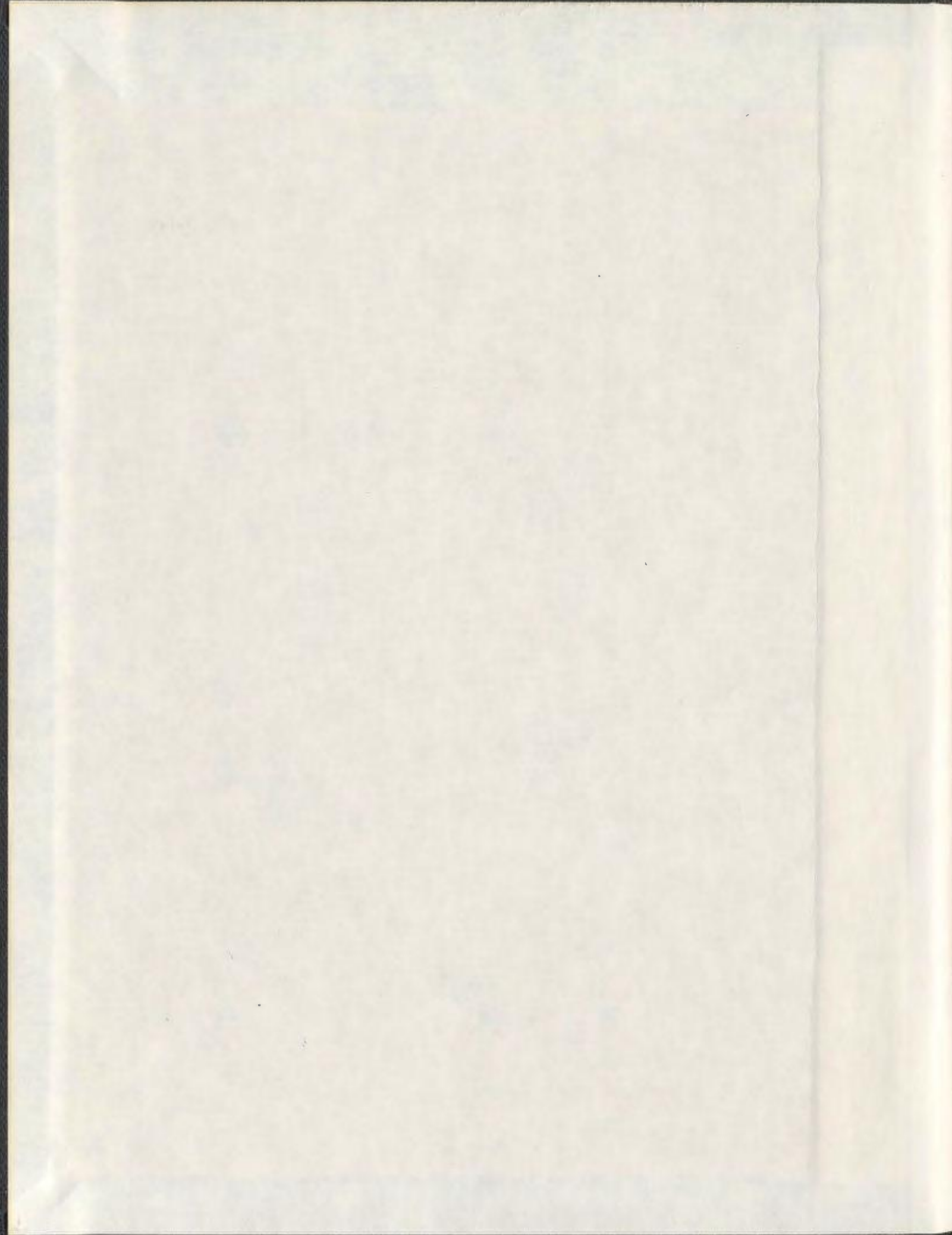# THE MEANING OF SOCIAL JUSTICE TO
SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS

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THE MEANING OF SOCIAL JUSTICE TO SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS

by

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Abstract

This study was based on the emphasis that Canadian social work education is currently placing on educational processes to graduate critically reflective social workers who can address social issues from a social justice perspective. This qualitative study explored the meaning of social justice to graduating BSW students and the social work educational experiences that shaped this meaning. Ten adult learners from a Canadian baccalaureate program in social work participated in the study. A transcendental phenomenological research approach supported the exploratory and descriptive nature of this study and the method of data analysis was a modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method developed by Moustakas (1994). Findings revealed that the integration of student participants' lived experiences and social work education created a meaningful commitment to social justice which could be further understood within the context of transformative learning in social work education. The findings also revealed that student participants had experiences with incongruency between the espoused commitment to social justice and a lack of commitment to social justice demonstrated within their educational and practice settings reflective of a tension that continues to exist between social justice and mainstream social work education and practice. The implications of this study suggest the need for social work educators who wish to promote social justice to further embrace transformative learning and further develop social justice education in social work programs as ways of continuing to support meaningful commitment to social justice and action for social change in their work with social work students. This study brings student voice forward and participants also offer their recommendations to social work educators. The study concludes with recommendations for future research.

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I dedicate this dissertation to my family and friends who made this journey possible. I will be forever thankful to my partner, Phil Jones, because his tenacity, unwavering support, wisdom, and adventurous spirit inspired and sustained me throughout my studies. Thank you to my son, Graham Jones, who embraced this journey and continued to inspire me with his social justice spirit. I want to thank my parents, Isaac and Lucille Fehr, for their life long support and encouragement of my endeavors. Finally, thank you to my dear friends, Lynette Baisch, who never doubted my abilities, and Linda Wall, who always believed in me and reminded me when it was time to get away from it all.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction, Purpose, and Overview

1.1 Introduction

The profession of social work is influenced by views that suggest a commitment to principles of social justice. Canadian social work education is also placing increasing emphasis on educational processes that graduate critically reflective social workers who can address social issues from a social justice perspective. These views are reflected in the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) Code of Ethics (2005), the Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE) Standards for Accreditation (June 2007) (which were the current standards at the time of this study), and in the values often advocated by educators and practitioners.

Promoting social justice is also prominently incorporated into the vision and mission statements of most Canadian schools of social work. For example, the vision statement of the School of Social Work at Memorial University of Newfoundland is "Strengthening human relationships and promoting social justice through academic excellence", and its mission statement is "To promote social justice by providing social work education, conducting scholarly inquiry, disseminating knowledge and contributing to public policy and practice thereby addressing the needs and aspirations of the local and global communities with whom we collaborate and interact" (http://www.mun.ca/socwrk/home/vision.php).

Together, these documents provide a contemporary commitment for the inclusion of social justice in social work education and reflect an expectation that graduating social work students will be able to integrate social justice into their practice perspective. This commitment is considered unique to social work as few other helping professions identify

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challenging social injustice as primary practice and educational missions (Finn & Jacobson, 2003).

At the same time, no universally agreed upon definition of social justice exists (Galambos, 2008; Hong & Hodge, 2011; Reisch, 2002) and the meaning of social justice is not self-evident leading to diverse interpretations (McLaughlin, 2006; Pelton, 2001; Reisch, 2002; Scanlon & Longres, 2001). This definitional and interpretive ambiguity "is not a recent phenomenon, it has been reflected in the profession of social work almost since its inception" (Reisch, 2011, p. 14). This lack of a common definition of social justice and the diverse interpretations between Canadian social work educational programs and within academia poses direct challenges for social work education with "a mandate to teach this important concept and instill a passion for it to the next generation of practitioners who will implement 'social justice'" (Birkenmaier, Cruce, Burkemper, Curley, Wilson, & Stretch, 2011, p.1). This has raised concerns that social justice is not clearly integrated into social work education and is not a guiding principle of social work practice (McLaughlin, 2006; Pelton, 2001; Reisch, 2002; Scanlon & Longres, 2001). Even the primacy of this commitment to social justice has been questioned by some scholars as becoming simply educational discourse and practice rhetoric (Reisch, 2002; Specht & Courtney, 1994).

