities".

Despite the priorities set forth by policies and mission statements, theory and practice in some ways remain disconnected. Mitchell and Lynch (2003) argue that the social work profession's current paradigms of oppression and social justice are ill-equipped to support either direct practice that incorporates social justice action or the pursuit of larger, policy-based structural shifts toward equality of opportunity or resources. They further challenge that the superficial nature and lack of professional attention to social justice may signify the erosion of the traditional commitment to this value. In other words, social workers may talk the talk, but do not always walk the walk. This study presents participants' perceptions of social justice along with contributing factors to its development, allowing for an examination of actual beliefs and practices within the broad context of the professional value and knowledge base.

Social Justice in Social Work Practice

Almost five decades ago, several criteria for the achievement of social justice in social work practice were put forth. These included fostering a sense of belonging for clients, protection of client dignity through understanding and respect, mutuality of rights and responsibilities between clients and workers, and commitment to the belief that access to services that meet human needs is a right not an entitlement (Reynolds, 1951). Such ideals still have relevance to the quest for social work practice that actively promotes social justice goals, and are applicable across practice settings. However, ideals abound in social work, and must be operationalized into specific, measureable, and observable tasks, particularly if evidence-based practice tenets are to be addressed. Practice behaviors often associated with social justice include advocacy; empowerment of clients through consciousness-raising, skill-building, and resource development;

community education and organizing; legislative and media activism; social movement participation; policy analysis and development; violence intervention; diversity promotion; and program development and evaluation (Birkenmaier, 2003; Finn & Jacobson, 2008).

Most social workers may play a role in social change but often do not do so in a professional capacity, largely due to fears of political reprisal, erosion of professional standing, or social sanction, in addition to simply feeling unequipped (Birkenmaier, 2003). Some research has demonstrated that, philosophically, social work students and practitioners uphold the value of social justice and believe in its importance to clients at the individual and aggregate levels (Van Voorhis & Hostetter, 2006; Weiss & Kaufman, 2006). Other studies have generated different results. For example, in a survey of NASW members, one study found that over 66% of respondents selected clinical work with individuals, families, and groups as the mission of social work even when given six other options from which to choose, including "social justice" (Dulmus, Bass, & Bunch, 2005). Fortunately, clinical practice and the pursuit of social justice are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but the findings remain concerning if understood to mean that practitioners perceive them as dichotomous. The promotion of social justice requires special attention to meeting the needs of vulnerable populations *and* engagement in social action to create structural change that would alter the conditions leading to discrimination and inequality – tasks that social workers have engaged in for decades (Birkenmaier, 2003; Reamer, 2006).

The micro-macro divide in social work education and practice has concerning implications for the incorporation of social justice. Social justice concerns and social

change strategies are generally perceived in terms of policy change and community work, or the macro piece of social work practice (i.e. policy analysis, development and advocacy; community organizing and development; and the promotion of organizational change). Within a dichotomized model of social work, clinical work is thought to require neutrality and scientific objectivity (Breton, 2006; Caputo, 2002; Gibelman, 1999; K. S. Haynes, 1998; McLaughlin, 2002; Olson, 2007; Reeser & Epstein, 1990), and may as a result be considered outside the realm of social justice-promoting advocacy. Direct practice work is prescribed as a value-free approach that would be de-professionalized by the application of a particular value orientation (Abramovitz, 1998; Hugman, 2003). Such perspectives create much confusion around the role and methods of clinical practice in the promotion of social justice goals. In some cases, the actions and behaviors associated with social justice are no longer identified as "social work" as the much discussed professional divide continues to deepen (Jacobson & Rugeley, 2007). Social justice-focused work has been labeled as "radical" social work (Andrews & Reisch, 2002; Reisch, 2001), perhaps further marginalizing such pursuits.

Professionalized clinical social work practice has been characterized as the perpetuation of the status quo of inequality in society, rather than as a vehicle capable of challenging societal structures (Abramovitz, 1998; Andrews & Reisch, 2002; Mitchell & Lynch, 2003; Specht & Courtney, 1994). The debate over the potential benefits and threats posed to the pursuit of social justice by professionalization is ongoing. As professionalization is not necessarily antithetical to social justice, integrative models are emerging to better represent how the promotion of social justice may be operationalized across the continuum of micro to macro practice. Social justice-promoting practice has

been theorized for all levels of social work intervention, including direct clinical practice (Johnson, 1999; Mitchell & Lynch, 2003; Parker, 2003; Stuart, 1999). Wronka (2008) suggests that purposeful attention to nonhierarchical, non-elitist language, a focus on strengths, and value-informed decision-making are strategies that enable professionals to act upon justice in practice. Van Wormer (2004) writes about the solidarity of the helping relationship, with social worker as ally or partner rather than as expert set apart from the client. Thus, social workers are clearly capable, within established professional guidelines, of engaging in professional practice that also embraces attitudes and processes that promote social justice .

Aldarondo (2007) has expounded on the idea of professionalism for practice rooted in social justice and for clinical work specifically. She describes her own social justice commitment as rooted in personal experience and exposure to others' experiences of injustice; she speaks of "hearing the cry" not only for help but for justice. The promotion of social justice is viewed as one path toward healing and enhanced human well-being. A clinician herself, Aldarondo critiques direct practice as often de-contextualized and in absence of a critical awareness of the structures and systems that may be at the root of individually-experienced problems. Liberation of the oppressed is seen as the responsibility of the privileged as well as an opportunity to help alleviate hurt and prevent future harm (Aldarondo, 2007). Other frameworks for practice exist that may enable direct practitioners to promote social justice. These include empowerment theory, feminist practice, anti-oppressive practice, the modern settlement house model, the strengths perspective, ethnic-sensitive practice, narrative approaches, oppressor-focused intervention, critical self-reflection, and active mindfulness of power dynamics

within the helping relationship (Aldarondo, 2007; Dominelli, 2002; Jacobson & Rugeley, 2007; Manning, 1997; Parker, 2003; Reichert, 2003; Swenson, 1998).

Several barriers to enactment of social justice-promoting practice behaviors have been identified. For instance, a lack of essential knowledge about social change tactics and training aimed at their implementation; absence of agency or other environmental supports for social justice work; market demands that steer practitioners away from activities not amenable to reimbursement policies; lack of time due to high work demands all serve to disempower professionals in the social justice realm (Birkenmaier, 2003). Clinicians also report feeling overwhelmed by the idea of broad-scale social reform or community-level change (Aldarondo, 2007) although aware that client needs are sometimes best met via such avenues.

An integrative model for both education and practice would serve to bridge the gap between these two major arenas (Breton, 2006; Caputo, 2007; Haynes, 1998; Mitchell & Lynch, 2003; Reisch & Andrews, 2001) and allow for direct practice social workers to affect policy and to advocate at whatever level may be called for to meet client needs. Finn and Jacobson (2008) challenge social workers to recognize the importance of structural forces on client needs in order to avoid individualizing problems when seeking to empower people. In their proposal for the "Just Practice Framework", they articulate the need for "a linkage of epistemology, theory, values, and practice…grounded in a critical understanding of social practice and a political and ethical commitment to social justice" (Finn & Jacobson, 2003), p. 59).

The structural approach to social work direct practice allows for the analysis of client issues in a broad environmental context that includes oppressive and privileging

forces and their consequences (Wood & Tully, 2006). These structures frame our institutions and behaviors and are thought to: 1) be socially constructed; 2) exist within created and maintained unequal hierarchies of oppression and privilege; 3) be dependent on socialization processes which also makes them largely invisible; 4) be understood and deconstructed through active interrogation; and, 5) require the process of deconstruction and analysis of inequality and its impact on individuals, families, groups and societies in order to promote social justice (Adams, et al., 2000; Wood & Tully, 2006; Young, 2001). Structural theory assumes the social construction of reality, and implies that if we can create something, it stands to reason that we can also deconstruct and rebuild. Structural theory helps us to broaden our examination of person- in-environment to include systemic issues that may underlie many social problems. Even within the arena of macro work, often perceived as the locus of social justice promotion in social work, a paradigm shift is called for. Andrews and Reisch (2002) argue that policy analysis and advocacy are indispensible tools, but adapting flawed structures to meet justice needs is not enough – social workers must challenge the structures and values on which they are built.

This study offers insight into social workers' practice behaviors centered on promoting social justice. Practitioners describe critical issues and targeted populations in the context of injustice and provide concrete examples of how they "do" social justice in a variety of practice settings. The findings of this study contribute to the current gap in empirical knowledge related specifically to social justice-promoting practice at the clinical level and suggest applications according to the generalist practice model to enhance operationalization of social justice.

Social Justice in Social Work Education

Social work education focuses on values, skills, and knowledge and prepares students to enter an applied profession in a vast array of settings and with diverse areas of specialty. EPAS (2008) dictates that social workers must apply ethical principles as guideposts of professional practice, apply critical thinking skills, engage diversity perspectives, and advance human rights and social and economic justice; in turn these competencies shape social work education. EPAS specifies the expectation that social workers, "understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination; advocate for human rights…; and engage in practices that advance social and economic justice" (Council on Social Work Education, 2008, Educational Policy 2.1.5). Education on such issues applies to all students regardless of focus area or concentration, and must be assured for CSWE accreditation.

Barsky (2010) warns of a lack of consistency across the United States in teaching social work values. This concern should be examined by empirical research to determine common and innovative pedagogical methods and to provide enhanced guidelines. In a CSWE-publication, Van Soest and Garcia (2008) offer theoretical frameworks and practical tools for diversity education and the development of cultural competence. They advocate for the infusion of social justice throughout social work curriculum, stating, "when social justice content is primarily limited to a discrete course, it can become marginalized and minimized" (p. 65). They also argue the necessity for social work schools and departments to create an environmental context that includes social justice in ways that go beyond curriculum and advise that all instructors be competent to teach theories of culture, oppression, and justice within courses across subject matter. van

Wormer (2004) notes that social work education must be as mindful about *inaction* and its consequences as it is of action taken. De Maria (1992) cautions that an absence of focused attention within social work education to social justice limits social workers' efforts toward building upon a largely unrecognized foundation. As with challenging oppression broadly, promoting social justice within social work education must be purposeful and proactive to be successful.

Pedagogies for social justice can be found within and beyond the social work literature. In his classic work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1970) stresses the importance of education as transformative, liberatory, and informed by the development of a critical consciousness. Elemental to his discussion of education as the path to liberation is an understanding of the nature of oppression and of the potential of the oppressed to challenge and dismantle it. Freire states that, "the role of the educator…is the permanent transformation of the world…toward the creation, the invention, of a society without injustice…the social worker uncovers and makes explicit a certain dream about social relations, which is a political dream" (Freire, 1970). Here Freire points to the idea that social work education is about creating vision, asking questions about one another and society, and empowerment for those made powerless by society. This model is helpful not only in thinking about social work education, but social work practice for transformation and liberation of others.

Saleebey and Scanlon (2005) argue for a critical social work pedagogy that would better equip new social workers to promote social justice. A critical approach to social work education would entail close examination of race-, class-, gender-based and other forms of oppression and privilege and their impact not only on social work practice, but

within the context of our personal lives and relationships. Integration of concepts such as intersectionality which provides a lens through which we may better understand complex and interlocking facets of identity will be important as we seek to understand the dynamics of privilege and oppression (Murphy, Hunt, Zajicek, Norris, & Hamilton, 2009). In a world of quickly changing culture, shifting social roles, vast technological innovation, sparse resources, challenges to social work's mission and critical thinking skills are necessary survival tools (Saleeby & Scanlon, 2005).

Adams, Bell, and Griffin (2007) have created a guide to teaching social justice for social work that establishes some basic assumptions which can be used to guide the process for both teacher and student. Some of these assumptions are that all forms of oppression are interrelated; we are socialized into oppressive structures; challenging oppression benefits everyone while assigning blame helps no one; enhanced self-awareness allows us to be more effective change agents; and, that we learn most from exploring the lived experiences of ourselves and others. Such concepts can aid social work educators in both academic and field settings to create a safe and facilitative learning environment. It is important to acknowledge that coming to an understanding of social justice as a student can provoke many strong emotions - as it also does in practice – and that we must attend to the emotional aspects of the learning process (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007; Aldarondo, 2007). Further, as a profession historically dominated by women, personal identification with issues of injustice is inevitable. Critical consciousness of the self, others, the shared environment, and its impact are important facets of social justice education for social work (Barsky, 2010; van Wormer, 2004). In terms of educating specifically for clinical practice that promotes social justice,

Aldarondo (2007) offers several considerations. She suggests inclusion of historical perspectives; the development and utilization of sound conceptual tools on which to base practice; an explicit recognition of the political nature of values and of social work and the interconnectedness of public ills and private troubles; and the value of bottom-up change.

Highlighted here are tools useful for the socialization of new professionals as empowered agents of social justice. The role and practice of social justice are subjects of debate in the context of social work education as they are for the profession broadly. This study contributes to this discourse by examining the *transmission of social justice-promoting practice behaviors through field education*.

Social Work Field Education

The field practicum, widely agreed to be the cornerstone of social work education, is where ideas become real and students learn through direct experience (Bogo, 2005; Bogo & Vayda, 1998; Lager, 2004; Wilson, 2006). EPAS (Council on Social Work Education, 2008) refers to field education as the signature pedagogy of the profession and the center of the socialization of new practitioners to the roles, values, and strategies of social work. Specifically, field education must connect theory to practice and promote evidence-based practice (Council on Social Work Education, 2008, Accreditation Standard 2.1). As social justice is a primary focus of CSWE competencies, it follows that the field instructor has some responsibility for making theoretical connections to real-world justice issues and engaging in evidence-based practice that promotes it. In order to gather evidence of effective social justice-promoting practice, it is essential to first identify such practices, a task that this study contributes to.

Social work students also regard the field experience as the most critical piece of their professional preparation (Mallick, 2007). Social work field education, although widely viewed as a crucial component of professional preparation (Mumm, 2006; Wayne, Raskin, & Bogo, 2006), has received a lack of attention in terms of systematic, empirical research (Noble, 2001; Raskin, Wayne, & Bogo, 2008 2005). In fact, in comparison with social work *classroom-based* education, field is generally devalued in terms of research and investment in its continual improvement (Bogo, 2005; Lager, 2004; Lyter, 2004). Most empirical research that does focus on field education centers on student learning, preferences, or satisfaction with placement rather than on instruction strategies employed by those responsible for facilitation of student learning (Bogo, 2005). This incongruence of expressed and actualized value for social work field education is of real concern in light of its importance to student outcomes, student satisfaction, and ultimately, client experiences with emerging professionals.

There are several roles within field education that are important to its organizational structure. The role of the field instructor is to guide the daily experiences of students in agency settings, to provide face-to-face supervision, and to evaluate student performance. Field instructors are generally practitioners, not academic staff, who agree to provide field instruction in service to social work education. The liaison is then employed by the social work school to provide oversight and to serve as a resource for both instructor and student in the field. The field coordinator then is also a member of the academic faculty, and administers policy, develops placements, and ensures compliance with CSWE accreditation standards. Field coordinators often hold lower status within social work education compared with other faculty roles (Lager, 2004; Lyter

& Smith, 2004), again pointing toward a general devaluing of field despite its recognized importance.

EPAS (Council on Social Work Education, 2008) describes the nature of the relationship between classroom and field; establishes suitable time frames for field-based learning (a minimum of 400 hours for the baccalaureate level, at least 900 at the masters level); outlines criteria for selecting placements and for qualified student supervision; and, provides training directions for field instructors. Field placements may occur as either concurrent with classroom learning or in blocks that take place independently of other classes, often as the capstone of the educational experience. When done concurrently, field experiences may enhance classroom learning in addition to serving as the locus for the application of academic concepts; in others words, allowing for a rich two-way flow of information (Teigiser, 2009). Schools employing block placements may do so out of necessity, not choice, due to a limited number of available field sites at any one time. When this is the case, as it is at the site for this study, a field seminar is required that allows for an approximation of the recursive process made possible by concurrent fieldwork.

As the locus of study for this inquiry is the instructor, not the learner, it is not within the scope here to delve into learning processes and student traits and styles. Further, much more empirical and theoretical information already exists that focuses on student learning (Bogo, 2005; Thomlinson, Rogers, Collins, & Grinnell Jr., 1996). Due to the absence of tested models and resources for field instruction, social workers filling this role may rely on instinct and experience to facilitate student learning (Caspi & Reid, 2002; Short, Priddy, McChesney, Murdock, & Ward, 2004). Short (2004) also notes that

schools of social work tend to take a minimalist approach to training field instructors and rarely provide them with concrete methods for integrating theory with practice or guidelines for the assignment of student tasks.

The role of the field instructor is complementary to, but very different than, that of the classroom instructor. Instruction in-placement provides what the classroom cannot – real-world contexts and teachable moments as they unfold. Important tasks for the field-based educator are to assess student strengths and needs; to promote student self-awareness; to act as a role model; to facilitate safe exposure to and experience with diverse populations; to make connections between theory and practice; to encourage critical thinking; to clearly define learning objectives with the student; to become and remain competent in field instruction techniques; to attend to professional, agency, and school standards and policies; to foster students' own strengths and interests; to enhance student self-efficacy; and to engage students in reflection and integration of professional values and ethics (Hendricks, Finch, & Franks, 2005; Mallick, 2007).

A primary tool of field education is supervision by a qualified master's level social work practitioner. Supervision provides the capability for the reinforcement of values and a reflective process for the learner (Barsky, 2010; Caspi & Reid, 2002). Based on her review of literature in 2005, Bogo found that field instructors reported their approach with students is greatly enhanced by the availability of pedagogical models that provide strategies to enhance both student experience and outcomes. She also advises that if field education is to become evidence-based, more research must be done to develop and test models of both learning and teaching within the practicum setting. This study will contribute to this process and to the emerging empirical literature giving

needed attention to social work field education. It adds to the knowledge base a model of field instruction as a process of student empowerment. It provides operationalized strategies that are applicable in any setting that build on existing methods of supervision and experiential learning, and that are aimed specifically toward meeting social justice goals.

Social Justice and the Field Practicum

The field practicum is essential to the socialization of new social workers to professional values and is the forum for linking theory to practice. It is the field placement that provides opportunity for exposure to injustice and its impact, the safety to examine one's own location within the structures of society and in relation to client experience, to affirm and realign personal values, and to integrate these with professional values (Birkenmaier & Berg-Weger, 2007; Bogo, 2005; Bogo & Vayda, 1998; Detlaff & Wallace, 2002; Lyter & Smith, 2004). It is within the practicum that a student can apply learned concepts, to evaluate how social work practice impacts clients, to enhance understanding of the nature of cultural competence, and to grapple with ethical dilemmas (Bogo & Vayda, 1998; Lager, 2004; Short, et al., 2004). Field is truly the crucible in which students distill learned information into useful tools of practice and experience the struggles and joys of social work as an active participant.

There is little empirical research directed at examining this socialization process and the experience of confronting intersections between personal values and professional roles (Bogo, 1993; Hantman, 2006). Self-reflection and value integration are critical elements of field (Birkenmaier & Berg-Weger, 2007; Bogo & Vayda, 1998; Hendricks, et al., 2005; Rogers, Collins, Barlow, & Grinnell Jr., 2000; Thomlinson, et al., 1996). The

process of confronting values may certainly be experienced in the classroom, but it is within the field placement that these conflicts cease to exist as internal grappling and begin to have real impact for clients.

Research on social justice-promoting practice tends to focus on post-educational behaviors rather than on education that would prepare social workers for such tasks (De Maria, 1992). Few studies exist that explore the social justice learning process (Morrison Van Voorhis & Hostetter, 2006). Evidence is lacking as to how field-based learning contributes to this process. Field education occurs through *experience* and involves the development of self-efficacy through direct exposure and active participation (Garner, 2006). Weiss and Kaufman (Weiss & Kaufman) demonstrated that social workers' ability to conceptualize and engage in social justice-promoting practice is greatly enhanced by opportunities to experience macro-level interventions and to participate in real-life applications of social action work. Another study found that the majority of macro placement opportunities centered on organizational rather than community-based tasks, possibly a limitation for the development of broad social change skills even for those who do not choose the clinical focus (Gamble, Shaffer, & Weil, 1994 1994). Hantman, et al. (2006) argue that field instructors must mindfully work to provide the information and skills necessary to enable students to come away with an identity in which they may self-define as social change agents and utilize social justice as a guide in practice. This study contributes to the knowledge base by examining how field instructors are actually facilitating this process for students.

The educational site for this study publishes manuals designed to guide both BSW- and MSW-level practica. The first thing a reader of either manual will encounter

is the school's mission and vision statement defining leadership for social and economic justice as the primary context and goal. In terms of the specific objectives of field education within the school, manuals for both undergraduates and graduate study offer as their second goal the preparation of students for "leadership in social and economic justice within micro, mezzo, and macro practice systems" (p. 8 and 6 respectively) within a generalist model. Students are expected to gain competency in understanding the structures and dynamics of oppression, to work on behalf of those in poverty and otherwise oppressed, and to apply social work strategies that promote social change through advocacy, policy and program development, and the empowerment of vulnerable populations (University of Missouri School of Social Work, 2007). All field instructors, liaisons, and students receive and are expected to review the field manuals and field instructors are also offered orientation trainings prior to the commencement of each semester. Accountability for students is primarily competence based and is achieved through reflective journaling, supervision, and objective criteria reviewed at mid-term and at the close of the placement.

The field instructor may be thought of as a "model of lived empowerment" (Brownstein-Evans, 2006). This study contributes to the idea of field education as empowerment through investigation of the strategies utilized to activate social work learning specifically around social justice promotion. These instructional strategies focus on the value integration process as well as the acquisition of practical knowledge and skills.

Impact of Social Worker Empowerment to Promote Social Justice

What can be the impact of a social work professional committed to the pursuit social justice? What will be the consequences if social workers are not in alignment with social justice goals or if social work training does not aptly prepare new practitioners? The resolution of these questions has impact not only to our essential understanding of what social work is, but has broad implications for our shared social realities. Social workers' commitment to and action for social justice affects client populations, the agencies that provide the vehicles for service, the lives of individual professionals, the profession itself, communities, and our society at large. As all members of a society are harmed when injustice limits potential and creates division, so can all members of society benefit by the realization of social justice (van Wormer, 2004).

Social workers are essential voices in areas such as health, mental health, child welfare, aging, domestic and community violence, and the meeting of basic needs. We work with vulnerable populations and hold immense power to impact individual lives, families, interdisciplinary teams, legal decision-making, safety, welfare, and access to resources. The endowment of power must be balanced by adherence to ethical standards for practice and such standards provide accountability to clients, the profession, and to society. We have the ability to raise our voices on behalf of others and to empower people to change lives and communities. We seek to promote strengths, to honor self-determination, to empower, to help, and to advocate. Social justice, if seen as a driving force, creates a very different professional landscape than one informed only by the desire to help or to care – many other professions can claim these goals, so it is the intent and the values that drive the work that can distinguish social work. It is the passion for

social justice that can keep alive the spirit of social change; it is neutrality and silence that will allow injustice to prevail.

Purpose of this Study

Several areas have emerged in the literature that point to research needs in terms of examining social justice within the social work context. To follow the treasured social work adage, "start where the client is", we need to begin at the crux of our own unresolved challenges. We need to understand the place of social justice in the practice lives of social workers. It is especially relevant to examine this considering the extent to which social justice has been put forth as a guiding value and professional standard. Although social work values and ethics are widely recognized in education and scholarship, there is little attention given to research on the use of values in practice (Reamer, 2006). Further, professional dialogue on the principal of social justice and its application is needed to enhance and guide both education and intervention (Galambos, 2008; Levy, 2001). Finally, there is little empirical research to date that specifically examines the process of field instruction and strategies specifically aimed at socialization to social work values and translation of ideas into practice.

Social work's historical commitment to social justice provides both theory and strategy, and social workers as an aggregate appear to have the will to pursue social justice. In addition to policy standards, there are resources available to guide curricula, theoretical frameworks, and practice models centered on enhancing social justice social work. Social work educators, however, need a more thorough understanding of what role the field practicum has in translating this value into action, what might prevent social work practitioners from engaging in social justice-promoting activities, and in what ways

it is currently being practiced. Field instructors already possess and utilize social work strategies that are tools of social justice. Thus, they are uniquely situated to help translate social work values and theory into action for students and to guide them through the transformative experience of the field practicum. This study seeks to contribute to the process of knowledge-building in this area through the creation of a model of student empowerment for social justice-promoting practice as it occurs via field instruction. The model offers instructors specific strategies that may be used to meet this goal.

Chapter 2

To further illuminate the context for this study, this chapter reviews definitions of social work as a profession, theories of social justice and related concepts, and the framework for empowerment that shapes its findings. The information presented in this chapter creates the context of the professional value and knowledge base in which the emergent model of field instruction exists.

The Profession of Social Work

The identity and purpose of social work are at once continually debated internally and staunchly defended to the public. Legislation, such as Missouri's HB 332, enacted on July 11, 2003, prohibits any person from using the title of social worker unless credentialed by education and/or professional licensure to do so ("RSMo 337.604: Title of social worker, requirements to use title," 2003). Battles to legitimize and codify the identity of social workers are significant political activities of NASW state chapters in recent years, but have not resolved the essential questions of identity and purpose (Land, 1988; Reisch & Andrews, 2001). Indeed, the debate as to the nature and purpose of social work has persisted throughout its history.

In 1958, NASW's Commission on Social Work Practice put forth a working definition designed to identify elements both unique and unifying within the field. This definition emerged as a constellation that encompasses values, knowledge, and methods (National Association of Social Workers, 1958). It was argued that although other professions or modes of practice might overlap with social work in method, knowledge base, or motivation, it was the unique combination of these elements that together formed an understanding of the profession as distinct, and, therefore, as having a unique place in

the world. Although this definition has been widely debated, concepts such as sanction, knowledge, and value were further distilled and refined. Wakefield (2003) points out that even the concept of knowledge may not be unitary or static as it exists at any given time within the specific context of time and place. What is perhaps most importance to the meaning of social justice for social work is the inclusion of *values*, not limited to knowledge or skill, as an essential element in defining the profession. The claiming of values, particularly social justice, is increasingly problematic, especially in light of criticisms of social work education as liberally-biased indoctrination (National Academy of Scholars, 2007).

Social work is intentionally value-driven and in many ways defined by those values and ethics that guide education and practice. Its historical commitment to improving the condition of people with the greatest need and vulnerability makes it distinct and provides direction for both processes and goals (Barsky, 2010). Marsh (2005) argues that it is social justice itself that provides the overarching organizing value under which we must go forth in the future. She states that social workers must "keep in mind that our competitive niche derives from the fact that there is no other profession that identifies social justice as its central organizing value; none with our rich heritage" (p. 293). In light of this sentiment, social justice is not only a matter of survival for individuals impacted by injustice, but is essential to the identity and future of the profession.

The Social Work Legacy of Social Justice

The early days, during the Progressive Period, in many ways mirror the landscape of social work today in terms of a divide in political and practice philosophy. Most noted

and hugely influential to the field, Jane Addams, and the Settlement House Movement represented successfully married attention to individual needs and structural reform. While the settlement houses themselves provided holistic services directly to immigrant individuals and families, it became apparent to Addams and her sisters in action that the true path to alleviating much suffering was actually that of political and social action aimed at broad social change (Addams, 1910; K. S. Haynes, 1998; Klosterman & Stratton, 2006; Reisch & Andrews, 2001). Issues such as child labor, sanitation, housing, peace, and democratic rights were passionately pursued in order to change the very structures of society that brought harm to individuals rather than simply working to ensure assimilation and adjustment to supposed unalterable systems. The Settlement House Movement sought not to reform the ineptitude of the individual, but to change the social climate that made people powerless and without voice. It stood some ways in opposition to the approach of the contemporaneous Charity Organization Society Movement which discerned individual shortcomings as responsible for troubles and offered short-term charity to those in need (Abramovitz, 1998; Specht & Courtney, 1994).

Throughout the Great Depression years this professional schism persisted. During the 1930s a contingent of radical social workers arose, dubbing themselves the Rank and File Movement due to members' alignment with organized labor and mistrust of those in administrative positions. Mary van Kleek, Bertha Capen Reynolds, Jacob Fisher and many others aligned themselves with this movement to unionize, to target institutions and structures, and to focus on solidarity with clients in the working class (Coconis, n.d.; Reisch & Andrews, 2001; Selmi & Hunter, 2001; Spano, 1982; van

Kleeck, 1935). Rank and File social workers were among those calling for racial justice and the place of the profession at the front of this fight (van Kleeck, 1936). During the time period, the more mainstream arm of social work continued to build social work education and overall legitimization (Haynes, 1998; Specht & Courtney, 1994). The Rank and File Movement ultimately died out while the American Association of Social Workers eventually was reorganized to become NASW. Regardless, the questions raised by Rank and Filers helped to cement social and political action as legitimate functions of social work and won compromises benefiting social work goals that would have been otherwise unrealized (Abramovitz, 1998).

Many have recognized the ensuing decades of the 1940s and 1950s as transitional years for social work. Professionalization and the dominance of the psychological approach over social reform were most influential at the time, building on earlier generations' turn away from more contentious approaches to social change. Additionally, backlash against all things with even the slightest communist bent was at its height with McCarthyism, a dangerous force from which social workers were not immune (Abramovitz, 1998; Reisch & Andrews, 2001). Although much was invested by the Johnson administration into the War on Poverty, the ultimate failure of the Great Society resulted in retreat from political and social action by social workers faced with a less hospitable environment.

