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**JUST PRACTICE**

**AND THE**

**BEGINNING SOCIAL PRACTITIONER**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Social Work**

**at Massey University Albany  
New Zealand**

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## ABSTRACT

This qualitative study looks at how beginning social practitioners have taken up the idea of social justice as an abiding principle for their social practice. Social justice is an aspiration for practice in the fields of counselling, community work and social work. This study explores the understandings and expectations held about this in the social practice literature and looks at how this commitment is developed through the eyes of a group of beginning practitioners.

Six new graduates from the UNITEC Institute of Technology Bachelor of Social Practice (hereafter BSP) programme were interviewed for this research. The meaning that social justice has for these participants is discussed in the context of literature about social justice as it relates to the social practices of community work, counselling and social work. A model of social justice in relation to change that I have developed provides a framework for these discussions.

The part that participants' personal stories and the contribution of the UNITEC BSP programme to the development of their commitments to 'just practice' form the other major parts of this study.

The literature on the teaching of social justice is explored and provides a context for a review of the curriculum and teaching on the BSP programme. How social justice features and is taught within the BSP programme is discussed in some detail. For all participants, the BSP programme provided significant learning about social justice.

The salient feature that emerges from the study is the way in which the BSP teaching programme crystallises the meanings of social justice for all participants. It inspires participants to take on social justice as both a desirable and attainable goal for their practice.

This study has identified the need for more extensive research on this topic, here and in other countries, and from the perspective of minority cultures. Ways to strengthen the BSP programme and other teaching programmes in their teaching of 'just practice' are recommended. The provision of 'hands on' learning opportunities are proposed, along with more integrated teaching approaches and ensuring that practitioners are equipped with strategies to sustain their 'just practice' are proposed. Questions are put to the wider social services community about their part in the practice of social justice.

# DEDICATION

**To Roger**

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# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

*“Our understanding of social justice is inextricably linked to our definitions of terms like equality and freedom, and to sweeping policy questions about the relative responsibilities and obligations of individuals and society.” Reisch, 2002: 343*

### The Idea of Social Justice

Concepts of social justice have threaded through societies since the world's great religions developed between 2500 and 1500 years ago. How those concepts have been interpreted has changed over time particularly in regard to ideas of equality of all people and tensions between the collective and the individual good. The French and American social revolutions of the late eighteenth century linked the ideas of individual freedom, equality of rights, opportunities and outcomes and the idea of communality together – liberté, égalité and fraternité. Nineteenth century thinkers such as Marx (1818-1883) exposed some of the political-economic structures that maintained injustice – exploitation of workers and the social class system that supported privilege. He argued that justice would prevail when people received what they needed based on their humanity rather than their social class or productivity (Marx, 1964 quoted in Reisch, 2002: 345). While differences about the balance of individual rights such as liberty and property rights and the collective attainment of equality of rights, opportunities and outcomes permeated twentieth century thinking, a broad agreement in the West has centred around a social justice paradigm that achieves a fair distribution of societal goods, both tangible and intangible. (Reisch, 2002).

At the same time the recognition of the 'socially unjust world' (Reisch, 2002:343) in which we live provides the impetus for the pursuit of social justice as a perpetual goal. The aspiration for social justice recognises the inequities and injustices of modern life. Advocacy for social justice and support for the 'underdog' have been features of modern society over its more recent history. Since the eighteenth century social reformers and reform and liberation movements have played

significant roles in developing more equitable sharing of societal power and resources for all citizens. It is from these reform movements in the nineteenth century that the social practices of social work and community development draw their origins.

Building on these origins, this study looks at where social justice now sits as an aspiration within the social practice professions of counselling, community development and social work. I explore the expectations and meanings that social justice has within these realms of social practice. Principles of social justice that underpin social practice are viewed in relationship to types of justice and the major functions that justice performs within society, stabilising or provoking change. As within wider society, how social justice is perceived has been the source of wide debate and varying perspectives over the history of social practice, particularly in relation to the dimensions of personal and social change. Teasing out the meanings of social justice and the dimensions of change in social practice and where they intersect, provides the context for the story of this thesis. Within this we hear the voices of beginning social practitioners about their understandings of social justice and what has supported their commitment to it within their practice.

## **Justification**

The practice literature identifies a commitment to social justice as a widely accepted principle underpinning professional practices of social work, counselling and community development. (Adams et al, 1998, Dubois, 1999, Ife, 1995, Monk, 1998, Payne, 1997). Yet there is little research that has specifically looked at what supports beginning practitioners to take up a commitment to this principle in their practice. What studies have already been undertaken on this topic have mostly been small sidelines of wider research (Gould & Harris, 1996, Hawkins et al, 2001)

This study has a specific focus relating to the UNITEC Bachelor of Social Practice (hereafter, BSP) programme. This programme recently introduced a new course into its final year, called 'Just Practice' which has the specific purpose of furthering the commitment of students to social justice as a principle of their future social practice – that it should indeed be 'just practice'. Exploring with a sample of UNITEC new graduates how they have taken up this commitment provides a review of this aspect of the BSP programme. This study will therefore be of interest to

the BSP programme for its future teaching practices, as well as being of more general interest to the social work, counselling and community work professions.

### **My Interest**

As a social worker, who trained in the late 1970s I had my interest in social justice as an aspiration for professional practice sparked during the two-year social work training course that I attended. Once back in practice after completion of the programme, the impetus to get out and address issues of social injustice inspired my practice particularly as an advocate and activist for social justice issues of the day. While I felt that I reached 'burn out' after ten years of direct involvement in this work, and have pulled back from much activist involvement, my passion and commitment has persisted.

At the time of identifying a topic for my thesis I was a member of the teaching staff on the UNITEC Bachelor of Social Practice programme. In an earlier university assignment (Gray, 2001), I had explored aspects of the personal stories of people applying to attend the BSP programme. My curiosity about what students bring from their own stories into social practice and how a teaching programme shapes them persisted. Taking up this topic combined this curiosity with my interest in social justice. I have to however thank David Epston, then an adjunct professor to the BSP programme for crystallising my thesis topic. David was the main architect of the 'Just Practice' course, which the programme added to the syllabus for third year BSP students. Having some evaluation conducted on its efficacy was timely. Taking up this topic rekindled in me a more active interest in social justice, at the same time supporting my curiosity about some of the components that new graduates might see as contributing to their commitment to social justice in their practice.

An added benefit that I perceived for myself in undertaking this area of study was the relationship that I already had with the class of students from which I hoped to draw study participants. My role in running the fieldwork placement (practicum) programme meant that I had organised the field placements for the class in the two previous years and had come to know the students, and they in turn had come to know me. This existing relationship I felt would support participants to discuss their feelings and experiences more freely than may have been the case had I interviewed strangers for this study.

By the time I came to conduct the interviews I had actually left the BSP programme, which again I considered helpful in enabling participants to be open in their comments about their experiences of the BSP programme.

## **The Study**

In this qualitative study, I interview six beginning social practitioners, former students of the UNITEC Bachelor of Social Practice programme, about how they have taken up a commitment to social justice for their social practice.

The formal objectives of the study are:

- To discover the discourses of social justice that beginning social practitioners access about their intentions for their future social practice.
- To identify the aspects of the BSP programme that supported their development of commitment to social justice in their professional practice.
- To discover the part personal stories played in the development of these 'just Practice' intentions.

The study findings are couched within the practice literature with a specific focus on Aotearoa New Zealand. Some of the debates about social justice and its relationship to social practice are discussed. A major feature of the social practice literature is the tensions that are seen to lie around the practitioner as an agent of change (Haynes, 1998, 2002). While much social practice works with individuals, expectations of practitioners to work at a macro level for social change have been the subject of ongoing debate (McLaughlin, 2002, Morris, 2002, Wakefield, 1988a, b, Waldegrave, 1987, White, 1995) in significant areas of social practice. I have developed a model of social justice in practice which encapsulates some of these dimensions of the debate and which provides a framework within which I discuss the study findings. This model is discussed in chapter three.

Looking at the part played by the UNITEC BSP programme in developing students' commitment to social justice introduces the world of social practice teaching. This literature is reviewed separately in chapter six and features as a major aspect of this study. Implications of the study findings relevant to this programme and social practice teaching generally are presented in the final chapter.

The most striking feature of the findings is the theme of diversity. Participants' interpretations of 'just practice' present examples from across the spectrum of change. At the same time, the sources of inspiration for them in developing and furthering their interest in social justice within their practice from both the BSP programme and from their own life experiences have been many and varied.

### **Thesis Outline**

In the first chapter I conduct a review of the literature around social justice as it relates to the social practice fields of community development, counselling and social work. I visit the expectations that the respective professional bodies have for social justice in order to establish what might be considered authoritative voices on this subject. Then the history of social practice within Aotearoa New Zealand is set out as the specific context for this study.

In chapter three I present a review of the literature of social practice as it speaks to discourses of social justice. I have developed a model of social justice in social practice, which places discourses of 'just practice' in relation to the dimensions of social change. Social and political axes on the model provide the levels of society at which social practice occurs, and the impacts of social practice in terms of change in society, respectively. My model of 'just practice' provides the framework for the discussion of the social practice literature.

My methodology and procedures for conducting the research are presented in chapter four. Chapter five contains the study findings about what participants have to say about their 'just practice'. These findings are presented in the context of the social practice literature and how they relate to my model of social justice in social practice, described in chapter three.

Chapter six first explores the literature relating to the teaching of social justice in practice, traversing a range of teaching and learning practices that enhance both a professional identity that supports a 'just practice' and specific didactic practices that help develop 'just practitioners'. In the second half of the chapter, the curriculum of UNITEC Institute of Technology BSP programme is reviewed to explore how it might support the uptake of a commitment to social justice in its students.

In chapter seven I then present what the study participants had to say about how the UNITEC BSP programme that they attended did, in their view, help their development as 'just practitioners'. An interesting aspect of these findings is the impact of negative as well as positive experiences in the shaping of these commitments.

Chapter eight enables us to listen to the personal stories of participants and what they saw as the significant aspects of their lives that contributed to their philosophy and values that inform their 'just practice'.

My discussion in chapter nine draws together the strands of personal experience and learnings from the BSP programme that have supported the development of the commitment to 'just practice' of these beginning practitioners. It also traverses how their intentions for 'just practice' illustrate different dimensions of social justice, especially in relation to the functions of maintaining social stability or generating change in society that they perform (Chatterjee & D'Aprix, 2002). Recognising these different functions elucidates much of the tension in the ongoing debate around social justice and social practice. The debate around 'private troubles and public issues' (Haynes, 1998) is not resolved, but perhaps some light has been cast about the intentions of practitioners in relation to these factors. I then conclude with some ideas for areas of further research, proposals for the UNITEC BSP programme and questions the social practice community at large.

## CHAPTER 2

### Social Justice

*'That sort of made me start thinking about social justice and how these issues of inequality affect certain sections of our society.'* Pat

#### Introduction

This chapter provides the context for the study of social justice within social practice. The nature of social justice is first explored as it has been taken up in the context of social practice. I then clarify the terminology of social practice. Where these ideas have come together is explored firstly in a brief historical overview of the development of the different strands of social practice and how social justice has featured differently within these practice streams. The discussion then leads into how social justice is seen as an expectation of the social work and counselling professions. This is explored chiefly through the lenses of professional codes of ethics.

From there I move to locate this study in Aotearoa New Zealand, traversing the history and the development of current 'just practice' in this country. I next move to a closer examination of the literature around the conception of social justice within social practice. The principles of social justice are related to types of justice and how they relate to the three fields of social practice and to the functions that social justice performs in society.

#### THE NATURE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

While there is an extensive literature on the subject of social justice (Reisch, 2002), the particular interest I have here is in its application to social practice. My exploration of this literature is therefore confined to those theorists whose ideas have been taken up within the arenas of social practice. What has emerged from my reading around this topic is the centrality of the ideas of John Rawls a twentieth century political theorist, to the debates around the application of social justice. Many writers have critiqued or expanded on his ideas (Ackerman, 1980, Held, 1995, Miller, 1999, McNutt, 1997, Nussbaum, 1999, Okin, 1989, Walzer, 1983). As one writer has put it, 'a synthesis [around social justice] emerges in the works of political theorist, John Rawls.'

(Caputo, 2002: 341). It is appropriate, therefore to examine Rawls' ideas of social justice in some depth.

Rawls' (1971) theory of justice has informed much of the writing, which has viewed social justice in the context of social practice (Ife, 1995, Morris, 2002, Reisch, 2002, Wakefield, 1988). The key tenets of his theory are therefore traversed here. Rawls' concept of a fair society builds on three principles of justice, which are: 'equality in basic liberties, equality of opportunity for advancement, and positive discrimination for the underprivileged in order to ensure equity' (Rawls, 1971, cited in Ife, 1995: 52). These principles of personal freedom, access to equal opportunities and a way of addressing inequalities present a sound base for social justice. However, among the many challenges that this theory has been subjected to are two that are particularly pertinent to our context of social practice. These challenges come from feminist and community perspectives.

Okin (1989) delivers a strong feminist challenge to Rawls' theory for some of its in-built assumptions about women and the family. While she accepts the major tenets of his theory as offering sound principles for a fair society, she challenges one of the key underpinnings of them. Rawls relies on the family to provide the necessary socialisation process to develop moral individuals, prepared to consider the interests of others. Rawls recognises the importance of feelings first nurtured within families in the development of the capacity for moral thinking. 'The sense of justice is continuous with the love of mankind' (cited in Okin, 1989: 97). He emphasises the fundamental importance of loving parenting for the development of a sense of justice in individuals, which is necessary to the acceptance and implementation of his three principles of justice.

Okin's major criticism of Rawls is that he assumes the family is a just institution that can nurture a true sense of justice. She argues that it is not, because of its dependence on women's unpaid work and the power imbalances that arise from this. The family is a key social institution and the structural inequities resulting from women's unpaid labour and unequal shouldering of the domestic work and family responsibilities throw up models and socialisation patterns that privilege boys over girls and men over women. The sphere of socialisation rests on injustice that flows through to the whole of society's structures. Okin identifies the unequal sharing of unpaid work, including child-rearing and domestic work, the vulnerability and inequities arising from marriage break-ups, and the consequent feminisation of poverty. The flow-on from these inequities into all

public social spheres is what she describes as the gendered nature of society. Unless a system of justice takes account of the gendered nature of society, it will be wanting (Okin, 1989).

In subsequent writing on the subject, Rawls (2001) acknowledges the merits of Okin's arguments, recognising the existence of gender-structured social arrangements that adversely affect the basic liberties and opportunities of women and children. He acknowledges the need to either equalise the share of the burdens of domestic responsibilities or to compensate women for their performance of these roles. (Rawls, 2001).

Ife (1995) in his writings on community development espouses Rawls three principles of justice, but sees Rawls taking essentially an individual perspective in the application of the principles of social justice, a view shared by McNutt (1997). Ife requires a broader framework for viewing and acting on social issues and uses a classification of accounts of social issues drawn from Taylor-Gooby and Dale (1981): individual, institutional-reformist and structural accounts, to which Ife adds, post-structural. Within these quadrants Ife explores the way problems and solutions are differently accounted for. He identifies dominant forms of structural oppression, namely class, gender, and race/ethnicity, and also cites age, sexuality and disability as other dimensions of disadvantage that need to be addressed in social justice terms. How dimensions of disadvantage overlay and compound one another is also acknowledged (Ife, 1995, Thompson, 1997). The recognition of an ecological dimension to social justice, bringing in ideas of equity across nations and generations, has added a further principle of social justice to Rawls' three principles (Anderton, 1997, Ife, 1995).

Ife elaborates on this, identifying four ecological principles: holism, sustainability, diversity and equilibrium. *Holism* introduces the idea of the interdependence of all phenomena – nothing operates in isolation and everything affects something else. *Sustainability* relates to the finiteness of our planet, and is the idea that resources should be used at a rate where they can be replenished, and the residues absorbed. This challenges the base of traditional capitalist economics which promotes continuing growth and accumulation of capital, even though models of sustainable economic activity are feasible. Anderton (1997) reinforces this argument, claiming that social justice demands an agenda of ecological sustainability of the world for its future peoples, providing for equity for generations to come (Anderton, 1997). *Diversity* as a principle opposes uniformity and endorses pluralism. It refers to social as well as natural structures, and supports decentralisation, with local structures and decision-making. *Equilibrium*, the fourth

principle, recognises the need for balance between systems, acknowledging the dynamic aspect of change at the same time (Ife, 1995).

Other writings of note on social justice include those of a Commission on Social Justice in Britain, which in 1992 reviewed the welfare state. It expanded on Rawls' ideas of basic liberties, opportunity for advancement and addressing inequality, seeking the elimination of inequalities and the flourishing of all. For the Commission:

'social justice includes a belief in the individual worth of all citizens, expressed most basically in political and civil liberties. ...it also includes meet[ing] basic needs for food, shelter and other necessities and the availability of opportunities and life chances to develop one's potential. We don't just want to enable people to survive. We want to enable them to flourish...social justice requires unjust inequalities to be reduced, and where possible, eliminated' (Borrie, 1995: 3).

In summary four key elements of social justice have been identified. They are first, providing for freedom and participation in society through civil and political liberties. Second, enabling each person's potential to be realised through access to life opportunities, including meeting basic human needs for food and shelter. Addressing social injustices, particularly structural inequalities built around gender, race and class and other forms of discrimination is the third element. Included here is redistribution of resources in support of redressing economic inequalities. Pertinent to the increasingly global context of our lives, is the fourth element of equity across generations and nations (Anderton, 1997, Ife, 1995).

How these concepts of social justice are applied within social practice is the essence of this study. The next step is then to clarify the terminology of social practice.

## **THE NATURE OF SOCIAL PRACTICE**

As social practice is the term that I use throughout this study, I would like to clarify its particular meaning and relationship to this study. Social Practice is a term used to encompass the fields of practice of social work, community development and counselling. The concept of social practice was defined and adopted by a recently developed training programme at UNITEC Institute of Technology, Auckland, which is from where the participants of this study have been drawn. The intention within the UNITEC Bachelor of Social Practice programme is 'to enhance efficiency of the work undertaken by these three strands of social practice which has often been undesirably compromised by artificial boundaries and consequent segmentation' within the fields of practice

which operate from the same theoretical and skills base. (School of Community Studies, 2000: 6). The generic platform of social practice provides a blurring of boundaries between these fields of practice which makes for flexible and multi-skilled practitioners who can be more responsive to client needs and changing contexts of practice. These blurred boundaries are also in keeping with responses to diversity and difference within a post-structural context.

I now briefly traverse the historical development of the three strands of social practice, identifying how and to what extent social justice came to feature as part of these practices.

### **Historical Origins of Social Practice**

Social practices of social work and community development grew out of movements for social reform in the nineteenth century. Social reformers identified the need for changes to society, although what needed to change to achieve a better society was viewed very differently. In the United States of America two strands of the social reform movement emerged with different strategies for helping the poor and dependent. These were the Charity Organisation Movement and the Settlement House Movement. While many viewed the poor and dependent 'as victims of social disorder, social injustice and social change' (Dubois & Miley, 1999: 31), and worked to change social structures, others saw the poor as in need of personal reform, victims of personal failings. The Charity Organisation movement focussed their work on providing services to individuals, seeking to encourage good behaviour and model good moral character. Through the work of Mary Richmond, an influential Charity Organisation worker, aspects of casework practice were developed, which informed the social work practice of the day and have continued as a framework for current social work practice. At the same time many of the Charity Societies developed community activities to address housing problems and child labour. Mary Richmond advocated the need to address the social context in which individuals experienced problems. However this perspective tended to be overlooked, as casework focussed firmly on the individual and their failings. Nevertheless the expectation that social work should address wider social issues alongside of its work with individuals was established early on in its history. It has remained an area of tension for social work practitioners, as is discussed below. The other strong movement of social reform, the Settlement House movement, viewed problems environmentally and used processes of neighbourhood organisation to address issues of social isolation, and disorganisation. It worked on developing such things as education, child care and recreation services using group and community organisation strategies, a forerunner of community

development. One of its foremost practitioners was Jane Addams, an outspoken activist who promoted social change through political reform. (Dubois & Miley, 1999, Mendes, 2001). Themes of social justice ranging from the betterment of the lot of individuals to structural change to providing for greater social equity, are seen to feature right from the beginning of these fields of social practice.

### ***Counselling***

Counselling is the stream of social practice that has most readily taken up the focus on work with individuals, as it grew out of different theories of human behaviour in the early twentieth century. Three major strands of theory, psychoanalytic, pioneered by Freud, client centred, developed by Rogers and behaviourism, derived from Skinner, informed most counselling practice up to the late twentieth century. (Counselling Resource Room, 2003). Focus on individual failings or concerns continues to dominate much counselling practice, with comparatively little attention paid to the broader social contexts or the impact of wider social issues. Consequently social justice is not a discourse that features strongly within this field of practice apart from some discrete areas of counselling practice. Developments in the field of family therapy gave rise to a particular theoretical direction of narrative practice, which has taken up more empowering and socially just orientations within the counselling relationship. (Monk, Winslade, Crocket & Epston, 1997). The limited nature of the counselling profession's undertakings in relation to social justice has meant that I feature a comparatively small amount of counselling literature in this work.

### ***Community Development***

Community development on the other hand has followed the Settlement House approach to social practice. Working with groups or communities, which is a key part of this practice, provides greater opportunities for a focus on structural change. As indicated above it sprang from a focus on addressing issues of inequality and injustice. Its practice and theory has continued to hold these as prime sites for its work.

### ***Social Work***

In the middle sits social work, seeking to respond to problems at an individual level and to address structural inequities in a wider context. (Mendes, 2001). This dual focus has continued as an ongoing area of tension within social work (McLaughlin, 2002). Various writers through the

1990s challenged the continuing allegiance of social work to the dual focus of individual change and social reform. Increasing emphasis on professionalisation, more social workers entering private practice, trends to medicalisation of social problems and adoption of psychotherapy as a mode of practice led some writers to question whether social work had abandoned its mission to the poor and oppressed (Specht & Courtney, 1994). Some writers saw a more conservative focus on social control having taken over social work practice (Margolin, 1997, Mullaly, 1998). Other commentators supported the call for greater involvement of practitioners in the arenas of social change (Dominelli, 1999, Ife, 1997, Mullaly, 1993, Pease, 1999b) Increased awareness of and participation in political action were also advocated as a way of moving personal troubles into the arena of public issues. (Haynes, 1998, Haynes & Mickelson, 2000, Mendes, 2001, Rennie, Collett van Rooyen, Gray & Gaha, 2002). Equally however, surveys of social workers have found widely disparate views about the political nature of social work. (AASW, 1984, Becker, 1997, Haynes & Mickelson, 2000).

While social work does maintain a voice that promotes change to structures in support of social justice concerns, especially through professional associations and collective bodies, the majority of social workers are employed to work with individuals and families at the micro level of society. The emphasis in much of this social work practice is on supporting clients to adjust to society and claim resources already allocated, though not always easily accessed. Struggles for more equitable distributions of social resources or changes in institutional structures on behalf of clients often become 'add-ons' to other agency work rather than an integral part of it.

The current relationship of social justice to each of these strands of social practice will be now explored. The major vehicle for this exploration will be through a review of the expectations that professional bodies for each of these strands of practice have in regard to social justice. While the subject of who can lay claim to being a profession continues to be debated, the qualities of knowledge and responsibility are linked strongly to the concept of professions. (Hoyle & John, 1995). For this reason I use the professional bodies as authoritative voices for the practitioners and modes of practice that I am here discussing.

### **Social Justice As An Expectation Of The Professions**

The links between social justice and the fields of social practice of social work, community development and counselling are due to the unique status of these disciplines among the

professions in claiming social justice as a core value. The focus on social justice within these professions is illustrated extensively in practice literature, which is discussed later. As well, the related professional associations present social justice as an intrinsic aspect of social practice. As the recognised authorities of their respective professions, what the professional associations have to say about social justice will now be reviewed. One of the difficulties in this is the lack of definition of social justice in any of these writings. (Reisch, 2002). Instead one is left to draw inferences about the understanding of it from how it is elaborated. Examples are drawn from the codes of ethics of professional associations in different English speaking countries in order to provide a variety of sources to illustrate these points. Codes of ethics have been selected as being one of the traditional defining aspects of professions (Banks, 1995), where key principles that practitioners are expected to adhere to are articulated. Codes of ethics underpin the responsibilities that members of a profession hold in relation to their clients and provide a set of values that practitioners are held accountable to their profession to uphold. (Banks, 1995, Hoyle & John, 1995). Given the significance of codes of ethics, they provide a valid source from which to identify the thinking of the professions of social work (including community development) and counselling about their expectations for their members about social justice.

### *Social Work Profession*

The International Federation of Social Workers in its statement of ethical principles for social work declares that 'social workers have a commitment to principles of social justice' (IFSW, 1994:2). The social work profession is characterised as 'promot[ing] social change ... the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. ... Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work.' (IFSW, 2000:1).

The Preamble to the Code of Ethics of the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (hereafter, ANZASW) states: 'Social work has grown out of humanitarian, philosophical and religious attempts to find solutions to poverty and injustice'. (\*NZASW, 1993: 1).

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\* **Footnote 1:** The New Zealand Association of Social Workers changed its name to the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers in 1999, hence the usage of the acronyms NZASW and ANZASW to refer to the same body.

It ascribes a dual focus to social work effort, namely to:

‘empower individuals, families, group and communities to find their own solutions to the issues and problems that beset them; [and] secondly ... to inform society at large about the injustices in its midst, and to engage in action to change the structures of society that create and perpetuate injustice’ (NZASW, 1993: 1).

These two foci for social work practice make clear the expectation of social workers that they have a responsibility to link the personal and the political. The preamble does however acknowledge that ‘from time to time, social work in practice has concentrated more on one focus than the other, often emphasising the specific at the expense of the general’. It goes on however, to ‘*affirm that member social workers are committed to the full realisation of the dual focus of social work.*’ [original italics] (NZASW, 1993: 1).

In Australia, the Australian Association of Social Workers (hereafter, AASW) in its Statement of Social Work defines social work as:

- ‘the profession committed to the pursuit of social justice....[ It achieves this goal] by working to address the barriers, inequalities and injustices that exist in society..... and by working with individuals, groups and communities in the pursuit and achievement of equitable access to social, economic and political resources.... Social workers:
- work with individuals, groups and communities to shape and change the conditions in which they live;
  - advocate for disadvantaged members of society;
  - work towards the elimination of structural inequalities in society to facilitate a more equitable distribution of resources;
  - engage in research to build our knowledge base and understanding of society;
  - analyse, challenge and develop social policies’. (AASW, 1995:1).

In the United States of America, the National Association of Social Workers (hereafter, NASW) in the Preamble to their Code of Ethics states: ‘The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. A historic and defining feature of social work is the profession’s focus on individual well-being in a social context and the well-being of society. Fundamental to social work is attention to the environmental forces that create, contribute to, and address problems in living.

‘Social workers promote social justice and social change with and on behalf of clients ... Social workers are sensitive to ethnic and cultural diversity and strive to end

discrimination, oppression, poverty and other forms of social injustice. These activities may be in the form of direct practice, community organizing, supervision, consultation, administration, advocacy, social and political action, policy development and implementation, education, and research and evaluation.' (NASW, 1999: 1)

The core values of social work are:

'Service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity and competence.' (NASW, 1999:1).

The 1999 revision of their code of ethics has resulted in the inclusion of references to ending discrimination, oppression, and poverty and identifying social and political action as activities for social workers, setting a much more activist agenda for American social workers than in its earlier code.

### ***Counselling Profession***

Counsellors in Aotearoa New Zealand in their professional Code of Ethics identify social justice as one of six core values of counselling. The general guidelines for the counselling relationship then elaborate on how 'respecting diversity and promoting social justice' is to be achieved. The ways counsellors are to respect diversity are to:

'take account of their own cultural identity and biases... work towards bi-cultural competence ...take account of diverse cultural contexts and practices of clients... avoid discriminating against clients and practice in ways that respect the clients' cultural communities. (NZAC, 2002: 27).

Promoting social justice is seen as:

'support[ing] ...clients to challenge the injustices they experience...equitable provision of counselling services to all individuals and social groups ...[and] through advocacy and empowerment.' (NZAC, 2002:27).

The introduction to the Code of Ethics sets out expectations in relation to bi-cultural practice. The Code is:

'to be read in conjunction with the Treaty of Waitangi and New Zealand law. Counsellors shall seek to be informed about the meanings and implications of the Treaty of Waitangi for their work. They shall understand the principles of protection, participation and partnership with Maori.' (NZAC, 2002: 25).

This privileging of the Treaty of Waitangi provides recognition for Maori, the indigenous and colonised peoples of New Zealand, as equal partners with the Crown, and with entitlements promised, but not yet fully provided, under this Treaty. Recognising Maori rights in this way becomes a statement of solidarity with Maori in their pursuit of social justice.

In the United States, in contrast, the American Counseling Association (hereafter, ACA) has no mention of the term 'social justice' in its code of ethics and standards of practice. There is limited reference to the need to respect diversity with no requirement around advocacy for its clients or their situation. The Preamble to the code of ethics states:

'Members are dedicated to the enhancement of human development throughout the lifespan. Association members recognize diversity in our society and embrace a cross-cultural approach in support of the worth, dignity, potential and uniqueness of each individual.' (ACA, 1995)

However the ACA website features an extensive document entitled "Advocacy Competencies" prepared by a Task Force on Advocacy Competencies which includes tasks of informing the public, advocating and supporting clients in their pursuit of remedies for social ills and taking up strategies for social and political change. This document is featured in a Resources section of the website, which suggests that this is an area of optional practice, supported by the Association. (ACA Task Force on Competencies, 2003)

### ***Community Work Profession***

While in Aotearoa New Zealand, in the absence of a separate professional body, community workers come under the auspices of the ANZASW, in Australia there is an Australian Institute of Welfare and Community Workers Inc. (hereafter, AIWCW) which is a professional body for community workers. The introduction to its code of ethics makes these statements about social justice:

'The welfare and community worker as a professional practitioner in the field of welfare and community work is concerned to promote the worth and well being of all individuals regardless of racial origin, sex, age or social status or other individual differences. The professional behaviour and practice of the welfare and community worker are aimed at maximizing the human potential and worth of all persons. Welfare and community workers are concerned with issues of social justice and equity for clients including access to quality services and the opportunity for maximum client participation in service delivery' (AIWCW, 1999)

Welfare and community work is 'intended to promote, relieve or restore the social functioning of individuals, families, social groups or larger communities.' (Ibid).

Social justice is supported as an issue of concern for community workers, although the context for action in this area is limited to ensuring access for clients to services, and the maintenance of social functioning. This association has a conservative approach to the promotion of social justice, focussing its members towards the support of social stability rather than the advancement of social change, issues that are discussed more fully elsewhere in this thesis.

## **Discussion**

Except for the American Counselors' Association, all of these national professional associations, together with the International Federation of Social Workers, see the pursuit of social justice as a core value of professional practice. While there are many commonalities in how social workers, community workers and counsellors are to fulfil this value, there are also marked differences in how far into the realm of social or structural change practitioners are expected to go. For Aotearoa New Zealand social workers, empowerment of individuals sits alongside informing society and working for structural change. However there is an acknowledgment that much social practice focuses on individuals at the micro level of society, rather than on institutions, at the macro social level. The ANZASW does however articulate an explicit political role for social workers at several levels: advocating for just policies and legislation, and encouraging the development and just allocation of community resources; public participation and action for change.

A unique feature of the ANZASW Code of Ethics is that it encompasses a bi-cultural code of practice, which recognises a partnership with the Maori people as tangata whenua or first peoples of the country. It requires a range of actions of all non-indigenous social workers to support their indigenous colleagues in various ways, and mandates a range of behaviour in relation to Maori as clients and the Maori community as tangata whenua (NZASW, 1993).

In Australia, social workers are expected to work for change at both micro and macro levels. Pursuing equitable access to resources, advocacy for those suffering disadvantage, changing social policies and structures and increasing the societal knowledge base through research are ways of achieving social justice (AASW, 1995).

In the United States of America a wide range of practice activities are specified, with practice at both micro and macro levels expected of social workers. (NASW, 1999). Similarly in both Australia and New Zealand an explicit agenda to take action to achieve social justice is laid out for social workers. (AASW, 1995, NZASW, 1993). 'Social justice' is used as an explicit term in all these codes.

The code of ethics for counsellors in New Zealand, in contrast, sets a more circumscribed role for its members, in that there is no expectation articulated for counsellors to take action to achieve social change. Respect for diversity and cultural competence in practice together with knowledge of the implications of the Treaty of Waitangi for partnership with Maori are articulated. Supporting clients to challenge injustices, equitable provision of counselling services, and a responsibility to inform society are the expectations of counsellors in relation to the practice of social justice. (NZAC, 2002).

For counselors in the United States, on the other hand, there is no expectation articulated by their professional association that they work for social justice, although support for work promoting social change appears to be an activity that the association promotes.

For community workers in Australia while advancing social justice for communities is expected, the extent of practice considerations set out in the code of ethics provides a limited mandate for practice. The focus on the promotion or restoration of social functioning for groups or communities, suggests an inward focus on the groups or communities themselves, and gives no hint of a social context which may need to be grappled with to achieve social justice.

In summary, the expectations for social practitioners from their professional bodies of how they should promote social justice ranges across the political spectrum. In Aotearoa New Zealand, for social (and community development) workers taking action to achieve social change is an expectation, while for counsellors informing society about injustices and supporting clients in their struggles to obtain justice sets more limited social justice goals.

In order to contextualise this study it is essential to review the history of the development of social practice in Aotearoa New Zealand.

## DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL PRACTICE IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

In early Aotearoa New Zealand, Maori society through its whanau structures maintained what has been called a normative system of welfare provision (McDonald, 1998) where all members of the whanau, or extended family had their roles and responsibilities. They were provided for according to a Maori kaupapa (principles) of taha wairua, (spiritual wellbeing), taha tinana, (physical wellbeing) taha hinengaro (mental wellbeing) and taha whanau (family wellbeing) (Durie, 1994). In pakeha society the British legacy of charitable aid was a feature during the nineteenth century, supporting and regulating the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor. Moral judgments about frugality, industriousness and abiding by the expected moral standards of the time were factors in whether charitable help was forthcoming. (Oliver, 1988, Tennant, 1989). These two worldviews came together with the arrival of Europeans as the colonial power in Aotearoa New Zealand in the early nineteenth century. However, Maori social structures maintained the care of their own people for much of the nineteenth century, and through to the mid-twentieth century. Increased urbanisation of Maori from the 1950s onwards saw Maori social structures weakened.

In the cities during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, social reform movements worked alongside the charitable aid societies such as the Society for the Protection of Women and Children, to address issues of social justice. Advocacy for legislative reforms addressed industrial abuses, such as sweated and child labour and social evils such as violence and poverty. (Dalziel, 1993).

Social work with individuals and families occurred from the late nineteenth century onwards, under guises such as lady visitors (Dalziel, 1993), alongside advocacy for social reform. It appeared later within departments of state where it appeared in the early twentieth century in the form of child welfare officers and probation officers. Right through the post-war years up until the early 1970s its focus within state agencies was 'needs-led' and bureaucratic, or philanthropic. It was only as the 1970s advanced that along with the development of social work as a profession, its agenda of social justice began to be articulated. (Nash, 2001).

## **Social Justice during the 1970s**

The uptake of social justice as a primary issue for social work in Aotearoa New Zealand picked up on developments in other countries, where radical practice was being articulated. (Alinsky, 1971, Freire, 1972). Within this country huge debates raged about what shape it would take and even whether it was feasible as a practice or not.

The discourses of social justice within counselling in Aotearoa New Zealand have not been strong over its early history, because of the introspective approach counselling has had. The Freudian psychodynamic and the Rogerian client-centred models of practice which held sway up until the 1970s (and still hold considerable following) meant that wider social issues tended to be more peripheral to the central focus of the client and their personal troubles. Client problems were viewed as a personal and usually individual responsibility, with little attention paid to the social, political or economic context of the problem. The rise of feminism in the 1970s and developments in family therapy in the 1980s, recognising the political context of practice (Waldegrave, 1987), have brought broader social perspectives and structural critiques into the world of counselling.

Overseas practices and directions were reflected in practice in Aotearoa/ New Zealand. In Britain and the United States community development with its underpinning of structural analysis, and the power of grassroots development was a strong vector of social justice through this period. (Alinsky, 1971; Thomas, 1976). Within New Zealand in the 1970s community work became a feature of practice in local authorities in major cities. Starting with an initial focus around community organisation and social planning, in the mid 1970s the focus for much of this work shifted to more radical community development work with marginalised or disadvantaged sectors and groups and moved to wider locations for practitioners. (Craig, 1983, O'Regan & O'Connor, 1989, Shirley, 1979, 1982). However the challenging nature of this work made community workers uncomfortable employees for conservative local authorities. Coupled to this, the sweeping neo-conservative political reforms of the mid to late 1980s saw the abolition of most of these positions.

## **Rights Movements of the 1980s**

The 1980s witnessed the flourishing of rights movements. The racial liberation movement, or call for Maori self-determination, as it materialised in Aotearoa New Zealand saw similar challenges

made to social policies and practice. (DSW, 1986, de Serrallach, 1988). The emergence of feminism saw its application to social work practice. (Barretta-Herman & Cruse, 1989, Duffy, 1988, Nash, 1989). The self-help movement witnessed the voice of many groups such as people with a wide range of disabilities beginning to be heard more loudly and advocating for greater control of their own destinies. (Sullivan, 1995). A structural analysis of social problems and the articulation of the political dimension of personal troubles were the general concepts underpinning the 'just practices' of the time.

### **Activism in the Eighties**

Shaw (1994) commented that there was little writing about radical practice in Aotearoa New Zealand during the 1970s and 1980s. He did however identify several practices and social changes that could be deemed to be in the radical tradition, engendered particularly by women and Maori social practitioners. A Maori Advisory Unit within the Department of Social Welfare in 1984 and a Women's Anti-Racist Action Group, a group of feminist women within the Department of Social Welfare, in distinct but parallel actions, challenged the racism of the department (Department of Social Welfare, 1984, 1994). These actions led to the Minister of Social Welfare establishing a Ministerial Advisory Committee to advise on a Maori perspective for the Department of Social Welfare, which a year later produced a landmark report, *Puao Te Ata Tu*. (Department of Social Welfare, 1986). This report, and subsequently the Children, Young Persons and their Families Act, 1989, which recognised the primacy of whanau, hapu and iwi processes in addressing the needs of Maori children were illustrations of structural change and challenge built out of radical analysis. Social work action contributed significantly to both of these developments. Both the NZASW and internal submissions of groups of Department of Social Welfare social workers contributed to the reshaping of the 1989 Children, Young Persons and their Families Act to hand decision-making back to families rather than strengthen professional decision-making processes. At the same time Maori self-determination was a vital thrust behind such movements as Maori claiming the right to service from their own people. (Bradley, 1995, NZASW, 1993, Tait-Rolleston, Cairns, Fulcher, Kereopa & NiaNia, 1997, Walker, 1990, 1995).