The tensions that exist between what is said and what is taught and practiced in social work and the definitional complexity and interpretive ambiguity of what constitutes social justice within the social work profession was a starting point for this research. As a social work educator, this researcher became curious about the relevance and meaning of

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social justice to social work students and the nature of their educational experiences with social justice given these existing tensions and complexities.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the meaning of social justice to students graduating from a baccalaureate program in social work and their experiences of social justice in social work education. The study explores the meaning of social justice through qualitative interviews with ten students who have completed their Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree from a Canadian school of social work and are awaiting convocation. The interest in graduating BSW students is because they are typically the profession's 'front-line workers' engaged in direct practice most often with the most marginalized and disenfranchised populations of people. Each student participant was interviewed at length using a semi-structured interview process. The interviews were then transcribed and analyzed by this researcher.

All of the interviews focused on exploring the following research question:

- What is the meaning of social justice to graduating BSW students and how have their educational experiences shaped this meaning?

According to Finn and Jacobson (2003), the concept of 'meaning' can be defined within a social work context as "the significance of something" and "how people make sense of the world" (p. 23) rooted in their knowledge and experience. Using this definition, sub questions were developed to further explore two areas of knowledge and their related experiences that may contribute to the meaning of social justice to graduating BSW students: participants' conceptual understandings (knowledge of social justice principles

and concepts – what they know) and participants' practice perspectives (knowledge of social justice-based practices-what they would do).

These sub questions were:

- How have social work educational experiences contributed to graduating social work students' conceptual understandings of social justice? and

- How have social work educational experiences informed graduating social work students' social justice practice perspectives?

A third sub question was developed to honour and acknowledge graduating BSW students' knowledge and experience with social justice along their educational journey and to gain their insight into improving the student experience in social work education. This sub question was:

- What recommendations would graduating social work students offer to social work educators regarding social justice in social work education?

The intent of this study is to gain insight into and further inform social work educators about the meaning and relevancy of social justice from the perspectives of the adult learners who are central to social work's educational practices and processes. This study is focused on bringing the student voice forward into the discussion about social justice in social work education. It is grounded in the voices of the next generation of social workers who will be pivotal in the pursuit of social justice with the people and communities they will serve. It is hopeful that this research will also contribute to maintaining the conversation about social justice in social work education and practice during these challenging times.

1.3 Chapter Overviews

This study is divided into six chapters. This introductory chapter presents the profession of social work and social work education as being both influenced by views that suggest a commitment to the principles of social justice and challenged by the tensions and complexities that continue to exist in social work education and practice. The chapter also discussed the purpose and intent of this study and the research question and sub questions that guided it.

Chapter two explores the multiple meanings and diverse interpretations of social justice in social work education and practice that are offered within the literature. Multiple meanings of social justice frame a discussion of the historical, philosophical, theoretical, educational, and practice contexts that have shaped the current views and teachings in social work education and the educational experiences of students. This chapter also further illustrates the tensions and complexities of social justice in social work education and practice. The chapter concludes by providing an overview of the research literature relevant to examining and exploring the nature of student experiences with social justice in the process of social work education and identifies a gap in the research which this study was designed to address.

Chapter three discusses the transcendental phenomenological approach that guided this study and the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of data analysis developed by Moustakas (1994) used in the study. This research methodology was chosen because it facilitates the development of collective voice and meaning of social justice within diverse participant experience as "it is less important that social workers identify a single "right" social justice approach" (Reisch, 2011, p. 25) than it is to find common ground in

the search for solutions to social, economic, political, and global issues and the pursuit of social justice (Reisch, 2011). This chapter also includes a full discussion of participant recruitment; data collection; data analysis and the ethical considerations of informed consent; confidentiality; risks to the participants; inclusion; trustworthiness of the study; and the limitations of this study.

Chapter four presents the data collected from the ten interviews with graduating BSW student participants. Moustakas' (1994) process of methodological reduction is used and the data presentation reflects this process. Data presentation includes a participant profile; representation of the participants' individual voices; individual descriptions of the participants' unique voices; and a summative discussion of the common and divergent features that emerged within the participants' responses to the research questions.

Chapter five provides analysis of the collective voice of the student participants. Six themes emerged from the data. They are discussed with respect to their relationship to the research questions, to the participants' collective voice, and to the literature on social justice. These six themes are subsequently constructed by this researcher into an exhaustive description responding to the research question and representing the findings of this study. This chapter concludes with a discussion of these findings.

Chapter six provides a summary of this study; a discussion of the implications for social work education; addresses limitations; and offers recommendations for future research.

This study will begin with a review of literature to help frame and better understand the issues focused on in the data collection.

Chapter 2 - Pursuit of Social Justice: A Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The pursuit of social justice has been a long journey for social workers. The vision of creating just societies has been part of the social work profession for over 100 years and in 2013 this commitment to social justice continues to be reflected as a professional value and educational mission within Canadian schools of social work. This chapter situates social justice as a turbulent and tenacious commitment within social work education and practice. It focuses on the multiple meanings and diverse interpretations of social justice in social work education and practice that have shaped the current views, the academic teachings, and the educational experiences of students. Multiple meanings of social justice provide a frame for this discussion of the historical, philosophical, theoretical, educational, and practice contexts that have shaped the views of social justice and its relationship to current social work education. The chapter also further illustrates the tensions and complexities of social justice in social work education and practice that have influenced the educational experiences and practice perspectives of academics, practitioners, and students alike. This chapter locates the research question 'what is the meaning of social justice to graduating BSW students and how have their educational experiences shaped this meaning?' within these various contexts (along with their tensions) highlighting their influence on the current meaning of social justice to social work students and on their educational experiences.

The chapter begins by discussing the historical context of social justice in social work and how the church-affiliated origins and reformist roots have shaped the current meaning of social justice in social work education and practice. The reformist principles

and community-based services of the Settlement House Movement were the early sources of structural analysis into social problems, politicization of personal problems, calls for social reform, and tensions with social case work approaches in social work education and practice that created a legacy for social workers, social work educators, and social work students alike.

Much of the current thinking and educational scholarship in social work about social justice has been influenced by philosophical contexts that are encompassed within this professional commitment. An examination of the philosophical contexts offers insight into the complexity of social justice which is inherent in social work educational processes and the educational experiences of graduating social work students. The philosophical contexts include a focus on the political and ethical dimensions of education and practice that involve diverse interpretations of the concepts of rights, justice, and equality inherent within the profession's commitment to social justice; and the connection of social work values and ethics to social justice.

A third context that will be discussed is the theoretical context of social justice and the array of frameworks that focus on challenging oppression and creating social change and social transformation. These theoretical frameworks contribute a critical, structural analytic perspective to social work education; provide a theoretical basis for social justice in social work education; and offer a structural approach to social work practice which is reflected in educational teachings and content. BSW students' conceptual understandings of social justice and practice perspectives are derived from their educational experiences with these theoretical frameworks which is the rationale for their exploration within this study.