The social justice/social action arena of social work saw renewed vitality during the 1960s and early 1970s as wider American society experienced an upsurge of movement-based activism centering on civil rights, women's rights, mental health reform, and peace (Reisch & Andrews, 2001). Much political opportunity existed at the

time and was capitalized upon, resulting not only in sought-after structural and cultural shifts but also in creating a generation of social workers for whom activism was a salient aspect of both personal and professional identity. The 1970s was a time of reorganization for social work as it became more scientific and regulated (Abramovitz, 1998; K. S. Haynes & Mickelson, 1992), perhaps unprepared to respond to the events of the 1980s. It was in 1976, however, that NASW established the organization's legislative action arm, PACE, or Political Action for Candidate Election, and in so doing, eschewed beliefs that social work should be value-free or apolitical in its efforts (Abramovitz, 1998). In addition to electoral work, PACE's goal was to forge relationships with influential persons for the pursuit of progressive social policy. Unfortunately, PACE did not provide adequate armor against what was to come next.

With the 1980 election of Ronald Reagan to the American presidency, a new tide began to wash upon the shores of the social work profession and progressive/liberalism on the whole. The Reagan years were characterized by an extreme rightward swing and a shift away from a Keynesian economic model that placed responsibility for planning and overseeing society and its protection on the state (Midgley, 1992b; Reeser & Epstein, 1990). Upon taking office, Reagan immediately began to shift toward a laissez faire approach to economics, touting the free market as the answer to economic woes and eschewing the values of the welfare state. His administration made massive cuts to social services dollars, redirecting them toward a buildup of America's military might. The administration changed tax law to benefit the elite of society, and brought a conservative fiscal and social outlook to the forefront (Burghardt, 1982; Reisch & Andrews, 2001). During the Reagan years, the labor movement was also weakened by deregulation and

inequities of wealth increased significantly (Abramovitz, 1998; Midgley, 1992). The repression of progressive interests during the 1980s and resulting sense of powerlessness appeared to further splinter interests within social work, relegating many practitioners to micro practice arenas (Midgley, 1992). The erosion of the social service system, built over previous decades, placed social work in a rear guard position, seeking to simply survive, keep jobs, and defend existing social programs funded by the state (Curry-Stephens, 2006; K. S. Haynes & Mickelson, 1992; Karger & Stoesz, 1993; Reisch & Andrews, 2001). The impact of this time and the subsequent deepening of the power of the right to organize for political gain persist today. It is apparent how the very identity of social work may turn on the influence of external forces. These historical forces have contributed to social work's loss of a critical consciousness and relegation to positions of relative powerlessness, receiving positive sanction for micro work and detachment from the political process (Karger & Stoesz, 1993).

Breton (2006) argues that social work has become locked into a pattern that privileges clinical/micro work over community/political/social action/macro work due to the relative rewards received for the former and the risks and negative sanctions associated with the latter. Such a shift back to the readily accessible role of social worker as social justice advocate would require no revolution of thought, but rather a reclaiming of a path that is already lit by our common history, skills, and knowledge. As Finn and Jacobson (2003) also point out, "it is possible for people to make something of themselves other than what history has made them" (pg. 58). Indeed, if we did not believe this as social workers, much of the ground we stand upon to do and defend our work with clients would erode.

The historical context of social justice in social work reveals a rich and powerful tradition of advocacy and changes as well as the risks and pitfalls of engaging in what some consider the more radical functions of the profession. Social work struggles with climate of powerful religiously-based political conservatism and a devolution of support for social welfare initiatives (Schneider & Netting, 1999; Roche, 1999). Finn and Jacobson (2003) acknowledge that one difficulty is that, especially in the United States, concerns for social justice and broad structural change have been largely marginalized and abandoned. Globalization has made the world seem smaller while also making social problems seem all the more massive, nationalism and racism have gained steam in recent years in response to issues of immigration, and corporate rather than state power to influence lives has taken hold (Ferguson & Lavalette, 2006; Roche, et al., 1999). Global economic change has weakened the power of organized labor, changed the nature of capital, eroded natural resources, altered employment patterns, evaded protections, further dismantled support for the welfare state, and sent already intolerable gaps between classes spiraling out of control (Abramovitz, 1998; Naples, 2002). It is this uncertain ground that social work needs to begin to gain footing and have a voice when social justice is so threatened.

Social work has become increasingly professionalized and fragmented by specialization as has it adapted throughout the 20th century. Hard won battles for recognition of social work knowledge and skills, licensure for practitioners, and competency requirements have shaped the profession and supported the emergence of clinical practice as its primary manifestation (Abramovitz, 1998; Reeser & Epstein, 1990; Reisch & Andrews, 2001). As noted, professionalization to some signifies social work's

position in maintaining the status quo, and that the focus on garnering professional gains represents nothing more than placing status over service and our own perceived needs over those of clients (D. T. Haynes & White, 1999; Mitchell & Lynch, 2003; Selmi & Hunter, 2001). One aspect of professionalization is social workers' move into the private practice of psychotherapy with clients who do not fit within our common idea of the oppressed or disadvantaged. Specht (1990) in fact states that those, "who opt for private practice remove themselves from the problems, settings, and populations that social work was created to deal with". He equally asserts that there is a real need for psychotherapeutic intervention, but that such work is not driven by the value system surrounding social justice. As discussed in chapter one, however, there are models of direct practice that are rooted in the promotion of social justice (Parker, 2003; Swenson, 1998). Again, integration of practices previously believed to be mutually exclusive or in conflict is called for rather than continued fragmentation within social work.

There exist many challenges for social work in advocating for change and opposing a status quo that reinforces and creates inequality and oppression. Values, such as social justice, are inherently political (Reamer, 2006). Social work is a value-laden profession and one in which ethics are hailed as critical guiding forces for fair and efficacious service. Social work education focuses on the transmission of certain knowledge, skills, and values. This model of social work education and practice has been criticized as indoctrination and a violation of first amendment rights and academic freedom (National Academy of Scholars, 2007). Such criticisms place social work education between a rock and a hard place – we are defined by our values, but face opposition when our values set us on a course with distinct political implications.

Challenges to social work education and practice rooted in social justice are also evident at the organizational and interdisciplinary levels. Individuals who rock the boat by questioning policy or speaking out against prevailing political forces are at real risk of job loss, diminished status, and threats to funding and public sanction(Birkenmaier, 2003; Reisch & Andrews, 2001). There are rewards for social work practice that is clinical, individualistic, and non-confrontative in nature (Abramovitz, 1998; Breton, 2006; Breton, Cox, & Taylor, 2003; Fisher, 1995; Schneider & Netting, 1999). For social justice to become operational, members of a basic structure (society, the profession of social work) must see that there is some mutual benefit to shared participation for its realization (Miller, 1999). Even if broad agreement on this point existed within social work, it unquestionably does not exist among members of wider society, and it is within this context that social workers choose whether and how to take up this struggle.

Social Work Values and Ethics

Values are described as core ideals about what is beneficial or important (Barsky, 2010). They are broad and often abstract and may be emotionally-charged. They function when shared by a group and upheld as the framework for behavior (Reamer, 2006). A closely related but distinct concept, ethics are principles or guidelines that outline what behaviors are agreed-upon by a society or group in terms of right and wrong. While values are encompassing priorities and preferences, ethics are represented by rules meant to provide paths for actions and behaviors. Social work is a value-laden profession, not free of ethical (behavioral) imperatives, but instead a preference toward the alleviation of oppression and human suffering.

The profession of social work first sought to formalize a set of values in 1947 when the American Association of Social Workers, the precursor to the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), put forth a *Code of Ethics* centering on professional service (Reamer, 2006). The 1960s brought a shift toward social justice, rights, and the reform of oppressive systems for the benefit of individuals and society. NASW published versions of the *Code of Ethics* in 1960, 1979, and 1996 with the current manifestation that provides six core principles for the practice of social work. These include service, dignity and worth of the person, the importance of human relationships, integrity, competence, and social justice (NASW, 1999). These core values function independently and in concert with one another and are meant to guide decision-making in practice situations. In this way, the context created by client needs and preferences, environmental supports and barriers, and social worker knowledge and judgment is of critical importance to this decision-making process. As a result, the meaning of social justice for one client (individual, family, group, or community) may be vastly different than its manifestation for another.

Core social work values outlined in the *Code of Ethics* are supported by the ethical standards also delineated and organized in terms of social workers' responsibilities to clients, and colleagues, in practice settings, as professionals and to the profession and broad society (sections one through six respectively). The standards established in the *Code* help to facilitate ethical decision-making and actions that promote core values; in terms of social justice, there are several helpful examples. Section 1.05 specifies the need for essential knowledge of social diversity and oppression; while section 6.04 notes the importance of participation in social and political action that

promotes access to choice and basic needs as well as the active prevention of oppression and discrimination (National Association of Social Workers, 1999). While still necessarily broad, such standards help point the way for the application of the social justice value to practice.

Values manifest in the individuals who act upon them. One's value orientation toward the client is a critical element for the application of social work knowledge and skill. It is important then to social work education research and development to determine whether and how such orientations may be taught. Challenges abound in defining and operationalizing core values such as social justice and there is a lack of consistency in social work education in terms of teaching professional values (Barsky, 2010). The professional socialization process can also be extremely difficult as it involves the learner's management of the intersection between personal and professional values. This process of value clarification involves "raising self-awareness by reflecting critically on deeply held preferences…and examining the meaning of each of these…and how they fit together as a system", (Barsky, 2010, p. 12). Critical to this process for social work is the ability to locate one's personal values in order to either integrate these with or compartmentalize them as separate from professional undertakings.

Barsky (2010) suggests a process of ethical acculturation during which students are exposed to, grapple with, and manage professional values within their own existing values framework. Successful ethical acculturation involves the adoption of professional values, and their integration with personal values. Gecas (2000) argues the importance of one's value orientation to understanding social change participation behaviors. He suggests that a worldview tied to a value, such as social justice, may be more

transcendent of contextual, special, and temporal boundaries as opposed to identities rooted in roles (e.g. job title). This has utility for examining the value orientation of social workers: Does one's commitment to social justice transcend a particular setting or role? Is social justice inherent to one's worldview? The relationship between one's orientation toward social justice and social work practice behaviors is useful to this study and is explored through participants' own personal and educational experiences. The ongoing challenge for social work educators and practitioners is to translate abstract ideas (values, ethics) into actions and behaviors that support and promote guiding values. The field practicum lies at the heart of this activation.

Cultural Competence

Cultural competence is distinct from, but linked with social justice in social work and so must be attended to here. Their relationship is not always clearly articulated: Is cultural competence best thought of as one tool for promoting social justice, or is social justice a path for assuring cultural respect and recognition in social work practice? Garcia and Van Soest (2006), state that "promoting social justice for diverse individuals and populations is the foundation for culturally competent social work practice" (p.1). NASW defines cultural competence as requiring a "heightened consciousness and analytical grasp of racism, sexism, ethnocentrism, class conflict, and cross-cultural and intracultural diversity" (Kelly, 2009, p. 70). NASW (2007) has established standards for culturally competent practice in social work that are tied to broader principles, roles, and responsibilities of professionals outlined in the *Code of Ethics*. In this light, critical consciousness around culture and its impact on groups and individuals may be interpreted as facilitating broad goals such as the pursuit of social justice.

Hendricks, et al. (2005) point out the importance of learning how culture, oppression, and privilege have evolved historically, and within a specific social context. Such knowledge allows us to understand not simply assumed traits of a certain social group, but how membership in that group impacts and creates experiences of oppression and privilege. Active application of this knowledge to direct practice helps to demonstrate respect for diverse ways of being and to avoid unintentional participation in discrimination. Social workers must be prepared to "start where the client is" in terms of linguistic, cultural, ethnic, and other facets of identity in order to accurately understand and respond to concerns of oppression and inequity. "Culture" encompasses more than race or ethnicity, and should be thought of as consisting of multiple identities such as gender, sexual orientation, religious belief, and ability (Garcia & Van Soest, 2006; Kelly & Clark, 2009; Lum, 2007). These multiple identities represent in each individual positions of possible social advantage and disadvantage (Adams, et al., 2007; Murphy, et al., 2009).

Cultural competence is addressed as an educational element and practice imperative in EPAS as well. The policy calls on social workers to "recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create or enhance privilege and power; gain sufficient self-awareness to eliminate the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse groups; and recognize and communicate their understanding of the importance of difference in shaping life experiences" (CSWE, 2008, p. 5). Educational standards also highlight the value to social workers of identifying as learners through engagement with clients as cultural informants. Framing the social worker as learner – not necessarily always as expert –

defines the client relationship as one of give and take, where each has expertise to offer in partnership, and where lived experiences are the keys to understanding others (Hendricks, 2003). In meeting these mandates, we are able to understand not only the *nature* of cultural difference as significant but the *impact* of culture in the context of oppressive social structures (Adams, et al., 2007).

Cultural competence is addressed in the context of the field practicum. Self-awareness of one's own position in society is viewed as a critical prerequisite to culturally competent learning and practice (Hendricks, et al., 2005). Cultural competence can also be presented to students as a lifelong process, not one that has to be (or could be) mastered in a semester and as a process that can at times be difficult. Hendricks, et al. (2005) offer strategies for teaching cultural competence in the field practicum setting. They suggest that diversity issues be infused throughout the practicum experience; that exposure to and opportunities to reflect upon differences in experience and social status must be actively facilitated; that naturally-occurring teachable moments be built upon in order to connect theory to practice; and that issues related to diversity be explicitly included in student process recordings and personal reflections. For these techniques to be successful, practitioner-field instructors must be themselves competent on issues of diversity and able and willing to engage students in self-reflection and discussion of potentially challenging situations within an atmosphere of trust and safety.

Profession-in-environment

The person-in-environment perspective is an essential one to social work assessment and intervention, taking into account the importance of the many forces that impact and create individual experience. It is helpful to examine the profession of social

work from a similar stance in order to better understand how cultural, social, and community factors impact efforts toward social justice. While definitions of the profession are generally rooted in ethical imperatives, theoretical frameworks for practice, and a distinctive history, the role and function of social work is largely defined by the environment in which the profession exists, and is therefore dynamic, fluid, and potentially vulnerable (Abramovitz, 1998; Gibelman, 1999; Reisch & Andrews, 2001). Social work as a profession is dependent on the social and political climate in which it exists at any given time for both financial and philosophical sanction and is intertwined with ever-changing policy, public opinion, and culture.

Theories of Social Justice

Social justice, claimed by social work as both duty and principle, has long been the topic of political, economic, social, and legal philosophy, and of constant debate within the profession. As a broad concept, social justice in a society is represented by fair treatment; equity in terms of status, access to necessities, and of opportunity; and freedom from discrimination in order to maximize self-actualization for all individuals (Barsky, 2010). Reisch (2002) writes of social justice as a vehicle for the redressing of inequality for members of historically oppressed groups through the creation of equal opportunity. Young (2001) indicates that social justice is the elimination of institutionalized domination and oppression; it is a means of liberation from systems that limit access and potential. While one view of social justice defines it as basic equality, in which all are treated the same, it is also thought of as important to treat everyone according to difference and to individual needs and circumstances (Barsky, 2010). Injustice, the target of such change efforts, is conceptualized as either act or omission that

wrongfully prevents an individual or group's access to rights and to meeting human need (Reamer, 2006).

Under the umbrella of social justice, several useful theories exist to assist social workers in operationalizing the value for the benefit of clients. Social justice is frequently described in distributive terms, or concerning each individual's fair share of societal resources. In social work, commutative justice is also a critical concept, and relates to our obligations to one another and fair interactions (Birkenmaier, 2003). One approach to operationalizing distribution can be described as "to each according to his [*sic*] needs" (Miller, 1999, p. 203). In this view, justice is contingent on situation, culture, subjective assessment, and individualized application. The capability approach focuses on not only achieving goods or resources but having the freedom and ability to pursue that achievement (Brighouse, 2004). Procedural justice offers a theoretical basis for ensuring fairness and equity through the policies and practices that guide institutions. In this way, social justice may be measured not necessarily according to outcomes, but in terms of the processes that create each individual's experiences in organizations. Human rights are also gaining favor as a framework within which we might situate social work for the protection of individuals and groups from infringement of essential freedoms. Liberal feminism also offers a perspective on social justice at the personal level that moves beyond the role of institutions and the state in facilitating just structures and distributive mechanisms. Termed commutative justice, this perspective focuses on fairness in interpersonal exchange. Following is an overview of each theoretical approach to social justice.

Theories of distributive justice are concerned with how a society disburses resources among its citizens, who deserves what, and by what process (Brighouse, 2004); put simply, what society owes to its citizens. Historically, distributive justice has received the most attention in social work and American society (Barsky, 2010; Brighouse, 2004; Miller, 1999) and provides an important conceptual context for this study's findings. Distributive justice manifests itself in social work services such as Temporary Aid to Needy Families or unemployment insurance that serve as conduits for the redistribution of societal resources. Distributive justice concerns several primary constructs including need (what constitutes basic and self-actualization needs and what best meets those needs), desert (who deserves what share based on merit, effort, status, etc.), fairness (how to best address injustice), and equality (ensuring that no one deserving gets more or less than what is judged to be fair) (Miller, 1999; Reamer, 2006). A critical challenge is to find common ground in terms of how distribution of benefit might occur and who is deserving of justice and why. Additionally, what goods are subject to distribution – jobs, material resources, opportunity, social capital – is also difficult to define (Miller, 1999). Within the distributive paradigm three perspectives are often discussed: libertarian, utilitarian, and egalitarian (Barsky, 2010; Brighouse, 2004; Miller, 1999; Van Soest, 1994a, 1994b). All three are concerned with how to approach the fair distribution of resources within a society and all incorporate a different view on how to best promote the "common good".

A libertarian perspective on justice emphasizes individual rights as primary and supports ownership and free market ideals over any attempt to legitimate what is seen as taking what is rightful from one and giving it to another via state interference (Brighouse,

2004; Miller, 1999). For libertarians, the role of the state should be one of benign neglect, allowing social and economic forces to play out, even if resulting in poverty for some and great wealth for others. Economic and political freedom are seen as inexorably linked, so that economic infringement such as taxation limits personal agency and liberty (Brighouse, 2004). The libertarian view sets freedom and contrived resource distribution at odds, and stands in theoretical opposition to mechanisms such as welfare that involve the intervention of the state to assure citizens resources through redistribution of wealth (Van Soest, 1994). These ideas are antithetical to the current processes of the social work profession meant to protect and defend those most vulnerable and to help ensure that needs are met through existing distributive mechanisms.

The utilitarian perspective stresses the importance of arriving at a manner of distribution of resources that is most conducive to a common good (Barsky, 2010; Brighouse, 2004; Miller, 1999). Again, a primary point of contention is that there are a variety of possible beliefs concerning what is "good". This perspective can be used to justify an unequal distribution in order to benefit the most people, such as taxation that burdens the poor less than the rich. However, it could also be used to argue for increased military spending with major cutbacks to social programs, if "the common good" is defined in terms of national security (Van Soest, 1994). The problem of who decides upon the meaning of good remains extraordinarily problematic in our pluralistic society.

The egalitarian perspective on distributive justice as a path to social justice emphasizes the importance of equal opportunity and treatment of individuals as a means of redressing inequality and facilitating fairness (Barsky, 2010; Brighouse, 2004; Miller, 1999). Social work is most in line with an egalitarian view of distributive justice as it

does take into account the desire for inclusiveness and attention to the impact of social status. The keystone of the egalitarian perspective is Rawls' 1971 work, *A Theory of Justice*. Highlights of his perspective include: each individual's right to liberty and liberty within society; the idea that social justice should be applied so as to benefit those with the least power and advantage first; and that equal opportunity creates the context for redressing injustice (Rawls, 1971). The theory also entails elements of democracy and the right and obligation of everyone to be active participants in civil and social life under the equal liberty principle.

Rawls proposes several useful concepts in delineating his view of social justice. First is the idea of a basic structure, one that is bounded and serves as the context in which in/justice exists and that also facilitates resource distribution. Importantly, the state is identified as the primary institution responsible for overseeing and ensuring justice by making sure all people's essential needs are met, regardless of wealth. All other social institutions then either support or detract from social justice and must work in concert to achieve fairness throughout society (Rawls, 1971). Primary goods are the subject of distribution, both material and social, such as liberty, choice, responsibility, and wellbeing. Rawls outlines the difference principle as a framework for understanding that inequality of distribution is acceptable and even necessary to first provide the greatest benefit to the least advantaged (Brighouse, 2004; Rawls, 1971). He also proposes the veil of ignorance as a theoretical state in which justice would be impartially disbursed when individual actors are unaware of how outcomes would affect themselves or others. In other words, if people are unaware of how they might fare personally under a structure of redistribution, they will opt for what is best for the achievement of justice

because it's the right thing to do (Brighouse, 2004). Unfortunately, the assumption that people will choose to protect the most vulnerable and act in cooperation toward fairness does not hold water in the real world, especially one driven by a free market mindset. Again questions of need, desert, what is good, and who is responsible for collective welfare remain unanswered. In terms of resource distribution, this perspective frames the work of social justice as that of moral obligation, based on acceptance of state (government) accountability, and is supportive of social programs aimed at addressing those most in need (Van Soest, 1994).

Several criticisms have been leveled at the Rawlsian model of distributive justice in recent years. First, his assumption of equal freedom and opportunity within an inherently unequal system such as the socio-political and economic structure of the United States is problematic (Banerjee, 2005). Rawls does not attend to the impact of race, gender, class, and a host of other social locations that disadvantage groups and individuals at a structural level. Fair distribution of resources does not address issues of cultural-structural oppression that create and underlie inequality (Reisch, 2002). Additionally, a theory that assumes that the government accepts an obligation to create a fair and just society, and that citizens and institutions will work collectively toward this end is not supported in reality (Banerjee, 2005). Without addressing the powerful forces of social construction and structural oppression, the continued application of Rawls to a social work profession committed to social justice falls short in providing tools to alleviate inequality (Banerjee, 2005).

A capability approach to social justice takes into account not simply receipt of societal goods, but people's ability to access and make use of them (Morris, 2002; Sen,

1999). Rawls' theory of justice as rooted in the equal distribution of social goods does not address the capability to make use of them or to "convert them into valuable functionings" (p. 368). Sen also emphasizes that it is not the products of distribution (material or social) but rather the *means* to obtaining or achieving them. The capability perspective minimizes the dilemma of comparing one person or group's needs and desert with any other and instead focuses on the idea of access and capacity (Brighouse, 2004; Miller, 1999). The capabilities perspective attends to person-in-environment contexts and issues of oppression which prevent actualization and self-determination that move beyond the attainment of basic needs (Banerjee, 2005).

The concept of procedural justice brings attention to the locus of in/justice, situating it between individuals and institutions rather than as defined in relation to the state (Barry, 2005; Brighouse, 2004). Procedural justice allows for a focus on the policies and processes that guide actions, as well as on the outcomes that might be set in place to achieve (Miller, 1999). Procedures and policies do not always result in their desired outcome but have meaning in the context of human interactions. Miller outlines several qualities of just procedures that are parallel to social work values including equality of access; competence; the hearing of all sides and voices; dignity of each person; accountability and transparency; and self-determining voluntary consent. He indicates that procedural justice must be acted upon "at the moment of engagement" (p. 121), in order to promote and sustain the substantive goals of fairness and equity.

In social work, as in society, injustice and its remedies exist in terms of both individuals and groups as targets and recipients. Group-based perspectives offer useful tools for analyzing justice claims in a society in which membership in socially

constructed groups (i.e., racial categories, religion, sexual orientation) results in the experience of either relative privilege or oppression (Young, 2001). The consequences of injustice, such as poverty, have cumulative effects on those who by virtue of actual or perceived group membership are socially disadvantaged by society's structures (Barsky, 2010). The principle of participatory parity calls for all citizens to be able to act as peers in a society, with equal voice and responsibility (Brighouse, 2004). If parity is evaluated only on the basis of individual access to participation (with individual shortcomings or assets as the assumed cause) rather than in the context of the historical and intentional structures of unequal access and citizenship, the essence of both problem and solution will elude.

The feminist perspective that the personal is the political points toward an approach to social justice that attends to interpersonal transactions. Liberal feminist thought on social justice has helped to broaden the discussion from a traditional focus on distribution and the role of the state and its basic structure in formulating mechanisms for fairness (Brighouse, 2004). From this stance, interpersonal behaviors and interactions are as much the locus of in/justice as the systems and outcomes of institutions and social structures. An individual's experience of the world as just may be as or more impacted by their day-to-day encounters as it is by access to social goods. Practice behavior in this light may be best articulated by the words of Gandhi: You must be the change you want to see in the world. If we strive for a world in which race does not create unfair hierarchies, power imbalances, and inequities, we can create organizations that eschew such injustices and demonstrate fairness and equal respect in our interpersonal transactions. Attention to personal justice, or commutative justice (U.S. Legal Inc., 2010)

is of great value for social work as it highlights the importance of micro level interactions to the pursuit of justice and is in alignment with other professional values.

A human rights perspective also offers useful insight on social justice. The United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations) in 1948, during the aftermath of the horrors of World War II. Within the document are three specific arenas in which rights and freedoms are outlined: 1) political and civil rights; 2) social, economic, and cultural rights; and, 3) collective rights such as the right to freedom of religion or the pursuit of personal development (United Nations, 1948). Of primary concern to social work is the second, said to be a "positive freedom" or one requiring state intervention to achieve. Three main barriers to an individual's ability to access human rights as outlined in the UDHR include poverty, discrimination based on prejudice and unequal social hierarchies, and lack of education (Mapp, 2008). Indivisible and essential in nature, these barriers are of critical importance to social work and fundamentally tied to structurally-based inequity.

Within the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural rights, based on the inherent dignity and value of each individual, the following (among others) rights are set forth:

- Self-determination
- Equal rights to men and women
- Work in employment of one's choice or consent
- Fair and safe work conditions; fair pay
- To form and join trade unions
- Social security or social insurance

- Family formation and protection of family processes such as family leave
- Protection of children from exploitation
- To an adequate standard of living
- To be free from hunger
- To the highest possible state of mental and physical health
- To primary education, and to higher education according to capability
- To take part in one's culture, according to one's beliefs and traditions

(United Nations, 1948).

The UDHR is gaining recognition amongst American social work scholars, educators, and activists and has great promise as a tool for enhancing both conceptual understanding and real-world action for the promotion of social justice (Reichert, 2003; Wronka, 2008). A framework of social justice based not on needs, but on rights represents a new lens through which to assess and advocate for just outcomes.

Despite its utility for and congruence with social work, human rights is not yet widely understood or applied for social justice in the U.S. and its absence should be examined. Reichert (2003) proposes that U.S. social workers (and Americans in general) tend to view human rights as primarily political or legalistic as well as within an international context, and therefore not helpful in terms of social and economic issues such as poverty or racism on the domestic front. Americans also place stock in the U.S. Constitution as an adequate and effective document already in place to protect rights (Reichert, 2003). American emphasis on individualism over communalism, personal freedom, and safety from state interference may also run counter to the use of the UDHR more widely in social work. It should also be noted that a significant portion of available

literature that specifically addresses social justice comes from European, Australian, and other sources originating outside of the United States. Despite its rich traditions and history, it appears that American social work has been less vocal and less consistent in its focus on social justice than other nations globally - this should inspire in us an examination of what may be missing from U.S. social work education.

NASW has taken a stand on the UDHR and its utility for social work. While the organization recognizes that "the profession does not fully use human rights as a criterion with which to evaluate social work" (Kelly, 2009, p. 204), it is also made clear that the UDHR is largely a reflection of beliefs held within the profession for some 50 years before its adoption by the United Nations. As a result, it is the official policy of NASW to promote ratification of not only the UDHR, but also other treaties such as the Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, taken up by the UN in 1966, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women from 1981, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, dating to 1996. NASW recognizes the importance of codifying the rights of vulnerable and oppressed populations and for establishing state accountability for enforcing these rights (Kelly & Clark, 2009).

Finally, there is a need to attend to linguistic issues surrounding use of the term "social justice" in social work. The term is often expanded in common use to include economic justice and sometimes, specifically racial justice. Economic justice is not absent in theories of social justice, but is implied; indeed most theories of social justice as described here, particularly those concerning distribution of resources are by nature concerned with economic justice as a primary aim. So, for the purposes of consistency,

this project assumes social justice to encompass specific elements of fairness including economic, racial, gendered, and other domains.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

Theories of social justice help to create a framework for understanding the perceptions and practice behaviors of participants. The perspective they provide on the substantive constructs explored in this study are of great utility, however, do not offer a reference point for insight into intervening factors that are salient as barriers and supports to social justice efforts, or how social workers perceive their ability to pursue justice goals. Empowerment theory offers an ideal framework for an examination of not only the *what* of social justice, but the *how*. It provides a lens through which we can evaluate whether and how social workers are actually equipped and enabled (i.e. empowered) to meet professional imperatives around social justice.

Although emerging today across social work scholarship, empowerment theory has long been at the heart of social work, even if not so named (Payne, 2005). Indeed, Lee (2001) holds Jane Addams' work as the precursor of today's empowerment models, noting that settlement houses brought together a collective of disempowered minorities, both gender and ethnic, who together raised consciousness about their plight and found common solutions for and by themselves. Empowerment theory is especially salient for application with the most vulnerable groups in our society, those most in need of a social work profession committed to social justice. The main concepts of empowerment in social work practice concern partnership with and active participation of the client in consciousness-raising, overcoming barriers and oppressive forces, and the endowment of self-efficacy, a sense of belonging, and access to personal power (Payne, 2005).

Empowerment is highlighted as a process, not necessarily an outcome, with the goal for clients of gaining influence in their own lives and the ability to improve their circumstances (Barker, 1999).

Important to empowerment is the notion that self-understanding can impact change at all levels, emphasizing the importance of consciousness-raising to the process (Gutierrez, DeLois, & GlenMaye, 1995). Consciousness-raising involves education toward the ability to analyze the intersection between individual disempowerment with systems and structures of oppression (Gutierrez, et al., 1995). Boehm (2004) differentiates two types of empowerment. First, *personal empowerment*, related to individual capacities such as the ability to look critically at the world, self-esteem, self-determination, a sense of responsibility, the ability to engage productively with others, assertiveness, and hope for the future. Second, *collective empowerment* relates to the ability to act collectively for the shared benefit, and to support one another in struggle (Boehm, 2004). These concepts point to the applicability of the theory not only to social work practice for client empowerment, but to its utility as a lens through which to view social workers' own ability to wield influence and to act as collective change agents in the socio-political context.