The women's movement, informed by critical analysis, threw up alternative discourses, which challenged sexism in many of its manifestations. (Hockey, 1990, Munford, 1990, 1994, Nash, 1994, Raven, 1993). The building of collective management structures and the women's refuge

movement practices and policies provided other practical illustrations of social justice in action in Aotearoa.

### **The 1990s – Fighting a Rear-Guard Action**

In Aotearoa New Zealand the uptake of new right ideology in the political and economic life of the country from the mid 1980s onwards had a profoundly negative impact on the social services and social practice. (Shirley, 1992, Fulcher & Ainsworth, 1994). Changes such as moves to contracting out of services, cut-backs in funding and deinstitutionalisation saw practitioners fighting rear-guard actions in support of clients (Kendrick, 1989, Munford, 1990, NZCCSS, 1991) and their own interests (Beddoe, 1993, Shirley, 1997). In this environment of constant restructuring, high workloads and funding cutbacks, fighting for survival diverted many practitioners from broader social activism. However challenges to new right policies and their impacts continued to be heard. (Cheyne, O'Brien & Belgrave, 1997). Poverty re-emerged as a cause for advocacy (O'Brien, 1996, St John, 1996, Waldegrave, 1996) as did housing (Hurley, 1993, Young, 1995). Support for community activism, consciousness-raising at a group and community level and politicisation of struggles for rights which were features of the 1970s and 1980s radicalism largely disappeared from social practice, but advocacy at a political level maintained some voice for the underdog in the face of oppressive state policies.

### **Into the Twenty-First Century**

The flow on from the shift to the right in welfare ideology has resulted in greater constraints on workers in agencies, and on agencies themselves. Social activism is now less tolerated. Would the Child Youth and Family Code of Conduct allow another Women's Anti-Racist Action Group report to appear? It seems highly unlikely. The New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services, which acts as a voice of advocacy for its member agencies had its government funding removed in 1998. This followed its publication of research that showed up considerable dissatisfaction with how government funding was administered by the New Zealand Community Funding Agency, and other criticisms of this agency's performance (NZCCSS, 1998). The costs of challenging the status quo have made it more critical for individuals to use collective structures such as professional associations to voice criticisms or raise concerns. Taking up the challenges of social justice in the twenty-first century has become more personally risky for some social practitioners.

At the same time, the rights movements have gained acknowledgment and recognition for women, ethnic minorities, people of different sexual orientations and people with disabilities. While such groupings continue to struggle for equality in many spheres of life, the recognition and acceptance of diversity in society has supported these voices to be heard more loudly. (Duncan, 1992, Keen, 1990, Kinder, 1992, Munford, 1994). *Social Work Review*, the professional journal of ANZASW has published six issues devoted to Maori practice writings since 1995 (ANZASW, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003) and one featuring Pacific Island writing (ANZASW, 2001). As well, much social practice in the twenty-first century in support of social justice builds on the post-modern acknowledgment of diversity and the ongoing struggle of subjugated voices to be given credence. (Epston & White, 1989, 1992, Mila, 2001, Monk et al, 1997, Wikaira et al, 1999.)

### **SOCIAL PRACTICE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**

The conception of social justice and its underpinning to social practice is next discussed. How social justice has been conceived of within social practice has changed over time, and how social practitioners bring social justice into their practice covers the full spectrum of political perspectives. As we have seen in the Codes of Ethics above and in other social work literature, the terminology around social justice ranges widely and lacks clear definition. (Morris, 2002, Saleebey, 1990). How social justice fits with social practice has also been the subject of debate. Wakefield (1988) saw justice as the organising value for social work: 'The value that distinguishes the special commitments and priorities of a profession.' (Wakefield, 1998: 193)

In his discussion of justice Wakefield drew on Rawls' concept of distributive justice, the access to life opportunities to realise individual potential. Wakefield saw social work as concerned with a fair distribution of a minimal level of social goods, both material and non-material: goods that would meet basic needs to enable a person to pursue their own chosen life plan. Extending on Rawls' non-material goods, Wakefield introduces concepts of self-determination and respect for people as goods that support autonomy of the individual and thus promote social justice. He thus links these values of social practice – client self-determination and respect for clients – back to the organising value of social justice. (Wakefield, 1988).

Morris (2002) introduces a new perspective on social justice as applied to social practice in her discussion of a capabilities perspective for social justice. She examines the Rawlsian perspective

of distributive justice in the context of social practice, seeing a more ready fit of this with the macro practices of social change models of community development, advocacy and political activism than with micro practice work with individuals, families or groups. Wakefield (1988), on the other hand, sees Rawls' distributive justice fitting well with both micro and macro social practice. A fair allocation of resources could be achieved by either helping individuals to access current resources, or by getting society to change the allocation of resources. The distributional nature of justice underpinning social work lends itself to the brokering role, with social workers working at the interface of the individual and the institution and with those individuals who are deprived. (Wakefield, 1988).

Morris argues for a capabilities perspective of justice drawing on the ideas of economist Amartya Sen (1985), and political philosopher Martha Nussbaum (2000). This approach has a different starting point, namely what makes a good life for an individual. Well-being is then defined as the achievement of valuable functionings, which in turn depend on a person's capabilities, or 'an ability to achieve.' (Sen, 1985: 36 quoted in Morris, 2002:368). Self-determination is part of this capability. Nussbaum expanded on Sen, setting human dignity as the basis of a claim for everyone to have the chance to achieve valuable functionings. She developed twelve central capabilities: life, bodily health, bodily integrity, senses, imagination, thought, emotions, practice reason, affiliation, other species, play and control over one's environment. (cited in Morris, 2002). Morris sees this framework as adding the social work values of well being, self-determination and human dignity to a perspective of social justice. She sees this as expanding on Rawls' minimal conditions of justice, to enable everyone 'to live in a fully human way.' (Morris, 2002: 370). For Morris this perspective of justice fits very well with social practices of empowerment and strengths perspectives, where worker-client partnership and client self-determination are emphasised. (Morris, 2002). Morris has elaborated on a social justice perspective that fits very well with micro practice, but has little to say about practice at a macro level.

Other recent writing on justice analyses the application of justice in more structural terms (Chatterjee & D'Aprix, 2002). Five types of justice are identified – protective, corrective, restorative, distributive and representational. These are seen to perform two principal social functions, providing social stability and generating social change. Corrective and protective justice works to maintain social control and to strengthen the existing social order, providing social stability. Distributive and representational justice support the vulnerable and marginalised members of society and provide the impetus for social change. Restorative justice performs both

functions, providing for both the protection of individual interests and for recompense where individual or group rights have been transgressed. (Chatterjee & D'Aprix, 2002).

Particular functions of each type of justice are outlined.

- Corrective justice: prevents unacceptable behaviour being repeated; punishes wrongdoing, ensures punishment fits the crime, and rehabilitates offenders afterwards.
- Protective justice: prevents unacceptable behaviour happening; removes vulnerable members to safety.
- Restorative justice: enforces contracts, returns property to their owner, compensates victims, defines "ownership" and "entitlements".
- Distributive justice: promotes egalitarianism, reduces poverty, reduces hierarchy, prevents rebellion by the "have-nots" and makes group membership look attractive.
- Representational justice: provides equal opportunities to disadvantaged groups.

Social work is seen to participate across all dimensions of these functions of justice. In the area of corrective justice, social work practice is in the areas of corrections and juvenile justice. In protective justice, the care and protection of children, the elderly and mentally ill or incapacitated and work with families and children are the primary fields for practice. In restorative justice, offender and victim meetings, mediation services, work in employee assistance programmes and social work advocacy roles are identified. Representational justice entails social work advocacy in areas of affirmative action. In distributive justice, social work in income programmes and advocacy roles are identified. (Chatterjee & D'Aprix, 2002). Counselling services are likely to work in areas of corrective, protective and restorative justice, while community development work is found chiefly in the areas of protective, representational and distributive justice.

How the principles of social justice fit with key elements of social justice discussed above is illustrated in Table 1 below. The types of justice link into the Rawlsian principles of social justice, also discussed at the beginning of this chapter, in the following ways. Rawls' provision of civil and political liberties are addressed in protective, corrective and representational justice. The second of Rawls' principles of justice, access to life opportunities including meeting basic material needs, ties into the protective and distributive types of justice. The third principle, addressing structural inequalities links to restorative, distributive and representational justice. The fourth principle, derived from life, of equity across generations and nations links to restorative and distributive justice. Chatterjee and D'Aprix contend that the latter would entail the redistribution of

resources from the First World, or core industrial states of Western Europe, North America and Japan, to the Third World or periphery – the poor regions of Africa, South America and Asia. (Chatterjee & D'Aprix, 2002).

**Table 1. Principles of Social Justice linked to Types and Functions of Social Justice**

		<i>Principles of Justice</i>				
		Civil & Political Liberties	Access to Life Opportunities	Addressing Structural Inequalities	Equity across Nations & Generations	
<b>Functions of Social Justice</b>	<b>Types of Justice</b>	Corrective	*			
		Protective	*	*		
		Restorative			*	*
		Distributive		*	*	*
		Representational	*		*	
<b>Supports existing order, provides social stability.</b>						
<b>Supports vulnerable &amp; marginalised, generates impetus for change.</b>						

The functions that social justice performs of maintaining social stability and generating social change lie at the heart of much debate about how social practice is performed in terms of its commitment to social justice. These functions of social justice become central to the discussion of 'just practice' and social change that is the subject of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 3

# Social Practice, Social Justice And Social Change

*'It was about actually being able to help those who were not experiencing social justice.'* Andrea

### Introduction

In this chapter I review the literature of social practice as it reflects the goal of social justice. Earlier discussion about social justice identified that a key element in understanding how social justice is played out in social practice - or how 'just practice' is constituted - are the two functions that social justice performs within society, namely maintaining social stability and generating social change. The discussion will now look in more depth at these inter-relationships. To this end I have developed a model of change to illustrate how different conceptions of social justice and social practice fit with and perform differing functions in relation to social change. The work of social practice is the facilitation of change, and can range from a shift in perspective of one's life, generated in the counselling room, through to legislative and political change, generated from developmental work with communities and policy-makers. Such changes intertwine with visions and aspirations for social justice. The model provides a framework for a detailed review of what the social practice literature has to say about the practice of social justice in terms of change. A feature of the model are discourses of social justice that have been identified within the social practice literature (Hawkins, Fook & Ryan, 2001).

### The Discourses of 'Just Practice'

A study of social work practice by beginning and experienced social workers in Australia investigated how social justice appeared in the descriptions social workers made of their work. (Hawkins et al, 2001) The study looked at the terminology of social justice that social workers' used in describing their practice. In preliminary work for this study, Hawkins et al (2001)

undertook a search of social work and related literature in order to arrive at a collection of social justice terms.

They identified 27 terms\* where social justice was privileged (such as used in the title) and also took account of oppositional terms, for example, injustice as well as justice. (Hawkins et al, 2001). These terms provide a valuable base for this discussion. To these I have added a term drawn from the two New Zealand professional codes of ethics discussed earlier, which is pertinent to advancing social justice in Aotearoa New Zealand, namely: *promote bi-cultural practice*. (NZASW, 1993, NZAC, 2002). Both the NASW and the NZAC codes of ethics identify the need to practice in accordance with the Treaty of Waitangi. For social practitioners in Aotearoa New Zealand this is taken up pre-eminently as a commitment to bi-culturalism.

### **'Just Practice' in a Post modern Context**

Given the current and growing influence of postmodern ideas within social practice, another dimension to be taken into account in reviewing the literature of social practice is the context of post modernism. It is appropriate therefore to elaborate on the main ideas that place 'just practice' within a post-modern context. Post-modernism has introduced a different way of understanding (or epistemology of) the world. It counters essentialist modern ideas of fixed truths about the world that can be derived from reason and scientific proof. Instead a plurality of truths are acknowledged, dependent on different times and places. 'Truths' become culturally and historically accepted ways of viewing the world. (Monk & Chen, 1998, Parton & Marshall, 1998, Jessup & Rogerson, 1999). Instead of certainty, there is a pervasiveness of uncertainties, relativities and contingencies. Acknowledgment of the power dimension in all meanings is another aspect of post-modernism. (Peter, 1995, cited in Jessup & Rogerson, 1999).

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**\*Footnote 2: Social Justice terms:** rights/duties/obligations, equity/equality, access, participation, contracts, social change/activism, empowerment, advocacy, disadvantaged, oppression, social critique/critical consciousness, community development/ organisational/social development, politics, co-operation/co-ordination, feminist, action-based, policy, critique, discriminatory. (Note that oppositional terms are also included. 'Anti-discriminatory' would be the term more commonly used in practice discussions and writing).

Within the post-modern context, social constructionism provides a more specific theoretical construct that focuses on discourse:

‘the implications of language as a producer of the social and cultural world... disclosing the implications of cultural and social discourse as a production of the interaction of people whose very subjectivity is a product of that discourse’ (Jessup & Rogerson, 1999:163).

Language becomes the producer of meaning rather than a reflector of reality. (Burr, 1995, Parton & Marshall, 1998, Jessup & Rogerson, 1999). Because language is the tool of social practitioners the impact of social constructionism on social practice, where it has been taken up, has been significant. It has altered both the context and the approaches to social practice in relation to social justice. Social constructionism challenges the ideas that there exists a single system of knowledge that is privileged. Through deconstruction, or exploration of what the dominant social story leaves out and privileges, counsellors can support clients to create alternative interpretations of their lives, and the situated experiences of the client can be freed up. (Monk & Chen, 1998, White, 2001). The social and political contexts of the client experience form part of the territory to be traversed; the agency of the client can be engaged through their identification of alternative positioning of themselves in relation to the issues of concern. (White & Epston, 1989, White, 1992, Saleebey, 1992, Nicholson, 1995, Jessup & Rogerson, 1999, Drewery & Winslade, 1997, Monk & Chen, 1998). In the literature review that follows particular examples of how ‘just practice’ is played out within a social constructionist framework are discussed. The primary approaches in practice that have taken up these ideas are narrative therapy (Epston & White, 1992, White 1994, 2001a, b, Nicholson, 1995, Monk et al, 1997), the strengths perspective (Dubois, 1999, Saleebey, 2002), and critical theory (Fay, 1987, Held, 1980, Ife, 1999, Mayo, 1998, Munford, 2001, Norris, 1990, Pease, 1999b).

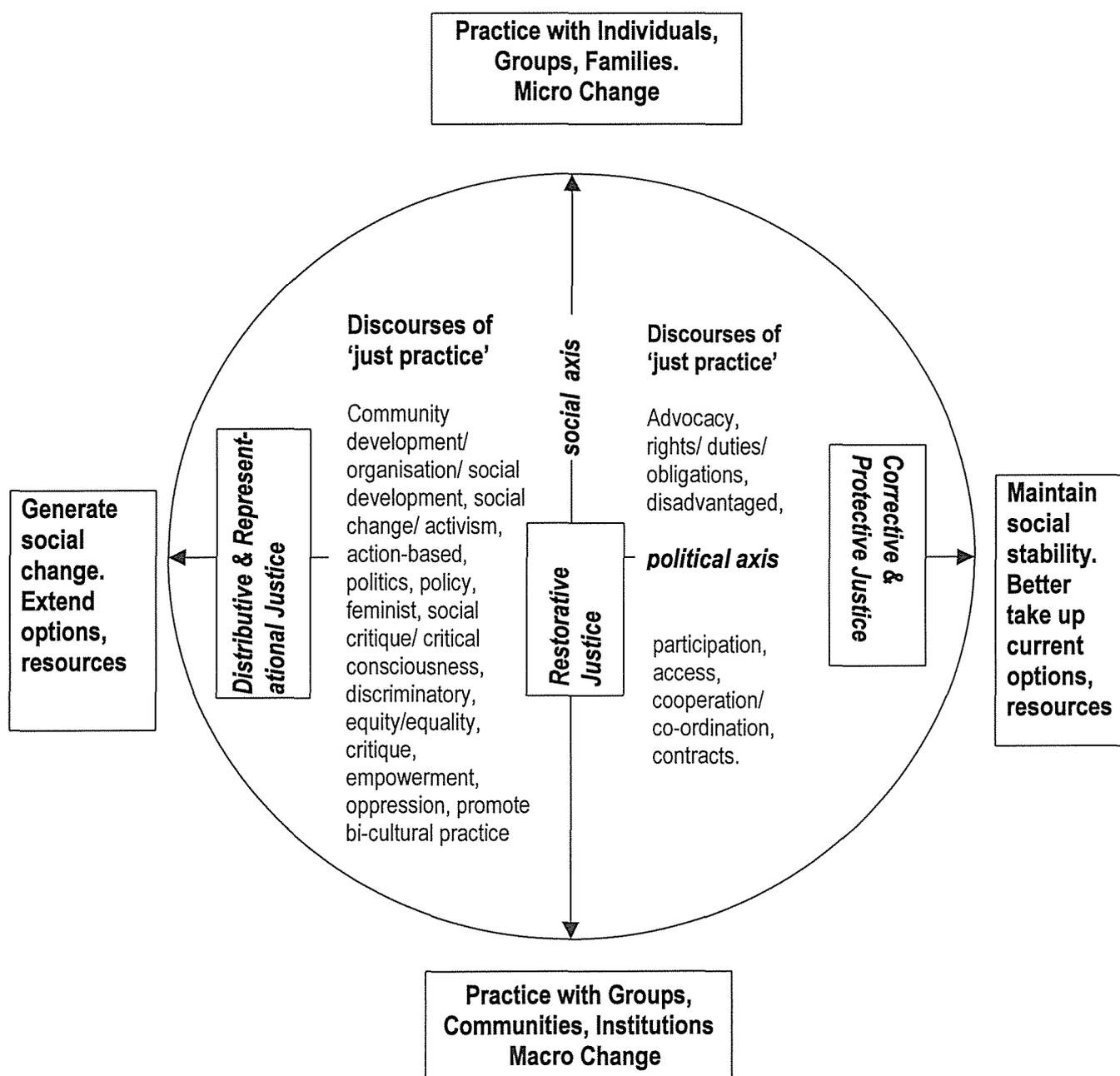
Our discussion will now turn to how my model of ‘just practice’ positions change, the work of social practitioners.

### **My Model of Change**

I have constructed a visual model so as to illustrate the interweaving of some of the different dimensions of justice in practice. (See Figure 1). A circle contains the discourses of ‘just practice’

set within two hemispheres dissected by two axes, a vertical, social axis and a horizontal, political axis. Positioned along the political axis are five types of justice (Chatterjee & D'Aprix, 2002) according to the functions they perform in relation to societal change. The chief functions that social justice performs in society, maintaining social stability and generating social change (Ibid) are positioned at the extreme right and left-hand ends of the political axis respectively.

**Figure 1. Just Practice: Model of Change**



The vertical, social axis represents a continuum of change looking at the focus of social practitioners' work. At the top end of the social axis, the micro social order is represented, where practice is with individuals, groups and families. At the bottom end of the axis lies the macro social order. Practice here is with groups, communities and social institutions. Groups are positioned within both micro and macro levels of change, as the nature of the work with a group and the nature of the group will influence the degree of change generated.

### ***Political Axis***

The horizontal political axis represents a continuum of political change ranging from conservative at the right-hand end of the continuum to radical change at the left-hand end. The types of social justice discussed in chapter two, as identified by Chatterjee and D'Aprix (2002) – corrective, protective, restorative, distributive and representational – are positioned across the political axis of the model. They are placed in relation to the functions of change they perform. Corrective and protective justice are situated on the right side of the model, in line with their functions of maintaining social stability. Distributive and representational justice are placed on the left, indicating their functions in generating social change. Restorative justice straddles the middle, as it works in both dimensions of change, supporting social stability and promoting social change. The major functions that social justice performs in society – maintaining social stability and generating social change (Chatterjee and D'Aprix, 2002) – are aligned at opposite ends of the political axis. They reflect the extremes of the dimensions of change, ranging from conservative on the right, where the preservation of the status quo ensures social stability to radical on the left, where generating change promotes social change. The discourses of social justice discussed above are positioned in either the conservative or radical hemispheres of change of this model in accordance with where I see particular alignments in the social practice literature. These discourses are discussed later in this chapter within the literature review.

### ***Hemispheres of Change***

The two hemispheres of the model will now be discussed more fully. In the right-hand hemisphere, individual and community work is practised within existing societal structures, and serves to maintain social stability. The maintenance of the current social order is deemed conservative. Here social practitioners help individuals, families, groups or communities to function better and advance themselves within the existing social order. Enabling access to

existing resources or opportunities supports social stability. The discourses of social justice more likely to be heard are those of *access, participation, disadvantaged, rights/duties/obligations, contracts, co-operation/co-ordination and advocacy*.

The left-hand hemisphere features work that generates social change, enabling individuals and groups greater access to power and resources, and supporting structural and institutional changes. The facilitation of change to social structures and institutions is deemed radical, with social practice working at a macro level, promoting change to procedures, policies and legislation that affect groups, communities and institutions. Facilitating the expansion of access to resources for certain groups or communities, helping the extension of their control over their lives and what affects them as groups or communities generates social change. Discourses of social justice more likely to feature in this arena are those of *equity/equality, empowerment, disadvantaged, oppression, social change/ activism, community /organisational /social development, social critique/ critical consciousness, discriminatory, politics, action-based, critique, policy, feminist and promote bi-cultural practice*.

As will be seen there is some overlap in the positioning of the terms of social justice. For example advocacy is performed at both micro and macro levels. Similarly feminist practice works in both of these arenas. Often the context of change will be the determining factor as to whether the social practice works to maintain social stability or to promote social change. Both policy and politics can be played out anywhere within the political spectrum. As well, practice will always outstrip categorisations, as the overlaps in categories indicates. Nonetheless grouping the terms of social justice within this framework can help to further inform us about how social justice is played out in social practice.

The social practice literature is now discussed setting it within the social and political dimensions of the model of change

## PRACTICE WITH INDIVIDUALS, GROUPS & FAMILIES: MAINTAINING SOCIAL STABILITY

### *Advocacy, access, rights/ duties/ obligations, disadvantaged*

The discourses of social justice around individual work within existing social structures centre on advocacy, access, rights, duties, obligations and disadvantage. Principles of equity or fairness underpin the concept of rights and are therefore fundamental concepts of social justice. United Nations declarations of human rights, children's rights and other such charters reinforce the concept of rights as universal principles. Linked to rights are the notions of obligations or responsibilities, as the balancing dimension for people living in society. The rights of individuals in a social context need to take account of the rights of others. The guarantee and enforcement of rights ensure that people are able to exercise them. (Ife, 1995). Supporting people to access existing rights helps maintain social stability. Much social work is undertaken in the *protective and corrective* arenas of justice, where upholding rights enshrined in the law is a primary focus. Protecting the vulnerable and disadvantaged, and working in mediating and gate-keeping roles (Wakefield, 1988a) at the interface of institutions and individuals, is a key arena of social work practice. Enabling individuals to obtain entitlements and rights provided by society but not always easily accessed, are major activities in support of social justice, which promote the well being of individuals and work against individual social disadvantage.

### **Advocacy**

Action in support of individuals has often taken the form of advocacy. Advocacy, which is seen as acting and speaking on behalf of clients or 'representing' them, has been an adjunct of social work practice from its early beginnings. (Dubois & Miley, 1999). The idea of "speaking on behalf" suggests an acknowledgment of the power differential between the practitioner and client, where the voice of the worker may be heard more readily than that of the client. Although it is not a strategy of supporting or resourcing the clients to speak for themselves, which would often be more useful longer term for the client, there are often occasions that call for advocacy. In particular, where clients' vulnerability or marginalisation (eg. children, ethnic minorities facing discrimination), precludes them telling their own story, or where a hostile or indifferent audience may make it a difficult task (eg. refugees, prisoners), then the role of voicing the unheard stories or messages is a valid and supportive strategy in work with clients. Upholding individual rights and supporting individuals to access their entitlements or have their voice heard, are other

discourses of advocacy that promote social justice practices for individuals within the current social order, helping to maintain social stability.

Generally speaking supporting change within the existing social order has a focus of enabling the individual to adapt to and operate better within existing social structures, maximising their existing opportunities. Functionally this works to maintain social stability, although for individuals their access to all five types of justice – protective, corrective, restorative, distributive or representational - may be enhanced. Social justice is working for them through improved access to existing rights and entitlements.

### **PRACTICE WITH GROUPS, COMMUNITIES & INSTITUTIONS: MAINTAINING SOCIAL STABILITY**

#### *Participation, access, co-operation/co-ordination, contracts, community development*

At a community level, participation and access have been central discourses of social justice when working within existing social structures. Advocacy for these has been seen as an expectation of professional bodies. (AASW 1995, NASW, 1996, NZAC, 2002, NZASW, 1993). The roles to educate wider society (NASW, 1996, NZAC, 2002), to lobby for political changes and to provide a base of research in support of practice and client issues are seen as important adjuncts of the individual work of social practitioners. (AASW, 1995, NZASW, 1993). They represent the linking of the personal to the political, which is at the heart of much of the struggle for social justice at a societal level. (Haynes, 1998, Trainor, 1996). Group and community work involving co-ordination of services, co-operative ventures and group contracting are strategies, which can enhance access to resources and power. (Derrick, 1995, Mayo, 1998, Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001).

Greater uptake for groups and communities of existing collective rights and opportunities may, as with individuals, access all five types of justice. Work in this sphere helps maintain social stability through the reduction of discontent and dissatisfaction among communities. (Chatterjee & D'Aprix, 2002). While community development has traditionally worked in the areas of institutional and structural change (Barretta-Herman, 1994), much community work focuses on change within existing social, economic and political structures. Discussing some of the tensions and dilemmas of community development practice, Kenny (2002) highlights the influence of different ideological

operating frameworks, ranging across the political spectrum, within which it is practised. He identifies four different operating frameworks, namely the charity, welfare state industry, activist and market framework. Each has a different set of ideas about how to respond to social problems, different methods of operation, and different solutions to social issues. (Kenny, 2002). Charity and market frameworks use individual patronage and competition and exchange relations as methods of operation respectively. Their solutions to social issues are philanthropic activity and incentives through market forces, respectively. Neither of these approaches, which lie within the conservative dimension of the political spectrum, promote equality and the voice for the disadvantaged is weak or non-existent (Ibid). However social ills may be alleviated and in so doing, social stability is supported. The welfare state framework applies rules and procedures, and works for policy change and state intervention, and an activist framework uses political mobilisation and advocacy and works for structural change and redistribution of resources (Ibid). A fuller discussion about community development frameworks that promote social change is given below.

### **PRACTICE WITH INDIVIDUALS, GROUPS & FAMILIES: GENERATING SOCIAL CHANGE**

*Analysis, discriminatory, equity/equality, critique, empowerment, oppression, promote bi-cultural practice*

The key element of individual change that generates social change is the underpinning of individual practice with a structural analysis and linking of the personal and the political. Here practitioners take the issues that surface at the micro level of practice into the macro level, through such strategies as advocacy or giving voice to otherwise silenced voices in the community. Critique of the individual's situation within his/her social context raises issues of equity, equality and oppression. However it is when practice moves beyond enabling individuals to assert themselves to claim the resources and autonomy they need to flourish and takes their issues into a wider social arena that social change is supported. Theories and models of feminist and anti-racist practice, including promoting bi-cultural practice, inform work at both micro and macro levels of practice. They will be discussed more fully below.

#### **Empowerment**

The concept of empowerment supports client aspirations for greater autonomy and has featured strongly in the social practice literature. Empowerment entails helping clients gain power over

their lives by increasing capacity and self-confidence to use power. (Rees, 1991, Shields, 1991, Dubois, 1999, Parker, Fook & Pease, 1999). At the same time empowerment has been challenged as a strategy of liberation by Lantern (1998), who saw it being adopted by the state in Britain and being used to reconcile people to positions of powerlessness. The paradoxes of empowerment have also been explored and the question raised about whether empowerment can work in favour of the client if the professional is the person who is empowering. When workers exercise power rather than having clients do so then empowerment may serve to control rather than to free. (Parker et al, 1999). Practices of empowerment work for social change when clients can use their own individual issues as a springboard to more collective action. Such issues as equity and equality, empowerment and oppression of course apply to groups and communities as well as to individuals. How these concepts are addressed at a community level will be discussed below.

### **Radical Social Work**

The concept of structural analysis to accompany work with individuals is exemplified in Fook's (1993) radical casework. Fook explores the area of radical practice particularly from the perspective of whether casework, or work with an individual, can be radical. In the process she reviews in depth the concept of radical practice. She leaves the relationship between radical practice and social justice implicit rather than explicit. For her, a key part of radical practice is a structural analysis, and the purpose of analysis is to identify and address power imbalances and social inequities. In fact social justice receives only one mention in this book, and is treated with reservation. She is wary of the use of concepts such as 'empowerment, social change, social justice and disadvantage' which can be discourses accessed perhaps somewhat glibly, and without a structural analysis, necessary for radical practice. (Fook, 1993: 17). Shardlow (1998) echoes this wariness of the use of terms such as 'empowerment' or 'partnership', whose meanings may be watered down in practice, where organisational structures do not support radical action.

From radical social work literature Fook (1993) identifies five themes on which she elaborates. First, *structural analysis* linking personal issues to social structures is seen as the underpinning of radical practice. This approach broadens the perspective beyond what otherwise may be seen as individual failings, to view the socio-political context for its contribution to the individual's situation. A constant *alertness to the social control* features of the social work profession and welfare

system is the second feature of radical practice. This entails monitoring the power dimensions of worker practice and structures to remain vigilant to who is benefiting from the direction and intent of policies and practices. This links closely to the third strand of radical practice, namely an *ongoing critique* of how social, political and economic arrangements affect both the worker, the profession and the client. The fourth element of radical practice is a *commitment to protecting individuals* from oppression by the more powerful. Here anti-oppressive discourses include rule-bending, welfare rights advocacy and protecting people from misuses of power. The fifth theme of social change sees *personal change inevitably linked to social change*. Practice here is likely to be more challenging of social structures and policies, questioning accepted practices that do not serve the interests of clients. This questioning of practices and policies is less likely to be in evidence in work with individuals which maintains social stability, referred to above, where practitioners are more likely to accept given structures and policies and support and advocate for clients within those bounds. (Fook, 1993).

While Fook (1993) offers a sound framework for 'just practice' when working with individuals, her case illustrations of radical practice have been challenged for the way in which they claim to portray non-radical practice. Trainor (1996) complains of an artificial distinction being made by radical writers between mainstream and radical practice, claiming that the examples Fook sets out would be regarded as poor practice. Trainor (1996) writes in defence of social work teaching and practices, which he sees as struggling throughout its history to remain true to its dual responsibilities: to help individuals in need and to promote social reform. (Trainor, 1996).

Shaw (1994) extends Fook's (1993) thinking on radical practice using a social constructionist concept of power, which he sees as part of all relationships. He works from two principles. The first principle is that society is conflictual. This conflict then can provide both the rationale for change and the energy for it. The second principle is about the collective nature of society. Our lives are shaped through the membership of various groups. The opportunities open to us and how we are defined by or in relation to others, all speak to the social construction of society. This very social construction, while it may shape our life chances, is also open to change. Related to this are the principles of a focus on social context and the strategic goal of changing social structures. Above all else one needs a positive vision both as a focus and an inspiration for radical practice. Shaw draws his practice methodology from Freire (1970) using an ongoing process of analysis and action to guide practice. (Shaw, 1994).

The strategies of radical practice that cross into the sphere of social change are those that move action beyond the individual or nuclear unit to work for the good of the collective. While strategies such as alertness to the social control and power dimensions of practice and rule-bending may enhance service to individuals, it is when advocacy and informing on behalf of the wider social group happens that practice generates social change.

### **Just Therapy**

The political dimension of individual practice is also evidenced in some of the counselling literature. Waldegrave (1987) challenged family therapists, arguing that their disregard for the social conditions impacting on low income clients was 'a highly political activity [that] institutionalis[ed] poverty in the community.' (Waldegrave, 1987: 3). In his view family therapists needed to be informed in their practice by a broader social analysis.

Subsequent writing by Tamasese and Waldegrave (1994a) discussed their work in regard to issues of gender and cultural domination that they set about addressing within their agency. A complex system of accountabilities of dominant men to subordinate women and the dominant pakeha cultures to subordinate Maori and Pacific Island cultures were the methods used to develop a just context for their social practice. Arising from this context they developed a model of 'just therapy'. (Tamasese & Waldegrave, 1994b).

Three themes inform 'just therapy'. First is the centrality of recognising the social, political and economic context of clients' lives within therapy. Instead of adjusting people to their poverty, the reality of the impacts of poverty in peoples' lives becomes a focal point for therapeutic work. The second theme is the issue of cultural knowledge. The dangers of working with clients from a dominated culture, and the potential for doing harm rather than good are highlighted. The third theme is that of gender. The primacy of working with one's own gender led to men working with men to stop male violence.

The ongoing struggles of addressing these three key aspects of social injustice worked within family therapy practice through the use of forums for staff to raise and address these issues as they arose. Using metaphors of weaving new meanings and dimensions into clients' stories, and recognising the spirituality of peoples' stories and experiences through listening fully and respectfully to the stories of pain, are ways of truly honouring clients. Reflections drawn from

stories of their culture, especially where clients are from minority cultures, are ways designed to provide hope and resolution for the family. These dimensions of the practice are conveyed through the concepts of *belonging* - the acceptance and validation of the family's own identity, *sacredness* – the honouring ways of respecting the client's story and pain, often experienced in the context of cultural or gendered subordination, and finally of *liberation* - the freedom and wholeness that the practice of just therapy can offer the people who participate in the therapeutic process. (Tamasese & Waldegrave, 1994b).

### **Narrative Practice**

White (1995) also addresses the political dimensions of therapeutic practice. He also argues that all practice is political. 'We cannot be neutral in our interactions with those persons who seek our help.' (White, 1995: 45) White picks up on Foucault's (1926 -1984) ideas about how structuralist thought has led to the 'objectification' of people and the location of problems in different sites of the body. Psychologies and psychotherapies, which construct significant aspects of the dominant culture, have ascribed to people problematic classifications, which have in turn ascribed to people 'spoiled identity' (White, 1995:43). Coupled with this, Foucault identified the way that internalising discourses - the ways that people speak about themselves and one another - isolate people, split them off from the social context of their lives, and engage people in policing their own lives. (White, 1995).

The political work of therapists within this context, as White and others see it, is to enable construction of alternative stories of people's lives that counter the dominant discourses of society that undermine their positive sense of identity. Use of deconstruction, externalising conversations, and witnessing are aspects of narrative practice that support people who are oppressed by dominant social discourses ranging from psychological labelling to gender, racial, economic and other structural oppressions. (Monk et al, 1997, Monk & Chen, 1998, White, 1995, 2001a, 2001b).

White (1989, 2001b) believes that people make sense of their lives through constructing an account of their experiences so as 'to arrive at a coherent account of themselves and the world around them.' (White, 1989: 19). Even so we have multi-storied lives so that one story can never encompass our whole lives, or even the whole experience. So there are parts of stories that are down-played or go unnoticed within the dominant story. Building on Foucault's notions of multiple discourses, White and others see the role of therapist as to first deconstruct the dominant

problematic story, and then to reconstruct a preferred more enabling one. (Nicholson, 1995, White, 1989).

### **Strengths perspective**

In social work, concepts of client empowerment see practitioners working alongside clients adopting a more collaborative approach to practice (Lee, 1994). Saleebey (1994) took these ideas further, drawing on narrative approaches to practice in the 'strengths perspective'.

Practitioners work with clients to develop their own solutions through drawing out their alternative stories. One implication of this is the down-playing of the 'problematic' and a greater focus on solutions. The client has opportunities to view the world differently and gain agency to address their problems successfully informed by different perspectives of themselves. They are regarded as the experts about their own lives. (Saleebey, 1994, 2002).

Helping people to free themselves from oppressive dominant social discourses is how practitioners working within a social constructionist framework promote social justice, providing resistance to ideologies that structure social inequalities and injustices within society. Challenges that this work delivers to dominant and accepted ways of thinking and acting locate these practices within the realms of social change when practices enable these challenges to be heard in a wider arena.

Social practice at the micro level of change with individuals, groups and families tends to work mainly in the areas of protective and corrective justice, working with vulnerable and disadvantaged clients. Generally this work lies within the hemisphere of my model where social stability is supported. It is when the linking to the wider collectivity takes place that action moves into the arenas where social change is generated. Advocacy that gives voice to private troubles in wider arenas takes practice into areas of restorative, distributive and representational justice.

## PRACTICE WITH GROUPS, COMMUNITIES & INSTITUTIONS: GENERATING SOCIAL CHANGE

*Social change /activism, community development /organisational/social development, action-based, politics, feminist, social critique/ critical consciousness, policy, informing society, promote bi-cultural practice.*

### **Social Change**

Social change is the fundamental concept that summarises the range of strategies and terms which support changes of the social order. Organisational, social and community development, activism, structural disadvantage and action-based work are all terms that speak to work aimed at changing the power or resource balances in society at some level. Politics and policy focus on the realms of structural power. Lobbying for policy and legislative changes in support of practice and client issues is seen as a significant role for practitioners and their professional bodies. (AASW, 1995, NZASW, 1993). It represents the linking of the personal to the political, which is at the heart of much of the struggle for social justice at a societal level. (Haynes, 1998 2002)

A tri-nations study of political participation (Rennie et al, 2002) looked at social workers from New Zealand, New South Wales, Australia, and the Kwa-Zulu-Natal province of South Africa and their involvement in political processes such as voting and providing input to government policy development. Members of professional social workers' associations were surveyed about ten political activities ranging from lobbying, voting, campaigning and collaborating in activist groups at the activist end of participation, to advocating for individuals or groups, individual politicking, protesting, persuading, witnessing and communicating about political and social policy issues. The findings were that communicator and voter roles were those most identified by over 80% of those surveyed, with an advocate role claimed by 60%. About one third engaged in activism and around 40% in lobbying, collaborator and persuader roles. The study found that social workers tended to participate mainly at the problem articulation stage and in evaluations of policies once implemented, rather than at the stage of constructing policy. (It was acknowledged that this stage can be more difficult to gain access to.) A call for social workers to be politically active to support the commitment of social work to social justice concluded the study (Ibid), a call which echoed that of Mendes (2001). He explored the barriers to greater social activism by social workers, identifying among other things gaps in social work education courses, professionalisation and ideological ambiguity on the part of social workers. (Mendes, 2001).