The educational context of social justice in social work education will be the fourth context discussed in this chapter. The historic connection between social work education and experiential, justice-centered educational theory is highlighted. The processes of educating for social justice and the influence of critical, anti-oppressive, andragogy, and transformative learning frameworks on this process will be reviewed. This discussion also focuses on how social justice is taught to and experienced by adult learners revealing that educating for social justice is a liberatory and transformative educational process that honours adult learners' lived experiences with the goal of empowerment and social action. An educational context is relevant to this dissertation because this study explores student participants' educational experiences with social justice in their social work program.

Social justice has been discussed by scholars as a complex phenomenon with divergent interpretations and practice contexts. This chapter will discuss the various approaches to social work practice which elicit different meanings about what social justice is and its role in practice. A discussion of practice contexts is relevant to this study because this study explores how social work students' classroom and practicum educational experiences have informed their social justice practice perspective.

This chapter will conclude with a review of the research literature relevant to examining and exploring the nature of social work students' experience with social justice in social work education. Previous studies examining social work students' beliefs about social justice; social work students' commitment to promoting social justice; social work students' preparation for practicing from a social justice perspective; and professional socialization of students within social work education are reviewed. This review offers

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insight into social justice as a research area within social work education and reveals a gap in the exploratory research in this area offering another rationale for this qualitative study.

2.2 A Tumultuous Journey – the Historical Context of Social Justice

The historical legacy of social justice in social work began over a century ago and current social work educators continue to be "charged with drawing on this rich history in their quest to transfer knowledge and instill passion for social justice" (Birkenmaier et al, 2011, p. 1) in the next generation of social workers. This rich history began during the Progressive Era (1880s-1920s) when "industrialization, urbanization, and immigration introduced myriad interrelated social problems, including deplorable housing conditions, diseases and ill health, unemployment, and poverty" (Jennissen & Lundy, 2011, p. 1) in Britain, the United States, and Canada. Early responses to these social problems were provided in the form of charity from church-affiliated organizations. Both the Settlement House Movement and the Charitable Organization Society (COS) were developed within this charitable tradition and both focused on alleviating these social problems by providing charity in the form of shelter, food, and services for the poor. Each of these movements, however, developed different responses to poverty and social injustice based on their community service experiences and two differing approaches to social work practice and education developed respectively (Lundy, 2011).

2.2.1 Settlement House Movement

The pursuit of social justice in social work has its reformist roots in the Settlement House Movement in Britain, the United States, and Canada (Heinonen & Spearman,

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2006). The word "settlement" meant to "settle" in and work with the residents of poverty stricken neighborhoods to provide educational, health, recreation, community development and other social safety net services (Heinonen & Spearman, 2006). The first settlement house was Toynbee Hall established in London, England in 1884. The Settlement House Movement grew rapidly throughout Britain and North America and was "especially popular in the United States. In 1901, there were approximately one hundred American settlements, an increase from forty-four in 1896; by 1905 this number had more than doubled, and by 1911 it had doubled again to over four hundred. . . . Britain boasted forty-six settlement houses in 1911, while Canada . . . claimed thirteen" (James, 2001, p. 66).

The pioneering vision of the Settlement House Movement was threefold: "to act as a bridge between disparate social groups, as a research facility to aid in the scientific investigation of social problems, and as a 'laboratory' for the development of innovative social programs which, if they proved beneficial, state or community agencies could adopt" (James, 2001, p. 65). According to Haynes and White (1999), "the settlement house movement was organized on the principle of social responsibility. Settlement workers were not tied to specific methods but sought to develop programs according to the needs of the neighborhoods and the communities in which they resided" (p. 386). The Settlement House Movement evolved from its charitable and church-affiliated origins to become increasingly secular advocating for social reform as a result of the community-based experience of the settlement workers living and working with poverty stricken and immigrant populations (Adams, 1910; Jennissen & Lundy, 2011). The Settlement House Movement began responding with structural explanations for social problems advocating

that "problems were a result of society's failure, not the individual's weaknesses" (p. 386). Settlement workers became active in advocating for the principles of public and government responsibility for social services and creating a just society through social action (Haynes & White, 1999).

One of the earliest and the most influential American settlement houses was Hull House opened in Chicago in 1889 by Jane Addams and associates. Jane Addams (1860-1935) is widely recognized in social work as a pioneer of the social reform movement and an influential leader of the Settlement House Movement in North America. She was the first woman and only social worker to ever win the Nobel Peace Prize, having received the honour in 1931 for her international peace efforts. She was also a political activist, feminist, labour organizer, educator, an advocate working for social change, and a visionary instrumental in the creation of the welfare state. Addams authored 13 books and over 500 speeches, essays, journal articles and editorials (Addams, 1922; Bilton, 2006; Glaser, 2001; Lundblad, 1995; Shields, 2006). Addams' commitment to social justice was an inspiration for Canadian child welfare advocates, J.J. Kelso and future Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King, who visited Hull House in the 1890s' with the intention of learning about the community work of Jane Addams and the settlement workers. The first settlement house in Canada, which was modeled after Hull House, was Evangelia House established in Toronto in 1902 by American settlement worker Sara Libby Carson (Hick, 2006; James, 2001; Jennisson & Lundy, 2011; Shields, 2006).

Early Canadian settlement work developed its social reform roots from the British and American Settlement House Movements, but was also influenced by the social gospel movement. The social gospel movement was "a widespread movement in Europe and

North America that promoted a progressive Christian response to social problems" (Jennisson & Lundy, 2011, p. 5). Prominent Canadian social gospellers James Shaver Woodsworth (who would later become leader of the CCF) and Nelly McClung (one of the five women who fought and won the right for women to be considered persons in Canada) advocated for women's rights, cooperative communities, and political activism to create radical social reform during the 1920s (Reisch, 2002).

Toronto's settlement leaders, including J.J. Kelso and Mary Joplin Clarke, were persistent advocates for the establishment of the University of Toronto's Department of Social Service, later to become the School of Social Work. After the School of Social Work opened in 1914, the settlement workers provided practicum placements and lectures on social group work, community development work, and social policy analysis for the school (James, 2001). The Settlement House Movement and its workers directly contributed to social work's foundation of social justice, social action, and social reform in Canada; however the Settlement House Movement also had its struggles.

Early critics chastised the Settlement House Movement for seeking and receiving philanthropic support and financial sponsorship from the elite class and, in doing so, supporting the status quo (Haynes & White, 1999). The Settlement House Movement also came under scrutiny for engaging in assimilation processes that were "aimed at extending a middle-class Anglo-Canadian cultural hegemony throughout the working-class and immigrant community" (James, 2001, p. 88). An interesting and critically viewed event for Canadian settlement workers was that they supported the professionalization of social work along traditional lines. They agreed that their work needed the authority, expertise, and broader perspective of a trained professional, even

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though Settlement House Movements themselves had continued to criticize the expert role of social workers as "agents of the state with considerable stake in maintaining existing power relations in Canadian society, and especially the power relations that existed between experts and their clients" (James, 2001, p. 84). Settlement workers also varied on their analysis and approach to social problems; some offered only direct services and advocacy while others, like Jane Addams and J.S. Woodsworth, worked toward social and political reform (Lundy, 2004). These early struggles with differences in understandings of class, hegemony, professionalization, and approaches to practice among the workers were indicators of the tensions and arduous journey ahead for social workers practicing and educating from a social justice perspective.