Gutierrez, et al, (1995) studied American social workers' perceptions of their own empowerment in practice. The study found that concepts such as self-efficacy, personal power development, access to choices, and decision-making power were significant to feelings of dis/empowerment in practice. The findings point to the importance of both internal and environmental factors to one's sense of empowerment. Disempowerment of social workers is not an uncommon experience and may be brought about by an

organizational environment marked by low pay, low place on the interdisciplinary hierarchy, unmanageably high caseloads, adoption of a medical or problem-based model that conflicts with social work values and strategies, unsafe work environments, scarce resources, lack of professional autonomy, and rapidly changing demands and work settings (Turner & Shera, 2005). These profession-in-environment factors are highly relevant to this study. See Appendix A for key concepts related to social worker empowerment.

When individuals perceive themselves as powerless in relation to the environments in which they function, they can experience feelings of helplessness, alienation, self-blame, burn-out, hopelessness, and spiritual and intellectual paralysis (Parsons, 1991). Strategies for the enhancement of social worker empowerment in organizations include: attention to power differentials related to decision-making and organizational change; respect and concern for worker confidence and efficacy; creation of an environment that provides opportunities for professional development; good communication among staff; recognition; and providing paths to self-care among workers (Gibelman, 1999; Turner & Shera, 2005).

This dissertation examined both internal and external intervening factors that serve as barriers to and supports for social workers' engagement in social justice-promoting practice and in turn, field instruction. It frames field education as an empowerment process for students and the strategies utilized by instructors to foster this transformation. It has also been suggested that empowerment is a "continuous variable" that, by such definition, "defies ready scientific measurement" (Carr, 2003) making true

empirical assessment elusive in the traditional sense. In this way, it is also well-fitted to the current qualitative study.

Chapter 3

Method

This study is a naturalistic inquiry using grounded theory in order to learn *how* social work field instructors empower students to understand and promote social justice in practice settings. The purpose of the study, an understanding of the *process*, was the driving force behind the chosen methodology, which allowed for the construction of a model grounded in the lived experiences of participants.

Qualitative research and grounded theory.

Qualitative research, like quantitative, is empirical in nature. It is divergent in terms of methods of data collection, analysis, and standards applied for rigor (Padgett, 2004) but, as with people, difference does not have to mean better or worse. Rather than utilizing numbers and statistical analysis to arrive at findings, qualitative researchers use the experiences of relevant persons and the content of social artifacts, represented and organized through language and communicated by words. The value of *both* approaches to social work is largely accepted at this point (Padgett, 2004). The value of hearing, using, writing, and finding meaning from the voices of those most impacted by social phenomena are consistent with the pursuit of social justice. Finally, context is vital for qualitative research as it is to the practice of social work and to action for social justice, calling for continuing attention to person-and profession-in-environment. Padgett (2004, p. 306) notes that, "for researchers in social work, such attention invokes a sense of responsibility for improving social and economic conditions resulting from inequality and discrimination". Although this project does not involve direct inquiry into one particular issue or path to its resolution it does examine broadly this very sense of responsibility

among practitioner-field instructors as it relates to direct practice and educating future workers.

This study applies qualitative methodology to the examination of the experiences of social workers in learning, doing, and teaching social justice in the field through both their words and my interpretations. Qualitative inquiry is inductive, or builds knowledge and theory from practice-based and lived experiences, rather than creating hypotheses based on theory and testing them in the field or lab (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba,1985; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Padgett, 2004; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The inductive method is a keystone of grounded theory methodology. In their foundational work on the topic, Glaser and Strauss (1967) state simply that "grounded theory is derived from data and then illustrated by characteristic examples of data" (p. 5). To further elaborate, Strauss and Corbin (1990) note that the process involves discovery through a reciprocal process of data collection, interpretation, verification, and theory-building that emerges directly from the study of a phenomenon of interest. A major assumption of grounded theory is that we do not know all there is to know about a phenomenon or process, and that the best way to arrive at a theoretical understanding is to remain grounded in the words and experiences of participants. This allows them to explain their experiences rather than trying to predict or fit their experiences into an already existing, perhaps inadequate model. This aspect of grounded theory methodology brings the authentic voices of participants to the fore in that all themes and theories that emerge are drawn directly from their words and experiences. This also makes the approach well-fitted for investigation into social justice in the social work context.

Research and social justice.

This project's purpose and methodology can be framed as promoting social justice. Research itself is political and has great potential (as does practice and education) to spark and contribute to positive social change (Denzin & Giardina, 2009; Humphries, 2008). The epistemological underpinnings of constructionist inquiry rest on the acceptance that knowledge is subjective, pluralist, subject to context and continual change, and is constructed and co-constructed within the interplay between researcher and participant (Creswell, 2007a). Knowledge production is not, nor should it be, value-free. The lived experiences and unique perspectives of individuals are seen as valuable building blocks. Meaning is sought in the words of individuals, is negotiated within the researcher-participant relationship, and is interpreted by the researcher as instrument (Humphries, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Research that challenges hegemony, seeks out unexamined perspectives, and explicitly attends to structures and consequences of oppression, power, and domination is necessary for the promotion of social justice (Denzin & Giardina, 2009; Humphries, 2008).

Standpoint and theoretical sensitivity.

This study attends to the process of coming to understand in/justice in the context of professional social work practice, putting the justice value into action, and then walking with others on this same journey through field-based instruction. My own experience of this process has been an emotional one and one that I in some ways was not fully prepared to undertake. As a student and in practice I felt assaulted by accounts of abuse, violence, rape and was disheartened by the treatment of vulnerable persons, their disenfranchisement, despair, and deprivation as I set out into the world to "make it a

better place" and "help people" through my work. This coming to terms with injustice and understanding my own power or powerlessness to make an impact, has been for me and for many I suspect, a significant aspect of being a social worker within a broader, often inhospitable environment. It is also important to reflect upon as I engage in research on the same topic.

My family taught me to stand up for what I believe is right, even if there are consequences and regardless of tradition or politics. I was taught to value inclusiveness and raised by liberal feminist democrats who believe in equality and justice. They gave me an appreciation for history, for the mysteries of the human condition, and our capacity as people to create change and work together in a positive way. The context of my childhood allowed me to explore and express my ideas about justice and undoubtedly set the stage for my entree into a profession that holds social justice as its driving force. My parents like to tell me how I "have always been a social worker", and indeed much like participants in this study, I found social work as a match to my inherent qualities and existing values.

My first social work experiences, and most of them since, were characterized by creativity in absence of resources, dark humor in the face of intolerable human suffering, but also by the resilience and determination of those driven to build a better world. Many of my colleagues have experienced the same violence and powerlessness in their own lives that clients do allowing I believe for greater sensitivity to and solidarity with them. I have always envisioned myself in social work as a warrior, standing shoulder to shoulder with all manner of others to fight a common battle called oppression, whether it manifests as family violence, discrimination of all kinds, the inability to access needed

services, food deprivation, or the failure of institutions to recognize and support basic rights. For me social justice is part and parcel of the worldview that drives me, and this orientation has been a source of both pain and joy.

The profession of social work is a divided one, despite the existence of the National Association of Social Workers' *Code of Ethics*, the educational standards set by the Council on Social Work Education, and our shared history. We are at once united in the spirit of helping those most vulnerable and divided as to who should do this for whom, based on what paradigms for what end, or even what the essential goals of our helping should be. I believe that the personal *is* the political. Either side of the divide is limited without the unification of both camps. Jane Addams knew this is as she worked both to assist individuals and families to escape poverty, and as she simultaneously fought for labor reform. During the Great Depression in an essay examining professionalism versus social change organization it was concluded that, "there is no insoluble conflict between the case work method and constructive social welfare principles any more than there is a conflict between medical practice and public health" (Lurie, 1935). This chasm, in my eyes, is severely weakening the profession as more and more graduates are emerging into the practice world armed only with partial knowledge. Working with field students during my years of full-time practice gives me insight into teaching in-place and the needs of students when faced with the realities of injustice. All of these experiences inform my research because they remind me of all that I want to be a part of accomplishing. There is much that is left unresolved about the social work profession itself and what we can do for ourselves and others that I hope to tackle as I continue gaining new knowledge and skills (power).

The feminist idea of standpoint helps one to locate herself within the field of inquiry, in relation to others, to time and space and being. Dorothy Smith calls for researchers to celebrate and work from their connections to their subjects, to state where they stand, to be unapologetically value-informed, and to use research as a tool of social justice (Harding, 1987). As feminist scholars and others have astutely queried, is it a good thing for social science to be objective, if objectivity means a dispassionate, value-free, or mechanistic approach to knowledge-building (Collins, 2000; DeVault, 1999; Harding, 1987; Hartstock, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985)? It seems important to ask this question in the context of social work research and in light of our profession's oft-stated commitment to social justice. Both the methodology of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and the theoretical underpinnings of social justice make room for subjectivity, emotion, and values. Where you stand is critical in order to take whatever steps possible to be reflexive and aware of how your standpoint does and could impact research. Such honesty may be the best path to ensure that research is indeed *not* impacted by unexamined beliefs and bias – we certainly cannot turn off our humanity during moments devoted to research. As Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 185) aptly put it, "one has no choice about representing *some* ideology" [emphasis in original]. The real issue is whether or not one takes account of it. Also, while understanding one's place in relation to a subject of study enhances one's theoretical sensitivity, it also creates accountability when, "the inquirer her/himself be placed in the same critical plane as the overt subject matter, thereby recovering the entire research process for scrutiny in the results" (Harding, 1987, p. 9).

Theoretical sensitivity is an important element for the qualitative research process. As a "personal quality of the researcher, it indicates an awareness of the subtleties of meaning of data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 41) and helps to enable recognition of emerging theory. This sensitivity, or insight into the nature and meaning of data, allows the researcher to develop sound and conceptually rich theory. One's theoretical sensitivity is derived from existing knowledge (literature), experience, and the analytical process itself, and is continual (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This sensitivity allows the researcher insight into influential conditions, strategies and processes, and consequences of a phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In the context of this research, a significant part of my theoretical sensitivity to the topic has come from the literature as I have expounded on here, and has continued through the process of data collection, analysis, interpretation, member checking, and further analysis. My personal and professional background, my own lived experiences related to grappling with issues of injustice, practicing justice-driven social work in a variety of settings, and teaching students both in the field and the classroom are of primary importance here. Most of the experiences I asked participants to describe and reflect upon I have also lived. The amalgamation of my sensitivity to the topic of study and an honest recognition of my value orientation and standpoint strengthen my ability to emerge with useful theory, and in terms of process, created a foundation for trust and rapport among practitioners who recognized our common language, history, and values.

Researcher reflexivity when conducting qualitative, constructionist, and critical research is of great importance (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Padgett, 2004; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As will be discussed later in the chapter, attention to

one's standpoint in relation to research and one's responses and reactions to the process matter for the rigor and trustworthiness of a study. The ability to reflect and engage with others about these factors via journaling and peer debriefing strengthen qualitative research and also in all likelihood, make continual self-improvement of researchers more possible.

As the profession of social work continues to struggle with epistemological questions, it is my stance that our mission is well-served by continual, critical, evaluative research with respect to existing paradigms and practices, and a constant eye to social justice. I also think that as a profession, we must take a critical eye towards what we *think* we know about our clients and the social ills that we seek to alleviate. Much more research is needed and will always be needed since human existence is dynamic and ever-changing, not to mention that the status quo is not working for so many. Research should take on a cyclical pattern in which we never simply leave something uninvestigated and we never stop seeking better understanding and responses (DePoy, Hartman, & Haslett, 1999). Further, as these authors also point out, more action-focused, participatory research is in line with social work ethics in its ability to address the concerns of power, elitism, and over-interpretation that often accompanies the positivist approach. As a social work researcher, I am here to learn from the lived experiences and perceptions of people so that I may use my skill and power to take what they teach me and work for change. The goal of research and practice alike must be to fight oppression, not contribute to it (Dominelli, 2002).

Study Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to arrive at a deeper understanding of social worker field instructors' perceptions of social justice in practice as well as strategies aimed at translating this value into action for students. The project examined broad questions rooted in a theoretical framework of empowerment:

1) How do social workers define social justice in the context of the social work profession?
2) How do social workers perceive their engagement in and promotion of social justice in practice and field education?
3) What personal and agency supports and barriers exist for social justice goals and strategies in practice and field education?

Research Design

The starting-point design for this study was informed by Lincoln and Guba's (1985) three-phase model for planning a naturalistic inquiry. The phases were 1) *orientation and overview,* characterized by exploration of what is known, what is most salient, and how best to approach the project. For my project, this phase involved the literature review, reflection on personal and professional experience, meeting with dissertation committee members and two pilot interviews; 2) *focused exploration*, or the information-collection phase wherein I utilized my scholarly and grounded theory tools to gather and analyze data recursively through a constant comparison process; and 3) *member checking*, or the elicitation of participant feedback on my interpretations of the data they provided. Phases two and three frequently overlapped and were mutually informative. Construction of the theoretical model and written narrative occurred largely

during the final phase of the inquiry. The orientation and overview phase has been described throughout this paper in terms of literature review findings, insights gained from pilot interviews, and personal reflexivity. The latter two will be further elaborated below.

In order to test initial credibility and dependability of study materials, two pilot interviews were conducted. Criteria for participation in the pilot were 1) a social work degree and 2) past experience as a field instructor for the School of Social Work. The study materials and instruments were piloted in order to assess whether study materials were clear and able to elicit appropriate and adequate responses; no analysis was conducted.

Phase two: Focused exploration.

Participants and sampling criteria.

Sampling for this study was purposeful and included efforts to achieve maximum variation of participants. Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to seek out those participants with the most direct experience with the phenomenon under study in order to elicit the most pertinent and information-rich data (Creswell, 2007b; Hatch, 2002; Padgett, 2004; Patton, 1990).

Participants were recruited from the University's School of Social Work in partnership with the school's Field Coordinator. She sent listserv messages that I provided to field instructors working in social work settings throughout the state of Missouri who supervise practica for bachelor's and master's students. Messages were sent during the following semesters: Fall 2008, Spring 2009 and Fall 2009. Included was a brief statement from the researcher about the study's purpose and contact

information. Two messages also included a flyer (also posted in the building in which the School of Social Work is located) and one included a message from the school's director encouraging participation based on the study's potential benefits to the school and profession. Several in-person recruitment efforts were also made at existing field instructor events. Brief presentations were made in December 2008 and April, May, and December 2009 at either field instructor orientations or field instructor appreciation events. The presentations involved a short description of the nature and purpose of the study and an acknowledgement of the value of field instructors to student development and to improving strategies that promote social justice. Interested parties were given copies of study materials either in hard copy or electronically including an explanatory letter (see Appendix B), consent form (Appendix C), demographic form (discussed below), and the interview guide (Appendix D) .

This study's sample was purposeful, not one of convenience, in that the intentional target of study were social worker practitioners also serving as field instructors. To meet both of the primary criteria, participants had to possess an MSW from an accredited institution and must have served as a field instructor within the year prior to participation. Maximum variation allowed for both the broadest look possible at the phenomenon through the eyes of diverse participants while also seeking out common patterns that transcended these differences (Patton, 1990). In other words, when possible, inclusion of participants with diverse characteristics was sought in order to best demonstrate that any patterns that do emerge transcend possible explanation based upon sample homogeneity. Demographic information was collected prior to provide participant background information as context and to assist with efforts toward maximum

variation. See Table 1 for details on participant characteristics and practice. See Appendix E for participant professional, community, and political organization affiliation.

Table 1

Participant characteristics (N=17)

Age	26-66 (Range)	39 (*M*)
Years post-MSW experience	3-34 (Range)	13 (*M*)
Licensed Clinical Social Worker	Yes = 13	No = 4
Years served as field instructor	<5 = 8	>5 = 9
Field instructor within last year	Yes = 17	No = 0
Gender	Female = 15	Male = 2
NASW member	Yes = 4	No = 13
Self-described race	White = 15	African American = 2
Received MSW at MUSSW	Yes = 10	No = 7
Current area of practice	Child advocacy center	
	Community mental health (2)	
	Domestic violence shelter	
	Early childhood education administration	
	Employee assistance	
	Hospice/Palliative care (2)	
	Job support and mentoring for at-risk youth	
	Maximum security inpatient psychiatric	
	Medical/Hospital social work	
	Private adoption agency	
	Private child welfare agency	
	School social work	

Teen transitional housing

Wellness/health promotion

Women's substance abuse treatment

Qualitative research methodology does not necessitate sample size prior to engaging in date collection and analysis (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 1990, Padgett, 1998). Patton does suggest that the logic of qualitative sampling is to obtain thick, rich accounts of a phenomenon rather than to seek to include a large, representative sample. It is the concept of theoretical sampling that guides this process. Glaser and Strauss (1967) note that, "the process of data collection is *controlled* [italics in original] by the emerging theory" – that is, until one sees what emerges, there is no way to know what will emerge from the data provided by participants, or how much data will be needed in order to arrive at theory. It is through the search for redundancy – when no new information is evident in newly collected data - and theoretical sensitivity of the researcher that informs it, that sample size is determined (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain that sample size is related to how many cases are needed in order to reach redundancy of information and that sampling may cease when saturation appears to be achieved. Efforts toward maximum variation serve to inform the researcher's judgment around theoretical saturation within a heterogeneous sample (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Put more simply, when convergent patterns and meanings emerge from data drawn from a diverse sample, the researcher may have greater confidence that the findings transcend within-group similarity.

Data collection.

Instrument. The mode of data collection for the study was semi-structured interviews with social work practitioner-field instructors. The interview guide consisted of broad, open-ended, questions designed to encourage participants to share their own unique perceptions while targeting the content area of the inquiry (Hatch, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990). A qualitative semi-structured interview guide was constructed using empowerment theory as a framework as well as substantive constructs related to social justice and field education. The guide was refined in wording, not content, after the pilot interviews, and again after study interview number five. The first revision reflected pilot participant feedback regarding face validity of questions and simplification of wording. After meeting participant number five, as well as discussing the process to date and receiving written feedback on the outcome content of the interview itself from my chair (who served as methodologist also), I added new prompts to my enhanced interview guide. Basic questions presented on the participant version of the interview guide remained the same. Questions remained sufficiently broad to allow participants to construct and communicate their own meaning of lived experiences (Creswell, 2007a).

Interviews. Interviews were conducted primarily at the participant's place of employment (n=10) with additional locations including public establishments (n=2), the researcher's office (n=1) and via telephone (n=4). The location and time of each interview was negotiated based on participant preference, distance from researcher, and convenience. I digitally audio-recorded the interviews and transcribed each interview verbatim prior to analysis. I also took notes regarding theoretical insights or concepts to

return to or build upon in future interviews. Upon completion of transcription, a summary of the content of each interview was provided in writing to each participant for review and member checking. Participants were offered the opportunity to engage in a follow-up interview or to provide comments concerning any information that they might wish to add, correct, or clarify. The summaries also provided the researcher the opportunity to immediately begin making interpretations of participant responses and for participants to assess the accuracy of these initial interpretations.

Data analysis and synthesis.

Qualitative data analysis is the process in which the researcher searches the data for relationships, meanings, and patterns. The process is inductive in seeking to discover specific elements of the lived experiences of participants and the connections between them (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Padgett, 2004; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The goal is to construct a model representing a process of social work field instruction strategies that facilitate empowerment to engage in social justice-promoting practice. The model is based on the subjective perceptions and lived experiences of participants in concert with my interpretations and meaning-making process.

Data analysis occurred concurrent with data collection (Hatch, 2002). By analyzing data as they were collected, I was able to benefit from application of a recursive constant comparative method. Constant comparison allows for a back-and-forth interplay between raw data and interpretations of meaning. In this way collection and analysis of data are reciprocal in informing each process (Hatch, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Padgett, 2004; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Atlas.ti software for grounded theory was utilized for the open coding phase of data analysis. Open coding was completed for each transcript within a period of two to six weeks following the interview. This allowed for a dynamic recursive process to unfold that was informative for my interactions with participants. It also helped with integration of initial interpretations as a building block for subsequent analysis. Member checking via participant review of summaries enhanced the trustworthiness of the study and provided a method of ensuring the collection of the richest and most complete data possible.

Coding. Open coding was done for each interview transcript utilizing constructs based on the empowerment theoretical framework and substantive elements of social justice and field education. See Appendix Z for a list of each code used and its definition. Codes were found to be both mutually exclusive and exhaustive as they allowed for all data to be coded distinctively during this initial process. After all transcripts were coded, each unique category was extracted for examination of within-construct meaning and coherence. See Appendix F for open codes and their definitions.

Atlas.ti software also allows the researcher to extract all participant responses assigned to a particular code. By extracting all content within each coded category, I was able to engage in a process of axial coding. Axial coding is a method of reorganizing coded data based on connections made by the researcher among categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Through this process, I was able to refine categories, focus in on patterns, and respond to emergent themes made evident through examination of each coded category. Below is one example of axial coding for the category of "field instruction strategies".

Table 2:

Axial coding example: Field instruction strategies

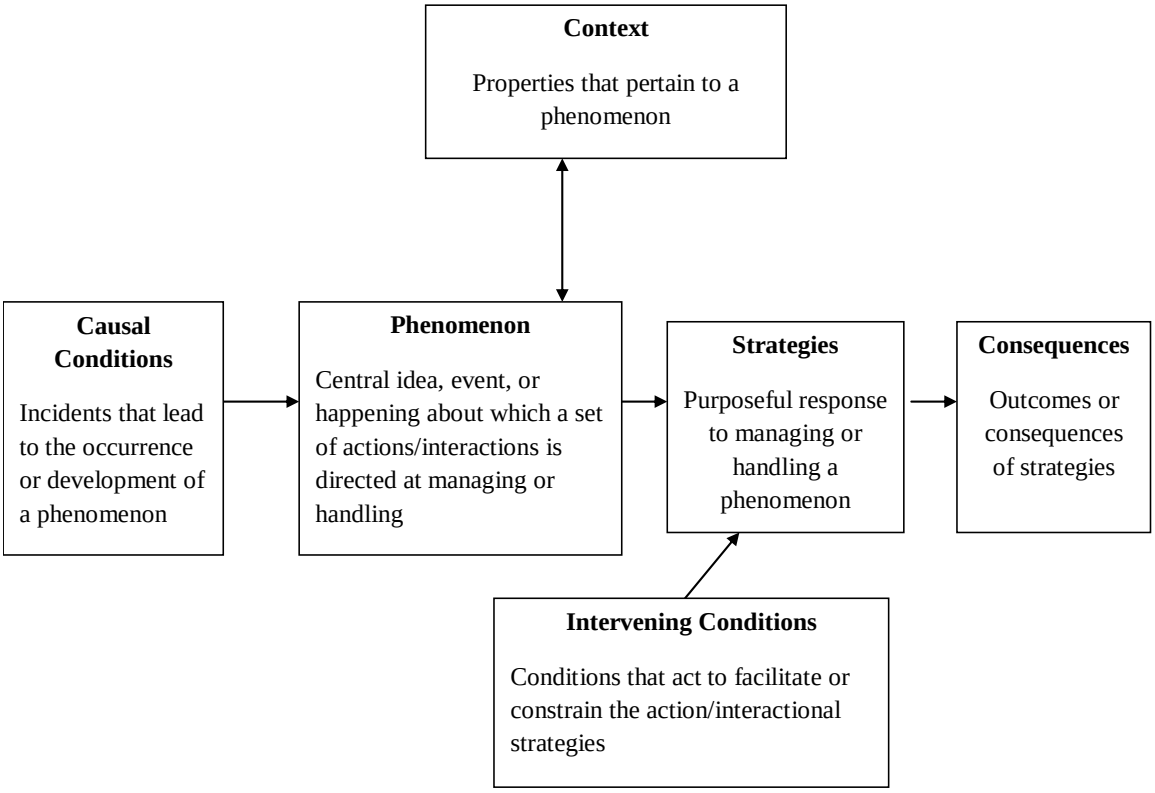
Immersion of student, exposure to milieu/daily agency functions in a culture of inclusion
Intentional exposure to diverse persons, client world and experiences, moving beyond the confines of agency, experiential exposure to client world in place; resisting urge to shelter students
Use of teachable moments for exposure, reflection, emotional response, glimpse into client experience and expertise, empathy development
Person-first culture/exposure
Teach by example – involvement of student in decision-making, self-determination as one would with clients; observation/modeling
Connection of concepts in the *Code of Ethics* to practice examples
Explicit attention to self-awareness by use of teachable moments and discussion of student reactions, use of measurement instruments to gauge impact of work, supervision, journaling
Facilitating DYAD level awareness – start where client is AND where social worker is
Connecting classroom concepts to practice examples – making it real
Challenging/building critical thinking capacity
Assigning targeted reading, research around social justice issues, specific client issues that present challenges or require social worker competence-building for response
Self-disclosure around own process, struggles in dealing with injustice and emotions; authenticity

The example reflects my process of elaborating within each coded category my interpretations of the meaning of participant responses. I recorded all examples of field instruction strategies provided to me across the sample under the broad category. I was then able to refine elements that emerged in the data.

The process of data synthesis through axial coding was aided by a coding paradigm for theory-building offered by Strauss and Corbin (1990). The paradigm model, depicted in Figure 1, represents critical theoretical elements of a process and can be applied to any substantive area of inquiry. See Appendix G for elaboration on constructs within the model. Once emergent themes became evident within and across data provided by participant interviews, I was able to translate the information drawn from the data to application in the Strauss and Corbin model. This application was most facilitative to my ability to illustrate the process under examination, and to organize participants' ideas and experiences in a coherent and meaningful way. The model was adapted and refined over time as I ruminated on its elements and how best to represent

their relationships visually and through member checking.

Figure 1: Strauss and Corbin's (1990) Framework for Grounded Theory



Finally, following methods described by Strauss and Corbin (1990), I engaged in the process of selective coding based on categories that took shape during the axial coding process. Selective coding allows the researcher to integrate, and make more abstract, the categories of data that were previously identified and organized (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This final step in the analysis process creates a story from the data presented by participants and allowed me to envision how I would tell this story in a comprehensive and cohesive manner. It was the process of selective coding that helped put the pieces together to reflect the critical process that I set out to describe with this study: *field education strategies that empower students to practice social justice in social*

work settings. Selective coding enabled me to refine my understanding of how the salient elements of different categories of data relate to one another and impact the process. For instance, when examining the category of "field instruction strategies" I condensed the different elements presented above into three distinct activities: facilitating exposure, role modeling, and focused discussion. The ability to frame data across and within participant responses helped view the overall process of field instruction. It also allowed for indentifying quotes and snapshots of meaning that best represented and supported my vision of this process. I was then able to validate my interpretations of the data by grounding it in the data, guided by a systematic process of analysis and synthesis of that data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This was a matter of data induction rather than reduction in which I constructed a meaningful representation of all the relevant elements of participant responses in regard to each area of inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This process was repeated for each emergent theme within the model.

Researcher reflexivity.

Throughout the all stages of data collection, analysis, and member checking, I kept a journal in which I made note of my own reactions, kept track of methodological decision-making, and wrote memos that reflected theoretical insights into the meaning and relationship of different elements of the data. My first interview resulted in both expected and surprising responses from the participant that I reflected on:

> "12/3/08: 1st interview! She did all the talking, used the interview guide literally. Less participation and use of myself in interview process than expected (hoped?). Some expected content did emerge (racism in the child welfare system and its impact on clients and the work; use of

professional power and privilege, sharing power); but surprising in that P reports identification as a republican. My subjective reaction to this did not necessarily impact my ability to hear and integrate this perspective, but reveals how my biases may limit my thinking – I did not expect someone with conservative political views to be so interested in social justice in her social work practice, or at least social justice in the way I might define it. Revealed as well P's personal process of working to integrate her upbringing and socialization, political ideology (taught and believed) conflicts with social work at times - and with what her social work experiences reveal to her about injustice and the reality of poverty, etc. Highlights importance of social worker self-awareness, willingness to see outside of own reality, and to grapple with the process of jiving what she thought, based on own life, with what she sees happen for others. She reported that she continues to struggle with these conflicting ideals and beliefs.

This entry helped me to reflect on and pay attention to my subjective location and biased thinking about the relationship between political orientation and a commitment to social justice and social work.

Other notes in the journal focused on method, such as this entry concerning use of prompts to enhance responses to the question posed to participants, "What is social justice?":

Seems potentially easier at times for Ps to respond to questions about nature of justice if first phrased in terms of *injustice*, seems easier to

define oppression than a vision for its absence. I will also start using their initial response to the justice question as a proxy for subsequent ones, i.e., if they define it as fairness, I will use the word fairness to help connect their thinking as we go through the guide. Also more direct inquiry regarding feelings toward NASW ethics, regardless of membership, seems to make sense to Ps as a way of beginning the conversations on justice.

Other entries were made to record insights I had along the way as I recursively analyzed and collected data. I ruminated for months on the relationship between social justice and other core principles of the *Code of Ethics*:

4/09: Keep thinking that social justice as one of six core values seems wrong. Maybe that the others are more like tools or paths to social justice; social justice is a goal, and outcome (but also a process) and these extant social work strategies and values serve to facilitate its promotion, not that they are parallel. Like social justice is the center of a wheel and the others are spokes that turn and move the wheel forward. Ditto other things like use of self, start where client it, PIE, client as expert. Need to refine my thinking about the relationship between social justice and others.

