Justice in action?

Social work and social justice in the 21st century

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Abstract

Most social workers today learn about and adhere to international and national commitments which specify social justice as an integral part of social work ethics and values. This research focuses on how eight Aotearoa/New Zealand recent social work graduates (2000-2010) understand social justice and how they integrate it into their social work practice. The study explores whether barriers exist in implementing social justice into social work practice on both a personal and structural level, and if so, what they are.

The study is qualitative, utilising a critical ethnographic methodology and a critical theoretical framework. Data collected through the use of focus groups and in-depth interviews is examined with a thematic analytical approach.

Analysis identified seven themes which showed that social justice was primarily understood as being able to work for change on a structural level. The themes also highlighted the existence of a number of barriers to the integration of social justice into practice. These barriers were in two key areas, the workplace and the organisation of social work. All participants were in strong agreement regarding these barriers.

These findings strongly support previous literature and research which identify a disjuncture for social workers between the definition and practice of social work in a number of areas, particularly in an environment dominated by neoliberal ideology. The concord between participants in this study and the similarity of the findings to data within earlier research suggests that the social work community is facing an ongoing and serious difficulty in ensuring social work is able to fulfil its ethical commitments and protect its workers as they work for social justice.

Based on this research five recommendations are made to develop and support the social work community.

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As with any achievement in life, this thesis is far more than the work of one individual. It is the culmination of a lot of learning, support, inspiration and patience provided by a range of people. I cannot mention everyone and given that all my friends had to tolerate my rants, general unavailability and obsessivness that seems inadequate but thanks so much!

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> Social work is the expression of social justice, or should be, or is it that social justice is an earlier way of talking about the theory behind social work and what is happening now is not really social work? They are so in and around each other, at least in theory, that it is hard to tell, at least from where I am sitting - Norida (Participant 2011).

Social work and issues of social justice have long been intertwined. Notions of social justice and its practical application have been a consideration of each generation of social workers. In 2011 the Australian, Aotearoa/New Zealand, and American (to name only a few) Social Work Associations have codes of ethics which contain a commitment to social justice, thus formally linking social justice with social work ethics and values (Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers, 2008; Australian Association of Social Workers, 2010; National Association of Social Workers, 2008).

> The social work profession holds that social justice is a core obligation which societies should be called upon to uphold (Australian Association of Social Workers, 2010, p. 13).

Thus in approaching this topic my primary desire was to *find out more* about 21st century graduates, how they saw, experienced and applied social justice in their day to day practice. The views and practice of the social worker graduates from 2000-2010 were not explicit in current Aotearoa/New Zealand research, and yet were known to me on a basic level as I am part of this cohort. I had felt and seen some confusing and contradictory things when it came to the relationship between social work values on paper and how they were translated into practice. Like Katherine Mansfield (1987) who wrote "I want by understanding myself to understand others" (p. 24), I could see that more detailed research into social workers who have come through into the field in the last 10 years could potentially improve our comprehension of what issues are facing the social work community.

The concept of social justice, what it is, how it should be practiced and to whom it applies has been hotly debated. Religious texts, great philosophical thinkers, political movements and indigenous communities have all contributed to an ongoing evolution in the way we think of social justice (Barnard, Horner, & Wild, 2008). As society changes or is changed over time, so too do notions of what is acceptable or

ethical. 'Social justice' is not a static reality. Today, just as throughout history, what it is to be 'just' is argued, discussed and examined with great passion (Porter, 2007). Consequently there is no consensus on an absolute definition of social justice. There appears, however, to be loose agreement that social justice is "principally concerned with equality, tolerance, compassion, fairness and participation" (Friesen, 2007, p. 145). Despite this somewhat general concurrence many differing opinions still remain when it comes to more specific interpretation and application (O'Brien, 2009b).With respect to the myriad of views in existence and to our capacity as human beings to alter our ethical positions, this study will not impose a rigid definition of social justice on participants in this research. Instead Friesen's broad definition will provide some general guidance as to what 'social justice' refers to in the context of this work, while allowing for variation in participant perception. The importance of approaching this study with a very general definition of social justice rather than choosing one already published or applying my own is aptly captured by early sociologist Ruth Benedict (1934) when she writes:

> We must be willing to take account of changing normalities even when the question is of the morality in which we were bred. Just as we are handicapped in dealing with ethical problems so long as we have an absolute definition of morality, so we are handicapped in dealing with human society so long as we identify our local normalities with the inevitable necessities of existence (p. 234).

In other words, to impose a pre-defined meaning on social justice would be to preclude the learning available from those whose ideas of social justice may be outside my own explicit or tacit knowledge of what is normal (Spradley, 1994). Valuable insight therefore, may be lost. This is something that one learns most keenly as a social worker as work is conducted across many boundaries such as culture, class, gender, sexuality and religion.

Social work itself is understood in a variety of ways, although it is easier to clearly articulate due to the definition provided by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) (see appendix 6). Social work is widely agreed to have its origins in "humanitarian and democratic ideals" (Hare, 2004), providing a broad overlap between social work and social justice from the outset. In fact social justice is a term frequently referenced and discussed in social work discourse from all over the world (Ferguson & Lavalette, 2005; Ife, 2000; Lundy, 2004; O'Brien, 2005). Most social

workers adhere to definitions of social work which include active, living commitments to social justice. Examples of these are found in the work of the aforementioned IFSW, the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) or more locally, the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW) (Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers, 2008; Hare, 2004; International Association of Schools of Social Work, 2004). With the connection between social work and social justice being so evident in literature, the importance of investigating and understanding this link gains added significance. The desire to unravel this interlaced relationship provided the impetus for this research topic.

In analysing the literature on the affiliation between social work and social justice two things become apparent. The first of these is that social work and its relationship to social justice is a topic of discussion and debate from the earliest writings through to modern day blogs. This reality, explored in chapters two and three provides some context to the issues that frame social work within our society. The second matter is that though the discussion of social work and social justice itself is old, the focus and issues that absorb those contributing to the literature does change. An example of this is the intensification of discourse on the emerging dominance of a neoliberal ideology that has occurred in the last twenty five years and its impact upon social work and social justice obligations (Connolly, 2009; Dominelli, 2004; Ferguson, 2008; Hawkins, Fook, & Ryan, 2001). Much of this discussion and commentary is focused on the dramatically changing social and political reality for many countries and its impact upon social work identity and responsibilities (Asquith, Clark, & Waterhouse, 2005; Dominelli, 2010; Ferguson, 2008). The growth of neoliberalism and associated managerial or market based approaches to social service provision have become central issues (Jones, 2005; Dunlop, 2006; Jordan, 2004; Wehbi & Turcotte, 2007), as has the associated shift away from ideas of universal social security and equality (Carey, 2008; Craig, 2002; Lunt, O'Brien, & Stephens, 2008). Questions around the identity of social work in such a period of change are posited with greater frequency (Ferguson & Lavalette, 2005; Rossiter, 2001).

Thus the experience of social workers entering practice between 2000-2010, a time where neoliberalism is not new and yet remains a polarising issue, is of great value to those wishing to understand social work, its relationship to wider society and

current notions of social justice. For there is an observable relationship, as social work academic Nash (2009) concludes, social work tends to reflect " the social, political, cultural and economic circumstances in which it is practiced" (p. 376). The validity of researching social workers in this time period begins to be evident.

In Aotearoa/New Zealand we have experienced 'concentrated' structural changes within our society since the 1980s. A report on Aotearoa/New Zealand by Moody's Investment Services (1994) comments that "The reorientation of New Zealand economic policy after 1984 represented one of the most ambitious and comprehensive structural reforms undertaken by any OECD country..." (p. 3). Social work graduates in Aotearoa/New Zealand from 2000-2010 have entered into study and graduated within a society shaped by these social reforms (Alston, 2009), and this provides the final impetus for the focus of this study. This thesis, while providing international perspective and linkages, will study social workers in Aotearoa/New Zealand who are at the front lines of social work practice at the beginning of the 21st century.

Research outline

This study is a qualitative research project incorporating eight participants in two focus groups. Further in-depth interviews were conducted with four of the eight focus group participants. The overarching objectives of the study are to:

- Gain insight into how social work graduates from 2000-2010 understand social justice.
- Discover how (and if) these graduates integrate their concept/s of social justice into their daily practice and what, if any, barriers exist to prevent them from doing this.
- Explore how graduates experience their relationship with their employer and whether the expression/s of social justice finds support and/or validation from the agencies they have worked in.
- Place the current understandings within a context of social work historically.

The methodology of this study is a critical ethnographic one. Critical ethnography is part of a qualitative tradition that "examines cultural knowledge and action with the aim of forcing society to identify and act on ethical and political issues" (Morse &

Richards, 2002, p. 54). This tradition is highly appropriate when considering the overarching goals of the study are to *find out more* and create thick, rich data on participants' experiences of social work and social justice (O'Leary, 2009).

The study is grounded in critical theory. Critical theory is a decidedly valuable framework when considering issues of social justice as it has "a stated interest in emancipation of humanity from injustice" (Chambers, 2004, p. 221).

The study will provide an overview of social work and social justice throughout history allowing current experiences and views to be placed in a clear context. Critical theory assists this process by "valuing subjective experience and hence affirming difference and the continual reconstruction of reality" (Ife, 1999, p. 219).

Justification

While it can be argued that there is not only considerable literature on social work and its connection to social justice, but also fairly recent local work (O'Brien, 2009a), closer examination reveals that this study offers a perspective that is both necessary and unique. When the caveat of an Aoteaora/New Zealand focus is placed on the search of literature examining social work and its relationship to social justice, the amount of work available is greatly reduced. With the additional caveat of the time period 2000-2010 it all but disappears. Little is in fact known specifically about 21st century social work graduates and their views and experiences anywhere in the world and in conducting my literature review I could find no study with this specific focus.

The lack of research in this area is no indication of irrelevance. The participant bracket this study focuses on is, in actuality, becoming more and more significant to the social work arena. This is due to the fact in Aotearoa/New Zealand we are facing a problem common to many western countries, namely the predicament of a 'top heavy' or aging population (Harrington & Crothers, 2005). A significant proportion of workers in Aotearoa/New Zealand are nearing or at retirement age precipitating a skill shortage in many areas (Harrington & Crothers, 2005). This problem is compounded for the social work community as social workers there are few practicing over 60, let alone to the standard retirement age of 65 (Harrington & Crothers, 2005). This led researchers Harrington & Crothers (2005) to postulate that

many must "retire smartly" (p. 6). These statistics ultimately mean that 21st century graduates are rapidly forming an increasingly large part of the social work community and inevitably are entering more leadership roles.

With the growing input of 21st century graduates to the social work field, research on the experiences and understandings of this group will contribute to the social work community on three levels. The first of these is the ability for the social work community to become aware of how social justice is understood by recently graduated social workers. It is one thing to integrate social justice into the definition of what social work is (Hare, 2004), it is quite another if we are all taking that integration to mean quite different and possibly contradictory things.

Secondly, while it is useful to appreciate how people understand a concept, that information becomes essentially obsolete without further insight into whether or not that knowledge is practicable in the field. If social workers are committed to principles of social justice yet find them complicated or unrealistic in practice this could be the difference between successful and unsuccessful standards in social work. The possibility of a gap between theory and practice is an issue that has been raised before within social work discourse (Payne, 2002).

Thirdly, social workers, aside from those few who are self employed, are employees of an organisation or agency (Harrington & Crothers, 2005). The directives, support, resourcing and expectations of employers are neither necessarily universal, nor compatible with the ethical responsibilities of social workers (Asquith, et al., 2005). To build knowledge of how social workers are experiencing and managing these relationships provides valuable insight into how far values and ethics can be implemented in a day to day work environment.

My interest and positioning

My interest in doing this research has been constant throughout my thirteen years of social work practice. I have always been interested in concepts of social justice, how societies define and express these ideas and how they shift and change. Involvement in activist movements and organisations has been a significant feature throughout my life and continues to provide challenges and learning for me on a daily basis. I remain highly motivated by the aspiration to achieve social change and live by

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strong social justice values. It was this same motivation or desire to fight for social justice that engaged me in activist groups which led me into working with people in the community sector and seeing social workers in action. Women's Refuge proved to be my first training ground and I was provided with extensive mentoring and support in my role on the Collective. The feminist kaupapa of Women's Refuge gave me a model for how social work could be a political and radical activity.

By the time I began my social work training, which I finished in 2007, I had worked as a community worker and youth worker for a number of years and had thought extensively on the complexities of social justice. On entering my social work undergraduate education I was startled to find there was a dearth of unfettered, open discussion on the complexities of social justice in class, something I had become used to as a colleague of (primarily older) social and community workers. Indeed within my undergraduate degree some of my fellow students complained to staff that I continued to raise issues in class that 'were unlikely to be in the exam.' While there was some reference to concepts of social justice in the written material we were provided, there was a distinct reluctance by most students and staff to discuss or explore these issues. This gap in my social work education honed my interest in social work history and the expression of social justice.

As a graduate within the designated 2000-2010 time period I am, in part, an 'insider' in to the research group of interest. Recognising this and ensuring it is transparent to all involved has been important in ensuring that I do not consciously or unconsciously attempt to influence or manipulate emergent data (Johnson, 2001). Conversely, it has been possible to utilise my 'insider' position in a positive manner to progress the research. Primarily this has been through prior knowledge of, and connection to, networks that the relevant social work graduates may access, thereby enabling constructive communication with the appropriate candidates.

I am not solely an 'insider' in this study however, as the makeup of participants who contributed to the research is, by design, diverse. I am an outsider in that there are participants who identify as Māori, Male and/or are heterosexual. As these are identities I do not claim, I cannot claim to be an 'insider' to all participants. This strengthens the research as I cannot, as the researcher, simply filter participants through my own cultural and social norms. As Fontana so aptly summarises

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"respondents are no longer faceless numbers whose opinions we process completely on our own terms" (2003, p. 52).

The positioning which is important to this research is not only my own. There are broader structural and political aspects that shape the environment that this research sits within.

> The problems of our clients are as much caused by global forces as by national forces, and we cannot understand local problems without reference to global economic, political and cultural circumstances (Ife, 2000, p. 7).

Therefore some important considerations are necessary to accurately position this work within the context of relevant local and global events. Of particular relevance is that 2011, the year of conducting this research is an election year within Aotearoa/New Zealand. Within an election year, political debate, contentious policy discussion and ideological argument are at a premium. News media, community events and critical commentary contain significant coverage of political issues (Bahador, 2008). This affects this research in that potentially a political perspective or analysis may be more forthcoming in such an environment than would be the case at another time. The issues raised or referenced in discussion on ideas of social justice may have been influenced by the 'hot' political topics receiving coverage in the media due to election year.

Furthermore Aotearoa/ New Zealand as well as much of the international community are currently immersed in an economic recession. In practical terms this means that as a country Aotearoa/New Zealand is facing extremely high levels of unemployment, deprivation and income disparity (Salvation Army Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit, 2011). Many cutbacks to social services and projects are being posited in order to reduce the expenditure of government (The National Business Review, 2011). This reality is one where social workers could potentially feel their jobs and livelihoods are vulnerable, hence restricting their free and unfettered participation in the research. Equally, this state of affairs could potentially crystallise issues of social justice for participants as the discourse of what social service provision is 'necessary' and 'productive' raises many questions around what is valued and considered 'just'.

Overall it appears that 2011 in Aotearoa/New Zealand is an apt time for this study to be undertaken. It is a time where the political direction the country is going to take, what is considered valuable, what is 'right' and what is 'fair' is a larger part of our national discourse than it may be at another time. The presence of such discussion makes the nature and direction of this study highly relevant as a contribution to this collective dialogue.

Thesis overview

This thesis is laid out in six chapters. This overview provides a snapshot of each chapter for clarity and to allow ease of access to particular areas.

Chapter One:

This chapter introduces the topic and its development as well as a synopsis of the research theory and methodology. This chapter also ensures that the research is contextualised so that those reading or considering the work may understand the influences affecting and shaping the work at the time of writing. The chapter concludes with an overview of the thesis and each chapter.

Chapter Two:

The second chapter explores the relationship between social work and social justice on an international level. A broad perspective is provided on how discourse on social work and social justice has developed throughout history on a world scale. This broad perspective allows patterns to be tracked in the development of social work internationally and illustrates key challenges and concerns.

Chapter Three:

Aotearoa/New Zealand is the focal point for this section. The patterns and developments previously examined from an international perspective are investigated from the unique perspective and position of this country. The particular experiences and key changes affecting the development of social work and its relationship to social justice in Aotearoa/New Zealand are scrutinised.

Chapter Four:

The methodology, theoretical framework and data collection process are covered in the fourth chapter. The research design is elaborated and contextualised. Why the study utilises the methodology and framework that it does and what these offer the study is explored. All ethical issues, how they were identified and resolved are also presented here alongside the process with which participants were engaged.

Chapter Five:

This chapter presents the demographics of the participants and the data collected. The seven themes identified by the application of thematic analysis are presented and analysed.

Chapter Six:

This chapter draws together the previous chapters and provides a concluding summation, critical discussion and five recommendations.

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Chapter 2

The long and winding road: Social work's connection to Social Justice

Introduction

> Social work grew out of humanitarian and democratic ideals, and its values
> are based on respect for the equality, worth and dignity of all people. Since
> its beginnings over a century ago, social work practice has focused on
> meeting human needs and developing human potential. Human rights and
> social justice serve as the motivation and justification for social work action
> (Hare, 2004, p. 419).

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a historical overview of social justice and the development of the social work field at an international level. This macro level observation of social work and social justice provides two key insights into the substance from which this thesis is wrought.

 Firstly, reviewing some of the history and development of social justice provides valuable insight into how this concept is not only a relevant and vital feature of human cultures worldwide, but is something that every generation adds to, adapts and reinterprets. Social justice therefore has both a history and a future, and thus has great importance to those of us who may participate in shaping, interpreting and applying it in the present.

Secondly, the chapter then builds on the exploration of social justice to investigate the origins and evolution of social work. By breaking the study of social work's historical journey into time periods, international patterns, themes and issues of the time can be understood. This section clearly demonstrates the inextricable link between notions of social justice and the progression and nature of social work.

A history of social justice

> Of the good in you I can speak, but not of the evil. For what is evil but the
> good tortured by its own hunger and thirst? Verily when good is hungry it
> seeks food even in dark caves and when it thirsts it drinks even of dead
> waters (Gibran, 1923, p. 75).

In any examination of recorded history, poetry, art or fiction, it is clear that human beings have long shaped, debated, discussed, explored and queried what it is to be 'good' and 'just'. Notions of what fairness, equality or justice are have been a part of the discourse of every culture and time period that we have access to (Dominelli, 2004). Whether those ideas are expressed in verse such as the aforementioned quote, philosophical musing such as Mill's "the greatest good for the greatest number"[i] or in religious texts like Exodus 21:24 "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth", ideas of what justice looks like have permeated our societies.

The spread of religion has certainly played a part in shaping ideas of justice, in particular the texts of the Bible, the Qur'an and the Torah have been widespread and influential, as well as retaining influence over considerable time spans (Preston, 1991). Perspective on what is 'just' and what is 'good' are significant within these religious traditions and have prompted many societies to contemplate and discuss these issues (Preston, 1991). Many church/temple based organisations, such as the Christian organisation the Salvation Army or the Muslim group Rayhaan operate social service programmes and research today which are based on self identified social justice principles.

While some propose that development of concepts of social justice in fact began with these 'great religions' (Gray, 2004) this is hotly contested. The counter argument postulates that it is unlikely human societies were without some form of ethical thinking prior to the emergence of religious organisation (Larue, 1991). Indeed indigenous cultures throughout the world are now known to have had established concepts of justice and ethics well before exposure to any of the 'great religions' (Bodley, 1999; Larue, 1991). Sociologists in particular challenged the notion that justice in any form was something owned or created by any one religion or society as their discipline emphasises the culture bound nature of values and ideas of normality (Wilkes, 1994).

Considerable attention is also paid to the great thinkers and their contribution to shaping notions of social justice (Miller, 1999). From Plato and Aristotle through to Jane Addams, Emma Goldman, Emmanuel Kant, Michel Foucault, John Stuart Mill,

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[i] This is often attributed to Rawls who utilised this phrase and made it better known, however it does originate with Mills work on utilitarianism.

John Rawls and Karl Marx (to name only a few) the parameters, intent and reality of justice and social justice was debated, elaborated and studied (Miller, 1999). Philosophers, political figures, activists and more, these influential thinkers, directly or indirectly all contributed to the development of our understanding of social justice- some by challenging society on *how* we know things, some by re-examining *what* we know, or think we know, and still others by exploring *why* we think we know something. All of the great thinkers touched on the enormous complexity of right and wrong, just and unjust. Foucault (1988) captures this tradition of thought when he wrote:

> A critique is not a matter of saying that things are not right as they are. It is a matter of pointing out on what kinds of assumptions, what kind of familiar unchallenged, unconsidered modes of thought the practices that we accept rest (p. 155).

Under such formidable guidance social justice as a concept became talked about more and more as a separate entity from other notions of justice, such as retributive or legal justice (Miller, 1999). This was a significant development as it allowed us to separate social issues from legal issues and understand that the morality of the courtroom may differ from the morality of the social world (Miller, 1976).

As well as providing some of the tools and language to deliberate on aspects of justice, debates prompted by great thinkers enabled their societies to ponder the inverse, *injustice*. What is significant in this is the influence political perspectives and ideologies have in how social injustice is defined (Miller, 1976). While people may concur that justice is good, by seeing the definition of injustice, it often becomes clear that justice isn't universally understood to mean the same thing. For example Marx, as a political figure, posited that capitalism and the associated class divide was a fundamental source of inequality and to speak of justice without reference to this reality was a bourgeois conceit (Tucker, 1978).

> ...In the modern world production is the aim of the man and wealth the aim of production. In fact however, when the narrow bourgeois form has been peeled away, what is wealth, if not the universality of needs, capacities,

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enjoyments, productive powers etc of individuals produced in universal exchange? (Marx, 1964, p. 84). [ii]

Contemporaries of Marx who adhered to a capitalist ideology however, claimed that any class divide was self created and that "every man (sic) had the opportunity to climb the social ladder and to achieve the highest rewards society had to offer" (Miller, 1976, p. 291). Advocates and analysts of both capitalist and communist ideological perspectives claimed social justice as an outcome of their approach (Miller, 1976; Tucker, 1978). This debate, which is only one of many in relation to justice and social justice, highlights how our ideas of what social justice looks like are informed by political perspectives, critique and challenge.

The 20th century saw the rise of another significant influence in the ongoing evolution of social justice. Community based political movements, such as the feminist movement, the indigenous rights movement and the gay and lesbian or 'queer' rights movement grew to such a size in many western democracies that they could not be ignored by the governments of the day[iii] (Lundy, 2004). These movements also captured the minds and hearts of new generations, providing serious challenges to institutionalised ideas of what social justice looked like and who it applied to (Bodley, 1999; Macdonald, 1993; Tong, 1998). A useful example of one of these challenges is the early 20th century upheaval over defining and applying equality, a significant component in many definitions of social justice[iv] (Friesen, 2007; Porter, 2007).

Equality was often defined in the early 20th century as people being equal within the confines of their roles, as circumscribed by their gender, colour or class (Fairburn & Olssen, 2005; Macdonald, 1993). For example, women were seen as having an 'equal' ability to fulfil their potential, as long as it was within the accepted

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[ii] It may seem odd to have a publication date well after the death of Karl Marx, who died in 1883. However for many years post-death more and more of Marx's work was collated and published, hence the date attached to this publication.

[iii] There are more movements than are mentioned here for there were many challenges for change at this time. It is beyond the scope of this work to list them all, but this is not intended to minimise the impact of any movements not listed.

[iv] While I have utilised a specific equality example here, there are many examples that I have not been able to mention. The battle, which is still ongoing in many respects, over what family means, who gets to access the rights accorded to married couples or adopts children, is another key social justice issue, as is the gap between rich and poor and the ongoing struggle for Māori to access their rights as full Treaty partners. There is no intention to place social justice issues in a hierarchy by utilising one example of equality.

parameters of the home or appropriate women's work (Fairburn & Olssen, 2005). Black Americans were also seen as having achieved 'equality', it was simply 'separate (from white) equality' (Stone, 1964). This kind of equality was espoused by governments of the time as a basic tenet of a 'just' society (Fairburn & Olssen, 2005; Miller, 1999), but was condemned by those who felt hemmed in or controlled by such role definition and saw it as solidifying fundamental inequality and injustice (Tong, 1998).