The influence of the Settlement House Movement in social work declined in the 1920s. The reasons for the decline were a combination of factors including: growing urban populations accompanied by rising poverty levels and people in need; the perceived inability of voluntary organizations to meet these rising needs requiring government intervention; the Settlement House Movements' zeal for social reform without a well-defined method; and the growth of casework as professional social work that viewed settlement work as old fashioned by social workers striving for professional status (Glaser, 2001; Hick, 2006; Lundblad, 1995; Specht & Courtney, 1994). Also during this period of time, the Settlement House Movements' radical social reform ideas supported by socialist politics were viewed with suspicion and hostility and feared by the public as subversive. The rise of Marxism and Communism, the 1917 Russian Revolution, and World War I aroused fears of socialism in Canada and created the Red Scare. These fears and perceptions were further reinforced by labour unrest, increasing conservativism, and

middle class beliefs that increased poverty would result in mob violence by the working class and the spread of disease by poor people (Jennisson & Lundy, 2011).

The decrease in popularity of the Settlement House Movement's reformist ideals and social activism and the growth of charity and casework practice during this early period was influenced by another movement that operated parallel to the Settlement House Movement, the Charity Organization Society (COS). Both movements originated in Britain and emerged in the United States and Canada during similar time periods and both focused on alleviating poverty among disenfranchised populations of people, but these movements had very different visions of helping and strategies for providing service that would lay a foundation for social work as a broad-based profession and for practice and educational tensions between the differing approaches (Jennisson & Lundy, 2011; Lundy, 2004).

2.2.2 Charity Organization Society (COS)

The COS was established in Britain in 1869. The first United States COS opened in New York in 1877 followed by the first Canadian COS opening in Toronto in 1888 (Heinonen & Spearman, 2006; Lieby, 1978). The COS was founded on the philosophy of the Poor Laws and scientific charity. Poverty relief was provided to individuals and families that were deemed 'deserving and worthy' due to their character and circumstances and was provided in kind and never monetarily (Jennisson & Lundy, 2011). The COS was based on the principle of personal responsibility and on the ideal that organized charity was to help individuals to help themselves and to encourage people to be responsible for one another. COS services were initially accomplished through the process of 'friendly visiting'. Friendly visiting emphasized the importance of purposeful

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and consensual personal contact with individuals and families and "following through" until a case was successfully completed ((Haynes & White, 1999; Richmond, 1899). The casework method was herein developed and, by 1910, the friendly visitors were being called caseworkers (Heinonen & Spearman, 2006; Smith, 2002). Through the experience of caseworkers working with marginalized and disenfranchised people, the casework approach adopted a systematic, rationalistic, and professional approach to social work practice that was favored with the rise of modernity. The COS also established the first social work training programs as early as 1898 in the United States and 1910 in Canada (Jennissen & Lundy, 2011; Lundy, 2011).

The most notable COS caseworker, from a social work perspective, was Mary Richmond. As a caseworker, director, educator, author, and researcher, Mary Richmond (1861-1928) made significant theoretical, organizational, and educational contributions to the social work profession. She contributed a theoretical framework of social casework which included the concepts of diagnosis and treatment becoming the basis for the medical model in social work practice. Richmond also put forth the ideas of a strengths-based perspective, the importance of the therapeutic relationship, and person-in-environment approach within social work practice (Heinonen & Spearman, 2006; Richmond, 1922; Szymoniak, 2007). As an administrator and organizational leader, her "research and writings influenced government, philanthropic organizations, and non-profit organizations to offer funding and service to 'those in need'. . . when there was no systematic financial or structural support for such work" (Szymoniak, 2007, pp. 3-4). Richmond's contributions to the development of professional social work education are also significant. She is attributed with founding the first American teaching programs in

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social work, such as Columbia University's School of Social Work in New York City, and "her books were among the first to be used in training for social work. They included *Friendly Visiting Among the Poor* (1899), *Social Diagnosis* (1917), and *What is Social Case Work?* (1922) (IFSW, 2005). Richmond's conceptualization of social casework had a profound impact on social work and significantly influenced educational curriculums and the view of the helping relationship.

The COS contributed to a legacy of social work values and beliefs in charitable and voluntary work, altruism, relationship-based practice, purposeful and consensual intervention, serving the marginalized and disenfranchised people in society, and formal training for social workers. The COS response to the social justice issues of poverty and social inequality was the casework approach which aligned with dominant societal values and played a prominent role in the professional identity, educational programs, and practice techniques of the newly emerging social work profession (Lundy, 2004; 2011).

From a more critical perspective, there were also deleterious effects of the COS. The COS has been described as maintaining structurally embedded and socially constructed notions of the deserving and undeserving poor; focussing on individual and family (personal) responsibility for social problems and inequities; maintaining the class and gender biased status quo of societies; and upper and middle class moralizing (Dominelli, 2002; Haynes & White, 1999; Heinonen & Spearman, 2006; Mullaly, 2002; Smith, 2002). The COS had significant influence on the development of early social work practice that were developed from and viewed as consistent with dominant societal values of the era.

The pursuit of social justice in social work has its reformist roots in the Settlement House Movement. The Settlement House Movement developed a social reformist approach for addressing social problems and focused on achieving social betterment through community development work and political activism. Settlement workers became active in advocating for the principles of public and government responsibility for social services and creating a just society through social action (Haynes & White, 1999). The pursuit for social justice in social work can also be viewed as having its client advocacy roots in the COS. The COS developed a scientific social case work approach focused on achieving social betterment through individual and family work. Although these approaches seem divergent, according to Mary Richmond, "Mass betterment and individual betterment are interdependent, [and] social reform and social case work of necessity [are] progressing together" (Richmond, 1917, p. 25).

The Settlement House Movement and COS contributed to the multiple meanings of social justice and offered early interpretations of social betterment. Social work educators and students continue to be influenced by the development, growth, interaction, and tensions between these early interpretations of social justice.

2.2.3 Shifting Commitment

The Great Depression of the 1930s created a revival in 'justice-centered social work'. This period was marked by economic collapse resulting in mass unemployment and poverty. One-quarter of the Canadian labour force was unemployed by 1933 (Hick, 2006). In the United States, a group of American social workers organized the Rank and File movement. This movement, independent of the Settlement House Movement but sharing a social justice focus, directly challenged the oppressive capitalist system

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responsible for the desperate poverty and social conditions of this time (Reisch, 2002; Lundy, 2004). Bertha Reynolds (1963), an influential social worker in the Rank and File movement, discussed a vision for the social work profession:

> Social work today is standing at the crossroads. It may go on with its face toward the past, bolstering up the decaying profit system, having to defend what is indefensible for the sake of money which pays for its services. On the other hand it may envision a future in which professional social services as well as education, medical services and the like shall be the unquestioned right of all, conferred not as a benefit but as society's only way of maintaining itself. (p. 143)

In Canada, this era saw a significant shift in the political landscape as social gospeller and reformer J.S. Woodsworth brought together a coalition of labour, progressive and socialist groups in Calgary in 1932 to form the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF). The CCF, precursor to the contemporary New Democratic Party (NDP), "became Canada's first socialist party. As its name suggested, its founders wanted a political party that promoted universal cooperation for the common good. Members believed capitalism led to inequality and greed and they wanted to make governments responsible for social and economic planning to even out the playing field" (Canadian Broadcast Corporation, 2001, pp. 1-2). The goals of the CCF party included "creating a mixed economy through the nationalization of key industries and that of establishing a welfare state with universal pensions, health and welfare insurance, children's allowances, unemployment insurance, workers' compensation and similar programs" (Morley, 2009).