Finally, my journaling included important communications with my committee chair and methodologist, Dr. Kim Anderson. After her review of my fifth interview transcript, I wrote:

Important to focus in on how personal and professional values intersect, conflict, integrate, co-exist…values help social workers make sense of in/justice and their place in the work. How do P's grapple with social

in/justice in daily practice? In own life? What lies behind injustice, what forces drive the conditions we label as unfair? Much of what is being or will be revealed are already the staples of SW – we have skills and strategies, how are they applied to a justice context? For example, meeting the client where they are. Highlight the daily work of Ps, how does it relate to social justice? No magic formula, it's the stuff of everyday practice.

The value of the reflexivity journal was at least three-fold: it allowed me to keep track of my process through the creation of an audit trail; it helped me throughout data analysis to reflect on my thoughts and reactions to participants in terms of my self-awareness and theoretical insight; and served as a tool of trustworthiness for the study as a whole.

Phase three: Member checking.

As noted, the member checking phase of my project was not distinct from my focused exploration, but actually informed continuing data collection and analysis. Each participant was provided with a written summary of the main points of their research interview. Summaries represented initial synthesis and interpretation of data. They provided participants the opportunity to ensure that I heard what they intended to communicate. It also created a space for additional input and new ideas in lieu of engaging in a second interview process. Only one participant provided substantive feedback at this stage. Jodi indicated her desire to elaborate and clarify two points from her interview. With regard to the impact of professionalization and representation of the social work perspective she stated:

> Not only does money drive the departure away from a critical and justice-informed focus due to diagnostic and reimbursement issues but it also helps add value to our profession in a world that values based on money. In other words, not charging for our services communicates that we don't value ourselves. Charging is making us more reputable but comes with strings attached. Some of those strings include being less focused on social justice….Social workers are missing in some arenas where mental health consult is strongly needed, particularly the court systems. In other words, not only should social workers be serving clients as therapists and case managers but they should also be serving judges, GALs [Guardian ad Litem] and lawyers in understanding mental and social issues. We are presently absent at this table.

I responded to her comments in order to demonstrate my understanding of their substantive elements and their importance to her.

In addition to individual summaries, each participant received a summary of findings and the model representing the process. Each was offered access to the full dissertation or any parts thereof. This final phase of member checking allowed participants to view not only my perceptions of their own responses, but my overall interpretations of the data and my vision of the process that the data informed. Jodi also provided feedback after she received the summary of the final findings. She indicated that my reframing social justice as individualized rather than universal (see full discussion in chapter five) was "refreshing" and helpful. She also noted that, "if we begin giving a voice to people who were previously unheard and they participate on our governing boards, etc. all of a sudden discrimination to that particular people has suddenly gone

down. Why? Because we affected it through providing the solution first (which then rid itself of the problem)". Her insight helped refine my thinking about affecting social change on a macro level by empowering people as individuals and within organizations. Jodi, as well as another participant, Nina, requested and were provided with drafts of chapters four and five.

To date I have not received feedback from other participants with regard to my findings. Although it is not a part of the methodology for this study, my intention is to create another opportunity for member checking. In collaboration with the School of Social Work's Field Coordinator, I intend to create a field instructor training based on the model that emerged from this study and using real world examples drawn from the data. I plan to invite all 17 participants to take part in this pilot training and serve as a focus group not only regarding the meaning of the information they provided as I have interpreted it, but also in response to its potential for enhancing field instructor comfort and self-efficacy around teaching the social justice value.

Human Subjects Protection and Approval

Approval to engage in this human subjects research was obtained through the University of Missouri's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The project was first submitted on August 13, 2008and was approved with exempt status on August 18. The project was recertified on July 8, 2009 and expires on July 8, 2010. As reflected in the materials submitted to the IRB as well as consent forms provided to and signed by participants, there are potential risks and expected benefits for participation. To protect participants from any possible repercussions at their places of employment, I discussed the idea of political fallout with them and assigned each a pseudonym. I also made it

clear in the consent form that all efforts would be made to mask any identifying information in my write-up concerning not only practitioner identity, but agency name and location.

Potential benefits to participants were also discussed with each as well as outlined in the introduction letter and consent form. Benefits might include making a substantive contribution to the social work knowledge base, assisting the school of social work with future field education efforts, improving student experiences in practica, acting on one's social justice ideals and commitments, having a voice to express successes and frustrations, and reinvigorating one's own understanding of and motivation to promote social justice. Many participants did express that taking part in the research study was helpful in refocusing both practice and field education efforts on social justice as a foundational and constant element of social work practice. Participants have all expressed interest in hearing the results, especially in a face-to-face focus group setting in order to build their own field instruction skills.

Methodological Rigor

Trustworthiness of the study.

The ability to establish trustworthiness – rather than the quantitative values of validity and reliability – is a major task of qualitative research, not only in terms of conducting a solid study, but also because of the continuing need to respond to skeptics of the qualitative approach who question its value for anyone other than direct study participants. This section further explicates the researcher's efforts to enhance the trustworthiness of the study, based on the concepts of credibility, transferability,

dependability, and confirmability as delineated by Lincoln and Guba (1985). These concepts and the study's methods for achieving them are presented in Appendix H.

Credibility.

There are a number of methods offered in research literature for ensuring the credibility of a qualitative study. As mentioned, member checking was employed as one attempt at this by allowing participants – experts on the topic of inquiry and their own perceptions – to review the data and interpretations of it for appropriateness and accuracy (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Padgett, 1998). The same sources also suggest that immersion in the phenomenon is helpful to the development of sensitivity to and understanding of the experiences and meanings that lie within. Although often hard to achieve in the absence of an observation site, my position within the field of social work and past experience as a field instructor created a context of immersion in and sensitivity to the topic of study. Triangulation is another method of enhancing credibility in qualitative research. Triangulation can occur in terms of the use of different sources of data, multiple interviews, different investigators, methodological variation, and different theoretical lenses through which to see and understand the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Padgett, 1998).

It is important to demonstrate efforts toward peer debriefing both for credibility and for the well-being of the researcher, especially when the topic of inquiry may be a difficult one as is common in social work (Padgett, 1998). Peer debriefing allows the researcher to discuss and explore thoughts and ideas about the inquiry outside of the vacuum of one's own perceptions with an informed yet detached professional peer with relevant research knowledge (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Peer debriefing

was engaged in several times throughout this process with my chair as well as with a doctoral student colleague with experience in social work practice and field education.

Transferability.

There are no confidence intervals in qualitative research to help "prove" that a study can be thought of as valid and applicable in a generalized fashion. Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Creswell (2007) suggest as solutions the use of thick description in communicating the results of a study, offering the idea that rich and detailed information in itself imply a level of trustworthiness. It is also argued that it is really not the qualitative researcher's aim to present information that can be transferred beyond the context of study; in other words, qualitative research does not strive to be generalizable. Rather the goal is to provide enough depth to understand (Campbell, Scott-Lincourt, & Brennan, 2008) the essence of a phenomenon through the exploration of all possible perceptions and experiences available from participants.

Dependability.

Dependability is also enhanced by the use of triangulation following the argument that improved credibility is paramount to improved dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Step-wise replication requiring at least two researchers was not possible to apply to this study; however ,the inquiry audit is one other path toward dependability. My chair and methodologist is responsible for examining both process and outcome of the study in order to determine whether they are supported by the data. Lincoln and Guba attest to the value of the audit for confirmability as well.

Confirmability.

The use of the inquiry audit, described above, and the audit trail are strategies for establishing confirmability in qualitative research. The latter involves creation by the researcher of careful records of all steps in a study and of all sources of information and data-gathering methods – this trail of information is needed for the audit to occur (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Lincoln and Guba's description of the Halpern audit trail, it must contain records on raw data, data reduction and analysis procedures, data reconstruction and synthesis steps, process notes, material related to expectations of the study, and notes on the development of instruments for use in the study. If a researcher's process is retraceable, the more likely the data can be relied upon as having come from stated sources and as representing stated interpretations. The reflexivity journal can be thought of as important to all aspects of trustworthiness in a research study by serving as documentation of the researcher's thoughts and feelings while immersed in data (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Chapter 4

Overview of theoretical constructs

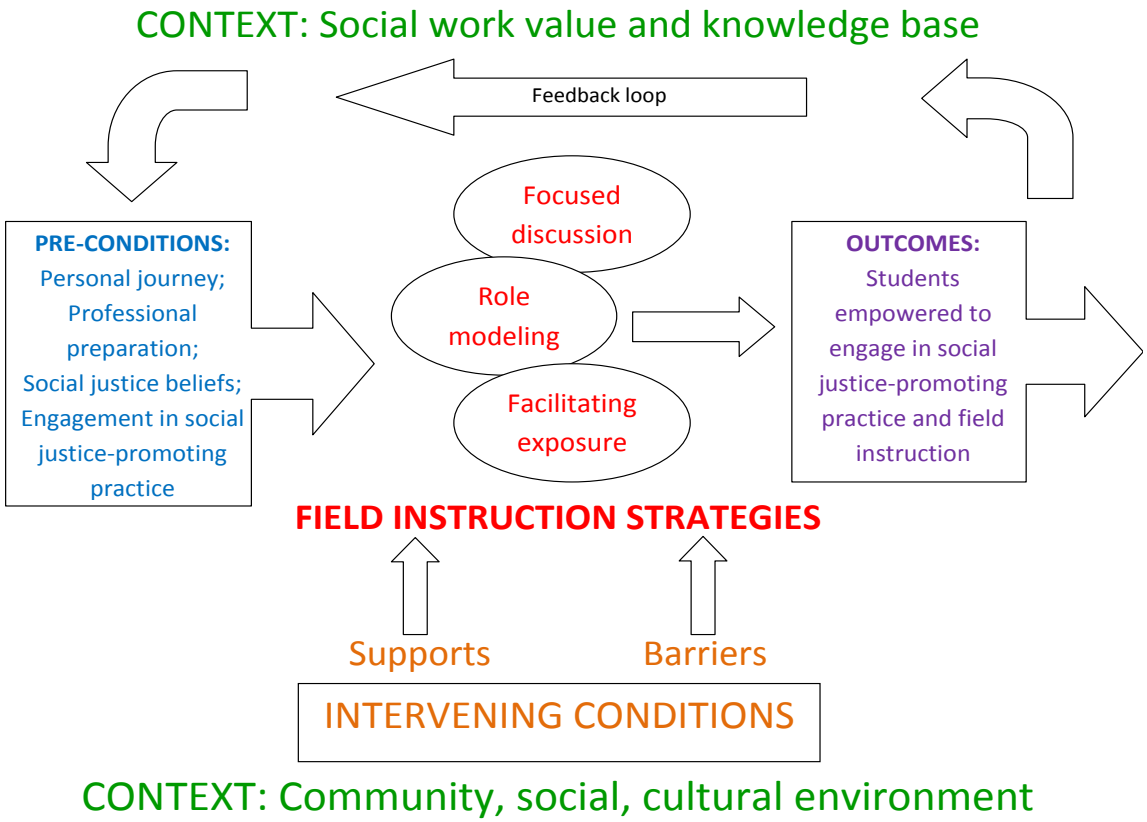
Through data analysis and synthesis, a model of social work field instruction that serves to empower students to engage in social justice-promoting practice emerged (see Figure 1, titled, "Process of student empowerment for social justice practice"). Although the process centers on the outcome of student empowerment, it is depicted in the model through the lens of the field instruction process. Presentation of findings will follow the model and offers thick description of each element with the words of the 17 participants.

The **context** of the model represents the professional, community, social, and cultural environments in which field instruction occurs. Participants share a professional value and knowledge base by virtue of their status as MSW social workers educated by accredited institutions and guided by ethical standards and principles. Their work with clients and students occurs within the wider, often challenging professional environment. **Pre-conditions** focus on the values, knowledge, and skills of field instructors. These factors are representative of their status as activated practitioners of social justice, prepared and empowered by their own personal journeys, professional preparation, social justice beliefs, and practice behaviors. Knowledge of practitioners' own learning and professional socialization was important not only to the content of field instruction, but also their ability to model for students the process of social work learning which they too experienced. At the center of the model lie three overlapping **strategies for field instruction**: *facilitating exposure* of students to injustice and client realities; *role modeling* social justice-promoting practice behaviors; and *focused discussion* with students about encounters with justice issues in the field and managing the learning

experience. **Intervening conditions**, conceptualized as both *supports* and *barriers*, impact field instruction strategies. These intervening conditions are connected to environmental forces that either help or hinder social work efforts toward social justice and therefore also impact the demonstration and teaching of such behaviors for field students. The **outcome** arrow represents student empowerment, through the process of field education represented here, for their own social work practice. The empowerment outcome also creates a feedback loop in which a new generation of practitioners, through personal journeys, professional preparation, social justice beliefs, and practice behaviors, are equipped to provide field instruction themselves.

Figure 2:

Emergent theoretical model of the study



Pre-conditions for Field Instruction

In order to contextualize participants' practice behaviors and field instruction strategies, I wanted to understand how participants themselves came to their ideas about social justice. These factors are related to the process of field education in terms of their utility for the strategies that emerged: facilitating exposure for students is often inspired by their own experiences of social justice; role modeling rests on one's ability to engage in social justice-promoting practice; and discussion of student learning requires the instructor's ability to articulate the meaning of the social justice value for social work. I explored participants' personal journeys in social work, intersections of personal, political, and spiritual views with professional values and their experiences of social work education around social justice.

Personal journey.

A primary element of field instruction pre-conditions as depicted in the model is the personal journal of participants and its impact on their practice and work with students. Formative experiences and values held by participants impact their work and teaching. For many, sensitivity to social justice issues is simply a part of who they are. The drive for fairness and to stand up against injustice was inherent for most participants, and manifested long before their entrée into social work. Several participants reported having experienced oppression and discrimination themselves, and how such experience informs their sense of ethics, for example:

> You know, I think a lot of it is personal experience, being African American, and you know being in the world, I think there's things that I've experienced that have just not, you know, sat well with me and you know, like, I don't like this, I'm not

going to take this. And certainly in my family, my parents have always said you know, stand up for yourself, fight for yourself, you know, you can do it, you're as good as anyone…it's going to be tough out there but you've got to fight for it, you've got to claim it. If you want justice, you've got to claim it (Vincent).

Well, I'm very sensitive to the need for fairness in all that I do and um, I know that that developed from my childhood. I came from a dysfunctional family with a father that had anger issues, so it was very important to me to protect others and to achieve, make sure as much as possible that they are not being persecuted or um, discriminated against (Bruce).

Others described being exposed to injustice suffered by others in their early lives and feeling called to fight forces witnessed such as racism, violence, poverty, and oppression of women:

I think it really fit with my values, um, this many sound kind of corny, but I remember as a very young child… just looking at my peers sometimes and people teasing them, or making fun of them for the shoes they wore or things like that. And I remember at a very young age feeling compassion for them and being angry about that and wanting to do something about it. And I think that's how, you know, I developed where I am now (Ruth).

You know I think it pretty much came as, probably at a young child, I'd say middle school, I was aware of the disparity between different groups, whether that was at the class level, also the racial level, and financial or let's say economic level. Um, I think I have always been able to see that there were different groups of people and there wasn't, I didn't like that about the world (Jackie).

> I have always felt that way. I can remember even on the preschool playground, elementary school playground sticking up for kids….I could remember the teacher asking everyone this question and all the kids are saying this, but I am OK with saying this is what I think….I remember picking once when I got to pick for the basketball people at my elementary school, I picked first everybody who never got picked….Pick all these people who never get picked first and you know what? I can still remember today their faces (laughing) like, wow, really? I got picked?! First? (Jodi).
>
> It's just been a part of my whole life, I just don't ever remember, you know, even as a young child, just being amazed that we would do volunteer work in the homeless shelter and just being amazed at how, and I used to ask my mom, I don't understand why they can't stay here all day long if it's 100 degrees outside…. why can I have a nice house and have air conditioning and this person can't even stay in this building all day long while it's 100 degrees outside. I just don't understand that, it just blew my mind…(Naomi).

Two participants discussed having been exposed to injustice in an international context as a result of childhood circumstance and, in the second example, participation in the Peace Corps prior to entering the social work profession:

> I think that for me personally, my interest in social justice led me to the field of social work for sure. And kind of in a roundabout way, I don't know that I really knew what to call it as a young person. I grew up overseas and saw a lot of human suffering and a lot of unfortunate things that occurred, especially at a government level…. in the country I lived in the economy was really struggling,

there would be aid from the U.S. or other countries and you would see the government kind of use that and it would not reach the people that it should have reached, and I could specifically remember an instance where there had been corn provided by the U.S. that said U.S. aid, not for sale, that was for sale, so somebody was benefitting….so I think things like that growing up impacted me and made me want to see some sort of change from that (Tessa).

My experience in India was that women were second class citizens and in my village and in every village in India the women waited to have dinner after their husbands and children ate and they would sit in the kitchen and have the cold leftovers and so sometimes I would often be served because I was a guest and foreign but sometimes I would refuse and I would sit in the kitchen with the ladies and in protest but still being mad, you know, still being mad, I was mad a lot in India, I was furious (Jane).

Some participants relayed stories of family members who helped foster awareness and an activist spirit and the impact of coming of age during the 1960s and 70s:

In 1964 I graduated from high school, went to college, and it was in the midst of a huge social change in America in every way. When I started college we didn't have birth control, and I had a sister who had an illegal abortion, we had every kind of racial issue going on, it was a really exciting time because students then felt that we had something to offer, we were all wanting to make a change, we all marched….The Peace Corps had an enormous impact on me….my senior year in college I had taken a couple of social work classes that had never been offered

and I immediately felt that it was meant for that, it just felt so perfect and so comfortable and I loved everything about it (Jane).

…growing up in the late 60s early 70s and having a brother, several but one particularly who was a little bit older than me who was very much into the civil rights movement and did a lot of protesting back in the day, I just sort of grew up with that knowledge, being aware of it personally, on a personal basis, so I think that did do a lot of my early forming of my own personality and thoughts (Nina).

For one participant who grew up in the post-civil rights era, social movement action also had an impact:

Well I have always had those underlying social work core values. You know, peace and justice and equality …my sister took a social work class and… took me to a couple of oh, rallies of some sort that were on campus and some social work, they were doing some volunteer work… it just kind of opened up my eyes and I followed my sister's footsteps (Naomi).

For many, social justice beliefs are inspired by or fit well with spiritual beliefs:

It's being really social justice oriented as my beliefs are Christian and being social justice oriented….Jesus was out there meeting people's needs, he wasn't just like, come to the temple and we'll talk, he was out there, hanging out with the lepers, hanging out with tax collectors, hanging out with the people that nobody else wanted to talk about….as a Christian as a person, that is what I am called to do is to reach out to, use my strengths, my god-given strengths and abilities to reach out to everybody, not just people in my middle class, white, Christian bubble (Kerri).

> … there's not one answer to things, there's not one vehicle to salvation, there's not one God, there's not one prophet, there's not one way that's better than the other so that helps me, you know, understand social work issues that, that you know to basically understand the wisdom behind things…I'm able to work with people that other people would just toss aside and say, well they're a throwaway, or there's no hope for them, they're a gang member, they're bad (Jade).

In the same way that personal values may align with social justice beliefs, they also largely mirror participants' sense of the purpose of social work, making it a natural fit:

> I think for me I, my faith…is such an integral part of my life personal and professional, not that I'm professing to people, but my faith beliefs consist of serving others and so I really do believe that we are here to serve our clients. Social work lends itself very, very well to that (Teresa).
>
> …for me, that's probably the biggest of the ethics is the right to self-determination and to honor people with positive regard and basically come from a place of love and acceptance…that's kind of where it seeps into my personal realm is that you know, is to kind of, my background, my spiritual practice has some Buddhist elements in it where you know, to do no harm, to be kind to people, even if I don't like them, to show them compassion. So, the *Code of Ethics* reminds me of that as well…. I don't think I could be in a profession where the *Code of Ethics* was contrary to my spiritual values or cultural values, so really it's a great match (Jade).

> I think it's more than a nine-to-five job, it also merges with my sense of faith and spirituality…I think that we are responsible for each other, I think it is terribly wrong for some people to have a lot of money and some people to go without basic needs, I just think that's wrong, I think that will be wrong 'til the day I die. I think that we are smarter and more caring as humans to allow that to happen, so for me the big question then is, why do we? I think that those are very ingrained pieces of me that social work just allows me to live out and to do something about. And so a piece of it's my faith, my spirituality, religious beliefs, part of it's my political voice and then the social work just allows me to carry that out through my education (Jodi).

Some participants recognized that there is often conflict between social justice principles as embodied by social work and personal religious and political values. These persons reported a continuing process of managing conflicting values and integrating - or learning to keep separate - professional and personal values.

> I do have conflicts on things like that and then I joke with people that I feel like I am a liberal Christian and a conservative social worker in that I am more liberal than most of my Christian friends and more conservative than most of my social worker friends. So when it comes to elections, I really have a hard time…. I am always a Christian and I am always a social worker, I'm not leaving one at the door, but when it comes to, it's not my job in a therapy session to promote my religious beliefs (Kerri).

> I had never even heard of social work until my sophomore year of college….I thought, well I will do it but I'm really a republican, I don't really agree with this

philosophy, I think these social workers just bleed money out of the government, I was really anti-social work, but even working in social work the first couple of years, seeing the families, I was like, oh, they're just deadbeats. But I've been doing it now for 11 years, and around the third or fourth year I kind of started shifting my thinking ….it's been a confusing journey for me (Heidi).

The process of coming to understand social justice and to manage the intersection between personal and professional values is critical to the ability to practice social work that incorporates the principle, and in turn to assisting others through this process. Our discussions of the intersections between the self, social justice values, and social work led us to then examine the educational process meant to prepare practitioners for the profession.

Professional preparation.

I tried to get a sense of whether or not participants felt equipped by life experience and/or social work education to act upon their desire to challenge injustice. This aspect of the pre-conditions element of the model focuses on participants' own professional preparation. Some participants indicated that they came into social work education grounded in existing ideas about social justice seeking a path for acting out their values as reflected by the above responses. Their responses indicated that although they may have had a sense of social justice in place, it was through formal social work learning that they found the words and actions needed to pursue change:

I think I might have learned the term probably in social work classes, my values that come along with social justice I think I learned through my parents…. I think

I brought that with me when I got my advanced education then I think I put words to it (Sienna).

I think my education as a social worker was the primary way that I became familiar with social justice. I don't think I had much exposure to that in the past, except that I did have experiences with discrimination against African Americans, and through that experience I became aware of prejudice and discrimination (Bruce).

For some, formal social work education was as much about gaining knowledge and skills as it was about finding a community of shared values and goals:

I think one, coming together with people of a like mind.…I think that understanding and seeing that other students have these issues and feelings was really beneficial part for me. And it's more than the content of it. I needed to see other people's passion….I still remember their examples of how they would go about advocating and so I think the visual piece of that was important (Jodi).

For me it was a natural fit, um, I have always sought to assist people with their problems. I very much view all people as equals, um, in terms of values, no one person is any better than another….It didn't feel like I had to be taught it, it just reaffirmed that I am, it was uh, a sense of belonging, really, that I found a group of individuals who also see the world like I do (Jackie).

Others reported that it was social work education that first exposed them to diversity and injustice:

I would say that I learned about it in social work classes in college…. I know that I really learned the history of it, Jane Addams and all that in social work classes.

So that is definitely where I learned about it, types of social injustice and what we can do to promote social justice as social workers, so that was my foundation….I grew up in this very small rural town, so there wasn't diversity at all, I didn't have any friends that weren't white until I got to college, because we didn't have anybody at my school who was not white. That's kind of how it was, so I was opened up more to it in college, obviously race, but socioeconomic status, and how people are affected by that. And so I see things don't have to stay the same…(Kerri).

Some participants indicated that it was through direct exposure that social justice came to have meaning:

…when I started working in the field, I kind of was blown away by some of the stories and some of the lifestyles and, that went on and with education learned to understand and accept diversity and not be judgmental and just because of my white middle class way of doing things doesn't mean it's right, that there are lots of ways of achieving the same goal. And that was definitely my social work education that helped me achieve that understanding and become more aware of that on a conscious level (Sienna).

Participant's exposure to client lived experiences highlights not only the hardships caused for others by discrimination but the privilege afforded those with greater advantage:

I deal mostly with African American families and clients. Obviously by not being African American, I've had a lot of education, been educated a lot by the families and clients on their – I don't know how to phrase it – almost their

> disenfranchisement, you know, from the legal system and just from society in general…. I work with urban people, mainly urban people from Kansas City and St. Louis. I know nothing about that type of lifestyle, I have no idea how it feels to grow up in a gang or have people shooting on the street corner every other moment (Teresa).

Participants own exposure to injustice is important to each person's own ethical stance and practice behavior, but also to their ability to use their own experiences to help guide students through the same process. In terms of academic preparation for social justice-promoting practice, there was a wide array of experience reported. Several participants remembered social justice as infused in their social work curriculum, talked about early and often, and tied to practice strategies being taught. Others felt that although concepts related to social justice were provided, tools and strategies for their application in practice were lacking:

> When I was in school it was there, and yes we had our policy class and we had, you know we had the classes, but as far as what that looked like in practice and work, you know, to hear the word and just, OK, I know what that means – but what does that really mean? I never put that together, which I guess makes it hard to talk about it. Most of us do policy, most of us do, you know like cultural competence class but it was not, what did that really look like was never addressed (Regina).

Among those who felt ill-prepared by social work education, participants reported culture shock and a difficult process of working to understand the dynamics of injustice and to manage their own emotional reactions:

> When I did get out in the field, I honestly did not know about all the things that went on. And also I had grown up in a small town in a rural area my whole life and so, I don't know, you know my first experience out of school was in the child welfare system, and I did not realize the amount of sexual abuse that goes on in this world. I mean I remember it was just a huge, kind of eye-opener after that and I struggled with it for awhile before I kind of got used to it. Because, you know, I was just very well protected growing up….It's hard seeing human suffering, it's hard, and sometimes I just want to turn those feelings off and not be upset about it when I go home at night. And I have come a long ways, I truly have. I remember when I was right out of college in the child welfare system, I mean I would come home crying at night, I mean it was traumatic for me (Ruth).

I explored with participants their sense of self-efficacy to engage in identified social justice-promoting practice behaviors. Internal barriers (different from environmentally-based intervening conditions discussed later in my discussion of the model) were identified. For some, these limitations are tied to a missing link in social work education that would connect ideas to actions, as stated by Teresa:

> I don't feel like I learned a lot about the job or the field until you actually got into field practicum work. I had some great instructors, had a great time, learned a lot of stuff in college, um, it didn't seem like it was very practical, I've got to be honest.

Recommendations for social work education are further discussed and provided at the end of the chapter. Participants cited internal barriers including lack of confidence in the political arena; feeling overwhelmed by social issues that are overarching and

entrenched in society; blindness to social justice issues rooted in their own position of privilege; the assumption that others are doing the "big picture" work; learned helplessness based on previous failed efforts; and simply a lack of time and energy to devote beyond regular job tasks. Ruth describes her perspective:

> One of the things that I haven't been real good about and comfortable acknowledging is the lobbying and trying to do things more at a macro level, you know, political level, those kinds of things. I think I am very good at advocating for the individual clients I'm working with and their families, um, I'm one of these people who want to work really hard when I go to work and give everything I have, but I am also one of these people who is very good about finding balance in my life.

Whatever their journey into social work has been, participants chose to work with students to provide critical experiences and guidance rooted in their own wisdom. Rooted in the personal and educational experience of field instructors are their perceptions of social justice and their approach to its integration into daily practices observed by students. We also discussed the meaning and purpose of social work. Participants described the profession itself as intended to help ensure people's needs are met, to empower others, to heal harm, to facilitate fairness within relationships and organizations, and to break down barriers that limit human potential. Participants view social work as a primary and unique vehicle of social justice, in some ways representing the two as one and the same:

> Whenever I think about what I am doing with my life as far as career wise I always think about trying to level the playing field and trying to, that's kind of

what social and economic justice is and just making sure everybody has a fair shot (Amaya).

I think the way that I describe it to people like friends and family is that I am a stepping stone to providing opportunities and opening doors to people who um, are either not able – physically able, mentally able, or um someone else is prohibiting them from accessing the opportunity or the service that they need….why do we do it? No one else is doing it (Naomi).

I would say that we as social workers advocate for clients, we help them find resources and we do our best to empower them to access those resources. We help people achieve fairness and equal justice in whatever situation they're in. Our goal is to make sure that the rights of all the people that we serve are met and respected (Bruce).

I think social work in general is about professionalized compassion. I think it's about how we work within structures and systems to minister to other people's needs and I think oftentimes, but not always, those people are people who don't have a voice or are vulnerable….And I think social work encounters people who tend to be fairly voiceless and brings them to the forefront of our society and says, this is not acceptable, this is not OK. And then most people would give the head nod, you're right, it's not OK, and then we go about our business and I think what social work does is continue that march until something's done (Jodi).

This last quotation harkens to the call for social workers to challenge injustice posed by the NASW *Code of Ethics*. In this light, social work is about helping to ensure

that needs are met and rights protected, but also involves actively seeking to dismantle the barriers that would prevent such access.

Participants view social work as diverse, but also united by ethical concepts including social justice, respect, and the inherent worth and dignity of each individual. Despite the fact that only four of the 17 participants were members of NASW, the *Code of Ethics* holds meaning as a guide and source of common purpose. Jackie stated that, "our profession is built on our *Code of Ethics*", alluding to the critical importance for ethical standards to day-to-day practice. Others also recognized that social work ethics function like second nature once understood and integrated as a foundation:

> I think values and ethics, professional values and ethics are always on the forefront of what I try to do and I guess now that I think about it, it's kind of an ingrained, kind of almost innate sort of thing (Vincent).
>
> I think keeping the social work values and ethics in mind at all times are really important in any aspect of practice and that was something that really drew me to the field is that we had those so spelled out and they were so integrated throughout our course work, I felt like it almost, it just helped make it so much more common place for us, and I don't mean that we took it for granted, but it just became a part of our daily thought process (Tessa).
>
> I mean I will admit I am no longer a member of NASW but I still go by the *Code of Ethics* by all means. And I see that as, it's a resource…I just wasn't getting out of it what it was costing me, I have two children in daycare…(Sienna).