The role to educate wider society is another responsibility of social practitioners, recognised by the professions. (NASW, 1999, NZAC, 2002). Informing society of the stories and voices of subordinate segments of society provides a catalyst for social change. Feminist /feminism, and anti-racist practice, which in Aotearoa New Zealand includes promoting bi-cultural practice, speak to particular categories of structural disadvantage that underpin western society. (Ife, 1995, Payne, 1997, Thompson, 1998). Social critique and critical consciousness are terms that relate to critical thinking and analysis, elements that are seen as fundamental to radical change.

### **Community Development**

Where community work managed to survive the 1980s, its commitment to social change and social justice has remained strong. Community development has been defined with variations by different writers, but the commonalities include the notion of working with a group of people experiencing disadvantage or lacking resources, to support them to set their own agenda and achieve their group goals. The goals will be around gaining resources, power or influence to improve their lives through collective action. (Derrick, 1995, Ife 1995, Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001). Where such collective action fits on the political axis depends on the degree of economic or political change being sought. While community development has traditionally worked in the areas of institutional and structural change (Barretta-Herman, 1994), much community work focuses on change within existing social, economic and political structures. Community development can then be found along the whole political axis, from conservative to radical.

In his writings on community development Ife (1995) has identified six principles of social justice. They are: structural disadvantage, empowerment, needs, rights, peace and non-violence and participatory democracy and together represent some of the strong discourses of social justice that appear in community development practice. It is useful to examine these six principles a little more closely. In looking at *structural disadvantage* Ife identifies four perspectives through which social issues have been viewed: an individual perspective, which tends to 'blame the victim' for his/her plight; an institutional reformist perspective where the problem is inadequate social institutions such as laws, schools, and welfare departments. The focus here is on changing or improving the latter - a 'blame the rescuer' perspective. Then there is a structural perspective where the problem is seen to lie with oppressive structures such as patriarchy, capitalism, and institutional racism - a 'blame the system' perspective. To these Ife has added a post-structural perspective where the problem is couched within how the world operates through discourses

which sustain and constrain people. The dominant belief systems and uses of language serve to control and limit both how issues and problems are perceived and how certain individuals and groups may act. Here blame is levelled at the discourse or ideology.

Within this framework in western society three major sources of structural inequality are identified, namely, class, race and gender, with the poor and unemployed being subsumed under a class disadvantage for their lack of access to the means of production. The all-pervasiveness of these forms of discrimination and disadvantage make them a necessary focus for empowerment strategies. Other forms of disadvantage and discrimination such as disability, religious affiliation sexual orientation, locality and a host of other sites of disadvantage are acknowledged. These may act to doubly or trebly disadvantage individuals, when they compound class, gender or racial disadvantages. (Ife, 1995, Thompson, 1997).

The principle of *empowerment* identifies both the perspective taken in identifying issues as personal, institutional, structural or post structural and then traverses the locus of power, where one desires or needs to exercise power. In personal life, the power to define *need* oneself, rather than have governments, teachers, social practitioners and other 'experts' define one's needs is seen as one crucial locus of power. The power over ideas, institutions, resources and economic activity are the other basic realms for exercising power. The power over reproduction, which is taken to include child rearing and education as well, introduces the whole gender perspective into the realm of choices and decision-making. (Ife, 1995).

Where *rights* are recognised by society, ensuring that they are upheld provides for social stability, as I have discussed earlier in this chapter. Where they are not available either in society at large, or within specific institutions or organisations, promoting them becomes an important principle for community development, supporting social change.

*Peace* and *non-violence* are seen as goals of social justice, a view earlier advocated by Van Soest (1992), particularly when the concept of peace is extended to community well-being as opposed to just the absence of war or conflict. Non-violence stands in opposition to competition and challenges fundamental institutions and structures of western society such as patriarchy, nationalism, and capitalism which are built on competition. Promoting cooperation and sharing become radical activities in the questioning of accepted structure and practices that they entail.

Finally the concept of *participatory democracy* provides a means for individuals and groups to share in how they will be ruled. Key elements in participatory democracy are decentralised decision-making structures (as a way of counterbalancing the centralisation of power), accountability of structures to the people, an educated, well-informed public and an obligation on individuals to participate in democratic processes. (Ife, 1995).

Ife's detailed vision of social justice situated in the context of western industrial society provides a comprehensive base for community development practices that can promote social justice within a sustained, holistic framework.

### ***Critical theory, Post- Structuralism and Community Development***

Applying critical theory to community development within a post-structural framework Munford and Walsh-Tapiata (2001) identify four key concepts which provide added dimensions to how social justice may be enacted within community development practice. These concepts are:

1. Analyses of power - how power relationships are ever changing; how they are maintained and can also be changed, challenged and transformed.

2. Difference and identity - understanding of how identities are negotiated and mediated through complex playing out of power relations; how some subject positions are closed off for certain groups; why marginalised groups are silenced and devalued; how diversity is constructed negatively.

3. Discipline of bodies - how bodies are maintained in positions of 'other'; functioning of power on a daily level; systems of exclusion and domination operating via mechanisms of discipline on bodies, for example, assessment, examination and categorisation of disabilities or client situations.

4. A politics of resistance - identifying potential points of resistance to power relations and how differences can be harnessed in order to bring together commonalities between diverse groups. Resistance includes acknowledging and celebrating diversity, challenging practices that privilege certain lived experience over others, exploring new meanings and multiple strategies and foregrounding the struggle for social justice. (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2001).

### **Anti-Discriminatory, Anti-Oppressive & Emancipatory Practice**

Discourses of anti-discriminatory practice, and with them the specific fields of anti-racism and feminism encompass practices of social justice that apply at both individual and social levels.

Along with a structural analysis, impetus for structural change underlies these practice arenas. Challenges in the 1990s to sexism, racism, the invisibility of many with mental, physical or intellectual disabilities have given rise to current social justice discourses of anti-discriminatory, anti-oppressive and emancipatory practices and approaches. (Dominelli, 1998, Munford, 1994, Pease, 1999b, Thompson, 1993, 1997). Thompson in writing on anti-discriminatory practice took as his premise that 'working towards equality and social justice... [is] a fundamental part of social work.' (Thompson, 1997: xi). He saw anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive as synonyms and considered that anti-discriminatory practice needed to take account of the personal, social and cultural dimensions of life and incorporate broad sociological, political and economic concerns.

Dominelli (1997, 1998) too linked these themes, but with a more explicit social change agenda. For her, an emancipatory approach to social work involved 'an explicit commitment to social justice ... and overt challenges to the welfare system if it is seen to thwart this goal.' (Dominelli (1998: 4). Social change is an intrinsic part of emancipatory practice. She saw emancipatory practice as:

'progressive practice which takes the side of people who have been subjugated by structural inequalities such as poverty, sexism and racism and seeks to assist them in their desire to reverse the position they are in, that is, to move in emancipatory directions.' (Dominelli, 1998: 5).

She also acknowledges recognition of diversity as an aspect of the social justice goal:

'A people-oriented social environment which allows each person, community or group to develop to their full potential while cherishing their cultural traditions ...and recognising diverse identities as being on an equal footing.' (Dominelli, 1998: 6).

Understanding the dimensions of social difference, linking the personal and political and how power operates in all relationships are some key principles for anti-oppressive practice in work with black clients that Burke and Harrison (1998) identify. Maintaining a reflexive approach that constantly weighs these factors in one's practice are ways for social practitioners to sustain an anti-oppressive approach. For them, challenging practices and systems is what drives anti-oppressive practice. (Burke & Harrison, 1998). These processes of reflexivity and challenge echo the linking of the personal and political, and theory and practice that Fook (1993) promulgates in her radical casework approach. While much social practice continues to support individuals to take up options available to them within current structures and policies, radical practice questions and challenges those structures and advocates for change to achieve better opportunities for clients. Two major sites of anti-oppressive practice are reviewed next.

## **Anti-racism**

Both racism and sexism are recognised as major factors supporting and arising from structural inequality. (Bradley, 1995a, Dominelli, 1997, Fawcett, 1997, Gergen, 2000, Langan, 1998, Matahaere - Atariki, Bertanees & Hoffman, 2001, Okin, 1989, Payne, 1997, Pease, 1999b, Ruwhiu, 1994, 1999, Selby, 1995, Singh, 1992, Smith, 1995, Thompson, 1997, Thompson, 1998, Trainor, 1996, Weingarten, 1994, WARAG, 1984, Williams, 1996, Williams, 1999). Because anti-racism and feminism represent such fundamental challenges to the dominant discourses of western society, and have developed their own theory and practice literature, they are highlighted here, rather than merely subsumed under anti-discriminatory practice.

Themes of anti-racist practice have included countering the assimilation of new migrants into the dominant culture of the country and encouraging cultural plurality where diverse cultures are affirmed alongside other cultures. (Singh, 1992). The lack of an analysis of issues of power and structural inequality in these approaches has seen these approaches challenged. (Dalrymple and Burke, 1995, Dominelli, 1997). Issues of power and oppression were addressed by Dalrymple & Burke, 1995, starting with an analysis of how people internalise acceptance of inequalities in power relationships. These have then to be addressed in the social practice approaches which seek to empower clients through helping them to gain more control over their lives, as well as heighten clients' awareness of how structural inequalities are working against them. (Dalrymple & Burke, 1995). In a critique of racism within British society, social work and social work training Dominelli (1997) deconstructed personal, cultural and institutional racism within social work. She looked at ways to tackle organisational racism and the development of anti-racist social practice. (Dominelli, 1997). A more sophisticated analysis of the diversity and complexity of black identity and of the process, range and forms of oppression is also urged. (Keating, 2000).

### ***Maori Self-Determination & Bi-cultural Practice***

Anti-racist social practice in Aotearoa claimed the right of and need for Maori to work with their own people. (NZASW, 1993, Terry, 1995, Wi-Kaitaia, 2000). Maori have challenged pakeha social work perspectives and their deficits in relation to working with Maori, as I also identified in chapter two. The inappropriateness of the practices used and the lack of knowledge of the Maori world have worked against Maori. (Bradley, 1995, Selby, 1995, Smith & Taki, 1995). The ability of pakeha social workers to undertake anti-oppressive practice with Maori, has also been challenged. Some Maori writers argue that the domination of colonialism continues in post-

colonialism, and that social work performs a social control function in relation to this. (Matahaere et al, 2001, Tait –Rolleston et al, 1997).

Following on from this, much tangata whenua social practice writing has been about the development and articulation of the cultural and theoretical bases of practice for Maori working with Maori. (Durie, 1994, Haitana, 1995, Ruwhiu, 1994, 1999, Walsh-Tapiata, 1999, Webber-Dreadon, 1999). These writers have articulated models of practice drawn from Maori tikanga (cultural practices), which range across a variety of practice fields, from specific casework settings to supervision, management of change and research. This articulation of social practice by indigenous workers provides a classic illustration of emancipatory practice, where indigenous workers have gained the resources to support independent Maori institutions, operating from their own kaupapa (agenda, world view). This represents the final stage of Durie's bicultural continuum of structural arrangements. (Durie, 1995).

### *Pacific Peoples Rights*

Models of Pasifikan\* social practice have also been developed by Pacific Island cultures within Aotearoa New Zealand. The development of written Pasifikan social work theory arises out of the culture, drawing on oral and practical traditions. (Mafile'o, 2001). A spiritual element is seen as fundamental to Pacific practice. (Newport, 2001). A number of Pacific practice models have appeared in the practice literature reflecting the indigenous perspectives of the Pacific. These have included a framework for Samoan social work practice developed by Autagavaia (2000); Lalaga, another Samoan model (Mulitalo – Lauta, 2000) and E Kaveinga, a Cook Islands model. (Crummer, Samuel, Papai –Vao & George, 1998). While it is gratifying to see these developments they as yet represent islands in a sea of pakeha cultural domination rather than a landscape of culturally specific action.

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**\*Footnote 3:** 'The term Pasifikan denotes the diverse unique and yet connected peoples who are indigenous to the Pacific. It includes, among others, those with ancestral links to the island of Samoa, Cook Islands, Tonga, Fiji, Niue, Tokelau and Tuvalu. This includes Pacific peoples who are 'New Zealand born'. (Newport, 2001: 12)

## **Feminism**

The influence of feminist thinking and analysis has been felt in social practice since the 1980s. Both women as the predominant workforce in the social services and women as the predominant client population were identified as suffering under patriarchal structures and ideology. (Barretta – Herman & Cruse, 1989, Dominelli & McLeod, 1989, Nash, 1989). Two New Zealand studies have reviewed the practices of women social work managers. The first identified the barriers to top-level management positions that women encountered and how issues such as having children impacted on women in management and supervisory positions. (Barretta- Herman & Cruse, 1989).

In the second Hawken (1996) discussed a wide range of struggles that women managers encountered working within a masculine culture. She highlighted the differences feminist managers brought to their practice and the richness that a feminist model of management practice can offer organisations. (Hawken, 1996). Nash (1989) explored what was happening in the field in relation to the application of feminist ideas in practice. She identified five practice principles most commonly used by feminist practitioners to support them in their work with women (Nash, 1989). A more structural application of feminist theory to social work practice articulated the issues of the abuses of male power in interpersonal and family relationships and proposed several strategies for supporting women. (Dominelli & McLeod, 1989). At this stage, a separationist approach was supported, moving women away from violent men and advocating their financial support by the state, when in sole mothering and caring roles. Alongside this, believing and valuing women's stories was seen as therapeutic, and affirmation of women was identified as a practice principle to redress the devaluing and silencing that women experience in a patriarchal society. (Orme, 1998, Munford & Nash, 1994).

### ***Feminism and Diversity***

At the same time, feminism was challenged for its assumptions about women's homogeneity. Classifying all women under generalised experiences failed to acknowledge the different, and often compounded, oppressions of black women, lesbian women, and disabled women. (Langan & Day, 1992). Maori women also voiced the lack of acknowledgment by pakeha feminists of the power differential and cultural differences that prevail for Maori men and women in a pakeha-constructed society. (Smith & Taki, 1995). More recently, as a result of these challenges and the

influence of post-modern thinking, the need to acknowledge the diversity of women's experiences and situations is recognised. (Fawcett & Featherston, 1997).

### *Women's Inequality in Aotearoa New Zealand*

Women's inequality continues to feature as a dominant factor in society. The feminisation of poverty, as many women have taken on the burden of sole parenting is a major factor:

'Because of their generally lower incomes women are more likely than men to have difficulty finding adequate, affordable housing. Sole parent families are more likely to live in rented accommodation.' (Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2003: 10)

High levels of domestic violence against women is another. 'Family violence continues to be the major issue for women's safety....Maori women are disproportionately affected by family violence.' (Ibid). Ongoing gender differentials feature in access to services, employment, promotion and income: 'Recent reports have highlighted barriers that prevent women accessing the justice system, including lack of access to criminal and civil legal aid.' (Ibid).

'Currently a third of all employed women work in 10 employment categories, most of which are low paid. They are less likely than men to work as legislators, administrators or managers.' (Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2003: 8).

'Women make up more than half of the paid workforce ...But overall they're still lagging behind men in terms of pay, earning 78% of what men earn on average. President of the National Council of Women Beryl Anderson says there is also a long way to go to end discrimination for women who are not in paid work ... The president of the Maori Women's welfare League, Kitty Bennett says Maori women face significant barriers to accessing education, health services and transport.' (nzoom.com, 1,1856. 2003).

The need for women-centred and feminist practice is shaped by these needs.

### *Aotearoa /New Zealand Feminist Frameworks*

Various feminist social practice frameworks have been developed. The key features of two New Zealand frameworks build on a feminist understanding and analysis of a gendered society as the context of women's lives. From this starting point, Munford and Nash (1994) have built five practice principles:

- analysis - a valuing of 'woman culture' that has been marginalised, and women's stories that have gone unheeded;
- integration – using processes that provide for a holistic approach to the practice situation;

- affirmation – raising self-esteem, supporting women to take control in response to their circumstances;
- empowerment – reconstructing for women the narrative of their actions and lives to make connections to the wider story of women's lives and situations, and reframe her own story in its political context;
- action and reflection – the thinking processes of social practice, using supervision to link practice back to theory, and keep one's practice alive and supported through reviewing one's practice regularly in the light of one's goals and visions for it.

Worrall (2001) has promulgated a framework that draws on some of these ideas, but takes a different starting point, namely the social practitioner herself.. She builds the model around 'analysis', which situates the knowledge component of practice, and 'action', which focuses on the application of theory and skills to practice. She starts with the feminist practitioner needing to *locate the self*, in terms of one's own self-knowledge, the effect of institutional sexism on one's life and one's relationship to power and difference in client relationships – gender, ethnicity, culture, age, class, disability and sexuality factors all need to be addressed. *Knowledge of current issues* relevant to women and their current manifestations, such as the feminisation of poverty and the cultural oppression of minority groups, and *situating problems within a [holistic] context* are the other steps of Worrall's 'analysis'. In the 'action' phase *using theory to inform practice* is the first step, which includes recognising the limitations of some theoretical approaches. For example, task-centred practice may have a limited individualistic focus that leaves out the socio-political context of the issue of concern. Feminist skills of *relationship-building* with women clients; *assessment* as a shared process towards reaching a common understanding of the issues; *interventions* based on joint planning with the client and using processes of validation and empowerment; and *closure* once the woman is ready for full independence. *Reflexive practice*, a review with both the client and in supervision of the intervention and its ramifications is the final stage of this framework. The essential underpinnings of both frameworks of Worrall and of Munford and Nash are the alliances that women as practitioners can form with the women with whom they work, drawing on the aspects of their common experiences as women in a gendered society. At the same time they need to recognise and acknowledge the worlds of difference that may lie between the practitioner's and the client's experiences of power and domination.

Community development and anti-discriminatory practices, including the spheres of anti-racist and feminist practice, operate at both macro and micro levels of social practice. Where practice is

at the macro level, the types of justice that are most often advanced are distributive, restorative and representational. Where greater resources are lobbied for or obtained, distributive and restorative types of justice are accessed. Where greater power and decision-making is achieved or sought, representational justice is being advanced. These practices all advance social change, working within the left hemisphere of my model of 'just practice' and change.

## **Summary**

From its very beginnings social practice has taken up ideas of social justice. The ways in which these ideas have featured in the different fields of practice has been variable and widely debated over time. The commitment of social practitioners to social justice as an underpinning principle of their practice has been interpreted and enacted differently, in each of the fields of counselling, social work and community development. Working with differing client groups has accounted for some of this difference. Principally what emerges is the way that the theoretical approach used defines the extent to which social justice concerns are advanced.

### ***Practices Supporting Social Stability***

What has been demonstrated is that much work at the micro level with individuals and families focuses on practices that support social stability. Enabling people to access resources, exercise their rights and fulfil their potential promotes social justice within existing social frameworks, helping to maintain social stability. Advocacy at both individual and collective levels supports individuals and groups to access existing rights and entitlements, although it may also promote change that extends rights and entitlements. Strategies to improve the quality of service such as service coordination and gate-keeping exercised in favour of clients are other practices of social justice that work in favour of social stability. Many strategies that enhance work with individuals such as anti-discriminatory practices may be used both to support social stability and promote social change. Much of the social practice that helps maintain social stability is conducted within the fields of protective and corrective justice.

### ***Practices Supporting Social Change***

All practice needs to extend beyond the micro level of practice in order to generate social change. Key elements that move work from the micro sphere are using analysis and critique of wider

social contexts of persons' lives to inform practice, and supporting the agency of people through a wide variety of approaches ranging across feminist, anti-discriminatory, narrative, strengths-based and radical practices. Taking personal concerns into wider arenas where a wider group of people may benefit from changes supports social change. Work at the macro level of practice, with groups and communities is often within the fields of distributive, restorative or representational justice. Practitioners support groups lobbying for greater resources or power, helping them marshal support for their cause, and gain access to the decisionmakers. Work in the fields of anti-racism, feminism or other major arenas of discrimination and disadvantage often promotes social or institutional change, practices that lie within the left-hand hemisphere of my model of 'just practice'.

My model of change has highlighted the distinctions between working to maintain social stability within a social justice context, and promoting social change, to address recognised social injustices. These opposite ends of the change spectrum represent much of the tension that continues to spark debate and challenge among practitioners, theorists and teachers of social practice, as the commitment to social justice is played out in ever-changing practice approaches.

The next chapter sets out the methodology of the study that I undertook and how I went about it. Issues that arose in the course of both developing and carrying out the study are discussed.

## CHAPTER 4

### Methodology

*'Will you trust the process? Will you trust what I'm saying could be different?'*  
*Andrea*

#### Introduction

This chapter introduces the methodological approaches used in this study and sets out the procedures employed in conducting it. I have couched this study within a social constructionist framework, which I see as providing a person-centred way for the study participants to structure their stories of the development of their commitments to 'just practices'. My position as researcher in this study and the steps taken in setting up and conducting the research are laid out. My intentions for the study to include an element of reciprocity so that participants may also gain something of benefit for themselves are explained. I then set out how I selected the six participants, developed the interview guide and conducted the interviews and focus group. Ethical issues of relevance to the conduct of the research are discussed. Finally the framework for the analysis of the interview material is set out.

#### METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

This research is a qualitative study which aims to explore with its participants a particular issue of social practice, namely what has contributed to the development of their commitments to 'just practice'. The area of qualitative research is fluid in that there are a variety of approaches to and definitions of it. (Parker, 1994). For this study the following description fits well with my intentions for it. Qualitative research has been defined simply and rather loosely as 'the interpretative study of a specified issue or problem in which the researcher is central to the sense that is made.' (Parker, 1994: 2). It is a method which provides for the capture of personal perspectives and allows for the exploration and elaboration of the significance of an issue or problem. 'It is an attempt to capture the sense ... that structures what we say about what we do.' (Parker, 1994: 3).

The study is couched within a social constructionist theoretical framework, in that the socially contexted nature of all our interactions and presentations of the self are acknowledged. Social

constructionism considers that how our world appears to us and what sense we make of it is determined by the paradigms that we hold about it. (Gergen, 1985, Pease & Fook, 1999).

'Social constructionist inquiry is principally concerned with explicating the processes by which people come to describe, explain or otherwise account for the world (including themselves) in which they live.' (Gergen, 1985: 266).

My purpose in this study is to look at how the participants have structured their understandings of social justice and how they play these understandings out in their practice or intentions for social practice. My hopes for this study include the new understandings that qualitative research can provide. 'Qualitative research draws its strengths from the ways in which accounts of action and experience reinterpret and understand facts anew.' (Parker, 1994: 11-12).

These new understandings I saw coming both from the fact that there has been little study of this area, and from having developed a framework of understanding about social justice as it relates to social practice during the literature review. 'The key to making sense of ...data was to create a framework for [it].' (Kelsey, 1999: 312).

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **Sources of Material**

Material was collected from a range of sources. In the preliminary stages of the development of the research topic, attendance at part of a course on 'Just Practice' helped me in refining the area for study. A substantial review of the literature was undertaken. I interviewed six participants who were newly graduated from the UNITEC Institute of Technology Bachelor of Social Practice programme, and read the course assignments that they wrote for the 'Just Practice' course. I also conducted a focus group with the participants, in all providing a diverse range of ways of approaching the study topic.

### **My Position**

As a former member of staff of the BSP programme, I was informally encouraged to undertake this study. A letter of endorsement from the then Head of the School of Community Studies, Gavin Rennie is attached. (See Appendix 1). As well as having a personal interest in this topic,

being known to the students and having some inside knowledge of the teaching practices of the programme have been helpful in furthering this piece of research.

### *Preliminary Phase – setting up the research topic*

In the preliminary phase of exploration of the research topic I attended part of the 'Just Practice' course, one of the final courses of the three-year UNITEC BSP programme. This course is structured around presentations by guest lecturers who are experienced practitioners and who are asked to talk to the class (according to a pre-set structure) about their professional experiences around their 'just practices'. I obtained permission to attend the 'just practitioner' (guest lecturer) presentations from the course coordinator and class. (The co-ordinator consulted the class and explained my research project). I also wrote to the class and obtained written permission from approximately half of the students to attend their class presentations and take notes, which could help me in the development of my research proposal and interview guide. This letter also sought permission and contact details from students who were willing to be contacted later as potential study participants (See Appendix 2). Sixteen students agreed to this. This approach was necessary as the students were nearing the end of their studies, would be dispersing, and could be difficult to contact in a few months' time when I would want to reach them in order to obtain my research participants. As the text of my letter makes clear, this preliminary approach entailed no commitment to participate in the study.

### *Obtaining Ethical Consent*

My next step was to clarify my research topic and obtain ethical consent from the Massey University Ethics Committee. My Consent Application was agreed to after some minor adjustments to my initial proposal (See Appendix 3 for the ethical consent).

### **Ethical Issues**

Confidentiality of participants was a major issue that I needed to be constantly alert to, in the presentation of participants' material. The social services industry is comparatively small and interviews at times discussed participants' current work and workplaces. For this reason I have divulged little personal information directly about the participants, and have used pseudonyms for them, when quoting their material. As well participants were asked a range of specific questions

about their experiences on the BSP programme, not all of which were positive. Even though they had left the programme participants did not necessarily want their comments to be identifiable.

In the interests of natural justice I also needed to provide anonymity for the subjects of participants' negative comments. At the same time I wanted to hold true to what participants had to say about the programme. While not naming specific lecturers generally ensured anonymity, there was one instance where the course discussed meant that this could lead to identifying the staff member concerned. I finally decided that because of the nature of the comments made, I needed to exclude this material from the thesis. My only other recourse, as I saw it, would have been to approach that person to clear the material for publication, which I also saw as problematic.

A further issue that I needed to take account of was the emotional reactions that may and indeed did surface, as participants discussed very personal and at times painful memories or experiences. My experience as a social worker was helpful in this regard, in that I felt that I could respond appropriately to any distress. I was touched by the openness with which the participants shared very personal experiences and the trust in me that they demonstrated in this regard.

In relation to the focus group there were obvious limits to the confidentiality that could be provided. Participants had agreed at the outset to participate in a focus group, which meant that they would learn who the other study participants were and would share their thoughts and opinions together. As they had been students together, knew one another and had often held such discussions in the classroom, I did not foresee any problems in this respect. Consent to participate in the focus group was sought at the outset, when participants first agreed to take part in the study.

### **Reciprocity**

An element of research practice that I wished to include within my interview and work with the participants was that of reciprocity. I wanted the participants to gain something from the interview process for themselves, so that the benefits of their involvement would not be all one-sided in my favour. I did not make this aspect of my practice explicit with the participants, but it was my hope that they would gain something for themselves from their interviews. In particular what I hoped to be able to provide for them was a strengthened commitment to 'just practice'. I saw this being

achieved both through the detailed discussion about their current practice and what had contributed to that, and also through a process of 'witnessing' that is drawn from narrative therapeutic practice. (Monk et al, 1997, White, 1997, 2001a).

### *Practices of Witnessing as a Reciprocal Offering*

Witnessing involves drawing in other people who are important to the person concerned to 'bear witness' to their achievements, understandings or commitments. The witnesses may be living or dead and are invoked for the person concerned through questioning, in the first instance, although within therapeutic practice they may also be physically brought in as allies and supporters for the person. (White, 1997, 2001a). Within the interviews I introduced two particular questions which were directed at invoking such support for the participants. These questions asked who from their early life would be least surprised to hear that they had taken up social practice work, and what would they have to say about that and about the participants' commitments to and purposes for such professional identity. I saw the recalling of these witnesses for participants, as providing people in their lives whom they can be mindful of at times when doubts or difficulties in their pursuit of 'just practices' arise for them. Having others believe in your actions provides a powerful support especially where the pursuit of your ideal may prove difficult. Establishing this potential personal ally from participants' own past through this process of witnessing provided benefit for participants that reciprocated their contribution to me through participation in the study.

The power of this process for participants is seen in their responses to the question about who would be least surprised to hear that they had taken up social practice work:

*'This is a funny thing to say because I don't know this woman, but it'd be my grandma. She died the year before I was born, but she's always with me. ... and my Dad ...I think they'd just be proud of who I've become, who I am and what I'm doing with my life.'*  
Kate

*'My grandmother ... I knew her to be the most compassionate, understanding, loving, always the same person, who deeply felt about things but I never saw her lose her temper, who modelled for me an idea of acceptance of people. I never heard her say an ill word about anybody, but she had a dreadful life. And yet she accepted it. ...She was a strong role model for me, absolutely. I don't think she'd expect anything less. "What took you so long?" She'd probably say that.'* Jo

Other indications that some participants found the interview process beneficial were some flashes of insight that were occasionally acknowledged. Pat had initially described the main reasons for taking the BSP programme in fairly pragmatic terms:

*'In all honesty the main reason I ended up doing it was the fact I knew I was bored with my job. I wanted to do a degree. I hadn't a clue what to do.'*

Further discussion in the interview drew out different factors:

*'It's quite funny because even now during this interview I'm starting to realise what I'd never even realised before ...[When I was] younger I spent ... long periods of time in hospital having major surgery. ... That geared me up towards nursing and that hospital environment, and brought me more towards wanting to work with people. ... I like being there when people are - this sounds quite morbid - but I like being there when people are ill, or not quite at their full potential. So I like getting them back to health.'* Pat

### ***Selection of the Study Participants***

As stated earlier I had obtained the contact addresses of sixteen students, now graduates, from the BSP programme who were prepared to be approached about participating in the study. It was now August in the following year when I wrote to these by e-mail, and by letter for those who did not have an e-mail address. (See Appendix 4). In this letter I set out my process for selecting six study participants. I would take two each from the three practice streams of community development, counselling and social work of the BSP programme on a first come, first served basis. (Students on the programme were required to choose either community development, counselling or social work as their area of speciality in the second or third year of the programme and their Bachelor of Social Practice was then endorsed for one of those practices.) My purpose in drawing from all three streams was to encompass the diversity of the BSP programme within this study. Enclosed with the letter was an information sheet (See Appendix 5) which set out the aims of the study.

The study aimed to explore how they as beginning social practitioners (newly graduated) from the BSP programme at UNITEC Institute of Technology had developed their commitment to social justice for their social practice. What part their personal stories and the BSP programme had had in the development of this commitment would also be explored. What participants would have to do was also set out. If they agreed to participate they were asked to provide a copy of a written assignment they had been required to submit for the Just Practice course, one of the concluding courses of the BSP programme; to participate in a one-hour interview that would be audiotaped

and transcribed; and to take part in a focus group at a later stage to contribute their further thoughts on the themes of the study. Probable time frames for these were also set out.

I received eight replies, chose my sample, and notified the remaining two, saying that if anyone of those selected dropped out I would approach them again about their availability. I then phoned the participants I had selected and set up interview times. At the same time I asked them to forward a copy of their Just Practice course assignment.

## **The Interview guide**

### *Developing the Interview guide*

I undertook a preliminary review of the literature and identified two studies in particular relating to students and practitioners interest in social justice as a focus in their practice (Gould & Harris, 1996, Hawkins et al, 2001). These helped to inform the development of my interview guide. Attendance at parts of the 'Just Practice' course was the other major source of influence on me in helping to shape the content of the interview guide. A draft of the interview questions was developed at the time of seeking ethical approval. Subsequently I read all the assignments from the participants. My intention in reading these assignments was to ensure that my interview guide was 'on track' in terms of the types of questions I was asking and the areas of coverage of the questions. I actually found that I had already gained understanding around these areas from having attended the student presentations at the end of the 'Just Practice' course. The assignments therefore confirmed my interview guide thus far. The assignments were also an alternate source for understanding participants' journeys around their commitment to 'just practice'. In this sense they provided some validation of the interview findings.

### *Piloting the Interview Guide*

My next step was to pilot the interview guide. I approached two friends who are also professional colleagues and conducted interviews with them. This was useful both for gauging more accurately how long the interviews might take, as well as checking for ambiguity or lack of clarity in the questions. These interviews did not exactly follow the interview guide, as I needed to adapt the interview guide to fit their different circumstances as experienced practitioners and as not having attended the BSP programme. However the interview guide actually required little

adaptation to take account of these differences and hence it proved a useful exercise to achieve my purposes. These pilot interviews were useful for me in determining the order of questions in helping to achieve a good flow to the way questions were put and for setting up the beginning and concluding phases of the interview. I also made some minor adjustments to the wording of some questions.

## **Working with the Participants**

### *Conducting the Interviews*

I phoned each participant in turn and set up times for interviews. (See Appendix 6 for the interview guide used.) The interviews were conducted at either participants' workplaces, homes or, in one case, at a colleague's office. I gave participants the consent form, (See Appendix 7) read it out to them and had them sign it prior to the beginning of the interview. The interviews were audiotaped. Occasional reassurances about the confidentiality of the material were sought during the interviews when sensitive comments usually relating to other people were being made. At the same time I gained a sense that already knowing me there was a sense of trust that enabled them to share thoughts and feelings that may not have come out had they not known the interviewer.

Although my ethical consent provided for a third party to transcribe the interviews I decided, on advice, to do this myself. It would enable me to gain good familiarity with the material, which would assist me later in working with it. I transcribed and returned the interview transcriptions by post to participants for checking immediately after each interview and before proceeding to the next interview. The checking gave participants the opportunity to delete or change any of the material from the interview, as well as to check it for accuracy. One participant made a number of small changes to the transcription. The interviews were conducted over a period of one month. Transcriptions and tapes were kept secure in anonymous files in my home office, and letter codes were used on all transcripts and computer files. My ethical approval provided for me to retain all transcription material and tapes for a year following publication of the thesis, and then to destroy all the material, unless further consent is obtained to retain any material. The consent form also provides for use of the thesis material for subsequent publication or presentation at conferences or seminars.

### *E-mail Communications*

Communication by e-mail was to all participants as a group when communication was of a general nature, such as setting up the arrangements for the focus group. Where issues of confidentiality were involved, such as when I returned chapters of work which featured participants' material together with their individual identifying letter codes I sent individual e-mail messages.

### **Drawing Meaning from the Material**

Transcribing the interviews helped me to gain familiarity with the material. I now used content analysis (Shuker, 1999) to draw together the findings into themes. A cut and paste exercise with the hard copy using colour codes resulted in a sifting of material into nine major topics. Included in these were: *social justice*, *social practice* and *just practice*, all of which feature in chapter five. *Prior interest in social justice and contributions of the BSP programme to their commitment to 'just practice'* formed the basis of discussions in chapter seven. Their *personal stories, values and beliefs* and *resonance of social justice in practice* feature in chapter 8. Further sifting of the material occurred in each area, as my writing proceeded. *Personal stories of injustice* which feature in both chapter seven and eight emerged in this process. *Doubts and uncertainties*, which are discussed in chapter nine, emerged similarly. My intentions in presenting the findings are to allow the voices and experiences of the participants to come through as much as possible. The academic framework provides a positioning and wider context for what the participants have to say.

### *Validity*

The issue of validity is a traditional measure of qualitative research and has used processes of 'triangulation' or the use of multiple sources for the data to ensure that the findings are a fair representation of the material under study. (Davidson & Tolich, 1999). Social constructionist approaches to research have deconstructed this measure, looking at what it sets out to achieve. The issue of validity has been seen as seeking to ensure the 'trustworthiness' of the findings and how they are presented. (Lather, 1986). Social constructionist approaches to assuring 'trustworthiness' have used criteria such as coherence, participants' understanding, fruitfulness or

readers' evaluation (Potter & Wetherell, 1987), and alternative texts for where the material is presented. (Parker, 1994).

I have addressed the issue of trustworthiness of the material in three ways. The first is by using multiple sources for the material. Three sources were used: the participants' 'Just Practice' course assignments, the interviews of participants, which were my main source of material for the study, and the focus group discussions. The next means of ensuring trustworthiness was having participants review how their material was being presented with opportunities to amend it, as the study was being written up. The third criterion of fruitfulness for the reader is yet to be achieved, although informal feedback from colleagues on some of the material indicates an interest in and enthusiasm about it.

The first opportunity for participants to review how their material was being presented was in the focus group, which is discussed in more detail below.

The second opportunity was provided during the final stages of the thesis writing. I sent each of the participants the three chapters containing the findings, with all of their quotes identified according to a letter code and asked them to indicate if they were satisfied with how their material was being presented. Apart from some minor changes one participant made, they all indicated that they were happy with the context and presentation of what they had said.

### ***Countering Bias and Addressing Researcher Power***

Social constructionist approaches also have a stance of making overt the authorial voice of the researcher (Burr, 1995, Lather, 1986, Parker, 1994) to acknowledge the powerful influence the researcher brings to the study. Drawing from ethnomethodology, social constructionism also makes an effort to value participants' voices over that of the authority of the researcher. (Burr, 1995). I saw the focus group as a means to introduce some lowering of the power imbalances between how I as researcher was presenting the findings and how they as providers of the information might prefer it to be presented. It would also enhance the 'trustworthiness' of the findings through a revisiting of them from a slightly different perspective, namely a group discussion. As the discussion below will show, I did not consider that the actual experience of the focus group succeeded in addressing the power differential between the researcher and the participants. However I do consider that participants' opportunities in the focus group and in the

subsequent review of how the findings were written up did provide a counter to possible claims of authorial bias or distortion of participants' material.

Another source of possible bias arose from my position as a former staff member of the BSP programme. I could present participants' material related to the programme in either a more or less favourable light. While undoubtedly my own views and experience of the programme have played a part in my writing about it, the checks on this have included firstly my acknowledgment of my position, so that readers can take this factor into account. Secondly, the endorsement by the then Head of the BSP programme provides official sanction for this study. (See Appendix 1). Finally the review by participants of their material provides a further counter to misrepresentation of their views or experiences.