The 'second wave' feminist movement and the civil rights movement in particular struggled to redefine equality through, education, protest and becoming politically engaged (Tong, 1998). Both movements had a multi layered approach to the fight for social justice. For example, some feminists and civil rights activists identified as radical and tended towards public protest, group action and providing a direct challenge to those in power. Others identified as more liberal and organised around education, consciousness raising and fundraising.[v] In conjunction, the protest and organisation in redefining equality and other key social justice issues was so significant that those who hold 'separate but equal' ideas or perceive justice to be only for those with white skin or the correct gender have found themselves facing powerful challenges and a shrinking support base in many of today's societies (Miller, 1999).

Summary

The history of social justice, even an overview such as this one, is clearly part of the story of human history. Human beings have, and most likely will continue to shape and reshape our ideas of what is 'just'. These ideas will evolve as they have throughout this literature, in response to remarkable people and their thoughts, faith, collective organising, uprisings, economic circumstances, war, famine, political context and other unforeseeable events.

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[v] There are considerable, separate bodies of work on both the feminist movement and the civil rights movement. In no way do I attempt to cover these comprehensive analyses in this summary as it is outside the scope of this thesis to do so. I wish to acknowledge here however the role that both movements had in dramatically changing society's notions of social justice and the enormous sacrifices made by thousands of women and black activists of both genders to bring about social change.

What is highly pertinent to this thesis is how a society's conceptions of social justice impact upon how we live, who gets what and whether we are celebrated or condemned. Social work is very much bound up with these issues and hence, tightly woven into the design of social justice.

1800-1945: Social work origins

> We have learned to say that the good must be extended to all of society before it can be held secure by any one person or class; but we have not yet learned to add to that statement, that unless all [people] and all classes contribute to a good, we cannot even be sure that it is worth having (Addams, 1899, p. 165).

There is a considerable body of literature that references the historical origins of social work. While this work at times provides divergent analyses around the intention and expression of the values that informed early social work (Mendes, 2005; Payne, 1999), there are also points of academic agreement. It is widely recognised that social work emerged from a desire for some kind of social change. Whether the change wanted was in personal morality or the structure of society the root appears to be the same. As Payne (1999) summarises "western social work originates from a tradition which sought to respond to moral failings in society" (p. 253).

There is also widespread consensus that a desire for social change or improvement, particularly for the poor, led to the development of various charitable and philanthropic organisations (Banks, 2008; Harlow, 2004; Reamer, 1998). Many of these were church based and focused on relieving the worst excesses of poverty while promoting spiritual and moral growth (Lundy, 2004; Tennant, 2007). The English Poor Law of 1601 which instituted parish based 'assistance' for the poor and its 1834 amendment which abolished 'in home' support to create workhouses for the poor were significant to the development of these charitable organisations (Tennant, 2007). The Poor Laws were seen to worsen an already desperate climate for many poor people and philanthropy was both popular and in great demand (Tennant, 2007). The activities of these charitable organisations, while not identical, tended to be conducted on a voluntary basis by the privileged for the 'benefit' and 'improvement' of the underprivileged (Barsky, 2010).

> Under the traditional method of helping, non professional social workers and society matrons visited the poor during the workday but returned to their middle-or upper class homes every evening (Barsky, 2010, p. 20).

The tradition of charity and moral improvement of the poor "gave way to social work" (Harlow, 2004, p. 168) in the latter part of the nineteenth century as charity workers struggled for an identity and recognition of the skills they had developed in working with people in need (Lundy, 2004). Two key organisations are widely credited with being instrumental in this shift and as such are frequently referred to in any examination of the origin of social work (Harlow, 2004; Haynes & White, 1999; Lundy, 2004) The first of these is the Charitable Organisation Society, (COS) founded in 1869 in England and 1877 in the United States (Lundy, 2004). The second of these is the Settlement Movement. This movement existed in London from the mid nineteenth century, though is most well known for the work of Chicago's Hull House founded by Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr in 1889 (Carson, 1990)[vi].

These two organisations represented quite different approaches to social work and social justice. Early leaders of COS believed in scientific philanthropy (Haynes & White, 1999) and that "an individualistic approach ameliorated the impact of industrialisation through advancing personal change or adaption" (Lundy, 2004, p. 21). On the other hand the Settlement Movement derided charity, claiming it hid poverty and advocated strongly for social change and government responsibility for service provision (Haynes & White, 1999; Lundy, 2004).

These two organisations are representative of the wider conflict of the time developing around individual versus social responsibility or moral improvement versus structural reform which drew in many leading figures of the time. Benjamin Seebhom Rowntree of the well known Rowntree family contributed much to this debate with his work *Poverty: A study of town life* published in 1901 (Packer, 2003). This book studied working class homes in York and concluded that poverty was not simply about poor individual behaviour but largely due to unmanageably low incomes (Packer, 2003). Utilising this evidence Seebhom publicly debated with

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[vi] Understandably many British may feel that this statement is inaccurate as Mary Ward and the Passmore Edwards Settlement House (now known as the Mary Ward house) was hugely significant in the United Kingdom (Mary Ward Centre, 2010). This is not meant to undermine this great work but rather to reflect the greater media attention and profile Jane Addams in particular had and continues to have today in representing the Settlement Movement.

leaders of COS and was chiefly seen to have been victorious (Packer, 2003).[vii] Research on both sides of the debate flourished throughout the early twentieth century and the Settlement Movement and COS both utilised relevant discourse to support their positions (Haynes & White, 1999). It has been posited that this early divide in approach to social work underlies some of the ongoing struggles the field has faced and perhaps has never been fully resolved (Haynes & White, 1999).

The late nineteenth century and early twentieth century social work may be considered the first phase of social work (Reamer, 1998). Social work historian Frederic Reamer (1998) named this time 'the morality period' of social work history, due to the aforementioned focus on an individual personal morals (p. 3). Many advocates of the newly emerged field of social work, followed in the footsteps of other professions by attempting to gain validation from the political elites (Lundy, 2004; Wenocur & Reisch, 1989). Even the more 'radical' Settlement Movement workers "sought support and sponsorship from the very classes striving to maintain the status quo" (Haynes & White, 1999, p. 387).   To gain such legitimacy social work had to conform to many of the dominant social values of the time, reflecting more mainstream conceptions of justice and wellbeing (Wenocur & Reisch, 1989). Hence the COS approach, more frequently amenable to both the government and the wealthy elite became stronger and better resourced than its Settlement Movement counterpart whose ideas required more structural change and government investment (Dominelli, 2004; Wenocur & Reisch, 1989).

The ideas and approaches encapsulated in the 'first phase' of social work have undergone considerable challenge and change over the course of the twentieth and twenty first centuries (Barnard, et al., 2008; Dominelli, 2004). As our notions of social justice have developed so have ideas of what is ethical and 'good' social work. Some actions and views of early social workers may be considered somewhat dubious today (Haynes & White, 1999; Mendes, 2005). For example in a 1997 Australian human rights report the Australian Association of Social Workers

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[vii] The work *Poverty: A study of town life* and Rowntree himself was not just successful in challenging the Charitable Organisation Society but is widely credited to have been instrumental in getting the first minimum wage law in place in Britain (Packer, 2003). Following the contribution that Rowntree made as a Quaker and as a social researcher provides fascinating insights into the difference that can be made by social research. Unfortunately tracking the work done by Rowntree in full is beyond the scope of this thesis but those interested in finding out more can view the bibliography.

acknowledges that "...social workers were involved in the forced separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island children from their families in every state and territory in Australia during this century" (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997, pp. 291-292). Clearly, these actions while considered 'just' at the time by the dominant culture and receiving full sanction from authorities are now considered abominable. Along with wider society, social work has adapted, grown and changed its ideas of what is right and just.

Despite changing ideas of justice and the ability to look critically at some early social work activity, there is still significant agreement that the desire to help others and create a more just society is evident in the earliest social work discourse (Banks, 2008; Barsky, 2010; Hare, 2004; Harlow, 2004). The Settlement Movement in the early 20th century is a good example of this as they "conducted social research on community needs and advocated for societal reform" (Haynes & White, 1999, p. 386) based on the desire to create a 'just' society. Jane Addams (1910) stated that, "The negative policy of relieving destitution, or even the more generous one of preventing it, is giving way to the positive idea of raising life to its highest value" (pp. 2-3). This work by the Settlement Movement is widely credited to have given social work its philosophical and moral base (Haynes & White, 1999; Lundy, 2004).

As early as 1919 there were efforts made to put together professional codes of ethics for social workers (Elliott, 1931) and accordingly discussions on values, justice and ethics came to the fore (Reamer, 1998). Partly this was encouraged by the seemingly harsh dismissal of social work as a profession by Abraham Flexner in his 1917 speech to the National Conference of Charities and Corrections in Baltimore (Austin, 1983). Flexner determined that social work was not a profession, partly on its lack of professional associations, clear and universal ethics and a solid scientific basis (Austin, 1983). Many social workers appeared to accept this diagnosis and began trying to fulfil Flexner's criteria (Austin, 1983). Considerable debate and discussion followed concerning what social workers were prepared to do in order to be accepted as professionals and indeed whether they should wish to be. This debate would continue the next several decades and has seen equivalent arguments re-emerge in countries where the registration debate has occurred (Hibbs, 2005).

The literature of this time reveals an intimate connection between social work and conceptions of social justice. The social work field was new and trying to find a platform on which to stand and be understood and recognised by the world. Even in this early form social work saw itself as connected to a socially just society. Regardless of how views of the nature of justice may have evolved and changed with time, this early history demonstrates a longstanding connection between social justice and social work.

> Without this emphasis on social justice, there is little if any need for social work or social workers...in practice, social workers draw from the same knowledge base in human behaviour and social systems as do psychiatrists and city planners. It is the application of knowledge and skills towards moral ends that imbues the profession with meaning and defines the role of the social worker in society (Bisman, 2004, p. 115).

1945-1965: Social work development

> Our social work values as presented in statements and codes are not stable and fundamental but constantly changing and developing (Payne, 1999, p. 251).

In the post World War Two period, social work underwent some fundamental changes. The first of these was that the early focus on the morality or behaviour of the client finally lost support to the point where it was no longer really viable (Reamer, 1998). The depression and the two world wars had shown that democracy was a fragile thing and that poverty could spread to encapsulate even the very privileged (Judt, 2010), highlighting the weakness of the 'individual moral deficit' approach to those in need. The powerful emergence of fascism had also provided a common enemy for Western democracies, minimising open conflict between the working class and the capitalist elite (Lundy, 2004). Hyperinflation from the harsh reparations ordered by the Treaty of Versailles and the associated poverty and desperation of the German people was seen to have given Hitler and his fascist regime the conditions necessary to sweep to power as they did (Parker, 2002). More and more people, including a critical mass of social workers had begun to consider the broader structural and social environment as crucial to social wellbeing (Lymbery, 2004). This change in focus led to discussion and presentation of the

issues of social reform and social justice becoming more evident within literature of the time (Lymbery, 2004; Reamer, 1998).

It was this shift towards a more macro perspective which encouraged social workers to share information and skills in a more coordinated fashion, which in turn prompted the growth of national social work organisations and journals (Lundy, 2004). In 1947 the American and Australian Social work organisations developed and publicised official codes of ethics while "several social work journals published seminal articles on values and ethics" (Reamer, 1998, p. 489). Pumphrey's work on teaching values and ethics in social work education (1959) and Hall's work on group workers and professional ethics (1952) are two key examples of such articles. The values and ethics of social work and its practitioners were more openly and widely considered (Reamer, 1998). The identity of social work as a distinct occupation from other helping professions developed rapidly in response to this kind of organisation (Lundy, 2004).

The second important development was provided by changing social policy. The year 1945 saw the rapid international development of the basic universal welfare framework that had begun to be established in countries such as Britain in the 1930s (Dominelli, 2004; Lymbery, 2004). Where social welfare had been seen primarily as the domain of charities and the voluntary sector, many western democratic governments began to see themselves as having a degree of responsibility for the provision of a 'just' society (Lymbery, 2004). The effects of war were not to be discarded lightly, even in light of a victory. Throughout many societies there were visible effects of broken families, disabled and traumatised individuals and the kind of poverty associated with the loss of a provider (Dicks, 1970). It became harder to associate need with simple laziness or stupidity, and easier to accept that much could be ascribed to unfortunate circumstances (Parker, 2002). There was also a growing belief, as the origins of World War Two were scrutinised, that if the state provided support for those so clearly in need, perhaps the fertile soil of desperation needed for fascism to thrive could be avoided in the future (Parker, 2002). While political commentator Judt (2010) states: "There was a moralised quality to policy debates in the early post-war years" (p. 47), the moralised debate he refers to at this time no longer refers to individuals, but to the state considering notions of justice and morality on a structural level. There was, frequently for the first time, significantly

broad cross party agreement that the state had some responsibility to support all of its citizens throughout much of Europe, America and the United Kingdom (Ferguson & Woodward, 2009).[viii]

This change in approach had a huge impact upon social workers as increased state funding and support of social service provision meant the growth of social work services (Dominelli, 2004). Much of what had previously been the sole domain of charities was now taken on by government departments and provided on a far more universal scale (Jones, 2009). "Social workers were seen as workers who could operate within the new state structures of children's departments, welfare departments and the health and criminal justice services" (Jones, 2009, p. 229).

As social workers became intricately involved with local and national government social service provision (Walton, 2005), they influenced state structures via an increased ability to contribute to policy decisions and implement state funded programmes (Lymbery, 2001). Increased involvement with state services also enhanced social work status and recognition, allowing social workers more lobbying power (Hill, 1993). It is now recognised that this relationship allowed social workers to influence the development of welfare states in many western democracies (Dominelli, 2004; Hill, 1993).

The relationship with the State was not straightforward or without controversy however, as the ability to influence went both ways. Involvement with the state, while increasing the number and scope of social workers also meant that social policy or governmental approach had a significant impact upon how and to whom social services were provided. This allowed the sometimes punitive policies of government to affect social workers approach and methods. For example when social security and support in times of hardship was first administered in Britain, women were left out as the government of the day judged they would be supported by their husbands or fathers as per the construction of the patriarchal nuclear family (Dominelli, 2004; Parton, 2004).

[viii] It is noteworthy that while basic support for all citizens was certainly an idea that was flourishing in post World War Two environment, 'all citizens' was still a notion circumscribed by society's dominant values, many of which meant that indigenous people and women were not recognised as full and independent citizens in terms of access to health, education and income.

The growth in social work over this period contributed to an increased demand for social work education and training. By 1947 the first masters in social work emerged from Toronto, Canada and in 1951 was extended to a doctorate level programme (Lundy, 2004). With more social workers, social service agencies and education, the push for the professionalisation of social work was strengthened (Lundy, 2004). The Kilbrandon report from Scotland (1964) and the Seebohm report from England and Wales (1968) were very influential, both recommending that to achieve status as a profession and a collective identity social workers must coalesce and provide a more generic service (Ferguson & Woodward, 2009).

When the post war years are reviewed today it is clear that the horrors of the war, the associated depression and the strong government hand in the daily life of countries at war all impacted upon what occurred in post-war social policy (Judt, 2010). Whole societies had to rebuild their communities and lives in a politically redrawn world and universal social security drew widespread support during this time. In this environment social workers were able to capitalise on a governmental commitment to eradicating the excesses of poverty and wealth and rebuilding a democratic society by becoming involved in the implementation and design of new services (Jones, 2009). Social workers offered the new social service provision skills and a growing network of knowledge and in turn were able to gain serious recognition and a future for their work.

1965-1985: Social work challenged

> The women's movement, black activist movement and disability movement have had a particularly powerful impact, seeking to realise social justice, their critiques have highlighted the power of social workers to oppress marginalized and disempowered groups (Dominelli, 2004, p. 54).

In the late 1960s and 1970s the popularity and strength of community or 'grassroots' was at an all time high (Dominelli, 2004). Many western democratic governments were exposed by political organisation and protest as maintaining unjust legislation that codified oppression and inequality (Ferguson & Woodward, 2009). Inevitably these movements and their critique of the social and political world had an impact upon the social work field, particularly as social work was so intertwined with the state (Lundy, 2004). The aforementioned Kilbrandon and Seebohm reports as well as the Scottish Social Work Act (1964) had "lodged social work firmly in the state

sector" (Ferguson & Woodward, 2009, p. 54). American Social Work Review editor Robert Morris (1964) commented that new federal government initiatives to combat poverty put social workers "at the centre of thinking and planning" (p. 2).

The growth in political consciousness saw social work and its relationship to the state questioned (Harre-Hindmarsh, 1992). Could social work have any independence or integrity if it continued to maintain such an entwinement with the state? Could social justice ever be realised while social workers were wedded to the state and its variable political objectives? (Jordan, 2004). Many different groups argued the negative claiming that social workers lost their independence and integrity in a relationship with the state Johnson (1972) captured this view when he wrote "the state intervenes in the relationship between practitioner and client in order to define needs and/or the manner in which such needs are catered for" (p. 77). Others claimed that "The knowledge, skills and values...of professional social work education are of little use in a work situation where structural constraints dictate the decision making process" (Wasserman, 1970 cited in Harre-Hindmarsh, 1992, p. 38). However despite the presence of strong critique western democratic states continued to grow their social service provision and employ a large proportion of social workers (Lundy, 2004).

It was during this period that issues such as class, equality, gender and sexuality were discussed as to their relevance and impact upon the social work community. Was political action on these issues a social work responsibility? Practitioners such as Carol Myer (1981) responded in the negative: "social workers can be more politically conscious and active, but politics ordinarily is not the domain of professional practice" (p. 74). Others argued that social work was inherently political and to neglect structural and political action was to represent clients poorly and ensure lasting change was not actually achieved (Dominelli & McLeod, 1989; Payne, 1999). This argument is reflective of the older division between COS and the Settlement Movement and demonstrates that the division was still inherent.

The onus was placed on the social work community by minority groups, activists and 'radicals,' to examine itself in order to identify the underlying presumptions and cultural imperatives that informed it and to take control over where it was going. In response to such challenges the social work community was compelled to review

ethical standards, processes and practices and "Oppressive features of social work in relation to women, ethnic and other groups were examined in detail..." (Walton, 2005, p. 590). The lens that had been turned firmly outwards on clients was now focused inwards on the potential damage and danger of social work enacted uncritically (Dominelli, 2002).

This debate encouraged a wealth of discourse and reflection, influencing calls within the social work community for a stronger professional identity, more radical social work practice, robust ethics and practice standards and a more active, living commitment to social justice (Dominelli & McLeod, 1989; Lymbery, 2001). Social work literature was fluent with the discourse of those wishing to define social work from a basis that included all people, not just those of the dominant culture. It wanted the practice of social work to be truly liberating. Paulo Freire (1973) captured this mood when he wrote:

> If a social worker (in the broadest sense) supposes that s/he is the agent of change it is with difficulty that s/he will see the obvious fact that if the task is to be really educational and liberating, those with whom s/he works cannot be the object of her actions (p. 105).

In looking back upon the 1960s and 1970s many have reflected on the political and social change experienced by those living through them (Judt, 2010). Beyond the stories of hippies, strikes, blockades and social foment is a real change in what people considered to be just and who justice should apply to and be defined by. From a place of exclusion to the margins of society, women, indigenous peoples, queer communities and other marginalised groups forced their voices to be heard by dominant cultures. There was no longer a possibility for one group, however powerful to define justice for everyone without challenge and critique. For the social work community it is another demonstration of how political, ideological and social transformation influenced the nature and practice of social work by challenging the established order and definition of social justice. In the words of Bertha Reynolds,

> "The philosophy of social work cannot be separated from the prevailing philosophy of a nation, as to how it values people and what importance it places on their welfare...Practice is always shaped by the needs of the times, the problems they present, the fears they generate, the solutions that appeal and the knowledge and skill available" (Reynolds 1905 cited in Ehrenreich 1985, p. 13).

1985-2011: Social work in 'crisis'

> It cannot be denied that social work has changed, both organisationally and in terms of practice methods, in the past 25 years; nor can it be ignored that this change, at least in the public sector has followed the lead taken by government policy, by managerial directive and by ideological shift (Jordan, 2004, p. 6).

From the early 1980s an ideological shift became evident that was to change the way that many western capitalist democracies functioned both locally and internationally. This ideology is now commonly known as neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is defined by the Collins English dictionary as "a modern politico-economic theory favouring free trade, privatization, minimal government intervention in business and reduced public expenditure on social services" (Collins English Dictonary, Complete and unabridged 10th Edition). Cultural theorist Stuart Hall provides another explanation of the different facets of neoliberalism:

> Neoliberalism is grounded in the 'free possessive individual' with the state cast as tyrannical and oppressive. The welfare state in particular is the arch enemy of freedom. The state must never govern society, dictate to free individuals how to dispose of their private property, regulate a free market economy or interfere with the god-given right to make profits and amass personal wealth. It must not intervene in the 'natural' mechanism of the free market or take as its objective the amelioration of free market capitalism's propensity to create inequality (Hall, 2011, p. 4).

Neoliberalism is based on neoclassical theories of economics, often seen as most accurately represented by the 'Washington consensus' a 1990 document drawn up by John Williamson outlining the key elements to a neoliberal structural adjustment programme (Kelsey, 1995). Essentially these 'key elements' focus on the privatisation of assets, deregulation and tax reform which seek to maximize the role of the private sector in determining the political and economic priorities of the state (Heywood, 2007; Kelsey, 1995). Neoliberalism became dominant with surprising speed in many western democracies, leading to widespread changes for those societies in which it was introduced (Braedley & Luxton, 2010; Heywood, 2007). Partly the success of neoliberalism at this time was due to a lack of coherent opposition (Judt, 2010; Kelsey, 2002). The traditional opponent of capitalism, in all its incarnations, had been communism and its collapse had seen the removal of "the West's main strategic and ideological combatant" (Kelsey, 1995, p. 17). The collapse of communism "unravelled the whole skein of doctrines that had held the

left together for over a century" (Judt, 2010, p. 142), allowing neoliberalism to be presented as the only feasible option in many countries.[ix]

Social workers in every country experiencing a neoliberal transformation were particularly affected as they were still significantly engaged with the State and the State was undergoing rapid structural changes. Where State regulated systems had provided social services and funding for welfare programmes that employed social workers, the neoliberal environment increasingly saw this responsibility pushed back onto the market (Ferguson, 2008). The prior broad consensus around the social democratic state and universal social welfare provision (Jones & Novak, 1999) was eroded by the introduction of the profit motive.

> One of the key assumptions of the 'social democratic consensus was that...the public domain offered more of an opportunity for equal access to the provision of welfare and support services. Essentially when organisations were compelled to make profits to survive, this quickly became a priority that superseded all else (Carey, 2008, p. 920).

Advocates for the neoliberal regime argued that universal welfare or security undermined personal responsibility and individual motivation, not to mention being expensive and unwieldy to provide (Heywood, 2007). The market, on the other hand due to its adherence to the laws of supply and demand would be more efficient, utilise resources in a more effective manner and ensure that only those services which were 'successful' would survive (LeGrand, 1993). It has been suggested that shifting the responsibility for many social services to a market based system "allows the state to relinquish moral obligations" (Judt, 2010, p. 114).

For those agencies that still received government or council funding, the expectations of the funding bodies changed (Carey, 2008). Social services were now expected to operate in line with market principles (Ferguson, 2008). Contracts for government funding became short term and based on organisations producing measurable performance indicators and outcomes (Carey, 2008; Lymbery, 2001). This structure became known as 'managerialism' and meant that government had

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[ix] Certain countries continue to regulate and protect their countries in ways quite contrary to neoliberal ideology. For example Norway subsidises its fishing, agriculture industries and has a social spending percentage of 25% which is 5% above the OECD average (Chang, 2010). It is a fair critique that neoliberalism has not made a worldwide 'clean sweep'. However it has become dominant in that the world's most powerful countries have become advocates and international organisations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund follow neoliberal logic (Chang, 2010).

both less responsibility but greater control over social workers (Ferguson, 2008; Harlow, 2004).

> Central government by means of performance targets and guidelines now dictates in greater detail the parameters of social work practice and managers operationalise the government's wishes. Social workers now act in accordance with the chain of command (Harlow, 2004, p. 170).

Many publications express the damage to social work ethics associated with this degree of control. For example Lymberry (2001) argues that:

> Social work made a bargain with the state in the last years of the twentieth century; it was allowed to carry out coercive statutory functions as long as it ignored the potential to be involved in the wider debate about inequality (p. 301).