Some participants identified social work as not just a profession but a worldview, one that represents the principles which guide life and transcend workplace roles:

> I believe social work is more than a profession, I believe it is a way of perceiving the world, and in many ways, it's a way of life. We are people who pride ourselves as being part of a long history of, of, supporting and empowering and engaging other people to really live lives that they love. Um, to meet their needs, you know, according to the hierarchy of needs, so whether it's in our personal life or in our professional life, we want to see people get their needs met and feel powerful in their lives and live lives that they love (Jade).
>
> I feel like social work is who I am as a person, it's not just what I do 40 hours a week – 40 plus hours a week – it's who I am as a person, it's part of my make-up and I believe that I was called to be a social worker and it's more than just what I decided to do in college, but I feel like it's a calling, something that I was created to do (Kerri).
>
> If you think you can just go to your office and see clients one after another and go home at five o'clock and that's all you're going to do, you're wrong. You know, part of your job is to advocate for change at higher levels, so I mean, I've said that to students over and over again. You can't hide.…it's almost like a fight that you have to get involved in, if you're a social worker….you've got to live it (Vincent).

With the critical importance of social justice to social work established, I talked with participants about the meaning of the concept for further insight into their approaches to teaching it to others.

Perceptions of the meaning of social justice.

Another facet of pre-conditions according to the model is how participants perceive and define social justice. For many, social work is viewed as a vehicle for

acting on social justice. Naomi illustrates this perspective in stating, "I just think it's the core of what we do, I think that's our, our belief system is that you know, justice is, should be valued and strived for". Despite, or perhaps because of the overarching significance of social justice to social work, the term can be difficult to explicitly define:

> It's probably something that I don't give a lot of thought to, not that that's good, it's probably a bad thing, um, because that's kind of what we do, that's kind of what we fight for each day, if you think about what we, why we're here and doing what we're doing (Sienna).

In working to define social justice, I discussed with each participant what social conditions might underlie *in*justice and what persons or populations are generally targeted. Responses revealed insight into those considered to be disempowered or vulnerable by nature of economic status and membership in certain social groups. Specifically:

> People who are economically disadvantaged, people who have a history of being discriminated against, whether that be, persons of color, women, people that, immigrant status, with various immigrant status…(Jackie).

Participants also brought attention to variety of populations they define as vulnerable or disadvantaged by virtue of life circumstances perhaps less commonly recognized as the purview of social justice efforts. These include rural underserved populations, victims of violence, children, persons with dementia, clients with life-limiting illness, people with addictions, the homeless, and the aged, as elaborated by the following series of quotes:

Social justice is helping to promote equality irregardless [*sic*] of the background – race, culture, sexual identity, economic, you know help promoting equality, or that where the person can develop satisfaction in where they are and what they're doing…. I think a lot of times when that word is mentioned a lot of times we go to, you know, oppression of minorities, which I believe very much so but at the same time, you know, I believe it's also not just seeing minorities as a cultural thing, but whether it's women, or poverty…so broadening that definition of what social justice is. I think we have had a very narrow mindset of what social justice is and I think society still does at times (Regina)

Well, certainly some of the obvious ones…populations at risk, but I think, you know, sometimes, we forget about the quote, unquote, normal kind of person who, because of any kind of life circumstance, could find themselves in need of intervention along the justice domain. So I think a skilled practitioner should always kind of have social and economic justice kind of at the forefront…when they are intervening with anyone…who would fall into the category of population at risk (Vincent).

Regardless of race, color, creed, gender, people who are coming into a health care setting by virtue of their health have a disadvantage. If you have ever been sick or been to a hospital, there is a disadvantage in just being that patient in the bed, so that's a different type of disadvantage that we don't usually talk about but when you start working in a hospital you do see that…you are in a gown, your rear end might be hanging out, you are at a disadvantage, when is the nurse going to respond to your call…(Nina).

Sometimes the environment, the neighborhood, the family lifestyle, being in a smaller community like this you get to know real quick the wrong last name to have…so you already have a strike against you because your last name is this, so you are destined to be a drug dealer or you grew up in this neighborhood, so I know you run with that gang (Sasha).

Trafficked individuals are often not, well they are obviously voiceless, some of them don't speak English and don't have a voice, some of them are children and some of them may speak English and are adults, but are so beaten down physically and emotionally that they don't have a voice….obviously children who are being abused are being treated unjustly and are oppressed….children don't really have a voice, they don't vote…you are taught to respect your elders, and seen and not heard (Kerri).

I would incorporate social justice as far as, you know society really views drug and alcohol abusers as again, another burden, there's no help – there is discrimination there. And I understand why with what we see as the symptoms but really understanding what substance abuse is in order to help versus just throw 'em in jail, you know (Regina).

I've always kind of felt that the aging population is one of the most disadvantaged because a lot of times by that time they are sick…they don't know how to reach out or don't think it's acceptable to reach out, you know and especially people who have dementia and can't, I mean they don't have the cognitive ability to stand up for themselves (Ruth).

Some social workers also discussed vulnerability in terms of the disadvantage and inequity that people experience within or as a result of social work systems and social policy. Chief among these was health care access among the middle class:

> Then we have socioeconomic disadvantages which are not always the poorest of the poor …there is sometimes that disadvantage for people who are middle income because they can't get Medicaid and don't have enough money to get the care that they need so they kind of fall in the middle. …30% of people who have someone with a life-limiting illness have to spend themselves down to poverty level (Nina).

> I think one that is missing in the social work world is not very recognized, uh, is that middle class ability to seek and to receive ongoing medical treatment….they don't have the private pay money…and they also are making too much money to qualify for some of the lower end services that would…actually address it so in those situations they either progress on with those issues which shouldn't happen…the family falls apart, a divorce happens, a child drops out of school, pregnancy occurs, things that shouldn't happen do happen, it was preventable and then all of a sudden now they do qualify at a lower end service…. (Jodi).

Heidi, a long-time social worker in both public and private settings, expanded on ways in which social disadvantage manifests within the child welfare system:

> The thing is you know it doesn't matter whether you are poor or rich, your kids can still be taken into custody but if you do have money or are middle class you are able to afford the expense of attorneys, you are able to afford the cars to drive you or the transportation, things like that (Heidi).

She also shared her perceptions about disempowerment in the context of the client relationship to service providers:

> I brought one of the new workers with me to this meeting and it's an African-American woman, and her big thing is, she goes to these meetings with us, and there's 15 white professional people and then she's the woman sitting at the end of the table by herself, and she has nobody (Heidi).

Vulnerable populations were also identified in the context of public education, specifically:

> …disproportionate minority representation in special education, in alternative education….There's 50 odd kids there…we speak 48 different languages in [this school system] I should have a wide variety of races. The majority of our students at [the alternative school] are African American and so it just doesn't make sense to me (Sasha).

The uniting factor amongst all populations discussed by participants is some type of powerlessness or lack of representation. The issue of power was central to participants' perceptions of injustice and at the crux of their efforts toward promoting social justice. Participants spoke not only of client powerlessness, but recognized how their position as a social worker and in other privileged social categories has endowed them with power:

> …it's a power differential in and of itself when you are in a more therapeutic role with someone … you have to really guard that, I think you have to really tread, be cautious of the role and the power differential you have and it was something that I thought a lot about when I was first working in the field especially because I

worked in mental health and there was such a difference in power….It's very much a part of individual one on one, even, maybe even more so (Tessa).

Powerlessness is viewed as self-perpetuating as well:

There's a kind of entropy that occurs when there is injustice…. I think is a kind of burnout, an apathy – you know, what use? What good is my effort, no one values what I do… and I think some of that sort of then bleeds over, if you will, into our family lives, our home lives, our community lives (Vincent).

I think it increases violence because people that don't have a voice are going to make sure they have a voice in some way….I think when you are oppressed you feel a sense of urgency – either you curl up and die, or you feel a sense of urgency to do something. So I think when we allow it to continue we increase violence and then we decrease the potential that we have for people in the work force or for contributing members in society; people that have all the potential that I do, but don't have the opportunity because they are being oppressed or discriminated against for their color or race or religion... (Kerri).

Building on perceptions of who is affected by social injustice, participants also discussed the *impact* of powerlessness and inequitable social stratification. The impact of injustice, according to participants, may be a lack of access to basic needs, discrimination in employment or housing, social stigma, and the inability to self-determine. At an essential level, injustice may be thought of as any barrier to a person or group's ability to access opportunity and to achieve according to potential. They offered examples of the consequences of injustice for individuals, for example in the context of adoption:

> … personally I don't care if you are gay or straight or anything else in between, I care that you have a heart for children and want to have a family, so my own experience is that there are some gay families that make awesome families… other organizations had problems with gay people so all those cases had to be transferred and I just find that outrageous, disgusting, and horrible.…the family finally gave up not only at adopting this little boy and it broke their hearts, they had already had a number of visits, but they gave up adopting all together. It crushes me to this minute that that happened, that that child lost a family and that that family lost children – for what? It just, it's just outrageous, it's a tragedy (Jane).

In this instance, the clients were impacted not only by the basic experience of being discriminated against, but this prejudice resulted in what can easily be considered a major loss, the loss of the opportunity to become parents. Participants also recognized the broad, societal consequences of unaddressed social injustice:

> You know I am just very sensitive in how I do that but bringing it home and making it *our* problem rather than their problem. Seeing it as a society issue, it's not just a child's issues, that is the social worker's job to work with, that it is a society problem, it's a lot bigger than the child or the family, it's a society problem. It's something that the entire society – because ignorance allows things to, ignorance perpetuates the injustice (Kerri).
>
> Well then we see the increase in needs for those services and they're not there, so you're going to see more homelessness, more criminal action, more medical problems. It's really hard for a lot of people who need services to get medical

> access… so the cost is going to still outweigh the cuts eventually, for the whole society (Regina).
>
> There's crime – as people find other ways to re-establish what's fair, if they are poor and they're without, they rob somebody, figuring if you have money and I don't, I will just take yours and we'll call it even. That's at the individual level, but of course when they're robbing stores or committing fraud, that raises prices for everyone….People who become so stressed that they can't, they feel they can't cope with life… people who just perceive the injustice as so great that there is no remedy besides getting violent (Jackie).

As participants established definitions of injustice and its impact, they also provided insight into the meaning of social justice. Common responses included giving voice to those unheard, the protection of basic human rights, fairness at the interpersonal and institutional levels, balancing power, valuing inherent human dignity, and ensuring equal opportunity. One participant discussed social justice in formal terms:

> I see social justice in three primary ways: First there is the notion of distributive justice which looks at the distribution of a wide variety of societal resources. So for example…we might look at how many men received a certain kind of benefit or service compared to women or minorities or populations at risk, other pops at risk….I think of it also in terms of procedural justice, i.e. the fairness, the quality, the inclusion if you will of policies and procedures for people at risk…. In some cases, institutional policies and procedures can serve to exclude others while including some and so there's a kind of lack of fairness that occurs for people because of procedures that are in place. Finally I look at this notion of

> interactional justice which…relates to the quality of interpersonal exchange that people receive in society (Vincent).

Many emphasized the place of civil and human rights in defining justice, framing it as the absence of barriers that would interfere with rights. In this light social justice means that everyone has:

> …equal rights and equal opportunities to succeed, to live up to their potential in what they were created to do as human beings and regardless of where they were born, where they live, whether it's Africa, or Columbia, or New York, you know, we are all human beings (Kerri).

Some built upon the importance of rights toward an expanded vision of justice that binds rights to responsibility. In this way, equal access comes with equal accountability to the self and to others:

> I also think with social justice there has to be a component of responsibility too, and it's not just my responsibility to treat each person with justice and dignity, every person has responsibility to treat themselves with social justice, so I do think there has to be a personal responsibility (Nina).

Participants envisioned a just world rooted in principles of equitable distribution and realigned priorities where people are valued more than money, as illustrated by the following vision:

> I would have a world in which we do not spend billions of dollars on space exploration and making bombs and other destructive devices, and that we would use that money for the poor and disadvantaged, design programs for them. I would also in a perfect world, indicate that political candidates cannot raise all,

> millions and billions of dollars and use that money to promote them. That money would also be made available for the disadvantaged. I would also make sure that the people who have been successful and are rich to also maintain a commitment to taking care of those less advantaged (Bruce).

In terms of looking at social justice through a distributive lens, participants recognized that it is not necessarily tied to receipt of the same benefits, but rather opportunities unfettered by oppressive structural forces. In the words of Amaya, social justice would mean, "a world where everyone has access to being who they want to be". In this light social justice is about:

> …creating a safe community that works for everyone without, without anyone left behind… people living within the community and it's working for them – and that may not mean they are getting the same, but whatever they are experiencing, it works for them. That they don't have the experience of being apart or left out or neglected…it could be that they are meeting their own needs, but in some way their needs are met within the community, and everybody has that experience (Jade).

> I have thought about that, what is social justice to me…I feel that it is at the core of what social work is, but it's more than that, it's important to how a society functions for everyone but it isn't necessarily a value that is held by everyone…that everyone has an opportunity and a chance to flourish, to have a life, to have a good life for themselves, not necessarily a particular life, but just a chance to have a life (Jane).

Finally, just as participants shared their perceptions of the consequences of injustice, visions for a just world were also offered. They evoked images of a world that values essential human worth for all, for example:

> …that churches would regardless of what religious tenet they are following that they would all accept people regardless of, you know they say their doors are open but they are not open, I guess I think of gays and homosexuals…they are not welcome, still, in this day and age, they are not welcome and I think in an ideal world, everyone regardless of what your race was….people are acting as responsible adults and participating in society, they would be accepted (Nina).

Jane spoke about what justice could mean for a particular category of social work client, youths who age out of the system:

> Social justice for these young teens being turned out…so many homeless people have grown up in foster care and that hasn't changed in 40 years!...Our society does not help these young kids…in a perfect world I would have something in place that kept working with them and kept them on their feet.

This vision embraces the idea of inclusive communities, and our shared responsibility to ensure that those with no power are recognized and supported in having their needs met. Finally, Naomi reflected on not only the benefits to society that the promotion of social justice could bring, but also her thoughts about barriers to this vision:

> I think people would have physical health, their physical health would change. We would have less mental health issues, a more positive experience, happiness, harmonious, people would actually live longer, I feel like violence would decrease – all of the things that oppress would be decreased and all the things that

promote healthy living would increase, and, I really don't think that you would lose your role or your status or your impact on who you are within your organization or your family system or anything. You know people have this fear, I think people have this fear that they are going to lose something – I just see it more as gain. I see everything as we are going to gain so much more…

This quote reflects important insight into social beliefs surrounding power, so often viewed in our American culture not as something to be shared, but to be strived for at an individual level. Such cultural forces will be further discussed in terms of barriers to the promotion of social justice below.

Social work practice strategies that promote social justice.

The final element of pre-conditions to engagement in field instruction represents the actual practice behaviors utilized by participants to promote social justice. Participants brought great insight to the question of "doing" social justice. They provided examples of practice behaviors that contribute to our collective ability to operationalize social justice in practice and in field education. Beliefs and behaviors around social justice are central to understanding the process of social work field education. They are the essence of what students see, hear, experience, absorb, and integrate as they gather the building blocks of their own social work practice. I asked participants to reflect on ways in which their professional choices and actions promote their vision of social justice. Practice behaviors characterized as social justice-promoting ranged from ensuring respectful and equitable interactions in the therapeutic relationship to designing and advocating for policy change.

Many participants spoke of social workers as facilitators of empowerment, advocates, and as voices for the powerless. In other words, participants tend to view themselves as conduits for social justice in whatever setting they practice, again viewing social justice as the essence of social work:

> I think we are not able to empower and work *with* our clients if we don't have social justice as the context, and also if we are not advocating for, we are allowing society to stay in the status quo, nothing is going to change, and it's part of our job in social work to rock things up a little and to, you know, rock the status quo and do what we can to educate others, that the status quo is not working (Kerri).
>
> I think it's standing up against, going up against the grain and I think sometimes the whole of society is going this direction and it really just takes one person saying I don't think that way, that's not OK and then all of a sudden others go, oh you're right, it's not….I think that's what social workers do, I think sometimes that's a piece of it is the willingness to say, I don't think that way to not go with the flow and to know why you're not going with the flow and to be comfortable with that (Jodi).

Again, social work is thought of as a vehicle for acting upon one's value for social justice. Following this idea is the application of essential social work skills as the tools of social justice:

> I think how we advocate, listen to people, respect where they are, hear them out, some of the really good social work skills of attending to people, making them feel like they are heard and trying to help them figure out how they are going to do what they need to do (Nina).

For many, social justice-promoting practice starts with an examination of the self and recognition of one's own place in society's hierarchy of oppression and privilege:

> I think that we are in a position of power whether we're at a hospital or a mental health center or corrections, you can misuse power very easy and maybe even the system kind of promotes that – we are the judges of what's best…(Jane).
>
> I mean how ridiculous would it be for me to let's say, um someone was feeling, you know, or someone was in a situation that I deemed was discriminatory or unjust, you know, I'm not in it, but if I go over there and I assume like, this is the way it needs to be, or you're getting this and that's not right and let me do something about it or even just have an opinion about it without actually talking with them about their experience with the situation, I mean maybe I'm doing the same thing that the you know, perpetrator of social injustice was doing....we have to have our own agendas in check, we have to have our own reactions in check, which is hard because we wouldn't be in this profession if we weren't personally drawn to it, or personally invested in the process or personally impacted by what we're perceiving as injustice but that totally has to be at least identified (Jade).

In this light, self-awareness and a solid belief in self-determination are important prerequisites to the practice of social justice. Helping influential others understand the dynamics of privilege and oppression was also noted, as well as how social work serves sometimes to fill in the gaps created by lack of power:

> Our board president is the president of [a large corporation], and he's always saying that, when his kids got in trouble, he would just go to the police station, talk to whoever, call in a favor, you know, throw some money somebody's way,

> you know, and his kids would be fine and he's like, you know, I realize that every kid does not have a father or…their father doesn't have the money or whatever to do that, so just trying to be the support system that they need to facilitate their success, whatever that is for them (Amaya).

Much of what participants described in discussing social justice-promoting practice centered on the empowerment of clients through education and the sharing of professional knowledge and power. For instance, Teresa stated that, "especially working with the court system here, it's so important with these incompetent to stand trial clients. Some of them have no idea what their rights are". There was recognition of ways in which systems may serve to disempower and the imperative of shaping social services that will work for clients. For instance, in child welfare:

> …what we do as a society is we take children away because you haven't met our standard, but we haven't done very much to help you meet that standard, and so we put kids in temporary settings where they get bounced around and screwed up in ways that were way worse than what they started and that is an injustice for all of us because those are people who could have been productive or could have had a better life and a better future maybe if you just help that family pay for housing or help them get that education, whatever it was they needed to really find their way out of it (Jane).

Following is another example of working to empower clients within the child welfare system that can marginalize or disempower clients:

> Whoever has the most money wins….I mean, even when we go to court, and the lawyers are in these nice suits and I tell my clients, dress up. Wear something

> nice….And you can tell especially when a kid goes into court and they have a suit on and the judge goes, do you have something to say, and they are like, yeah, I do. So we always try to empower our kids too, go in, this is your court case, you need to say what you want. And if you disagree with something you need to disagree (Heidi).

In this example, the social worker is in a position to share insight into a complex system, to expose ways in which systems create injustice, and to equip clients to function successfully within them. The idea of equalizing power by building client knowledge and strengths is complemented by the desire to be where the client is as well, to repudiate expert status and an approach to professionalism that requires objective separation:

> I'm not a believer that just sitting in your office and having someone come to you one hour a week is all that effective. I think being with them as much as you can in their own environment and walking as much as you can in their shoes – you know, taking the bus to the social security office and waiting in line with them is much more powerful for both parties, the worker and the client, than having clients come to you…. I am a firm believer in that, I don't care how many letters you have after your last name (Jade).

Other approaches to client empowerment were rooted in seeking avenues to enhance client voice. Social workers in the study spoke of supporting clients in having their perspective heard by others:

> …how can we be a part of change for our clients to become more active and have a voice for themselves, because we can't do it just all on our own? We are not experiencing the oppression that a schizophrenic homeless person is experiencing,

> we are just not…how can I help that person who's being oppressed really feel like he or she has a voice?...if we had more services to provide for our clients that that case managers role could be that kind of social injustice person, educational person that can kind of teach them, OK, you are not feeling like you have a voice, you are feeling very oppressed, you are not getting all of your needs met, you don't feel like you have equal opportunities, so what can you do? (Naomi).
>
> We might kind of try to empower that individual, help that individual to try to develop voice so that she can impact change in her own world….or we may ask them for permission to advocate on their behalf at the next level of the institution to try to eliminate this inequity or lack of fairness. I mean if I'm discriminated against or something's unfair and I never say anything about it as an individual, then it can kind of go on that way for a long time. So voice helps in two ways: it empowers the individual, and it can help the individual affect change in their own way (Vincent).

Participants also discussed specific mechanisms employed by their agencies which serve to facilitate client participation and representation in terms of their own needs, but also at the level of guiding policy and practice:

> We have a policy council that is client-based… they are pretty intricately involved in our organization and I think that that's really a very, it's a great idea that isn't used a lot….We also do a program here that teaches both staff, like our front line staff and the consumers, adult parents, how to be community leaders, how to sit on boards, Robert's Rules, all of that stuff with the hopes that in their communities they will take more of a leadership role on the boards of education,

> on charity boards, and feel more – we try and help build the confidence level through giving them the information they need (Jodi).
>
> As part of the advisory board, we had one a few years ago and there was, like a lot of clients involved in that… we always do kind of evaluations and stuff and ask for their feedback. We have them speak, like we're going to take one of our, my clients, to actually talk to the committee that's looking at the budget cuts…. I think there's more we could do and that just kind of makes me think, oh yeah, we should do more like that (Regina).

When participants shared their thoughts on "doing" social justice, they talked about working to achieve fair and equitable outcomes for clients, including policy change. Examples include the development of legislation meant to protect vulnerable persons and fair policies to guide agency work with clients; education for the community and other professionals on social justice issues; ensuring that basic needs are met and keeping people safe from harm; consciousness-raising with clients and client empowerment for social action; and competency-building for social workers. Following is one participant's reflections on policy and its place in the pursuit of social justice:

> Where I got involved in the policy piece of it is because I felt like that was a really great way to impact that and kind of equalize the power differentials that exist. For sure I think power is the ultimate, the age old haves vs. have-nots and that's overly simplified, I know that, but I mean it's been the source of strife for generations throughout our history…one of the things I feel is so valuable that kind of helps to I don't know, alleviate that to some degree is policy, I am a believer in policy. I really feel like social workers have a responsibility to know

about policy and advocate for policy that is equitable, that is social justice oriented (Tessa).

Several others discussed the role of the social worker as a bridge for those with the power to shape the policy that then shapes both social work practice and client realities. In the following examples, participants discuss the importance of their role as interpreter of policy and its potential impact either as new bills are introduced or after statutes take effect:

> I've gone to Jeff City numerous times and had conversations with legislators, especially if there's specific issues, bills coming down that is going to harm kids or people in general and you know, oftentimes they are living in their white, upper class box and they don't see the effects that this could have or they get this pie in the sky idea (Kerri).

> The social injustice I saw I guess was just all of a sudden, boom, their benefits were gone, literally overnight. You would have, we had pregnant women crying to me, "please don't make me go out...I know I'm going to use" I mean they're telling me "I'm not ready, I will use"….I threw on my suit and my heels and ran down to the capitol and walked door to door, um whether they were my legislator or not…. I got my numbers and went marching (Sienna).

> There's laws out there that if they have a drug conviction that they can't receive um housing or Medicaid or some of those things that just perpetuates the cycle of poverty and um, perpetuates being stuck in, you know if a person is trying to do something and can't access or can't get help to get up off their feet, the pulling up by the bootstraps mentality, they're going to just stay stuck in the cycle, and so

> that's part of what we have to do and to educate, educate the community, educate other agencies, um, just educate people in general (Regina).

The importance of educating not only policy makers but the community at large was emphasized by many as a necessary task in the fight for social justice. Attempts to alter the environment within which social work functions is one tactic utilized in the broad continuum of practice behaviors described. Along with this, participants recognized that their work is not easily categorized as either micro or macro, but that they may take up a variety of tasks necessary to address client needs. It is of note that participants pointed out the importance of social workers' ability to intervene at whatever level is necessary to challenge injustice. In describing her efforts toward social justice within the domestic violence sphere, Jackie stated:

> I work at the micro level and try and help people gain access to various things like giving referrals, etc. Also, by helping shape their perspective, so if they're feeling powerless, if they're feeling that the system is unjust, helping them find ways that they can be empowered essentially to take care of themselves in our current society. We do some community education as an agency, kind of the mezzo level of informing communities that this is an issue in our community, this is what it looks like, this is what you can do about it, this is what is being done, this is what still needs to happen. So for example, we will train police officers, either new cadets or standing officers and talk with them about the importance of the appropriate response on their part to victims of domestic violence and to the perpetrators. Because of the ripple effect once again, so we are hoping we are making an impact on the way that victims in general are treated. Then at the

> macro level, we try and keep aware of the policies; we don't advocate as an agency, but we do ask our volunteers and our interns. We do advocate that people keep abreast of policy issues, write to their senators, policy-makers.

Ruth also recognized the value to social justice of working across intervention points:

> I think both of those things are very important because I can advocate at an individual and family level but unless some of those laws change or those regulations change, then those things continue to affect my clients and I *know* that, and so um I mean I think both of those things are just hugely important (Ruth).

These quotes highlight participants' understanding of the need to consider and target the many factors that contribute to oppression. The importance of context and a person-in-environment perspective was also recognized in terms of client change:

> …I thought, why am I standing out here in the woods working with this boy on his profanity when I'm going to send him right back home to an impoverished situation that he can't lick in the first place and he's got a mom who is, you know, a heroin addict and a dad who isn't around. Tell me what sense that makes in our world (Jodi).

Client consciousness-raising is one element of social work practice that is structurally informed, or that takes into account the societal and systemic forces that shape and support injustice. Two participants discussed work with men who batter their intimate partners. The work involves the deconstruction of socialized beliefs about gender inequality and a focus on those accountable for an injustice, as elaborated here:

> MEND is our group for men, it's a long-term group for men who are batterers. And that is a type of social justice that we focus on because it's a tough population that not a lot of people want to work with, but if they don't get help they are not going to change their pattern and their behavior and we find that really important (Sienna).
>
> …we are constantly focused on injustice, oppression, in all areas, what society's messages are to our boys, to our girls, to you know, just in general the hierarchy of how our system is set up and how our families and communities and cities and towns and states and how all of those things are run and how it influences our behaviors and our actions…. I think we don't talk a lot about, in individual therapy or group-type therapies about how did this come into being? And what do you think society, how do you think society has a part in this and how can we better educate ourselves so that we are not so oppressive to others….it gives me good insight about what messages are still out there and how injustice, oppression is being experienced by other people (Naomi).

As important as just outcomes are to social workers' efforts, participants emphasized equally the value of fair and respectful interpersonal exchange. Strategies that embody this idea included honest use of self and authenticity in the client relationship; taking a holistic view of clients; use of critical thinking; standing in solidarity with clients; valuing the client as expert; constant mindfulness about one's own social status; use of person-first language; and modeling socially just actions for others in shared professional settings. This last practice is illustrated in the following:

…Often that we are modeling that behavior for other people in the hospital and then also helping as a consult service, in palliative care that we are going back and talking with the other physicians and nurses that are caring for these folks and educating them so we are not just keeping it insulated with us but then we are trying to model and teach other people (Nina).

Participants stressed strongly the importance of demonstrating respect for others regardless of social status or group membership, past history, or reason for social work involvement. In this way, social justice is achieved by acting out the values that define it.

… I believe that everyone is, should be afforded personal rights and when I think of rights I think of not just when we talk about civil rights, I really think more in a personal framework and what I do here, every person no matter who they are, what their background is, is that they should be afforded dignity just for the fact that they are human beings. I have patients that sometimes come to us and they are shackled to the bed because they are coming from the prison system and …I still have to treat them as that person in the bed and they are a person above anything else (Nina).

Participants in this study come from a variety of practice settings and work across the continuum of social work intervention. Those who reported that they engage mainly in direct practice identified ways in which social justice manifests, for instance Kerri noted that, "even therapy can promote social justice". Amaya also spoke to the idea of acting out social justice in daily interactions:

We seem to make the most change when we have been able to establish relationships with the people that we, that we work with. Now we are really big

> on, when the kids come in, you know, saying hi to them, acknowledging them, you just don't get that here… when you're a teenager – and don't be a Mexican teenager or a Black teenager, then you are like not even there, and so we have had parents, numerous parents say, my kid's been going up there for three days and his attitude has changed…they come in, they see African American people doing something positive, we are all acknowledging them and speaking to them and respecting them…

I also asked participants about the connection of cultural competence to the promotion of social justice in social work practice as the two concepts are often intertwined within the literature. Cultural competence was framed as one facet of an overall repertoire of social justice promoting strategies, or as stated by Sienna, "part of social justice is being able to provide that level of competence". Participants discussed the relationship of culture to social justice:

> I often think of cultural competence in terms of just firstly embracing differences. I mean, just acknowledging that the person who walks in the door will largely be quite different from me, sort of valuing that different from a variety of levels. Language, sort of family patterns, decision making styles, economics, and on and on and on. And I think sort of just starting with that person in terms of who they are and what they represent and how they want to do things. And recognizing that I may not understand all of it, but that if I'm willing to help, if I can be accepting, if I'm willing to help, that may go a long way toward affecting change in that client's life (Vincent).