Public need exacerbated by reformist political pressure resulted in a shifting perception of unemployment and poverty which became viewed as social problems rather than individual failings. The result was that government funded social services agencies were formed to administer poverty relief and social workers took on the responsibility for relief administration. The number of Canadian social workers increased by an estimated 65% from 1933 to 1941 (Hick, 2006). This was the beginning of the modern welfare state in Canada that brought hopes of universal access to equal benefits and services for all Canadians. Social workers were involved as proponents of and service providers in this social reform.

The collapse of the economy combined with the pressure from social reform movements like the CCF and the Rank and File, forced federal governments to assume major responsibility for social welfare and the redistribution of resources, however reluctantly, from the haves to the have-nots. The modern welfare state was formed with unexpected consequences for the growing numbers of social workers who were being employed by the government. Social workers were now expected to simultaneously control (social control function) and help people within society (social care function). The social control function of the modern welfare state promoted citizen conformity to the status quo benefiting the dominant interests of a capitalist society. In *Regulating the Poor; The Functions of Public Welfare* (1971), authors Piven and Cloward discussed two primary functions of the welfare state - maintenance of civil order and regulation of low-wage labour, which were both intended to keep the capitalist system stable. Piven and Cloward (1971) go on to state that modern social welfare "goes far toward defining and

enforcing the terms on which different classes of men are made to do different kinds of work . . . [and] have a great deal to do with maintaining social and economic inequities" (p. xvii).

The social care function promoted a more just society benefiting marginalized individuals and groups in society. This social care function acknowledged the need for responsive, responsible, and universal access to benefits and services on a chronic and crisis basis (Abramovitz, 1993; Payne, 2005). Societal responsibility and social reform were the purview of social work and working with broader social issues was considered a focus of professional practice. For social workers, this meant dual and sometimes conflicting obligations to serve the best interests of both their clients and society. These dual obligations further highlighted the ongoing tension between the casework and social reform interpretations of social justice in social work education and practice.

With the postwar welfare state in place since the late 1940s and financed by an ever-growing economy, social work focused primarily on casework development with many social workers believing that social institutions were responsive to and capable of meeting people's needs. For the first time, most Canadian citizens "gained access to services such as health care and education and had at least a minimum of financial security" (Ghorayshi, 2007, p. 225). However, the establishment and growth of the welfare state did not address the structural inequalities within society and achieved, at best, partial social reform for certain groups of citizens. Political and economic ideologies guided by conservative agendas dominated in the 1950s bringing increasing "antagonism toward public expenditure on the welfare state" (Parton, 1994, p. 98). The

rise of McCarthyism and anti-communist and anti-socialist sentiments during the 1950s took its toll on radical social work movements in North America. Akin to the 1920s, social reform movements in social work were again marginalized with minimal influence on social work practice and education.

University-based social work education programs grew during this period of time building the profession with little input from marginalized social reform movements. The first Masters degree in social work was established in 1947 at the University of Toronto and its Doctoral program began in 1951 (Lundy, 2004). Dominant conservative ideology exacerbated by the 'Commie Scare', public outcry at the expanding of the welfare state, and social workers' struggle to shape policies and programs reflecting social reform values within a powerful hegemonic belief that the welfare state was meeting people's needs, combined to reduce the influence and popularity of radical social work movements during this period (Lundy, 2004). This was now the second time in 40 years that the combination of capitalist ideology, public disapproval, and social work practice and education focusing more on the social control function in working with the poor, marginalized, and disenfranchised people in society would create a disconnect between social reform and casework approaches to social work education and practice. This turbulent relationship between casework and social reform has created historic dissonance within social work education and practice. It also illustrates an ongoing tension that continues to suggest a lack of relevancy of social justice principles in social work education and practice influencing social work students' educational experiences and understanding of social justice (Reisch, 2002).

The 1960s was an era of social upheaval in response to the political and social constraints of the postwar era. The civil rights movement brought social unrest and organized protest for social change and, joined by a large number of relatively affluent and educated young adults, challenged the existing institutions that supported the status quo and their relevance to the creation of a more just and inclusive society. Social workers engaged in the equal rights campaigns and built coalitions with labour, feminist, black-power, anti-war, student, and anti-poverty groups that spoke their social reform and social action language. Within a climate of renewed public support, some social workers again engaged in social activism and community development work causing a resurgence of social justice principles in social work practice and education. The writings of social activist Saul Alinsky (1969, 1971) were studied in schools of social work and "critical social work was out to change the world" (Ife, 2005). Community development gained prominence in social work education and became a formalized part of social work education curriculum in Canada including community organizing as a specialization (Leighninger, 1999; Lundy, 2004). Social activism laid the ground work for the political and social reforms of the 1970s and early 1980s. A buoyant economy, liberal politics, and expansion of the welfare state to ensure human rights, address social service gaps, and meet the needs of society's most vulnerable citizens brought attention to social justice issues and radical voices in social work.

Governments began experiencing economic crises again in the mid-1980s. Neo-liberal and conservative political agendas were on the rise and resulted in the political devaluing of the welfare state, privatization and erosion of social welfare programs, and economic globalization. All of these factors again cast serious doubts on the ability of the

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current welfare state to meet the needs of its most vulnerable and marginalized citizens and the ability of social workers to maintain their social reform work within this climate (Dominelli, 1996; Khan & Dominelli, 2000; Mullaly, 1997; Reamer, 1993; Reisch, 2002). The social reform agenda and commitment to principles of social justice in social work practice and education has grown and waned over the past century driven by shifting political, economic, and social conditions. This professional commitment and its educational relevancy would now face its next difficult challenge, globalization.

The thirty plus years since 1980 has seen the rise of globalization and the term has become a commonplace and inescapable concept over the past decade (Ghorayshi, 2007). According to Ellwood (2006),

> Globalization is a new word which describes an old process: the integration of the global economy that began in earnest with the launch of the European colonial era five centuries ago. But the process has accelerated over the past 30 years with the explosion of computer technology, the dismantling of barriers to the movement of goods and capital, and the expanding political and economic power of multinational corporations. (p. 12)

Although primarily understood for its economic activities, globalization also encompasses political, cultural, and social dimensions that are interrelated and which have all adapted to this process including national boundaries, political sovereignty, labour forces, cultural diversity and traditions, social policy regimes of differing welfare states, human rights, and human needs (Ife, 2000; Payne & Askeland, 2008). The current experience of globalization is a "clash between two opposing views of society: on the one side are people who seek open borders for increasing the mobility of their investment, trade,

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labour, and money flows with minimal government intervention; and on the other are those who make social justice their priority and call for globalization from below, attempting to build a shared international sense of how best to meet societal needs around the world" (Ghorayshi, 2007, p. 216).

Globalization has again drawn attention to and spurred discourse within the social work profession on the principles of social justice, social reform, and social action and has created debate about the future of the welfare state and social work's role in society. Globalization has been the impetus for the further inclusion of social justice principles into social work education and practice as it has called many of the profession's cherished assumptions about the nature of humane society and its ability to respond genuinely to human needs into question (Mullaly, 1997).