The effects of neoliberalism were not simply confined to social workers' relationship with the state. Rapidly growing inequality in the places where the neoliberal model is followed inevitably impacts upon social workers and their client base. In Britain and the United States income inequality is "not now far short of 40% greater than it was in the 1970s" (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010, p. 241). With income inequality comes poor physical and mental health, greater rates of imprisonment and social corrosion (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). For a social worker in any field of practice these circumstances have impacts on client numbers and presenting issues (Ife, 2000). Combined with the ethical challenges and restrictions in operating in a performance based environment Payne (1999) summarises: "Many social workers feel more regulated by legislation, managerial control, bureaucratic systems and quality assurance mechanisms than they do by moral precepts" (p. 6).

As the impact of these changes became felt in the social work community the responses and challenges emerged. Repeated endlessly within literature from the 1980s onwards is the catchphrase 'social work is in crisis' (Asquith, et al., 2005; Butler, Ford, & Tregaskis, 2007; Camilleri, 1999; Dominelli, 2004; Lymbery, 2004; Payne & Campling, 2006). This refrain seems to have emerged from the sense expressed in much of the literature that under the weight of dramatic social and political reform, social work has become fragmented, without an identity or method to coherently respond to the current political milieu. As neoliberalism flourished a collective pathway forward for social workers was unforthcoming as different factions called for different responses to the new challenges facing social work

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"Social workers role in society became hotly contested within the media, government, academia and practice" (Dominelli, 2004, p. 70).

It was argued, most notably by Brilliant (1986) that behind this lack of coherence and response to new realities was lack of leadership. She claimed that leadership was "a missing ingredient" and a "non-theme" in social work education (Brilliant, 1986, p. 325). Without being able to continue the tradition of strong leaders of the past such as Jane Addams and Bertha Reynolds, social work was left without the ability to clearly define and defend its existence and parameters (Brilliant, 1986). Indeed in a study fourteen years later Rank & Hutchison (2000) found the two most important facets social workers were wanting in leadership were still "clearly defining the profession to ourselves and to the public" and "political advocacy" (p. 496).

While contention around social work identity can take many forms, there are several overlapping issues that appear to elicit the most discussion and disagreement within the literature of this period. These are: the value base and ethics of social work, professionalisation and the importance of a social work knowledge base. While these are all areas discussed in previous time periods, within the last thirty years they have been more condensed, vociferous, and related to the political context than ever before (Asquith, et al., 2005).

While strong international codes of ethics and practice standards that capture social justice have emerged in local and national levels (Asquith, et al., 2005; Hare, 2004), it is argued that these ethics are not able to be implemented in practice in the current climate (Dominelli, 2004; Lymbery & Butler, 2004). While some push for social work professionalisation to resist the subordination of social workers and gain credibility (Davies & Leonard, 2004), others feel it is this same professionalisation that can simply place social workers in ethically compromising positions where they are complicit with unjust policies and practice (Hibbs, 2005). Where a strong knowledge base is advocated as desirable for social workers to defend their practice standpoint others question the validity of raising knowledge to "doctrinal status" (Hughes & Wearing, 2007, p. 25). Containing clear traces of the historical strain between the Charitable Organisations Society and the Settlement Movement, once again social workers are debating what it is to be effective *and* be just.

The effect of such contention about the status, role and future of social work has left many deploring the state of social work and feeling that there are no viable solutions (Asquith, et al., 2005). "Morale in social work is not low simply through the extent of challenges with which it is confronted but also through the difficulty in understanding how these challenges may be addressed" (Lymbery, 2001, p. 370). Contributing to this struggle to find answers is the fact that neoliberalism and the 'profit motive' have been normalised to such a degree that, to many of those in my own generation (children of the late 1970s and1980s), they appear "self evident" (Judt, 2010).

> Much of what appears natural today dates from the 1980s: the obsession with wealth creation, the cult of privatisation and the private sector, the growing disparities of the rich and poor (Judt, 2010, p. 2).

The embedding of neoliberalism problematises the situation for the social work field still further, for conflicts with the commitments to social justice so long espoused by social workers are inevitable (Ferguson, 2008; Rossiter, 2001). This is not to say that there has not been significant work on providing answers by social work leaders, academics and activists as well as significant work on framing the issues. Quite the opposite is true. A useful example of said work is a report commissioned by the Scottish Executive in 2005 to provide a literature review on the role of social work in the 21st century. This report makes an urgent call for social work "to clarify its professional identity" and that this identity "should be based on "core values and principles" (Asquith, et al., 2005, p. 2). Perhaps most importantly, it acknowledges that "the crisis in social work is seen by many as rooted in the difficulty, under current conditions, of upholding and pursuing the values of social work" (Asquith, et al., 2005, p. 2).

It appears that the ideological shift experienced by so many societies over the last 25-30 years has had a significant effect on both social workers and their clients. As well as raising a myriad of issues for social workers to address in terms of the role of social work, and the implementation of ethical commitments, the ideological change has affected the structure of societies all over the world. Social workers now are still caught within the difficulties these changes have initiated and will perhaps rely on the upcoming generation of social workers to define where to from here.

Summary

As social work has been shaped and transformed by the societies it has found a place in, so has social justice and their journeys have often been interconnected. As ideas of social justice began to be challenged by a changing world, so did social work challenge itself and find itself tested.

Social work, from its earliest point has had conflict over direction and identity as epitomised by the COS/Settlement movement divide. This difference seems to have gone unresolved or at least reoccurred as the social work community faced external challenges from war, changing public opinion and policy shifts. In the period of greatest policy consensus post WWII, there was significant challenge from working class and indigenous communities as well as from women around their access to social justice. While greater equality in terms of participation and recognition did develop for many, the political environment then began to shift towards a neoliberal ideology. More questions were raised regarding where social work would position itself in relation to this changing environment.

The political and social climate of 2011 is a direct outcome of an ideological shift towards neoliberalism begun in the 1980s. Internationally social work is alive with discourse and argument about how to survive, develop, influence and resist the current challenges and environment, yet social workers remain divided on where to from here.

The international trends and experiences discussed in this chapter contextualise the broad issues for social work and social justice. To build upon and complement this framework the next chapter will provide a micro analysis of Aotearoa/New Zealand and how social work and social justice undertook their own expedition in this particular and unique environment.

Chapter 3

Shifting Sands: The Aotearoa/New Zealand experience

Introduction

> Social work is an evolving profession, changing in response to social,
> cultural and political developments. Each decade offers a new challenge as
> the profession sorts out what it stands for, whom it represents and how it
> might develop (Harms & Connolly, 2009, p. 454).

Aotearoa/New Zealand is unique in many ways; it is the last country to be settled by humankind (King, 2003), a young addition to the British empire and a study in indigenous/colonial relations (Orange, 1987). A borderless country in the southern hemisphere, yet considered part of the western world, Aotearoa/New Zealand has attracted world attention on a number of occasions throughout its relatively short history (King, 2003).

This chapter will focus on key events and experiences documented in Aotearoa/New Zealand history that have influenced the social and political landscape in which social work has become established. This context explicates the particular relationship social justice and social work has within an Aotearoa/New Zealand environment and what events have been crucial in shaping our notions of social justice. While there are some clear links to the macro perspective discussed in chapter two, this chapter provides a micro perspective, illuminating what makes social work and social justice in Aotearoa/New Zealand distinctive on the world stage.

As in the previous chapter, this section is broken down into time periods to illustrate the predominant influences and discourse in a particular time frame. Beginning with pre colonisation and ending with the neoliberal transformation of Aoteaora/New Zealand this chapter provides a comprehensive overview of our inimitable country. The objective of this chapter is captured by the words of Ehrenreich (1985) "although the orientation...is historical its ultimate aim is to illuminate the central issues facing social work today" (p. 15).

Pre-Colonisation

> In the beginning there was only Te Kore, the great void of emptiness and space. (Walker, 2004, p. 11).

The indigenous people of Aotearoa/New Zealand, the Māori people, are known to have travelled from East Polynesia, discovering and settling this land where they would live for over a thousand years prior to the arrival of Europeans (King, 1996). Naturally Māori had highly developed social structures and patterns of interaction and survival well established by the time other peoples came into contact with Māori communities (King, 1996).

The social structure of Māori society is based on iwi, hapū and whānau (Durie, 2001). Iwi literally means tribe or people, while hapū equates to pregnancy and whānau to birth (Metge, 1995). In practical usage the word whānau, according to Metge, much like the term family in English has many different meanings which have evolved over time and context. However one of "the most important of these is a large family group comprising several generations and parent-child families related by descent from a recent ancestor" (Metge, 1995, p. 16). Hapū are usually aggregations of whānau, and hapū are in turn part of a wider tribal or iwi identity (Durie, 2001).

It is generally accepted that prior to colonisation it was with the iwi, hapū, whānau structure that 'Māori' identity rested (Durie, 2001). Within the context of iwi, hapū and whānau problems, conflicts and resource use were managed and decisions made (Durie, 2001; King, 1996; Metge, 1995). The term 'Māori' as used to describe members of all iwi only appeared after colonisation; the word itself simply meant 'ordinary'(Durie, 2001; King, 1996; Orange, 1987). Nevertheless Māori is commonly used and accepted in today's society as referring to the indigenous people of Aotearoa/New Zealand.

All iwi, hapū and whānau utilised what is now often referred to as ngā tikanga Māori or 'Māori ways' to make decisions, interact with outsiders, fight, grieve and organise all aspects of daily life (Metge, 1995). Tikanga is a noun created from the adjective tika, which describes something that is 'right' or 'just' (Durie, 2001; Metge, 1995).

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The specifics may differ between whānau, hapū and iwi but the underlying principles of tikanga are considered to be the same across the board (Durie, 2003; Metge, 1995). "Ngā tikanga Māori encompass and hold together ways of thinking (whakaaro nui) and ways of doing (mahinga), principle and practice" (Metge, 1995, p. 21).

The importance of understanding that Māori had, prior to colonisation, a detailed social structure and ethical system is noted by historian Michael King (1996) when he states:

> Māori have long been amused or offended by the notion that Māori history began with the arrival of Pākehā[x] in New Zealand-as if there was no such thing as recorded history until literate Europeans observed and recorded it...It is of course nonsense...History is the story of human occupation of a place compiled by surviving evidence (p. 37).

A useful example of such history which is highly relevant to this thesis is the way that whānau structures were utilised in what has been called a type of welfare provision (Durie, 1994). Māori communities had whānau based welfare models, which incorporated concepts such as whakapapa (genealogy) and whānaungatanga (kinship) (Metge, 1995). The whanau existed to meet the taha wairua (spiritual wellbeing) taha tinana (physical wellbeing) taha hinengaro (mental wellbeing) and taha whānau (family wellbeing) of the group (Durie, 1994). Dr Ranginui Walker (1994) explains the sanctuary of the whanau thus:

> ...in the whanau children were used to receiving care and affection from many people besides their parents...In the security of the whanau the loss of a parent by death or desertion was not such a traumatic matter. The whanau also looked after its own aged or debilitated members...It was self sufficient in most matters (p. 63).

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[x] The origin of the term Pākehā is still debated although the strongest historical evidence indicates it was used in New Zealand before 1815 to mean 'white person'(Department of Labour, 1985). This has changed with usage as initially a Pākehā was a person who came from England, and settled or worked in New Zealand. With time, Pākehā was the fair-skinned person who was born in New Zealand. Later the term applied to all fair-skinned people in New Zealand, no matter what their ancestry or place of birth (Department of Labour, 1985). By 1960, Pākehā was defined as "a person in New Zealand of predominantly European Ancestry" (Ausubel, 1960).

Not only did the whanau welfare model exist prior to colonisation but it was maintained even under extraordinary external pressure from Pākehā into the twentieth century (Durie, 1994; King, 1996).

Summary

Pre-colonisation Māori had a well developed social structure in which they lived based on the whanau, hapu and iwi. This social structure allowed for social justice to be defined and upheld by each iwi.

1769-1840: Early contact

> A considerable part of the history of New Zealand has been and will continue to be a history of relations between predominantly two people and two cultures (King, 1996, p. i).

Māori, while having contact with Dutch explorer Abel Tasman in 1692 would not have detailed engagement with Pākehā until Captain Cook arrived in 1769 with the Tahitian Ariki Tupaia (King, 2003). Tupaia was able to provide mutual translation of both language and customs allowing information exchanges and relationship building to occur (King, 2003). In the decades following Cook's four visits to Aotearoa/New Zealand contact between Māori and Pākehā steadily grew. Some English and Irish people facing imprisonment in Australia jumped ship to end up living and working within Māori communities. Māori also proved superb sailors and entrepreneurs in the new whaling, sealing and timber industries building successful industry that competed internationally (King, 2003). Māori utilised the strengths of their "cooperative structure of internal tribal organisation" (King, 2003, p. 127) to learn and diversify from external contact while maintaining a strong sense of their own identity.

As the nineteenth century progressed more influences came in to the mix which would provide huge challenges for Māori and Māori/Pākehā relationships. To circumvent the designs of France and of private land companies James Busby was appointed as the first British Resident in Aotearoa/New Zealand in 1832 (Orange, 1987). Instructed to protect Māori from exploitation and 'encourage' them towards a settled form of government Busby was appointed to represent British interests in Aoteaora/New Zealand (King, 2003).

In 1835 Busby was instrumental in persuading a group of chiefs to sign the 'Declaration of Independence' by the Confederation of United tribes (Orange, 1987). It is widely agreed now that he did this to thwart a French explorer's desire to declare an independent state in the Hokianga, rather than purely out of goodwill (King, 2003). This document had no legal recognition from London, nor Māori input in design, yet shows that Māori were keen to express their rights and status in ways that would be understood and recognised by the rituals of British authority (King, 2003).

In 1840 Busby would have a direct hand in writing and organising of the Treaty of Waitangi, signed by both Māori and Pākehā (Orange, 1987). This document would go on to be highly significant for Aotearoa/New Zealand and the future relationships between Māori and Pākehā (Orange, 1987). However at the time it was hastily drawn up and translated into Māori by a somewhat harried and ill equipped James Busby and associates (King, 2003). The resulting three article (or four as it is often argued) Treaty contained fundamental differences between the Māori and English versions (King, 2003; Orange, 1987).

One of the key differences between the English and Māori version is in the translation of sovereignty. Signatories to the Māori text never ceded sovereignty, (tino rangatiratanga) as is claimed in the English text, but kāwanatanga (governorship) (Orange, 1987). There is a wide gap between sovereignty and governorship and it is postulated that the translators knew Māori would never sign away tino rangatiratanga and so utilised the less threatening kāwanatanga (Orange, 1987).

As the number of Pākehā grew exponentially within Aotearoa/New Zealand, bringing their own social structures and ideas of what was just, how the promises and protections of the Treaty document were enacted would go on to be the source of considerable tension and conflict within Aotearoa/New Zealand society (King, 2003).

Summary

Two different ways of living and understanding society began to come into conflict as Māori and Pākehā continued to live in proximity to one another. While Māori

adapted to what they perceived as useful from Pākehā society, they retained their own social structures and concepts of right and wrong. Attempting to ameliorate this and perhaps attempting to blend Māori more into British social structures the Treaty of Waitangi was signed in 1840. This has become a highly debated piece of text as the justice it guaranteed Māori has not been upheld.

1840-1914: The colonial models

> Major political, economic and social developments occurred during the decades 1840-1870. The European population grew from an estimated 2000 in 1839 to outnumber the Māori by 1858 (approximately 56,000 Māori to 59,000 European). By 1872 the European total had reached 256,000 while the Māori population was proportionately less than one fifth of that number (Sinclair, 1990, p. 52).

Settlers to Aotearoa/New Zealand came from many countries throughout the world, bringing not only numbers but different ideas of right and wrong and ways of living. There is considerable evidence that British immigrants (by far the largest group) for example brought with them social norms as they had experienced them, such as class structures, gender roles and religious beliefs (Oliver, 1977; Olsen & Hickey, 2005). An example of this is found in the fact that despite settlers in Aotearoa/New Zealand being far from the rigid class structures of British society, amongst colonists there "was a widespread acceptance that class differences were part of the natural order of life" (Sinclair, 1990, p. 60). These transposed class divisions made their presence felt in the growing society and demonstrated how values can easily cross the boundaries of distance

> "There is little doubt that New Zealand in the nineteenth century exhibited a class structure that was unequal in terms of wealth and income, which grossly disadvantaged indigenous people and discounted the contribution of women" (Wilkes, 1994, p. 72).

Historian P.J Gibbons (1992) argues that "many of these British social attitudes and cultural values atrophied in a colonial framework where the social and cultural challenges which caused change in the parent society were absent" (p. 308). Challenges to ideas of class, poverty and inequality provided by the Settlement Movement in the United States and the Quakers in Britain (amongst many others) were not as influential in Aotearoa/New Zealand as British settlers clung to the values of home as they recalled it (Sinclair, 1990). This in turn is said to have meant

that "both countries saw social work flourish and expand in ways which were never realised in New Zealand" (McDonald, 1998, p. 10).

Attitudes and values brought by colonists into this new country led to the dominance of British values which were reinforced by the imposition of a centralised British Parliamentary system on Aotearoa/New Zealand (Belgrave, 2004; McDonald, 1998). British dominance influenced social work practice of the time as models utilised in Britain were simply transferred to Aotearoa/ New Zealand (Belgrave, 2004; McDonald, 1998). An example of this is found in the introduction of 'charitable aid' a term utilised in Aotearoa/New Zealand since 1870 (Tennant, 1989). The term is British in origin, drawing heavily on the concept of the 'deserving and undeserving poor' seen under the English Poor Laws (see chapter 2), whereby moral judgments were utilised to ascertain whether those in need were in fact worthy of assistance (Oliver, 1977; Tennant, 1989). Issues such as conformity to (Pākehā) social norms, religious adherence, family structure and discipline were all relevant considerations when deciding on the legitimacy of any need, ensuring the term charitable aid was highly stigmatised (Oliver, 1977; Tennant, 1989). The use of this framework ignored not only the challenges being experienced by advocates of this system internationally, but the existence of whānau based models for welfare provision Māori already utilised (Nash, 2009).

In Aoteaora/New Zealand where provincial government was quickly abandoned and the state had "central control of all welfare purposes since 1876" (McDonald, 1998, p. 11) the term charitable aid came to refer to all government assistance as well as philanthropy (McDonald, 1998). Aotearoa/New Zealand was not large or wealthy enough to mimic the 'rich benefactor' system present in the funding of many of the British charities, where very wealthy people could personally fund a particular organisation or service, hence there was a greater reliance on government funding and support (Tennant, 1989). Government involvement in welfare was largely established by the Hospital and Charitable Institutions Act passed in 1885, establishing a national system for hospitals and charitable relief which was administered by local boards (Tennant, 1989).

The liberal government which held power in Aotearoa/New Zealand from 1891 to 1912 (Roper, 2008) utilised what is now known as the residual welfare model where

" the state helps out as the last resort, market and family provide first" (Gray, 1994, p. 2). The residual welfare approach allowed for some welfare and hardship support, for example the introduction of old age pensions in 1898, however these were primarily provided to white men to the exclusion of others such as women, Māori or those characterised as 'undeserving' (Roper, 2008). The relieving officer who was in charge of making such decisions has been said to be the predecessor of the modern social worker (Tennant, 1989).

Summary

As British settlers began to outnumber Māori, the imposition of British values and systems also increased. While ignoring existing Māori models, the British parliamentary system was transposed into Aotearoa/New Zealand and began to pass law ordering society and implementing British ideas of social justice based on British values. These were adapted where necessary due to the size and position of Aotearoa/New Zealand ensuring the government took a more direct hand in welfare than it did in Britain where the philanthropic system was more developed. The needs were however primarily measured by the standard of the patriarchal nuclear family, leaving independent women and Māori out of the equation.

1914-1945: Depression and social security

> The depression was the deepest and most generalised crisis of the capitalist
> system in its history, characterised by a decline in economic growth and real
> incomes coinciding with a dramatic rise in unemployment, poverty and
> hardship (Roper, 2008, p. 11).

Between 1912 with the collapse of the Liberals and the depression of the 1930s support such as that provided by the old age pension was gradually expanded to cover more groups in society (Cheyne, O'Brien, & Belgrave, 2000). This expansion was still very much a residual welfare model and tended to be accompanied by considerable derision for those who could not 'help themselves' (Roper, 2008). The slow service expansion, the skeletal social security safety net and the concentration of power with the employer was to cause great unrest (Olssen, 1992). Many workers faced long hours, low pay and little to no bargaining power or social security (Olssen, 1992). The waterfront in Wellington, a flashpoint in a vulnerable export based economy, saw a strike (or lockout as it was seen by the wharfies') on the 24th

October 1913 that would go on to involve 16,000 unionists (Olssen, 1992).[xi] The dispute was about far more than the instigating issue, as Taylor (2005) states "The genesis of the 1913 strike, a minor dispute over travelling allowances, was virtually forgotten as the fundamental issue came into focus; the right to freedom and autonomy..." (p. 151). While ultimately this strike would collapse in December 1913 many of those involved would go on to rise to prominence in the Labour Party (Nolan, 2005).

During this time the 'social worker' emerged in Aotearoa/New Zealand, first appearing in the census as an occupational category in 1926 (Tennant, 2007). It is thought that this inclusion occurred due to the development of child welfare officers which emerged from the 1925 Child Welfare Act (Tennant, 2007), though most social work occurring was still within the charitable sector at this point and was known by other titles such as casework.

The 1930s economic depression was to increase the roles and visibility of social workers as the hardship of the depression provided the rationale for universal social welfare. "No longer could individual ineptitude or moral laxity be blamed for unemployment or poverty. Too many people were unemployed or faced the possibility of unemployment" (Cheyne, et al., 2000, p. 36). Capitalism in many senses had been seen to fail, the boom and bust cycle now highlighted as a function of international capitalism was seen to offer no protection to citizens in a 'bust'(Cheyne, et al., 2000). Cuts to support and services that were made initially in an attempt to bring the Government's books out of deficit were highly unpopular and were seen to contribute to the growing social dislocation (Roper, 2005). Due to the work of trade unions and political activists, support grew for isolating Aotearoa/New Zealand from the potentially volatile international market and providing state funded social security and social services, support which was to find political expression in the election of the Labour Party in 1935 (Roper, 2005).

The Labour government, once elected, developed a considerable volume of social policy within a very short time frame, meaning that unlike many other OECD

[xi] It is noteworthy that while it is outside of the scope of this work to fully detail the impact and significance of the Union movement in Aotearoa/New Zealand history, Union organised/supported strikes, blockades and marches played a large part in shaping the battle for social justice. The Maritime, Blackball and Waihi strikes are some of the many examples of these.

countries, whose moves towards developing a welfare state did not gain significant ground until after 1945, Aotearoa/New Zealand made significant steps towards a welfare state during the 1930s (Hawke, 1985). In particular the Social Security Act of 1938 laid significant foundations for the welfare state by linking social security with citizenship (McClure, 1998). This development brought charitable organisations, as experienced providers of social services into a more centralised and intermediary role between individuals and the developing welfare state (Oliver, 1977; Roper, 2008).

Many charitable organisations had grown to organise nationally by the 1930s and were well placed to use their standing to influence this growing social policy and push for government funding and recognition. The acknowledgment of the skills and 'inside knowledge' of many charitable agency workers was to influence the development of social work as an identifiable profession (Tennant, 1989). An example of an organisation which gained prominence and influence, is the Society for the Protection of Women and Children (SPWC) which formed in 1893 and spread out nationally to organise as a federation throughout the early 20th century (Tennant, 2007). This organisation held a series of overarching political and strategic goals to preserve the wellbeing of women and children, such as the need for equal pay and adequate legal protections (Macdonald, 1993). What makes this organisation so interesting from a social work perspective, is that it also emphasised personal contact and advice giving with individuals and families (Tennant, 2007). This personal contact meant that SPWC workers gained considerable knowledge of the (often harsh) realities for women, as well as providing significant support (Tennant, 2007). The individual experience was thus linked to more structural political work within the SPWC. Some key figures from SPWC, such as Ann Ansell would go on to work within the public sector and come to be recognised as an early social worker (Tennant, 2007).

The growth and nationalisation of charitable agencies, despite being a significant development, did not immediately create recognition or organisation of a cohesive social work profession in the national arena, as there was still no clear pathway to social work, nor educational or professional framework (Tennant, 1989). Despite advancements in these areas occurring overseas, Aotearoa/New Zealand was not to follow this route until the 1940s.