> I know that other people might not think of it as social justice, but if you have someone of a different culture and they have completely different beliefs about death and dying than what you are used to…. we have helped carry those out in the midst of this hospital and to where at first someone might look at us like, well why can't they die on Friday? Or why can't they die on Saturday, or it's like, well you know that is a Sabbath to them and we really want to respect that and it's really important to respect someone's religious beliefs so I think again it's all part of social justice, for us it includes end of life. The thing that I do tell students as well as actually my team - which my team is doctors, nurse practitioners, and a chaplain, to remind people too…we should be aware of what the culture might be, but we also have to remember …it's not textbook…. It's like saying, well every Irish Catholic is going to act this way, well no, they are not….the best thing you can do is ask, just ask…tell me about where there are cultural issues or ritual you would like us to be aware of, because I don't know! I don't, I can't even pretend to know, so…. I think to me, we run the risk of cookie cutter and just assuming that because their face sheet says a certain religion or ethnicity that that's how you are going to treat them (Nina).

Here Nina challenges a common approach to cultural competence that frames social groups as largely homogenous and predictable; echoed as well by Jade:

> I think it's totally dangerous and I remember that in school because that's how it was approached – I had a chapter on the Hmong people, I had a chapter on Cambodian refugees, here's my chapter on African-Americans, Irish-Americans….I think it's great to be educated, but to take it with a grain of salt and

> really, but again, treating each person as if they are a culture unto themselves… cultural competence isn't about education or knowledge, it's about a way of perceiving with an open heart and an open mind and a way of relating with, with, with compassion and with honest curiosity (Jade).

In this light, social justice is best served by a balance of sensitivity and knowledge about diverse ways of being with humility and recognition that each individual must be treated as such, free from imposed categories. Not doing so would perhaps result in further injustice if clients feel misunderstood, stereotyped, and disempowered by the assumptions of others. The impact of culture was emphasized not just in terms of direct practice, but also in terms of creating fair policy. Again, client involvement is key to the ability to base social work on accurate insight into its effect for those we wish to serve:

> I just think there are a lot of things like that that when we are working on policy and cultural competence is important because you have got to be thinking about these other sideline ways in which the policy that you are working on could affect multiple people almost the very people you are trying to protect (Tessa).

The pre-conditions element of the model helps to establish a necessary grounding in the "what" of social justice, as well as the "how" of practice application. This background also provides insight into the lived experiences of participants around their own personal and professional journeys related to social justice. With an understanding of these pre-conditions, we can focus on the strategies that field instructors use to create learning experiences that will then form the basis for students' own social justice beliefs and practice behaviors.

Field Instruction Strategies

With an understanding of participants' ideas about social justice and how they enact it in daily social work practice, I was able to explore field instruction strategies meant to communicate these concepts to students. I was able to identify three distinct strategies utilized by field instructors: 1) facilitating exposure; 2) role modeling; and 3) focused discussion. I will describe and provide participant responses that illuminate these strategies. Each facet contributes to the experiential learning process that is the essence of field education. These strategies are not representative of *student* learning processes, but the process of *teaching* a value and its application in practice. As depicted in the field instruction strategies represented in my theoretical model, the three facets overlap to create an active interplay of experience, reflection, integration, and application.

Facilitating exposure.

Across the board, participants discussed the importance of exposing students to injustice and to clients representing diverse characteristics and experiences. They made connections between their own social work education and strategies used with students as field instructors. Exposure serves several key purposes in field instruction. On a basic level, it enhances student social workers' competence around service provision and community resources:

> I think exposure is very important. Um, I am very glad that I had the exposure that I had, like I said when I volunteered at food pantries. It wasn't something we had to do for school, it was just on my own, but that really um, opened my eyes to

lots of things….For example, if you've never seen the inside of a homeless shelter, do you have any idea of where you are referring this woman to? (Jackie).

In this example, the instructor recognizes the need for students to have awareness of resources for practical purposes, but also to enhance empathy around client experiences. Jackie also described the importance of empathy development through exposure for students working with survivors of domestic violence:

> And I think there is also the, part of the ignorance is, well, who are those people? Unless they have known someone or experienced it themselves, they are able to say, well there is something wrong with those people. And because there is something wrong with them, they don't feel inclined to help them.

Several other participants also emphasized the importance of insight that may only be gained through direct experience:

> There is a book knowledge piece to this, but when it comes down to practice, it's about experiencing, doing it, but ultimately meeting people where they're at, and if you are at some lofty place, then you will never be where people are at (Jodi).
>
> I definitely like it when they, when they go out there and take the bus and ride with the young people to pick up job applications. I mean, I know, to me that was the best learning experience was sitting in that social service office in downtown L.A. helping, waiting for somebody's number to be called to try to get their SSI back on, and how they were treated, but I didn't even get, I didn't know, I still don't know how they were treated, I only know how they were treated while I was standing next to them, you know?…Go live in their world, go listen to their music, walk the two miles that they walk to their GED class… (Jade).

> Well, we deal with a number of families and patients who are disadvantaged and through that experience of working with those families and understanding pressures and issues that they have to deal with is the way that I help social work interns learn about social justice. In other words, I want them to see it first hand and then we'll have discussions after we meet with patients and families and talk about the issues that we determined and talk about the barriers that the families or patients were facing and things like that….I've had students become very aware of the barriers that some federal and state agencies put up that make it very difficult for the poor and disadvantaged to do well. I guess most recent on was how many clients lost Medicaid and what a difficult position that put them in. So yeah definitely, as much as possible I encourage students to advocate for change if needed…to get involved in some kind of political work so they can see that process going on also (Bruce).

Exposure allows students to witness discrimination and other manifestations of oppression, making real what may have only before been read about or discussed on an abstract level. This is the essential purpose of field education – to connect theory to practice. Exposure provides opportunities to gain insight and empathy into the lived experiences of clients and the impact of injustice. It also allows students to experience, confront, and learn to manage their own biases and emotional reactions when faced with real-world injustice. Jodi recognized that the discomfort students feel during the practica: "I think all of them encounter that sense of, I didn't know it could get this bad, or this is really painful". Facing injustice and seeking avenues for its confrontation are critical

elements of the empowerment process that can take place for students, although it can be difficult:

> That is usually, at the very beginning, they sit through forensic interviews and then they find out that very few cases are prosecuted. And they feel very outraged, and upset, and tears, and we have to deal with that and we talk about that as a social justice issue. It's a really, I feel like I, because of the nature of my agency, and my own personal journey, I feel like I am able to address that fairly well (Kerri).

> One of the things that I did do with my MSW student was we, I had her work with me on a media literacy training that I did, one of the components of that was how the media, how the industry, the tobacco industry targets minority populations ….I have tried to weave social justice into my work….when students, young people see that they are a little outraged and I think it's important to see that.…I always encourage people to search out things for themselves, but I don't think there's anything wrong with kind of planting the seed to get them thinking about it, blowing the whistle if you will (Tessa).

Several participants discussed facilitating exposure to clients in a targeted way that places the person first; in other words, they work to challenge assumptions through contact with clients on a human level, or as Heidi stated, "just sit down and ask them what their story is, get their perspective, and then come back and look at the file". An additional example further illuminates this strategy:

> A lot of the students that I've taken really are, you know, middle class Caucasian people from Missouri, and aren't used to working with these clients any more

than I was when I began and so really throwing them into the mix….their very first assignment is I introduce them on our ward and…and I make them play spades for half the day, that's all they get to do….Now they can, they talk during it, they, you know, they get to hear what's on the ward around them when they do it. But the point is, they're stuck on that ward and they are protected, you know an aide is standing there with them. But they get to know people personally, and that's the whole point of it….Then after that I say, we process and say, "what did you learn from those clients? Give me your impressions of those clients"….I teach them to learn about people on a personal level, not from the description of what they've done or what they've been accused of (Teresa).

Role modeling.

Role modeling was identified as a primary tool for field-based instruction focused on the social justice goals of social work. Participants indicated that when opportunities arise in practice, they are able to demonstrate through their own work how students can promote social justice. Role modeling can provide students examples of socially just practice behaviors as well as permission to apply social work tools such as the use of self. As Jade shared, "I let my humanity show so much, I want them to show their humanity to our kids".

As Kerri stated, the student is often the field instructor's "shadow", witnessing daily the behaviors of practitioners that I have described above. As social workers model respectful and equitable behavior in the workplace for other professionals, it provides an additional layer to this strategy as well, and helps students begin to envision themselves

as social justice advocates. Modeling the promotion of fairness in areas that students may not recognize initially as justice-related was also mentioned:

> …my front line staff really don't make a lot of money, they are the experts on my clients, and I know that. I need to keep in their good graces, I can't be an administrator from afar, and I am pretty high up in the hierarchy. However, what I ended up doing three years ago is I started working PRN as a security aide, so I worked alongside them doing every single thing that they do, there's not one thing that they do that I can't do…. I make all of my students go through the exact same thing I do….They will be dumping a bedpan. I don't care that social workers don't do that. They need to realize that you're not any better and not any worse than anybody else. That you will be doing everything because you're here to serve the client if that's what serving the client means (Teresa).

Here, Teresa is providing the student with a model of the social work administrator that embraces equity in the workplace and that recognizes the contributions of the total environment for client wellbeing.

Role modeling also occurs through field instructor self-disclosure around the process of learning about injustice and how to respond in the social work context. As students become exposed to the realities of injustice as they manifest in violence, poverty, racial discrimination, lack of service access, etc., they grapple with the meaning of justice and their place in its pursuit. By providing students with concrete examples as well as relating their own experiences in practice, participants facilitate professional socialization:

> I think I try to model my beliefs and so in my, I take my students with me to a client's home, I take, we talk about what we are seeing and so forth in the car and the way back or I have them participate in our parent training class and part of parent training is really modeling a way to deal with the problems that they are likely to experience….I always try to relate my experience of change over the past 40 years in terms of our practice with children and families, what it was like when I started out as a social worker and how society has changed for our clients, for our children and families, so you know I try to be really open about that (Jane).
>
> I think a lot of interns, and I was at some point, stuck in the white middle class box…. I think being able to see the bigger picture and being able to understand what your own personal beliefs are and how they correspond or collide with our values and ethics as social workers, and figuring how we are going to deal with those things when they do collide….that's something that a lot of interns deal with….various interns that have had conflicts and sometimes not even religious beliefs, it may be, you know, a social belief like one girl kind of grew up like me, small rural town, not much diversity and really like, anti-welfare, anti-government handouts and that's how I grew up too and so I really had to find a way to look at the big picture rather than, "get off your lazy butt and work" – that's how I was taught and obviously as social workers we see it is much bigger than that (Kerri).

In this way, use of one's own journey as a model helps students to develop self-awareness around their own limitations and biases as normal, and to approach integration as a challenging but valuable process. Participants also applied self-reflective role modeling to encourage student self-care as the exposure process unfolds:

…. when you are new to the field, I remember my first few years in the field it was hard for me to separate things, I think it's important to learn that earlier because we will maybe see less burnout….I encouraged her to take the weekend and really step away from the work if she could, if there was any way to separate herself out, is there anything you really enjoy doing…I even tried to have her articulate what maybe she could do, didn't want it just to end with let me tell you what I do…(Tessa).

Role modeling is not about imitation, but integration of behaviors that can be utilized for the promotion of social justice. As reflected here, an important weapon in the fight against injustice is caring for oneself and maintaining the ability to be a part of the struggle. Although some of what I have termed role modeling occurs through instructor-student interaction, it is the use of one's own journey as a model for students makes these examples distinct from use of discussion as explicated below.

Focused discussion.

Finally, participants all highlighted the use of focused discussion with students as a fundamental tool of field instruction around social justice. Supervision is not only a required component of field education, but provides essential opportunities for students to ask questions and for instructors to evaluate their progress. Within the broad scope of supervision, I identified that participants make special effort to discuss occurrences related to client diversity, experiences of oppression, and social worker efforts for client empowerment. By rooting student learning in the lived experiences of clients (first facilitated through exposure), instructors are able to highlight justice concerns directly for students:

> … [we] talk about what they are seeing in terms of maybe barriers to treatment, things that their clients are experiencing in their lives that are oppressive or control or a power differential or anything like that so we kind of focus on that part (Naomi).

In addition to exposing students to client realities, they use discussion to help orient new social workers to the broad environment within which we work. To paint a realistic portrait of social work in the wider professional context, participants were able to bring to light some potential hurdles for social justice efforts:

> I will ask, what were your thoughts about that? What did you think about the interaction, was there something you would have done differently… so I think the constant sort of one on one, I think that's been and I hope, some of the good feedback that I get about this practicum is that they do get a lot of chance to talk about the different patients and families and situations and some of is not even about the patients and families, some of the a ha stuff is about how doctors, nurses and other staff act you know, oh I can't believe that person said that! (Nina).
>
> I try to talk a lot about stuff that, barriers that you want to see when you are helping people and how to get around them and, I try to talk a lot about how to work with different, different people that you are going to run into, other social workers, not the clients, but I think people get really like, how do I deal with clients, clients, clients, and you definitely need that, but you also have a bunch of, I have the least problems with my clients and the most with other professionals and other agencies (Amaya).

In these examples, the field instructor is facilitating a deeper understanding of not just client needs and dynamics, but of being a social worker and promoting social justice in a sometimes difficult environment.

Focused discussion appears to stem from both naturally-occurring and purposefully facilitated experience, allowing the student to build greater client sensitivity as well as self-awareness. In the following examples, participants talk about their efforts toward student self-reflection:

> …I do encourage our interns to be aware, to notice when they are having an emotional reaction, getting mad at a client on the phone or feeling frustrated with someone and that is something we will discuss in their supervision…. be on the lookout for it, here's what it looks like. And then when you do find it, come to supervision and say, wow, I really did find myself being frustrated. OK, good, that's great awareness, let's look at it (Jackie).
>
> These kids come in here and they don't know anything and so, try to brace them….people are going to tell you things, and you're just going to be out of your realm, and you're going to hear somebody tell you about them molesting somebody. You just have to keep your face straight and agree like you hear it every single day, then go to the car and ball…I remember last semester I had a girl who was higher economic status and still lived at home with her parents and was very, very religious. So we sat down and I said tell me a little bit about your background and I said, um, you know, when people are telling you their issues and their problems you have to put everything aside and think of where they are. Have them tell you how they got there. You've got to put yourself in their

predicament, in their shoes, and I said, you're going to think, oh my god, I can't believe that, I can't believe she didn't eat for a week, or whatever, or can't believe they did that to their kids (Heidi).

It comes up every time….I've been lucky that I've had students who can recognize it and have felt open enough to bring that to supervision, like let's talk through that, that they've struggled with different values that the client has and that its conflicting with their own so, and how to work through that and how to try to make sure that that's not overflowing in their therapy…. I've had students who come from larger cities and dealing with the rural population has kind of been an eye opener…. I would say the most common is cultural difference. They are working with someone, um, you know, who is Wiccan, and they don't know much about Wicca and that religious aspect and so they're struggling because they have their perceptions, they come into supervision like, "I've got this witch in my office" and I'm like, "slow down, let's look it up, let's see what it's about" and so they're like, "oh! Not at all what I thought it was about!"….so working through with them, you've got your preconceived judgment about what something is, and it's really not what you thought it was at all (Sienna).

They come to me and say things like I am starting to realize how I am coming from a certain paradigm and to see things objectively….don't even impose your expectations on what an adolescent should be on these kids. I mean do you, you know, then they get present to what other people have been though and realized, oh crap, and I tell them, imagine if you had to go through all that, would you have the coping skills, would you have all the strengths that you have now? (Jade).

> I talk about that a lot: meeting them where they're at, not where you're at….When I'm hearing frustration, when I'm hearing um, some kind of transference or I'm hearing just you know, burn out or I don't know what to do, I think sometimes that's what's coming into play is the differences in, this is what I think should happen, this is where they're at, that provides an opportunity to kind of build on that self-awareness and build on re-framing, you know, a lot of times using re-framing for understanding (Regina).

Due to the intense, emotional and sometimes personal nature of injustice, it is imperative for students to be provided the opportunity to debrief, reflect, share concerns, and integrate experiences with their existing worldview:

> …kind of talking more about bringing it back to the client situation – well, what could be, these are the issues, they don't have a job, they are on welfare, they might become homeless, let's look at some other situations that could be going on, let's look at the bigger picture of why this could be besides just they are lazy and don't want to work….(Kerri).

Participants also utilize focused discussion to make connections between social work theory or classroom learning and practice. As this is the primary goal of experiential learning, these connections are vital:

> Then when we come together and we talk I try to keep people's focus on those objectives that we set out from the very beginning. And I try to tie it in, I am not as good as I would like to be, but tying it in to some of those um, things that they have learned in the social work program….I try to take some of those kind of examples that they have from their class. And then I also try and bring out the

> um, you know, person-in-environment and the micro, mezzo, try to use some of that same language, I think that's really important (Jodi).
>
> …when I get a new intern I always sort of go back to the *Code of Ethics* and look at it and see what kind of changes have been made….it's one thing to read the *Code of Ethics* and say, oh yeah, I'm all right, I do that. Are we really doing it? Are we sort of questioning and kind of facilitating a discussion about how is that really going to play out for you when you are in a therapy session? (Naomi).

Field instruction strategies are undergirded by participants' own journeys in social work and informed by their daily practice behaviors. They are then enacted through student exposure to injustice, modeling justice-promoting actions at all levels of potential client intervention, and focused discussion aimed at the integration of values (personal and professional) and knowledge (from theory to practice).

Intervening Conditions

Empowerment theory provided a framework for my examination of the field instruction process that extends beyond description of what social justice means and looks like in practice. This lens allows for an examination of intervening conditions that serve to either empower or disempower one's ability to successfully pursue a goal. In this case, the theoretical framework served as a mechanism for revealing forces that enable or impede social justice-promoting practice, and in turn, field instruction strategies rooted in that practice. I have framed intervening conditions as *environmental* in nature, manifesting as either supports (conditions that help to facilitate social justice efforts) or barriers (conditions that prevent or minimize engagement in justice-promoting practice). I conceptualized internal supports in terms of participants' perceptions of social justice

and self-efficacy around its promotion as described above. Intervening conditions viewed as supportive were mostly agency-based, while barriers were rooted in agency, interdisciplinary, professional, and societal contexts. An examination of profession-in-environment is critical to fully understand how participants perceive the ability to practice and instruct students within a social justice framework.

Environmental supports.

Profession-level support for social justice is evident in participants' discussion of the contributions of social work education, policies, and standards to their work. They discussed using the *Code of Ethics* as a touchstone for practice, and being guided and inspired by being a part of a profession with a legacy of progressive social change. Other facilitative factors for socially just practice derived from the agencies in which participants practice. These included like-minded colleagues; administrators who trust and value social workers and who are willing to stand behind their decisions; agency culture that is open to constant improvement, innovation and change; and policies and procedures that are in line with social justice-related values.

Working within an agency that promotes a mission that is in line with social justice goals was cited as a major facilitative factor, as reflected by the following:

> I refer back to my agency mission a lot and one of the last sentences in it is "will perform quality services regardless of their ability to pay"….that is like the keystone of our agency….I have people on my sliding scale which means that they have no insurance and they are seeing master's level therapists who have been in the field for over a decade. And I think that's fair, I think they deserve to

have that quality of treatment. So you know I think that's something that I definitely practice on a daily basis (Sienna).

I believe that's what encompasses social work as a whole and I think our agency um, really fits the social work model….it just really fit for me that it's not just you know an internal disease or disorder, it's lots of things in the community, in families, in organizations, and that just really fit for what I've seen in different um, different places, personal and professional (Regina).

Also within our agency I think, I really think we do a good job of trying to be an open door – we have sliding scale funding, we are the only agency in town that has sliding scale funding. We don't turn anybody away (Naomi).

… they are very um proactive here about poverty and very idealistic. Um, which uh, it is idealistic, but it is also been off of our agenda since probably JFK, which is, we want to eradicate poverty. And who has had that on their agenda, you know? But, I find myself saying, ok, why not? Because the other alternative is if we say that is so big we aren't going to work on it at all. It's a very positive agency and they really, really work hard in a lot of different ways and so I am very proud of this organization's ability to stay positive and I have worked in lots of different organizations and places and it's just nice to be in an org right now that really is very um partnering with clients and not we're up here and clients are down here (Jodi).

Other facilitative agency features were also noted, such as the availability of interpretation and cultural services within a large facility, and coworkers or supervisors who respect social workers and support their efforts. For example:

> I don't think that they stifle my creativity and I know they don't stifle my ideas because they trust that they know where my heart is, where my values are…. I do mostly things that don't cost a lot of money for the org so I think that's another reason they don't put the squelch on anything I do. Most of my results have been very, very positive, so I have a good track record and their trust in me is built with that also (Teresa).
>
> I again think that's something that students really find, hopefully empowering to them so that they know they can have a voice when they go out… we are all encouraged to speak up in our team meetings, we have a physician who is our attending, really respects social work (Nina).

The second quote here points to the benefits of a supportive agency environment for effective social work practice as well as for student empowerment; in other words how agency-based supports enable field instructors to model practice behaviors.

Environmental barriers.

A number of factors at the agency, interdisciplinary [explain], and community or societal levels were viewed by participants as hindrances to the promotion of social justice in practice. Additionally, participants discussed elements of the social work profession itself that are perceived as obstacles. One agency-based barrier had simply to do with the nature of social work as highly demanding:

> Burnout, mmm-hmm, I think that and I think the daily grind, I mean, working in a, a high crisis, volume, high volume, crisis, lots of crisis happening here….by the time the day is over, you, you know all you want to do is go home and take care of yourself and relax and so those ideas never really have the time to be

> fostered…. I can make a phone call and say, this client needs this, but to go beyond that gets kind of stuck sometimes…. we always have these ideas of what we want to do but in ourselves also finding the barriers, or fears, or um complacency even that keeps us from going further than the micro steps we take (Regina).

The restrictions placed upon nonprofit organizations that limit political advocacy were described as a limitation for some efforts meant to respond to injustice. For-profit organizations can also pose major challenges for social work efforts focused on challenging inequity as agencies may be reliant on referrals and reimbursement from outside entities that may or may not share the social justice orientation:

> Probably the thing, and again, it's not so much directly spoken, but because we are a business and we are trying to grow our business…there's a lot of expectations about growing the business, having the census, that kind of thing and it's not spoken, but we, we have to work, you know with nursing homes and with doctors and that kind of thing and there are times that you want to advocate more for the patient, but you have to be very careful how you do it because you tick them off, and they don't want to refer to you and you are in trouble and then it's not good…. So sometimes that is a little conflicting if there's something I'm seeing that I don't agree with, you know, that's hard (Ruth).
>
> …the business does better when people are coming in and going out of the hospital not when they are staying, so there's a culture of, we've got to move patients through, we've got to move 'em through, we've got to move 'em through, so um that fast-paced sort of thing (Nina).

Public relations was also cited as a barrier to taking action judged by social workers as important to working with clients toward meeting needs and protecting rights:

> …if I was to start doing anything you have to have permission, even like to have a fundraiser for our building, I have to have permission from my supervisor, who has to call her supervisor and then, what appearance does that give that we are not meeting your needs and that's not the opinion we want people to have, so let's not do that (Sasha).

Most participants in the study also communicated their awareness of the impact of interdisciplinary work on their ability to act on social justice-informed strategies. They acknowledged the reality that social work often occupies a lower status in the interdisciplinary context. Treatment teams in health or mental health settings and work involving legal systems commonly involve other professionals such as physicians, attorneys, judges, and law enforcement. Frequently, the decisions made by more powerful others often set the course of the social worker's involvement and may also be out of alignment with social work ethics or processes:

> It is a challenge, because of the perspectives of other professions, um, for example, what we end up encountering over and over again is with the medical profession. We have a nurse working with a victim and this nurse is outraged that this person was abused and they insist, the nurse insists to the victim, "you need to go to a shelter"….we run the risk of the medical profession losing faith in us as an agency because we are not carrying out what they believe needs to be done (Jackie).

Right and that it's not just social work it's the legal system - you could have judge that says "no, know I don't believe in terminating parental rights", and he just won't and the kids are just stuck, they are not going to go home, they are not going to get adopted, or, so our legal system, there is power in different places and may be in different ways….You know, it's, we need all of the pieces for it to work (Jane).

I have had kids come to me and say well I didn't know how to get scholarships, or I don't know I was supposed to apply for college or my teacher told me not to take honors….so that kind of tomfoolery is just, like how do you expect people to be successful? (Amaya).

Now you are really on the outskirts, everyone is operating from a totally different philosophy. Education is the expectation forte here, so you know, everything is about education, not about social work…. It's not about anything else and so when you are coming from a totally different mindset and a totally different operating system values, then it's, you know, you are kind of the alien here (Sasha).

That's another thing…we never convict anybody of any of these crimes, ever. Only once in a while and that's only because the child got pregnant, or the child got an STD, they never take the child's word. The criminal system needs to change too – this mom murdered her child and she got two months. But if she had murdered a 25 year old healthy man, she would have got like 25 years (Heidi).

Interestingly, several participants identified barriers to social justice-promoting practice that spring from within the profession. Jodi stated that, "I think we have had a professional problem, a stigmatized problem…I think that sometimes we demean ourselves, we devalue our own role". There was concern about lack of representation for social workers in the broader social environment by NASW as well as about the inaccessibility of the organization due to cost-prohibitive membership fees. A lack of professional cohesion and resources has an even greater impact for already isolated rural social workers:

> I have been in a rural area and um, I think that's very important….I received something in writing one day and it had a map of Missouri and it showed the licensed social workers in each county of the state and there were tons of counties that had nobody, at all, not one licensed person….my point with that is when you are doing social work in a rural area, I mean, you don't feel like you have a lot of networking…there's just not a whole lot of opportunity to get together with other professionals and talk about what you're doing (Ruth).

Participants called attention to the fact that they often have very limited access to the professional literature that would keep them informed about diverse populations, policies, and practice innovations:

> That's another thing that's frustrating after graduating – when you are in school, you have all this access ….I see studies, that would be really interesting to read, but I don't have the money to buy the journal and I can't get on line and look at it, so…(Kerri).

Several also noted that although the state requires three hours of ethics training per licensure period to maintain the status, topics covered rarely attended to the principle of social justice. The impact of continuing education for field instruction centers on practitioners' ability to remain competent and informed – this is true for any area of practice including the promotion of social justice. Finally, participants recognized that social work training tends to frame social justice action as the purview of macro practice, sometimes leaving clinicians feeling ill-prepared to engage in a full range of possible social change efforts. This perspective was noted in my discussion of participant preparation and will also be further attended to through their recommendations as presented below.

Participants spoke about the practice of social work and the promotion of social justice in the context of American culture. Societal attitudes toward the poor and those with addictions or persons with mental illness, racist beliefs, and sexist gender hierarchies were noted as powerful intervening forces. These same societal forces are then reflected by those elected to govern, who approve the budgets and create the legislation that creates the context in which social work is practiced. The consequences of the barriers presented by these forces include lack of resource allocation for social services and budget cuts aimed at services for vulnerable populations and misunderstandings about social problems:

> Working in a not-for-profit, first of all, we get very limited resources…with some of the funding sources and the ones that make the cutting of, will cut mental health services and substance abuse services are not really willing to understand the implications of um, what that will mean for society. Um, so the limited

funding just in the agency is so, but also with the lack of understanding of people that make those choices (Regina).

Being a state employee, I see what budgets can or cannot do. We're in the middle of the throes of a big budget crisis right now where we're potentially having to fire people, lay people off, things like that, but that does impact the services that I can offer to my clients as well (Teresa).

Cuts and things like that really hurt…there's a huge rehab center in St. Louis for adults who can't take care of themselves, who are bipolar and just can't make it in the community. They just shut it down and all those people just went in the community who have never lived outside of a structured facility. And where they all go, well they all committed a crime and they all went to jail so now our jails are full. So I think that a lot of times politicians really don't think this stuff through before they make a proposal (Heidi).

I think that the limited funding that we have can sometimes um, inhibit our ability to help. You know, if we had unlimited funding, we could have unlimited staff, which means we could help an unlimited amount of people. We could put billboards all over the city if we had money to do that, we could do so much more, um, with more resources (Jackie).

I think kind of a lack of resources, sort of um assigned to social justice efforts. I mean, even if we understand it conceptually, I think the fundamental question is, what do we have in place in this institution or in other institutions, to make sure things are just….So I think there's a lack of resource allocation in addition to a lack of awareness and a lack of knowledge that interferes with it (Vincent).

> I think we need to be more preventative and stop being so reactive. And I think if we did that we would head off a lot of issues, but people don't really want to do that…I don't think people really believe in social programs, don't really believe that they can make a difference. I think if they did they would put more money into it and stop cutting it first….I think it would be nice if we were more in a position to educate…I'm not really sure how we could get the opportunity to do that more because we don't always have an audience with the people who could actually make the change and when we do I don't know that they really care or that they are really listening (Amaya).

This last statement clearly articulates the disempowerment experienced by social workers in an unsupportive environment. As Regina further described:

> I just feel like sometimes the whole concept is not looked at and social workers look at that. But again the mindset of the rest of society is not that way, and that's the biggest barrier we have. So we get complacent and think, well I can't do anything, and then we just do our jobs again.

The American cultural emphasis on individualism, meritocracy, personal responsibility, state-noninterference, resistance to change, and independence contribute to an environment that is not always a hospitable one for the approach to justice undertaken by social workers. Through the lens of profession-in-environment, cultural factors have great influence over what resources and support are available to social workers that would facilitate social justice efforts.