The pursuit of social justice has deep roots in social work. This historic pursuit has resulted in a myriad of meanings of social justice in social work education and practice. Social reform, individual advocacy, social betterment, the welfare state, social care, radical social work, socialist politics, civil rights/human rights/and feminist movements, labour coalitions, community development, social action, and political activism are, just to name a few, all part of contemporary professional language used to describe the profession's commitment to social justice over the past century. This historic pursuit has also been a tumultuous journey. The presence of social justice principles in social work education and practice has grown and waned over the past century driven by shifting political, economic, and social conditions and fueled by the tension between casework and social reform that developed in the early days of the profession and have solidified over the century. The historic variability of and tensions engendered within

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social justice principles in social work has also created ongoing challenges to educating

the next generation of social workers in the meaning and practice of social justice.

2.3 Clear as Mud - the Philosophical Contexts of Social Justice

Much of the current thinking and academic discourse about social work and social

justice is influenced by the philosophical contexts that are encompassed within this

professional commitment. Reamer (1993) defines philosophy as "the rational,

methodical, and systematic consideration of those topics that are of greatest concern to

humanity" (p. xiii). He describes political philosophy, in the context of social work, as

"Questions concerning the aims of government, the grounds of political obligation, the

rights of individuals . . . the nature of political liberty and social justice" (Reamer, 1993,

p. 3). A discussion of political philosophy is relevant to this research because it focuses

on meanings of social justice related to the concepts of rights, justice, and equality.

Reamer (1993) also describes the central place of moral philosophy, or ethics, in

discussing the social work profession's "duties of a just society [and] obligation to

address problems of poverty, discrimination, and oppression" (p. 40). A discussion of

moral philosophy is relevant to this research because it focuses on meanings of social

justice related to the concepts of ethics and values.

These political and moral philosophical contexts contribute to the student

educational experience by offering a deeper conceptual understanding of social justice

principles and providing insight into social justice as a professional value and ethical

responsibility. Both will be discussed further in this section.

2.3.1 Political Philosophy

Social work's espoused commitment to social justice has created complex political relationships with the state, marginalized citizens, and the distribution of resources (Reamer, 1993). These relationships have been fraught with tensions advancing various perspectives of "rights" and can be characterized as philosophical differences "between the historical social work conceptualization of justice rooted in the rights of individuals and more recent views of justice rooted in group identity and membership" (Scanlon & Longres, 2001, p. 441). Pelton (2001) argues that the promotion of social justice is central to the mission of social work and that it is rooted in classical liberal assumptions about the inherent rights of the individual. These rights are viewed as paramount and exist prior to the state and rights of groups. One major interpretation of this view of social justice is provided in the works of John Rawls (1971, 1999) and his distributive justice model. Rawls's *Justice as Fairness* model has two component principles. The fairness principle states that there are primary goods, such as income, status, and self-esteem that should be available at some basic level to all citizens. The principle of equal opportunity states that, where inequalities exist, these primary goods should be attached to situations that individual citizens have an equal chance to obtain. This view of social justice is synonymous with a combination of principles of equal opportunity and redistribution based upon individual need (Miller, 1976; Pelton, 2001; Scanlon & Longres, 2001).

A differing philosophical perspective views social justice as focusing on the increasing inequality between and among groups by altering their social relationship, from dominant–subordinate to equal or peer, and thereby eliminating cultural domination

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and marginalization in society (Scanlon & Longres, 2001). This view of social justice is represented in the work of feminist Iris Marion Young (1990) and her relational or processual justice model. This model "refers to the decision making processes that lead to decisions about distribution and to the relationships between dominant and subordinate groups, such as racial minorities and people of color, that affect decisions about distribution" (Longres & Scanlon, 2001, p. 442). Young (1990) argues that "it is a mistake to reduce social justice to redistribution, as egalitarian-liberals such as Rawls and Dworkin tend to do. . . . This focus tends to ignore the social structure and institutional context" (p. 5). Young believes "that by making the concepts of oppression and domination the focus of a theory of justice one can inspire a liberating public philosophy . . . that both promotes social equality and provides the recognition that undermines cultural imperialism" (Farrelly, 2004, p. 183). This view of social justice is reiterated by authors Wakefield (1988), Gitterman (2003), and Solas (2008) in that people's experience of social justice and injustice cannot be limited to the distribution of material goods and services, but needs also to address the equal allocation of nonmaterial socially produced 'goods', such as opportunity, power, and the social bases of self respect, from a radical equalitarian perspective.

This discussion highlights the diverse meanings of social justice in terms of rights, equality, resource distribution and redistribution, accessibility of resources and services, opportunity, power, oppression, and domination. These concepts have been considered philosophical foundations on which the professional commitment to social justice rests (Reamer, 1993) and concepts that social work students will struggle with in their educational experience.

2.3.2 Moral Philosophy

Values and ethics hold a central place within the profession of social work and in social work education. The CASW Code of Ethics (2005) discusses the "Pursuit of Social Justice" as a primary social work value with guiding principles that include upholding the right to have access to resources; advocacy for equitable access to public services and benefits; advocacy for equality and human rights; and promotion of social development and environmental management (p. 5). The CASW Guidelines for Ethical Practice (2005) also discusses participation in social and/or political action, advocacy, and local and global human rights activism as important social work practices for promoting social justice (pp. 24-25). As a normative profession, "social workers have placed emphasis on the moral duties of a just society, that is, society's broad-based obligation to address problems of poverty, discrimination, and oppression. . . . [and] social work's principal mission is to illuminate society's structural flaws" (Reamer, 1993, p. 40).

This ethical commitment to social justice has also created a moral tension that began during the Progressive Era and continues to exist within the profession. This tension is between the public interest and common good views of social work (Reamer, 1993). The public interest view being a vision of society that works toward a broad collective good primarily through individual self interest. This view promotes social justice as one aspect of ethical social work practice which works toward enhancing the functioning ability of clients so that they can pursue their own interests and productively contribute to a just society. The common good view being a vision of a society in which citizens work together for the common good of all people. This view embraces social

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work's commitment to social justice as an ethical obligation to society (Miller, 2006; Reamer, 1993). Embedded in this ethical tension about the public purpose of social work are two very different interpretations of social justice, one being an ethical obligation to the individual (as a means to just society) and the other an ethical obligation to society. This central ethical tension may influence the meaning of social justice in social work education and practice that is experienced by social work students.

The social work profession and its values and ethics have grown over the years with a focus on developing ethical codes, guidelines, and standards for social workers, teaching students their application to practice, and introducing ethical decision-making models for addressing moral problems or ethical dilemmas (Miller, 2006; Reamer, 1993). This process has lead to professional growth through introspection, the gaining of professional identity, and skill development in dealing with increasingly complex casework problems (Phillips, 2000). This professional growth and focus on professionalization can, however, also be considered an ethical tension within the social work profession and social work education. It has been viewed by some as a drift away from social work's commitment to social justice and its mission of dealing with major social problems, a distancing from the vulnerable people and communities that social work serves, and a decrease in social activism (Reeser & Epstein, 1990; Specht & Courtney, 1994).