## **Focus Group**

### *Preparing for the Focus Group*

In my initial planning of the study I had decided to conduct a focus group with the participants and agreement to this had formed part of the written consent that they had earlier given. The focus group was to be held after I had done some sifting of the themes from their interviews and had done some positioning of the findings within the context of the literature review. Once this stage was reached, I contacted the six participants, and made arrangements to hold the focus group. I sent them an early draft of chapter four, which presented material from their interviews and related it to the early version of my model of social justice and social change. (See Figure 1 in Chapter 3). This earlier version contained four quadrants of change, rather than the two hemispheres of the final model.

### *Focus Group Aims*

My purpose for the focus group was to have participants review how I had presented the material from their interviews within my model of social justice and social change, and to have them critique the quadrants from the point of view of their understandings of just practice. (See Appendix 8 for the focus group aims and preparation). I was having doubts about the validity of the arrangement of the discourses of 'just practice' into four quadrants, and subsequently expanded the four quadrants to two hemispheres. A further aim of the focus group was to provide

participants with an opportunity to discuss what supports they were accessing for their current 'just practices'. This discussion about sustaining commitment I introduced partly as a result of what had come to light from their interviews. One participant in particular was struggling in an environment that was hostile to social justice commitments. Raising the issue at a more general level continued as I saw it, the process of reciprocity that I had introduced in a different way into the interviews.

### *Conducting the Focus Group*

All accepted the invitation to attend, but when the time came, only four turned up. (The other two I learned afterwards had failed to show because of intervening family situations.) The group met at my workplace. I audiotaped the group and later transcribed it myself. I had prepared a guide for myself on how to facilitate the group, setting out the way we would work through the material set out in the draft chapter. The group found it a little hard to take in the complexities of the model in terms of their material. During my introductory presentation of the material, I recognised that my explanation of the model was becoming somewhat didactic and the group was getting lost in the detail. I therefore confined the range of the material covered and we had some fruitful discussion around the four principles of social justice in terms of their current practice as well as their interview responses.

The second phase of the focus group discussion moved on to review how 'just practice' was working for them in their current practice. We also explored what practices and people currently supported them in their practice and whether they had sufficient support for sustaining this commitment. This discussion proved beneficial in that it brought to the fore issues such as having support in the workplace and maintaining their personal networks of support for themselves. For one, keeping herself focussed on what she wanted to achieve was cited as important for sustaining her commitment to 'just practice'. For another, keeping safe was a necessary part of sustaining commitment. The use of supervision was canvassed, but it did not come through as a major source of support that they were using.

Overall I felt that my attempts to engage the participants in scrutiny of how I was presenting their material in terms of the full complexities of my model had proved over-ambitious. Despite having had time to consider the material in advance of the focus group discussion, I received the message that they preferred to leave the academic structuring of it to me. My level of

expectations about the extent of their participatory engagement with the material was greater than what they were prepared for or wanted. Nonetheless they affirmed the way that their material was being presented within the four principles of social justice, and contributed further comments on their continuing 'just practices', some of which I subsequently included in the discussion of findings.

## **Writing Up the Findings**

### *Understandings of Social Justice*

The meaning participants constructed of 'just practice' and of their intentions for future practice constitute a major part of the findings. These findings are placed in the context of the literature on social justice and social practice and positioned in relation to a model of social justice and social change that I have constructed.

### *Influences of the Bachelor of Social Practice Programme*

Parts of the BSP programme that participants had found particularly influential for them in building their commitment to 'just practice' were the second major segment of the study interviews. As earlier indicated, reviewing the part played by the BSP programme in supporting students to develop a commitment to social justice in their practice would provide evaluative material on the teaching programme that programme teachers could find useful. How new graduates looked back on their learning about social justice would also have wider interest for the professions that aspired to social justice as a principle for social practice.

### *The Teaching Literature and the BSP Programme*

Literature about the teaching practices that address the uptake of values and specific teaching practices that support the development of social justice as a key focus for social practice are reviewed. These provide the professional context both for the UNITEC teaching programme that participants attended, and for the findings from the participants' interviews. I am concerned here to confine this part of the literature study to the area of teaching practices, rather than work practices which are addressed earlier in the literature review on social justice in practice.

The teachings of the UNITEC BSP programme are the next area of study. The programme is reviewed in terms of its stated commitment to social justice and how the value of social justice is advanced within each component course of it. My intentions here are to try and gauge the extent to which social justice is promoted through the programme's teaching practices. My review of the courses is necessarily limited, given the size of this study and as this constitutes but one part of it. I have taken the aims and learning outcomes of each course and reviewed them in terms of the terminology of social justice. The teaching practices of the BSP programme are also considered in the light of the teaching literature already discussed. As a former fieldwork coordinator and staff member of the BSP programme, my personal knowledge of the teaching practices on particular courses at times informs me about the content taught, although I do not claim comprehensive knowledge in this respect. This programme review then provides the context for the study findings of what participants have to say about their learning about 'just practice' from the BSP programme.

Participants were asked specifically about particular aspects of the BSP including particular course, readings and assignments, and fieldwork placement experiences and the influence of particular lecturers. What aspects of the teaching and learning practices of the BSP programme helped the development of their commitment to social justice in their practice was the overall focus of this component of the study.

### *Personal Stories*

How participants' personal stories have contributed to their understandings and commitment to social justice in their work was the next major topic area discussed with them. Their personal journeys had brought the participants into a programme teaching social practices, but discourses of helping are often stronger among entrants to such a teaching programme (Gray, 2000, Uttley, 1980) than are discourses of social justice. I was therefore keen to explore the extent of their interest in social justice prior to attending the programme and what life experiences they saw as influential in the development of their social justice commitment.

I saw the presentation of personal stories as highly relevant from two points of view. One's personal (and professional) values (although hopefully they are integrated into one set of values), are shaped by a wide range of life experiences. I could therefore expect that life experiences prior to attendance at the BSP programme would have played a key role in shaping the uptake of

social justice as a value for these practitioners. The extent to which this was consciously acknowledged by participants prior to attendance at the teaching programme and what they saw as having influenced the uptake of this value held its own significance. An underlying theme is the flow-on into their practice of these earlier influences.

The second viewpoint was the use of 'self' as the vehicle for social practice. (Brandon, 1976, O'Connor et al, 1998, Worrall, 2001). A key ingredient of social practice is the relationship that the practitioner forms with the client, be it an individual or group. This relationship actually becomes the vehicle through which the practice is performed. Unlike other professions that have practices based on particular spheres of independent knowledge or belief, such as medicine, religion or engineering, social practice draws on the personal relationship to advance the processes of change for the client. Key experiences that have shaped practitioners' lives become highly relevant to how they will perform their practice. In this instance, that is how beginning practitioners may apply principles of social justice in their practice.

### **Summary**

The qualitative nature of this research and the social constructionist context in which it is positioned have been set out as the methodological frameworks for this study. Some of the problems of qualitative research such as possible researcher bias and the power dimension of the researcher / participant relationship and how they are addressed have been discussed. Participants were engaged to review the findings of the study at different stages of the research as ways to support the trustworthiness of the study findings.

The conduct of the study has been laid out with issues such as ethical considerations and processes of reciprocity interwoven. Some difficulties encountered in the focus group process reveal some discrepancy between the theory and practice, in this case, of some social constructionist understandings. The chapter also sets out my intentions of endeavouring to have the voices of the participants heard from within the framework of academic discourses.

In the next chapter I set what the participants had to say about social justice and their practices of it, in the context of the literature and the model of social justice and change that I have developed.

## CHAPTER 5

### The Discourses Of Social Justice In The Practice Of Beginning Practitioners

*'The strength of social justice is to allow the voice to be heard.'* Andrea

#### Introduction

This study sets out to explore how beginning social practitioners who have completed a Bachelor of Social Practice at UNITEC Institute of Technology have taken up a commitment to and purpose for social justice in their practice. Six recent graduates were interviewed. Five of the six participants were working in the social services. The sixth had an interest in volunteer advocacy work for people experiencing mental illness and was not employed in a social service position. The chapter starts with participants' understanding of social practice. It then examines what participants have to say about their aspirations for 'just practice' within the context of the elements of social justice discussed in the literature review, and within the model of 'just practice' I have earlier developed. (See Fig. 1) How participants see their practice working to achieve social justice and what other literature has to say about this is placed in the context of the principles, types and functions of justice earlier discussed. The theories of justice that inform social practice and the functions that different social practices perform in society, are exposed through the discussion of the practices of these new social practitioners. The discussion here goes to the heart of this study about the place of social justice within social practice.

#### SOCIAL PRACTICE

How participants understood social practice is first looked at, so as to provide a context for the ensuing discussion of their 'just practice'. Participants' understanding of social practice encompassed the UNITEC fields of practice of social work, counselling and community development. Their perspectives ranged from all-encompassing work within the social services for social justice:

*"The application of my professional skills in a social context ... according to a social justice framework."* Carol

*"Working within social services within society... working against social injustices and supporting the community" Andrea*

to using relevant elements of practice from across the three field of practice:

*"I operate on a professional basis, using all the areas of social practice which... involves the elements of social work ... basic elements of counselling and basic elements of community development, taking community perspective into account." Jo*

to a specific approach to practice within their chosen field of practice:

*"To me it's social work, coming on board with people, and walking with them through where they are, and doing whatever I can to help...Respect for clients, where they're at and them owning their own stuff ...being respectful in all ways when you're with clients." Kate*

*"A community development perspective, working with groups to empower them really so that they can get what they want." Barbara*

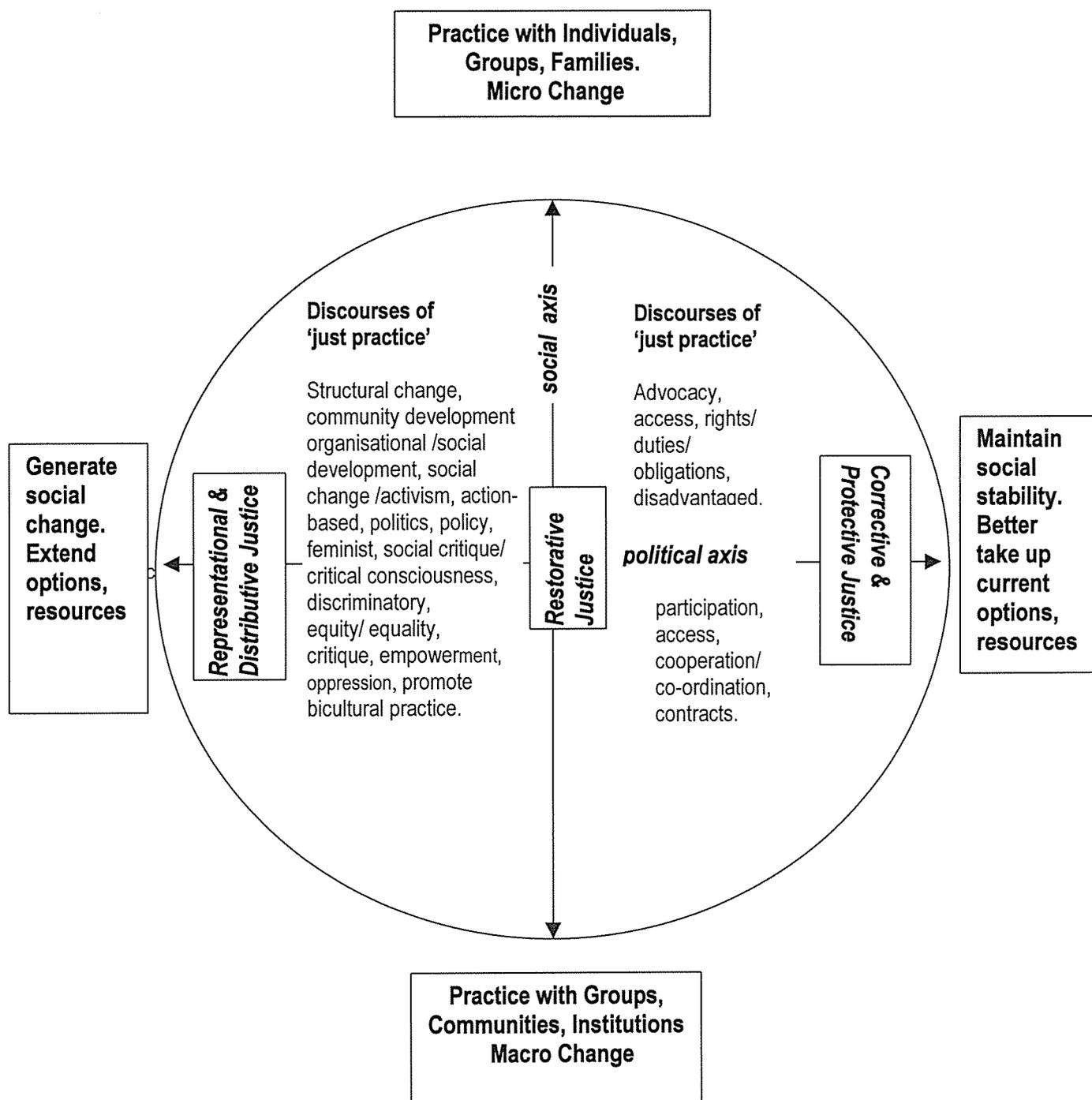
## **Just Practice**

Here we begin to explore what the study participants have reported about their intentions and early practices of social practice, in the context of the literature on social justice. Earlier discussions on ideas of social justice drawn from the literature identified four elements summarised as:

- i. basic freedoms and participation in decision-making at all levels of society;
- ii providing access to life opportunities to realise individual potential (including meeting human material needs);
- iii addressing structural injustices (Rawls, 1971) and
- iv. providing for equity internationally and across generations. (Borrie, 1995, Ife, 1995).

These elements will be used as a framework within which to discuss what the study participants have had to say. The model of social justice in practice discussed earlier will further inform this discussion. It is reproduced here for the convenience of the reader. (See Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Just Practice: Model of Change**



As indicated in earlier discussions, the model sets out dimensions of change along social and political axes.

- The social axis identifies the targets of change, the micro (individuals, groups and families) or macro (groups, communities and institutions) social order.
- The political axis illustrates the degrees of change, from conservative to radical.
- Types of justice - corrective, protective, restorative, distributive and representational (Chatterjee & D'Aprix, 2002) are positioned across the political axis, according to the functions they perform in terms of change.
- The principal functions of social justice - maintaining social stability and generating social change (Chatterjee & D'Aprix, 2002) - are aligned at the conservative and radical ends of the political axis respectively and represent the dimensions of change.
- Terms of social justice\* that have featured in social practice literature in a privileged way (Hawkins et al, 2001) are allocated to either the conservative or radical hemispheres in accordance with where I see particular alignments in the social practice literature with the dimensions of change of this model. These terms will be used as reference points for the discourses that the study participants have accessed in their discussions of their practice.

Material from participant interviews is placed within the contexts of the four elements and types of social justice of the model. Dimensions of change that they demonstrate are discussed, along with what discourses of social justice in practice are accessed. Participants' perspectives of 'just practice' range from broad societal and universal values around social justice, to contextual practical applications of justice. At the same time, the fit between social justice and professional practice for all participants was very firm. For most they were one and the same thing with social justice seen as an inherent part of social practice.

*'They have to fit together for me... I couldn't work in a place that my clients' rights for social justice wasn't being respected. So for me the two go hand in hand. My personal values and beliefs, my professional hat and social justice have to fit together.'* Andrea

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**\*Footnote 4. Social Justice terms** are reproduced here for the convenience of the reader: *rights/duties/obligations, equity/equality, access, participation, contracts, social change/activism, empowerment, advocacy, disadvantaged, oppression, social critique/critical consciousness, community development/ organisational/ social development, politics, co-operation/ co-ordination, feminist, action-based, policy, critique, discriminatory and promote bi-cultural practice.*

However, there was for Jo a sense of development in the relationship.

*'It's a close fit and I think I'm working towards making it more comfortable like a new pair of shoes I'm learning to wear in.'* Jo

Participants' articulation of their work is now sited within the frameworks of social justice.

### **A. FREEDOMS AND PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING**

The first elements of social justice, freedoms and participation in decision-making, were the concern of both community development participants. For one participant much of her work focussed on extending the community's involvement in political decision-making:

*'What I'm doing is I'm trying to make available to the community the information and the resources for them to be able to participate in decision-making processes and therefore it's kind of democracy at a Local Government level ...trying to make opportunities in the community to actually have more control and more resources. That's almost entirely what my job is really.'*  
Carol

She is using her position within the Local Government structure to enable community groups to tap into the local body resources and processes that are not always accessed well. Her work for social justice is bringing democracy alive through ensuring that people in the community participate in the decision-making processes of local government. She is working with disadvantaged parts of the community to help them gain greater access to resources and decision-making so as to achieve better equity. This focus of work fits with Kenny's (2002) activist framework for community development where:

'political mobilization provides a way of giving organised expression to solidarity, advocacy and self-determination. Empowerment takes place as groups and communities are resourced to take control of their own destinies.' (Kenny, 2002, 291).

Discourses of equity and participation, and working within a political structure links this social practice to representational and distributive types of justice. The work is aimed at extending resources for community groups, thus promoting social change.

Another perspective on the theme of freedom in society was a discourse on social norms. Two participants spoke of the power and oppression exerted in society through the way social norms operate to control and dominate individuals.

*'Social justice is about empowerment of those who are undermined, marginalised, categorised, labelled ... who experience imbalances in their lives because of universal norms, society's norms that are placed upon them.'* Andrea

Chatterjee and D'Aprix (2002) have discussed how norms operate in relation to social justice in an extensive analysis of justice. Norms, which they defined as rules of group behaviour, work to maintain social integration in the group, at times operating as a form of social control. (Chatterjee & D'Aprix, 2002). It is this social control function that norms perform that the two study participants were identifying and resisting, in the name of social justice, asserting and supporting a right for individuals to be different and to resist social conformity:

*"It is that social control thing. I mean people have a right to be...individuals ...the right to be a bit eccentric and to have weird behaviours.'* Barbara

This normalising control was seen as quite pervasive, promulgated by powerful institutions within society:

*'The media which is quite an institution of its own ... and the whole medical profession's scientific way of thinking has quite a structure that ...interprets to us or enforces upon us what we should be like and look like and act like. And most human beings are human beings. They don't really fit into those.'* Barbara

Individuals are moulded in inhuman ways by these norms that are enforced by powerful institutions. These institutions then become the enemies of liberty and humanity. This participant is picking up ideas that Foucault (1980) first brought forward in an analysis of power and the effects of the ideas of 'truth' and 'objective reality'. In a discussion of power and knowledge, Foucault (1980) traced the way that from the seventeenth century power and knowledge have reinforced each other in that those holding power are the creators of 'truth' and that we all operate within a domain of power/knowledge. These items of knowledge are privileged as 'objective reality' and it is from these that the notion and power of norms have arisen. Norms have become the means of categorising, classifying and evaluating people, serving to exclude some groups and isolate individuals. People are recruited into self-evaluation against society's norms and hence have become guardians of themselves. Foucault saw this self-evaluation and normalising

judgment as a primary mechanism of social control, wielding huge power within society. (Foucault, 1980).

While Barbara sees major institutions as reinforcing oppressive social norms, Foucault saw the problem lying rather in the acceptance of a system of unitary knowledge and 'truth' that scientific positivism had promoted. Foucault's counter to the discourses of 'normality' lay in resurrecting what he referred to as 'subjugated knowledges'. (Foucault, 1980: 81). He identified two categories of subjugated knowledges – 'erudite knowledge' that had been suppressed through revisioning of history, and what he termed 'popular' or 'indigenous' knowledges that survive at the margins of society and that lie outside of the approved, established regimes of thought. (Foucault, 1980: 82). A striking example of the latter is a discussion of Pacific spirituality found in recent social work writing, where the sensory awareness (through sight, hearing) of people not physically present is acknowledged. 'Such encounters are a fundamental part of our systems of knowledge, providing us with vital information.' (Newport, 2001:8).

Discourses of empowerment, resisting oppression and supporting those in society who are less powerful are aspirations for practice heard here. They fit in the more radical hemisphere of practice aspiring to generate social change.

For Barbara, an accepting community is one answer to the oppression engendered by dominant social norms.

*'In a unified community everyone is accepted as individual and allowed to have their quirks...'*  
Barbara

'Community' allows people freedom to be different and individual, accepted without the requirement of conformity to social norms. However the pervasiveness of social norms means the community does not totally escape them. Instead as a positive social structure the community's role in promoting norms is seen as accidental, rather than deliberate:

*'Community is the arm that enforces norms accidentally.'* Barbara

Community is also seen in a positive light by Carol from a somewhat different angle, that of collective responsibility:

*'That someone else's injustice is actually my injustice as well. And that while ... someone else isn't free, I'm not free, in that sense of, I guess, collectivity.'* Carol

Here freedom is reliant on a sense of community, of collectivity. Freedom can only be a freedom of everyone. Justice is only justice when it is available to everyone. Ideals of an accepting community where all are supported and of justice that reaches all in equal measure are the aspirations of these two participants for their 'just practice'.

## **Discussion**

Extending the participation of the community in political decision-making was a major area of work for one participant in her promotion of social justice. Other themes relating to freedom were around expanding the norms of society to take on diversity. The oppressive nature of social norms was recognised, in line with the writings of Foucault (1980) on this subject. Whereas Foucault's analysis had exposed the way power and knowledge worked together in the creation of social norms and how discourses of normalising could be resisted, the participants had not taken their thinking so clearly into the realm of what resistances could be accessed in this struggle. Instead their discourses were focussed on the end goals of what they were working towards. The ideals of an all-accepting community and of universal justice were the aspirations of participants whose voices have been heard here. The discourses of 'just practice' that have been heard - equity, participation, empowerment and resisting oppression - are used here supporting distributive and representational justice and working to generate social change.

## **B. PROVIDING ACCESS TO LIFE OPPORTUNITIES TO REALISE INDIVIDUAL POTENTIAL**

The second major realm for achieving social justice is through providing access to life opportunities in order that people may reach their individual potential. For several study participants this was a major focus in their work. These participants worked to ensure that clients received their entitlements from social institutions.

*'My understanding of social justice is to do our best to operate a service.'* Pat

*'So we don't just say "No, go away". I follow through as much as I can. And to me that's kind of justice for everybody, rather than just saying "No, I'm not accepting that referral".'* Kate

The gatekeeper role of professional social practice is being used in the interests of clients, supporting their access to systems and resources. Certainly Wakefield held that the place for social work was at the interface of institutions, supporting the disadvantaged and powerless. (Wakefield, 1988). Ensuring that power and authority is used properly, either by themselves or others is another discourse of professional practice couched in terms of social justice.

*'It comes down to the people with the power and what they're doing with it. And the fairness and the justice around that. ... I think that's justice for the client too. If you've got professionals doing what they're supposed to do...I have questioned colleagues in the field, about their decisions about families that we have in common. And I think I've turned on a few light- bulbs out there, in that respect. To me, that's what social justice is about too.'* Kate

There is a commitment to what might be called natural justice, providing for fairness.

*'You're looking for justice for everybody ...Fairness for everybody...fair outcomes.'* Kate

*'An ethical manner for me is speaking up when I see injustice.'* Jo

Acknowledgment of uniqueness:

*'Everybody is unique with their own values and stories and understandings. I think I offer that to any person. That is part of what social justice is about. That you're offering that understanding of that place [where] they are.'* Andrea

Avoiding discriminating against or judging clients:

*'Not labelling, not stigmatising ...labelling can be a big barrier to engaging with these people ...Creating a comfortable environment for them to be able to speak is part of social justice. Trying to be non-judgmental, irrespective of what they are who they are and what they've done ... Being non-judgmental is very, very important.'* Pat

*'Not judging her, not blaming her, not labelling her, not doing any of those things that she'd been having done to her.'* Andrea

Accommodating differing cultural values when working with clients of differing ethnicity or culture:

*'To strive to give an adequate service to people irrespective of their background, what has actually brought them there, their beliefs, their culture, and their personal beliefs and obviously their culture may not just be, Maori, Polynesian, Pakeha it may be if they've been in a gang – that could be their culture. If they belong to a certain religious group that could be their culture.'* Pat

Using social practice techniques to engage well with clients, so as to provide them with good service:

*'I use it [choice theory] to get as much information from them as I can so I can assist them better ... I can only help them if I can get an idea of what's going on. So any way I can try and get that going or getting that stuff out helps me to provide a better service to them, so to me that's social justice as well.'* Pat

Accessing alternative services in the interest of clients and being client-centred are further social practices spoken of in the context of 'just practice':

*'I do what I can, and when I can't do it I try and bring in someone who can help move it as well.'* Kate.

*'It's being able to change things round to suit the individual person. Be more client-centred.'* Pat

Looking at the 'bigger picture' of the client's circumstances, so as to further their interests:

*'I think I can look further ahead than they can sometimes... That's kind of justice for me in the context that I'm working. ... I try and do whatever I can to sit where they are now, but still keep in my mind the long-term goal.'* Kate

Deliberate practice strategies to identify positive aspects of client stories, that could provide hope and constructive areas for progress, were other practices that participants identified as contributing to socially 'just practice'.

*'I'm always looking for a positive in there that someone can hang on to and work with. That's justice to me.'* Kate

*'Taking each person's story and looking at the strengths of it, and looking at their meaning-making of it.'* Andrea

Separating out the client from the problem was another aspect of professional practice, which Andrea saw as constituting 'just practice'.

*'The person is not the problem, the problem is the problem. And that resonates for me in anything I do ... That's the essence that goes towards social justice... You're dealing with the problem, you're not dealing with the person as the problem.'* Andrea

## Discussion

Many of the participants' discourses that we have heard derive from professional models of practice. Expectations of respect for the person, which includes accepting, non-discriminatory and non-judgmental practice articulate professional practice values. (Dubois & Miley, 1999, Hanmer & Stratton, 1988, O'Connor et al, 1998). Aspects of current professional narrative and strengths-based approaches to social practice include drawing out positive, more hopeful options; separating the problem from the client to avoid blaming and to generate a more constructive approach to addressing the problem. (Epston & White, 1992, White, 1994, 2001a, 2001b, Nicholson, 1995, Monk, 1997, Sleepy, 2002). Working respectfully with clients of a different ethnic or social culture (Sue & Sue, 1990, Tamasese & Waldegrave, 1994b), seeing the client's situation in its broad social context (Fook, 1993, Ife, 1995, 1997) and referring on or drawing in other resources for clients to better address their needs (Dubois & Miley, 1999, O'Connor et al, 1998) are all elements of professional social practice.

At the same time participants have described these practices in terms of social justice. Participants were, of course, responding to questions about their practice in terms of social justice, so couched their responses accordingly. Parker (1994) has drawn attention to this aspect of research where research subjects are keen to confirm what they see as the expected outcomes of the research. This tendency to compliance, as it has been called, is more problematic for quantitative research where attempts to ensure objectivity and distance from the research subjects are generally made. The counter to this problem is acknowledgment of it as an issue so that the reader can take account of it. (Parker, 1994). In this study, nonetheless, this framing of sound professional practice as promoting social justice fits with the capabilities perspective of social justice articulated by Morris (2002), which she applied to social work. Built on notions of human dignity and the goal of enabling everyone to live a full, human life Morris saw this perspective of justice supporting social practices of empowerment and strengths perspectives, where worker- client partnership and client self-determination are emphasised. (Morris, 2002). Practice here is mainly with corrective and protective types of justice. The gatekeeper role and the appropriate use of professional power that accompanies practice are significant aspects of the social practitioner role. Discourses of rights, access and anti-discriminatory practice are heard here, enabling clients to better take up the services and resources that are available to them. Ensuring that the practitioner role is exercised well in the

interest of clients is a key part of 'just practice' when it works in this conservative realm of supporting social stability.

### C. ADDRESSING STRUCTURAL INJUSTICES

Other aspects of social justice emerge from the way in which certain social structures work and whether they are seen in positive or negative lights. Two participants identified issues of structural inequality for particular groups in society:

*'So frequently there were issues - when you've got women in hospital - issues of their economic situation after they divorced that would cause problems or they were in bad relationships. All coming down to positions of gender ...everything was pointing towards issues of feminism. And that sort of made me start thinking about social justice and how these issues of inequality affect certain sections of our society.'* Pat

*'There isn't enough funding for mental health, so where's the social justice in that?'* Jo

Recognition of structural issues affecting women reflects a major site of social injustice.

(Dominelli & McLeod, 1989, Langan, 1992, Nash, 1989, Thompson, 1997, Worrall, 2001).

Similarly structural issues often impact unfavourably on people with mental illness. (NAC on Core Health and Disability Services, 1993, Richards-Ward, 1994, Thompson, 1997). Both participants recognised in their work the impacts of particular structural inequalities visited upon these major groups in our society.

Promoting change within institutions to ensure that clients are heard is a further discourse around social justice that two other participants, Andrea and Jo, talked about.

*'I have a very great passion for working with adolescents because I think there is a lot of social injustice to adolescents because of the voicelessness and powerlessness that they experience in their lives ...I think that essentially the strength of social justice is to allow the voice to be heard.'* Andrea

Consulting clients and offering them a say in how their services were organised was a way of empowering a group of clients, in line with the practice literature on empowerment (Croft & Beresford, 1994, Dubois & Miley, 1999, Rees, 1991, Shields, 1991, Thompson, 1998):

*'I took it to the clients ...and I asked them 'What do you need? What do you see would be helpful for you, What hours do you see when you would like to have two staff on? ... And they gave me feedback and I took that back to the house. And they said, "No one's ever done that before. That's fantastic!" No one's ever thought to ask the clients.'* Jo

*'It was about trying to assist those young people to address the social injustices that were happening, that do happen in schools... it's been going from the day schoolrooms were invented hundreds of years ago ... It was that "power over" stuff.'* Andrea

Jo was experiencing her whole workplace as a seat of injustice, where the interests of the clients were subsumed to those of the staff.

*'There's actual abuse of clients, and I've watched this happen and I've tried to intervene...I'm powerless to do anything because staff are protected by ...team leaders and by ...management. Because untruthfulness exists and cover-ups are happening in order to protect those arses of those people concerned. And to me that social justice is somewhere out there buried in the grass. It's not in the room, it's not in the organisation. And I find that really hard to deal with.'* Jo

Her lack of success in addressing these injustices in the workplace left her feeling powerless, uneasy, and compromised

*'And I'm finding I'm having to compromise and settle and be complacent and go along and not speak up. Because the times when I do speak up, it is just squashed organisationally. Or made out to be something that I'm not doing.'* Jo

The personal cost for participants of their struggles with injustice is taken up more fully later in this work.

The issues of professional power, its misuse and challenges around its effectiveness, have been discussed in the literature over the years. (Goldberg & Warburton, 1979, Titmuss, 1968, Wilding, 1982.) Another study participant also identified abuse of positional power:

*'The beneficiaries that came through were made to feel so inferior and frightened, by this major Department that wielded so much power over them. And that was completely unjust.'* Barbara

Supporting the practices of advocacy, participants talked of how they used analysis and critique of what was happening for clients, as Jo illustrated.

*'Blanket theories ... are placed upon the ...client group ... rather than taking people on an individual basis. They have a "one kind of therapy fits all" ...To me it isn't just therapeutically ...*

*that a client be given a diagnosis and treated in a certain way without much leeway for things to be different or ...a different model to be considered.'* Jo

Contracting with those holding power to try something different, and assuming an activist role, enacting a different way of doing things, that was then accepted by the agencies concerned were demonstrations of successful social action. Use here of contracting and negotiation is reflective of community development strategies (Derrick, 1995, Munford, 2001), illustrating the crossover roles that new practitioners from the Bachelor of Social Practice programme could access. Andrea had majored in the counselling stream of the programme.

*'It was about the communication with the faculty, ...asking them to understand, "This is a different way of doing things, I know, but will you give it a go? Will you trust the process? Will you trust what I'm saying could be different?" And they did. And that was an awesome, awesome space to be in. And then for them to see it different, then they could support it further. And that's how social justice works, eh?'* Andrea

Educating and promoting institutional and structural change were discourses that the two community development participants, Barbara and Carol, were interested in. Each had somewhat different targets in their work for change. For one informing the 'little people' about the impacts of unjust structures and supporting efforts for change to these is her intended focus.

*'I'll work toward waking people up - about how structures are and how they affect peoples' lives. Structures and institutions. They're just powerful companies looking after their own interests ... The media are so rich and can enforce their views. The little people haven't got much chance.'* Barbara

For Carol, people's ignorance was similarly seen as a focus for action.

*'That whole issue of you can't know what you don't know, and there's so much ignorance. People just do not know. We're kind of programmed to think a certain way and to hold certain values, and we never - until you actually stumble across the concept of questioning your own beliefs at a really deep level, you may never come across that.'* Carol

Her education targets were different in that she was concerned to wake up those holding power to different ways of viewing and doing things.

*'One of the biggest focuses in my personal social justice work is that whole thing of ideology and finding ways of communicating and giving information to people from a variety of different areas of society. ...My challenge to myself is to find a way of articulating to the boardrooms and to the*

*chief executives the idea of injustice and equity in a way that they can understand it and they can begin to change the way they see the world.'* Carol

The 'just practice' here is concerned with addressing institutional and structural change. These social practitioners are promoting restorative and representational justice. Questioning the agency arrangements of power, saying that the clients' interests can be better served through changes to current structures are ways that support restorative justice. Their support for the voices of their clients to be heard promotes representational justice, enabling those with lesser power to gain a voice and have a say. Similarly educating both those lacking power and those holding it in order to redress power imbalances in society are aspirations in support of representational and distributive justice. Encouraging those holding power to understand society differently is a way to change their decision-making in favour of more equitable resourcing for those in less privileged situations. Discourses of advocacy, informing society, empowerment, equality, feminism and resisting professional oppression are heard. Social change is being promoted.

#### **D. PROVIDING FOR EQUITY INTERNATIONALLY AND ACROSS GENERATIONS**

The extension of social justice to encompass global and inter-generational perspectives is the strand of social justice least accessed by participants. Only two references were made to these dimensions of it. Carol made reference to ecological sustainability that equity across generation entails and that Ife (1995) argued is an essential ingredient of social justice.

*'Principles around equity and empowerment and participation and ecological sustainability'* Carol

Another extended the ethical responsibility of professional practice out from the practitioner, to both the wider community and the whole world, placing her practice within a global context, echoing the world ecology perspective of practice promoted by Anderton (1997).

*'There's an ethical and social link there and responsibility to act in ways that are not only true for you, or true for a counselling therapeutic relationship but true for the wider community and the wider world.'* Jo

Discourses of equity and empowerment are the themes of 'just practice' that link to the literature, but perhaps the theme of ecological sustainability is the one that fits better with the idea of justice

across nations and generations. Distributive and restorative justice are here being promoted, supporting social change.

## Summary

Extending participation in political structures and resisting the power of oppressive social norms were the foci for some participants which supported Rawls' (1988) principle of social justice that entailed participation in society and basic freedoms. Work in support of social change is the aspiration of these participants using practices of community development and advocacy.

Participants working in social work and counselling saw performing their professional role well, according to ethical standards of practice, as accessing principles of social justice including fairness and equity. Ensuring that their clients 'got a fair go' and received access to entitlements and resources was a strong discourse. Respectful, non-judgmental practice sat alongside the use of a range of professional approaches that supported clients to advance their own personal situations and fulfil their potential.

Practical applications of participants' work for social justice also illustrated both resistance to oppressive practices in the workplace and efforts to achieve change within organisations in the interests of the client group. Enabling the voices to be heard of young people in a school and mental health clients in a residential institution were ways that these clients were supported. The two counsellors of the study illustrated well the ability and desirability to be able to take their practice into the realms of social action in order to serve the interests of their clients as a group, practices perceived to be outside the traditional bounds of counselling. They demonstrate successfully the aspirations of the UNITEC Bachelor of Social Practice programme to extend practitioner actions across traditional practice boundaries.

The wider dimensions of social justice that take account of impacts beyond the here and now to the whole world and future generations were also raised in two participants' accounts of their work and aspirations for social justice.

Participants covered the four dimensions of social justice that my review of the literature has identified as the main tenets of social justice in practice in our modern world. The types of social

justice and functions they perform, however, provide the key to making sense of social justice as a goal and achievement of social practice.

### *Maintaining Social Stability*

The social practices of these new social practitioners make a strong claim to working within the realms of 'just practice' along both social and political axes. Practitioners working at the micro level of society were supporting and empowering individuals and families to achieve greater well-being and to live more fruitful lives. Respectful ethical practice was enabling people to overcome difficulties, access entitlements from social structures, and achieve fair outcomes. Strong discourses of professional practice are heard, within these practice arenas. Here 'just practice' is working in the interests of maintaining social stability, working mostly in the areas of corrective and protective justice, and is at the conservative end of the political axis.

### *Promoting Social Change*

Discourses of 'just practice' at the macro level of society are heard less frequently, but nonetheless very powerfully, when they do occur in this study. They range from support for political participation to addressing institutional injustices. Supporting client voices that have not previously been heard are practices that have here supported social change in a variety of ways. Restorative and representational justice are the types of justice being advanced in the work these participants have described.

The dimensions of social justice that are being realised within participants' social practice are wide-ranging. Depending on the fields of their practice different types of justice as categorised by Chatterjee and D'Aprix (2002) are supported. The end point of practice reaches out to both ends of the political spectrum, generating social change especially where practice is within the macro arena, and supporting social stability more often when practice is within the micro arena, working with individuals or families.

In the next chapter we turn to the teaching of 'just practice'. First the literature on the teaching of social justice in social practice programmes is reviewed. Then the specific teaching programme of the UNITEC Bachelor of Social Practice is discussed.

## CHAPTER 6

### Teaching 'Just Practice'

*'It was the biggest, most beautiful sort of learning in the whole time.'* Barbara

#### Introduction

In this chapter the teaching of 'just practice' is examined in two ways. In the first part of the chapter general literature about teaching that supports the uptake of social justice by students is reviewed. This provides the second half of the literature review of this study. Particular teaching practices and the theories that underpin them are looked at. The aim in reviewing this literature is to provide the wider context of theories and teaching practices that may support the development in students of a commitment to social justice as a key element of their practice. Issues in relation to teaching values as opposed to knowledge or skills are of special relevance here.

In the second part of the chapter, the UNITEC Institute of Technology Bachelor of Social Practice programme, the particular programme that the study participants attended, and the teaching components of that programme are discussed. The aim here is to identify and review the aspects of the programme that would support the development of a commitment in students to social justice in their professional practice.