Outcomes of Student Empowerment

The outcome of the field instruction process represented by this model is social work students empowered to define and pursue in practice social justice goals. Primary functions of field instruction are to connect theory to practice, to facilitate student self-awareness, and to create opportunities for students to experience social work in a real but safe context. Through the application of instruction strategies described here, participants fulfilled these functions specifically aimed at the promotion of social justice. Now equipped with their own beliefs about social justice and an understanding of practice behaviors that promote this key value, students emerge as empowered practitioners. The feedback loop depicted on the model represents the continuing process of professional preparation and engagement in social justice practice. Students become practitioners with a set of pre-conditions that position them to provide field instruction for future students, and to reproduce in a cyclical manner the practice of social justice in social work.

Practice Wisdom and Participant Recommendations

In addition to student empowerment outcomes, I also explored with participants their accumulated practice wisdom and recommendations for social work education and practice that would further promote the social justice value. I asked each participant to envision a world in which they were fully equipped to promote social justice, and to reflect upon how such a world would be different. Their responses touched upon social work education, both classroom- and field-based, as well as various elements of practice.

Professional preparation and training.

Participants gave recommendations for social work education in terms of classroom learning, the field practicum, how the two may work together, and for continuing education. These elements are all vital pieces of the overall process of empowerment of students for engagement in social justice-promoting practice. As I have described, field instructors' own experiences and knowledge are the keys to what and how they teach others. For this reason, it is relevant to mine their accumulated wisdom around social work education. Several participants commented on the importance of gate keeping at the university level. Suggestions were aimed at ensuring that candidates possess or are open to an ethical framework that aligns with social work's values, a process also engaged in when meeting with potential interns:

> I really screen them [students] a lot because my clients have committed horrible, horrible offenses, the worst you will read about in any serial killer novel anywhere. And you have to be able to overlook that, you have to be able to see them as the person you're serving and if you can't do that, I don't want you….So I think that being able to match them well would be really important for the students (Teresa).

> How could we make our application to the social work school different to weed out those people that really are not going to adhere to the *Code of Ethics*, who are not going to be challenging themselves in the injustices that are occurring in the world…(Naomi).

Gate keeping was also noted as important to creating a profession that embraces diversity and that itself reflects the values we seek to promote:

> History reminds me that we really haven't changed that much demographically, and to me that's a problem. Cause part of social work values is also finding good client-worker matches and we're just not doing it and I don't know if it's a recruitment process or recruitment issue, um, I don't know what it is, but I think it needs to be addressed more often in schools (Jade).

Classroom learning. Although this study's focus is field instruction, it became important to reflect upon classroom learning as well in my conversations with participants. This allowed insight into their perceptions of their own preparation as well as ways in which class and field intersect and inform. If field education is to connect theory to practice, we must examine what connections are to be made. Several spoke about creating a more solid foundation of social justice learning throughout the social work curriculum:

> I think it should be discussed more and there should be more emphasis on it. I think at times, it just depends on the class, and I don't think it should depend on the class, I think ALL courses in social work should have this emphasis and somehow incorporate it into their lecture series….I don't think it's just one area, I don't think it's just therapy or whatever, I think it's in all areas and we teach so many different issues in social work, why not?...if you want to create critical thinkers, you have to be talking about all of this all the time (Naomi).
>
> I would like to see more of a foundation in the classes. I didn't have, I had policy classes, but I didn't have a social justice class ever…. in the clinical program there should be some sort of social justice class, if there isn't already, and specifically address, OK I get that we can go to the capitol and advocate, write a

letter, I get all that. But what can I do on a micro level? And I know as a clinician I can do those things, but what can I do from a micro level, what does social justice look like from a micro level, as far as individual with our clients? Because I think social justice is always thought of as a bigger, macro issue, but really, social change starts with individuals, really, and so, how on a micro level do we do social justice? (Kerri).

I think you should really emphasize a lot of historical stuff about it, because there's been a lot of leaps in the last, you know, 50 years, well the last 100 years if you go back with women and things like that. Just in general, so you need a historical context to see where we've been to know where we've come (Teresa).

A few participants reflected on the nature of academic social work education in terms of practice concentrations and the separate clinical and policy/administration tracks that exist within the school.

I think that people have felt that in order to move into the clinical track they have had to let loose of kind of the social workey pieces and I don't think that that's so, but I think that's the way other people have kind of thought though that and now the younger people coming into the school, they have lots of that passion for the social justice part of it. They kind of see it as, this is what social work is, the clinical piece (Jodi).

I think there's a way in which some clinical students, maybe many clinical students don't get the kind of training to prepare them to really deal with this large scale social and economic justice concerns….If all I do as a practitioner is help people on a one-to-one basis, or help families, one family at a time, I mean,

> I'm going to be chiseling away at a mountain that's so huge….I think that part of the barrier is in our educational system, in our social work educational system. I mean, I think if we thought about it differently we would recognize that. We ought to be preparing everybody, even if they eventually are only going to work with individuals or families, we ought to be preparing everyone to look at the world through this macro lens and understand where the intervention points are at that level (Vincent).

In addition to the comments regarding educational content, the value of experiential learning as an instructional process was emphasized. Some felt that more opportunity for this before and in addition to the field practicum would be of great benefit:

> Well, I wish we had, I wish students were with us longer, I wish students were with us for a year, you know, um, so I think we can get at some things more you know, they are here for a semester and it seems like, you know we do some good things, and students work very hard, but it seems in my experience sometimes it feels like we are just getting going and they are leaving (Vincent).

> I would create more experiential learning opportunities for students to almost, to forget that you are a helper, but to be an ethnographer, an anthropologist. Go in there, just go and live, go and breathe it, but realize that even though you are living it and breathing it, still you will never know it….it's still your perception based in your social, cultural skin color paradigm, gender paradigm. So, yeah to have more opportunities to experience and to not be afraid to, you know, I mean I would love that!.... And I would love it if students would go and just spend a

> week or a day with a mom who's on welfare and trying to raise five kids. I would rather them do that than an internship at an agency that's she's trying to get services from (Jade).
>
> I feel like my first class that I took was the oppression class, I felt we started discussing and talking about it right away and I thought that was great, it set a tone for the rest of the education so I feel like that was really important….The thing I guess that I think could enhance it is maybe providing actual opportunities, volunteer opportunities for students to get involved in…. (Tessa).

Below, Tessa expands on the value of experiential learning for her own process by recalling a visit to family court in a domestic violence class:

> For me in that instance it was standing there seeing both people walk up there, they stand 10, maybe five, not 10 feet, not even that, three feet maybe apart and you just have to spill your guts ….it's so easy to sit back in an office and say, well you should get an order of protection…. It was really valuable, yes, much more so than just hearing it, for me to go see it, I think if we could weave a little bit more of that into our education it would be great.

Participants' comments make a case for the value of experiential learning for social work preparation in general, beyond it utility in field settings. For those responsible for connecting the dots between classroom and field, these ideas emerged based on cumulative experience as both learner and teacher.

Social work field education. Participants also offered ideas for the enhancement of field education that would empower students in the social justice realm. Again, increased exposure was suggested, as Teresa states, "I think that maybe having them go

through more rotations of it, or um, being able to easily jump to another area would be important. Participants pointed out the value of being able to make concrete connections between theory and practice; the essence and purpose of the field practicum. As Regina noted, it is:

> …what the practicum experience is supposed to be about is not this, what do I learn in the book, but what does it look like and I think that is on the part of the field instructor, we have to take that and teach it. One thing that would be helpful is maybe for the field instructors to know more about, they are learning about social justice in this way. Instead of just giving the journals and saying, OK, this is what I am seeing, but also kind of what, more, maybe more collaboration between what's the curriculum of the school.

This idea was further articulated:

> I think a lot of the stuff that you learn in school goes in one ear and out the other for some kids and I was one of those kids that that would be so unless I didn't put it into action…so I think for field instruction, when it comes down to field instruction, I really like an instructor to teach a student, I would really like to know, specifically, what the instructor taught the student and then reinforce that in the field and I don't always get that direct connection unless I hear it from the student (Jodi).

As a field instructor who also has taught students in a classroom setting, Vincent echoed this sentiment based on experience:

> Well so far all the students that I've ever worked with have been students that I've also – in a practice setting – have also been students that I've had in the

> classroom, so we're kind of on the same page with the notion of these organizational justice constructs and how to use them in a practice setting. So, I think we're kind of off to the, to a good start, we are already on first base so to speak, because we're speaking the same language, we're using the same tools…

Finally, the demands placed upon practitioners who choose to engage in field education were pointed out:

> I think they ought to have remuneration for field instructors. And if they cannot do that, they need to focus on benefits….when I was in private practice, and had field students there, it was really hard, to do it right, it takes a time commitment…. the number one motivating factor why people are field instructors is the ability to impact students as they come into the program (Jodi).

Here the inherent value of field education is recognized, but she also brings to the surface the reality that while there is great benefit, there is also great cost to this investment.

Continuing education. Lastly, I want to present comments made about continuing education, required for state clinical licensure and recommended for best practice. Again, this element has a place in this model when we consider the field instruction strategies utilized – facilitating exposure, role modeling, and focused discussion – and their dependence on the continuing competence of instructors. In other words, students are learning from what field instructors demonstrate and communicate; they therefore must also receive ongoing education in order to offer these tools to students. Upon reflection, several participants noted that social justice is not present in ethics trainings, also required by the state as one facet of required continuing education:

> As I think about it I am not sure that the word social justice comes up in the educational process that I have participated in very much. It's a value I hold but it's not something that I feel like I am receiving ongoing education on (Jane).
>
> The ethics training… I don't remember at all it being focused on the macro level and that. I remember it being very focused on individual, working with individuals and families, that what I remember it being focused on (Ruth).

Kerri shared this realization, stating that, "maybe one thing that needs to happen, is that I don't think I have ever been to a training on social justice….How awesome would it be to have something that's social justice type things!?". The benefit of continuing education with a social justice component would enhance practice around this value and in turn, the experience of a student witnessing that practice by arming social workers with information and skills.

Social work practice.

On a broad professional level, several areas emerged that participants felt were connected to our collective ability to engage in social justice pursuits, and by extension, to model and expose students to such practices. Again the dichotomy of micro-macro social work practice was pointed out:

> I think that the word social work and the social work mission is about the broader picture, I think a lot of social workers have tended to go into, over the last 10 years, into serving people on an individual basis like individual therapy or family therapy. And I don't think that that's a wrong avenue, it's a helpful avenue, that's also a part of social work, but it is just a part….(Jodi).

In speaking with Jodi about her thoughts, she identified money (e.g., insurance reimbursement) as the driving force behind the clinicalization of social work. Again, the demands of the environment have great influence. Several participants echoed the call for greater commitment to macro work for all social workers:

> I just think we should be more involved. I don't think as a whole we are that involved. We are, I see social workers being very involved in community political activism, I really feel like we need to be down in our state capitols, we need to be more present in Washington DC, and I have a real strong interest in that…. I think social workers do a good job, I think we could do a better job. I think we could be more active and run for the offices and really kind of get out there (Naomi).

The connection between social worker self-efficacy for and engagement in practice for social justice across boundaries to the instruction students receive in the field was pinpointed:

> The big thing is empowering that micro level social worker to be involved in, that's what I think my overarching thing, and thus I wonder some micro level social worker, how much they are passing that off to their students (Kerri).

Other suggestions for social work practice that promotes social justice were offered from participants' visions:

> One of the other things I would do is a lot more education to people about mental illness. You know, I, the statistics are everywhere but you know….I think that we have swept mental health under the table so long (Teresa).

I just think better collaboration with other agencies, interdisciplinary agencies to provide overall services, not just focusing on one piece of it, that would promote social justice as well. I really enjoy that role where we're able to work as a collaborative unit, versus just an agency, so that we can be able to have a voice, we can speak to the state and the people that provide the funding, everything is too, like, starting to educate other agencies (Regina).

…I would create a program to encourage clients to become more involved in social justice issues. Obviously not exploiting clients, but empowering them. Personal stories have so much more of an impact than statistics (Kerri).

….one of the areas that we are not there and very much needed is in our judicial systems….my experience in this setting is that, it's been crazy that there has not been mental health consult available to attorneys and judges. They really have a perception that they understand mental health, and they don't, and then they are making decisions about people's mental health issues and what should happen or not happen based upon those kinds of beliefs (Jodi).

I fully believe without a doubt if we can improve the lives of the direct care staff which are the experts on my client behavior, the security aides, the forensic rehab specialists, and we could send them home after eight hours. Or they could have the days off they were promised, or they didn't have to work mandatory overtime. I think if we could make their lives better, my clients' lives would in turn be better (Teresa).

Many expressed that access to material resources would enable better staffing patterns, the ability to provide additional or extended services to clients, and to offer

resources to help in meeting client need. However, as Jade expressed, an orientation toward social justice and competency to practice in a way that promotes client empowerment and challenges social inequity is not only tied to finances: "More money and more services does not equate into people living the lives they love. And it certainly does not equate into fixing the problem".

In discussing this vision with Jade, she indicated that it is not money that allows us to live social justice ideals in our daily interactions with clients, but it's simply a choice whether or not to treat others with fairness, to honor self-determination, to speak up against injustice, and to empower clients with knowledge. In this way, social justice promoting-practice is in reach of all.

Findings Summary

The model that emerged from these findings provides a depiction of the process of field instruction as it is informed by the experiences, perceptions, and practices of participants, and impacted by environmental conditions. The outcome of this process is the empowerment of new social work practitioners to engage in social justice-promoting practice and to in turn provide field instruction to others. In addition to contributing to scholarly discourse on the meaning and practice of social justice in social work, these findings offer clear, observable, and specific field instructional strategies aimed at this challenging element. Finally, the model offers insight into how field instruction contributes to social justice-promoting practice behaviors, which then set the stage for former students to take up the reigns of educating others. In this way, we can see how social justice knowledge is formulated and reproduced within the profession.

Chapter 5

Discussion of Findings

This study offers a number of implications for social work practice, education, and research. It also and contributes to theory-building and the ongoing professional discourse around social justice. The emergent model of student empowerment for social justice practice rooted in field instruction provides specific strategies for field education as well as insight into the contexts in which perceptions of social justice are formed and practice efforts undertaken. In addition, it adds needed empirically-based knowledge to a most critical topic for the social work profession.

Why is this Study Unique?

The overarching purpose of field instruction as conceptualized by the findings of this study is student empowerment; educational efforts by definition target change in the student. This inquiry focused on how those responsible for facilitating such change, the field instructors, work toward this end. This focus is one aspect of the study that makes it unique, as previous studies of field education have examined learning and satisfaction primarily from the student point of view (Bogo, 2005; Bogo & Vayda, 1998; Fortune, McCarthy, & S., 2001; Hendricks, et al., 2005). This study contributes to the knowledge base by bringing to light teaching strategies rooted in the instructor's perspective. It also focuses on a specific element of field education, the values clarification process, wherein students are able to increase their level of self awareness and to reflect critically about personal and professional values, and their reconciliation of the two (Barsky, 2010; Reamer, 2006).

Another unique element of this study is the fact that it adds empirical evidence to our ongoing professional dialog on the topic of social justice and education on this foundational value. The overwhelming majority of published discourse around social justice is theoretical rather than empirical, especially in terms of education (Birkenmaier, 2003; Finn & Jacobson, 2008). Rarely have the actual beliefs and practices of social workers been examined. In this way, use of grounded theory to build knowledge on lived experiences makes this study most valuable in that it provides a snapshot of what *is*, not what we want or think things to be. A most critical piece toward understanding field-based education is an understanding of practitioner behaviors (and the contexts in which they occur) that students are exposed to and reflect upon in discussion. In this way, this study builds on our knowledge of beliefs about social justice, practices intended to promote it, as well as strategies utilized to teach it.

Implications of the Study

This study brings to light several important implications. It contributes to the theoretical foundation of the profession around the concept of social justice and social worker empowerment. It also provides direction for social work education, practice, and research focused on social justice. Implications for practice include the need for tools that facilitate assessment and intervention around social justice and more broad definitions of social justice that are inclusive of the full range of practice. Findings also suggest directions for social work classroom curriculum as well as field instructor training around strategies for incorporating social justice in any practicum setting. Important considerations around barriers and supports for social justice-promoting practice emerged including the need for enhanced collaboration and better access to

professional resources and representation. Research implications include further exploration of barriers to empowered practice, effectiveness of enhanced field instructor training, the impact of new EPAS rules for the social justice component in field education, and the need for evidence-based decision making around graduate social work education.

Theoretical implications.

As elaborated in chapter three, the goal of grounded theory research is to build theory. This goal was achieved here through the construction of the model depicting the process of student empowerment for social justice-promoting practice through field education. Merely arriving at a definition of social justice (while also regarded as the very basis for the profession of social work) is a challenge not yet resolved (Abramovitz & Lazzari, 2008). This study contributes to our collective understanding of the meaning of social justice by providing perceptions of those anchored in the day-to-day struggle toward this end. It also adds to our ability to conceptualize social work field education as a process of empowerment for students/future practitioners.

The meaning of social justice.

Social justice is at once the foundational value of the profession of social work and an ill-defined concept often dependent on one's particular worldview (Abramovitz & Lazzari, 2008; Banerjee, 2005; Mitchell & Lynch, 2003; Reisch, 2002). Social work has rested on a view of social justice as primarily distributive (Banerjee, 2005). Within the distributive paradigm, social justice is measured in terms of outcome or receipt (Brighouse, 2004). An egalitarian approach, most reflective of contemporary social work is marked by the importance of access to resources, taking a needs-based approach to

deciding distribution, a focus on the most vulnerable first, and self-determination without obstruction (Abramovitz & Lazzari, 2008). The findings of this study support the value of an egalitarian distributive theory of social justice for social workers. Participants spoke widely of the need to ensure that all persons' needs are met and to advocate for policy as well as direct services that would meet this purpose. Participant responses also clearly point to their collective focus on vulnerable populations and people who experience, in some form or another, discrimination, oppression, or lack of access to needed resources. This is also in line with professional policy and practice standards (Council on Social Work Education, 2008; Kelly & Clark, 2009; National Association of Social Workers, 1999).

In addition to attending to matters of distribution (outcome), participant responses harkened to other perspectives on social justice. Responses reflected elements of the capability approach (Morris, 2002; Sen, 1999). From this view, it is access to opportunity and the capacity to attain goods and meet one's own needs that is most significant, rather than disbursement of the goods themselves. This perspective represents a practice goal that many participants described: client empowerment. The process of client empowerment may be clarified by additional theoretical constructs. An understanding of the nature of power differentials and the effect of oppressive forces on people in order to not only break these forces down within wider society, but also to ensure they do not impede the intervention process is crucial (Aldarondo, 2007; Gutierrez, Parsons, & Cox, 1998; Swenson, 1998). Empowerment theory creates a context for affecting change through a focus on giving power to the powerless and by giving voice to those unheard. Payne (2005) writes that, "the basic objective of

empowerment….is social justice, giving people greater security and political and social equality, through mutual support and shared learning, building up small steps towards wider goals", (p. 303). Lee (2001) emphasizes the role of the social worker as facilitator, acting on a client-driven understanding of problems and solutions, who should maintain a vision of the client as "victor not victim" (p. 60). Additionally, she mandates that to be a part of this process, the social worker cannot be an objective observer of client ills but rather must take a stand in alliance with the client against an oppressive force (Lee, 2001)

Staples (1990, p. 30) proposes that "empowerment…is the product of the same process". The drive to ensure client access to resources and the ability to make use of opportunity and goods (capability) was complemented by participants' attention to procedural and interpersonal processes. Significantly, socially just procedures and processes emerged from this study as having equal or perhaps greater importance than attention to fair and equitable outcomes. This emphasis is well-fitted for social work as it applies to direct practice and clinical work in addition to macro facets like policy change. A view of social justice only in terms of distribution does not attend to elements such as essential socially constructed social categories and their impact (Banerjee, 2005; Folger, 1996). As has been argued, it is not fully equipped to provide social work a complete model for the practice of social justice. Additionally, we can minimize the impact of environmental barriers that exist beyond individual encounters and agency walls when we locate social justice in areas that we can control. For instance, as administrators and program planners, social workers can ensure that organizational policies promote fairness and in no way create barriers or discrimination for clients (or staff). As clinicians we can commit to acting on social justice within client interactions and relationships. Use of

nonhierarchical, non-elitist language, partnership with clients, and awareness of power imbalances in client relationships are strategies that enable professionals to embody traits of commutative justice (Aldarondo, 2007; Birkenmaier, 2003). Application of the strengths perspective and empowerment theory, feminist practice models, anti-oppressive practices, the modern settlement house model, and mindfulness of power dynamics within the helping relationship are the paths to social justice at the micro level (Swenson, 1998).

The theoretical implications of this study are significant in terms of defining social justice and social justice-promoting practice for social work. Expanding our view of social justice beyond outcomes allows us to act upon the value by way of respectful interactions, the modeling of fair and equal treatment, and an appreciation for difference. In this light, social justice is not contingent on policy, but only upon the choices we make every day, with every client. It adds a more manageable and relational focus to the pursuit of social justice within the profession and is applicable within any client relationship. Such a view allows for clinicians to take active part in the pursuit of social justice, rather than feeling limited by narrow perceptions of it as the purview only of macro practice. This expanded view on social justice also enables educators in the classroom and in field to frame social justice in interpersonal terms, as well as in terms of broad social change.

Perhaps the question of "what is social justice?" continues to confound social workers because there is no one universal response. Consider other core social work values such as self-determination. No one would argue that self-determination is the same for everyone; by definition it is about allowing each person to make their own

informed choices based on their own preferences, values, and needs. What if we were to apply social justice in the same way? With a broad definition in mind (fairness, freedom from oppressive barriers and discrimination), we can seek to understand social justice for each client in a similar way. Viewing social justice as individualized offers some resolution to the unending question of "what is social justice?". It allows us to change the question to: "what is social justice for *you*"? Realizing that there can be no such thing as a unitary definition of social justice can minimize time spent on an irresolvable dilemma. This also points to the benefit of an approach to cultural competency that views each individual as a culture of one, rather than universalizing the characteristics and experiences of any group. Although the "each to his own" approach may seem too abstract to be helpful in an applied profession, it actually provides a lens through which to view social justice that maximizes client self-determination and makes clear the relevance of cultural competence. Additionally, allowing clients to define for themselves their justice-related concerns supports the imperative of holding our personal values separate from professional undertakings. This approach would not preclude social workers' ability to educate clients or to provide insight into structural roots of problems that manifest at a micro or mezzo level, but would ultimately help to ensure that we do not become another barrier to client self-actualization through the imposition of our goals and values.

Finally, the findings of this study support the utility of a human rights perspective for social work's pursuit of social justice. Participants spoke widely of ensuring that client rights are protected. In describing rights, they spoke of the right to information and representation, to self-determination (freedom from oppressive barriers), to be free from

hunger, to receive needed medical care, to have the ability to provide for oneself and one's family, to love freely with consenting others, to practice religious beliefs, to appropriate education, and to be safe from violence. Not only do human rights as elaborated in the UDHR operationalize what would be socially just, it reframes how we define the targets of social justice (Reichert, 2003; United Nations, 1948). From a distributive point of view, desert is defined in terms of need and begins with those most disadvantaged (Rawls, 1971). This leaves us with the task of operationalizing who is need, what needs are legitimate claims, what level of need equates to desert, and by what mechanisms the state will address these needs. Conversely, if it is accepted that *all* humans have essential rights that are inviolate, the issue of desert is incapacitated. Everyone deserves the protection of their essential human rights and individuals, organizations, and institutions alike must not interfere with these rights, but rather hold the collective responsibility of seeing that they are upheld.

Social worker empowerment.

This study suggests several implications for the empowerment of student social workers to engage in practice that promotes social justice. Gutierrez, Parsons and Cox (1998) highlight four important components for the empowerment process: 1) the attitudes, values and beliefs that impact self-efficacy and capacity for empowerment; 2) the importance of validation through collective experience; 3) an emphasis on knowledge and skills for critical thinking an action; and, 4) action itself or reflexive action/praxis. These components are reflected in the strategies described in this study. Through classroom preparation, students are imbued with information surrounding social work values and receive knowledge upon which to build. Values are explored, challenged, and

validated through exposure to injustice and diverse ways of being. Focused discussion between student and instructor is marked by application of critical thinking and a process of pulling back the curtain on the structures that shape inequity. Students observe social workers engaged in active promotion of social justice, experience opportunities to participate, reflect, and build professional skills. This empowerment process then allows them to emerge from the field practicum with an enhanced level of ethical sensitivity, increased self-awareness, the ability to critically examine new situations, and tools for action toward social justice.

The importance of the relationship and use of critical conversations within the supervisory relationship are utmost, and if well-utilized result in transformation, not only cognitive acquisition (Todd & Schwartz, 2009). Empowerment theory frames student preparation as more than learning, but as a process that equips social workers to understand and intervene in matters of social justice as active change agents, regardless of practice concentration, work setting, role, or job description. Empowered social workers have the ability to contribute to client empowerment and to impact the environments in which they practice. The implication is that we must educate to ensure that students not only accumulate the knowledge, skill, and value base that distinguishes social work, but also that they leave our schools truly equipped to apply these tools in challenging practice environments.

Implications for social justice-promoting practice.

This study offers several important implications for social work practice. As the purpose of social work education is to prepare practitioners, we must define this goal before we explore paths to reaching it. Participants in the study helped to operationalize

social justice in a way that is rarely done in the literature (Abramovitz & Lazzari, 2008; Birkenmaier, 2003). They spoke of social work practice methods that may be utilized to combat injustice at the interpersonal, organizational, community, and societal levels. Behaviors centered on social justice were inclusive of clinical practice as well as interventions at the mezzo and macro levels such as group work and policy change. Practices ranged from ensuring respectful client interactions and relationships to awareness and advocacy around social policies that impact access and opportunity, also reflective of existing perspectives (Aldarondo, 2007; Finn & Jacobson, 2008; Wood & Tully, 2006; Wronka, 2008), but are rooted in empirical information-gathering rather than theory. Participants' social justice-promoting practice behaviors are summarized in Table 3.

An interesting finding regarding the practice of social justice concerns the relationship between the core values of social work as put forth by NASW in the *Code of Ethics*. These include service, social justice, the dignity and worth of the person, the importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence (National Association of Social Workers, 1999). The *Code* presents each element as separate and parallel. However, participants' descriptions of their beliefs and practices point to the other five as vehicles for creating and promoting social justice. Demonstrating respect, maintaining a service orientation toward clients, upholding each person's dignity and self-determination, creating partnering relationships, adhering to ethics, and remaining informed about culture, policy, and practice (competence) were frequently cited as paths to the social justice in practice.

Table 3

Participants' social justice-promoting practice behaviors

Recognizing and avoiding abuse of one's one power and privilege
Educating clients on their rights; client consciousness-raising around issues of social justice
Sharing/equalizing power; refusing expert status; assuming a solidarity stance with clients
Facilitating client participation in advocacy, policy, practice decision-making
Including structural factors and considerations of social injustice in assessment and intervention
Advocating at the policy level for legislation that increases access to services
Advocating at the individual and community level to eliminate barriers to client wellbeing
Demonstrating respectful treatment of clients for other professionals in the agency setting
Challenging oppression by defending client self determination; keeping personal and professional values separate
Balancing cultural/diversity knowledge with curiosity and openness; avoiding group-based assumptions
Honoring the inherent worth of each person with a person-first approach; defending essential human rights
Listening to make others feel heard
Speaking up on behalf of voiceless and vulnerable others
Educating other professionals and communities at large about issues of injustice

The theoretical implications described here provide a new foundation from which to shape practice toward the promotion of social justice. The next task is then to translate these new perspectives into enhanced practice. Answering the question of what social justice is for an individual requires the ability to assess for injustice. In order to work to solve a problem, including one of social justice, it must be "diagnosed" or identified and understood (Abramovitz & Lazzari, 2008) to best promote just responses. Inclusion of discrimination, unfair treatment, social status, economic concerns, and structural barriers in assessment would reveal a new set of client needs and goals. One implication of this finding is the need for development of a social justice assessment instrument for use with individuals, families, or groups. Existing assessment tools could be adapted to incorporate explicit attention to social justice. The Culturagram was developed to encompass elements not normally addressed by ecomaps and genograms, and for use with immigrant persons (Congress & Singer, 2008). It is focused at the family level and includes assessment of oppression, discrimination, bias and racism, as well as other cultural characteristics and values. In terms of process, justice- and culture-focused assessment instruments demonstrate respect for the client's knowledge and perspective and facilitate active engagement. Such collaboration can promote client empowerment and enhance social worker effectiveness and confidence around social justice-promoting practice. Further experimentation with existing tools would continue to enhance social workers' sensitivity to inter- and intra-cultural difference, to identity structural connections, and the ability to effectively intervene in issues of social justice.

These findings suggest the utility of the generalist practice model, which allows social workers to intervene with clients at all levels, when seeking to affect injustice. In

this way, we can ask, "what is social justice for this individual, group, population, or community?", and utilize social work skills, values, and knowledge toward social justice. Generalist practice is characterized by two primary elements: it is problem-centered, in that it enables the practitioner to seek an array of responses to a core issue; and it is ecological, or starts from the person-in-environment perspective and takes into account all facets contributing to a problem. In circumstances where injustice, discrimination, or marginalization are the essence of a problem, "the generalist orientation allows the social worker to respond not only to an immediate problem of the individual, such as job training, but also to the conditions in the community and society that present barriers" (Gibbs, Locke, & Lohmann, 1990). Application of the generalist model to social justice problem-solving minimizes the urge to create an all-encompassing definition of social justice and provides a model for assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation of justice-promoting practice that is inclusive of micro, mezzo, and macro practice arenas. The generalist model also has utility for bridging practice, policy, and research .(Barsky, 2010)

In seeking all paths to social justice in social work, it must not be overlooked that, as demonstrated here, agency and other environmental contexts may limit engagement in practices that might extend beyond specific roles or organizational boundaries. Although participants recognized that, regardless of the nature of their practice, the impact of policy on individuals cannot be ignored, and, ideally, vice versa. The reality is, however, that most practitioners by choice or circumstance receive an education in either micro (clinical) or macro (community, policy, administration) practice. With this reality in mind, it becomes critical then to prepare students to access or form collaborations

between and within social service delivery systems and to avoid the isolation that can come with dichotomization of the profession. The importance of coalition-building to facilitate sharing of information and cooperation with others toward social change is apparent.