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Summary

Social justice was highly contested during this time. There was unrest from the working classes and dissatisfaction with the capitalist system. More people called for Aotearoa/New Zealand to protect its own workers and provide for the vulnerable because they were citizens rather than because they needed moral upgrading. The rise of the social worker also came at this time and became part of developing the emerging social service provision.

1945-1965: Education, organisation and the welfare state

> "Human beings constantly create and recreate their knowledge, in that they are inconclusive, historical beings engaged in a permanent act of discovery"(Freire, 1973, p. 107).

With the end of World War Two peace brought with it a period of economic prosperity (Roper, 2005). Partly this has been attributed to the policies implemented by the 1935 Labour government which some see as having prompted economic recovery and the ability to take advantage of the post war economic boom (Lunt, 2009). Regardless of the extent to which this is true, export prices increased as Europe and North America recovered from a war footing ensuring Aotearoa/New Zealand had a strong income source from these export markets (Hawke, 1985). This does not mean that this new wealth was evenly shared and all struggle for social justice ceased, as was demonstrated by the sheer size and scale of the 1951 waterfront dispute. The dispute began when ship owners refused a demand for a pay increase from watersiders' (King, 2003). The dispute escalated as the government tried to crack down and activate the old Public Safety Act of 1932 banning those who fed or assisted locked out workers. The strike (or lockout) lasted 151 days and involved at its peak 22,000 workers. It was ultimately defeated by division and post war suspicion of communism, leading many to align with more moderate positions (Olssen & Hickey, 2005).

Post war society brought more than suspicion however and a growing international trend towards welfare provision ensured that state provided social security and services promoted by Labour and only slightly amended by the National Party were to remain highly popular. Economic theories based on the work of John Maynard

Keynes (later to be known as Keynesian economics) were widely enacted to general acclaim (Lunt, 2009). This time frame is often referred to as being a period of 'welfare consensus' as despite competition between Labour and National, both parties generally accepted this approach and it had wide support from voters (Kelsey, 1993; Lunt, 2008; Roper, 2005). Under this approach social security and social services came to be viewed not as a safety net for the desperate, but an aspect of society that actually encouraged economic growth and ensured social cohesion (O'Brien & Wilkes, 1993). Aotearoa/New Zealand was beginning to be known as a country with a "very comprehensive welfare system" (Gray, Collett van Rooyen, Rennie, & Gaha, 2002, p. 102).

Welfare and the provision of associated social services required input, implementation and development from those who had knowledge and skills in working with people. Gray et al (2002) argue that social work education developed in Aotearoa/New Zealand initially to meet the needs of the welfare state which had a clear need to identify and utilise skilled social workers. While this appears likely to have been a contributing factor, it is not to be discounted that those working in welfare provision, had a growing sense of themselves as skilled and wished to be able to formalise this and ensure that this knowledge was recognised and passed on (Nash, 1998b).

In 1949 the Diploma in Social Science was established at Victoria University College Wellington to teach both one on one casework and associated administration and organisation skills (Nash, 2009). This programme was based largely on overseas models and did not incorporate much of the unique identity or experiences of the Aoteaora/New Zealand community in the learning (Nash, 2009). This was later condemned by Crockett (1977) in his thesis on social work education in which he castigates the 25 years of Victoria University's social science programme as staid and over influenced by overseas methods.

The development of social work education did not immediately lead to the unification of 'social workers' as most workers tended to see themselves as affiliated primarily to the agency or field they worked within, and hence were called 'child welfare officers', 'medical social workers' or a number of other titles (McDonald, 2004; Nash, 2009). The term 'social worker' was not necessarily universally used or

understood. This differentiation based on workplace began to change over the next 15 years as the existence of education began to help forge " links between educators, practitioners and employers"(Nash, 1998a, p. 239). Workers from different fields also began to recognise that although there were differences in their client base, often they were drawing on the same underlying skills (Nash, 2009).

In 1964 the New Zealand Association of Social Workers (NZASW) was formed, open to all those who practiced in recognised social work areas (Nash, 2009). Responding to the sense that unity amongst social workers was beginning to outweigh the differences, the Association was to put considerable work into lobbying for education and practice standards (Nash, 1998a). The Association adopted an interim code of ethics at the time of establishment, which lasted until the adoption of the International Federation of Social Worker's Code in 1973 (Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers, 2008). The Association would adapt and evolve in response to challenges faced from within and without the social work community over the next 50 years and yet retain a fundamental commitment to training, practice standards and competence.

Summary

The post war years while bringing prosperity to many, also brought new ideas and new struggles. Struggles over distribution of wealth continued, yet a basic level of social justice through the provision of universal social security gained support. Social work also grew as state funded services emerged and employed social workers. With growth in the social work sector came a desire for greater organisation, recognition and formal education.

1965-1985: Challenge, change and identity

> Until we are willing to look at these larger issues, we will only be putting
> bandages on festering wounds. This is not to say that it is not important to
> address problems such as poverty, violence and substance abuse, but in order
> to work on these issues, we must address their fundamental causes (Weaver,
> 2001, p. 185).

In 1970 the Department of Social Welfare Act (DSW Act) was passed, having been influenced by the Seebohm Report (see chapter two) but still containing aspects

unique to Aotearoa/New Zealand (Tennant, 2007). In the words of academic Barretta-Herman (1994a):

> ...under the Department of Social Welfare Act, 1970, the New Zealand government was charged with the responsibility for the provision of direct social services but also for the provision of supportive services to the voluntary sector and other government agency providers. This provision confirmed the state as the main provider and resource of social services and extended its influence over the entire social service delivery system (p. 10).

The New Zealand Social Work Training Council (NZSWTC) was established in 1973 with a mandate "to assist and advise Government on the development of social work training" authorised under the DSW Act (Crockett, 1977, p. 50). This ultimately led to the creation of more tertiary training for social workers-Massey University 1975, Auckland University 1975 and Canterbury University 1976 (Barretta-Herman, 1994a).

In 1974 the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) was not only wielding remarkable influence over social services but was the predominant employer of social workers (Nash, 1998a). However this reality was not passing unremarked by the wider social work community or indeed Aotearoa/New Zealand society. Many groups, including feminists, community workers and indigenous activists raised questions about the legitimacy of the State to define, regulate and provide social services (Barretta-Herman, 1994a). An example of how the State dictated processes to social workers is seen in Aotearoa/New Zealand where right up until 1983 social workers were legally obliged to investigate the welfare of every child born to an unmarried couple (McDonald, 1998).

Non Government Organisations (NGOs) such as Women's Refuge, Intellectually Handicapped Children's Society (IHC) and Rape Crisis were some of the social service providers outside of government that were disputing the idea that the State was best equipped to support and protect the needs of communities (Barretta-Herman, 1994b). Each of these organisations challenged government by, identifying, developing and providing services. Despite their remarkable achievements all of them at some point struggled for funds and needed to engage government as "New Zealanders viewed the State as both the primary funder and provider of social services and because the philanthropic tradition in New Zealand was never very strong or well developed" (Barretta-Herman, 1994b, p. 111).

Another powerful challenge to the state came from Māori activists within Māori Organisation for Human Rights (MOOHR). In their 1971 newsletter MOOHR argued for Māori land and resources held by Pākehā to be returned so Māori would not have to be dependent on government charity or handouts (Walker, 2004). MOOHR also proclaimed that Māori welfare, human rights and wellbeing were not met by Pākehā dominated governments that had shown they were unable and unwilling to meet the needs of Māori (Walker, 2004). Nga Tamatoa, another radical Māori group also gained in strength at this time and organised concerted resistance to government attempts to 'integrate' Māori (King, 2003).

Māori resistance and activism flourished during the 1970s, as the many injustices and inequalities perpetuated by the government of Aotearoa/New Zealand were revealed, and the many breaches of the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi were exposed (King, 1996). The great land march of 1975 led by Dame Whina Cooper that swept down the North Island, culminating outside Parliament, to protest the alienation of Māori and the ongoing theft of land was a great demonstration of the strength of Māori organisation and growing resistance to the imposition of Pākehā law upon Māori communities (Walker, 2004).

> The combined effect of all of these activities of all of these groups was to focus media attention on Māori issues in a way that had never occurred previously, gradually to radicalise such establishment organisations as the New Zealand Māori council, Māori parliamentary representation and the mainline churches, and to bring about major changes in the operations of such governments departments as education, social welfare, justice and Māori affairs (King, 2003, p. 483).

The 1981 protests against the Springbok rugby tour in which the South African team had a 'whites only' selection policy demonstrated the growing consciousness of wider Aotearoa/New Zealand society as Māori activists together with Pākehā trade unionists, anarchists, feminists and socialists (to name a few) declared their opposition to apartheid. Seen now as a formative experience for Aoteaora/New Zealand, the Springbok tour was an expression of a growing awareness of racism and injustice and provided a platform for Māori to challenge their Pākehā allies to make the links between the oppression of black South Africans and Māori (Harris, 2004) .

Social work practice and methods were also dramatically affected by challenges from Māori, and changing social attitudes. The DSW was pressured to "respond

more effectively to the needs of Māori through less reliance on state provided social services and more support for whanau and iwi based services" (Barretta-Herman, 1994a, p. 14). The 1986 report Puao-Te-Ata-Tu (daybreak) added to this pressure when it recommended a plethora of changes to social work practice and social policy after revealing "institutional, cultural and personal racism in the DSW" (Nash, 2009, p. 367) .

Alongside the great social changes occurring as ideas of justice were challenged were some key economic changes for Aotearoa/New Zealand. In 1972 Britain entered the European Economic Market, permanently changing Aotearoa/New Zealand's economic structure which was designed to export primarily to Britain (Collins, 1989). Aotearoa/New Zealand could no longer rely on the previous preferential trading relationship and had to seek more widely for trading partners (Barretta-Herman, 1994a). This change was one of many which shifted the previously stable relationship Aotearoa/New Zealand had with the world and by the 1980s the drop in export demand coupled with low economic growth, and rising unemployment meant pressure on governments to make changes (Barretta-Herman, 1994a). Changes were indeed upon the horizon, though it is unlikely that most people would have anticipated how far reaching these alterations would be, nor the dramatic affect they would have on life in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Summary

Aotearoa/New Zealand society found itself challenged both externally and internally in this time period. Internally, many whose voices had not been valued or heard before gained publicity and strength. With organisation and persistence women and Māori (among many) challenged society at large about what social justice was and who had access to it. Externally the world that Aotearoa/New Zealand was familiar with was changing shifting the economic grounds of our economy. Social work found itself forced to examine its own practices as it was not exempt from the challenges emerging, including critiques regarding social works' relationship with the State.

1985-2011: The transformation of Aotearoa/New Zealand

> The idea of social justice strikes many as, at worst, harmless, and at best thoroughly desirable. However experience of pursuing equality of outcome

this century, in communist countries and elsewhere, shows that it is incompatible with a society of free individuals. Market competition should not be looked upon merely as a device for creating wealth which can then be parcelled out in the political process. It is inseparable from a wider vision of a society of thinking, choosing and morally responsible citizens (Green, 1996, p. 65).

In 1984 the Labour Party was returned to power after a 9 year period in opposition (Cheyne, et al., 2000). Prime Minister Muldoon had called a snap election which the National Party then lost (Duncan, 2007). It has been argued that the rapid nature of the election and the lack of agreement by the Labour Council on economic policy allowed newly elected Minister of Finance Roger Douglas to implement rapid, drastic economic policy changes with little opposition (Lange, 2005; O'Brien, 2008). In the first few days of office the new Labour Government devalued the currency by 20 %, the first of many rapid moves to change the nature of Aotearoa/New Zealand economics (Kelsey, 1995). The changes that followed were comprehensive, a Goods and Service Tax (GST) was introduced, import protections were removed, taxation structures were altered and eligibility for benefits was wound back (Roper, 2008). The concepts of privatisation and user pays were portrayed as an answer to the economic woes Aoteaora/New Zealand had faced and fees for students and those seeking health care began to undermine previously free health and education services (Roper, 2008).

A large portion of state assets were privatised and those which remained in State control were expected to act as businesses within the private sector and produce maximum profits (Kelsey, 1995). Minister of Finance Roger Douglas, whose name would come to be a catch phrase for the neoliberal changes being made (Rogernomics) was seen to have taken over the party and as Kelsey surmises "The Labour Government became a vehicle for a programme which neither its members nor the electorate had endorsed and which was irreconcilable with the basic tenets of social democracy" (Kelsey, 1995, p. 35). Despite the controversial direction of the Labour Government the party held office for two terms until the National Party returned in 1990 (O'Brien, 2008). Supporters of the neoliberal regime claimed that the Labour Government had not been able to implement all the changes needed due to the resistance of "powerful vested interests such as public sector unions..." (Green, 1996, p. 2). The National Party was not seen as having historical ties to the union

movement and therefore retained the ability to progress the reforms in the face of union resistance (Duncan, 2007).

The introduction and expansion of neoliberal ideas in Aoteaora/New Zealand brought considerable and well documented changes to the way society viewed social security (Kelsey, 1993, 1995; O'Brien, 2008; Roper, 2005; St John & Rankin, 2002). Social services and welfare provision were talked of as reducing choice, creating disincentives to work and earn high wages and creating debt problems as successive governments borrowed to maintain social spending (Green, 1996). Labour leader Michael Savage famous for embedding the culture of social security 'from the cradle to the grave' (Gustafson, 1986) had his well-known and previously well loved work condemned publicly, for example: "the imposition of compulsory social security in New Zealand in 1938 weakened and displaced some of the finest organisations ever developed, including the friendly societies..." (Green, 1996, p. 121). People who received or supported state funding of social services and welfare were portrayed as contributing to the moral decay and social breakdown as expressed by Green (1996) in the following summation:

> To sum up: there is a degree of acceptance amongst critics of otherwise varying points of view that the welfare problem is moral in nature. It is having harmful effects on the human character, encouraging the breakdown of the family, crowding out the voluntary associations on which the moral order of a free society rests and, if these were not serious enough, it also fails to accomplish its chief aim of reducing poverty (p. 97).

This change in attitude in many respects saw a resurgence of the old individual moral argument to explain why poverty, crime and other social ills occurred. The welfare state which had enjoyed many years of widespread support was to come under serious attack and despite considerable evidence based research which warned of the dangers of cutting welfare provisions and social services (Gustafson, 1986; Oliver, 1977) Aotearoa/ New Zealand faced a return to the residual model of welfare seen prior to 1938 (McDonald, 1998). The residual model of welfare with its clear approaches to personal responsibility and moral order as directed by the state heavily influenced social work with new ideas of success and failure touted and models for social service provision reviewed (Barretta-Herman, 1994b; McDonald, 1998).

The Department of Social Welfare (DSW) was seen by the new political regime as highly bureaucratic and centralised, something considered inefficient in neoliberal

terms (O'Brien, 2008). Hence intensive restructuring of DSW occurred from 1984 and many social services were contracted out or devolved to the voluntary sector or to iwi (Barretta-Herman, 1994b). Initially much of this restructuring was widely supported, as the institutional racism exposed by Puao-Te-Ata-Tu called for decentralisation of service provision.

> The practice of social work [within the Department] is undergoing a radical change. Acceptance of the principles of Puao-Te-Ata-Tu implies that every familiar role and activity needs to be re-examined in the light of partnership of decision making and resource sharing with community and in particular Māori whanau, hapu and iwi (Department of Social Welfare, 1988, p. 1).

Non-Māori community social service providers had also been critical of DSW centralised bureaucracy for some time and as such were hopeful about the possibilities of a restructured DSW (Barretta-Herman, 1994a). Despite this optimism, when DSW was split in 1992 into 5 business units:

- New Zealand Income Support Service
- New Zealand Children and Young Persons Service
- New Zealand Community Funding Agency
- Social Policy Agency
- Corporate Office (Ministry of Social Development, 2006).

 the problems with decentralisation accompanied by a growing neoliberal political environment began to be highlighted.

> Social service organisations, including notable church based not for profit entities found themselves recast as little arms of the state and to a certain extent forced into competition with each other. Repositioned as accredited service delivery agencies for government they were forced to represent their capabilities within the parameters of the new public management discourse (Larner & Craig, 2002, p. 8).

The choice and empowerment of the community service providers that was to accompany decentralisation was restricted by lack of funding, high demand, skill shortages and the expectation that social workers practice within efficient business models touted by neoliberals (Barretta-Herman, 1994a; O'Brien, 2008). By 1994 many community providers had been forced to reduce services or close by the lack of government funding alongside dramatically increased demand "Responsibility for social well being was individualised, privatised, neutralised" (Kelsey, 1995, p. 294). The individualisation of responsibility also forced social workers to consider risk in a new light. No longer was risk to a client the only worry, risk for the organisation

and as an individual worker became issues that social workers had to weigh up. As Hughes & Wearing (2007) write:

> A key concern might be if they [social workers] underestimate the risks posed by a particular situation and the person is exposed to harm. There is no doubt they may be concerned about the impact on the client, however in an era of increased managerial control and accountability strategies that serve mainly to scapegoat they may equally be concerned about their own jobs. Even worse they may be concerned about facing litigation for negligence, being hauled before a public enquiry or being castigated in the media. These factors reflecting the individualisation of responsibility in society provide a context for a defensive 'covering my back' approach to practice...(p. 92).

Despite these growing difficulties community social service providers did fight back. An example is the action taken in 1994 response by the first conference of Auckland food banks when they warned government they would not continue to be utilised to prop up unjust social policy and laid a complaint with the Human Rights Commission that the government was violating its social contract (Kelsey, 1995).

The impact upon communities and social service providers did not go unnoticed. Many people were beginning to express discontent with the growing gap between rich and poor, rising costs and high unemployment (Kelsey, 1995). The dissatisfaction with the rapid implementation of neoliberal politics in Aoteaora/New Zealand is said to have contributed to the success of the referendum on new voting system Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) at the 1996 election (Kelsey, 2002). It is certainly true that when Labour won the 1999 election they quickly moved to adopt the language and positioning of the 'third way'(Maharey, 2001, 2003). The 'third way' is a term coined by British economist Anthony Giddens (Giddens, 1998). The 'third way' claims to be a new type of politics which abandons the traditional left (first way)/right (second way) divide to present a balanced amalgamation of the strengths of social democracy and neoliberalism (Latham, 2001). This idea is heavily criticised by academics, economists and social workers internationally as being true only to the extent where the language of social democracy is adopted to present neoliberal policies in a more humane light (Hall, 1998; Kelsey, 2002; Peck, 2004; Sevenhuijsen, 2000). Prime Minister Helen Clark provided ammunition to those who are suspicious of the 'third way' when she stated to business leaders "yes we have made moderate policy corrections...but what is of far greater significance are those economic fundamentals that have not changed" (Clark, 2000).

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NZASW also faced its most difficult years over the 1984-1988 time period, with low membership and funds (Barretta-Herman, 1994b). There was growing uncertainty about the identity of social work in a rapidly shifting political climate and without a strong identity social work risked losing the elements of social change and social justice so long espoused. Community workers and Māori caucus both left the association in 1987 as division and dispute about social work identity and responsibility increased

> Social workers lost further ground in the processes of decentralisation which pushed progressively separated social workers into smaller and smaller groups, thus eliminating the critical mass needed for professional development and growth. Most importantly social workers lost their professional reference group within the Department (Barretta-Herman, 1994b, p. 274).

In 1988 NZASW in an attempt to reverse the decline of the Association, and pull social workers together developed standards of practice and based eligibility for membership on passing a competency test based on these standards (Nash, 2009). This opened new arguments about the validity and consequences of professionalisation yet did have the required effect of revitalising membership and participation (Barretta-Herman, 1994a). In 1993 the association added Aotearoa to its name making the acronym ANZASW and adopted a bicultural code of ethics which emphasised "action for social change is necessary to achieve social justice" (Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers, 2008, p. 5). Gray et al (2002) argued that this position is "counter-ideological to that espoused by both Labour and National governments throughout the 1980s and 1990s" (p. 107), hence making social work in Aotearoa/New Zealand a site of greater resistance and political involvement than elsewhere. To what extent this is true is still debated by the social work community in which argument continues about how significant the resistance of social workers to the neoliberal agenda truly was in light of the rapid capitulation of many social services to the 'contract culture' (Tennant, 2007).

The competition for funding and contracts from the State raised issues of social work leadership and its effect (or lack thereof) on how social workers fared in a neoliberal environment in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Legislation was being passed that placed social workers in an environment of uncertainty and yet the opposition from social work leadership was seen to be muted or unsuccessful (O'Brien 2005). One example

of legislation that had real impact upon social work providers was the Public
Finance Act of 1989 (Hanna, 1999). The Public Finance Act of 1989 provided a
legal framework for government's financial management and produced a tight
definition of what could be considered an 'output' and 'outcome' (Hanna, 1999).
Consequently many social workers were being directed to practice in ways which
accorded with the outputs desired by government so funding could be retained and
success evidenced (Hanna, 1999). As a result social work was seen to be
increasingly led by managers from a business background, rather than senior social
workers (Hanna, 1999). The pressure on social workers to do more for less, or to
work outside of their own ethical prescriptions was not without effect. Studies began
to emerge on the health and wellbeing of social workers and terms like 'burnout'
emerged (Van-Heugten, 2009).

By 1999, 15 years after the introduction of neoliberal ideas, Aotearoa/New Zealand
had experienced the greatest increase in income inequality in the entire Organisation
for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (Duncan, 2007). For those
who did not thrive in the competitive nature of neoliberal society, economic and
social exclusion often resulted, particularly in the labour and housing markets
(Cavadino & Dignan, 2006). "The status and economic wellbeing of citizens is
heavily dependent on how well they can succeed in the (free) marketplace of the
economy" (Cavadino & Dignan, 2006, p. 440). Domestic violence, suicide, crime,
poverty and poor health were some of the social indicators that, through their rapid
increase, demonstrated the failure of neoliberalism to address social issues (Kelsey,
1995). The pressure on social service agencies to deal with these growing social
costs was enormous and is thought to have contributed to the reigniting of the
ongoing debate around professionalisation. Some saw the road to recognition and
professionalisation as a way to become visible and gain the ear of government, thus
influencing change (Chenoweth & McAuliffe, 2005), while others still argued that
the road to professionalisation was one certain to lead to cooption and a greater level
of external control (Hibbs, 2005).

Social work education was also influenced by the deep changes occurring in
Aotearoa/New Zealand's political environment. As education providers received
recognition and accreditation from the State it was logical that providers should be

influenced by the strong ideological positioning of the government of the day. In 1986 under the fourth Labour government the New Zealand Council for Education and Training in the Social Services (NZCETSS) came into being (Nash, 1998a).[xii] One of the key priorities for this council was the establishment of new standards of accreditation and education resource development. However this was not a simple journey for the new council, the existence of some serious issues began to come to light. Not only were university fees becoming normalised, making tertiary study less accessible (Kelsey, 1995), but real concerns were felt around the social justice or critical thinking component of social work education being lost under State regulation (Nash, 1998a). Many agencies that employed social workers were keen for the standardised accreditation as it gave them a clearer idea of the skill base of potential employees, yet many social workers were not as comfortable with this (Nash, 1998a). O'Brien (1998) summarised this when he stated:

> We now have a range of educational and accrediting institutions with a wide variety in interpretation of what is required to produce a competent and effective social worker. The need to recruit students to maintain viability means that the imperative and perhaps even more importantly, the managerialism that shapes social work practice become the critical considerations influencing and determining the nature and shape of education and training programmes, rather than the requirements of effective and competent practice (O'Brien p. 7).

Where critical elements remained in social work education, students faced a gap between their learning experience and their subsequent practice environment. This difference potentially sets up a divide between social workers and employing agencies in terms of expectations of practice (Harre-Hindmarsh, 1992). This divide inevitably places further pressure upon educational providers to adapt their curriculum. As Hughes & Wearing (2007) comment:

> For many social workers this sense that their professional identity is limited by their organisational role comes as a surprise. Their social work education has been about not just instilling in them the skills, knowledge and values of social work but also in socialising them into the profession. That they are not able to fulfil all of the potential of their professional identity in the organisation that now employs them challenges many people...(p. 10).

[xii] The full history and impact of the NZCETSS is beyond the scope of this thesis, though it is a worthwhile study for those who wish to develop a deeper insight into the ongoing struggle between the ethical desires of social work practitioners and the need for state recognition and support. See bibliography for further reading.