#### THE TEACHING OF 'JUST PRACTICE'

If the presence or absence of a commitment to social justice is a key part of social practice, then how it may be developed within the teaching and learning environment is worthy of closer study. Some of the teaching processes that have been helpful in supporting students to take up social justice in their practice are now explored. Here teaching processes are being separated from theories and practices that form the content of much social practice teaching. These theories and practices have been presented previously in chapter three. Among the teaching processes discussed here are those that support the development of professional identity, namely self-reflective practice (Shön, 1991, Gould & Taylor, 1996, Griffith & Frieden, 2000, Payne, 1998), the

positioning of a reflexive self (Miehls & Moffatt, 2000), and how social identity theory is used to support the teaching of values and attitudes that support 'just practices' (Johns & Sullivan, 2000). Experiential practice that teaches students strategies for addressing issues of social injustice (Flynn, 1997) and a comprehensive approach to teaching radical practice within a social work programme through a process of experiential radicalisation (De Maria, 1992) are also presented.

The idea that a key part of a social practice teaching programme is the shaping of the professional identity has a long history (Reynolds, 1942, Towle, 1952 and Kaplan, 1991 all cited in Miehls & Moffatt, 2000). Adopting social justice as an underlying value of social practice is a significant part of this professional development, as has been discussed previously. What will be seen in the following discussion is that the development or change of one's values is not a straightforward matter for teaching practice. It is a truism that values are 'caught not taught' and, as with all learning, new values will be taken up differentially by students, depending on their world views, life experience (Harris, 1996), self perceptions and their approach to education. (Salmon, 1988).

### **Self-Reflective Practice**

The concept of self-reflection as a key component of professional practice has maintained currency among social practice educators and researchers since Shön first explored the intricacy of processes involved in 1983 (Gould & Taylor, 1996, Payne, 1998, Fook 1999). Shön's (1991) examination of professional practice in architecture and social work identified the processes of self-reflection as more than simple problem-solving, and more akin to research in practice:

'When the practitioner reflects-in-action in a case he perceives as unique, paying attention to phenomena and surfacing his intuitive understanding of them, his experimenting is at once exploratory, move testing and hypothesis testing. The three functions are fulfilled by the very same actions. And from this follows the distinctive character of experimenting in practice' (Shön, 1991:147).

There is a spiral of appreciation, action and re-appreciation. Practitioners bring their past repertoire of experiences to bear on the unique client situations that are being presented. Shön has likened the complexity of processes involved to artistry, in contrast to the 'technical rationality' of methodical problem solving. What has been called the professional use of self, requiring qualities of genuineness, integrity and self-awareness (Lishman, 1998) are an integral part of this process. The values a practitioner brings to bear are an inherent part of their practice. Processes of self-reflection enable practitioners to hold social justice as a major focus of their practice.

The importance of reflection to reinforce and enable the integration of experiential learning with prior experience has been illustrated in a U.K. research project of social work and teaching students reported on by Harris (1996). She found that individuals learned through reflection on their experiential learning, and that this learning was mediated by the students' prior personal experiences. (Gould & Harris, 1996, Harris, 1996). This process moved the learning process away from academic theory closer to personal construct theory, which is discussed below. Students' world-views and values have significant influence on what sense they make of their learning experiences. Later discussions in chapter seven of the findings from this study demonstrate how participants' personal experiences supported their aspirations to 'just practice', reinforcing this research.

In an Australian study Gardner (2001) explored with ten new graduates factors on a social work education programme that helped them develop self-awareness. Graduates were asked if they felt that their attitudes and values had changed. All were mature students, over thirty years of age. While for some their values had changed markedly, for others there was more awareness of and ability to articulate and review their values. This ability to self-reflect on their values and attitudes they saw as having derived from a wide range of their learning experiences. These included the presentation of new ideas such as social policy and listening to other students talk about their attitudes and values both in class and informally outside class. Reactions to different viewpoints and challenges from students and lecturers were some of the dynamics of the group and classroom that supported self-reflection.

Several graduates commented on their fieldwork placements and its required assignments as significant in developing their personal style and knowledge of how they presented as a worker. Developing a sense of integrated thinking and practice, drawing on learning across courses, small group work, and student presentations that included having to articulate one's values were other processes students found helpful. Finally graduates considered that the modelling that lecturers presented in consistently representing the values that they were teaching, had helped in their development of self-reflective practices. (Gardner, 2001). Gardner's research shows the way that students integrate professional values that support social justice into their practice through the use of self-reflection. Many of Gardner's findings are echoed in this study, as will be illustrated in chapter seven.

This research supports Salmon's (1988) ideas on how people construct new meaning for themselves through reflection, and also endorses the significance of the class as a learning

community. (Britton, 1985). For Gardner, her study affirmed for her the benefits of structuring student participation and discussion into her teaching practices, alongside the value of the input of knowledge and ideas. (Gardner, 2001).

Use of a reflective approach to practice promotes the surfacing of the practitioner's values and enables a goal of social justice to be kept to the forefront. Not that reflective practice per se will maintain social justice as a practitioner's goal, but that the process of appreciation, action and re-appreciation facilitates the constant application of a theoretical or ethical framework to ongoing practice. For those practitioners for whom social justice is a live aspiration, reflective practice provides a methodology which supports the striving towards this goal. (Nash, 1994). When this process of reflection in action is applied to what Payne has called 'socialist-collectivist' views as he categorises feminist, radical and anti-oppressive practice, the work becomes transformational, aiming at changing the unequal or oppressive structures in society from which, in his opinion, most peoples' difficulties spring. (Payne, 1998). Applying critical reflection in a post-modern context, Fook (1999) argues that this allows for the surfacing of alternative and marginalised knowledges, in this way promoting social justice. Post-modern practice which places the self formally in the picture more easily allows the person to locate a clear site for change because the analysis is contextual and of concrete experience. (Fook, 1999). Other ways of teaching reflective thinking have been described by Griffith and Frieden, (2000). They offer four teaching and learning processes – Socratic questioning, journal writing, interpersonal process recall and reflecting teams – for teaching counselling students reflective thinking. Students are helped to identify, understand and evaluate the basis for clinical judgments. (Griffith & Frieden, 2000).

Self-reflective practices support students and practitioners to keep the values that support social justice to the forefront of their practice. Such practices enable the practitioner in the field to constantly weigh up their processes and decision-making so that their actions are furthering the interests of clients to redress injustice and support social change in favour of greater social equity.

### **Social Identity Theory**

Because social practice requires individuals to use their own self as a tool in their practice (Brandon, 1976, O'Connor et al, 1998, Worrall, 2001), in that the relationship between the practitioner and client is central to the practice, the values that a practitioner holds becomes a key

part of their practice. For this reason, a feature of social practice courses involves the expectation that practitioners will adopt the values of their social practice profession. Teaching on social practice courses then needs to address issues such as students' discriminatory attitudes and values. Challenges to one's attitudes and values can raise particular difficulties. Johns & Sullivan's (2000) work on teaching social work students about discriminatory practice identified the threats to identity engendered when challenges to their currently held values or beliefs were received. Students reported feelings of 'guilt, paranoia, hopelessness, resistance, dissociation and distrust of educators.' (Johns & Sullivan, 2000:1). Others became paralysed by feelings of hopelessness about things that were outside of their control such as global economic forces and social structures. On the other side of the coin, some students were of concern to teachers where they appeared to take on the new language of anti-discrimination glibly, competing to use the correct terminology, rather than appearing to have a deeper appreciation of the issues at stake. (Johns & Sullivan, 2000).

Johns & Sullivan (2000) proffer social identity theory as a framework that provides educators with specific insights into how social identity is created and promoted. For educators who have responsibilities to further the cause of social justice in their teaching this theory can better enable students to address discriminatory attitudes and take on new values. (Johns & Sullivan, 2000). Social identity theory contends that people tend to categorise the world into in-groups and out-groups as a way of processing information easily. An in-group is one to which a person belongs and which one then categorises positively. Others belong to out-groups, which are categorised negatively. Differences between the groups are accentuated and stereotypes are developed. Out-groups are perceived as homogeneous, while members of an in-group may be seen in their diversity. (Johns & Sullivan, 2000).

Learning about social identity theory through experiential exercises and reflection on their own behaviour helped students to gain insight into in-group and out-group behaviour and to rise above the stereotyping and fixed views of themselves or others. (Johns & Sullivan, 2000). This approach to learning enabled students to reflect on possible discriminatory attitudes or beliefs that they may themselves hold, without developing the range of negative feelings that can result from teaching approaches which challenge students' values or attitudes more directly. In a similar teaching approach, Latting (1990) used a three-stage process of presenting and engaging with the concept of bias to achieve what he called 'the development of cognitive sophistication' in students. (Latting, 1990). Firstly, bias was defined so that students could readily admit to being biased

against some categories of persons, and then discussion was held on the functions of bias. Analysis of a series of vignettes to identify bias and the functions it served then enabled students to admit to and confront their own biases and develop critical thinking skills when examining their own or others' biases. (Latting, 1990). Both of these teaching approaches facilitate the development of attitudes and values congruent with promoting social justice in practice. Reflective practice supports students to keep their values and ethics under constant review and so keep a commitment to social justice to the fore. As an adjunct to this, social identity theory enables students to address constructively their own and others' biases and discriminatory attitudes, a necessary pre-condition to successfully taking up a commitment to promoting social justice in practice.

### **The Reflexive Self**

Other writing, which has explored the development of social practice identity in social work students, identifies a major difficulty arising from a different angle. In students taking on a new professional practice role anxiety is produced arising from the challenges to the student's ego identity (Miehls & Moffatt, 2000). For these writers this focus on the self distracts the students from their primary focus of the 'other' namely the client. In this sense the client is a potential threat, as the student struggles to develop a non-judgmental, empathic relationship, while at the same time feeling challenged in their values by the client. Miehls & Moffatt draw on post-structural ideas on how an identity is constituted through social relations rather than as an intra-psychic process. The process of constructing the 'self' in relation to others is reflexive. Reflexivity is a term drawn from post-structural approaches to research (Burman, 1994, Lather, 1986) where the researcher 'takes a self-critical stance regarding their assumptions' (Lather, 1986: 65). Here Miehls & Moffatt (2000) have transferred this stance to how students position themselves in relation to their clients in constructing their professional identity. Students take up a position of curious 'not knowing' and openness to difference that the client represents and brings, rather than a power position of professional expertness and the need for mastery, which engenders student anxiety and perceives threat in client differences.

This position of 'informed not knowing' as a position of respectful and empowering practice is also a key aspect of narrative counselling practice. (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992, Laird, 1998, Sylvester, 1997). It sets the practitioner alongside the client, promoting a sense of the client's own authority and sharing the traditional power of the professional position. For the student this positioning of themselves with openness to the client's 'difference' also makes for a greater

sensitivity to the marginalisation and struggle for identity which is often an aspect of the client's circumstances. (Miehls & Moffatt, 2000). It is a position which promotes social justice at an individual level through practices of client respect, valuing of clients' knowledge and expertise about their own lives and bringing to the forefront alternative discourses or interpretations, which increase the clients' agency on their own behalf. (White, 2001b, Winslade & Smith, 1997). Social justice is promoted through client empowerment, validating clients' perspectives of their lives and advancing their ability to manage the problems that disrupt their lives, often in the areas of resisting negative social labels or categorisations.

### **Experiential Radicalisation**

De Maria (1992) presents a more comprehensive approach to the teaching of 'just practice' in his programme of teaching radical social work practice. Working from a definition of radical social work as a practice that both identifies the foundations of disadvantage and acts to address them, De Maria builds a radical pedagogy. (De Maria, 1992). He raises the problem of mainstream social work education, which he sees as having a hegemonic purpose, namely reinforcing dominant social values of 'individualism, competition, authoritarianism, self-responsibility and work' in a situation of unequal power. (De Maria, 1992: 238). From his own teaching experiences he draws out an alternative comprehensive programme to develop and support radical social practice.

In mapping out a programme of radical education De Maria sets out seven elements. The first of these entails 'reorient[ing] students back to first causes of oppression' through lectures and discussion, and then addressing the action component through practicum work involving reflective practice. As with many earlier writers on radical practice (Bailey & Brake, 1980, Galper, 1980, Vayda, 1980), De Maria sees radical practice as a transformative rather than reformatory practice: fundamental social problems are to be addressed, rather than ameliorative action taken, which may lessen some impacts but not address the underlying issues.

For students interested in radical practice, the second element that De Maria proposes is tailoring learning, building learning opportunities through the curriculum to continue the radical teaching programme over the years of student study. Case studies are subjected to extensive analysis of first causes and students develop alternative work scenarios to achieve what De Maria calls 'cause-sensitive action.' (De Maria, 1992: 240).

For the mainstream of students whom he sees as resistant to radical practice he proposes contradiction-based learning, explicated by McCouat (1989), taking social practice principles and contrasting them with practice realities. Such aspects of practice as client empowerment is contrasted with service depowerment, client self-determination with authoritarian welfare practice, accountability to client with accountability to agency. Students are confronted with the dilemmas of practice to be addressed.

The fourth aspect is referred to as demonopolised values, meaning that radicalism has no particular ideological base, but can rest in a range of ideologies, whether religious, humanist or political. An analysis that takes little for granted and that needs to be able to confront the complexity and pervasiveness of the hegemony of liberal capitalism is the fifth element for a radical pedagogy. To these are added two more elements: polemical storytelling, that is the use of pithy, telling stories, which illustrate injustice and stir emotional responses, and centring marginality. Marginality is seen as a touchstone for delineating between radical and non-radical practice. While compliance with the dominant framework produces rewards, challenges to these result in sanctions. Feelings of fear and uncertainty also accompany radicalism. The need for practitioners to maintain alliances and supports for themselves and their actions as a counter to both these feelings and the marginality, is stressed. (De Maria, 1992, Shields, 1991).

### **Teaching experiential practice**

'Hands on' learning is presented as a successful approach to learning 'just practices' in another Australian study. Processes of student teaching using an experiential learning approach aim to have students 'discover their capacity for action to address societal inequality.' (Flynn, 1997; 21). By way of student feedback, this study evaluated a teaching programme that involved students researching aspects of the Criminal Justice system by means of interviews with judges, academics, politicians and officials, and then conducting a radio interview about the inequalities of that system. The teaching process placed big demands on both students and teaching staff by way of time and effort, but had a range of positive outcomes. The study concluded that this experiential learning approach had enabled students to gain skills and strategies about how to improve 'real world' situations. They had contributed in the process to the debate about inequality and the law. (Flynn, 1997).

## Summary

While the content of much teaching practice traverses theories and methods of social practice that support socially 'just practice', the focus here has rather been on teaching and learning processes that support the uptake of a commitment to social justice in practice. Developing processes of critical reflection invites students to continually review their approach to practice. (Harris, 1996, Shön, 1991). Furthermore critical reflection is the basis for developing increased awareness of and sensitivity to one's own values, a fundamental part of development as a social practitioner. (Gardner, 2001). While this does not necessarily build in values of socially 'just practice' it opens the way for ongoing self-scrutiny of a practitioner's practice values, a necessary prerequisite for taking on professional values that promote social justice. Learning about the functions of bias and the dynamics of in-groups and out-groups in social identity theory have been ways that social practice teachers have supported students to develop appropriate anti-discriminatory attitudes and values (Johns & Sullivan, 2000), necessary adjuncts of 'just practice'.

A further teaching approach, based on social constructionism (Miehls & Moffatt, 2000) has assisted students to take up an open 'informed not knowing' stance in practice, enabling them to put aside a professional authority position in favour of one of partnership and collaboration with clients, thus promoting social justice. Finally 'hands on' approaches to learning have been presented as successful approaches for students to gain strategies on how to address issues of social injustice. (De Maria, 1992, Flynn, 1997). Taking students through a comprehensive process of critical case study analysis and practice in the development of alternative practice scenarios within a context of radical critique has been used to support students to take on activist, radical social practice with the achievement of social justice as its primary focus. Our discussion has traversed a range of teaching processes that have been used to support the development of students' 'just practices'. While some approaches such as the development of anti-discriminatory attitudes and the use of self reflection in practice may apply across the spectrum of 'just practice', the collaborative informed 'not knowing' stance, experiential learning and the development of radical practice offer more applied approaches to practices promoting individual and social change.

We now turn our attention to a specific social practice teaching programme, the Bachelor of Social Practice programme at UNITEC Institute of Technology, Auckland, to see how this programme has supported the development of a commitment in students to social justice as a

guiding principle of their practice. The extent to which the above approaches have been used and what other teaching and learning strategies the programme has employed are discussed.

### **UNITEC BACHELOR OF SOCIAL PRACTICE PROGRAMME**

How social practice teaching contributes to the uptake of social justice by students attending this programme will be looked at in two ways. In the first instance, how the UNITEC BSP teaching programme posits social justice within its curriculum will be examined. Alongside of this the social practice teaching theories and practices used that facilitate the uptake of new values or support and promote social justice practices will be discussed. This discussion then sets the context for the part of this study that looks at the contribution of this teaching programme to the study participants taking up social justice in their social practice.

The philosophy and aims of the UNITEC BSP programme, from which the beginning practitioner sample of this study is drawn, are examined in terms of what they say about social justice and the programme's expectations for its graduates. The programme sets out its philosophy as:

'Society is structured in a way which causes inequalities and these inequalities have a limiting effect on people's lives. To be effective social practitioners, students need to understand the social context, social pressures, and inequalities people live within, They also need an awareness of and ability to critique social policy. The ... programme is committed to the empowerment of individuals, groups and communities.' (School of Community Studies, 2001:1).

Studies are taught 'from a bi-cultural and anti-discriminatory perspective.' (Ibid). The programme aims to provide:

'Skilled social practitioners who ...promote social change; work safely ... from a bi-cultural perspective...have the ability to develop a critical analysis of the place of social practice in society, with particular attention to the structures imposed by class, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, health status and geographical location, ... are competent reflective practitioners, ...and competent critical thinkers.' (Ibid).

The discourses around social justice in the UNITEC BSP curriculum, philosophy and aims espouse critical awareness of the social contexts of practice, critical thinking, empowerment, bi-cultural and anti-discriminatory practice and promotion of social change.

## Bachelor of Social Practice Curriculum

While it is expected that the above discourses of social justice will be woven through the content and processes of the BSP programme, the component courses of the programme that students study will be reviewed to establish more concretely the exposure students of the programme may have to teachings around social justice.

In each of the three years of the programme students study six compulsory courses, which form the core curriculum. In the first year all students study the same six courses. In years two and three students separate out into counselling, community development and social work streams. There are overlaps between the streams in the courses studied, making in all twenty-four core courses within the programme. (See Appendix 9 for the UNITEC BSP degree structure.) The aims and learning outcomes of each of these courses are located in Appendix 10. Drawing on these I discuss here how the content of the BSP curriculum may support the development of a commitment to just practice in students, identifying where discourses of social justice are made explicit. The terms of social justice\* earlier used in my model of change will again be used as the defining discourses for this. I wish to acknowledge, for purposes of manageability, the circumscribed nature of my examination of the BSP curriculum. I am looking only at the aims and learning outcomes of the 24 compulsory courses of the three-year programme. One would expect that a key theme of practice as social justice is claimed to be (AASW, 1996, Caputo, 2000, NASW, 1995, NZAC, 2002, NZASW, 1993, Reisch, 2002, Wakefield, 1988) would be threaded as a theme through teachings, feature in course readings and form part of class discussions even when not specifically appearing in the learning outcomes of courses. While it is not feasible to review all such material, this review of the major elements of the content of the programme courses does provide a framework within which to hear the voices of the study participants on how the programme shaped their 'just practice'.

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\***Footnote 5:** Again the terms of social justice are positioned here for ease of reference of the reader.

**Social Justice terms:** *rights/duties/obligations, equity/equality, access, participation, contracts, social change/activism, empowerment, advocacy, disadvantaged, oppression, social critique/critical consciousness, community development/ organisational/social development, politics, co-operation/co-ordination, feminist, action-based, policy, critique, discriminatory, structural change and promote bi-cultural practice.*

## First Year of Study

The six courses of the first year of programme, taken by all students, are Ripene, Aotearoa/ New Zealand Society, Professional Practice, Psychology and Research, Counselling Micro Skills and Fieldwork Placement 1. Introduction to Communication is a compulsory level 7 course that can be taken at any stage of the degree programme.

**Table 2. Year 1 Curriculum, Bachelor of Social Practice**

Ripene introduces students to basic Maori language and culture, philosophy and worldview, the Treaty of Waitangi and its implications for Maori and tauwi (non- Maori) for contemporary social practice. Along with classroom teaching, the course involves a marae stay where students experience the culture in a living context. Ripene picks up in a major way the social justice discourse of *promoting a commitment to bi-cultural practice*, an expectation in terms of social justice for social practitioners in Aotearoa New Zealand (NZAC, 2002, NZASW, 1993).

Aotearoa/ New Zealand Society introduces students to the study of social structures and social policy in the context of a bi-cultural society and requires students to undertake a social *structural analysis*.

Introduction to Communication introduces both the theory and practice of good communication including *critical thinking* and cross-cultural communication.

Professional practice covers issues such as *social change* and social control, client *oppression* and *anti-discriminatory practice*.

Psychology and Research introduces students to the psychology of human behaviour and research processes. On the face of it there is no clear commitment to just practice demonstrated and reliance is on how the course is taught for whether it becomes a vehicle for this learning.

Counselling Micro-Skills provides for skills and personal development and for students to explore the client- practitioner relationship. Study of the enablements and constraints of students' own socio-political context and of cultural diversity in relation to value systems form part of this course curriculum that may advance just practices. Students begin the process of looking at their own values, beliefs, gender, ethnicity and differences in terms of how this may affect their relationship and work with clients.

Fieldwork Placement 1 sets a context for students to apply their theoretical and skills learning in a live practice situation. As with the psychology and research paper above, there is nothing specific in the course prescription that promotes just practice. A closer look at specific performance criteria is needed to identify where these elements of learning such as critiquing for *anti-discriminatory* perspectives and practising *advocacy* are expected. The diverse range of experiences students may encounter in a wide variety of practicum situations may enhance or constrain learning about social justice.

Table 2 presents more detailed descriptions of these courses and the discourses of social justice that are presented within their course aims and learning outcomes.

## Discussion

A key part of any social practice teaching programme is the shaping of the professional identity and has a long history. (Reynolds, 1942, Towle, 1952 and Kaplan, 1991 all cited in Miehl & Moffatt, 2000). Adopting social justice as an underlying value of social practice is a significant part of this professional development, as has been discussed previously. Having students examine their values and beliefs becomes a significant aspect of their professional development which is woven through out the BSP training programme principally through development of self-reflective practices and examination of ethical practice dilemmas and issues. The curriculum of the first year of the BSP programme begins these processes. The Counselling Micro-Skills course identifies expectations about self-reflection. Examination of ethical issues is focussed on more in the second and third years of the programme. The Ripene course brings to the fore issues of students' values particularly in relation to cultural domination and subjugation. Practitioner's personal values are an integral element of their professional practice (Brandon, 1976, O'Connor et al, 1998, Worrall, 2001) and challenging dominant discriminatory social values forms part of the text of this course. The process of confronting issues of discrimination and oppression and one's personal position as a member of a dominant or subordinate group can be challenging and painful. (Sue & Sue, 1990, Sullivan, 1998, Van Soest, 1994). Exposure to differences between the Maori world view and students' own cultural world views begins the process of development of a bi-cultural practice for students, a key aspect of a commitment to social justice expected of social practitioners in Aotearoa New Zealand. (NZAC, 2001, NZASW, 1993). Bi-cultural perspectives and models of practice (Durie, 1994, Selby, 1995) feature in most of the programme courses. In Counselling Micro- Skills the points of difference and similarity between the students and clients' experiences, and the implications of these for practice also begin to be explored. Alongside of this examination of their own views, values and experiences students are introduced to the study of the social contexts of practice. Elements of social oppression, social change and social control along with an introduction to anti-discriminatory practice are other discourses to which students are exposed in the first year that may develop a commitment to 'just practice'. (Derrick, 1995, Dominelli, 1998, Fook, 1993, Monk, 1998, Shannon, 1986, Williams, 1996).

## Second Year of Study

The second year curriculum has four courses required for all students: Whanau/Family Systems, Risk Assessment, Disability and Mental Health, and Fieldwork Placement 2. The counselling stream as well study Counselling Processes and Micro Skills Lab and the social work and community development streams take Social Change and Development and Social Work Fields of Practice courses, making six courses in total for all students. Table 3 provides a fuller description of each of these courses and sets out the discourses of social justice as they feature in each of them.

**Table 3. Year 2 Curriculum, Bachelor of Social Practice**

Whanau/Family Systems provides for students to study the family as a social system and to study systems theory as a base for work with all clients, families in particular. *Bi-culturalism* and *feminism* are perspectives brought to bear within this teaching.

Risk Assessment prepares students for practice within high-risk areas where violence and abuse and other risks to clients are involved. *Anti-discriminatory* practice is part of this course curriculum.

Disability and Mental Health entails the study of theoretical approaches to disorders and addictions and practices in areas of work involving such disorders. Issues of *discrimination* and *anti-discriminatory* practice, together with Maori theoretical frameworks feature in this course.

Fieldwork Placement 2 provides a similar framework to Fieldwork Placement 1 with differing expectations such as *critiquing* for client marginalisation and more complex levels of practice expected.

Counselling Processes introduces students to the theory of social constructionism, the understanding and *critique* of a range of counselling theories and development of skills in narrative practice.

Micro Skills Lab is a skills-based course where students extend their counselling skills and awareness of safe, ethical practices.

Social Change and Development examines social policy developments within social, political and economic contexts in New Zealand, analyses factors in contemporary and historical Maori development and teaches *advocacy* and *community development* models and practices.

Social Work Fields of Practice provides for students to learn about specific aspects of practice within the principal fields of social practice.

## Discussion

Overall the courses in the second year of the BSP programme provide greater analysis and critique, extending the areas of learning of the first year. Some social practice writers (Fook, 1993, De Maria, 1992) consider analysis and critique to be key elements of radical practice. Beyond these skills of analysis and critique, the major new elements of learning that may promote 'just practice' are the study of feminism and narrative counselling practices. As earlier discussions about narrative practice have indicated, a philosophy of honouring clients, externalising problems in order to remove client blame and engender client agency and countering dominant discourses which may devalue or oppress clients' stories are aspects of this style of counselling which may be seen as supporting 'just practice' (McKenzie & Monk, 1997, Monk et al, 1997, Monk, 1998, White, 1995, 2001a, Winslade et al, 1997). Feminist practice builds a counter-story to the dominant male culture (Gergen, 2000, Langan & Day, 1992, Nash & Munford, 1994, Trainor, 1996, Worrall, 2001) and provides students with grounding in one of the major areas for anti-discriminatory practice.

The Whanau Family Systems course provides what is described as a modelling of 'bi-cultural partners/teachers in the classroom' (Goldson & Fletcher, 2003:19). It uses a process of dialogue and debate between pakeha and Maori lecturers and students with the task of 'find[ing] a place where the notion of difference could be negotiated through a larger concern for justice and autonomy' (Ibid). Students are introduced to processes for the examination of ethical issues within the Micro-skills lab and the Fieldwork Placement 2 courses. Reflecting on dilemmas of practice and their underlying values provides significant practical opportunities for students to learn how to promote particular values within their practice.

## Third Year of Study

In the third year, four courses are common to the three streams. They are Management & Organisational Change, Research Project, Just Practice and Introduction to Communication. The counselling stream has three further compulsory courses: Counselling Practicum, Counselling in Practice 1 and Counselling in Practice 2. For social work, additional required courses are Critical Social Work Intervention and Advanced Principles and Theory in Social Work. For community development the additional courses are Advanced Community Development Theory and Community Work Practicum. Table 4 provides a fuller description of each of these courses, and identifies the discourses of social justice that they promote.

**Table 4. Year 3 Curriculum, Bachelor of Social Practice**

Management & Organisational Change provides teaching around management roles and functions, including the role of leadership in organisational development.

Research Project requires students to plan and conduct a piece of research using formal research methods.

Just Practice exposes students to experienced practitioners who present about their long-time work in the social services and how they have demonstrated 'just practices' in it. Students have opportunities to enhance knowledge and skills around *social change* and *social justice*.

Counselling Practicum provides for students to undertake 100 hours of practice, demonstrating the management of a caseload of clients, ongoing client work using narrative practice and the use of professional supervision.

Counselling in Practice 1 extends the practice skills of students in counselling with provision for *critical analysis* of own skills and strengthening of practice.

Counselling in Practice 2 provides for practice in couples, group and family counselling and the implications of work with different client populations.

Critical Social Work Intervention provides a practice situation for using varying models of practice and strategic interventions. *Bi-cultural practice* is critically evaluated.

Advanced Principles and Theory in Social Work teaches a wide range of social work theories and practice modalities including Maori models and concepts of practice and processes of *policy* formation.

Advanced Community Development Theory provides frameworks for students to critique *community development* theories and models of intervention and current issues in community development work.

*Anti-racist, non-discriminatory, feminist* and reformist perspectives are traversed.

Community Work Practicum allows an opportunity for students to undertake *community development* work in a practice setting applying a theoretical model of community development to practice.

## Discussion

Practices of critique and analysis, and reflection on practice are expected at this level of study in all courses. Applying these practices in the studies of feminism, community development, anti-discriminatory and bi-cultural practices, which are the specific discourses of social justice in the third year courses, enhances the development of 'just practice' commitments. Study of the theory and practice of community development, as an identified discourse of social justice, promotes

'just practice' for those students taking this stream of practice. The culmination of this year, in terms of the topic of this thesis is the Just Practice course. It is designed specifically to build understanding of and commitment to 'just practices' through illustrations by experienced practitioners of their work within a framework that focuses on how they practise social justice. A group - practitioner interaction process enhances the presentation style of the course, and individual written assignments provide for the application of this learning to students' own intending practice.

### ***BSP Teaching and the Teaching Literature***

Areas of the teaching literature discussed above that have featured within the programme most prominently are the teaching of reflective practice, which underpins teaching particularly across the counselling and social work streams of practice. Critical analysis, which is evidenced across all streams, supports students to view problems and issues within practice contexts. While social identity theory appears not to be studied specifically, the teaching of bi-cultural practice which threads through all courses, involves students in the examination of Maori cultural and world views. Issues of discrimination and bias are raised as students learn aspects of the history of Maori – pakeha relations in Aotearoa New Zealand that few of them have been exposed to before. The process of comparing and contrasting a new set of values and beliefs about the world involves students in critically reviewing their taken for granted values and beliefs about their own culture or up-bringing. A wide range of practice models are presented within the whole teaching programme and these provide frameworks for practice which may be used to advance social justice within practice. Strategies such as reflective practice, models of bi-cultural practice, strengths-based and narrative practice and frameworks for community development are some of these. However there is little evidence of teaching processes that aim specifically at the radicalisation of practitioners that De Maria (1992) seeks to achieve.

### ***BSP Teaching and the Model of Change***

The aims of the BSP programme are to teach students to 'understand the social context, social pressures and inequalities people live within [in order to become] skilled social practitioners who ...promote social change.' (UNITEC School of Community Studies, 2001: 3). These social practitioners will be expected to gain the ability to critique the structural dimensions of social inequality: racism, sexism, poverty and other areas of discrimination. The themes of social justice and expectations that students will advance social change in support of social justice run through

the philosophy and intentions of the programme. As has been seen in the discussion above, various discourses of social justice are threaded through the teaching programme.

This overview of the programme has identified ways in which a range of the major discourses of social justice in practice feature in the teaching curriculum: addressing oppression, anti-discrimination, advocacy, social and structural change, social critique, community development, bi-cultural practice, feminist and anti-racist practices. These are the discourses of social justice that feature in the hemisphere of the model of change where social change is generated. On the other hand discourses around rights, access, participation, and activism have not been identified in these texts, although one might expect that rights and access are necessary accompaniments for supporting advocacy, anti-discriminatory practice, community development and most of the aforementioned practices that support social justice. Activism as a discourse of practice appears less visible. Certainly the philosophy of the programme leans more to what De Maria (1992) would see as a liberal rather than a radical view of social practice. 'Students ...[will] have the ability to develop a critical analysis of the place of social practice in society, ...[become] reflective practitioners, and competent critical thinkers.' (UNITEC School of Community Studies, 2001:1). Critique is expected, but the follow through to action is less well articulated. The applied nature of De Maria's approach to the radicalisation of practitioners is not found here. Nonetheless models of community development, feminist and narrative practice articulate practices that promote social change (Hockey, 1990, Ife, 1995, Monk, 1998, Munford, 2001, Trainor, 1996, White 2011b). The generation of social change as provided for in my model of change appears then to be a strong feature of this programme.

This review has provided an outline of the official framework of expectations of what the programme provides. It provides a context for what the study participants have to say about how the programme influenced them in their development as just practitioners, which is presented in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 7

### What Participants Had To Say About The Bachelor Of Social Practice Programme

*'It's an ongoing learning thing as far as I'm concerned.'* Carol

#### Introduction

Students attending a programme of learning can expect to grow and develop in new and unexpected ways, as part of the learning process. The term 'social justice' does not feature as a specific goal of the BSP programme, but is rather a theme found in several of the discourses running through the three year teaching programme. How then and in what ways did these participants have their passion for social justice awakened or developed from the teaching and learning processes of the BSP programme? The participants' accounts take us through a wide range of experiences both positive and negative, within the classroom and outside it. Influences from fellow students, structured learning processes, the example of their lecturers and their own experiences in the field during practicums have all influenced these participants in a variety of ways. We now hear what our participants have to say about the learning experiences that shaped their interest in social justice on this teaching programme.

#### Prior Interest in Social Justice

As a starting point for this part of the study I asked participants about whether they had an interest in addressing social justice issues when they applied for the BSP programme. For Carol, this was a fundamental attraction to the programme, although her understanding about social justice was only in relation to individual disadvantage, but for most their intentions had somewhat different orientations.

Previous social practice experience:

*'Yes I did. But I didn't really have the information, enough information to know what that really meant at a structural level. I had a sense of that at a sort of a personal level and at a - because I'd had sort of social, youth work, counselling sort of background. I had that sort of sense at an*

*individual level, but not at a social level. I mean the whole justice, that whole justice base was one of the things that really attracted me to the course. That there were ideas of equity and social justice and empowerment and those sorts of things seemed to be an integral part of that course.'*  
Carol

An interest in change coupled with a desire to provide counselling support for people:

*'I wouldn't have put it in those terms. But I always liked to look at issues that were important to me and think what can I do to change it?' And I guess that's ultimately why I came to the Bachelor of Social Practice. That in my journey I've been fortunate enough to have people travel with me on the hard bits, and so for me in looking for something in a career it was about - I mean I get on well with people and I have always been the informal counsellor - the person that people come to. So yeah, I guess it was about offering to travel on other people's journey in their hardest bits. And in the meantime that's allowed me some learnings around what areas I'm passionate about. ...I came specially to do counselling ...and I guess that was about - but not having the words to describe it to myself even. It was about actually being able to help those who were not experiencing social justice. Yeah. And that's part of travelling that journey with them.'* Andrea

Awareness about social justice but desire to be a counsellor:

*'No, I kind of knew, I knew what they were, but I didn't think that I could do anything. I just wanted to be a counsellor. But I found out that being a counsellor is being a social practitioner - social justice practitioner.'* Jo

A desire to help people:

*'No, not at all. I didn't - I wasn't a person that applied to want to change the world. I just wanted to be with people and walk with people, and assist them in any way I can. That was my focus then, and still is. I've just learnt some tools along the way.'* Kate

*'No. I didn't know anything about issues, didn't know what issues were about. I was so naive, so naive. I felt I was originally applying for the counselling stream and what I thought I'd do there was sort of just help people talk. I ... realised that counselling was lifting emotional weight off people ... That's what I was going in to do.'* Barbara

A degree en route to a more stimulating job, helping people:

*'Absolutely not. In all honesty the main reason I ended up doing it was the fact I knew I was bored with my job, I wanted to do a degree, I hadn't a clue what to do. Ideally I wanted to do nursing. I couldn't do nursing because of the lifting required. I like people. I'm a people person. ...I wanted to do something with people. ...I wanted to do a more vocational degree. And to be honest another reason was I wanted to do a degree that would get me a job. And I thought well if I go into this there's always a need for me.'* Pat

Helping people is the common thread that these participants had as they started this social practice education, with a variety of other factors in their intentions for practice. These factors fit

well with other studies that have looked at what brings people into social practice. A New Zealand study undertaken in 1978 (Uttley, 1980) looked at the motivation of social work students entering various social work programmes that year. A survey of the students was conducted and they were asked two questions about what they hoped to achieve by entering social work and what they hoped to avoid. The discourses that emerged from the 'achieve' responses were grouped into seven categories. These were as follows: tangible rewards (career or material rewards); non-tangible rewards (such as satisfaction arising from the work environment and the social work task but not from 'helping'); 'helping' others; personal growth and development; gaining knowledge and understanding of society; translation of (predominantly religious, sometimes political) beliefs into action, and achieving social change. The discourses of non-tangible rewards, helping, gaining knowledge and understanding of society, and of personal growth and development were the most often occurring discourses. The latter two discourses could relate to expectations of the learning that could be expected on social work programmes. The non-tangible rewards included such things as involvement with caring people, and having a diverse, unpredictable work situation. The discourse of helping is a persistent discourse within the social work profession and was strongly represented in the survey. (Uttley, 1980).

In an earlier unpublished study (Gray, 2000) I looked at what students said about why they wished to study social practice. In a discourse analysis of a sample of six student applications for the UNITEC BSP programme I reviewed answers to a question about why applicants had decided to pursue the BSP programme of study. Concern for others in trouble, interest and enjoyment in the helping role, and a desire to help others, drawing on applicants' own life experience were reasons offered. The satisfaction of successful social practice that stems from work well done was another factor identified, alongside the expected rewards of a professional career. (Gray, 2000). In both my earlier study and the Uttley study, interest in social change featured as a discourse for a small number of applicants. The discourses of helping, obtaining professional skills and improving one's career prospects are ones that resonate predominantly with this current research.

The participants of this research volunteered for it, knowing that there was a focus on social justice. One could then expect that this might show up in their reasons for entering the BSP programme. While it was central for one participant in applying for the BSP programme, it was also an unarticulated supporting factor for a further two. In contrast, in my previous study, only one of the six applications studied cited an interest in social change as a factor.