Participants identified agency-based barriers including limits to advocacy when viewed as a threat to agency public image or profitability, lack of resources to devote to efforts such as client education and policy advocacy, and simply the demanding nature of the work. Agency-based supports were also described. Participants cited agency missions that are in alignment with social justice goals, supportive or like-minded colleagues and administrators, and fair policies and practices as facilitative of social justice efforts. Supportive intervening conditions centered mostly on the agency and were not cited as stemming from other elements of the environment such other disciplines, communities, and socio-cultural factors; these influences, rather, were cited as mostly negative. Participants discussed their work in interdisciplinary environments, often reliant at least in part on the actions of other professionals such as law enforcement, attorneys, judges, medical providers, and educators. When at the table with others who may hold higher status or even equal power, lack of understanding of social work values and of client realities was frequently cited as a barrier to the promotion of social justice. Recognizing the dependence of social work on the environment, participants discussed the impact of legislative budget cuts, policy change, and community buy-in for social services as significant barriers. Prevailing cultural attitudes such as a bootstraps mentality (i.e., poor people just need to work harder) and meritocracy (i.e., if people work hard they will succeed, an overcome forces such as racism) pose serious challenges to

social workers' ability to protect needs-based programs, or to "convince" people of the actual impact for people of structural inequality.

Self-efficacy, voice, access to choices, and decision-making power were found to be significant to social workers' feelings of empowerment in practice, elements reflected in the literature (Gutierrez, et al., 1995; Parsons, 1991; Turner & Shera, 2005). Also, organizational environments distinguished by a lack of resources (salary, staff, access to evidence-based practice information) and issues of interdisciplinary status and conflict had great impact on participants' perceptions of their own empowerment to promote social justice. Participants also expressed feelings of helplessness and burn-out that impede social justice efforts. Barriers experienced by participants mirror barriers to empowerment such as marginalization, lack of tools and information, and fears of taking risks (Garcia & Van Soest, 2006). Empowerment theory suggests strategies for the enhancement of social worker empowerment. Some of those were reflected in my findings, such as colleague and administrative support for the social work perspective in mission and in practice (Gutierrez, et al., 1995). In the same way that a facilitative environment is crucial to social worker promotion of social justice, the environment is of utmost importance to instruction strategies and student learning (Caspi & Reid, 2002). Examinations of student empowerment as it occurs through field instruction must attend to the environment just as we take into account person-in-environment when intervening with clients. By pinpointing both supports and barriers, we can better prepare social worker practitioners and educators to function in challenging environments. The empowerment lens provides a view on not simply what social work aims to do in the social justice realm, but the factors that actually allow or prevent us from doing it.

Implications for social work education.

This study suggests implications for social work classroom- and field-based education aimed at empowering social workers to actively engage in social justice-promoting practice. These include implications for social justice curriculum, the integration of theory and practice, building experiential learning across the curriculum, and enhancing social justice competency among practitioners through continuing education.

In building the emergent model from this study, it was important to look at how participants arrived at their own views and how education contributed to these perceptions. These insights have implications then for future educational efforts. Participants described a range of personal experiences and perspectives surrounding social justice, how they were formulated, and how engagement in social work practice has impacted current beliefs. Some shared that formative experiences helped to shape their personal views of social justice in a way that was closely aligned with social work values and ethics. For many who participated, the drive toward a fair world, free from discrimination and oppression of those afforded less power in our society is inherent. For these persons, social justice, social work, and their own worldview are equivalent or parallel. This finding harkens to the concept of the value-informed professional identity (versus role-based views on practice goals and tasks) as facilitative to a social justice commitment (Gecas, 2000). Understanding an individual's value orientation and its relevance to behavior can help us to "start where the student is" and to facilitate the social justice learning process.

Participants described their social work journey, through classroom and field education as well as work experiences, as a complex process of exposure and value integration. This professional socialization process can involve anger, sadness, confusion, and frustration, especially when such experiences force them to examine their own schemas and to reframe socialized beliefs to a broader lens. The importance of this process to social workers should not be minimized. Field instructors facilitate and support this process as it unfolds for students (Bogo & Vayda, 1998) by way of the strategies described in the model. Perspectives on the role of personal religious or spiritual beliefs also contribute to a better understanding of how practitioners act on social work values and ethics. Whether perceptions of social justice in the social work context were in alignment or in conflict with their own beliefs, the critical element is the ability to recognize and maintain a separation. The importance of having and adhering to a professional *Code of Ethics* is clear in the words of participants. The power endowed to social workers by knowledge, policy, and position must be balanced by accountability to ethical guidelines designed to protect client rights (National Association of Social Workers, 1999). These guidelines must be the beacons by which we navigate the decisions that impact the lives of clients and participants spoke of the NASW *Code of Ethics* as a useful set of guidelines that assist in this process. Like any core value (e.g. self-determination), social justice is assessed for its unique application to a client system, based on client needs and rights, not the stance of the social worker. Students must receive clear messages regarding the difference between personal and professional values and be supported in the process of exploring and managing potential conflicts.

As perceptions of social justice among field instructors were explored, the vital importance of self-awareness as a starting point for the pursuit of social justice was stressed. This study's findings support the idea that it is necessary for social workers to understanding the dynamics of power and privilege, starting with recognition of one's own place in social hierarchies (Adams, et al., 2007). Participants described tenets of social justice in terms not unlike those found throughout the literature, including fairness, freedom from discrimination or other barriers to self-actualization, access to opportunity and resources, and the protection of human rights (Birkenmaier, 2003; Brighouse, 2004; Kelly & Clark, 2009; Reamer, 2006; Reichert, 2003). An essential grasp of the *mechanisms* of injustice is essential to practitioner's ability to see and act upon it, and social work education must create strategies that empower us to not only deal with the consequences of oppression, but also the source(s) (Garcia & Van Soest, 2006). As a result, it is of utmost importance that social work education be equipped to provide students with this essential knowledge and opportunities to apply theory in practice.

Implications for field education.

At the center of this study was the question of how field instructors teach students about the meaning and practice of social justice. These essential strategies include 1) facilitating student exposure to client lived experience and injustice; 2) role modeling practice behaviors that promote fairness and equity; and 3) focused discussion around issues pertinent to the integration of theory and practice, grappling with the intersection of personal and professional values, and managing reactions to injustice. In absence of existing models that provide concrete and operationalized educational strategies (Bogo, 2005), this study provides needed insight into exactly how this process occurs from the

point of view of the field instructor. This model therefore provides a roadmap for practitioners who have taken on the most vital task of supervision in the field practicum. In addition, because the model emerged based on the lived experiences of field instructors (rather than being purely theoretical), it is practical and empirical in nature.

Detlaff (2002) reports that students are often overwhelmed by the complexities of injustice and by the application of theoretical concepts to these challenges within social work practice. Field instructors, as well, are often confronted with the important task of facilitating field-based learning for students in absence of a model for doing so (Bogo, 2005). According to the Field Coordinator for this study's site, the social justice component in particular is one of the most challenging aspects of field instruction for those practitioners who take on the task (S. Cary, personal communication, February 18, 2010). To assist in this process, instructors need organized models for managing students' field-based experiences, especially in light of the fact that they are also managing the many demands of full-time practice. This study offers such a model, aimed specifically at operationalizing instruction strategies, and inclusive of the context in which field instruction occurs (instructors' own learning experiences, perspectives, and practice behaviors). The model could be presented at field instructor trainings in order to illustrate some methods for the inclusion of social justice content through facilitating student exposure to injustice, role modeling social justice-promoting behaviors, and engaging students in focused discussion around their experiences.

A primary task of the field instructor is to connect theory (classroom learning) to practice (Bogo, 2005; Bogo & Vayda, 1998; Hendricks, et al., 2005). This was identified by participants as a key element of their role, but one which they found difficult in

absence of adequate information from the school. The implication here is for a more effective mechanism of communication with practitioners around general and social justice-specific curriculum. Efforts between the field coordinator, field liaison, field instructor and student are called for. Examples might include enhanced description of curriculum in the field manual and instructor trainings as well as explicit discussion of curriculum in student journals and supervision.

Continuing to build the model around strategies for social work field instruction, and guided by elements of empowerment theory, I also examined intervening factors or environmental forces that impact the process. An examination of the profession-in-environment is critical to defining and enacting social work change efforts as a profession highly dependent on social and legislative sanction (Abramovitz, 1998; Reisch & Andrews, 2001; van Wormer, 2002). Such factors impact social justice efforts undertaken in practice and therefore also affect the realities that students are exposed to and must learn to manage as professionals. Although such barriers are not uncommon to social work practice, their impact is not recognized in existing literature on field instruction or the importance of addressing this piece as an aspect of student preparation.

The strategies outlined in the model reflect existing elements of effective educational supervision. A learning process in which the instructor serves as a role model, links observation and experience to theory, is supported by the environment, enhances student autonomy, and attends to the learners' affective responses is likely to result in successful educational outcomes (Caspi & Reid, 2002). Raising issues of self-care, facilitating student participation in critical events as well as day-to-day natural occurrences, drawing student attention to potential or actual value conflict, and

connecting specific experiences to broad social work processes and goals are all elements of effective field instruction (Birkenmaier & Berg-Weger, 2007). Concerning the educational process surrounding value transmission, reflection on one's own socialization, assumptions, and biases is critical. Elicitation of students' thoughts and feelings as they are exposed to new experiences, as personal value systems are challenged, and ethical imperatives manifest in the real world is most vital (Bogo & Vayda, 1998). Issues of vicarious trauma and self care must be incorporated (Garcia & Van Soest, 2006), and the model presented here allows for attention to these processes for students through role modeling and focused discussion. The strategies that emerged from this study are in line with theoretically-based approaches to effective field education, adding empirical support for their use and benefit.

Implications for social justice curriculum.

A primary implication of this study's findings relates to the academic preparation of students to engage in social justice pursuits prior to placement in the field as interns or active agency employees. Above I described the perceptions of participants around what social justice means as well as practices they utilize to promote it on behalf of clients. I concluded that social justice is promoted through attention to fairness and the elimination of barriers (discrimination, lack of access to resources) at whatever level is necessary for unique individuals and situations. I further established the utility of the generalist practice model for enabling assessment, planning, intervention, and evaluation of social justice-promoting practices from the individual to the policy level. The logical extension of this line of thought is that social workers must possess skills at the individual as well as policy level in order to shape social justice to meet client needs, protect client rights,

and ensure freedom from oppressive barriers. The implication of this finding is two-fold: On the one hand, as discussed in terms of implications for practice, it is imperative for social workers to actively collaborate on issues of social justice in order to strengthen the collective voice and to share knowledge and resources. On the other hand, the findings also suggest the need for social work practitioners graduating with MSW degrees to enter into practice with a broad range of knowledge and skills. This conclusion, rooted in these empirically-based findings, are in line with existing concerns about dichotomized social work education and its impact on social justice work and the very identity of the profession (Breton, 2006; Caputo, 2002; Gibelman, 1999; K. S. Haynes, 1998; Jacobson & Rugeley, 2007; Reisch & Andrews, 2001).

At the school at which this study was conducted, MSW students must declare a concentration that is either clinical or focused on policy planning and administration. Many accredited social work schools across the United States operate from a similar model. In light of this study's findings, it is most appropriate to question whether such an approach is truly able to equip students to engage in the promotion of social justice across client systems. Participants recognized that individual problems are often tied directly to structural forces and must also be addressed at that level; it was clinical practitioner's confidence in doing so that emerged as a concern (outside of environmental influences). Lawson and Alameda-Lawson (2001) argue that intra-professional boundary setting serves to divide our collective goals and identities and serve as barriers to the creation of substantive social change strategies. These authors explicitly state that:

> …there is a specific need for schools of social work to actively and explicitly increase the development of social workers who can help vulnerable communities

> mediate and negotiate these extremely complex multi-level, multi-modal, and multi-systemic barriers to community, organizational, professional, institutional, and overall systemic transformation. Because the range of knowledge and skills needed to accomplish such an ambitious objective, and because social work continues to be the lone profession with the foundational focus of liberating oppressed populations…the Advanced Generalist Perspective can be utilized to help provide all social work students with multi-level and multi-modal practice skills and frames of reference (Lawson & Alameda-Lawson, 2001).

One suggestion is to offer graduate students the option (in *addition* to existing choices) of an Advanced Generalist concentration, rather than forcing a choice between micro and macro practice when such a dichotomy may not be conducive to the goals of the profession. In addition, an Advanced Generalist concentration option holds special promise in rural areas (Gibbs, et al., 1990) and in an economic climate where more must be done with less.

The findings of this study reveal educational strategies, based on participant experience, that would further empower future social workers to promote social justice. It should be disturbing to social work educators that clinical practitioners are emerging into a profession in which they feel ill-equipped, per the literature and my findings here, to engage in its primary purpose. Reframing social justice in procedural and commutative terms goes a long way toward remedying this issue by defining social justice in a way that makes it more accessible and relevant to the daily practice lives of clinicians. Classroom curriculum should include these theoretical perspectives, in addition to recognition of social work's rich history of social reform (Abramovitz, 1998;

De Maria, 1992) in order to create a culture of social justice. An infusion model of social justice education is also advised. Such an approach would involve meanings of and strategies toward the promotion of social justice across the curriculum, and explicitly tied to all areas of social work education, from human behavior to research, from policy to direct practice. By making available master's level generalist skill-building, building social justice into the full range of social work curricula, defining social justice at all levels of practice, and preparing students for active collaboration in the field, we may fill many of the gaps that currently exist (Barsky, 2010; De Maria, 1992; van Wormer, 2002).

Lastly, the experiences of participants of their own social work education as well as the strategies they utilize with students point to the value of experiential learning to the ability to act on social justice goals. Participants reported widely that until they were exposed in some way to the real-world oppression and barriers experienced by clients, they did not have a true understanding of injustice. Many reported a culture shock upon entering field placement or even employment and struggling to integrate new information and find ways to address injustice. Some participants also stressed the value of early and frequent exposure opportunities and suggested an increase in such experiential learning throughout social work education. The value of experiential learning to an applied profession such as social work has been established (Goldstein, 2001), and existing sources may point to strategies for enhancing this vital real-world component.

Implications for professional development.

Additional implications emerged from this study regarding social workers' ability to engage in effective field education that center on professional representation and competence. Participants noted the lack of access to current social work research,

information considered vital for policy awareness, cultural competence, and practice innovation that they experience once they themselves exited the academic setting. If practitioners are to take on the important task of field education, it is imperative for them to remain up-to-date with emerging social work knowledge. This is a serious issue in light of the fact that participants reported having limited or no access to professional journals. This fact represents one way in which social workers are disempowered in practice, and therefore are limited in what power they are able to share and offer for client goals. It is also important to recognize participants' concern about continuing education. Licensed social workers participate in mandated continuing education, including the ethics requirement in this state. The findings of this study, however, indicate that even the ethics training is not inclusive of social justice, one of the profession's core values that is invoked throughout the *Code of Ethics*. Additionally, lack of access to NASW because of the costly fees serves to disempower social workers. It seems an injustice that social workers, due to inadequate salaries, experience barriers to professional representation and voice, not to mention information that is available to members only. Social work professional organizations, including but not necessarily limited to NASW must consider how to eliminate barriers to the pursuit of social justice that emanate from *within*. We cannot always control the environment in which our profession exists, but we certainly can choose how we support one another and attend to our own goals and standards.

Implications for Social Work Research

This study suggests several directions for future research in terms of classroom and field education as well as social work practice. I have discussed a number of barriers

identified by participants to their social justice practice behaviors and field education efforts. Their responses reveal areas in which it is likely that many social workers also experience challenges such as interdisciplinary work and conflict; lack of access to professional organizations or scholarly literature to inform practice; the impact of cultural attitudes and community norms for successful social justice-promoting practice; and the impact of burnout and vicarious trauma on one's engagement in and commitment to broad social change efforts. These are all areas ripe for further inquiry, both qualitative and quantitative, in order to better understand the nature of these barriers, social worker efforts to circumvent or transcend them, and possible new solutions that might better empower social workers to apply knowledge and values in everyday practice.

With specific regard to social work field education several implications for research emerged. Participants noted difficulty with the task of connecting students' experiences in field to the theory and foundational knowledge received in the classroom. One question that bears further examination is whether or not block versus concurrent field placement makes a difference in terms of the effective integration of course- and fieldwork. It may also be informative to inquire into possible differences in social justice competency between field placements that are either macro- or micro-focused. In terms of application of an empowerment perspective, there also exists the opportunity to add to the sparse literature (Garner, 2006) that has examined its utility as it applies to social workers (rather than clients) (Staples, 1990).

In terms of further testing and building upon the model I have presented here, there are also opportunities for further exploration. Emergent constructs and processes could be operationalized as survey items and tested quantitatively to establish validity

and reliability. As I have discussed, I also hope to present the findings as a field instructor training on social justice practice and teaching. One methodology that would be useful in this context would be to conduct focus groups to further explore the substantive meanings (what is social justice? How do social workers "do" social justice?) I have offered. In addition, to assess the model's utility as a teaching tool for field instructors, a pre- and post-test could be created and administered to training participants.

I have argued here the potential benefit of the generalist/advanced generalist perspective to social workers' ability to most effectively assess for and intervene on behalf of client social justice issues. As some programs exist that offer the Advanced Generalist concentration at the MSW level, comparison of social justice competencies as elaborated in the new EPAS among such programs and those utilizing a dichotomy model would be most informative. Examination of social justice outcomes in field education according to the new guidelines in EPAS would also be of great utility for building and expanding our knowledge of educational success around this most critical element.

Finally, further inquiry into the actual practice behaviors of social workers in the area of social justice-promoting practice should continue to be explored. The value of operationalizing and explicitly describing such behaviors cannot be overstated, as evidenced by the century-old debate over the exact nature of social justice. Making social justice practice concrete, attainable, and relevant across concentrations and practice settings can only serve to enhance its manifestation on behalf of clients. In addition to further exploration of practice behaviors, the question of non-employment-related social action should be examined. Social workers have previously been found to be apt to engage in social change efforts and activism that is not undertaken in a professional or

paid context (Birkenmaier, 2003). What activities do they engage in? What organizations, aside from NASW, do social workers subscribe to, and seek as vehicles for acting on social justice beliefs? What opportunities exist to enhance available collaboration or to create new coalitions toward social justice? What might prevent organization participation?

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations, primarily its small sample size. Participants self-selected for the study by responding to listserv messages and announcements at field instructor events, and interview data is based on self-reporting. Although efforts were made toward maximum variation, the sample shows limited diversity of race and gender. The essential purpose of grounded theory inquiry is to reveal new information and formulate theory and not to produce a widely representative sample. As a result, the findings have limited transferability beyond similar demographic, geographic, and organizational contexts. Future research should continue to explore the constructs and processes represented in the emergent model in other settings and with different participants to build confidence around transferability.

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Appendix A

Table 4

Key theoretical constructs of social worker empowerment

Factors that promote empowerment	Ability to respond to change
	A sense of relatedness
	Belief that social work role is valued
	Ability to advocate for self, have a voice
	Self-efficacy
	Internal locus of control
	Personal power development
	Access to choices
	Right to decision-making
	Consciousness-raising
Factors that disempower	Lack of appropriate and adequate training
	Low perceived self-efficacy
	Low place in agency or interdisciplinary hierarchy
	Unmanageably high caseloads/unrealistic job expectations
	Agency model/job duties incongruent with social work values and knowledge
	Safety issues
	Lack of material resources, low pay
	Lack of professional autonomy
	Clarity of job expectations
	Rapidly changing work environment/job demands

	High staff turnover
	Privatization and market demands
Consequences of disempowerment	Helplessness
	Alienation
	Self-blame
	Hopelessness
	Burn-out
	Spiritual and/or intellectual paralysis
Strategies for empowerment	Increase decision-making involvement and power
	Minimize power differentials
	Enhance involvement in agency change
	Demonstrated respect for social work
	Opportunities for professional development
	Good communication within agency
	Provision of positive feedback/rewards
	Support for/provision of paths to self-care
	Redirection of power and resources to benefit social workers/employees/social work
	Enhancement of sense of belonging

Appendix B: Letter to potential participants

Dear Potential Study Participant:

Thank you for responding to my request for study participants for my research project entitled, "Exploring Field Instruction Strategies for Social Justice"! The purpose of this qualitative study is to better understand how social workers practice and teach the foundational value of social justice. In other words, I want to create a model of how we as social workers "do" social justice in everyday practice. I have a great passion for social work, social justice, and social work education, and this study is about enhancing each of these based on the unique and important knowledge that YOU hold.

Although it is hoped that the findings of this study will inform social work education surrounding social justice, it is in no way evaluative of current strategies or persons involved in field instruction. We as social workers have the values, skills, knowledge, and tools to promote social justice every day in practice and through the education of future practitioners – the goal of the study is to collect and present this information using your practice wisdom and life experience as a model.

Interviews will be the primary source of information for the study in order to record directly the firsthand perceptions of participants. If you consent to participate:

- You would be asked to engage in one primary interview with the option of a follow-up interview to be scheduled at a time and place that are convenient for you. These may be conducted either face-to-face or via telephone.
- Your participation will be strictly voluntary and you may withdraw at any time.
- With your permission as described on the attached consent form, I will audio record and transcribe the interviews.
- All information will be kept strictly confidential.
- You will have opportunities to offer feedback regarding my analysis and findings.

I am including with this letter a consent form, the questions that will guide the interview, and a brief demographic form that will provide me with basic information about you and your social work background. I value your time, so the questionnaire may either be completed at the time of the interview or prior to our meeting, depending on what is most convenient for you. Thank you for your time and patience in reading through this letter and looking over included materials. I look forward to meeting with you, and in the mean time, please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Kirsten Havig, MSW, LCSW, Doctoral Candidate
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Appendix C: Participant Informed Consent

Participant Informed Consent

"Exploring Social Worker Field Instruction Strategies for Social Justice"

The following information is to help you decide whether to participate in my research study on social workers' perceptions surrounding social justice in practice and field education. The aim and potential benefit of this study is to gain a better understanding of how social workers develop and perceive practice and field instruction strategies for social justice.

Two primary research questions will guide this inquiry:

- How do social workers perceive their engagement in and promotion of social justice in practice and field education?
- What personal and agency supports and barriers exist for social justice goals and strategies in practice and field education?

If you wish to take part in the study, you will be asked to do the following:

- Participate in a series of two individual interviews, approximately ½ - 1 hour each. The first interview uses open-ended questions focusing on the above research questions. The second interview will serve as a follow-up, allowing an opportunity for any information not shared during interview #1 to be collected. Interviews may be either face-to-face or via telephone and arranged at your convenience.
- Provide feedback on the study's findings. A copy of the transcripts for each interview will be made available to you and findings will be shared for your review.
- Give permission to have your interviews audio taped. They will be transcribed by the researcher.

If you wish to participate, you also need to know:

- Your participation is completely voluntary.
- You may stop or withdraw from the study at any time without any type of penalty.
- You do not have to answer any question if you do not wish to do so.
- There are no known risks to you if you decide to participate in the study.

With regard to confidentiality:

- Identifying information about participant employment will be kept confidential and will not be specified in any write-up that emerges from this study. No names or any other identifying information about participants will be attached to the results, although general employment settings (i.e. hospital) may be identifiable. Only pseudonyms will be used in

the final write-up and can either be chosen by the participant or assigned by the researcher.

- All materials associated with this research study will be kept solely by the researcher, to be stored in a locked cabinet inaccessible to others.
- Participant information and interview transcript materials will be identified only by study number, not by name.
- Findings (complete or partial) from this study will be shared with other students and instructors at the University of Missouri and will be submitted for publication in an academic social work journal.

If you have questions about the study, you may contact (the researcher), Kirsten Havig, Ph.D. candidate, at: havigk@missouri.edu or 573-489-8141. Alternatively, you may contact the researcher's advisor, Dr. Kim Anderson with questions or concerns at andersonki@missouri.edu, by writing her at 724 Clark Hall, UM-C, Columbia, MO 65211-4470, or by calling 573-884-8077.

Additionally, if you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the University's Campus Institutional Review Board: **483 McReynolds Hall Columbia, MO 65211. Telephone: 573-882-9585. E-mail: umcresearchcirb@missouri.edu**

I do hereby give my informed consent to participate in this research study. I understand that involvement in the project is entirely voluntary. I also understand that I may end my involvement at any time without being penalized in any way. I will receive a copy of this form for my review and records.

Signature Date

Appendix D: Interview Guide

1. If you had to describe your work to someone who does not understand what social workers do, or why and how we do it, what would you say?

2. How does being a social worker impact who you are?

3. How do you define social justice?

4. How do you view social justice in the context of the professional practice of social work? What social injustices are/should be of concern to social workers?

5. How did you learn about social justice? Are there policies, organizations, experiences, or information that have significantly informed your understanding and perception of social justice?

6. How did your social work education prepare you to engage in social justice pursuits?

7. How is social justice reflected in your practice?

8. As a field instructor what do you communicate to students about social justice within the profession of social work?

9. How does your agency help or hinder your ability to engage in social justice pursuits?

10. In an ideal world, if you had the personal and agency resources necessary to support social justice in your social work practice, what would be the impact? How would your practice be different? How would your strategies for field education be impacted? What recommendations do you have for making this happen?

11. If you could revisit your social work education, in what ways might you change or enhance your education about social justice? What recommendations do you have for current educators for enhancing education surrounding social work practice for social justice?

Appendix E

Table 5

Participant affiliation with political, community, or social action groups

Basic Needs Coalition
Central Missouri Stop Human Trafficking Coalition
Chamber of Commerce
Emerging Professionals in Columbia
Interagency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect
Missouri Association for Community Action
Missouri Association of Substance Abuse Providers
Missouri Council on Aging
Missouri End of Life Coalition
National Hemophilia Foundation
National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization
Prism Gay Straight Youth Alliance
Progressive Women
Republican party
School of Social Work Alumni Board
Social Work Hospice and Palliative Care Network
Social Work Leaders in Health Care of Metro St. Louis
Youth Community Coalition (2)

Appendix F: Open codes with definitions

Agency barriers	Aspects of practice setting that create barriers or impose challenges to participant's promotion of social justice in practice or education
Agency supports	Aspects of participant practice setting that facilitate or support engagement in social justice pursuits (practice or education)
Self intersect	Participant perspective on intersection of self and social work; may include personal and foundational values and/or impact of social work practice on values
Social justice definition	Participant definition of social justice and/or social injustice that are the purview and concern of social workers and the profession
Social justice field Instruction	Strategies and methods of teaching the concept and practice of social justice to students as the field instructor
Social justice in social work practice	The intersection of social work and social justice; the meaning of social justice to social work; views on social justice in the social work context; ways that social justice is reflected in own practice
Social justice learning	Participant's own process of learning what social justice/injustice is, via personal experience, formal education, and/or practice experience
Social justice preparedness	Participant perspectives on their own self-efficacy for and academic/professional preparation for social justice practice
Social justice vision for field instruction	Ideal world-visions and ideas for enhancement of social justice education
Social justice vision for Practice	Ideal world-visions and ideas for enhancement of social justice practice

Social work definition	Participant definition(s) of what social work is, what social workers do

Appendix G

Table 5

Strauss and Corbin axial coding paradigm as applied to this study

Model element	Strauss and Corbin	Applied to this study
Context values	Properties of phenomenon	Social work knowledge &
Causal conditions	Lead to phenomenon	Empowered field instructors
Phenomenon values	Central idea or event	Activation of social work
Strategies	Purposeful response	Field instruction strategies
Intervening conditions	Conditions that act to facilitate or constrain	Internal/external supports and barriers
Consequences justice-	Outcomes or consequences	Empowerment for social promoting practice

Appendix H: Trustworthiness Strategies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)

Criteria	Goal or concern	Methods
Credibility	Learn lifeworld of participants	Immersion in data
	Rectify misinformation	Member checking
	Identify salient elements in data	Peer debrief
	Identify atypical data	Constant comparison
	Researcher bias	Reflexivity journal
	Researcher as instrument	
Transferability	Provide reader with context	Thick, rich description
		Maximum variation
		Literature review
Dependability	Saturation	Systematic data collection
	Interpretation rooted in data	Researcher reflexivity
		Inquiry audit
Confirmability	Assurance of data-based findings	Audit trail
	Establishment of analytical logic	Inquiry audit
		Reflexivity journal
		Peer debriefing
		Member checks

VITA

Kirsten Havig was born in Columbia, MO and raised there by parents Dr. Alan Havig and Bettina Havig. She attended the University of Missouri as an undergraduate, earning dual bachelor's degrees in May of 1994 in Anthropology and Women's Studies. She soon discovered social work while employed at a local Head Start, and found it an ideal path toward the pursuit of social justice and a better world. She received her Master of Social Work degree from the University of South Carolina in 1998 with a concentration in practice with communities and organizations.

With MSW in hand, Kirsten found her first professional employment as a social worker with the 13th Circuit Court of Missouri, Boone County Juvenile Division. From there she worked as a therapist at Missouri Girls Town, earning her LCSW clinical licensure. Prior to returning to the University to pursue a doctoral degree in social work, Kirsten served the community at Rainbow House Child Advocacy Center providing an array of services for children and families impacted by sexual abuse. She continues as a child advocate and hopes to contribute to the profession with future research focused on issues of child sexual abuse and exploitation. Kirsten brings her professional practice experience to the classroom to best educate and support student social workers as they enter the field.

As the focus of her dissertation suggests, Kirsten is committed to issues of social and economic justice as a professional social worker, as an educator and scholar, and in every area of her life.