While the NZCETSS did not survive past 1995, concerns about the direction of social work education remain. Considering the aforementioned evidence of the continuation of the neoliberal political environment in Aoteaora/New Zealand it is fair to say the political environment remains influential to social work education providers and hence shapes social work practitioners.

The changes of the 1980s and 1990s, while comprehensive, were not yet over. In 2001 the Ministry of Social Policy and Department of Work and Income were amalgamated and renamed the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) (Ministry of Social Development, 2006). This change would extend to incorporate Child Youth and Family into MSD in 2006 (Ministry of Social Development, 2006). In 2003 legislation was passed which created the framework for the registration of social workers, while initially a voluntary process, the legislation made the intention to move towards a mandatory system clear (Hibbs, 2005; Lonne & Duke, 2009). Despite these Labour government adjustments, by 2008 there were still only small documentable changes to the fundamental neoliberal trajectory of the 1990s (O'Brien, 2008). Roper (2008) comments:

> The fifth led Labour government has reversed some aspects of the neoliberal redesign of the welfare state while leaving most of the central features of the neoliberal social policy regime intact (p. 18).

This failure to truly change direction has been termed by political commentators as the inability to make a distinction between two critical questions "what is to be done and what is just?"(White, 2004, p. 164).

The evidential basis of analysis of social conditions in the last 3 years certainly appears to support the claim that Aotearoa/New Zealand retains considerable social inequities. For example in 2009 there was a 9% higher income gap than that of 1984 (New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services, 2009). Additionally in Wilkinson & Pickett's (2010) comprehensive recent data analysis Aotearoa/New Zealand is shown to have one of the greatest levels of income inequality in the world - alongside other countries who introduced similar free market policies This gap has been directly linked to poor health outcomes, high levels of mental illness and imprisonment (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). This high level of need has translated into dramatic statistical increases in the numbers of people accessing social services from Women's Refuge to the Auckland City Mission (New Zealand Council of

Christian Social Services, 2011). Simultaneously funding to these social service organisations has been cut or frozen (Torrie, 2011). Clearly Aotearoa/New Zealand still faces core questions regarding the fabric of our society and how we can operate in a way that engages the whole of society.

Summary

This era saw huge changes to ideas that had comfortably embedded themselves in the Aoteaora/New Zealand psyche were faced in a short time frame. Ideas of universal social security and basic rights were challenged by notions of freedom of choice and individualism. Aotearoa/New Zealand was opened up to the world economically and saw a wealth of legislative change. The gap between rich and poor widened and the ways in which welfare and health are provided were shifted. Social workers were impacted as many of their employers were restructured and the aims changed. The role of the social worker came under fierce scrutiny as the place of social workers in the new neoliberal environment was uncertain at best. Despite changes in government and the language we use to describe our political milieu in the last 25 years Aotearoa/New Zealand society still operates in a neoliberal environment, leaving many questions for today's social workers.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has given an overview to what is a considerable period of history in Aotearoa/New Zealand. In each era explored, ideas of justice, what it is, who it applies to and how it is challenged are examined. Changes in society and social norms can be seen in the changing attitudes and knowledge bases and in social policy. Social work is shown to be interwoven with these changes as ideas of what is best practice and indeed what a social worker does evolves alongside our ideas of justice and fairness. This journey while inevitably influenced by international events, such as war and technological development, is still one that is unique to Aoteaora/New Zealand and tells part of the story of how our national social work community has experienced the journey through history.

This chapter also delves into the huge amount that has happened in Aotearoa/New Zealand in little more than 150 years, showing that despite such a wide ranging history some of the same key arguments facing social workers appear to remain the

same. Questions around social work's relationship with the State, and the commitment to social justice, as well as those around independence, status, role and professional recognition reappear throughout different time periods and remain, to a large degree, unanswered as social work is buffeted by a rapidly changing national and international environment.

The design of this research project, from theory to methodology to method is explored in the following chapter. The aim of this chapter is to lay down the framework for a strong and valid research project that will provide insight into how some of these questions and conflicts are perceived by social worker graduates from 2000-2010.

Chapter 4

The critical approach: Theoretical framework, methodology and
methods

Introduction

> There are three major ingredients in social research: the construction of
> theory, the collection of data and, no less important, the design of methods
> for gathering data. All of them have to be right if the research is to yield
> interesting results (Gilbert, 2008, p. 22).

This chapter is designed to lay out the theoretical framework and methodology that
frame and guide this research alongside the methods of data collection. In presenting
these fundamental elements of research design and structure the study is further
clarified in terms of *how* and *why* it was conducted.

With keen awareness of the contested nature of the qualitative tradition particularly
that of critical ethnography, this chapter will clearly set out the rationale behind the
choice of theory and methodology, the strengths they offer and the challenges they
provide. The process of data collection is also discussed in this chapter in reference
to the theoretical and methodological approaches.

The chapter begins with an exploration of critical theory, the theoretical framework
utilised in this thesis. The focus of this section is in revealing the points of
connection critical theory has to the research topic and the process by which it was
selected. The selection of critical ethnography as a methodology is then similarly
examined.

Having explicated the rationale for the choice of framework and methodology the
design of the data collection methods and how these panned out are examined in
more detail. Data from non-participants has been included here as there was
noteworthy input from those who could not participate which enriched the research.

Finally the salient ethical challenges and obstacles that had to be addressed prior to,
during and after the data collection are discussed.

Theoretical Framework

> Good social research involves more than the identification of a worthwhile topic and the selection and competent use of an appropriate method, vital though these are. ...research is inevitably framed by conceptual and theoretical considerations and such frameworks when properly handled, can enrich and enhance the research (Cooper, 2008, p. 6).

This thesis is framed by the presence of critical theory: a theoretical platform which Marx (1975) aptly summarises as being "the self clarification of the struggles and wishes of the age" (p. 209). Other theoretical standpoints were considered, most notably feminist theory. After considerable review feminist theory was rejected as a primary theoretical framework. This decision was based on two key factors: the difficulties involved in clearly articulating to a diverse audience what feminist theory entails and the prevailing perception (however dubious) that feminist research only considers women's lives and experiences (Harding, 1987). To ensure that the research was seen as credible and relevant to the entire social work community it became necessary to employ a theory that more obviously engaged the experiences of all social workers.

After the recognition of the impediments to utilising a feminist theoretical framework I embarked upon a more detailed study of critical theory. This investigation revealed critical theory as having a multifaceted relationship with social justice, social work and social research. To elaborate, critical theory has a historical relationship with notions of ethics and diversity and "fully legitimises social work's traditional commitments to social justice" (Ife, 1999, p. 222). For a study on the understanding and practice of social justice in the 21st century these connections ensure critical theory is highly relevant, while maintaining many of the analytical and reflective strengths of feminist theory.

Critical theory, much like feminist theory is considered to be inherently political (Fraser, 1985). In the case of critical theory this is largely due to its origins, which are considered to be interwoven with the desire to explain why the socialist revolution that Marx prophesised did not occur as anticipated (Agger, 1991). Associated with the Institute of Social Research which was established 1923 in Germany, critical theory was utilised at this time to critique capitalism and

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positivism (Agger, 1991). These early ties built a political legacy for critical theory that allowed subsequent researchers to assert that critical theory had "A stated interest in emancipation of humanity from injustice" as a core agenda (Chambers, 2004, p. 221).

The use of critical theory in investigating and understanding social justice clearly marks the strong connection of the theory to the research topic, as the study aims to explore and listen for understandings of social justice and the subsequent reality of implementation. This is particularly useful for a study of social workers as social work organisations worldwide claim an association with social justice via the field's history, standards of practice and international commitments (Hare, 2004). Furthermore it has been argued that much of the theoretical and ethical developments within the field of social work have mirrored the developments in critical theory (Morrow & Brown, 1994). An example of this is seen in the critique of positivism that engaged both social worker academics and critical theorists so comprehensively (Fook, 2002; Habermas, 1987; Ife, 1999).

Developments made within the late 20th century and early 21st century have increasingly linked critical theory with research that is collaborative, challenging, and able to hold a variety of perspectives without creating a hierarchy (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). This aspect of critical theory has had particular impact on framing the research as it underpins the decision not to measure all responses of participants against a pre existing definition of social justice. Instead, the research ensures that all participants' *definition/s* of social justice are explored as well as their experiences. This approach links well to the critical ethnographic methodology the study utilises which is designed to find out *what is* rather than measure against a pre defined classification or assumption (O'Leary, 2009).

The strength of critical theory and its relevance to the shaping of the research and methodology does not end with a shared relationship to social justice. Critical theory bears a unique history in its relationship with other theories, disciplines and areas of foci that is crucial to its vitality in this study. Kellner (1989) summarised this phenomenon aptly when he stated:

> "Critical theory has refused to situate itself within an arbitrary or conventional academic division of labour. It thus traverses and undermines

boundaries between competing disciplines, and stresses interconnections between philosophy, economics and politics, and culture and society..." (p. 7).

This ability to connect disparate areas is one of the strongest arguments for critical theory as the framework for this proposed research. Understandings of social justice emerge from a variety of knowledge bases, many of which are drawn upon by social workers (Connolly & Healy, 2009). Despite the ongoing argument for the need to have one knowledge base for social work it is widely accepted that social workers continue to draw from many, including those mentioned by Kellner (Connolly & Healy, 2009; Healy, 2005; Oko, 2008). Critical theory brings a unique ability to ensure all of these areas are seen and heard within the research, without the need to focus on one at the expense of another.

The strength of critical theory in making connections extends beyond different disciplines to the diversity of individuals. This is important to this research as the use of critical theory as a framework strengthens the research's relationship to difference. Ife (1999) captures this potency when he writes: "The particular value of critical theory is that it values subjective experience, and hence affirms difference and the continual reconstruction of 'reality'" (p. 219). For qualitative research based on studying distinct individuals, the ability to ensure that diversity is not lost, ignored or assimilated by a positivist approach is vital. With its ability to recognise diverse subjectivities, the use of critical theory as a framework helps to moderate any biases I, as the researcher, bring to the research as an 'insider', strengthening the validity of the study.

Methodology

> Critical ethnography is a type of reflection that examines culture, knowledge and action. It expands our horizons for choice and widens our experimental capacity to see, hear and feel. It deepens and sharpens our ethical commitments by forcing us to develop and act upon value commitments in the context of political agendas (Thomas, 1993, p. 2).

In designing this research project it was imperative that the methodology be strong, relevant and capable of achieving well grounded and credible results. It was clear that the type of in-depth knowledge sought from the study was not to fit into a quantitative study as these studies tend to be more focused on larger numbers and less detail (O'Leary, 2009). Qualitative research on the other hand "works at delving

into social complexities in order to truly explore and understand the interactions, processes, lived experiences and belief systems..." (O'Leary, 2009, pp. 113-114). The richer and thicker data provided by qualitative research was what this topic sought.

To then narrow the field further to the most appropriate methodology it was a matter of asking: what best answers the question? The answer surprised me in that both the observation of social interaction and discourse provided by focus groups as well as in-depth one on one interviews offered opportunities for rich data. Neither outstripped the other in possibility or appropriateness as clearly is the case for some researchers (Cooper, 2008). Focus groups offered the ability to find out not only what someone thinks, but *why they think it*, as well as potentially providing the space for individuals to come into contact with new ideas, or support for their current thinking (Kitzinger, 1995). Furthermore the social workers I wanted to interview will, like me, have experienced many group discussions, as well as role plays within the format of their social work degree, allowing a certain level of familiarity with speaking frankly in a group setting. There was little concern the focus group format would silence or intimidate social workers who had come through their degree in the 21st century.

In-depth interviews on the other hand allow insight into "an individual's self, lived experience, values and decisions, occupational ideology, cultural knowledge or perspective" (Johnson, 2001, p. 104). Again within the social work degree structure all students would have had considerable (and often videoed) experience of one on one interviewing and assessment. With the usefulness of these two data collection methods in mind I examined methodological approaches that would allow for both techniques to be utilised. Drawing together both methods will produce strong, credible research that allows a broad level of group understanding as well as individual insight to be generated. Critical ethnographic methodology as well as mixed method offered the opportunity to utilise both these qualitative data collection methods (Alexander, Thomas, Cronin, Fielding, & Moran-Ellis, 2008), further narrowing down the options for the best methodological approach.

Further analysis focused my attention on *who* exactly *it* was that I was studying. Which of the aforementioned methodological approaches was more appropriate for

understanding a bounded group (21st century social workers) and their perceptions and actions regarding social justice? The acuities and resulting acts of members of this group are not only influenced by current social norms and social work culture but are connected to a broader history, a history which has shaped and influenced the culture of the social work community and hence today's social workers. Part of what is needed therefore is a greater understanding of *what is* as well as an analysis of *how* the perspectives fit within a wider context. This is where critical ethnography became the clear choice. Simply put ethnography is a "culture of people studying, writing about, thinking about and talking to other people" (Thomas, 1993, p. 5). This fitted the research objectives in terms of building insight into the group in question. Critical ethnography however adds a level of reflectiveness to this process of knowledge gathering in its ability to be both scientific and critical, with a view to think directly about culture and its relationship to knowledge, action and politics (Thomas, 1993). In other words, critical ethnography offered this research the opportunity to build *understanding* as well as insight through its ability to ask what and how but also *why?,* fitting well with the critical theoretical framework. Critical ethnography also offers the opportunity to study all the forms of knowledge produced in data collection, not just what is said, but how it is said, body language and patterns of interaction and avoidance.

Furthermore in regards to understanding context and building knowledge critical ethnography demands that:

> ...history is not to be relegated to the collection of background data but rather becomes an integral part of the explanation of the regularities explored in any specific analysis. To historicise within ethnographic work is to show the conditions of possibility of a definite set of social forms and thus simultaneously establish the historical limits of their existence (Simon & Dippo, 1986, p. 198).

This particular strength added to the value of critical ethnography as a methodological approach. The entire thesis, from introduction to literature review to conclusion places current thinking and opinion within a historical framework that illuminates social work as a profession and as a part of our community.

Data Collection

Once I had ascertained that both the focus group structure and the in-depth interview would be utilised it was a matter of designing the data collection process and recruiting. I made a decision to aim for sixteen participants initially in two focus groups. The choice to run the focus groups first was made in order to bring participants together in a group where they could discuss the topic in a semi-structured way without the direct personal focus of an in-depth interview. In my experience people can feel nervous about a one on one interview to a far larger degree than a group setting, where talking is more optional. The focus groups allowed participants to warm up to the subject and their own views in a non-threatening group environment.

The decision to run two focus groups instead of one was made in order to fulfil two key requirements. The first of these was to make attendance at the group accessible for participants, thus two very different locations in Wellington were chosen. This ensured those who work or live at different ends of Wellington would not have their attendance hampered by travel time.

The second key point for running two was that the credibility of the research would be strengthened by providing comparability between the groups (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas, & Robson, 2001). With a small sample size, comparability offers greater validity to the research findings by allowing the themes and nature of a group discussion to be contrasted with a different group discussing the same topic. In doing this patterns, anomalies and themes can be more easily identified.

Recruitment for research participants was conducted via advertising in community notices and email lists as well as through the Wellington branch of Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers. Advertising was deliberately wide and those who saw the ad were encouraged to pass it on to others I may not have considered. Morse (1999) contends that it is in the selection process that qualitative research gains generalisbility so advertising was deliberately targeted to reach beyond the organisations and individuals I had prior knowledge of.

Responses to the advert came quickly and while only eight were confirmations for participation, there were also five emails and two personal approaches that detailed

considerable interest in the research, accompanied by reasons that frustrated their attendance. While worded differently they all centred around two key points

- A workload that was too heavy
- Fear that there would be judgment or repercussions from hostile managers (even though identity was confidential).

I sought permission to quote part of these emails within this section and consent was granted by three people as long as their names were changed.

> Your study sounds great, I am stoked that someone is asking these questions and is actually interested in where we are as social workers in 2011. I would love to be part of the study but I am so stressed out at work already with a caseload you wouldn't believe that by the end of the day there is nothing left in the tank. I'm empty and I cannot see my way clear to being part of anything else. Social justice for us as social workers? Yeah right-Esther

> It certainly sounds like you have hit upon a topic that will bring some uncomfortable things to light! When I saw your ad I thought, yes! Māori have been asking that kind of question for ages, about time we faced ourselves in today's light! Sorry though I can't join in, things are on the edge here and you know the social workers will be first to go if there's a question. I don't want to make myself more at risk than I am anyway and for sure I have enough work to do here to eat up all my spare time anyway. Sorry and good luck-Fred

> Interesting time frame you are studying there, I will be interested to see how it turns out, I wish I could be part of it but we have lost three staff over the last 6 months and surprise! They are not being replaced. All us social workers are now holding more work than is really ethical but who is listening? In order not to burn out and to tick all the boxes we need to tick to retain our funding we have to just suck it up and not get involved in anything else outside work. So I can't join in but am keen to read the final product! Good luck-Aroha

These responses were certainly interesting for me and while I regretted the loss of would-be participants, I appreciated that people needed to keep themselves safe and prioritise their down time. The consistency and strength of the reasons for non-participation, as well as the commitment in sending these through to me certainly added to the richness of the data.

All those who had agreed to participate were provided with full information and a consent form (see appendices 4 & 5). In organising the focus groups I prepared some key questions which were open ended and designed to promote discussion as well as

provided some definitions of social work I thought would be thought provoking. In both groups I did not get to ask my key questions in a linear manner as the group made links themselves and through interaction with each other asked and discussed questions themselves, frequently covering the questions I had prepared without me even asking them. As the groups were so interactive I was able to observe exchanges and participate minimally. Focus group one ran for 1 hour and 24 minutes and Focus group two for 1 hour 47 minutes.

From those who participated in the focus groups I then randomly approached four of the eight for further in-depth interviewing. I pulled names out of a hat to ensure complete randomness of selection. All participants had right of refusal if they felt they did not want to have further input. All participants who agreed to take part chose to have their individual interviews conducted in my small office space in a local community organisation as it was most convenient.

I had all focus groups and interviews transcribed and all participants were offered opportunities to view and amend their contributions (see appendix 8). Several participants also sent me additional thoughts and responses after the data collection as the discussion had stimulated their thoughts on the issues discussed. These were all included in the data set.

Ethics

An application was made to the Massy University Human Ethics Committee (MUHEC) and was approved in May 2011 to conduct focus groups and interviews for this thesis. All documents were submitted to MUHEC for scrutiny and feedback, including questions and structure of both group and individual interviews. All agreements made with MUHEC have been adhered to and documents can be viewed in the appendices, pages 124-131.

An area of particular ethical consideration for me, both pre and post ethical approval was that of objectivity and how this may be affected by being an 'insider' to the research. While the existence and relevance of objectivity is highly contested within social research, to ensure research validity it was necessary to consider any potential repercussions from an 'insider' status. Nietzsche's famous metaphor "a man (sic)

may muddy the water to make it appear deep" (1886, p. 121), was not without applicability considering I fit the criteria for participation in my own research.

To answer the questions about objectivity it first became important to define what it is. There are of course many definitions in existence, so I chose Fay's concise and clear explanation as encompassing the primary identity of objectivity:

> "[objectivity is]…the separation of scientists from their field of study-separation physically as not interfering with it; separation emotionally and evaluatively as being neutral with respect to its doings; and separation intellectually as being without preconceptions regarding it" (Fay 1996, p.244).

Rather than arguing against the necessity or even existence of objectivity, which many qualitative researchers have done (Bishop, 1998; Butler, et al., 2007; Morse & Richards, 2002), I chose instead to focus on what I could do as a researcher to minimise any detrimental impact my own value position may have on the data collection process. This is not to say I approached the research claiming a value free position, as that, for me would be impossible as well as counterproductive in terms of reducing any possible negative impact. Any "veil of neutrality" (Bishop, 1998, p. 344) could be perceived as dishonest and artificial. The conscious awareness and transparency of my own values through a process of self reflexivity was something I actively sought throughout the research process. Ely frames this as a constant probing, asking yourself "am I talking about the interviewees or am I talking about me?" (Ely, cited in Vanderpyl, 2004, p. 22). This self reflexivity also ensured that I examined and re-examined how questions were framed and how the interviews/focus groups were conducted to help minimise my ability to simply validate values or ideas I already held.

Rigorous reflexivity "involves the ability to recognise that all aspects of ourselves and our contexts influence the way we research (or create knowledge)" (Fook, 2004, p. 18) and was crucial to the research design and analysis. Thus regardless of my inability to be valueless or completely intellectually separated from my field of study I was able to ensure I focused on observation rather than participation in focus groups, utilise post interview thoughts and comments from participants on their contributions (which came in some cases months after the interviews) and feedback

from my supervisors as a check against my own positionality in influencing and interpreting the data.

Data analysis

> It is important that the theoretical position of a thematic analysis is made clear, as this is all too often left unspoken (and is then typically a realist account).
> Any theoretical framework carries with it a number of assumptions about the nature of the data, what they represent in terms of 'the world', 'reality', and so forth. A good thematic analysis will make this transparent (2006, p. 81).

A thematic analysis has been undertaken of the data collected. Thematic analysis, while at times suffering from lack of adequate demarcation (Braun & Clarke, 2006), is a highly appropriate analytical technique for qualitative research in its ability to be flexible and provide a rich and detailed account of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis can be for example "a method that works both to reflect reality and to unpick or unravel the surface of reality" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 81).

Initially post interviews I had a clear feeling about having understood and heard all of the discourse, especially considering that the participants were so talkative and engaging that I was able to primarily take notes and observe. In beginning the thematic analysis process though, it quickly became evident how much there could be gained by reviewing and sorting through the material so finely. In each re-reading of the data something that had previously gone unnoticed drew my attention until I felt fully saturated by detail.

For me as a researcher thematic analysis provided a method by which I could study and view the data for patterns of interaction, language use and recurring topics or expressions. Each transcript was analysed, with words and phrases that appeared frequently or drew strong responses coded and sorted. The coding of words and phrases then allowed me to progress to pattern recognition. The process of pattern recognition is one where data is sorted and linked in a mind mapping process where seemingly random pieces of data can be contextualised and connections can be made. This allows important patterns and meaning that may have initially been obscure in participants' responses, views, experiences and language to become more visible. This process has been referred to as an act of defamiliarisation with the data,

allowing the researcher to gain some distance "from the taken for granted aspects of what we see and allowing us to view what we have seen more critically" (Thomas, 1993, p. 43).

In accordance with the ethnographic methodology, all excerpts from participants are quoted exactly how they were said within the focus group and/or interview. This is because how something is said, what is emphasised, repeated or linked can be can be as informative as the statement itself (Thomas, 1993). This includes colloquialisms, abbreviations, pauses, laughter and sighs to fully explicate the nature of the discourse for the reader.

Themes were surprisingly easy to identify, as there was little to no disagreement between participants on what the key issues were and the participants themselves continually drew discussion back to a few central issues, or linked peripheral issues back to underlying topics. For example, despite there being no direct question about membership of a professional association or any reference to Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW) in the focus groups and interviews *every single participant* raised the services and/or the approach of ANZASW as an issue directly related to their social work practice. Upon further analysis however, it became evident the considerable discussion around ANZASW was not an indicator that ANZASW was a standalone theme but rather was part of the overarching issue of *lack of leadership*. Themes also connect to each other, for example the theme of leadership was strongly connected to the theme of *social work identity in the workplace* through direct links made by participants each time either subject emerged.

The process of thematic analysis and identification of themes is time consuming and in many respects the most difficult process undertaken in the entire research process. It requires the researcher to bring to bear all the critical faculties and a willingness to look and relook at the data to see beyond what you may expect to see. This undertaking was helped in my case by the incredible keenness and involvement of the participants. Three sent me further thoughts and comments in written form on the discourse they had been part of. They had felt stimulated by the discussion and were

prompted to continue thinking on the topic long after the data collection had finished. This additional information operated as a form of 'check and balance' for me to review if the theme identification I had done so far resonated with their additional input. In many cases for a masters research project conducted over a one year period this kind of reflection and checking back is not logistically possible, so I owe a great deal to the passion, interest and generosity of the participants I was lucky enough to encounter.

Ethical challenges

I found myself at what I thought was an ethical impasse when I first examined the data. For it appeared from thematic analysis that the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW) as an organisation was being roundly condemned by all participants. My initial analysis suggested ANZASW may even have to be a theme of its own to capture the volume of data relating to it.