## PROGRAMME CONTRIBUTIONS TO 'JUST PRACTICE'

Given that an interest in social justice was acknowledged as a primary factor for enrolling in the BSP programme by only one of the study participants, it is fascinating to now start to explore the development that brought this discourse to the fore for them all. Participants were asked a range of questions about specific aspects of their course experiences. They were asked about what courses and topics, readings and assignments influenced their interest in social justice as a focus in practice, whether particular lecturers were influential in this process, and whether their placement or practicum experiences influenced their commitment to social justice. These areas will be explored in turn, and the particular parts of the programme that they have identified as helpful for this purpose will be discussed.

In response to a general question about whether any experiences on the BSP programme had awakened or advanced their commitments to and purpose for social justice in significant ways the respondents all replied in the affirmative, with most responses commenting on the ongoing learning over the three years of the programme.

*'Oh, millions.'* Andrea

*'Certainly in terms of the information that I learned, there was some really, really good information that I learned during the process of the three years that has become the building blocks of my analysis.'* Carol

*'Oh, the first thing that comes straight to mind is the content of what we were taught, particularly in that through community development and the whole social justice theme that went throughout the three years ... was around working to fight any institutions or you know, trying to make a more equitable social structure.'* Barbara

*'I guess my placement experiences more so than my colleagues on the course.'* Kate

Personal development featured for some as a key part of this process.

*'The legacy of what has happened in one's own life ... for so many years I kept so many things to myself, coming to UNITEC allowed them all to come out. Mostly the justice issues, but also awareness about feminism, and how that's been working. ...Understanding why and how the bigger system works'* Jo

*'I think in some senses it was through the programme that I met people that scratched me, that let everything start blossoming. In a way it was my choice of going after the programme and then*

*the programme's content that helped me develop it. I certainly wouldn't be what I am today without it.' Barbara*

What comes through these broad statements is a sense of growth, expanding awareness and understanding about themselves and society, the base of a practice featuring social justice.

### **Courses and Topics**

A range of course and topics were cited by participants as having particular significance for their development of or advancement of a commitment to social justice. Ripene, one of the first courses taken had a major impact on participants, in varying ways:

*'Ripene was a mind-blowing , not always good, but it was ...it made me feel impassioned about the plight of Maori in this country. um... That was a very emotional time. ... the marae stay was awesome. It was spiritual, it was ...fabulous. As I say not all of that paper was good and there was a lot of stuff that didn't need to come into the classroom. But then maybe it wouldn't have been as powerful if it hadn't.' Andrea*

*'I think the very first paper we did was Ripene, and that opened my eyes a lot. Because I grew up in Australia where I didn't know much about the culture in New Zealand anyway, but that was a real eye-opener. And I felt a lot of compassion in those first few months. It was kind of heavy stuff. It was really put quite heavy on us then. And I remember most of the class feeling compassion and ... but over the years that disappeared. I don't know what happened to that. I think we got angry. I can only speak for myself, but I know that a few others were the same. But we started off feeling compassion for Maori issues and what was done to them and that. And then there was the justice thing, I guess. Well what about me? After a while, all of a sudden, pakeha seemed to be put in a separate box. "You don't understand, you're pakeha." And I felt myself saying: "Well, hang on a minute. I do understand." So that to me - there was some real injustice come through by the end of the degree. Yeah. It was the Maori and us – quite sad. But it happened. And we finally, I found I was having to stand up for who I was. Talk about colonisation in the reverse. It's amazing. I don't know what the others felt, but that's what I felt.' Kate.*

The cultural knowledge and history including issues of institutional racism and personal discrimination that Ripene introduces students to engenders a wide range of emotional reactions and processes. Students are challenged about their own values and beliefs, paralleling the tensions and complexity acknowledged in the teaching of anti-discriminatory practice (Harlow & Hearn, 1996, Sullivan, 1998). This course starts students on the journey to bi-cultural practice, an expectation of both the BSP programme itself and the social practice professional associations for promoting social justice in Aotearoa New Zealand (NZASW, 1993, NZAC, 2002).

Structural and social analysis that came through the sociology and community development and family /whanau systems courses were areas of learning referred to by several of the participants.

*Sociology, I didn't know a lot about, to be honest ... and that was eye opening for me. And I'd really love to do a masters in sociology if there was one. I don't know if there is. So that was the start of the growth.'* Andrea

*'That whole systems analysis stuff was really, really good, because that did a lot of looking at the whole systemic sort of analyses I found really, really effective, for me.'* Carol

*'The sociology side of things and the community development theory side of things ... That certainly helped me to focus where I wanted to go and it probably increased my resolve ... But also getting that sense of the structural issues where starting to get the idea that, hang on a second, I could spend the rest of my life running around putting out little fires while someone else, somewhere up the ladder was lighting them. And I got a very strong sense of, "No, hang on I want to find the guy with the matches." So that kind of took me from that counselling through to the social work thing, which I then started to realise was a complete, for me, a complete waste of energy because of the structural barriers up further, and so that headed me up further. Basically up the ladder to try and have, I guess, the maximum output for my energies, really. And that meant hitting as high up the power chain as I possibly could. And I thought that I could do that more effectively through taking a community development sort of angle on things.'* Carol

*'Yep, yep. And also doing the Community Development papers and the Advanced Community Development papers, studying Jim Ife, [a theorist] who's got some really excellent definitions - very simple powerful definitions of social justice, making me understand more.'* Pat

*'Then I found community development and suddenly just had my eyes totally thrown open to issues, that there were issues out there. You know there were political situations that created disparity or inequity. Yes, so that's where it all started.'* Barbara

Three of the six participants have gravitated to community development as the practice area that best supports their aspirations to be agents of social change within their 'just practice'. This reflects both the social practice literature around social change (Adams et al, 2002, De Maria, 1992, Fook, 1999, Ife, 1995, Munford, 2001, Payne, 1997, Pease, 1999b, Shaw, 1994), and falls within the left hemisphere of my practice model, where discourses of social change are about the extension of options and resources for those who are disadvantaged.

The specific content or processes of the teaching was featured:

*'Some of ----'s stuff was really good in that the whole focus of that paper was to look at how we do, what we do, why we do it, and what we hope to achieve, and how are we going to know, sort of thing. So a really important part of actually looking at where I stand in this big picture and what I do and why I do it, which has been really helpful.'* Carol

*'(---- the lecturer) talking about feminism ...[moving my ideas] from a bunch of women in the 70s burning bras...to understanding that there's something I can do... to ... "I can do this" ... to*

*broadening out "I'm going to educate you" and find out and understand that I could do something and find out what I could do.' Jo*

*'Counselling Microskills, talking about the sort of Rogerian approach, the client-centred, which I try to bring into my practice as much as I can. And also Whanau Family Systems and Risk Assessment ... Excellent papers that really, that really broadened my horizons... [In terms of social justice development], in relation to counselling, providing that environment, making them [clients] feel safe, making them feel comfortable, trying to be non-judgmental, irrespective of what they are, who they are, and what they've done.' Pat*

Practices in social justice when working with clients at the micro level are featured here, reflecting practices of respectful engagement with clients. In terms of my model of practice, most work at the individual level supports people to better take up current options available to them, and promotes social stability. Some frameworks of practice, such as feminist practice referred to above, may support more challenging action, promoting change for individuals beyond their current options. This is usually when advocacy work supports clients with their difficulties, or when the practitioner takes the individual troubles to the macro level of action.

The Just Practice course featured especially for two participants:

*'Hearing some of the [guest] lecturers talk ... some of the speakers actually helped me develop my sense of social justice. ...So hearing their stories helped me, not develop my sense of social justice, but make me more committed to it....The way that that was done, with guest people coming and the questions and answers, the way that was set up, um, definitely. The discussions that went on at the end, with questions and answers, after listening to a person give their talk, the questions and answers at the end from everybody, whatever they wanted to speak about, and then hearing those answered, were really encouraging and enlightening. And food for thought. Like it would make me go away and think. I don't think I ever said very much ... But I certainly processed it, thought about it, and read and thought about it a lot.' Pat*

*'The Just Practice class, having those speakers was brilliant and positive. Having all those people come in was just so rich, so rich and they were just all speaking their life. And whether I agreed or didn't agree, it was just so good to hear from them about just what their part of the world, their life was like. I found that really inspiring. Yeah. It was the biggest, most beautiful sort of learning in the whole time.' Barbara*

### **Influence of Lecturers**

Participants were asked whether any lecturers had advanced their commitment to social justice and if so how they had done so. The power of the mediating role of the teacher's own perspective on who as well as what they teach has been explored within personal construct theory. What teachers bring by way of their own personal constructions of the world greatly influences their teaching so that the teaching-learning process involves the meeting of two different 'subjective

realities' (Salmon, 1988:14). Lecturers made an impact on participants in various ways. Their professionalism, experience and style of teaching were referred to. The example they set as practitioners also impacted strongly:

*'----. It was so useful, due to her experience and the hands-on stuff we were learning. Her professionalism, as well.'* Pat

*----, because she was different. A totally different approach, and ---- using the elements of choice theory.* Pat

*' ---- was – she was really very important I think, in that she sort of, I don't know if it improved my social justice – then again it's sort of all part of it –you know, social justice I think is about the emotional being in a person and she was just challenging and probing. So that she, just the way she was with the class, how she facilitated it so well, how she questioned things, allowed discussion to really progress. I think it's all really important. You know, just her interaction in the class, is like a microcosm of the macrocosm, with how we need to be out there. So it was quite informative, influential.'* Barbara

*'I think it was just the way that ----spoke about everything, and everyone in such a way that it opened my mind up to thinking about how I used to think and how ... there were ways to think differently about just about everything. ...Challenging things like: "Boys always need a male role model", or "That's just what families do". Generalities would be talked about and explored ... in such a way as awareness would just get expanded and I would talk about this like bubble packs when they're getting exploded. And they would happen just all the time ...Just in the person that she was, who she was and how she would speak. She was a role model in herself, if you like.'* Jo

*'The counselling papers I did with ----. I mean she was just a real, true just practitioner. She is. She's got a heart for the work. She's really good at what she does. And she's nurturing, She was incredibly nurturing of us.'* Andrea

*'I could see that the way she acted in class would be the way that she would be out in society as well. And I think it was definitely a good example for me. It made me think, you know, I want to be questioning things more, I want to be challenging things more. Certainly for myself.'* Barbara

Modelling of practice and values by lecturers and experienced practitioners, as students witnessed in the Just Practice course, provided powerful learning and inspiration for the participants, echoing Gardner's (2001) study. These reports also tie in with the findings of Van Soest (1994) in her study of how students experienced learning on a new MSW course. Teachers' behaviour that was reported as most helpful to the students included being supportive and available, challenging students, providing insights, being sensitive and providing a safe environment for the discussion of feelings and views. (Van Soest, 1994). The passion of one lecturer was referred to by two participants, reflecting the findings of Salmon, (1988) that feelings the teacher conveys during the teaching process and about the subject will be influential:

*'I guess I was enthused by ---- passion for what he does. Not just what he was talking about, but his passion for what he does enthused me. And being who he is and where he's come from as well. And he never brought his own stuff into it. Never. And just his boundaries, and where he was – to present the issues that he did, and be who he is. I've got great admiration for that, and I take that away with me.'* Kate

*'You know like ---- would come out very passionate about his stuff, and I'd get - that would help me get quite passionate, although he's really quite academic about it.'* Barbara

## **Contribution of Readings and Assignments**

All except one of the participants found that assignments provided opportunities to advance their learning in this area.

*'I did a media analysis of Maori within media and just looked at the language that came through in the media coverage of different issues around Maori and that was a really, really powerful learning experience for me. Just kind of doing all that...all that structural analysis stuff and getting the language and the understanding and also the historical content. ... how societies have changed over time, and starting to learn some of the analysis that has been done, and getting information about, you know, different people who wrote different things - those sorts of things I found really, really useful.'* Carol

*'When we did a placement... and it was when I came to do my assignment that my finished assignment was totally the opposite to what I'd originally intended ...my actual assignment ended up being how issues of feminism affect female patients at --- hospital. And I would never have thought that I would have done that, especially being a male as well. For when I first came to UNITEC I was quite dubious about feminism. I didn't really understand it. I thought it was all about hating men. And I ended up doing this assignment because so frequently there were issues of - when you've got women in hospital - issues of their economic situation after they divorced that would cause problems or they were in bad relationships. All coming down to positions of gender ... issues of feminism. And that sort of made me start thinking about social justice and how these issues of inequality affect certain sections of our society.'* Pat

## **Fieldwork Placement Experiences**

Fieldwork placement or practicum experiences, providing the opportunities for students to undertake work in agencies, could be expected to be a source of learning about social justice, and so it proved. Learning in the field is acknowledged as a complex process, where intellectual, practical, emotional and value-based learning all take place. (Cooper, 2000b). An interesting dimension to this learning is how often it was negative experiences that brought home issues of social justice to the participants. At times, this was an experience of injustice to themselves, and

at other times, it was the experiences of their clients that provided impact. This is what participants had to say about their practicum learning:

*'Heaps. Victim Support was my first placement and that was fabulous experience for me. Straight in the deep end and I did their 50 hour training, which was great, before I went there. But of course working with victims, they're the people that are being dumped on at that end. So of course that enabled me to strengthen my desire to go out there and work for and with people who aren't getting a fair go, really... that was very empowering for me to know that that was the work I wanted to do....'*

*I worked at a high school the next year, which was where...I didn't think I would ever want to work with adolescents because I owned two myself. That's not very strengths based - owning them. So I didn't think that I would want to work with adolescents. But in actual fact that's where I found my passion. ...So those three placements, they just added to my commitment more and more.'*  
Andrea

For Carol, both negative and positive experiences informed her learning.

*'Yeah they did. Probably by default as much as by intent. My first couple of places with young people, yeah, just once again seeing how completely dysfunctional some things are and how the whole philosophy by which we approach young people is the thing that will dictate the outcome... And how frustrating that was. It gave me a sense of, "Hang on, it can be better than this. It doesn't have to be like this. This is a waste of time. This is not actually helping the young people. This is about propping up the systems that are around them, and the infrastructures." So that kind of increased my resolve to change things at a more institutional level....'*

*My second year placement with xxx Social Services that was a really, really good experience for me ... that was where I identified my own personal power...What I didn't realise is that actually what I was doing was very, very threatening to people who perhaps perceived me as having more skills, more intelligence or whatever than themselves. So just for me that being really powerful in terms of the way I work, to be aware of the personality, the power of the personality in an interaction. ... And becoming aware of that, in terms of having a social justice analysis – it's about power and personal power is a part of that. ...So I think for me its been really important because I've had to learn how to kind of tune myself down, so that I'm not inadvertently having a negative impact on people I'm working with. So that was quite a good experience.'*  
Carol

On the other hand for one participant, the commitment to social justice did not take hold until the third year, after the major placement experiences:

*'No, no, because I don't think I really, I don't think the penny dropped about social justice until my third year. And it took me until my third year to really then have a definition of say, what community development was all about. Social justice comes along into that.'* Pat

Experiencing a sense of powerlessness was a powerful experience for one participant:

*'I think my first placement taught me a lot about who I am now... I was angry. I think for the whole three months I had suppressed anger... And it was about power issues and how much power someone can have over you. And the misuse of that power. And I think that's probably formed who I am today myself because of that. A huge misuse of power and manipulation, and just feeling so powerless. ... I advocate for my clients where I can within my framework here. And I think it does go back to that time where I had no voice. Or I felt I didn't have one. ... So I've found my own voice, but I think I've found a voice for others as well. So it was a very powerful experience. It wasn't nice but ...yeah, I think it's made me. It moulded me in big ways, I think.'*  
Kate

Negative experiences of structures that worked against both clients and workers fuelled a passion for social justice for Jo and Barbara:

*'Social justice in the school system at ---- College. ...I went time and time again to advocate for kids to deans and got totally blocked, and dismissed, and that's just how it is in the school system...[A strong negative experience is] firing my passion for social justice Yes. Throwing logs on the fire all the time.'* Jo

The advocacy role that Barbara had during her placement informed her commitment to social justice:

*'Yeah. It was more the social work- oriented one, that was dealing with beneficiaries and so it definitely did, because we were advocating for beneficiaries, with the Work and Income [Department], and that is a major social structure. And so it definitely did, because I could see the, um, inadequacies I suppose, of that structure and the...just the crazy, ridiculous Act that it works from. I think it's doing, it's trying to do its best, at the end of the day. I suppose all the staff of that Department are too, ... It just wasn't as if they were there for the people. Yeah, it really – the beneficiaries that came through were made to feel so inferior and frightened by this major Department that wielded so much power over them. And that was completely unjust. It made me annoyed, angry, so that certainly helped.'* Barbara

Fieldwork as a site of experiential learning can be expected to present significant learning (Boud, 1993, Clare, 2000, Cooper, 2000a, Danbury, 1994, Gould, 1996, Kolb, 1984) and this was borne out by participants. For all except one, their fieldwork experiences strongly influenced their commitment to social justice through a wide range of practicum experiences. Working with clients and the systems that surround both clients and practitioners influenced participants in different ways. Having opportunities to take up practices supporting social justice such as advocacy and witnessing first-hand clients' experiences of injustice provided powerful experiential learning. Acknowledging their own areas of personal growth as a result of both positive and negative experiences and feeling themselves in positions of powerlessness are other significant features of participants' stories from their fieldwork practicums that deepened their commitments to social justice.

## **Influence of fellow students and friends**

Barbara had some interesting reflections about the influence, both positive and negative, of classmates and others as of special significance in developing her commitment to social justice. This supported the findings of Gardner's (2001) study:

*'I would say that the majority was from fellow students. When I say majority it would be like 55 to 60%, and then the – not just my fellow students –but from contacts then through doing this placement thing, which led on. And then the other 40% was from lecturers ...I needed classmates and friends to help me ...bounce ideas.'* Barbara

*'The [---course] was an interesting one ... just the interaction particularly in that class. People's prejudices, I think it was, just came out straightaway, and so cliques were developed in that class ...I saw these people were tomorrow's practitioners and the way they acted towards each other and this lecturer in the class concerned me. That they were going out to be the hopefully effective practitioners, but they couldn't get past their own shit really. So that strengthened my resolve to improve myself to be as –you know- to look out for prejudices. To be non-judgmental, that sort of thing. I think that's really important for social justice. ...So that was a negative thing that helped me to see what I wanted to improve, or keep a lookout for.'* Barbara

## **Experiences of injustice on the programme**

One further aspect of learning from the programme that emerged during the interviews as a source of commitment to social justice were experiences on the programme that participants experienced as unjust. A range of issues were raised in relation to this, with different experiences impacting in different ways for the participants who identified these issues.

For Angela, learning to challenge unjust practices was the key learning:

*'Yes, assignment. ...I was very aware that I needed to write a specific type of assignment to pass. and I knew that if I was too truthful or too off the mark of what the tutor wanted that I wouldn't pass. And I mean I got a reasonable mark, but the thing I was marked down for was not valid and I wasn't prepared to challenge. And I should have, and I know that now. That I had the right to challenge.'* Andrea

*'As counsellors we at the end of Year 3 had to do a portfolio and present to a panel, present ourselves and our work to a panel of three. Now all our teachings at UNITEC counselling was about not being the expert and not having expert stance, not having power over, not - just that. And yet the culmination of three years of study came down to a panel who was meant to judge us. Judge our expertise, and judge our competency to go out into the world. Now I don't have a problem with having my competency examined, but to be taught one way and then at the end of the day to have our final assessment ...and if you didn't pass that panel you were out. ...And I did*

*challenge that ...and they've changed that process now. ...Yeah, that was huge pressure and it was the opposite to what we'd been taught. That's a case when I did challenge.'* Andrea

Identifying the issues and processes of structural power inherent in institutions and contradictions between what is said and done and developing an analysis around these issues enhanced Carol's commitment to social justice:

*'Part of my learning came from the experience of being in a programme like that, that had articulated certain things, in certain ways, and then the practice was really different. So having to, having that kind of real life everyday experience of that - the disparity, the contradiction between the policy and the practice, and then the responses to certain issues that were raised and sort of seeing that structural power thing happening in terms of things not being addressed.... And having to deal with those sorts of things and developing my own analysis of how power works and positional power and sort of the structural, institutional stuff. I learned a lot through that.'* Carol

Barbara's experience of injustice centred on a perception of elitism and mono-culturalism:

*'And yet at the end the degree the graduation process was just another institutionalised ritual that after all they'd been teaching us about making it equitable, you know, making life equitable, they go and have a really, I sort of saw it as quite inequitable, this whole very English sort of ceremony that you had to pay for.... But people have worked really hard, sure, to get to that and to get this degree, but it was like a little bit of elitism. And so I didn't go through it...there wasn't really a Maori component to it.... So that was an example of a bit of an issue for me. Hence I didn't go to the graduation ceremony.'* Barbara

## **Discussion**

A wide variety of course experiences have supported participants' commitment to social justice as a goal of their practice. At an academic level, exposure to new theoretical frameworks and understandings have been key ingredients. For some, frameworks of structural and social analysis have helped develop new understandings that have enriched their 'just practice': *'really good information that ...has become the building blocks of my analysis.'* Carol

Bi-cultural, feminist and community development theory and practice in particular brought new lenses for viewing the world that have exposed participants to social injustices: *'Then I found community development and suddenly just had my eyes totally thrown open to issues.'* Barbara

All of these are discourses of 'just practice' that fit with the generation of social change on the left hemisphere of my model of change. It is noteworthy that participants' learning and the theories and practice models that have been most influential in informing and enriching their commitment

to social justice lie in this hemisphere where social change, rather than individual change is promoted.

However the right hand hemisphere of my model of practice also featured for some practitioners. Some talked about the tools for action they had gained for working with clients to help them access resources and entitlements. The development of respectful engagement with clients is an area of individual practice that was cited as supporting commitments to social justice. New perspectives on what social practitioner roles entail were also described: *I found out that being a counsellor is being a social practitioner - social justice practitioner.*' Jo

Discussion, class interaction, personal reflection and analysis and the influence of their teachers are the processes that participants have referred to in their integration of the BSP programme of learning with their own prior knowledge and experiences. These processes fit well with personal construct theory that talks of how every individual draws on their perceptions of themselves, and their past experiences of learning, along with their personal understanding of the world as the framework into which new knowledge is absorbed. (Kelly cited in Salmon, 1988). What teachers bring of themselves to the teacher student interaction, both their ability to relate to students and their feeling for their subject, impact on how students relate to the topic and what levels of enthusiasm they bring to their learning. (Gardner, 2001, Salmon, 1988). How feelings shaped their learning is illustrated here by participants in their references to how certain lecturers' passion for their subject influenced them. Participants also revealed strong reactions to negative programme experiences, and identified how these experiences shaped their commitment to social justice in different ways. For some, empathy with clients experiencing injustice has fuelled their commitments. For others, taking their own negative experiences and endeavouring to ensure that their clients do not experience the same has been the outcome.

Experiential learning illustrated particularly in their practicum experiences is another dimension of learning that participants found significant for them in taking on aspirations to social justice. Doing as a learning process has a long-acknowledged and examined history (Boud et al, 1993, Kolb, 1984, Harris, 1996). The weighting in terms of BSP programme credits given to practicum experiences (20% of the three-year programme) endorses this idea.

In conclusion what comes through is the way in which the teaching and learning about social justice is permeated throughout the BSP teaching programme. Among the participants

themselves there is considerable diversity as to where they started on their 'just practice' journey and in what ways the teaching and learning programme has supported this journey. It has ranged from one participant who had clear, but limited ideas about advancing social justice in practice at the point of programme entry, to others for whom the articulation of these beliefs developed through the learning processes, to another for whom ideas of social justice emerged late into the third year of the programme. Overall what stands out is that participants have learned about social justice for themselves through a wide variety of experiences: academic, emotional, exemplary and experiential. Both positive and negative experiences have informed the growth of their commitment to social justice for their practice.

In the next chapter we turn to the other major influences on participants in developing their commitment to social justice, namely their personal experiences prior to entering this learning programme.

## CHAPTER 8

### The Contribution Of Personal Stories To The Development Of 'Just Practice'

*'So hearing their stories helped me, not develop my sense of social justice, but make me more committed to it.' Pat*

#### Introduction

The purpose in asking participants in this study about the contribution of their personal stories to their commitments to 'just practice' comes from both a personal conviction and a growing recognition in the literature of the particular contribution practitioners' own stories make to their practice. (White & Hales, 1997, White, 1997, Clare, 2000). Coupled to this is the long-held acknowledgment of the use that social practitioners make of them 'selves' as their tool for engaging with clients and as their vehicle for practice. (Brandon, 1976, O'Connor et al, 1998, Worrall, 2001). These two strands suggest that an exploration of participants' personal stories would be a vital part of my inquiry about how beginning practitioners take up a commitment to 'just practice'.

There are also other angles to this area of exploration of people's stories. One was borne out of my experience of attending training with Michael White, a family therapist who has been a key figure in the development of narrative social practice. This training had focussed on as he described it, 'thickening the stories' for social practitioners as ways to stand against doubts and negativity that can creep into professionals' views of themselves. His process of enrichment entailed drawing out from practitioners times when they had resisted the doubts or difficulties that were now bothering them. He also enlisted from practitioners certain witnesses who had or would support the alternative stories that were being developed to support the practitioners in their work. (White, 1997, 2001). So it seemed to me that taking something of this approach through my interviews with the study participants would build in reciprocity for them. While I was receiving from participants information that I could use for this study, perhaps this process could also be enriching for them at the same time. The exploration of their stories could include questioning

that might strengthen their commitment and draw on witnessing that they could be mindful of from time to time.

Finally the social constructionist lens for looking at life constitutes life stories in a particular way. The stories that we make of our lives don't just simply reflect our lives, they actually shape and constitute our lives (White, 1995, 1997). Reviewing one's life stories then may become a way of enriching and reconfiguring our lives through drawing out other aspects and incidents that have contributed to our lives. Highlighting the contributions of participants' life stories to their commitments to social justice then becomes more than the relating of a story. It may include elements of reconstituting that story and so strengthening its relevance to these commitments. "Persons organise and give meaning to their experience through the storying of that experience." (White & Epston, 1990:12).

In the interviews participants were asked about possible major influences during their lives that may have shaped their ideas about or interest in social justice and in particular whether there were early life events that may have shaped their thinking about social justice. Were there special happenings or experiences that informed their ideas about social justice? What themes of social justice or injustice have resonated for them in terms of their own lives? What are their beliefs and values that have informed their 'just practice'?

What I have done is to set out the stories of the participants so that they speak for themselves. I have grouped elements of their stories together, where there are common themes, with some comment from me interwoven. Beyond this I wish for the reader to gain the sense of diversity and richness of life experiences of some people who wish to feature social justice within their social practice.

### **Major influences that shaped participants' ideas about or interest in social justice.**

The experiences that participants sense are key contributions from their life stories to their commitment to social justice come from a wide variety of experiences. There is a mix of both negative and positive stories. The experience or witnessing of injustice in their own lives has provided participants with the passion to do better for others than their own circumstances at the time provided for them. On the other hand, positive and inspiring experiences ranging from

parental example through to previous training have also motivated these beginning practitioners to make a positive contribution to their fellow citizens and community through their social practice.

### *Influence of Parents*

From their families came stories of loving and caring:

*'My mother probably taught me a lot just by being her. My mum and dad, they're both people that have accepted anyone into our lives, into our family life. We had a young guy that was heading for juvenile court or something like that ... come and stay with us. Just with being in a really open loving sort of environment he really sort of straightened himself up. And now apparently he's a youth worker or something like that, which is really cool. So I think their openness and loving sort of attitude and stuff probably shaped us and that's just become a part of me I think. That's all I can say, it's a part of me.'* Barbara

*'My parents. My mother was a very strong woman raising children on her own. So her outlook on life was somewhat different than the staid sort of aspect that she was probably brought up with. And she actually had conflict herself in that she was brought up one way but lived in the world a different way.'* Andrea

*'One pops out immediately and maybe it's had more of an impact on me than I thought. But my dad was a prison warden, and when we lived in England he was too short. They wouldn't have him. So he migrated to Australia and the story goes that was the reason, or one of the reasons. He wanted to do this, and he got into the prison service in Australia. I remember him coming home and talking about his job and he was the shortest bloke there, the smallest fellow, and he had the reputation of being the fairest. He was the one that listened to the crims as they referred to them. Whereas a lot of the others were a bit power hungry and what have you. And he always maintained fairness. I think it probably sat with me for a long time.'* Kate

The shining illustration of the loving, nurturing family speaks volumes. Barbara's strong influence of the loving example from her parents: *'that just became a part of me'* is echoed in the stories of each of the participants in different ways. For Andrea, she has drawn inspiration from the struggles of her mother, raising four children on her own: *'We had stigmatisation because my mother was a solo mum, and it really wasn't the done thing.'* She drew pride from *'growing up in a state house...from the poor neighbourhood...we all rose above it,'* - that people looked down on them. Experiencing discrimination strengthened her spirit and family connections.

From her father, Kate learned a value that informs her *'just practice'*. *'He always maintained fairness. I think it probably sat with me for a long time.'* Talking later in the interview of her own practice she spoke of *'fairness for everybody'* and how that fairness translated into *'my passion*

for respect for people. I drill that into my team.' The influences from her father have flowed through to her own practice and to her expectations of how her team too should work.

### ***School Experiences***

School experiences stood out for Barbara and Jo:

*'Seeing how people that were considered to be different and out of the norm were treated, like, within the school environment. When I was at primary and secondary school there was a young, a girl in my class that was intellectually handicapped and she was just an absolute, she was such a sweetie but she was treated so badly. So you know, she was my friend, and through the years I tended to go to the - I just gravitated towards those sort of people who because they were just a bit different, they weren't in the in-crowd. You know they weren't good-looking, well-dressed kids. They were all slightly out of the norm, I suppose in some way. And I saw how - it was funny because I could - I was friends with everyone. I suppose everyone is, at school. You know each other. But I remember once I was asked by - I went to a birthday party with the cool girls and there was myself and my friends invited as well, and I was asked over - the cool girls were having a little confab in the spa - and asked me in and they wanted to ask me if I wanted to join their group of friends - because I really fitted in with them better than with my friends. And yeah, I suppose that gave me a real idea of the "who's in and cool and who's not". That structure thing again. What society deems as good people. So I suppose that was my experience of it of some kind of - offended by prejudice involved, I suppose that was.'* Barbara

*'I look at that now, and it is unjust now, at the time it was normal, it was what happened. That if you were dumb you got put in the dumb class and you got the - you didn't get the good teachers and nobody probably looked after you as well as they looked after the people who were going to go on and achieve.'* Jo

Childhood experiences can make a deep impression, although full understanding about the experience may come later, when the person has wider reference points from which to reflect on the events. Here participants are looking back on school experiences, recognising the injustices that they now appreciate more fully.

### ***Religious Influences***

Religious ideas shaped some of Carol's early learning:

*'I come from quite a ... sort of a strong Christian background which whilst I don't agree with a lot of that stuff, what it did was gave me a sense of there is a right and a wrong; there are some things that are right, there are some things that just aren't, and that's because of the impact they have on people. And so that started me questioning ... "This is right, this is not" and "Why is it right and why isn't it?" and those sorts of things...*

*I think that actually looking at the greater good, looking at, "Okay, it might be fine for me, but how's it for somebody else?" also came from that Christian sort of idea of doing something for*

*others, that you'd like to have done for yourself, and putting others first and those sorts of things, from quite a young age. I think that has actually informed the way I respond. That someone else's injustice is actually my injustice as well. And that while I'm not - while someone else isn't free, I'm not free, in that sense of, I guess, collectivity. And that I am intrinsically a part of everybody else, so that that kind of keeps me um ... I think it stops me from being able to just go, "Oh, it's not my problem". I consider that my wellbeing is intrinsically linked with the wellbeing of others.'* Carol

Carol is the only participant who came to the BSP programme with a clear expectation of learning about working for social justice. Religious teachings were where her ideas about social justice started taking shape quite early in her life. The concept of helping others as a social responsibility, *'that Christian sort of idea of doing something for others...and putting others first'* has extended to the collectivity of *'someone else's injustice is actually my injustice as well..'* Her sense of having a collective responsibility towards all social injustice is extremely powerful. It gives her both a deep level of commitment to advancing social justice in the world, but also brings with it a heavy weight.

*'The more I become aware of justice issues, the more difficult it becomes to exist in an unjust society. And I find that that is probably my biggest challenge, actually how to survive without it destroying me.'* Carol

Issues of maintaining commitment are discussed more fully in the final chapter. Carol's early learning about injustice has been enriched over the years, both experientially and intellectually.

### ***Period in which Participants Grew up***

Growing up through the 1960s and 1970s had a significant impact:

*'I'm a child of the 60s, so there were a lot of things happening in those days. You know, women's rights, human rights. There were civil rights movements in America, which I followed. In the 70s and 80s there was the Maori renaissance in our own country. And I did march, marches, you know the Springbok tour; marched with Maori, tangata whenua, against the sale of land at Bastion Point. I mean I was lucky to come through that era really ... the American influence was for good through that time. It was civil rights. People like John F Kennedy, Martin Luther King, and there was an awakening I think of people for social justice, during that period.'* Andrea

*'Strangely enough Elvis Presley's song 'The Ghetto'. I can remember, I must have been all of seven or eight and I can remember hearing that, and hearing the words of it and actually understanding what it was talking about, and thinking "This is really not a good look, you know. I want to do something about this."'* Carol

*'Living through the 50s and the 60s and watching the unfolding of justice ... injustice in this country in terms of - I mean I was in Ponsonby in the 50s and 60s when the Pacific Islanders came into the country and the general way that that was treated in the population. And watching*

*the evolvement of that over the years and the continuance of the attitudes that prevailed from that era, from when the huge influx happened to now. And finding out how alive and well it really still is in the community. Having my own ideas develop and change around that. It's been a huge influence watching that. It's been a huge influence watching what's happened with Treaty issues.'*  
Jo

The part that history and social context plays in shaping our knowledge and ways of being is amply illustrated here. The decades of great social change through the 1960s and 1970s when *'there were a lot of things happening...women's rights, human rights, civil rights movement in America ...the Maori renaissance in our own country ...marches ...the Springbok tour...Bastion Point'* (Andrea) helped shape the three participants who grew up through that era in Aotearoa New Zealand. All made reference to the influences of that time. *'There was an awakening ... for people on social justice.'* The BSP programme was to expand this awareness, but the interest in issues of injustice had been sparked by the social movements of their youth.

### ***Experiencing Discrimination***

Personal experiences of disempowerment or discrimination provided participants with special appreciation of the impacts of injustice. Carol spoke of instances in her life when she has been at the mercy of others' actions.

*'In my own experience as well I've also had quite a few instance during my life where someone who's got more power than me has turned my world upside-down. You know, parents separating and new people coming and all that sort of thing.'* Carol

Learning drawn from such experiences gave her an appreciation that reached beyond an intellectual understanding.

*'It's been built around my own personal experience of being disempowered, that kind of gave me ... an understanding of what the experience of being empowered is like at an emotional and physical level - which is always something that informs how I respond to things externally.'* Carol

Others also spoke of discriminatory experiences:

*'I guess we had stigmatisation because my mother was a solo mum. And it really wasn't the done thing. It was kind of around that time where it was becoming acceptable for families to split up. But there was yeah, there was some of that. And there was some stigma around living in state housing. I'm very proud of growing up in state housing actually, but there was some of that. The poor people from the poor neighbourhood and the state houses.'* Andrea

*'Watching the injustice of things that were passed off in the name of justice. Like... "Oh, well, people should just help themselves. You know, everybody's got equal opportunities, everybody's*

*got the same opportunities." People get an education and it's passed off as being an individual. If the person's failed it's because they weren't clever enough or they weren't good enough, rather than looking at the background of what was that person's life like, what were their opportunities? Did they have the same opportunities and why that was, rather than again a blanket explanation of why people are like that.'* Jo

*'There's been some unfairness shown to me in my early days, my early working days.... I had a terrible experience of what fairness and justice was there. I had a senior who was responsible for training me and she... had her finger in the till and all sorts of things, and she wanted me out of the way. It was just an awful experience. So I think in that I must have sub-consciously, anyway, thought, "Where's the fairness in this?" And I had to go before a tribunal to plead my case so that I wouldn't be struck off, had my indentures cancelled, because they were making up all sorts of stories about me to try and get rid of me so that I wouldn't talk about they were doing. It was awful. So yeah, it probably has helped.'* Kate

### ***Life Events***

Particular life events were instanced:

*'I like being there when people are - this sounds quite morbid - but I like being there when people are ill or not quite, you know, at their full potential. So I like getting them back to health ... That probably comes from, as being younger I spent a lot of time, long periods of time in hospital having major surgery. ... That geared me up towards nursing and that hospital environment. And brought me more, you know, towards wanting to work with people. On the other side when they're not well.'* Pat

*'Alongside that came a whole lot of experiences around - things around the way the media report things ... I mean being at Moutua Gardens and then seeing how the Herald covered it. And just realising that our whole - the whole sort of dissemination of information, the whole media process is setting up a set of understandings and knowledges about what's happening in our world that is completely incorrect. And the impact of that on justice.'* Carol

More sombre experiences were part of this era. Experiences of racism impacted strongly on some participants, more as observers, rather than as direct recipients of this site of discrimination and oppression. For Jo, growing up in Ponsonby alongside Pacific Island communities during the 1950s and 1960s, observing the discrimination that those communities experienced, and still experience, has left a major impression.

*'Finding out how alive and well it [racial discrimination] still is in the community. Having my ideas develop and change around that. It's been a huge influence ... watching what's happened with Treaty issues... coming to UNITEC and having more ... awareness open up.'* Jo

Andrea participated in Bastion Point protest marches, and in more recent times, Carol took part in the Moutua Gardens protest. Participation in group actions of protest is a powerful way to take on the struggle of others. The public nature of such protests provides acts of witnessing that support

those on whose behalf the action is taken, as well as speaks to the audience of the protest. There are physical and communal aspects to such witnessing that provide extra dimensions of learning.