This drift away from social work's commitment to social justice has also been a criticism of the most recent code of ethics. The CASW Code of Ethics (2005) discusses the "Pursuit of Social Justice" as a primary social work principle and value, however, the

code has been criticized by some social work scholars as having a limited view of social justice. According to Mullaly (2007),

> Although the new Code identifies the pursuit of social justice as a value, it presents a limited and limiting view of social justice. That is, social justice is defined only in terms of distributing or redistributing society's resources (i.e., distributive or redistributive justice), which excludes doing anything about the social institutions, policies, processes, and practices that are responsible for the inequitable distribution in the first place. A (re)distributive view of social justice simply compensates victims of social injustice and does nothing to change a society that is characterized by inequality along lines of race, class, gender, age, sexuality, and so on. (p. 52)

One of the ways suggested to deal with this drift away from social work's commitment to social justice has been to address the need for further professional socialization from a social justice perspective within social work education. Goldstein (2001) views socialization as an important aspect of maintaining, supporting, and developing the professional social work commitment to social justice. Socialization focuses on the process of how students learn professional values, knowledge, and skills rather than on the content that they are taught. This is a process whereby social work students actively construct their professional identities through ways such as peer groups, role models, and mentoring relationships despite curriculum intervention (Barretti, 2004). Goldstein (2001) states that "socialization begins to take hold when novices are inspired to identify with and become part of the mission, ethos, and culture of the profession" (p.26). Professional socialization offers social work students an opportunity to learn

social justice values, and ethical responsibilities, complexities, and tensions through experiential educational processes.

The above discussion on moral philosophy presented the meaning of social justice in terms of a primary value and ethical responsibility in professional social work and described some of practices associated with this commitment as outlined in the CASW Code of Ethics (2005) and CASW Guidelines for Ethical Practice (2005). As an expectation of professional practice, social work students can be expected to acquire a conceptual understanding of these values and ethical responsibilities and a working knowledge of the practices associated with them. This research inquires into both the conceptual understanding and the social justice practice perspectives of social work students. The tensions encompassed in and the perceived 'drifting away' of this ethical commitment to social justice were also discussed. Professional socialization from a social justice perspective was viewed as one possible way for social work education to maintain students' commitment to social justice principles. This study also explores BSW students' experiences of social justice in their social work education beyond curriculum to also include experiences with peers, faculty members, and practicum supervisors.

These political and moral philosophical contexts broadened the meaning of social justice in social work education and practice to include rights, equality, professional values, and ethical responsibilities. These contexts continued to deepen the conceptual understanding of social justice and describe social justice practice perspectives with respect to professional ethical practice that may be part of the social work student experience. This discussion of philosophical contexts and their inherent tensions also

revealed the complexity of political constructs, moral perspectives, and socialization processes within social work students' educational journey which they will continue to grapple with along their professional journey.

2.4 Theoretical Frameworks for Social Justice

Social justice can be further understood within a theoretical context born out of the Settlement House Movement and social reformist movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Those early beginnings of social justice, social reform, and social activism had a limited influence on traditional modernist social work theory and practice in the 1940s and 1950s. Social justice regained an educational and practice influence in the 1960s and 1970s when radical social work emerged, accompanied by other social movements including racial equality and civil rights, women's rights, labour rights, gay and lesbian liberation, disability rights, Indigenous decolonization, and peace, were reinvigorated following the social upheaval of the 1960s (Mullaly, 2010). Radical social work at this time was based on Marxist theory and a socialist perspective that placed "individual problems with common experience and explored the degree to which they were socially constructed" (Lundy, 2004). Activists, Bailey and Brake (1975) described radical social work as "understanding the position of the oppressed in the context of the social and economic structures we live in. . . . Our aim is not, for example, to eliminate casework, but to eliminate casework that supports ruling-class hegemony" (p. 9).

Radical social work theory maintained its reformist, socialist roots, but expanded its focus to include emancipatory social work that placed emphasis in education and

practice on both the client's view, voice, and experiences, and on structural analysis of the social, economic and political structures of society both with attention to social justice and human rights. It did, however, continue to be marginalized by mainstream (case work) social work education and practice (Goldstein, 1973; Howe, 1987; Lundy, 2004).

A dialectic approach to social work theory, acknowledging the need for social work education and practice to address both individual and social change and the interaction between them, was further developed into the structural approach by Canadian social work scholar Maurice Moreau in the mid-1970s (Lundy, 2004). The structural approach to social work education and practice provided a unique view of oppression. Structural social work viewed "various forms of oppression as intersecting with each other at numerous points, creating a total system of oppression" (Mullaly, 2007, p. 212). Oppression consisted of multiple, intersecting social and institutional conditions which created barriers and prevented people from full participation in society and was a central concern for social workers committed to social justice. Anti-oppressive social work in turn emerged as a significant focus of theory, education, and practice development in the 1990s (Dominelli, 2002; Mullaly, 2007).

Anti-oppressive social work deepened the theoretical understandings of the multiplicity, intersectionality, and levels of oppression, and offered a practice approach mindful of the connection between the personal and the political (Mullaly, 2010). Anti-oppressive social work practice promoted equity and social justice through individual action and social change. Recently, an integration of postmodernism, structural social work, and radical social work has resulted in a reconceptualizing of critical social work. Critical social work focuses on social transformation through social action as the means

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to achieving social justice in a globalized world. Theories that contribute to the meaning of social justice in social work education and practice continue to broaden social work students' insight and conceptual understanding of social justice. These include critical theory, conflict theories, anti-oppressive social work, and critical social work.

2.4.1 Critical theory

Critical theory (also called critical social theory), was arguably founded on the emancipatory ideas of Karl Marx and then expanded upon by notable theorists including Lukas, Horkheimer, Pollock, and Habermas. Critical theory was originally developed in the 1930s, but re-emerged in the 1970s with support for the structural causes to social problems (Mullaly, 2002). Critical theory asserted that social structures "favour certain groups in society and oppress others along lines of class, race, gender, and so on. The oppressed or subordinate groups are susceptible to all manner of social problems" (Mullaly, 2010, p. 5). The solution sought by critical theory was to transform society replacing social inequality with social justice. Critical theory was motivated by an interest in oppressed populations; informed by a critique of domination; and focused on the goal of liberation (Kellner, 1989; Lundy, 2004). Critical theory is not a singular theory or body of knowledge, rather is a 'theory cluster' made up of a number of different theories (Agger, 1998). For a theory to be considered grounded in critical theory, it must have the following features: opposes positivism; attempts to raise consciousness about domination, exploitation, and oppression; argues that oppression is structural; argues that the structures of oppression are based on dominate-subordinate power relationships; rejects economic determinism; and holds people responsible for their own liberation (Mullaly, 2002).

A range of theoretical perspectives relevant to the meaning of social justice in social work education and practice continue to be informed by critical theory including structural approaches, radical theories, liberation theology, Freire's liberatory pedagogy, transformative feminist theories, post-colonialism, phenomenology, social constructivism, and postmodernism (Bishop, 2002; Dominelli, 2002; Hick, Fook, & Pozzuto, 2005; Mullaly, 2002). Critical theory can be pragmatically viewed as political practice that "is committed to changing the world in ways that can help emancipate those on the margins of society" (Leonard, 1990, p. xiii).

Critical theory deepened the meaning of social justice as an emancipatory vision and political practice that is committed to transforming the oppressive structures of society through liberation of marginalized populations. Social work perspectives and approaches that share this emancipatory vision and political practice are discussed in the social work literature and within social work classrooms as conflict theories.

2.4.2 Conflict Theories

Conflict theories, introduced into social work in the 1970s, were grounded in critical theory. Conflict theories, also referred to in social work literature as radical change or transformation approaches; include radical social work, radical humanism, Marxist social work, and radical structuralism theories. Conflict theorists view society as having an unequal social order that is politically, socially, and institutionally organized to support the hegemony and entitlement of the dominant group. They offer critical understandings of capitalism as the source of structural inequality and exploitation which creates vast disparity in wealth, power, status, and social existence between the dominant and subordinate groups. Conflict theories are defined by their similar postulates which

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include: society is comprised of dominant and subordinate groups divergent in their values, interests, and behaviours; the state and the law are instruments of oppression and support the hegemony and entitlement of the dominant group; social inequality is the result of dominant entitlement supported by corrupt institutions in society; and social inequality is a primary source of conflict (Reasons & Perdue, 1981).