To write this up without considerable forethought left me exposed to the possibility of 'doing harm' to an organisation in a way that I had assured MUHEC that I would not do. It may even appear as if I set out to discredit or harm ANZASW by the nature or design of the research. However to ignore or obfuscate this strong and clear data would be a betrayal of the generosity, openness and commitment of the participants, not to mention my own fundamental integrity as a researcher to honestly present findings, no matter how difficult or challenging.

After pondering how to navigate this matter for some time I simply returned to data analysis, thinking I would discuss the issue further with my supervisors at our next visit. The more I analysed the data, the more I was able to make connections and enhance my own understanding of what the data showed. I soon realised that I had missed on first analysis that a broader theme, namely lack of leadership lay behind this commentary on ANZASW. As the only clear social work organisation ANZASW naturally came under intense scrutiny from participants when raising this issue. (See chapter five for further details). This is not to say that what was said about ANZASW is not crucially important; on the contrary I consider it to be something both ANZASW and the wider social work community can learn from. It was simply a reminder that analysis is an intensive process and true harm lies not in

criticism, which we all must face to grow, but in perfunctory or non rigorous examination of data.

Summary

This chapter has reviewed the key foundations for the research in this thesis. Beginning with the critical theoretical framework, the scaffolding of the research is developed by explicating the methodology as critical ethnographic and the design and rationale of the data collection methods.

Non-participant data is then added to widen the lens of the available data to include the explanations of those who had wanted to be involved but could not. The chapter then proceeds to the outline process of data analysis to complete the picture of the research design. The chapter concludes with the ethical challenges involved in shaping and considering a project such as this one if it is to be both useful and have integrity.

The purpose of this chapter was to ensure that all the processes, decisions and challenges this research project contained were made transparent. Thus the reader can judge for themselves, with all pertinent information to hand, the strength, validity and quality of the research.

Chapter 5

The participants' voices

Introduction

> "The wording there from the International Federation of Social Workers, yeah I love it, it sounds great- social justice is fundamental to social work and all that. In many ways I believe that, I wish for that, I try for that but really do the people who wrote that definition actually practice? Do they have a back to back caseload? A manager who needs you to demonstrate to hawkeyed funders that you are 'successful'? A mortgage to pay? The gap between what social work theoretically should be and what it turns out to be in the reality of being an employee with no real professional back up, no collective voice, no sense of unity is massive. It seems that claiming social justice as an inherent part of social work is nothing more than a dream that ignores the pressures we are under and the reality of the frontlines"- Norida.

This chapter covers the data collected in the focus groups and interviews. Beginning with basic demographics of participants the chapter then moves on to detail the emergent themes produced by the thematic analysis. There are seven themes that have been identified which are:

- Social justice as structural change
- Social work identity in the workplace
- Lack of leadership
- Workload
- Neoliberal environment
- Social work education
- Risk aversion

These themes weave tightly together to produce a meaningful insight into the experiences and vision of social work graduates from 2000-2010, as well as strong connections to social work history and current issues facing practicing social workers.

Participant demographics

There were eight participants in this research, eight of whom participated in a focus group and four who participated in a further in-depth interview. Information was

collected from participants regarding their ethnicity, gender and practice area. This information is tabled below.

Figure 1: Make up of focus groups and in-depth interviews
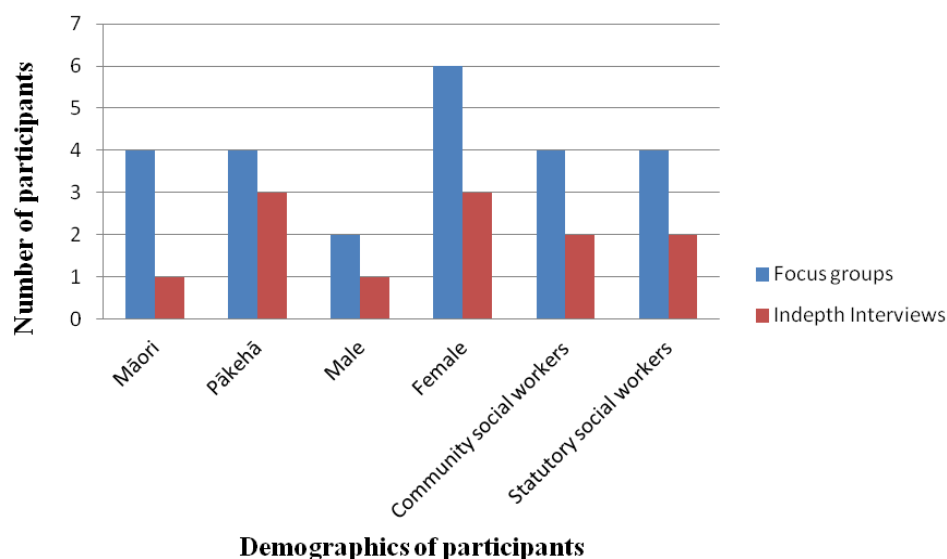
Tertiary institutions attended

From the eight participants there were six different tertiary providers around Aotearoa/New Zealand.

The emergent themes

This research set out to *find out more* about social workers who graduated within the time period 2000-2010. More specifically it sought to gain insight into how social workers from this particular slice of time perceive social justice and its role within their social work practice. Furthermore it sought to probe how perceptions of social justice had developed and what has helped or hindered these concepts in practice.

In asking participants open ended questions both within a group setting and an individual one, considerable data was gathered on this relatively unknown group. Despite the warnings and advice of resource books on interviewing and focus groups there were no awkward silences, distracting side discussions or much prompting

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needed from me as the interviewer. All those involved participated freely and many expressed strong feelings, body language and emotion:

> When I hear that word [social justice] it just makes my blood boil about what injustice is out there...it's just so hard [bangs desk] - Sonia.

> When they involve you as a social worker, it's nothing like civil liberties or you know any of those kinda phrases or visions, it's very immediate, short-term, task-centred stuff, and it's *soul-destroying*, because it's just like you're doing that, but you know for your statistics, it's never got a social justice category - Tai.

This level of emotive response was very interesting as it clearly indicated that the topic of social justice in social work was one that was highly relevant to social workers in this time period. Simply asking the question of what social justice meant appeared to open the door to the frustrations, concerns, fears and day to day choices facing these social workers. The strength of the response was certainly unanticipated by myself as researcher. The level of personal disclosure, shared experiences and desperation for answers highlighted the importance of understanding this topic more thoroughly. The fluidity with which the participants spoke and how much they had to say also made the discovery of themes an easier task than originally anticipated as there was considerable agreement and affirmation of others experiences, particularly within the group discussion. The first of the themes pinpointed by analysis was that of *social justice as structural change.*

Social justice as structural change

> Social justice is all about looking at the big picture - Rebecca.

The question was asked, both within the focus groups and within the individual interviews about how social justice was understood, what it meant to each participant. While the responses were clear that defining social justice in a one or two sentence sound bite was not something anyone wished to do, nor considered necessary, everyone had an idea of what social justice was in their experience.

> ...so that is what social justice feels like to me, though I get that other people might see it differently, I know many of my Māori friends see social justice primarily through the lens of the Treaty and that's valid as well, it's just different, if we know anything it's that pushing one *right* idea of social justice can only be dangerous, even fascist, isn't that how assimilation for indigenous people got presented, as 'just' in the long term? - Rebecca.

Human rights, fairness, equality and freedom were the most commonly used terms in participants' explanations of social justice and its meaning to them. What was particularly interesting about the responses and discussion around the idea of social justice is that no one had a concise definition, even for their own use and most struggled to sum up their understanding to others. This was not a precursor to disagreement over definition, on the contrary it led people, particularly within the group discussions, to support one another to express their ideas around social justice, and there was considerable agreement, nodding and minimal encouragers provided to speakers explaining their ideas.

> I'm just thinking about social justice and I'm thinking there's so many layers, it is all much more complex, diverse and dynamic than you would believe - Ngahuia.

There was a real sense from the group that social justice was a large, almost unwieldy concept. Many participants, especially in the in-depth interviews spoke at some length in attempts to capture the importance and yet elusiveness of social justice:

> I think social justice, it's about - my own personal view, I'd say social justice is about um, individuals having the opportunity, and the processes, and the power, to live their life as they see fit, to me it's very closely tied, human rights discourse stuff. You know, social justice is about, yeah, individuals, and when individuals have that ability, and are free in a really sort of positive sense - not like just free from, but free to - then, you know, it aggregates up, and we get a society that doesn't have to be... You know, I'm not a communist - we don't all have to be living on a farm together and [laughter] you know, like, that's not what it's about. But it's about, you know, having the ability to make the choices that you wanna make in your life, um, without discrimination, without anybody, you know, not giving you the right opportunities through health or education, or, you know, any of those things. So where our health system and our education system, and our tax system, and all of those things are working to give people the freedom to do things, then we're starting to see, ah, you see kind of like, I don't know, a flattening, where it's... We don't have social justice at the moment cos there are so many people who *aren't* free to do things. In New Zealand, we may be - you know, we're not Syria, we're not Libya at the moment, we're not, you know, being taken down in the streets and stuff like that, but there's so many people who still aren't free to do things, because they don't have all of those social structures put around them-Felicity.

> Social justice, to me it means it's a continuum, it's a journey towards where people's potential is realised and people get a fair crack of the whip and, you know, vested interests aren't totally calling all the shots. I see it as um basic

human decency and a systems approach, so it's about clear thinking, it's about what would you want, what do I want, what would I need to be healthy and happy and have the community around me be the same - Frank.

In analysing the discussion and commentary on social justice while there are many different aspects mentioned there was one element that linked all the discussion and commentary on understanding social justice. This was the perception that while social justice is important and can be talked about on an individual level, person to person, ultimately it the broader structural level that connects it to social change. To elaborate, participants concurred that social justice for individuals was an important occurrence, yet they agreed through references to human rights discourse, social structures, systemic advocacy, community, laws, institutional injustice that to change how society acts, makes decisions, functions or allocates resources the battle for social justice must be at least partly a structural one. Without this structural change we face individual injustices being repeated over and over again. To achieve social justice on any issue or in any area essentially requires making change, or at least taking the challenge to a structural level.

> Social justice is basically systemic advocacy to make sure that the change makers upstairs are actually bringing it down to a grassroots level and that grassroots problems result in systemic change and if that means going against another organisation, to government, the media or against my own organisation for the social justice of this client, so that they regain their mana that they feel has been taken away from them, and so it doesn't just happen again, then I'm okay with that - Sonia.

> In trying to achieve social justice you're gonna look at, you know, human rights or, um, even one's potential as a human being, there's no end, and eventually by advocating or pushing barriers or calling other agencies to task it challenges the powers that be who like it a certain way - Dolly.

This perception of social justice on a structural level accords with the perception discussed earlier of the Settlement Movement, an early branch of social work led in America by Jane Addams, among others. They too saw social justice as being achieved by considerable focus being placed on structural and political change, not merely on the betterment of the individual (Ehrenreich, 1985). This is particularly interesting considering the ongoing struggle between the Settlement Movement approach and the Charity Organisation Society approach discussed in chapters two and three. This observation led to the analysis of what then these same participants

had to say about the function and nature of social work and the emergence of the next theme *social work identity in the workplace*.

Social work identity in the workplace

> We're not given the leeway by our employers, you know. You have your job d. You adhere to that, or you're gonna be hauled in, you know, one day soon if you don't, so yeah, I feel so constrained by the workplace culture of conservatism, you just end up concentrating on what you are told to do even if it doesn't fit with social work ethics- You know, you can understand where it's coming from too, if you've got a mortgage to pay, like kids and that - Tai.

That the theme of social work identity in the workplace emerged so spectacularly was probably one of the most surprising outcomes of this research. Initially the questions I had framed were around gaining insight into how participants saw social work and how their ability to practice it accorded with their understanding (see appendix 2 and 3). These open questions were designed to illuminate to what extent the understandings of social justice were integrated into the definition and practice of social work. Instead of gaining said definitions of social work as seen by social work graduates between 2000 -2010 however, what emerged was a unanimous expression of frustration at how social work functioned in the reality of an agency environment. This occurred in every interview, and in each focus group as well as being the central topic in all of the additional written material the participants added post interview.

> How would I define social work? [Pause] I think I would probably say that as a *profession*, as opposed to employment - so as a *profession*, I would say that social work is about empowerment, and it's about trying to bring about positive social change at any level, whether that be a one-on-one thing, whether that be for a sort of group of society, or whether that be sort of at an aggregate type, you know, um, level, or whether that be internationally. Um, and yeah, that it's about positive social change as a profession, whereas being employed as a social worker can often be about very different things. It doesn't really make sense, but I think because when you're employed as a social worker, it's just like anything - it comes with the job description, it comes with a boss, and it comes with a management structure, and you become part of your organisation. So, yeah, so I almost see that as a profession and as a job, they're almost different things - Felicity.

The depth of feeling about the difference between what participants had believed their social work role would entail and what being a social work employee had provided was enormous. Clearly there was contradiction between the structural nature of social justice identified by participants and how social work was bound to

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the constraints of organisational rather than social work values. Feelings of isolation, loneliness, job insecurity and exhaustion were expressed. Again bonding and mutual support was offered between participants within the focus groups as while their work experiences were by no means identical it was apparent from the positive affirmations and the widespread murmurs of agreement after each speaker that the sentiments were broadly understood.

> Once you are out there in a job, you're a social worker second to a CYF worker, or a mental health worker, or a rehab worker, or you know, whatever. You're the social worker second. The organisational culture and vision and beliefs dominates any hope of working to your social worker code of ethics or standards of practice, you have to *fight* to bring it out, and it's very hard, almost too hard cos you would be the lone voice a lot of the time - Felicity.

> I remember not long after starting social work practice, realising it could be really lonely, that sometimes you felt like you were fighting everyone; you were fighting your supervisor, your manager, the budget, the police, the courts, the lawyer... it felt like you were fighting everyone, and for me it was really, really lonely - Rebecca.

As well as the workplace experience being difficult in terms of struggling to practice social work according to ethical or practice standards, participants spoke a great deal about how social workers were perceived by their colleagues and managers. It became apparent that the low status and recognition accorded to social workers, as well as the varied and often unreasonable expectations of what they would or would not do within their various work environments was perceived to be an impediment to practice.

> It's a very much seen by others to be a catch-all kind of job, eh. Whereas you know counselling and okay you pretty much know what that's all about. But social work is kind of seen to be all over the place I feel. Well, I know you get your job description, but you know, if it doesn't fit anywhere else, it's gonna come the social worker's way – almost guaranteed. I guess I thought that we'd have more of a mandate as a profession but we are at the bottom of this weird pecking order from the consultants down [laughs] to us and some meetings we've just had this talk amongst ourselves, oh yeah, you know, we're just the social workers - Tai.

> So we've got contractual expectations that mean many of our referrers are not social workers - there is the odd social worker there, but they're mostly nurses. So the people who refer to us for us to do our work, well, we're not necessarily on the same page as to what we're gonna be doing. I mean, we are in some cases but actually the philosophies are very different - Frank.

This struggle is certainly one that is reflected for social workers throughout history. Whether one considers the origins of social work and the struggle to have it recognised as a skill set, or the debate ignited so fiercely by Flexner in 1917 regarding whether or not social work had the necessary characteristics to be a profession, social workers have struggled with the issues around professionalisation and its relationship to recognition and identity. It was also an issue clearly identified more recently by Scottish researchers in their examination of social work in the 21st century which they summarise thus "there is an urgent need for social work to clarify its professional identity in order to establish clear roles for individual social workers" (Asquith, et al., 2005, p. 39).

Many have argued that struggles with social work identity were due to the lack of professionalisation in terms of formal degree structures and registration (Lonne & Duke, 2009). This argument now proves somewhat weak in light of the fact that now in 2011 we have considerably more official status and professional recognition in Aotearoa/New Zealand than ever before, with the 2003 Social Worker Registration Act and the creation of the Social Worker Registration Board (SWRB) as well as recognised degree programmes up to Doctorate level, yet the issues emerged again so strongly in this study. An argument that perhaps has more evidence is that which claims a neoliberal environment has dramatically shaken the identity of social work as the ethics and commitments that defined the profession have come into conflict with the dominant ideology (Ferguson, 2008; Lymbery & Butler, 2004).

The lack of recognition or understanding of social work from colleagues and referrers generated much hilarity as participants recounted stories of strange requests and cases they had been given to work on.

> I mean I had a case where the referral just said-referred to social worker as non-compliant, needs to be shown that following our guidelines is necessary for wellbeing [laughter] I mean it is just like oh I don't have time to work with this person so flick it to the social worker and they will make it all go away, [laughter] what a joke! I mean, what were the issues, the needs, did they want social work support? I don't remember studying that our job was to generate obedience in people! [laughter] - Sonia.

While the safety of the focus groups allowed these stories to be told in a humorous way, I observed that the laughter was the veneer on a sense of real impotence or powerlessness as considerable shaking of heads and exclamations of frustration

accompanied each story. This was confirmed in the interviews where people spoke more about their personal battles to change the perception of social workers and the ability to incorporate social justice into their day to day practice.

> How can I keep fighting my own agency? And not just my own, if it was that simple I would just leave, but social work agencies in general-it's an endless battle of um excuse me, that's not my job, that's not ethical, I am a social worker, I have a code! I have standards! I have skills! But it's tiring being a lone voice all the time, with no one really backing you up. You can't get very far on your own as you just get too burnt, you can't work for social justice for clients when your workplace doesn't see that as part of your job - Norida.

The strong feelings regarding social work identity in the workplace led to a discussion why the battles to change it were felt to be so solitary. The discourse produced the next emergent theme which is *lack of leadership*.

Lack of leadership

> I mean of the very people who should be the masters at lobbying eh and banding together, but we don't do it. We've got no leadership - Tai.

Participants in this research came from different backgrounds, workplaces and study locations, yet were in complete agreement on the issue of leadership in the social work field. The sense of being a united profession with a national (or even local) body that publicly represents the views and real experiences of social workers was completely absent. The lack of such representation and collective identity or organising was identified as a key component to the poor status and conditions of many practicing social workers. Participants felt that they were left to struggle within their own work environments as best they could, with little to protect their role from degradation. Social work practice standards and code of ethics as produced by Aoteaora New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW) were generally seen as a good thing, yet lacking the impetus behind them to ensure those practicing social workers had support to uphold them. Similarly the definition of social work from the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) was perceived to be a great aspiration, but missing the advocacy and clarity necessary to ensure social workers could actually work to that goal in any workplace.

> I just think the Association needs to be very careful that it doesn't lose what it has got, and I think there is a lot that it could build on. I think it would be a lot more powerful. I think it could be a lot more vocal about issues. Like you *seldom* ever see public comment by them, you know, and if there's one place

> where we're gonna come together as a *profession*, given all the different employers we have - if there's one place where we're gonna find the heart of what we do, and the heart of what matters to us, it should be through the Association, I would think. Like that's the kind of logical mechanism for it… I guess in a way I want the Association to be the radical in me that I can't be in my job - Felicity.

There were organisations identified as having the kind of presence and focus that was seen as missing from ANZASW, such as the Police Association (PA), Post Primary Teachers Association (PPTA), New Zealand Nurses Organisation (NZNO). These all happen to be unions, focused primarily around a particular profession. This showed that participants clearly felt the lack of protection in the workplace which these unions have visibly fought for, and recognised this high profile advocacy as a vital ingredient which is missing for the social work profession.

> Imagine if we had the guy from the Police Association, O'Connor - he's in the media every week just about. Whenever there's an issue - I mean he's one-eyed as hell, you know … but he backs policemen really well and you know, he puts the police view really well - but we don't have anyone, - *I know* this guy's surname, he's been doing it for years. Who backs social workers? Who is the 'go to' person when there's an issue around social work that the media goes to? If he or she is there I don't know – I've never heard them. Yeah, I think one time in the last five years or so in a couple of years I've heard a social ANZASW media comment. So I don't feel like we're strongly led. It's kind of quite safe, it feels like, you know, I don't see a lot of modelling of radical social work in this country, you know, it feels pretty in-house, it feels pretty tame, like, you know, there isn't much challenge going on - Frank.

Bringing social workers together to share information, skills and identity were some of the reasons behind the creation of professional associations such as ANZASW. In Australia the creation of their professional association in 1946 was stimulated by Norma Parker who "realised that social workers could not have a say in the social service polices affecting them and their work unless they became an organised force" (Nash, 2009, p. 370). In Aotearoa New Zealand, where the professional association formed some time later in 1964, a different focus was present with the issue of training described as "the most important problem the Association is confronted with" (Wadsworth, 1965, p. 45). (See chapter 3). While participants acknowledged the work done by ANZASW on training and practice standards, there was a clear feeling that this work was fairly redundant to the frontline social worker without the capacity to advocate for the rights of social workers at work, define clearly what

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social workers are there to do and speak out publicly on policy issues that affect social workers.

> You know, they could give me safety, they could give me a voice, even if it's an anonymous voice, that I can't have because I have to pay the bills and I have to pay the mortgage, and I have to do what I have to do at work. So if I have to compromise myself at work, the bit that I'm compromising I want to be equalled out by the bit that I can have for the Association, in some way. I just think that the Association needs to pull its socks up. The only time I really think about the Association was when they send the bill. I always think, I've gotta get along to the meeting, I've gotta get along to the meeting, but, you know, it means I've gotta leave work two hours early and I can't see enough that makes me want to do that - Rebecca.

This gap in leadership experienced by participants links directly back to the literature in chapter two and three in which the issue of leadership within the social work arena has been a real issue, particularly throughout from the 1980s onwards. Early social work is littered with well known leaders, such as Jane Addams and Bertha Reynolds who provided a powerful voice for social workers, yet the feeling in the literature and in this research was that no such figure or figures existed today. While this feeling may be contextualised with an understanding of the nature of history which tends towards making figures from the distant past 'larger than life, or even current social workers lack of knowledge, it is widely accepted that leadership cannot be effective without being strong and visible (Brilliant, 1986; Rank & Hutchison, 2000). If there is a perception that no leadership exists, regardless of whether it does or not, no leadership can claim the consent of the community.

Rank and Hutchison conducted a further study on leadership in 2000 and a quote from this research struck me powerfully as it was similar in its expression to what was said by participants in this research so I have included them both below :

> I am concerned about the quality of leadership in the profession; I see a decline; we are in a defensive role; we have become apologetic; welfare reform has hurt us; we need strong confident leaders (Rank & Hutchison, 2000, p. 498).

> I don't feel we're independent. I don't think we're vocal. I don't think we're proactive. I don't think we're visionary; we have a serious gap in our leadership capabilities - Tai

Clearly the issues of leadership and its role in defining and lifting social work remain unresolved.

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With the amount of discourse on ANZASW it was initially easy to assume the emergent theme was one of dislike or dissatisfaction with this organisation in particular. However when examined critically it became apparent that the issue was not just about one organisation, but rather showed a desire for focused leadership which would combat the disunity, isolation and poor work conditions articulated by participants. ANZASW simply drew much of the attention on this topic as the only real professional social work body in Aotearoa/New Zealand, which seems like it should be well positioned to provide such leadership. Other figures such as long time social workers, academics and even participants themselves were also discussed as being responsible for working towards an environment where social work can fulfil its stated commitments to social justice.

> You know, we need senior practising social workers and practising academics who can kind of articulate those questions around how we can really live our ideals in the real world, for the rest of us who are just caught up in it - Frank.

> It's not that I want to fob it all off on others, like it's not for me to work towards, it's not for me to change ANZASW or try and provide leadership for others, I see that it is and that ANZASW could be changed by a determined effort, but the real questions is who can poke their head over the rim?, who can fight and stand up? I know ultimately I am already drowning in work, and I need my goddamn job, you know, it's not like I can afford to be the asshole whose contract is not renewed because I took one second away from my client load to speak up for social workers, or even myself - Norida.

The desire to contribute to facing and resolving the problems encountered in practice was something that all participants expressed. The struggles to achieve this in reality were the subject of much reflection and debate. One of the most recurrent of these struggles was that of the amount of work required simply to manage day to day schedules. The number of references to this led to the next emergent theme which is *workload*.

Workload

> When you're there in the frontline you don't have time to pee - Felicity.

None of the eight participants that engaged in this research were employed by the same agency, or even in the same field of practice. Some worked for the community sector in Non Government Organisations (NGO's) and some for organisations managed by branches of the Government. Two participants identified as social work

team leaders and spoke from this standpoint. Yet despite these differences, all eight expressed clearly the fact that they found themselves with an enormous workload. Additionally the non-participant data which I received in the form of emails (see chapter three) also emphasised the amount of work they were facing as a barrier to involvement in other activities (in their case this study). The sheer volume of work was seen as a clear factor in inhibiting the ability to practice social work to the high standards possible.