### ***Gender discrimination***

Another powerful site of learning was sexism:

*'Later on in life there were gender issues that came through, where women or girls weren't accepted for certain things where boys were. And even, actually in my home yeah, in my home, the gender issues. I had three brothers and they were - had WAY more scope than I did, because I was a girl.'* Andrea

*'Educational opportunities for women. The ...financial restrictions about - or not restrictions - difficulties about women being able to have an education. And for the generation before me, for them, ten times, a hundred times worse...*

*Domestic violence. Watching what happened in my family and um thinking that that was normal. And realising how widespread - that it was just accepted, or not talked about and covered up. And well that's just what happened. And the expectation that, you know, women should just submit, and be subservient. Put up with that, well and the widespread - how widespread it is in the community today, even.'* Jo

*'I also got into an abusive relationship when I was in my late teens and so ideas around - the whole thing of violence and domestic violence and that sort of gender abuse stuff. Yeah, that's been where some of my strongest learnings have come through.'* Carol

These three women talked of their personal experiences of gender discrimination. Andrea lived with three brothers who had *'WAY more scope than I did.'* For Jo, *'Attitudes towards sexuality has been a big one when ...sexual orientation wasn't spoken about.'* The barriers to education for women and the different pay scales for females and males were other examples of discrimination that the women cited. As with other experiences, realisation about how these stories represented sites of injustice often came later when the participants had better tools of analysis to identify and even articulate stories of past discrimination.

### ***Previous Education***

On a more positive note previous educational opportunities were influential in developing awareness in different ways:

*'I think I started with the self-help movement of Louise Hay 'You can heal your life' all of that kind of stuff, and that kind of started it up. But I think it came to the fore more when I did a course called 'the Forum' and they had some things in there that really made me think. Like*

*philosophical kinds of things. It was pretty blunt and brutal to go through, but really that sort of got me interested. Then I did some courses at HD&T [Human Development & Training Institute] and two years counselling and one year of guided imagery and music therapy training as well, before coming to UNITEC. ... I was on the path then of finding out things.' Jo*

*'One of the biggest changing points for me was when I went to Tech in Hawkes Bay to learn the Reo. At that point I was going because I was working with at risk young people and most of them were Maori and as a pakeha I didn't - I hadn't previously come across much information about Maori. I hadn't learned it at school, I didn't know there was a Treaty or anything like that. Didn't really have an understanding of cultural difference, but someone in the group I was working with said, "If you're pakeha and you're working with Maori you need to go and find out what it is to be Maori, and start learning, at least learning about the culture and language." So I took myself off to Tech to do that. And I think that it was a HUGE sort of change moment in my life when I was sitting in class one day and I realised that I wasn't normal, that we were different. That everything about me as a pakeha was different. There was some different thing about the way I processed things, about the way I looked at my world, about the way I interacted with people, with ideas, the way I problem-solved, everything. I suddenly realised that normal is a cultural construct, and that my normal is different from another culture's normal. And that was huge because I hadn't- It's one of those things that you can't know until you know. And that moment when I realised that I was different from Maori and Maori were different from me - it was just huge realisation. ... So it started me thinking about, you know, how might someone else see this? What might they believe about this, and how might that make them experience that thing? ...which has helped me to understand why issues around equity and justice happen the way they do.' Carol*

On the other hand, for Pat, ideas of social justice have featured only since attending the BSP programme:

*'I didn't even think about this label 'social justice' till I was taught about it.... I never had to think about issues of social justice because I had a very happy comfortable, supportive upbringing in life.' Pat*

What has impacted from the lives of participants has been wide-ranging. Bringing reflectiveness to bear on their experiences has drawn out meaning for them.

*'The way people in power have responded to things started me on the path of recognising how much injustice exists within our structures.' Carol*

In summary, the major positive experiences that participants have highlighted have included role modelling from parents along with community, religious and school experiences. Alongside of these sit a wide range of personal experiences of discrimination or witnessing of injustice to others. The powerful nature of the feelings that accompany these experiences and how that has supported participants' commitment to social justice is a strong feature of these stories. *'...gender abuse stuff. Yeah, that's been where some of my strongest learnings have come through.'* (Carol). It is noteworthy how often negative experiences are cited as having developed

participants' passion for social justice. The emotional impact that accompanies such learning appears to have reinforced intellectual understanding and held these experiences in participants' memories. Conversely, Pat cites a happy supportive upbringing as the reason for an interest in social justice not having developed earlier. Experience of social injustice needed to be brought into the personal realm, before Pat could take the learning about it on board.

Reflecting on the range of experiences of social and personal injustice that participants brought forward from their earlier lives, what stands out is the salience of these experiences to the work of social practitioners to address issues of social injustice. Yet only Carol entered the BSP programme with working for social justice as part of her agenda. I am struck by the contrast of this lack of articulation by the other participants of their commitment to social justice at the point of entering the BSP programme. Their stories here have been told from within the framework of understanding and learning that they have gained from the BSP programme. What shines through is the language and understanding that this teaching programme has provided, which has enabled the participants to relate stories of their growing up from within a social justice framework.

### **Participants' Beliefs and Values that have Informed their 'Just Practice'.**

From their personal journeys participants have developed their values and beliefs that contribute to their commitment to 'just practice'. The themes that come through about these centre on valuing and helping people and ensuring that they receive a fair deal.

Valuing people:

*'Everybody deserves a chance to have their life work out for them.'* Jo

Personal values that have grown out of life experiences generally:

*'My beliefs and values are I think around the value of life, and I guess the value of humanity. That we, in a sense, that I'm no more special or deserved than anybody else.'* Carol

*'That we are the experts of our own life. We know our story best. And in actuality - that we all do have strengths and resources and skills which sometimes become obscured by the problem that surrounds us at the time.'* Andrea

*'Being non-judgmental.'* Pat

*'My idea of social justice is that each person is this wholistic being: emotional, spiritual, mental and physical, and that all those need to be in balance and nurtured.'* Barbara

Helping people:

*'I had a really strong sense of "I want to be useful, I want to help people. I want to be somehow impacting on my world".'* Carol

Being fair:

*'What's fair and what's not fair.'* Kate

For Barbara, her utopian vision for society provided her inspiration for just practice:

*'I would like to see that a utopia would be really fantastic where there isn't a need for crime and authoritarian or social control structures, because each individual is allowed to be what they want to be. And therefore they're happy, and productive, contributing, and that communication is essential as well, in that we communicate with our neighbours and members of the community about what's ailing us at a time and what we need. You know it's all to the benefit of mankind, so that we benefit each other. We all strive forwards.'* Barbara

Finally, what featured most strongly for participants in terms of social justice was explored. What particularly resonated for them in practising justice in their work was quite variable.

### **Resonance of social justice in practice**

Turning people around from anger to having a sense of being understood and a sense of hope:

*'How I am with people ... I'm here to help and support you in any way I can.'* Kate

Looking at the broad context of a client's life and the meaning for them of their story and the part fairness has played in it:

*'Fairness, context, experience, opportunities, upbringing, attitudes, background. In terms of both clients and myself, I look at those clients and what they are saying. Instead of a theoretical or philosophical stance, to look at the effects of the person's life, of those things in their lives.'* Jo

Acceptance of clients and the need to suspend judgment of people and look past their public presentation of themselves:

*'Don't judge a book by its cover. ... What you see is not always what you've got.'* Pat

Separation of the person and the problem frees up the person from its weight and often from the guilt of responsibility for the problem. The client's energies can then be focussed on addressing the problem, free from guilt and blame:

*'For me one of the most powerful things that has come to me in my learnings and work is that Michael White saying of "the person is not the problem, the problem is the problem." And that resonates for me in anything I do. ... That's in essence what goes towards social justice.'* Andrea

Equity, empowerment and liberation through enabling all to reach their full potential:

*'Equity, rights.'* Barbara

*'The sense of living life to the full. And freedom and that ... tinorangatiratanga was about freedom and liberty... And so the truth brings freedom, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free." ... That sense of total freedom through understanding of what the truth is, for me that ... has ideas of equity and empowerment in it. And liberation. ... To live life in fullness of our potential and our relationship with ourselves, with others, with our spirituality, with our world in terms of the earth. ... My interactions with others and my work is all guided by that sense of being free and liberated to be all that we can be.'* Carol

## **Discussion**

These discourses of 'just practice' have been drawn from the whole range of participants' experiences. Some, such as focussing on the problem and not the client as a problem, and viewing the wider context in which the client lives, have come straight from practice teachings, as is the sense of self that one brings to the client in relationship. Alongside the professional discourses are those of 'folk psychology' (White, 2001) or traditional wisdom which participants have drawn from everyday life such as 'don't judge a book by its cover', give people 'a fair go'. The biblical references 'do unto others' (Matthew 7:12) and 'know the truth and the truth shall make you free' (John 8: 31-32) can also be seen as guiding principles that have extended beyond the realms of organised religion. As well as professional themes, discourses of everyday wisdom emerge as guiding principles that these beginning practitioners bring to their professional practice. What stands out most of all is the inspirational nature of the phrases that resonate for the participants - hope, fairness, equity, acceptance and non-judgment, the person is not the problem, the truth shall set you free. All speak to the valuing of people as central to their work and their commitment to 'just practice'.

The next chapter concludes this study, drawing together the strands of meaning and understanding from the texts and discussions of all chapters. Implications of the study findings are reviewed in the light of the goals of the study and areas for further research are identified.

## CHAPTER 9

### Conclusion

*'Free to live life in fullness of our potential and our relationship with ourselves, with others, with our spirituality, with our world.'* Carol

#### Introduction

This final chapter puts the finishing strokes to the three-layered picture of this study. The part that their personal stories have played in the development of the six participants' intentions for 'just practice' provides the landscape for the stories that they have told of the contribution of the Bachelor of Social Practice programme to their growing commitment to 'just practice'. On to this outline has been painted the bright colours of participants' understandings of and aspirations for social justice in their social practice. Along with their aspirations have come more sombre hues of their doubts and uncertainties and these form parts of this final composition. Their understandings have been set within the framework of my model of social justice and change which illustrates the coming together of social justice and social practice. The reverberations that their discourses have with what their global and local social practice colleagues have to say about social justice in practice provide further contextual richness for this picture.

#### DEVELOPING THE PALETTE

The meaning we make of our stories changes in time and place, depending on our purpose. Here I am constructing meanings from the stories of my six participants, to paint a picture about beginning just practitioners. Painting a word picture responds to my delight in colour and to my responsiveness to the visual as a medium for learning and expression. My palette draws on many colours, some the darker shades of hurt, pain, difficulties, doubts and struggles. Others are the brighter colours of nurturing, inspiration, understanding, connection and reward. Interviews with the participants have filled my paint-pots and I shall use only touches of these rich hues that my participants have contributed through their stories. Let us now start the daubing on canvas to see

what colours contribute to this picture of aspiring just practitioners and where these tones have come from.

## BACKGROUND COLOURS OF THEIR PERSONAL STORIES

From their lives before they came to the UNITEC BSP programme the participants have identified key experiences that have influenced them on their life journeys. Warm tones of inspiration and nurturing sit alongside darker shades of witnessing and experiencing the pain of discrimination and lack of power.

### Nurturance and Inspiration

All participants talked about their families, most in terms of the inspiration and nurturance they had drawn from them. Barbara spoke of caring *'that just became a part of me.'* Andrea expressed admiration for a mother parenting on her own. Kate's father set her an example, demonstrating concern for and connection with the clients he worked with. These are positive stories that participants have accessed to show how their early lives have supported their later aspirations for social justice. Stories too of *'domestic violence. Watching what happened in my family and thinking that that was normal'* and the impact of marriage break-up *'parents separating and new people coming'* paint a darker side of childhood experiences for Jo and Carol that have informed their commitments to social justice. The formative influence of early religious teachings also stayed with Carol, shaping early on an expectation of helping others that grew into *'looking at the greater good... that someone else's injustice is actually my injustice as well'* and that has inspired her passion for social justice.

### The Social Context

Andrea, Carol and Jo, who grew up in Aotearoa New Zealand through the 1960s and 1970s all commented on how what was going on in the world had influenced them. Influences ranged for the rights movements of the time *'women's rights, human rights, civil rights movement in America'* to the race marches and protests in our own country. All three had been drawn into these movements at some level. Jo was a witness to scenes of racial discrimination against Pacific Island families in her own neighbourhood. Andrea participated in protests over Maori land rights at Bastion Point. For Carol, the lyrics of an Elvis Presley song sent a message of injustice. All have drawn on experiences from their social environment that have started to colour their

perspective of society as less than benevolent for everyone. The part that history and social context plays in shaping our knowledge and ways of being is picked up by Carol also in relation to her learning from the BSP programme. *'Getting that sense of where things have come from and looking at history ...to learn some of the analysis that has been done. ...It gave me a sense of being part of a tradition.'*

### **Personal Connections**

Stories of injustice happening to people they knew, or the experience of it in their own lives, are further influences that all participants discussed. Both Barbara and Carol talked about having school or childhood friends who were 'different' and treated differently.

*'When I was four my best friend who was just a little bit older was Maori. ...Her father spent ten years in gaol and the difference between how she was treated and how I was treated in my world and her world ...I didn't have the words or understanding of that till much later.'* Carol

Feeling that emotional connection is part of the power that fixes the memory and strengthens the commitment as the meaning of these stories is transformed through later learning. *'It's been a huge influence ...watching what's happened with Treaty issues...coming to UNITEC and having more ...awareness open up.'* Jo

Domestic violence and gender discrimination were powerful experiences that had impacted strongly on some of the participants. Jo talked of how prior to starting the BSP programme, she had accepted that this was *'the way things were, rather than [that]... there might be something wrong with this.'* Attendance at the UNITEC programme had enabled her to take up a less accepting stance to particular injustices of her past that she had taken as given for so long. *'It was a huge one for me to confront at UNITEC ...how come I thought that for all those years?'* The integration of new learning is a process of applying new knowledge to one's own experiences. (Boud et al, 1993, Kolb, 1994). Alongside the excitement of new realisations can be the emotional pain drawn from revisiting and reinterpreting past experiences of injustice.

The personal stories reflect a range of influences that participants see have shaped their ideas about social justice prior to their attendance at the BSP programme. What is of significance at this stage is that it was to take formal teaching to crystallise these experiences as springboards for

action about injustice. Carol was the only participant who entered the programme wanting to address issues of injustice. *'That whole justice base was one of the things that really attracted me to the course.'* Even so, her focus then was confined to the individual, personal dimensions of such problems. Andrea wanted to change things for people, *'but not having the words to describe it to myself even.'* Jo knew about issues of social injustice, but, *'I didn't think I could do anything.'* Formal teaching and learning experiences of the BSP programme were what expanded their understandings about social injustice and gave the participants the tools to do something about it.

### **SKETCHING THE OUTLINE: LEARNING FROM THE BACHELOR OF SOCIAL PRACTICE PROGRAMME**

All participants acknowledged the huge contribution that the BSP programme made to their commitment to 'just practice'. For all of them, the programme provided the tools and the impetus to take up social justice as a strong feature of their social practice. Here the picture takes on the outlines of knowledge and understandings. Formulations of what social justice looks like in practice are being laid down on the canvas. These understandings are many and varied. It is pertinent to introduce here two overseas studies that have looked at how social workers have talked about social justice in relation to their role and work. These studies are introduced here rather than earlier in the literature review, because their focus is on what social practitioners have said about social justice in their practice or aspirations for practice, paralleling the current stage of discussion of this study. My earlier literature reviews in chapters two, three and six had looked more broadly at the discourses of social justice within practice, and what the teaching literature had to say about 'just practices'.

#### ***Australian Study***

The first is the study referred to earlier in chapter three, from which I drew the terms of social justice in practice that I have used throughout this study. This was an Australian investigation of the use by beginning and experienced social workers of social justice terminology. (Hawkins, Fook & Ryan, 2001). It was a side study to two larger research projects about social workers and their practice, looking at their knowledge and skills development. The aim of this study was to explore how much social justice is a feature of practice descriptions by social workers, for whom social justice is expected to be a key principle of their practice. Transcripts of sixty interviews with beginning and experienced social workers (30 of each) from the above mentioned studies

were analysed to identify the use of social justice terms and other themes. What the study found was that social justice terms were little used, even when discussing scenarios of practice where social justice issues featured significantly. Rather, the language was what the writers called 'professional', more oriented to clinical or therapeutic discourses. The orientation of the language was also to an individual rather than a structural level, which would have been more reflective of social justice terminology (Ibid).

The study also found that very few social workers used social justice terms. Only two of the thirty experienced social workers used more than two social justice terms, and eighteen used none at all. Among the beginning social workers usage was also confined to a minority (Ibid).

Differences between the structure of this Australian study and my study are such that comparisons can be made only in limited areas. The Australian study was much larger and covert, in that the focus on social justice was unknown to the social workers who participated, whereas my study of social justice had a smaller number of participants who knew that social justice was its focus. While the whole orientation of responses from my participants was to present their thoughts in relationship to the discourses of social justice, the Australian participants usually chose to take up discourses from 'professional' practice. Another point of contrast is the orientation to an individual focus in their practice that predominated among the Australian responses to the work scenarios that were presented to them. In my study, two participants maintained solely an individual focus in their practice, albeit making use of advocacy on behalf of their clients. The other four all talked about structural intervention as practices they used or aspired to, alongside of their work with individuals. Perhaps, however, my participants may align with the minority of the Australian interviewees for whom social justice was also a more dominant discourse, given their interest in participating in this study. Perhaps too there are differences in the way in which social justice is understood in the two societies and the perception of practice in the two countries.

### ***British Study***

The second study for discussion was a British study, which explored aspects of experiential learning. The study compared what mental images of practice, teaching and social work students bring with them when they enter training and how this imagery influenced the development of their professional identity and practice. What is noteworthy for my study is that:

'The social workers invariably saw themselves as engaged in a political process ... There was a permeation of belief that social work is practised within a social environment of unequal access to life opportunities, and that as social workers they would have a direct responsibility towards the empowerment of their clients.' (Gould & Harris, 1996:232).

A commitment to social justice is a strong expectation of these social work students for their practice. These beliefs appeared to have flowed through from the social work education that they received, albeit with some resistance to it where it appeared to be a demand for political correctness in class rather than a more genuine message. (Gould & Harris, 1996). This widespread acceptance of a commitment to social justice in the social work students carries a stronger message than is heard in the Australian study. While the participants of my study share the commitment to social justice, viewing social practice as a political process was a discourse that only Carol took up specifically. However taking on a role of empowerment in relation to their clients was a discourse that most of my participants accessed and all, I think, would have acknowledged.

### **Brush Strokes from the BSP programme**

A review of the major ways in which the BSP programme contributed to the development of a commitment in participants to 'just practice' shapes the outlines of the main features of this picture. Structural understandings provide broad frameworks for recognising what justice and injustice looks like for practitioners and their clients. Techniques of practice shape up features in the foreground, providing the tools for 'just practice.' Experiential learning drawn from both negative and positive experiences in the daily experience of the programme and from the opportunities of 'doing' during practicums adds colour and texture to this painting. Inspiration and commitment drawn from the example and passion of lecturers and practitioners enrich the colours on the canvas.

#### ***Structural understandings***

Providing different structural perspectives within which to understand new and past learning was a major way that helped most of the participants to advance their understandings about social justice. *'My eyes were totally thrown open to issues...political situations that created disparity or inequity'* (Barbara). Theoretical learning on the BSP programme did this in a variety of areas. The practice models and underpinning theories of community development and narrative

counselling were two practice modalities that appeared to have the greatest resonance for participants in terms of their development of understandings around 'just practice'. Both Barbara and Carol found that community development offered them more potent ways to address their commitments to social justice than counselling, which they chose as their intended mode of practice at enrolment. Both switched from the counselling stream at the end of their first or second year of study. They chose instead to study the community development courses and to graduate under this major. Pat talked of the learning about social justice that community development theory had provided. Learning about systems theory and the way that wider social structures impact on individuals and families also provided Carol with useful analytical tools. Teachings about feminism and racism and other areas of structural oppression and discrimination highlighted further dimensions of structural inequality that also advanced the commitment of participants about social injustice. *'Ripene... made me feel impassioned about the plight of Maori in this country.'* (Andrea).

Racism and sexism are acknowledged as prime seats of endemic injustice in our society. (Ife, 1995, Dominelli & McLeod, 1989, Dominelli, 1997, Thompson, 1997, 1998, Walker, 1990). They represent key elements of structural inequality that Rawls (1971) identified as a key tenet to be addressed if a fair society is to be achieved. (Rawls, 1971). They have consequently become major sites of 'just practice' as has been discussed earlier in my reviews of both the general and teaching literature of 'just practice' in chapters three and six respectively. Interestingly, none of the participants accessed specific discourses of feminist or anti-racist practice, although the experiences that they have related suggest that principles of feminism and anti-racism were informing their 'just practice'. Instead more general terms of 'empowerment', 'fairness', and 'valuing people' are discourses through which anti-discrimination is presented.

### ***Techniques of Practice***

Applying learning about counselling to current work was how Kate saw 'just practice' operating. *'Providing that environment, making them [clients] feel safe ...comfortable, trying to be non-judgmental.'* Both Kate and Andrea talked of their work as walking alongside people on their journey. Andrea also drew on the narrative practice ideas of *'taking each person's story and their strengths and their meaning making of it'* in elaborating on her 'just practices.' Valuing uncertainty ahead of certainty and the honouring of people as the experts about themselves, were other ideas that Andrea and Jo had drawn from narrative practice.

Carol also valued learning about systematic processes for practice. *'To look at how we do, what we do, why we do it and what we hope to achieve and how we are going to know.'* She saw this solid framework for practice supporting her aspirations to develop as a 'just practitioner'.

Specific techniques drawn from Rogerian client-centred practice, which underpinned practices of client empowerment and Glasser's choice theory, which Pat used to advance the cause of clients in the Justice system, as described earlier in chapter seven, were other helpful sites of learning. Colourful splashes of learning are brightening the landscape.

### ***Experiential learning***

All of the participants talked about experiences during their practicums that advanced their commitment to and understanding of 'just practice'. These experiences included identifying unjust structures that worked against the interests of clients. *'Dealing with the dysfunctions in the institution and organisations, rather than the actual people who need the input or the resources.'* (Carol). Identifying with the oppressive situations of many clients advanced commitment. *'Working with victims ...strengthen[ed] my desire to go out there and work for and with people who aren't getting a fair go.'* (Andrea). Experiencing success in changing unjust situations, seeing their early attempts at 'just practice' bear fruit was especially powerful.

*'It was about communication with the faculty...asking them to understand "This is a different way of doing things, I know, but will you give it a go?" ...And they did and that was an awesome, awesome space to be in.'* Andrea

Some of the participants talked of various experiences during the three years on the BSP programme that were at odds with the teaching of 'just practice'. *'It was the opposite of what we'd been taught. That's a case when I did challenge.'* (Andrea). Another talked of what she described as 'colonisation in reverse', feeling a sense of injustice from being grouped and labelled: *'put in a separate box. "You don't understand, you're pakeha"'* (Kate). Teaching on the BSP programme has sensitised students to issues of injustice and to expectations that their practice will address injustices that their clients may be experiencing. Experiencing injustice themselves within the BSP programme must then strike participants as both incongruous as well as unjust. Of significance is that not only did Andrea and Kate identify the incongruity of these experiences, but in both cases they challenged them. Kate verbalised her protest within classroom discussions

and Andrea's challenge to the course lecturers resulted in a subsequent change to procedures. Both had gained the confidence and skills to stand against injustice. It is also a tribute to the openness of the programme that they could challenge without undue risk to themselves as students and their vulnerability in that role, and to the learning that they have taken from the programme. Realisations are drawn from multiple experiences, and learning creates a multi-layered picture.

### *Learning by example*

A site of learning that participants found very inspirational was the example that their lecturers provided for them. Modelling is a key element of any teaching processes and for students engaged in taking on roles and the ways of being of a practice field, the daily illustrations of their teachers is likely to be influential, whether positively or negatively. Several of the lecturers were mentioned as having inspired the participants, as this illustration demonstrates. *'She was just a real, true, just practitioner.... She's got a heart for the work. She's really good at what she does and she's nurturing.'* (Andrea). Congruity between teaching and practice strengthens the message: "the medium is the message."

The Bachelor of Social Practice programme has inspired these participants to take up the challenge of being 'just practitioners'. It has provided the structures and theoretical frameworks for participants to make sense of the world through particular lenses that highlight the structural as well as individual seats of injustice that permeate our society. More importantly it has given participants some tools to address these injustices and opportunities to 'try themselves out' as practitioners who can do things to address some of the inequalities and oppression that clients encounter in their daily lives. Social practitioners work at the margins of society. At times the work is ameliorative, helping clients to achieve better options for themselves and their families within the given social structures. Other work puts its efforts into improving those structures, to widen the opportunities and lessen the inequalities of our 'unjust world'. (Caputo, 2002: 343).

## **ENRICHING THE CANVAS - THE PERFORMANCE OF 'JUST PRACTICE'**

Our participants have contributed their personal stories that have informed their interest in social justice. To this has been added the rich understandings and skills that they have gained from

their learning on the BSP programme, blending vibrant hues, as the picture develops depth and structure. What sense have they made of this commitment and learning as they have entered the world of social practice? What aspirations do they hold for their future 'just practices'? How do these aspirations relate to what other writers have said about 'just practice'? The conclusion of this thesis blends together the shades and textures of these final brush-strokes of their stories. Gaps left in our understanding that provide possibilities for future canvasses are also identified.

### **Aspirations for 'just practice'**

Study participants see their role as 'just practitioners' working in different ways. Carol wants her professional practice to be *'informed by those principles of justice and equity.'* For Barbara, her practice goal is *'to have a society where everyone can have the same opportunities.'* Their aspirations for social justice fit with Rawls' principles of justice, providing for equality of opportunity and redress of inequalities. (Rawls, 1971). The fields of social practice all espouse a commitment to social justice in varying degrees. The divergence of practice in two directions early in its history into social casework, working for change in individuals and community work, working for institutional change set the scene for an ongoing debate. This debate has maintained an underlying presence in this study. Wakefield (1988) saw a commitment to social justice resolving this debate, by providing a 'both-and' solution. The goal of social justice encompassed both micro and macro levels of practice. This view of social justice was supported by Haynes (1998), who required practitioners to address both 'private troubles and public issues.' (Haynes, 1998).

### ***Social Work Practices***

Participants in this study have reflected work in both of these arenas. For the two social work practitioners their work has been largely focussed on the working with the 'private troubles' of their clients. Advocacy, empowerment and aspects of respectful practice that honour clients and enable them to make positive changes in their lives have been the 'just practices' that these participants have discussed. Both were working for organisations where their role involved 'gate-keeping' as part of the service provision to clients. Both were very conscious of the power and potential for oppressive practice that this role carries. As Kate put it: *'That's justice for the client ...if you've got professionals doing what they're supposed to do.'* Pat identified how she used particular techniques of intervention to gain information about the clients so as to be able to advocate effectively for them. *' I can only help them if I can get an idea of what's going on ...Getting that stuff out helps me to provide a better service to them, so to me that's social*

*justice.*' Alongside of this, elements of client-centred practice such as showing respect towards the clients, building trust and offering non-judgement were practices learned on the BSP programme that she saw supporting her 'just practice'.

Practice here is at the micro level, concerned with promoting the two Rawlsian (1971) principles of access to life opportunities, where the advocacy role comes to the fore, and the principle of providing positive discrimination for the underprivileged in order to ensure social equity. For Kate, her work had a child focus.

*'We only ...provide the service if we feel it's in the best interest of the child. So there's some conflict there...people jump up and down a bit. "I have to have it" but we do have the right to decline...I try and stay really focussed on the child and outcomes.'* Kate

The voice of children is often overlooked in an adult-centred world. Kate's support for the voice of children provides protective justice (Chatterjee & D'Aprix, 2002), and functions in the conservative hemisphere of my model, helping to maintain social stability. Pat's work was with people within the Justice system where again some redress of the balance of power is needed in support of these clients. Functions of corrective justice (Ibid) are being sustained and Pat's work within this arena entails advocacy to ensure that clients receive their entitlements. The practice with individuals and families that Kate and Pat have described here is primarily concerned with the first Rawlsian (1971) principle of the provision of civil and political liberties, realised through legislation. Their work is within the conservative hemisphere of my model of change, and supports social stability.

### ***Counselling Practices***

The two counsellors, Andrea and Jo, also worked largely in the sphere of micro work with individuals. Use of the narrative modality of counselling practice featured strongly in Andrea's work, where respectful practices supported the voice of clients and the hearing and honouring of their stories. *'Everybody is unique with their own values and stories and understandings. I think I offer that to any person. That is part of what social justice is about'* (Andrea). Their counselling is supporting clients to address difficulties and problems that are hindering their opportunities for advancement, and is providing positive discrimination for the underprivileged. They are working in the restorative area of justice (Chatterjee & D'Aprix, 2002), supporting the second Rawlsian (1971) principle of justice of access to life opportunities. Andrea illustrated this well when she

talked of how she worked with a client in a school who was among the '*marginalised, categorised, labelled ...who had a HUGE reputation.*' Using practices of respect and valuing of the student and her story, '*not judging her, not blaming her, not labelling her...eventually she came to a place where she felt that she could trust me and that relationship enough to do the work.*' Her counselling practice here supports someone marginalised within the system. Andrea is ensuring her client has access to life opportunities, in line with Rawls' second principle of justice. Within the structure of my model of 'just practice' she is advancing social justice for this individual client within the existing social system, fulfilling the function of maintaining social stability.

Both counsellors talked of working in institutions that were oppressive to their clients. Andrea was working in a high school, and Jo was practising in a mental health facility. Both counsellors gave illustrations of their work in the macro sphere, which effected changes in these social structures. Discourses of 'giving voice' to what students wanted in the school, and consulting clients and changing procedures that supported them in the mental health service, were heard. '*I asked them 'What do you need? What do you see would be helpful to you? ...And they want it implemented and there's an uproar at the moment about it.'* (Jo). This work supports the third Rawlsian (1971) principle of social justice of ensuring equity for all by providing for change in the institutional structure. Here counsellors have worked at the macro level, advancing social justice, within the radical hemisphere of my model of 'just practice'.

The flexibility of the broader social practitioner role that the BSP programme aspires to for its students is wonderfully demonstrated. Teaching had prepared counsellors, social workers and community development workers to draw from all three of these practice modalities according to the needs of their clients. Both counsellors advocated successfully for their clients to achieve structural change, moving beyond the usual bounds of individually focussed counselling practice. Promoting 'just practice' within the social constructionist context of blurred roles and practice that could adapt to its context has supported this role flexibility.

### ***Community Development Practices***

For the two participants from the community development stream, their practice and aspirations lay within the macro arena of practice. Both talked about their intentions for lobbying and advocacy aimed at those holding power as ways to support structural change.

*'One of the biggest focuses in my personal social justice work is that whole thing of ideology and finding ways of communicating and giving information to people from a variety of different areas of society....to find a way of articulating to the boardrooms and chief executives the idea of injustice and equity in a way that they can understand it and they can begin to change the way they see the world.'* Carol

Barbara was not currently working in a social services agency, but used her community development skills to a limited extent in her current position. She also had some involvement as a volunteer with a group advocating in the mental health field. Carol was also supporting groups to access current resources that would strengthen their political position, working here in support of the Rawlsian (1971) principle of the provision of freedom and participation in society. Their practice and aspirations here were focussed on the macro level of practice, using community development processes, lobbying and advocacy to promote social change, illustrating work within the left-hand hemisphere of my model of 'just practice' and change.

The work and aspirations of these beginning practitioners have provided bright patches of colour across the canvas, filling out the designs that the teaching programme had provided.

### **Advocacy - Giving Voice**

A fascinating aspect of this study has been the wide array of ways in which participants have interpreted the practice of social justice. All participants have given instances of advocating for or otherwise supporting clients to gain access to resources within the current welfare system. These activities have extended across a wide range of fields of practice: advocating for clients of the Work and Income system; supporting children and young people in schools: *'I wanted to work with young people and nurture their strength of spirit.'* (Andrea). Speaking out for clients in the mental health system; fulfilling a gatekeeper role in favour of clients within the justice system: *'I will ring lawyers and different people and say, "Look, you know this isn't okay."* (Kate). The advocacy role is in some respects the 'bottom line' activity of 'just practice'. It is a role that all professions that claim social justice as a principle of practice expect of their members, as discussed earlier in chapter two. It is a practice that ranges across the spectrum of change. From the ANZASW there is an expectation that, 'social workers should advocate policies and legislation that promote social justice and improved social conditions' (NZASW, 1993: 12), working for social change. This role is supported by AASW (1990) and features also in the general practice literature. (Adams, et al, 1998, Payne, 1997). Alongside of this, as seen in the examples quoted above, much advocacy helps clients to get a better deal for themselves from the existing

structures, strategies that support social stability (Chatterjee & D'Aprix, 2002) and align with the conservative hemisphere of my model of 'just practice' and change.

Another way that advocacy works to support social justice is through the giving of voice, informing society, again a role expected of practitioners by the professions. (AASW, 1990, ACA, 1995, NZAC, 2002, NZASW, 1993). Often writing by practitioners (as opposed to teachers or policy-makers) fulfils this role, bringing into the public arena client or practice issues that impact on clients. Articles on sexual abuse of people with intellectual disabilities (Brook, 1997), miscarriage, (Cameron, 1997), working with people with dementia, (Schofield, 1997), are examples gleaned from a scan of one issue of the ANZASW journal. As Kate said about what she had gained from the UNITEC teaching programme, *'I've found my own voice, but I think I've found a voice for others as well.'* Social practitioners are in a privileged position in that they are often the ones who hear the stories of disadvantage or injustice. Publicising that knowledge for a wider audience is one way of taking individual problems to a wider arena as a strategy of gaining support to address injustices or advance the clients' interests.

### **Valuing People**

Participants spoke of the practices of respect that they had learned from the BSP programme. These included values of non-judgement, appreciating the uniqueness of each person, recognising the expertness that individuals have in relation to themselves, that they know themselves best. The contributions that these practices make to reaching socially just outcomes for individuals is achieved through recognising and growing the positive dimensions of each individual's self knowledge.

*'I come from a place of valuing my clients...That everybody is unique with their own values and stories and understandings ...That is a part of what social justice is about.'* Andrea

*'I think as human beings we respond the most to feeling safe and empowered and actually choices generated through options, not the removal of options...the power of love!'* Carol

Underpinning their aspirations for 'just practice' is the valuing of each individual. As one participant put it: *'that I'm no more special or deserved than anybody else,'*(Carol) the valuing of all humanity.

## Brokering Power

Ensuring 'a fair go' for clients is an approach shared by all participants. This approach supports Rawls' principle of social justice of supporting access to life opportunities for clients insofar as the social structure already provides for their needs. The fact that clients need an advocate to ensure or support access to fairness from 'the system' brings to the fore discourses of power. The position of greater power that the professional voice has in making itself heard, and that can work both for and against clients' interests, is a salient factor. For Jo, her first workplace after graduation brought shocking realisation: *'I don't see clients' interests being served at the moment, I see staff interests being served.'*

The gatekeeper role that social practitioners often hold is a feature of many social practice positions. *'I have a lot of power in this job over clients, but I'm very aware of that. It's always there and I don't - I hope I don't misuse it.'* (Kate). The way that institutions often become seats of injustice by virtue of their bureaucracy illustrates another dimension of power that Carol reflected on: *'Working within institutional structures that have a certain amount of process that is actually quite disempowering for people who are at the bottom of the food chain.'* (Carol).

As discussed in chapter three, power and powerlessness feature strongly in the 'just practice' literature of the 1990s onwards, with feminist and anti-racist movements making their voices heard. Giving greater acknowledgment and agency to clients through empowerment, anti-oppressive, narrative and strengths-based practices were some of the responses used to address the power imbalances in the worker-client relationship. Specific feminist, anti-discriminatory and racially sensitive models and practice processes were also developed to address these social issues. Post-structural theory and practices (Pease, 1999b, Parker et al, 1999), which acknowledged both the dimension of power in all relationships and its changing nature, provided other approaches to this issue. As well it provided the theory that underpins narrative and critical practice, again features of the literature discussions in chapter three.

Advocacy often worked to support both the immediate client/s and others that followed. Where change was introduced on behalf of a group of clients, the realm of change went up a notch, moving from the micro level of practice to the macro level. Change was then introduced at an institutional or structural level.

While some participants wanted to change the world, another was clear about the opposite:

*'I wasn't a person that applied to want to change the world. I just wanted to be with people and walk with people and assist them in any way I can.'* Kate

### **Countering the dominant discourses**

The taken for granted nature of our responses to the world we grow up in is one of the powerful forces maintaining continued injustice. Social constructionist thought recognises how powerfully discourses shape our world. (Burr, 1992, Foucault, 1980, Gergen, 2001, Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Countering the discourse was a theme that featured strongly for our participants in different ways. As discussed in chapter five, resisting discourses of social norms, recognising the destructive power that certain of these have for many people, was an aspiration that Barbara and Andrea had for their practice with both individuals and communities. Carol set her sights on addressing taken for granted learning in the interests of social justice with a different target audience in mind. As a person who came from a background of privilege, her aim was to work with *'her own people'*.

*'When you're surrounded by people who have been socialised into a set of values and beliefs and norms that they don't even realise they've been socialised into, that it's just normal to them, and everyone should think like that. ...My personal challenge to myself in terms of social justice [is to] ... find a way to work community development ...with the 'haves', with the people who have got the power and resources to actually effect change.'* Carol

### **Sustaining Oneself**

This study has been listening to the voices of beginning practitioners. The fields of social practice make particular demands on practitioners, as they work alongside people who are struggling with difficulties in their lives. As I alluded to earlier in the chapter, much social practice occurs at the margins of society, with those who are not 'getting a fair go' or are not coping well in their community. For all practitioners in the field, sustaining oneself is an issue. Self-care, the use of supervision and maintaining a network of professional colleagues from whom one can draw support are some of the familiar discourses heard about this subject. (Beddoe & Worrall, 2000, Crocket, 2002, McMahon & Patton, 2002). For beginning practitioners, especially ones such as these participants are, who are taking social justice into the heart of their practice, it is not surprising that the theme of sustaining oneself in practice emerged. Discourses about maintaining their commitment to 'just practice' took different turns. As beginning practitioners they are still

finding their feet in their agencies. They have all had less than a year of postgraduate practice. Understandably there is tentativeness about their practice.

*'Although the challenge is really good, I'm not sure I'm that good at it...It's an ongoing learning thing as far as I'm concerned.'* Carol

One talked of struggling to find ways to practice in a work environment that did not support 'just practices'.

*'It's how to do it really...I assumed that it would just happen naturally because the organisation would be just, or a certain way that I would be able to fit into. So it came as a shock to find that that wasn't the case.'* Jo

While she had some successes in doing things differently referred to earlier in this chapter, she was struggling with a sense of 'giving in' to the system:

*'I very quickly have learnt to play the game, if you like. And it's got an enormous cost on me to do that, because it's compromising everything I said I wasn't going to do.'* Jo

The study interview had brought her face to face with a major dilemma.