> You know, you've got the kid there; you've got the parent, the community the other 20 clients you are supposed to see this week. You don't have the time, or the support, to step back, tell everyone to wait, wait, stop, I need to go and have some, you know, do a bit of praxis over here, a little bit of reflective practice - Felicity.

> You don't get the time/means or mandate to look at the bigger picture; you just end up concentrating on what you're asked to do, with little time to bring your head above water when you're flat out all day, every day - Tai.

What was particularly interesting about the discourse about workload was that there were two clear components to what ate up work hours. The first part, being the large number of clients their agencies are dealing with on a daily basis, reflects the discussion in literature and statistical reports regarding the increasing numbers accessing social services over the last few years with little to no increase in staffing (New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services, 2011). Large numbers of clients *per se* was not seen as a problem, as uptake of social services is often heralded as a sign of success; rather it was the concern about individual workers' caseloads being too heavy.

> It becomes a juggling act, do I try and see every client I am given and tick the box that says there has been contact? Do I say I can't do a proper job if I have this many? No one else seems to be saying it so maybe I will just be seen as useless, but I just can't see how you can do real social work, that is about social change, justice and empowerment when you have more people than you can realistically even get to know - Norida.

Caseloads that are identified as too big raise concerns regarding the ability for social workers to do their job to the level required to meet practice standards and retain basic levels of self care. All participants identified that they worked additional hours without extra pay and at some personal cost to try and engage each client as they were motivated by the desire to ensure no client missed out on service provision.

The issue of high caseloads is one that has been the subject of significant study and reflection by researchers and the term *burnout* is one commonly utilised within the social work field (Van-Heugten, 2009). Frustration, exhaustion, helplessness and despair are all symptoms of burnout and are seen most often in social workers who are facing "organisations issues such as workload pressures and the failure to resource workers adequately through supervision" (Van-Heugten, 2009, p. 441). Burnout has been identified as leading to a variety of negative outcomes from the simple-high staff turnover to more severe effects including depression, withdrawal, addiction among others (Baker, 2002).

> If I think that I'm gonna really go for it, work comprehensively with clients with a view to the kind quality practice I want to do and really have social justice as part of that- I can see it really affecting my health, do I want the stress, what am I going to turn into, to cope you know. I might end up an alkie or whatever, you know that you want to do it and it feels right, but have you really got the capacity or the stamina to see it through? - Tai.

The second issue that was identified by participants as significant to workload pressure was that of the amount of paperwork and report back measures that they faced to ensure ongoing funding. This generated some hilarity as it was discussed in the focus group as participants compared the requirements they were expected to meet in their workplaces and how much time they took from actual practice.

> Oh yeah the fill in each five minute block reporting sheet that was fun [laughter] - Sonia.

> You too? - Felicity.

> It's like first five minutes, filling in this form, second five minutes filling in this form...[laughter] oh you seem to have paid me for 40 hours of form filling! [laughter] - Rebecca.

This aspect of workload was one that was considered incredibly burdensome by participants. There was general agreement that while accountability in terms of quality practice was good, the kind of reporting they were expected to do did not fulfil this criterion. The paperwork which added to already stretched schedules was seen to be more about trying to evidence their ability to process large volumes 'successfully' and 'efficiently' to funders, whether government based or philanthropic. This discourse led to the identification of the next theme which is *neoliberal environment.*

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Neoliberal environment

> Neoliberalism is a conflict between providing a service for human beings but treating them like widgets. - Frank

In discussion with participants, whether one on one or within the group setting it was interesting how conversation naturally turned from discussion of paperwork and reports to the political environment behind these. Not every participant used the term neoliberalism which may well beg the question: why is it a theme? This is easily answered however by the many references used by all participants, which even under the harshest critical lens clearly refer to the neoliberal world view- in perhaps more colloquial terms. I have placed the words I thus identified in bold in the following quotes:

> Well when we have **Thatcherism** running the country it makes it hard to make an argument for investing in social workers and social work programmes that do not show instant gain for political figures....- Norida.

> I think one of the issues and one of the challenges is that we have people, or social workers who are working politically in the sense that they work for the statutory organisation or within an interface between statutor organisations, are not recognising the influence that politics of the day have on the capacity of the work that they can do and with **Rogernomics** firmly in place that is dangerous! - Dolly

Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister in Britain from 1979-1990 and Roger Douglas Minister of Finance in Aotearoa/New Zealand from 1984-1988 are often seen as the architects of the neoliberal changes introduced in both countries (Kelsey, 1993). They both left a legacy attached to their names and hence Thatcherism and Rogernomics are widely understood to refer to neoliberal policies or approaches. This is evidenced in the title of books which discuss the advent of neoliberalism such as Eastons' (1989) book *The making of Rogernomics* or Letwins' (1992) book *The anatomy of Thatcherism* Once I had clearly ascertained that despite some differences in terminology participants were actually referencing the same thing I was able to critically examine how it was spoken about and what the context was. Initially the affect of neoliberalism seemed to be perceived to be primarily around funding and reporting back considerations.

> In a culture of trying to reduce services and reduce costs, which a neoliberal environment definitely provides, in the end you're sending somebody in to

review or manage social services who maybe knows how to do that but won't actually know what she's looking at, they just look at the widget - Frank

A lot of social work is about being contracted by the government. All our organisations will get money somewhere somehow via a contract from the government and therefore you're often delivering something that fits less into a social justice model and more into the shape of what a neoliberal government has politically mandated, some of which may be ok, some of which is horrendous - Rebecca.

The perception of a neoliberal approach having significant control of the financial environment social workers found themselves in was universal to all participants. Yet as I continued to analyse the data it became evident that the perception of the effect of neoliberalism did not end with money and reporting, but rather extended out into the culture of service provision:

Rogernomics being so dominant leads to the individuation of social workers, a kind of inherent denial of the co-opting by the state and politics, you know, and not recognising how influential that kind of rhetoric is in the way that you practice. I notice it a lot, I notice it all the time in people who I work around, kind of this real individual responsibility kind of approach and I think that that's partially also to do with services that get run as a kind of business model. You know, it sort of becomes that, you know, do you deserve this service? You don't want to do what we want you to do or what we think you should do. You don't want to adhere to this idea of treatment so therefore you can no longer have it, which is, you know, very similar rhetoric to 'you did it to yourself'. You know, this is an individual, New Zealander's responsibility. It's not for the state to provide this, this and this for you - Dolly.

As a social worker, in a neoliberal system it's like you might go God I'd like help from the community at large, to reflect, to build better practice, to be just, but then it's like this, you get from your manager "Oh no you don't. You just do your clinical assessment" - Tai.

In considering these responses another challenge presented itself, many of the approaches reflected upon by participants as being neoliberal are arguably not simply a product of the neoliberal era. For example the idea of being deserving or undeserving of service provision easily reflects early twentieth century social work models where an individuals' moral fibre was seen to be the source of many social ills (Lymbery, 2004; Tennant, 2007). Similarly at different times throughout history the desire to be seen as professional has been seen as a heavy handed 'top down'

approach to social work, as was seen in Australian social work involvement in the removal of Aboriginal children (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997). Furthermore the issue of funding and the 'strings' it may come with has been a particular issue throughout social work history in Aotearoa/New Zealand as we lacked the philanthropic base of other places, such as the United Kingdom, to support services out of favour with the government of the day (Tennant, 2007).

Despite the fact that issues around approach, funding and function of social work have been experienced prior to neoliberalism becoming strong and well known, there are two key factors that link these participants' experiences in these areas to a neoliberal environment. The first of these is *dominance*; as explored in chapter two prior to the collapse of communism, often symbolised by the fall of the Berlin wall, unfettered capitalism had serious opponents in both communist and socialist frameworks (Judt, 2010). This opposition meant that even within capitalist countries wholehearted subscription to capitalism was consistently challenged by the existence of viable alternatives (Judt, 2010). With the collapse of communism however the viability of alternatives was hugely diminished and allowed for neoliberalism to be posed as the *only* way forward. This was certainly reflected in the discourse of participants, for at no time did any of them discuss, raise or contrast alternative political structures or systems as a way to positively moderate or influence the effect they felt a neoliberal environment had on their social work experience[xiii]. Prior to the 'neoliberal revolution' of the 1980s it would have been likely to see those dissatisfied with their political environment explore common political alternatives, particularly communism or socialism (Judt, 2010).

The second factor, which directly relates to the success of the first, is found in the *normalisation* of neoliberalism. While two participants were of the age to have grown up prior to the heyday of neoliberalism they, along with all participants spoke of neoliberalism in a way that one may speak of gravity, you may fight it to allow a plane to fly, but it is fundamentally immutable:

> Like I often think of great schemes, to get my work away from the neoliberal model and focused on the needs of the client but the CEO's never going to give them the light of day, you know, it's so frustrating, and then at night

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[xiii] The only exception to this was when Felicity stated "I'm not a communist!" in attempting to explain her views on social justice-see page 67.

> you'll go home and you'll think oh, nah I'd better not give up the job, I'd better go back because I've gotta do this, that and the other … So you're always drawn back just to the status quo, I feel. It's like a rubber band, and you know, dare you try and pin yourself out of its hold? - Tai.

> Yeah, sweet, you're a kaupapa Maori service, but yep, we need KPIs[xiv]. Full stop. It's not gonna change - Ngahuia.

This returns us to a neoliberal setting in that our current political and economic environment becoming 'status quo' has been much discussed in literature. In his book on neoliberal economics Chang (2010) states "The free market doesn't exist. Every market has some rules and boundaries that restrict the freedom of choice. A market looks free only because we *so unconditionally accept* its underlying restrictions that we fail to see them" (p. 1 emphasis mine).

The influence of neoliberalism and the way it was spoken of did cast social work as being 'in crisis' a phrase used frequently throughout the more recent literature in chapters two and three. Participants identified having to function within a political environment containing strong values that are, in many instances, contrary to the social justice commitments expressed by international and national social work bodies essentially creating an ongoing predicament for social workers. It is noteworthy that the neoliberal environment has an observable influence on all of the themes identified by this research. For example, the issue of overwork in *workload* was linked to the under resourcing of social work agencies as neoliberal business models which preference efficiency and output over quality are implemented, while the sense of isolation and lack of status perceived in *social work identity* was related to the conservatism of agencies adopted to remain in favour with a ideologically neoliberal government.

While participants were able to demonstrate that resistance was technically possible to the dominant ideology, often through a treasured personal example, ultimately the reality of retaining job, status and often organisational funding influenced their capacity to do this long term. Furthermore, the capability of overworked social workers to continually challenge the influence of neoliberalism was seen as personally unsustainable:

[xiv] Key Performance Indicators

> I think probably social justice is one of the parts of social work that when you graduate, and you get out into having mortgages and paying the bills, and doing your daily grind, and you're dealing with who's coming through the door, often I think social justice is a part of social work that we forget - not on purpose, and you know - I don't know if we hold onto it strong enough - Felicity

> Whoever's raising the issue of social justice or unjust policies somehow, you know, is rocking the boat or at risk of being seen as disloyal or whatever it is eh, you know, or just a bit of a pain when there's so much hard work to get on with so there's a bit of an aspect to it which is a bit, you know [pause], yeah, I mean it's just easier not to sometimes isn't it? - Frank

> It seems that in this country politics dictate that the better you are as a social worker and the more connected you are to your community and the more social change you do and the more close to our ethics you are, the worse you get paid - Sonia

When Camilleri (1999) states "Social work does have a tradition in social justice; it is time to move from the rhetorical to the problematic of practice" (p. 37) he captures the essence of the gap identified by participants between what they learnt and what they wished to do and how they are currently required to practice. This is also reflected in the Scottish literature review which concludes "Social workers may thus be required to fulfil an organisational function that conflicts with professional values and principles and with the reasons that provided the motivation to enter social work in the first place"(Asquith, et al., 2005, p. 4). This conflict between what was *taught* and *anticipated* about practice and what was *experienced* led to the identification of the next theme which is *social work education*.

Social work education

> The degree has great points, but it doesn't equip you to be a social worker. And it doesn't equip you to fight for social justice either-Felicity.

From the eight participants within this research I was lucky to receive a relatively comprehensive demographic spread. The eight participants had six different study providers. Yet again, despite these differences, there was remarkable agreement regarding the experience of studying social work. All participants found some useful elements to their years of study but agreed there were fundamental gaps between the theory and practice of social work as they were taught in the degree structure and the

reality of real world practice. Overall, the social work degree was seen as somewhat detached from the real complexities and challenges facing social workers:

> You have your curriculum, you follow it, and then you do your real learning [laughs] when you're out there. I just think some papers were a bit like detached - Tai.

> I just think that it's inadequate our training, and I just couldn't wait to get out there and really do it, it seemed so clear cut from what we were taught and then it was a steep, steep learning curve. Yeah. And then you realise how unjust the world is, how naive the idea is that social workers can challenge this daily and survive, while you're protected in your little classroom you have no idea and you think you will be in your job being celebrated for challenging injustice...Ha! - Norida.

The gap between education and practice was identified by participants as being two fold. Firstly, social work identity appeared strong at university level, indeed participants self identified that this was the time they felt most part of a social work profession. Even on placement one was identified as a social work student so the sense of being part of something larger was present. Additionally participants felt that the roles and responsibilities of a social worker were portrayed as well defined in school. This belonging and clarity did not last for participants beyond the classroom and all felt they lacked preparation for the complexity and contradictory nature of social work in the workplace:

> I feel like once I walked out the door of my classroom and into the field it became like me on my own, I went from being a social worker, part of a wider whole to being an individual struggling to make sense of how all I had worked for and believed in actually fitted in to my job description, or any social workers job description. [sighs] I have never felt truly part of something larger since the end of my study - Norida.

> I would have loved to have had some kind of warning about the challenges and difficulties of practice. You wouldn't have been able to answer those questions at school, because you hadn't experienced them, but I would have liked to have been told that these conflicts and contradictions - yeah, these contradictions were gonna come up and you need to be able to think through them, and this is some of the way you can think through them, and you can remember to open, you know, your ethics book and, you know, your take your ethics book to supervision and say, well hang on a second, I am a social worker - Ngahuia.

This experience reflects the concerns expressed in chapter three by social workers in the 1980s and 1990s that the neoliberal environment with its associated fiscal leash on social work education providers would lead to social work education developing a

conservative "functional and fragmented task orientated approach" (Nash, 1998a, p. 344), or end up producing a significant mismatch between the educational setting and the workplace environment. In this case rather than exploring the possible ethical complexities facing social workers wishing to enact practice standards, ethical commitments and practice models within the work environment, participants instead discerned a tangible lack of honesty and critical thinking regarding the applicability of these standards outside of their controlled educational setting. Thus a disjunction was experienced by participants upon entering practice. Harre-Hindmarsh (1992) summarises this very same problem in her study when she writes "...social work and social work education are more usefully reformulated as inherently ambiguous and conflicted" (p. 258).

Participants also agreed after a year or so in practice, any relationship or connection that had been built through study to various theoretical frameworks, practice models and standards began to slip away in the frenetic work environment. The lack of ability to take time out for reflection, praxis and further study was seen to have a deleterious effect on social workers' relationship to their profession and to their own ability to articulate best practice:

> I mean, wouldn't that be neat if, like after every five or seven years full-time social work you got a year to do further study or to do that, cos I mean, you know, I don't have a narrative about what theories I'm using. I've kind of drifted away from that and I know that's not healthy eh, it's not good in the long run. You know I could probably dredge up a few but I'm not really in daily relationship with a sort of a theoretical background of my profession, you know, and I know that's not healthy in the long run - Frank.

Secondly, participants felt that discourse around social justice, what it was, what it meant for practice and even what it looked like to different people did not feature as a powerful part of their education, despite the commitment of social work to social justice having been formalised by the IFSW when they studied.

> Whenever we tried in class to talk about what I now understand to have been discussions around social justice, it wasn't explicit - I don't recall ever having a lecture that said, this is social justice, or this is a social justice paper, or this is what social justice means or let's talk about social justice. If we did, it hasn't left a big enough impression on me that I can recall it. I don't *feel* like it was an overt discussion - Rebecca.

> The degree is only the beginning of your education. It's only the beginning of your ability to engage with people, to do those micro skills stuff like all the

> video tapes and everything that you practise. You walk out and you've still got a lot to learn, in terms of what you are, what social justice really is, who you are as a social worker, and whether you wanna hold on to the passion, and the stuff that got you going in the gut that brought you to it in the first place, or whether you just wanna become a bit of a clock ticker which you are never told will be much much more accepted - Felicity.

This lack of discussion around social justice raises some serious concerns about the role of social work education in preparing social workers for practice as well as some trepidation regarding agency expectations and positioning of their social work employees. O'Brien captures why the lack of such discourse is so important when he states:

> Without explicit attention to social justice, social work becomes something else. It is not social work in either a historical or contemporary sense. Moreover without that attention, it would fail to meet both its international definition and its ethical requirements (2009b, p. 78).

The lack of attention to social justice issues is a fulfilment of the concern most succinctly captured by Nash when she stated in 1998 "The sense of altruism and justice that is part of social work has come under pressure with the supremacy of economic policy. Decisions being made as this is written will affect the direction of social work and how people are prepared for it" (1998a, p. 408). Those decisions she referred to potentially led to the education experience of the participants in this research. The powerful agreement between participants on the difficulties of practicing to the standards they believed were integral to social work led to a discussion of a particular work place culture experienced by all participants to some degree that was unanticipated in practice. This led to the clear identification of the final theme, *risk aversion*.

Risk Aversion

> Risk trumps everything, it trumps social justice, it trumps human rights, it trumps *everything* - Felicity.

Alongside overwork, isolation, lack of status, leadership and role definition an emotive and highly significant impediment to the practice of social justice for participating social workers was the culture of risk aversion. To explicate, in all fields of practice there are times where a social worker has a working relationship with a client who may be at risk, (for example someone who may self harm or be harmed by another) or who poses a risk to others (for example someone who may

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exhibit violent or abusive behaviour). Participants felt that this reality when considered alongside the pressure to be seen as 'successful' 'efficient' and 'professional' meant that they felt under duress to 'pass on' exit, or control clients who posed such a risk. The need for the services employing these participants to avoid negative publicity and to garner stories of triumph for managers, funders and politicians creates a palpable pressure for social workers when dealing with certain clients.

> We talk about it a lot anecdotally in the service [name removed] about kind of, you know, headline avoidance, that sometimes people's treatment is actually more for the avoidance of risk and headlines than what we actually know is best practice. We're not willing to take any risk so our work becomes more about managing the risk to our organisation than what is best for the client. Our agency [name removed] has become very rigid about what our core business is and if you are not accepting treatment as per the plan or are seen as risky you are out - Dolly.

> Oh and then let's not forget the audit pressure, you know show us how many people you pumped through for your X amount of dollars and you better be able to show that there were no fuck ups, no media, no risky business because if there is you know the social worker will be hung out to dry and suddenly this, this and this should have been done. Really we get the message loud and clear to hold the line, this is what we do and all that other complex stuff that needs to be someone else's problem, maybe someone who doesn't need any funding, or doesn't feel the effects of the 'slam the social worker if anything goes wrong' attitude - Norida.

> When you consider all the KPI's, the caseload, the expectations of your managers to keep it all good news for the funders, it feels like sometimes you are achieving that by standing on other people's human rights, and by pushing down social justice. How do you ethically manage those two things? Ultimately our work is majorly shaped by that risk aversive stuff - Ngahuia.

The experience of a risk averse workplace validates the critiques made both nationally and internationally by those who consider the managerial or market based approach to social service provision to be problematic for social workers. For in utilising a business or a 'quasi business' model as Heffernan names it (2006) attitudes towards what risk is and how it should be ameliorated and managed do change. This in turn impacts upon how and what social work practitioners are expected or allowed to do in their work. Essentially power has shifted from practicing social workers to managers to define what risk looks like, and how much is acceptable (Lymbery, 2001). This power shift can, and has, led to organisations becoming risk led, rather than needs led (Hughes & Wearing, 2007).

There has been considerable discussion, particularly from the 1980s onwards about the impact of neoliberalism, managerialism, the 'contract culture' and what this means for approaches to practice and to risk. More of this ongoing discourse is explored in chapters two and three but it is immediately apparent on analysing the data provided by participants that how these policies impact upon social work practice.

Summary

The seven themes identified by the data from the eight social work graduate participants present a vivid picture of how they experience social work and social justice in today's practice environment. While participants retain a commitment to social justice and express support for the commitments of the IFSW, the realities of poorly defined social work identity, lack of leadership, heavy workloads, a neoliberal environment, ill fitting education and the risk averse nature of practice are providing considerable obstacles to practice which upholds social justice. The themes are all areas that have been identified as problematic in social work before, often over long periods of time as is evidenced by the literature. The themes relate closely to one another, which is evidenced by the natural linkage made by the participants themselves from one issue to the next as well as the overlaps between them. For example if social work had a more clearly defined identity, would social workers be so overloaded? If social work had stronger leadership would identity be so problematic? If the environment social workers were operating within was not dominated by neoliberalism would social work agencies be so risk averse? These questions could continue and certainly provide some food for thought.

What is truly significant about this data is that the responses to interviews and focus group discussion garnered no conflict or disagreement and the experiences, across very different practice environments was strikingly similar. The fact that many of these themes are issues that have occurred throughout social work history, yet evidently remain important is one which provides significant food for thought. Despite the smaller than desired sample this active agreement and support witnessed between those involved in the study was notable and in many regards strengthens the findings. It is perhaps worthy of mention at this point also that many of the

participants have stayed in touch with each other post research and maintained links forged through sharing the experience of being part of the study. The recognition of what was important about this experience for participants was summarised by Rebecca when she said:

> What I see though is like what is happening here, that when you're in a room with social workers, there is that type of understanding, that passion, that understanding of social justice, and probably rekindling the principles of why you started in the first place - Rebecca.

The next chapter will summarise the findings, examine what may be useful to the social work community from this work and where further research and/or development may be needed. As the concluding chapter it aims to instigate the kind of growth and inspire the kind of passion Rebecca spoke of for all social workers by drawing together the data provided by the participants and by the literature.

Chapter 6

Conclusion: The final word

Introduction

"To do social work in capitalist, imperialist countries is to occupy a place of pain and doubt" (Rossiter, 2001, p. 7).

This chapter is divided into three parts: summary, discussion and recommendations. The summary draws together some of the key findings of the research, linking these back to the initial research objectives to ascertain how these queries were answered. The discussion then examines potential critiques of the findings, as well as providing some research context to enhance understanding of the process. The third section contains some recommendations for further work and research that may benefit the social work community and make use of the findings of this thesis.

Summary

There were four initial research objectives that guided and shaped this study, as indicated in chapter one. This section will look at how this work met these objectives and what the findings were.

1) The first objective involved gaining insight into how social work graduates from 2000-2010 understand social justice.

To find out more about how this group understood social justice was an important part of guiding the focus groups and interviews. While the question put to the participants about their understanding of social justice generated much discussion there was little in the way of a clear, simple definition that emerged from the discourse. To explicate, the discussion, while generating no disagreement also did not produce any definitive sentence regarding social justice which could be entered into a dictionary or lesson plan. While many ideas can be learned and repeated by rote, this was clearly not the case for social justice. This is true to the view that social justice is a dynamic, living concept rather than static and easily categorised.

Despite not receiving one precise definition, the language used by participants was identifiable as relating to a structural approach to social justice through the links made to human rights discourse and systemic change. Social justice was clearly seen to be in the ability to aggregate change upwards from an individual to a structural level. Thus social work graduates from 2000-2010 understand social justice primarily as structural change, yet express this fluidly and in a myriad of ways.

2) The second objective was to discover how (and if) these graduates integrate their concept/s of social justice into their daily practice and what, if any, barriers exist to prevent them from doing this.

This objective was able to be met comprehensively due to the wealth of data produced by participants on the subject. All expressed clearly that they wished to integrate social justice into their practice, and indeed had tried to on many occasions but had repeatedly come up against a number of barriers. The social justice that they were able to integrate was done against these barriers or sneakily around them and was identified to cost a considerable amount in terms of energy and sense of pride in their work. Indeed all the themes identified by analysis in chapter five could arguably be barriers to the practice of social justice. However as the workplace specific barriers are captured within the next objective I will identify some structural barriers here. They are:

- Lack of leadership - the perception that there is a lack of leadership within the social work community is formed by the sense that there is no larger body, organisation or even prominent individuals to organise, coordinate or advocate on behalf of social workers and the work they do with clients. For participants this resulted in a sense of isolation from other social workers, as well as a feeling of disempowerment when it came to putting forward a social work position or analysis.
- Social work education - a real disjunction between social work education and the reality of practice was identified by participants. Social work education did not appear to provide opportunities to understand the struggles social work had encountered in the past, nor prepare for the inevitable conflicts between social work and organisational ethics and values that may be faced in the workplace upon graduation. This was identified to have left many new graduates

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disillusioned and unprepared for the difficulties of integrating social justice into practice.

- Social work identity - the problem of no coherent social work identity was seen as a strong barrier to successful just practice. The lack of a clear identity for social work was identified to be the cause of why social workers are often accorded low status and recognition by colleagues and face misunderstanding regarding the skills available to a social worker. Integrating social justice from such a weak position was seen as difficult and exhausting for social workers.

3) The third objective explored how graduates experience their relationship with their employer and whether the expression/s of social justice finds support and/or validation from the agencies they have worked in.

The relationship participants had with their workplaces was slightly complex. For though many respected their organisations as a whole and many if not all of their colleagues, they perceived there to be a distinct problem when it came to practicing social work in accordance with social work ethics and standards. It is noteworthy that in this discussion at no time was a single manager or boss identified as being to blame for this problem, rather the employment environment, across all of the different agencies represented by participants was seen as not conducive to social justice being part of social work practice. The fundamental workplace issues that were raised repeatedly were as follows:

- Workload - all workplaces were seen as having heavy and often restrictive workloads, which showed no signs of abatement. This heavy workload was a defining factor in less time being available to spend with each client, less follow up for longer term clients and no time for advocating on a structural level for change. To achieve social justice in this kind of environment social workers would have to work well outside of their allocated hours for no extra pay.
- Risk aversion - all participants felt that their various agencies, at times, had become risk led rather than needs led. This was due to the fear of negative publicity that accompanies a death or violent incident where social workers may have been involved, and the need to maintain a good image for funders.

- Neoliberal environment - the neoliberal environment that Aotearoa/ New Zealand society currently functions under puts enormous pressure on social work agencies, in terms of completion for funding, defining success in economic terms and ensuring that social workers, despite being listed as an area of skill shortage, felt their job status was insecure if they were to push too hard for change. Essentially neoliberalism reprioritises measurable economic efficiency over social justice.

4) The fourth objective was to place the current understandings within a context of social work historically.

This was achieved by the literature review in chapters two and three. These chapters placed social justice and social work within historical contexts, demonstrating the strong, yet complex links between the two. The literature confirms that the questions surrounding social work and its relationship to social justice are persistent, in that they appear repeatedly throughout the history of social work, yet are also current and ongoing. Many of the same issues, for example, social work identity, reoccur frequently.

Chapter two focused on the movement of social work and social justice internationally. It notes important developments in how social justice is considered how this is linked to the different paths taken by the Charitable Organisations Society (COS) and the Settlement movement. This division is relived most obviously with the advent of neoliberal ideology in many western countries and the conflict in social work identity and aims that this brought. This chapter clearly establishes a relationship between social work and social justice on an international level.

Chapter three concentrated on the particular experience of social work and social justice with Aotearoa/New Zealand. As each country has a unique experience of cultural and social development, chapter three details this journey for Aotearoa/New Zealand. From a pre-colonial society, through to the neoliberal 'revolution', key social justice struggles and their impact on social work and social policy are explored. This chapter demonstrates the particular identity of social work and social justice in Aotearoa/New Zealand, and their many points of connection.

In conducting this research to gain insight into these four research objectives I have collected data evidencing an inherent conflict facing practicing social workers, a conflict between the social justice commitments grounded in social work ethics and standards and the requirements of employers and funders. Hard fought for structures of professionalism, such as formal qualification levels, competency and registration do not appear to be resolving this inherent struggle as we have more elements of professionalism now than ever, yet the tension remains. Furthermore, this conflict is aggravated by the dominance of neoliberal ideology, which in many respects is the antithesis to international and national social work ethics in its focus on economics and measurable efficiency rather than strategies which recognise client needs and could ultimately prove more effective than the neoliberal ethos. This study shows that social workers exhibit dedication to social justice, yet face difficult and compromising choices in integrating it into their practice.

This research included a process of information and data gathering, interpreting and analysing. The findings from this research are clear, yet further reflection and discussion is necessary to strengthen the interpretation of the data. This will add to the overall conclusion by providing some context to the research journey and by strengthening the analysis through critique. Thus the following section will provide such discussion.

Discussion

This study demonstrates that social justice is now a formal part of the internationally recognised definition of social work. Yet it also argues that commitment to social justice is not simple, nor sometimes even possible to enact in day to day practice. The difficulties faced in implementation of social justice principles in social work are not new; to many readers it may appear that this work is yet another addition to the number of studies throughout social work history which have indicated the practice of social justice is a problematic area.

It is also debatable that the way participants in this research interpreted their experiences could legitimately also be seen in an entirely different way. For example with the amount of discourse on the lack of leadership supplied by participants, could they not easily have concluded that there was a lack of motivation in their fellow social work graduates? For if one had been motivated to lead or to shape

leadership within ANZASW or elsewhere, surely it would have occurred? Furthermore could the overwork spoken of so eloquently not be related to poor supervision, rather than under resourcing or management demands? Perhaps if their supervisors had acted, the situation may not have been ongoing. I could go on as for every conclusion drawn by participants certainly it could be argued that there is another way that these issues could be interpreted.

The two points, the repetition of issues facing social workers that this data shows and the potential multiple readings of the issues are not in my opinion unrelated. It would potentially be a smaller and more manageable issue in the social work community if the barriers identified by this study were simply down to how the individual social workers involved chose to understand their situation. Perhaps it could even be as simple as the participants not being suited to the field of social work and thus mismanaging their difficulties.

The aforementioned questions of interpretation were actually asked of me post data collection. I felt, from some of those I discussed the direction of the data with, a palpable reluctance to think that the experiences of this group were being read accurately. These responses were interesting in that they not only dismissed the real and deeply felt experiences (and skills) of the eight participants in this study, but ignored the fact that all of the conflicts identified by this study have been acknowledged many times before. I can, for example, read a study from 1992 or an article from 2001 and find the same disjuncture in education that participants in this study in 2011 are speaking of (Harre-Hindmarsh, 1992; Rossiter, 2001), or a study from 1986 or 2000 which raises similar questions about leadership (Brilliant, 1986; Rank & Hutchison, 2000). I found countless works which detail the effect of a neoliberal environment on social work practice in similar terms to the data collected for this study (Ferguson, 2008; Jones, 2005; O'Brien, 1998), and a similar amount on the struggles in social work identity (Austin, 1983; Ife, 2000; Russell, 1988). Again I could go on but the point is made. Regardless of how the participants' experiences are viewed by others, there is no doubt that they are consistent with history.

The view that it is the competence of social workers' that may underscore many of our difficulties perhaps explains the drive towards professionalisation and registration. Many have thought that these things would resolve the issues facing our

community (Lonne & Duke, 2009). The findings of this study presents an important question for the social work community, if professionalisation is not the 'holy grail' in terms of solutions, do we have in fact face these repeating difficulties because we have not yet addressed the core of the problem?

Despite the wealth of literature and research on the struggles facing social work and the complexity of social justice, when I began this research process many of those around me, and to a certain extent I myself, anticipated that a large part of any discussion where social workers were asked about social justice would generate answers focused on different practice models, the role of the client voice and the injustice/s experienced by clients. This kind of response was not at all dominant and on reflection contained two very outward looking assumptions. One was that social workers themselves *would be able to* implement a particular practice model to accord with the commitments social work has made to social justice if they so wished. The second was that thinking about social justice *only applied to work with clients* and not the positioning of social work and social workers within a political world.

The participants soon dispelled the notion that this research would discuss whether the ecological or structural practice model better fulfilled the social justice test and demonstrated that before that level of conversation could take place social workers need to have strong leadership, a powerful identity, and an ability to collectively organise and challenge their political environment. Without that space and clarity attempts at social work 'best practice' can be smothered by the demands of the manager, the funder or current dominant ideology. Essentially, the participants in this study ensured that I as the researcher was not able to gloss over or ignore the issues that they saw as most important, regardless of my own assumptions.

Recommendations

There are five key recommendations from this research that respond to the findings of this study. They each cover a different area that will feed in to the ongoing growth and development of social work as a whole. The five areas are: further research, social work education, social work unionisation, social work professional leadership and political action.

Further research

This is a study conducted for a Master's thesis and as such has a smaller sample and follow up time than a large scale professional research project or a Doctoral study. In my opinion this research, despite its small size, has highlighted some pertinent and serious issues for social workers that need to be discussed further and addressed. Without work to remove barriers to the practice of social justice, the social work community faces erosion of our international and national commitments. Further research would be beneficial in ensuring these issues are placed at the forefront of our discourse as a community. There are two areas in which I would recommend further study, the first of these being a larger scale study on the same topic. Findings from such a study would be more readily accepted as generalisable by the social work community. The study would provide more detailed data and a more thorough insight into our social work graduates. A larger scale study could also include a follow up with the same participants two years later to see if they felt the same as first indicated about their practice and its relationship to social justice and what if anything had changed in their practice environment. If the environment was different yet the same issues remained it many assist to isolate the issues we as a community need to work on. If the environment was the same yet the feelings are different, this could be explored to see what could be done to assist people earlier in their careers.

Secondly a piece of research would be useful which investigates further the documented disjuncture between social work education and social work practice. A study which involves social work employers, social work students and social work educators on what they expect, desire and are experiencing in their environments would potentially identify areas of overlap and disparity. This information could then be utilised by social work leadership to pinpoint what may need to change to ensure social work education prepares social work students well for practice *as well as* ensuring that there is a goodness of fit between employers' and professional social work standards. The better we know ourselves, the more we can define our identity and hold it proudly in any environment.

Social work education

It became apparent in the research process, both in the study of literature and in the data collection that social work history is not well known by Aotearoa/ New Zealand

social workers. In researching for the literature review, I was surprised to find such an incredible amount of fascinating material. Many times I found myself exclaiming "how did I not know this?" when it came to events and people that feature in the remarkable journey of social work throughout history. It was through study in this area that I was able to ascertain several key points. The first of these was that social work had struggled repeatedly throughout history, often with similar issues. This allowed me to consider some of my own responses to the struggles I had experienced and alter my approach taking into account the lessons from those who faced similar situations before. The second was that I had incredible mentors to look to beyond current generations who had fought for and achieved remarkable things in shaping the social work I see today, i.e. I was not as alone as I had sometimes felt.

In the process of the data collection I saw my own lack of detailed historical information reflected in participants' struggles to name any influential figures in social work history or perceive that the battle to define and shape social work had been a long and comprehensive one with many players. I found myself in strong agreement with Harms & Connolly (2009) when they write:

> Understanding our history strengthens our capacity to build a future that is infused with practice wisdom, sound research, and hopefully, equal amounts of creative ideas and good sense (p. 455).

Hence I highly recommend that within the Bachelor of Social Work social work history becomes an integral paper. This could allow social workers of today to contextualise their difficulties, and avoid some of the pitfalls their predecessors experienced. This could also contribute to a more critical examination of how social work can be, and is, influenced by the political climate of the day as this is more evident with the benefit of hindsight. Furthermore historical knowledge could potentially reduce the disjuncture identified by participants of moving from education into an organisation which will be influenced by the politics of the day. We can move forward more successfully if we fully understand our own history, from the horrific to the inspiring.

Social work unionisation

- In this research when participants spoke of organisations that they perceived as successful at protecting, supporting and, publicising on behalf of their

members, they were all union organisations with the mandate to advocate in a highly visible manner for the rights of their profession. While some social workers have been unionised, there has been no specific union which represents social workers as a group and can ensure the unique needs of social workers are met. The fact that this was identified as a missing element by participants highlights the fact that there is a real need for social workers to organise collectively to protect their rights as employees, which in turn will ensure their integrity as social workers. This is not a new idea, in 1980 a feasibility study found there was 50% support for a social work union, with 35% who thought maybe it would be good and only 15% who said no (Chow & Ellis, 1980). Furthermore the Social Workers Action Network (SWAN) which is part of the Public Services Association (PSA) was launched in Wellington in 2011 with the specific needs of social workers in mind and aims to provide union protection which is relevant and useful for social workers (Public Services Association, 2011).

Social workers cannot uphold their code of ethics and standards of practice in a workplace in which they are isolated and oppressed. To protect fundamental commitments, such as provided by IFSW and ANZASW social workers need to have a strong union to represent the needs of social workers at a workplace level, thus complementing these professional bodies. Instead of being the lone voice within an agency, social workers who were unionised could bring the strength of a union organiser with access to the views and needs of hundreds or thousands of social workers. This representation could insulate social workers from the vagaries of shifting government ideology, funding shortages, and unethical workplace demands, all issues which were identified as problematic by this study. Union representation would also be likely to have the impact of increasing pay and conditions for social workers, retaining more skills and reducing turnover. Without such protection social workers, especially those in multidisciplinary teams or in small workplaces will continue to be vulnerable to the erosion of their social justice commitments, overwork and poor recognition, which can lead to burnout and disillusionment. I highly recommend the unionisation of all social workers in a social work focused union or union branch.

Social work professional leadership

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There are many types of leadership, provided by senior social work practitioners, by social work academics and researchers and by social work organisations such as ANZASW and the IFSW. What came out of this study was that two particular elements were missing from all aspects of leadership. These were visibility and strength. It is evident that social workers wish for leadership that is more *public* and *clearly identifiable* as speaking about issues that affect social workers. This is not to argue that this is not happening at all, simply that it is not visible and clear to social workers as a whole. The perception that there is a person or people who will capture community attention, media attention or government attention to ensure the presence of the social work perspective is missing.

There are many issues, those identified by this study as well as specific policy issues that are vital to social workers and yet there is no strong *public* voice or voices responding and generating debate. I recommend that all aspects of our leadership concentrate on generating a strong public profile and voice, so social workers everywhere can be confident that social work perspectives are well known and practitioners do not feel they have to leave their social work role to be active and vocal for social justice.

Activism

As evidenced throughout this thesis social work is influenced by the society that it works within. Conceptions of social justice have changed and this has changed social work. Society, even in the short overview provided in this work has been seen to have been changed by activism in many forms, from letter writing through to lobbying, street protests, land marches and research. Outside of social work, activism can occur that can shape how we work and what resources we have to work with. It can also change injustices that may be facing those we work with. For example how Māori activism and pressure led to the commissioning of Puao-Te-Ata-Tu, a report that changed the way social workers (among others) worked with Māori, or how protests from the gay and lesbian community eventually overturned the homosexual law reform bill, liberating gay men from prosecution and ensuring people could access services while being openly gay. In the data I collected for this research I heard a lot about people feeling isolated, powerless and overwhelmed in their social work roles and feeling too vulnerable to fight back in their work environment.

It is my recommendation that social workers, get involved in some form of activism so that if you feel you cannot fight in your workplace, you may be able to participate in change from another angle. It may also provide a way to ensure that commitments to social justice in our codes of ethics are expressed and we give back our considerable knowledge of vulnerable communities to the ongoing movements for social change. Involvement in activism may also break down the sense of isolation and give an isolated social worker a sense of support and being part of a broader picture.

The last word

I feel immensely proud to be a social worker, in all its complexity, and I hope that this work is able to assist us to draw together, work for change and be strong in facing our challenges. I will leave last words, fittingly, for Mike O'Brien (2005), a great advocate of social justice in the field of social work in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

> For me, the directions, goals and achievements of the next three years must be located in the broad social justice remit that we regularly assert as a core part of social work, but less regularly, especially in recent years give priority and attention to. If we do not strengthen that part of our work then we run the risk of denying our history and, even more importantly, failing in our mandate and failing to meet our ethical obligations (p. 2).

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10 May 2011

Amy Ross
38 Hargreaves Street
Mt Cook
WELLINGTON

Dear Amy

Re: HEC: Southern B Application – 11/18
      Social work and social justice in the 21st Century

Thank you for your letter dated 2 May 2011.

On behalf of the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B I am pleased to advise you that the ethics of your application are now approved. Approval is for three years. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of this letter, reapproval must be requested.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please advise the Secretary of the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Dr Nathan Matthews, Acting Chair
Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B

cc   Dr Mary Nash   Dr Lareen Cooper
     School of Health & Social Services   School of Health & Social Services
     PN371   PN371

     Prof Steve LaGrow, HoS
     School of Health & Social Services
     PN371

Interview guide for in-depth interviews

Introduction:

As you know this research is on the relationship/s between social work and social justice for 21st century graduates. I hope to build on the discussion we have already had in the focus group to get a more in-depth insight into your personal experiences and understandings.

A) Defining the terms:
   i)   How would you define social work?
   ii)   Now how would you define social justice?
   iii)   Is how you describe these terms today the same as how you may have described them upon entering your social work study? If not how and when did they change?

B) Personal connections to social justice:
   i)   Thinking back over your life, were there any major influences which may have shaped your own thinking about social justice? [further probing of what is offered]
   ii)   Are there any particular events or happenings which have informed these ideas?
   iii)   What (if any) are you own beliefs and values that may have informed your practice of social justice?

C) Exploring the relationship between social work practice, social workers and social justice:
   i)   What drew you to social work education?
   ii)   Was social justice discussed and debated as part of your social work education? If so how was this done? [further probing of what is offered]
   iii)   Do you see yourself as part of a wider social work profession? If so what gives you this sense? If not what prevents it?
   iv)   Do you consider the fit between your understanding/s of social justice and your day to day social work practice to be a good one? [further probing of what is offered]

D) The work environment
   i)   On entering the work environment after graduation how well did you feel your social work education equipped you for day to day practice?
   ii)   Has your idea of what it is to be a social worker changed since graduation? If so why might this be? If not how has it remained the same?
   iii)   Have there ever been any conflicts between your social work education and your practice requirements?
   iv)   In your current workplace do you feel that social justice is considered a valuable aspect of daily social work practice? If so how is this shown? If not how do you experience this?

E) Summary
   i)   Some of the things we have covered today have been.......is there anything further you would like to add or anything you feel we may have missed?
   ii)   Is there anything else regarding social work practice and social justice you would like to tell me?

Focus Group

Aim: To create a safe, stimulating environment where participants can share their experiences, thoughts, reflections and understanding/s of the relationship/s between social work and social justice.

Structure:

1. Introduction by researcher, housekeeping and a group effort to establish basic ground rules that the group is happy to work by.

2. Group introductions of themselves and what they hope to get out of today

3. Hand out some social work definitions from: International Federation of Social Workers /Wikipedia/Careers NZ

4. Introductory questions:
    i)   The topic for this research is social work and social justice in the 21st century, when you consider the term social justice, what does it mean to you?
    ii) How do the definitions of social work that you have in front of you sit with you? Comments? reactions?

5. Key questions:

    i)   You will not that two of the definitions reference social justice Do you feel that social work practice is fundamentally connected to social justice? If so in what ways? If not how so?
    ii)   Do you feel that on a day to day basis you are able to integrate social justice into your practice? If so how? If not why not?
    iii) Do you feel confident that as a social work employee you are supported to practice according to your ethics? If so how? If not why not?
    iv)   Have you experienced significant differences in approach to social work practice between social workers from different agencies? If so what has this been like? Are the differences contradictory or complementary?
    v)   Do you see yourself as connected to a wider social work profession? If so how? If not why not?

6. Summary and closing round:
    An overview of key points discussed and explored will be offered to the group. There will then be an opportunity for each participant to offer up any corrections, additions, final thoughts, ideas and feelings.

Social Work and Social Justice in the 21ˢᵗ century

INFORMATION SHEET

Researcher: Amy Ross Tel-H. 04 972 2936/ Cell 0277472617

Email: anarchfemme@hotmail.com

Supervisors:

Mary Nash: M.Nash@massey.ac.nz

Lareen Cooper: L.Cooper@massey.ac.nz

Tēnā Koe,

Thank you for your interest in my research project: "Social Work and Social Justice in the 21ˢᵗ Century." I am sending you this information so you can decide whether you wish to be a participant. If you find that after reading this sheet you still have questions, please do not hesitate to contact me and I will do my best to answer them.

What is this study about?

This research explores how social workers who graduated from 2000-2010 understand social justice and how those understanding/s translate into day to day social work practice. Every participant's perception/s of social justice and thoughts on what role it plays in social work will be considered valuable and insightful. Your personal experiences and reflections as a social worker, an individual and as an employee will be part of providing the social work community with a greater understanding of ourselves and our work.

What are the criteria for participating in the study?

First, you need to be a social worker who has graduated in Aotearoa/New Zealand between 2000-2010. If more people are keen to participate in the research than I am able to include, I will select for diversity so that the data will be richer and more thorough with a variety of different people. This is why if you agree to participate you will be asked to fill out the short questionnaire (attached) asking your ethnicity, gender, study location, religion and sexuality.

What would you have to do?

There will be two separate focus groups with a maximum of 8 people in each. They will take place in a local community centre in June 2011 and last up to two hours. Participation in a focus group will entail an agreement to keep the focus group discussion content confidential. You may receive and review a transcript of this discussion and make corrections to your own

input if you wish. **Any personally identifying information, or information that identifies your workplace will be excluded from the study results.**

I will invite five of the 16 focus group participants to do a further, individual in-depth interview of 1-2 hours in June 2011. The choice of which five will be done randomly and participants can decline further involvement if desired.

All costs incurred by a participant in attending a focus group and/or an interview such as travel or childcare would be reimbursed by the researcher up to a maximum of $100.

What happens to the recordings from the focus groups/interview/s?

Recordings will be stored in a locked cabinet at the researcher's address. The only exception to this would be when they go to a professional transciber who will be bound by confidentiality agreement not to copy data or release it to anyone. Once the study is completed all tapes will be destroyed.

What are your rights?

If you were to take part in the study you have the right to:

- ✓ Refuse to answer any question
- ✓ Withdraw from the study or refuse further involvement
- ✓ Ask any questions that occur to you at any point during the study
- ✓ Provide information on the understanding that it is completely confidential to the researcher, her supervisors and those who type up the transcripts and that you will not be personally identified in any way.
- ✓ Be given a copy of the summary of findings from the study when it is concluded
- ✓ Have access to your own material
- ✓ In the in-depth interview you may ask for the sound recorder to be turned off at any time.

In the event of any personal issue arising for you as a consequence of the focus group discussion or interview, free counselling will be made available to you by a person who is mutually agreed upon.

If you decide that being a part of this study is for you, please return the consent form and questionnaire and I will be in touch shortly. Tēnā rawa atu koe.

Heoi anō,

Amy Ross

Social Work and Social Justice in the 21st century

CONSENT FORM

I have read the information sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I am clear I can ask further questions at any time.

    ✓ I agree to participate in a focus group discussion.

    ✓ I agree to the focus group discussion being sound recorded.

    ✓ I agree that all information shared in the focus group remains confidential.

    ✓ I understand I may be asked to participate in a further individual in-depth interview and may accept or decline this as I see fit.

    ✓ I understand I may ask for the audiotape to be turned off at any time in either the focus group or interview.

    ✓ I understand I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and to decline to answer any questions.

    ✓ I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out within the information sheet

Signature_____ Date_____

Full Name (printed) _____

Definitions of Social Work

International Federation of Social Workers:

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

Wikipedia:

Social work is a professional and academic discipline committed to the pursuit of social welfare, social change and social justice. The field works towards research and practice to improve the quality of life and to the development of the potential of each individual, group and community of a society.

Careers NZ:

Social workers provide advice, advocacy and support to people with personal and social problems. They also help with community and social issues.

Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers Inc

ANZASW Wellington
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Paekakariki 5034

Amy Ross
38 Hargreaves Street
Wellington
16 May 2011

Dear Amy

The Wellington Branch of ANZASW is happy for you to advertise your study to our members and wish you well with your research. We hope you can present your findings to us in due course.

Yours sincerely

Sylvia Bagnall

Sylvia Bagnall
For ANZASW Wellington

Social Work and Social Justice in the 21st Century

Authority for the release of transcripts

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read and amend the transcript of the interview(s) conducted with me.

I agree that the edited transcript and extracts may be used in reports and publications arising from the research.

Signature_____Date_____

Full name (printed) _____