*'Do I follow my values and leave the job... and thereby abandon a great group of clients ...Do I walk away, chuck in the towel or try to work with it? ...submit or leave? And that really bothers me greatly because of the things I said and thought I was committed to.'* Jo

Her commitment to 'just practice' on behalf of her clients was presenting her a choice, to stay or to go, where both paths felt like 'lose-lose' options. How was she to sustain herself in an environment hostile to her intentions and sense of herself as a 'just practitioner' if she was to stay, or should she leave and abandon clients to whom she felt committed? What was currently sustaining her was the use of external supervision, which provided her with a regular, safe forum outside her agency where she could address this ongoing dilemma.

Others talked of the struggles and difficulties in sustaining their commitment in the way they wanted to:

*'I don't want to lose that ability to self-reflect and self supervise'. And I do that, and I hope I don't lose that ability, because it's important.'* Kate

There is a sense of tenuousness, drawn from observing fellow practitioners absorbed into the stresses of their work and losing perspective. Her comment about these workers had been to ask: *'Where's their supervision?'* She recognises for herself the vital roles that self-reflection and self-monitoring play in supporting her 'just practice'. As a beginning practitioner, though, there is a concern being voiced that these practices could become swallowed up in busyness.

For another, doubts surface about whether it is all too big. Her sense of social justice and her role as she sees it for herself as a 'just practitioner' at times threatens to overwhelm her.

*'I would hope that my understanding of justice will inform whatever I do and wherever I am in terms of my professional life ... I do find that at times really, really difficult. Yeah, I guess the more I become aware of justice issues, the more difficult it becomes to exist, I guess, in an unjust society. And I find that that is probably my biggest challenge, is actually to know how to survive without it destroying me.'* Carol

Maintaining the bright luminescence of idealism and just practices that they have learned and taken up strong commitments to, comes with more sombre colours of doubts and dilemmas as these beginning practitioners confront the real world of practice. To adapt the words of Reisch, how do they sustain the commitment to social justice within a socially unjust world?

### **Further Research**

This study has been interested primarily in exploring the beginning stages of 'just practice': the aspirations for this and what has contributed to these. Wider studies with greater numbers of participants, both beginning and experienced practitioners would provide more comprehensive information than was the intent of this study. This study has also exposed the dearth of research about this area of practice, both here in Aotearoa New Zealand and elsewhere. The meanings of 'just practice' would also take on very different hues for indigenous and minority practitioners. Research from these perspectives would provide valuable information for practice and teaching.

The literature on teaching practices that support aspirations for and practices of social change has presented a series of examples of discrete teaching and learning practice areas that advance the uptake of a commitment to social justice as discussed in chapter seven. Viewed in the context of social practice teaching literature generally, this is an area that has received comparatively little study. There is room for considerably more attention to be given to it. In Aotearoa New Zealand writing on the subject is sparse and the field is wide open for future scholars.

Only one writer, De Maria, (1992) wrote of how his part of a teaching programme was supported or otherwise by other parts of the programme. As a theme that runs through programmes, and a topic that is taught under many different guises, how well the theme of social justice in practice is taught within a teaching programme becomes a major research topic. Research into more integrated teaching practices in support of 'just practices' would be another fruitful area for exploration.

The doubts that these beginning practitioners have raised about sustaining their commitment to 'just practices' point to areas for further research around what sustains 'just practitioners' in the field. While the use of supervision has received much attention as a primary site of practitioner support (Bennie, 1995), practices such as forming alliances both inside and outside the workplace, making use of professional networks and joining both professional associations and relevant lobby groups have received little research attention. Longitudinal studies on what helps or hinders practitioners to sustain their commitment to 'just practice' would help to illuminate this aspect of practice.

### **Teaching Practices**

This study has reviewed the UNITEC BSP programme for the way it has advanced the cause of social justice as an aspiration for social practice, together with teaching literature on this subject. The study participants have identified a wide range of learning that they gained from the programme that has achieved this aim. While experiences of injustice during the programme that participants identified are obvious sites for remedy, albeit that specific circumstances at the time may have given rise to these experiences, what are the other areas of learning from this study for this teaching programme and social practice teaching programmes more generally?

The salient features of the BSP programme that participants have identified as having supported or developed their commitments to 'just practice' are:

- the influence that community development studies had in advancing awareness of 'just practices',
- narrative practice as a forum that advanced liberatory practices when working with individuals,

- practicum experiences, where participants came face to face with 'real world' practices that informed their commitment to social justice in a myriad of ways,
- many parts of the programme that developed structural analysis and analytical thinking,
- tools of practice that again were gained from different parts of the programme that practitioners could use in furthering social justice in their practice,
- the power of the example and commitment that lecturers brought to their teaching practices, and finally
- the Just Practice course that provided an integrating process for the uptake of this principle of practice.

What I see would strengthen the uptake of social justice as a practice principle on this programme are more specific opportunities for students to undertake 'just practices'. Case study analysis, such as De Maria (1992) made use of, and more structured use of material from fieldwork practicums are possible strategies that could be incorporated into this and other teaching programmes. Specific focus on the topic of social justice in each year of the programme as is provided in the Just Practice course in Year Three, would provide a more focussed integration of it into the curriculum. Alongside of more learning on how to do it, sits the area of sustaining practitioners in maintaining social justice as a feature of their practice. Practices beyond supervision that enable practitioners to maintain themselves and hold to their aspirations for 'just practice' could be brought into the Just Practice course.

### **The Wider World of Practice and the Professions**

Maintaining social justice within one's practice is a topic for wider consideration by agencies and the professions. Are practice issues brought to agency staff meetings where the broader implications can be recognised and acted on? Are staff able to use agency time to write submissions, address internal or external structural issues, or do work in support of their professional association that advances social justice? How active are the professional associations and their members in Aotearoa New Zealand in raising and following up issues of social injustice pertinent to their clients? Most of the contribution to the work of professional associations by members is done as voluntary effort. Much of the writing for professional publications similarly is done as an 'add on' to one's paid professional practice, rather than as an integral part of it. Amid the inspiration and passion that the beginning practitioners have brought to this study, vital issues about how 'just practices' are supported and sustained in the world of

practice are raised. These issues present as fruitful areas for consideration by agencies and by the professions as well as identifying areas worthy of further research.

### **Conclusion of the Study**

Their life stories have developed in these participants their leanings towards issues of social justice and set them on the path to a career in social practice, helping others. Warm background tones have tinted the canvas. From the Bachelor of Social Practice programme they have gained the words and the mental constructs for putting past and new experiences into more coherent understandings. Along with these understandings have come the blossoming of intentions for and commitment to 'just practices'. Structure and texture have given shape to the picture. Venturing into the worlds of social practice, their 'just practice' intentions and aspirations have been both strengthened and challenged. Their aspirations and practices have encompassed the four principles of social justice that have provided a framework of understanding for this study. Their discourses of 'just practices' have featured across the political continuum from maintaining social stability, especially in work with individuals, to advancing social change, through advocacy and strategies that have addressed individual issues at structural levels, supporting change for many. Doubts too have surfaced as beginning practitioners take their first steps of their practice journey and face the challenges of new practice environments. Strong colours both bright and sombre have filled in the canvas, painting a picture full of passion and commitment. What shines out most strongly is the strength of the aspirations for 'just practice' from all the participants. Pat summed it up for them all when describing the link between social practice and social justice:

*'I don't believe you can have professional practice if you haven't got social justice.'*

29 October 2001

Mary Gray  
14 Telford Ave  
Balmoral  
AUCKLAND 4

Dear Mary

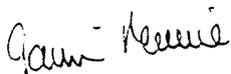
I am very pleased to endorse your thesis proposal 'Just Practice and the Beginning Social Practitioner' in which you plan to interview some of our students who are about to graduate from the Bachelor of Social Practice programme.

The research into how students develop their commitment to social justice in their practice and how the Bachelor of Social Practice programme has contributed to that, will provide valuable information for us in how we shape and teach the programme for the future.

I understand that you will obtain ethical approval before formally approaching students to participate in the research.

I am pleased to give you every cooperation in accessing the relevant material from the programme that can assist with this research. As I have already indicated to you, there is no problem with you attending the remaining classes of the 'Just Practice' course this year. You are well known to the students, and I understand that they are also agreeable to you attending the classes.

Yours sincerely



Gavin Rennie  
HEAD OF SCHOOL

## Appendix 2

Dear Just Practice students

### Thesis Proposal

I am writing to tell you about my thesis proposal, which I have called 'Just Practice and the Beginning Social Practitioner'. In this study I wish to explore how you as beginning social practitioners (students about to graduate) have developed your commitment to just practice within your future social practice. What 'just practice' means to you and what part your personal stories and the BSP programme have had in the development of this commitment.

### Ethical Approval

I have yet to obtain ethical approval for my research, and so will not be making a formal approach to any of you until I obtain this, which will hopefully be before the end of this year.

### Research Process

I shall be seeking to interview six or seven of you for this study, as well as read your 'Just Practice' assignments and have a follow-up focus group of e-mail group conversation about the findings with you. The timeframe I have set for this is:

- Write to you formally in December or January
- Interviews in February
- Follow-up focus group or e-mail group conversations in May-June.

### Requests

At this stage, I would like to ask you about two things in particular.

Are you happy for me to attend your oral presentation and take notes that would provide some background information for this study?

Name: ..... Yes  No

Are you interested in being approached to take part in this study? This involves no agreement to participate at this stage, as that is what I would be asking you later on. I would then explain more fully about the study and the conditions for your participation. I realise many of you may not know what your circumstances may be in a few months' time, as you seek work or start it. What I would like to obtain is the contact details of those interested in this study. If you are interested in providing me with contact details so that I can approach you please fill in the information below:

Name: .....Phone No. ....

Address: .....

.....E-mail (if available) .....

I am really excited about this study, and hope that those of you who do participate will find it equally exciting. Gavin Rennie has given his endorsement to my research, and a copy of my thesis will be provided to the School of Community Studies. If you want to talk to me further about this please ring me at (W) 630 8961 or (H) 629 1002.

Yours sincerely

Mary Gray 24.10.01.

16 January 2002

Mary Gray  
C/o Ms J Worrall & Associate-Professor Mike O'Brien  
School of Social & Cultural Studies  
Massey University  
Albany

Dear Mary

**HUMAN ETHICS APPROVAL APPLICATION: MUAHEC 01/057:  
"Just practice and the beginning Social Worker"**

Thank you for your application. It has been fully considered, and approved by the Massey University, Albany Campus, Human Ethics Committee.

Any departure from the approved application will require you to return this project to the Human Ethics Committee, Albany Campus, for further consideration and approval.

Yours sincerely

**Associate-Professor Kerry Chamberlain  
CHAIRPERSON,  
MASSEY UNIVERSITY, ALBANY CAMPUS  
HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE**

CC Ms J Worrall & Associate-Professor Mike O'Brien, School of Social & Cultural Studies,  
Massey University, Albany

**Appendix 4**

School of Social and Cultural Studies  
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Albany  
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**23 August 02**

**THESIS STUDY: JUST PRACTICE AND THE BEGINNING SOCIAL PRACTITIONER**

Dear

You will recall that last year you expressed interest in hearing further from me about this study, which I am undertaking towards my Masters in Social Work. I am now at the stage of seeking participants for interviews and a follow-up focus group, and would like to invite you to be one of these.

I plan to interview two each from the community development, social work and counselling streams, and will take the first two from each of these groups that I hear back from. Once I have done some sifting through of the themes coming out of the interviews I will discuss the material further with you in a focus group.

Enclosed is an Information sheet, which more fully explains this study.

I found the Just Practice presentations that I attended at the end of last year very interesting and am looking forward to this next stage of hearing about how your practices have been shaped by your life experiences and the Bachelor of Social Practice programme experiences.

If you are interested in taking part please phone or e-mail me. We will then arrange an interview at a time that suits us both. You can ring me on 630 8961 (Home & Family Society) or 2799 539 (Home) to make contact or if you have any further questions.  
I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Mary Gray  
114 Chapel Rd  
East Tamaki  
AUCKLAND  
[mgray@ihug.co.nz](mailto:mgray@ihug.co.nz)



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## Just Practice and the Beginning Social Practitioner

### Information Sheet

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Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

Massey University

***What is this study about?***

The aim of this study is to explore how you as beginning social practitioners (newly graduated) from the Bachelor of Social Practice programme at UNITEC Institute of Technology have developed your commitment to just practice within your social practice. What part have your own personal stories, and the Bachelor of Social Practice programme had in the development of this commitment?

***What would you have to do?***

If you agree to take part you will be asked to participate in three ways.

**First**, by providing a copy of the written assignment you submitted for the Just Practice paper.

**Second**, by participating in a one-hour interview. During this interview you will be invited to talk about the issues described above. Your interview will be audiotaped. A copy of the transcript will be returned to you for correction.

**Third**, by participating in a focus group, once I as researcher have done sifting out of the themes from the assignments and interviews. You will be asked for your comments and further thoughts on the themes. This will probably happen in late November or early December. I expect it to take up to an hour and a half.

*What are your rights?*

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

- ❖ refuse to answer any question and to withdraw from the study up to the time of completion of the focus group discussions
- ❖ ask any further questions about the study that occur to you during the participation
- ❖ provide information on the understanding that it is completely confidential to the researcher, her supervisors and the person who types up the transcripts. All records will be identifiable only by code number, and will be seen only by the researcher. It will not be possible to identify you in any reports that result from the study.
- ❖ have access to your own material.
- ❖ be given a summary of the findings from the study when it is concluded.

In the event of any personal issues arising for you as a consequence of the interview or focus group, free counselling will be made available to you with a person mutually agreed on.

I am happy to answer any other questions you may have.

If you are interested in taking part please get in touch. We will then arrange an interview at a time that suits us both. Please ring me at work on 630 8961 (Home and Family Society) or at home 2799 539.

Mary Gray

## Themes and questions for co-researching (interviewing) conversations.

### Introduction

As you know I am undertaking a piece of research looking at how beginning social practitioners take up the idea of social justice in their practice. I'd like to ask you a range of questions about this.

### A. Interviewee's understanding of just practice.

1. Can I start by asking you your understanding of social practice?
2. Now can I ask you about your understanding of social justice?
3. What are some of the key words or phrases you would use to describe social justice?
4. What does social justice mean for you in terms of your social practice?

### B. Personal life stories that connect to social justice concerns and commitments

5. You seem to have a well-formed idea of what social justice means for you --  
[keywords and phrases interviewee has used]
6. Thinking back over your life, were there any major influences that may have shaped your ideas about or interest in social justice?
7. Can you recall any early life events that may have shaped your thinking about social justice?  
[further probing of what is offered]
8. Are there some special happenings or experiences that have informed these ideas?
9. What are the themes of social justice or injustice that have resonated for you in terms of your own life?
10. What are your own beliefs or values that have informed your practice of social justice?
11. Did you have the idea of addressing social justice issues when you applied for the BSP programme?  
  
[If so, were there particular ideas about social injustice that drew you into social practice?]
12. Who from your early life [or family and friends] would be least surprised to hear that you have taken up social practice work?

13. What would they have to say about this and about your commitments to and purposes for such professional identity?

**C. Teaching and learning practice on the BSP programme that have supported just practice purposes.**

14. Have any experiences on the BSP programme have helped you to develop your commitment to social justice in your practice?

15. If so, were there particular courses (papers) or topics that awakened or advanced your commitments to and purposes for social justice in significant ways?

16. What about readings or assignments?

17. Were there any particular lecturers that advanced your commitment? If so, how did they do this?

18. What about your placement experiences?

19. What of this learning has connected to your own values and beliefs? How has it impacted on these?

**C. Professional practice**

20. How do you see social justice and your stories in terms of your (current/ future) professional practice ?

21. How do ideas of social justice and professional practice fit together for you? Are they quite separate or quite linked together? If so, is the 'fit' very firm, loose, or somewhere in between?

Some of the words and themes of social justice in practice that you have talked of during our interview have been .....What ones of these resonate for you especially?

22. What do they connect with for you in your practice so far?

23. Are there other aspects of just practice that you would like to tell me about?

**Thank you for your time. I shall transcribe our interview and send you a copy of it for you to check for any errors or misunderstandings. I shall then be drawing on the material from the interview in an anonymous way, for an initial analysis of the responses.**

**Once I have interviewed everyone and have drawn out the themes of what everyone is saying, I shall contact you to take part in a focus group of all the participants, to discuss what you are all saying about this topic and what further ideas you may have about this.**



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**Just Practice And The Beginning Social Practitioner Study**

**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 understand that I may ask further questions at any time.
- ❖ I understand I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time up to a month following the focus group, and to decline to answer any particular questions.
- ❖ I also understand that I have the right to ask for the audiotape to be turned off at any time during the interview or focus group.
- ❖ I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that my name will not be used without my permission.

The information will be used only for this research and publications and presentations arising from this research project.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signed: .....

Name: .....

Date: .....

## Appendix 8

## Focus Group

**Aims**

To invite participants to identify where their discourses of social justice fit with my scenario of just practice according to the quadrant;

To ask them to critique the quadrant from the point of view of their understandings of just practice.

To have them review their experiences of support for sustaining just practice.

- what practices and people are currently a support for them in their just practice work?
- do they have sufficient support for sustaining this commitment?
- if not, how can they increase the level of support to what they need for just practice work?

**Preparation**

Send them my Interviews analysis to read in preparation for the focus group.

Ask them to look over their interview transcript for the parts around social justice and just practice

**The Focus Group. 1.3.03**

1. **Introduction** about the purpose of the focus group, namely, to involve them in how the material from their interviews fits into social justice and social practice frameworks. What has been left out at this stage, namely their personal stories and the part that the BSP has played in the development of their social justice practice.

2. Would they also like to look at how just practice is operating for them now in their practice?

*Review with them their interview scripts*

**3. Definitions of social practice**

Are there comments that they have about how the material has been described?

Four themes of social justice and how their ideas have been set out in relation to these themes (OHP)

How does this matching seem to them? Are there good fits and not so good fits?

Do they have queries or concerns about how the material is presented? (May need a bit more separate comment on some quotes).

Are there other ways that they would present their discourses?

**4. Just Practice quadrant (OHP)**

i. What comments do you have on the dimensions of the axes - social and political?

ii. How well do the groupings of terms into the quadrants seem to work?

iii. What overlaps would you extend or contract e.g. community development, advocacy?

- iv. Option to take the terms out – they are the techniques used, and at times the same technique may fit all 4 quadrants eg. Advocacy.
- v. Are there any that are discrete – don't fit in any other of the four quadrants?

**5. The fit of their work into the dimensions of the quadrant**

- i. How do these quotes work for them in how they have been set out?
- ii. What would they like to see changed?
- iii. Are there elaborations or different aspects they would like to see emphasised?
- iv. What are your general impressions of how the material fits together?

*Break*

**6. How just practice is now working for them in their practice.**

- a. What practices and people are currently a support for them in their just practice?
  - b. Do they have sufficient support for sustaining this commitment?
- If not, how can they increase the level of support to what they need for their just practice work?

**Conclusion**

I'll rewrite the material incorporating their ideas and e-mail these to them.

**Further work on other discourses from their interviews.**

I'll e-mail them their own personal stories as I put them into the writings and how the BSP course influenced their just practice. Once I've completed the thesis I'll let them know where they can obtain a copy to read, if they want to.

## Appendix 9

**UNITEC BACHELOR OF SOCIAL PRACTICE DEGREE STRUCTURE**

To graduate with a **Bachelor of Social Practice (Social Work)** students must have gained a minimum of 360 credits (12 @ Level 4, 120 @ level 5, 120 @ level 6, 108 @ level 7) and successfully passed all compulsory courses.

Course #	Name	credit	level	compulsory + optional
<b><u>Year 1 Six compulsory courses</u></b>				
08.511	Ripene	18	5	*
08.512	Aotearoa / New Zealand Society	18	5	*
08.513	Professional Practice	18	5	*
08.514	Psychology and Research	18	5	*
08.515	Counselling Micro Skills	18	5	*
08.516	Fieldwork Placement 1	30	5	*
<b><u>Year 2 Six compulsory</u></b>				
08.621	Whanau / Family Systems	18	6	*
08.622	Risk Assessment	18	6	*
08.623	Disabilities and Mental Health	18	6	*
08.616	Fieldwork Placement 2	30	6	*
08.624	Social Change and Development	18	6	*
08.628	Social Work Fields of Practice	18	6	*
<b><u>Year 3 Five compulsory plus two optional</u></b>				
08.731	Management & Organisational Change	18	7	*
08.732	Research Project	18	7	*

30.401 Introduction to Communication 12 4 \*

08.786	Advanced Principles and Theory in Social Work	18	7	*
08.738	Critical Social Work Interventions	18	7	*
08.733	Integrative Practice	18	7	+
08.734	Practice Modalities	18	7	+
08.735	Counselling Fields of Practice	18	7	+
08.737	Creative Therapies	18	7	+
08.716	Community Work Practicum	18	7	+
08.739	Advanced Te Reo	18	7	+
08.740	Tangata Whenua Research	18	7	+
08.741	Women's Studies	18	7	+
08.775	Facilitation negotiation & leadership	18	7	+
08.776	Governance	18	7	+
08.777	Community Research	18	7	+
08.781	Ethical Management for Change	18	7	+
08.782	Volunteerism, Employee Management	18	7	+
08.785	Community Funding & Entrepreneurism	18	7	+

To graduate with a **Bachelor of Social Practice (Counselling)** students must have gained a minimum of 360 credits (12 @ Level 4, 120 @ level 5, 120 @ level 6, 108 @ level 7) and successfully passed all compulsory courses.

Course #	Name	credit	level	compulsory + optional
<b><u>Year 1 Six compulsory courses</u></b>				
08.511	Ripene	18	5	*
08.512	Aotearoa / New Zealand Society	18	5	*
08.513	Professional Practice	18	5	*
08.514	Psychology and Research	18	5	*
08.515	Counselling Micro Skills	18	5	*
08.516	Fieldwork Placement 1	30	5	*
<b><u>Year 2 Six compulsory</u></b>				
08.621	Whanau / Family Systems	18	6	*
08.622	Risk Assessment	18	6	*
08.623	Disabilities and Mental Health	18	6	*
08.616	Fieldwork Placement 2	30	6	*
08.625	Counselling Process	18	6	*
08.627	Micro Skills Lab	18	6	*
<b><u>Year 3 Six compulsory plus 1 optional</u></b>				
08.731	Management & Organisational Change	18	7	*
08.732	Research Project	18	7	*
30.401	Introduction to Communication	12	4	*
08.733	Integrative Practice	18	7	*
08.734	Practice Modalities	18	7	*
08.735	Counselling Fields of Practice	18	7	*
08.737	Creative Therapies	18	7	+

08.716	Community Work Practicum	18	7	+
08.738	Critical S W Interventions	18	7	+
08.739	Advanced Te Reo	18	7	+
08.740	Tangata Whenua Research	18	7	+
08.741	Women's Studies	18	7	+
08.775	Facilitation negotiation & leadership	18	7	+
08.776	Governance	18	7	+
08.777	Community Research	18	7	+
08.781	Ethical Management for Change	18	7	+
08.782	Volunteerism, Employee Management	18	7	+
08.785	Community Funding & Entrepreneurism	18	7	+

To graduate with a **Bachelor of Social Practice (Community Development)** students must have gained a minimum of 360 credits ( 12 @ Level 4, 120 @ level 5, 120 @ level 6 , 108 @ level 7) and successfully passed all compulsory courses.

Course #	Name	credit	level	compulsory + optional
<b>Year 1</b>	<b><i>Six compulsory courses</i></b>			
08.511	Ripene	18	5	*
08.512	Aotearoa / New Zealand Society	18	5	*
08.513	Professional Practice	18	5	*
08.514	Psychology and Research	18	5	*
08.515	Counselling Micro Skills	18	5	*
08.516	Fieldwork Placement 1	30	5	*
<b>Year 2</b>	<b><i>Five compulsory plus 1 optional</i></b>			
08.621	Whanau / Family Systems	18	6	*
08.622	Risk Assessment	18	6	*
08.623	Disabilities and Mental Health	18	6	*

08.616	Fieldwork Placement 2	30	6	*
08.624	Social Change and Development	18	6	*
08.625	Counselling Process	18	6	+
08.627	Micro Skills Lab	18	6	+
08.628	Social Work Fields of Practice	18	6	+

<b><u>Year 3 Five compulsory plus 2 optional</u></b>				
08.731	Management & Organisational	18	7	*
08.732	Research Project	18	7	*
30.401	Introduction to Communication	12	4	*
08.787	Advanced Community Development Theory	18	7	*
08.716	Community Work Practicum	18	7	*
08.733	Integrative Practice	18	7	+
08.734	Practice Modalities	18	7	+
08.735	Counselling Fields of Practice	18	7	+
08.737	Creative Therapies	18	7	+
08.738	Critical S W Interventions	18	7	+
08.739	Advanced Te Reo	18	7	+
08.740	Tangata Whenua Research	18	7	+
08.741	Women's Studies	18	7	+
08.775	Facilitation negotiation & leadership	18	7	+
08.776	Governance	18	7	+
08.777	Community Research	18	7	+
08.781	Ethical Management for Change	18	7	+
08.782	Volunteerism, Employee Management	18	7	+
08.785	Community Funding & Entrepreneurism	18	7	+

### **Bachelor of Social Practice Programme Course Aims & Learning Outcomes**

The twenty-four compulsory course for the BSP programme are set out here, together with the aims and learning outcomes specified for each course. The courses are set at three levels, relating to year one (level five), year two (level six) and year three (level seven) for a full-time student.

#### **Level Five**

Ripene, Aotearoa New Zealand Society, Professional Practice, Psychology and Research, Counselling Micro Skills, Fieldwork Placement 1 and Introduction to Communication.

#### **Level Six**

Whanau/Family Systems, Risk Assessment, Disability and Mental Health, Fieldwork Placement 2, Counselling Processes, Micro Skills Lab, Social Change and Development and Social Work Fields of Practice.

#### **Level Seven**

Management & Organisational Change, Research Project, Integrative Practice, Practice Modalities, Counselling Fields of Practice, Critical Social Work Intervention, Advanced Principles and Theory in Social Work, Advanced Community Development Theory and Community Work Practicum.

A number of optional courses are also provided where numbers permit. These have not been included in this study, both because of time and space restraints and because none of the study participants indicated that these had been influential for them in their pursuits of 'just practice'.

The aim and learning outcomes for each course are set out here as a point of reference.

#### **Level 5      Ripene**

##### **AIM**

The aim of this course is to introduce the student to basic Maori language, cultural values and ceremonies and to explore the issues of bicultural community development and funding.

##### **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Develop basic language skills in Te Reo Maori

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of tikanga

Integrate Maori philosophy into social practice

Determine the contemporary implications for Maori and Tau Iwi based on the texts of Te Tiriti O Waitangi

Determine the contemporary implications of Te Tiriti O Waitangi for Maori and Tau Iwi against its historical context

Analyse key factors in contemporary Maori development

Analyse the changing role of Iwi, Hapu, & whanau in Maori development

**Level 5      Aotearoa New Zealand Society****AIM**

The aim of this course is to enable students to explore the structure of Aotearoa/New Zealand society, the origins of social policy, relevant legal issues and backdrop of Te Tiriti thereby informing a model of social practice.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Analyse the historical development of social policy  
 Construct a model of social practice, which is informed by knowledge of social policy  
 Analyse the legal issues relevant to a range of social work practice  
 Conduct a social structural analysis  
 Critically evaluate social stratification  
 Integrate the theories and practices of bicultural community development  
 Develop a strategy to fund a community organisation

**Level 5      Professional Practice****AIM**

This course will give students an opportunity to explore the issues of social practice for safety and effectiveness. It will consider social practice as a tool of care and control and will show the place of supervision in safe and effective social practice.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Evaluate social work as a tool of social change and social control  
 Evaluate social practice for elements of oppression  
 Analyse the effects on clients of anti-discriminatory practice  
 Apply change theories to Social Work practice  
 Critique the model of task-centred practice from an anti-discriminatory perspective

Evaluate the application of the model of task centred practice to client population  
 Apply the model of crisis intervention to social work practice  
 Critically analyse the vulnerability of clients in crisis  
 Evaluate the role and function of supervision in social practice

**Level 5      Psychology and Research****AIM**

This course will provide introductory level knowledge in psychology. It is a theoretical course, which gives students a grounding in the psychology of human development, social behaviour and research.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Explain the evolution of psychological knowledge  
 Explain human social behaviour  
 Explain human behaviour in biological terms  
 Describe psychological function of the organs of perception and sensation  
 Analyse human development across the life span  
 Explain human experience of religion and spirituality from a psychological perspective  
 Explain human memory, intelligence and learning  
 Compare and contrast research paradigms

**Level 5 Counselling Micro Skills 515****AIM**

This course provides students with counselling skills from a theoretical and practical perspective which views clients and their concerns in social contexts. It provides opportunities for personal development and exploration of the client/practitioner relationship within a professional ethical context.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Identify counselling microskills

Identify the effect of self on clients and clients on self.

Demonstrate positive communication with peers.

Demonstrate the ability to establish and develop a therapeutic relationship with clients.

Explore enablements and constraints of own social/cultural context

Explore culture diversity of value systems as they impact on professional and ethical practice

**Level 5 Fieldwork Placement 1****AIM**

The field work placement aims to provide students with an opportunity to integrate their own theoretical learning within the constraints of an agency and to practice the day to day skills of social practice case work.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Initiate, develop and sustain relationships with clients/groups

Develop a conceptual framework for practice

Contract for an intervention

Implement intervention

Close the change process

Fulfil a professional role

**Level 6 Whanau/Family Systems****AIM**

This course explores the nature of family within society. It provides students with an understanding of the problems experienced by families and of the skills of intervention with families.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Locate experience of family within the wider sociological context

Analyse the major categories of problems and needs of the elderly, and of children and of adolescents in families

Evaluate a systems approach to family work

Locate a family referral in the context of the family life cycle

Analyse the methods of resolving conflict within a family

**Level 6 Risk Assessment****AIM**

This course prepares students for social practice in high-risk areas. It addresses the questions of self-care and prevention as well as exploring the challenges of agency work in high-risk areas.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Develop principles for social practice intervention in the areas of violence & abuse  
 Analyse and apply a model of risk assessment  
 Practice self-care as an agency worker in the area of violence and abuse  
 Analyse issues of violence & abuse from an anti-discriminatory perspective  
 Analyse and apply models of preventative social practice in areas of violence & abuse

**Level 6          Disability and Mental Health****AIM**

This course will provide students with an overview of the theoretical approaches to disorder; an opportunity to develop expertise in working with people with disabilities and with the issues of substance abuse and dependency.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Compare and contrast perspectives of abnormality  
 Compare and contrast major types of disorder  
 Compare and contrast classification systems of abnormality  
 Develop expertise in working with people with disabilities  
 Conduct an assessment of substance abuse factors affecting a client  
 Identify substance abuse and dependency issues within client systems

**Level 6          Fieldwork Placement 2****AIM**

This fieldwork placement provides an opportunity for students to fulfil a professional role in social practice.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Initiate, develop and sustain relationships with clients/groups  
 Develop a conceptual framework for practice  
 Contract for an intervention  
 Implement intervention  
 Close the change process  
 Fulfil a professional role

**Level 6          Social Change and Development****AIM**

This course will give students a theoretical understanding of development, particularly for Maori, in New Zealand. It will explore the development of current social policy and it will examine the issues of community development. It will also provide practical skills in advocacy for benefit entitlement.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Critique development theories in the New Zealand setting  
 Analyse key factors in contemporary Maori development  
 Analyse the changing role of iwi, hapu, & whanau in Maori development  
 Develop a model of community development that informs own practice  
 Perform welfare advocacy

**Level 6          Counselling Discourses****AIM**

This course provides students with an introduction to social constructionism and opportunities to study the discourses of counselling as constructed by a range of major theories. Students will develop the skills of critically reading theory as socially and culturally contexted. Students will workshop counselling practices using narrative ideas and discourse analyses of counselling texts and transcripts.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Investigate the historical and cultural contexts of a range of counselling approaches

Develop further skills in using narrative ideas in counselling conversations and supporting activities

Critically analyse counselling theory

**Level 6          Micro Skills Lab 627****AIM**

This course aims to provide students with the opportunities to practice and reflect on counselling practice using narrative ideas. Students will practise counselling skills and build up a repertoire of counselling responses to a range of client issues, including work with transcripts and tapes of their own counselling practice. Ethical issues are a central component of this course.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Manage a counselling process

Demonstrate a range of counselling strategies

Demonstrate the skills of a reflective practitioner

Critically analyse and reflect on counselling practices

Demonstrate skills of reflecting team work

Demonstrate appreciation of ethical issues and respectful practices

**Level 6          Social Work Fields of Practice****AIM**

This course will provide students with information about the various fields of social work practice available. It will provide an opportunity for them to explore the different requirements for work in alternate fields and to match their own skills and aptitudes to the requirements of agencies and fields of practice.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Critically evaluate the range of social services agencies currently operating in Aotearoa New Zealand

Compare and contrast the skills necessary for working in a range of social service agencies

Identify and justify a field of practice that matches own skill base to agency ethos

**Level 7          Management & Organisational Change****AIM**

This course will provide an opportunity for students to understand the issues of management practice in organisations in the various sectors and to acquire management skills.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Compare and contrast models of management from the Private, Public, and Not For Profit Sector

Critically evaluate concepts of governance and management in the Not For Profit Sector

Develop a comprehensive range of report writing skills

Demythologise statistics, accounts and balance sheets

Develop a strategic plan

Demonstrate the role of mediation and tools of conflict resolution for managing staff and volunteers

Critically analyse the processes of ethical decision making

Analyse the role of effective leadership and team building in organisational development

**Level 7          Research Project****AIM**

This course will allow students to pursue an area of interest and to conduct applied research of relevance to social practice. The research will be presented to a professional panel.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Prepare a written research proposal

Conduct the research

Analyse the data

Interpret the findings

Inform others of the research

**Level 7          Introduction to Communication****AIM**

To establish the importance of effective communication and to equip students with the understanding and basic skills for good communication practice, in both a local and an international setting.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Identify the range of elements comprising the process of communication. Relate the process of communication to work-based settings

Describe relevant theories of interpersonal and organisational communication. Relate theory to practical settings

Demonstrate ability in critical thinking

Present ideas logically and effectively

Communicate effectively across cultural boundaries

Evaluate current communication technologies

**Level 7          Counselling Practicum****AIM**

This course will give students expertise in managing a caseload, taking responsibility for the safety and effectiveness of their own practice and providing counselling services.

Student counsellors will engage in a minimum of 100 hours counselling with supervision and will present a portfolio of their work to a panel of experienced practitioners/educators, in which they demonstrate narrative ideas in counselling

practice and in their reflections on their work. Students must present evidence of practicum work within a month of the first day of term.

### **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Counsel a number of on-going clients effectively  
 Analyse and critique own practice  
 Provide counselling services  
 Monitor and reflect on professional development using supervision  
 Demonstrate professional accountability and safe practice  
 Speak to examples of counselling practice with a panel of counselling practitioners/educators

#### **Level 7          Counselling in Practice 1**

##### **AIM**

The aim of this course is to provide students with the opportunity to explore counselling theory and practice and to develop their own counselling expertise using narrative ideas. Students analyse and reflect on the development of their practice.

### **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Critically analyse and strengthen own expertise in narrative practices  
 Critique own theorising and practice  
 Demonstrate the practice of counselling

#### **Level 7          Counselling in Practice 2**

##### **AIM**

This course aims to provide students with the opportunity to acquire expertise in couples counselling, group work, and family therapy. Students will be able to understand how counselling using narrative ideas addresses particular client populations and related issues.

### **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Develop a framework for effective counselling with couples  
 Explore group work practices  
 Develop a framework for effective counselling with families

#### **Level 7          Critical Social Work Intervention**

##### **AIM**

This course will give students an opportunity to explore the way in which significant variables impact on social work practice. A locus within a practical context will be created for the examination of strategic interventions and the role of coherent theory in the minimisation of defensive practice.

### **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Analyse key variables which affect bicultural social work practice  
 Critically analyse and evaluate key conceptual frameworks for coherent practice  
 Critically evaluate 4 major models for bicultural social work intervention  
 Distinguish strategic practice from defensive practice using coherent social work principles for practice  
 Critically evaluate the role of strategic practice from an ecological perspective

**Level 7                      Advanced Principles and Theory in Social Work**

**AIM:**

The course provides an advanced critical study of the principles and the theoretical basis of Social Work practice. Emphasis is placed on the knowledge base relevant to the practice of social work, namely conceptual explorations, research practice principles, models of intervention and current issues in theory and practice.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Critically analyse major conceptual approaches to social work from a bicultural perspective

Critically analyse a range of social work fields of practice

Demonstrate an understanding of the of the inter-relationship between theory, practice and research

Critically analyse own practice

**Level 7                      Advanced Community Development Theory**

**AIM**

This course provides students with an advanced study of the theoretical basis of Community Development practice. Emphasis is placed on the critical exploration of the theoretical frameworks which form the basis for community development work. The course focuses on theoretical explanations, an examination of models of intervention, and an evaluation of the relationship between current issues in theory, research and practice.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Critically analyse major theoretical approaches to community development work from a bicultural perspective

Critically examine a range of community development work projects

Demonstrate an understanding of the inter-relationship between theory, practice and research

Critically analyse own practice

**Level 7                      Community Work Practicum**

**AIM**

This practicum provides an opportunity for students to engage in community work in a nominated community and develop a tested model of community development under guidance of a community agency.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Facilitate the expression of community needs

Identify the nature and make-up of community leadership

Establish community networks

Translate structural theories into a community work context

Develop strategies for intervention

**Level 7                      Just Practice**

**AIM**

To provide an opportunity to develop awareness and skills in social practice that enhances social justice and social change. Through interaction with advanced practitioners in the field of social practice students will have the opportunity to reflect

on practitioners' experiences and through collaboration develop strategies for just practice.

### **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

To explore the concept of social justice as a focus for social practice

To evaluate histories and herstories of just practice

Critically reflect on own social practice

*All the following were optional Level 7 courses.*

Creative therapies

Tangata Whenua Research

Women's Studies

Facilitation, Small Team Leadership, Negotiation

Governance

Community Research

Ethical Management of Change

Community Funding and Entrepreneurism

Volunteerism, Employee Motivation and Management

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