Conflict theories also "differ in the emphasis placed on either agency or structure and the possibilities for social change" (Lundy, 2004, p. 55). Radical social work, radical humanism and several other approaches, including radical feminism, post-colonialism, anti-oppressive social work, and narrative therapy based on postmodernism, emphasize individual subjective lived experience, client voice, and advocacy (Lundy, 2004). Howe (1987) described social workers who practice from the above perspectives as 'The Raisers of Consciousness'. Marxist social work and radical structuralism, along with approaches such as socialist feminism, emphasize structural analysis of the social, economic, and political (power) structures of society and collective social action (Lundy, 2004). Howe (1987) described social workers who practice from these perspectives as 'The Revolutionaries'. Conflict theories contributed to the meaning of social justice by offering students critical understandings of capitalism as the source of structural inequality and exploitation and explained that social inequality exists to support the hegemony and entitlement of the dominant groups.

It has been suggested by social work scholars Mullaly (1997) and Lundy (2004) that structural social work is situated within both a radical social work perspective and socialist ideology bridged by their common view that inequality is perpetuated by capitalism (structural) and maintained through oppression. According to Lundy (2004),

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structural social work is the best theoretical perspective for addressing the meaning of social justice in social work education and practice because it attempts to bridge the duality of the personal and the social, the individual and the community, and offers social workers an understanding of diverse populations in the context of social structure and social processes that generally support and reproduce social problems. While structural social work may recognize the need to address social problems at both the individual and societal levels and may also share some commonalities with strength-based, empowerment, and anti-racism approaches, structural social work focuses on critical analysis of social structures with an emphasis on social justice (Fook, 1993; Lundy, 2004; Mullaly, 1997). Another theoretical approach that has become particularly influential interpreting the meaning of social justice in social work education and practice is anti-oppressive social work.

2.4.3 Anti-Oppressive Social Work

Anti-oppressive social work has become a prominent approach that provides an understanding of and addresses the multiplicity, web, and unique constructs of oppression through a wide range of theories and practices that emphasize the individual subjective lived experience, client voice, advocacy, and social justice. Anti-oppressive social work is considered the current nomenclature for a range of theories in social work education including radical, structural, feminist, anti-racist, anti-colonial, and liberatory frameworks (Campbell, 2003a). Informed by this rich theoretical landscape, anti-oppressive social work also serves to inform and offer alternative ways for practicing social work. For Dominelli (1998), social workers and students pursuing social justice require an anti-oppressive approach which she describes as follows;

A form of practice which addresses social divisions and structural inequalities in the work that is done with 'clients' (users) or workers. Anti-oppressive practice aims to provide more appropriate and sensitive services by responding to people's needs regardless of their social status. Anti-oppressive practice embodies a person-centered philosophy, an egalitarian value system concerned with reducing the deleterious effects of structural inequalities upon people's lives; a methodology focusing on both process and outcome; and a way of structuring relationships between individuals that aims to empower users by reducing the negative effects of hierarchy in their immediate interaction and the work they do together. (p.24)

Anti-oppressive social work practice offers social workers and students an understanding of personal, cultural, and structural levels of oppression, their complex inter-relationship, how they operate within dominant society, and the significant impact that oppression has on the lives of marginalized clients and client groups that they serve (Mullaly, 2010). Anti-oppressive social work practice also provides a way for social workers and students to take into account social inequalities "that texture the lives of those denied access to society's resources because of their defined social status and the exclusionary practices of the dominant systems" in their daily practice (Dalrymple & Burke, 1995, p. 18). It also offers a rationale for social workers and students to become more self aware, critical, and reflexive in their approach to education and practice and to engage in dialogue about power, privilege, different ways of knowing, colonization, and diversity (Dominelli, 2002). Anti-oppressive social work promotes a commitment to

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social justice in social work education and practice by further developing the meaning of social justice to support social action based on client empowerment, client advocacy, the eradication of oppression, and creating an equitable and just world.

Critical social work theorists have challenged anti-oppressive social work as being unresponsive to social work education and practice conditions that include the impact of globalization and rising environmentalism, and ignoring the causes or origins of disadvantage (Ife, 2005). Critical social work theory and practice was reconceptualized within this environment and revisited collective social action as an important part of the commitment to and meaning of social justice in social work education and practice (Fook, 2002).

2.4.4 Critical Social Work

Critical social work theory and practice in the 21st century has maintained its critical theory and radical social work roots, and grown to incorporate structural, feminist, and postmodern approaches. It is a mingling of theories that rejects the notion of a grand theory and supports developing an understanding of social work practice that is inclusive and participatory. It challenges the current social structures, social construction of knowledge claims, the power relations involved in making these claims, and how these claims produce increasing numbers of poor and marginalized populations (Soloman, 2005). Critical social work education and practice, as described by Fook (2002), advances an understanding of structural and feminist social work by incorporating the insights of postmodern thinking;

A postmodern and critical social work practice is primarily concerned with practicing in ways which will further a society without domination, exploitation and oppression. It will focus both on how structures dominate, but also on how people construct and are constructed by changing social structures and relations, recognizing that there may be multiple and diverse constructions of ostensibly similar situations. Such an understanding of social relations and structures can be used to disrupt dominant understandings and structures, and as a basis for changing these so that they are more inclusive of different interest groups. (p.18)

Critical social work is also a response to the escalating social control functions in social work practice and social policy development; the negative impact of globalization that has produced increasing numbers of poor, marginalized populations of people; and to rising environmental issues. It enhanced the meaning of social justice by offering emancipatory, consciousness-raising approaches to social work education and practice that seek to improve the lives of people and engage people in liberatory and collective social action (Ife, 2005). Critical social work practice is working with and for marginalized and oppressed populations of people to achieve liberation, social change, and social justice.

The challenges raised by social work scholars is the applicability of critical social work to direct social work practice and the usefulness of broad social theories for social change which seem disconnected from the workplaces of large numbers of social workers and the lives of their clients (Hick & Pozzuto, 2005). Critical social work is at risk of "reproducing the academic-practice split that has limited the development of critical knowledge development in social work" (Hick & Pozzuto, 2005, p. xv). In a sense,

critical social work and social justice in social work education and practice face a similar challenge; to connect the day to day practices of social workers and educational process of students with the macro-relations and structures of society which create inequality, oppression, and injustice in society and within the lives of their clients.

The meaning of social justice in social work education and practice can be further described within a context grounded in theoretical frameworks and approaches that are focused upon challenging oppression, supporting individual and collective social action, and creating structural change and social transformation. These frameworks and approaches (critical theory, conflict theories, anti-oppressive social work, and critical social work) offer students conceptual understanding and insight into social work practice as political practice; provide a theoretical basis for further understanding personal, cultural, and structural oppression; and contribute a structural approach to social work practice which addresses social division and structural inequalities in the work they will do with clients.

2.5 Social Justice in an Educational Context

The previous section discussed the resurgence and development of a theoretical context for further exploring the meaning of social justice in social work education and practice and the implications for social work students' educational experiences with social justice. The following section will discuss the relevance of the educational context in exploring the meaning of social justice to social work students and the educational experiences that shaped this meaning. The discussion will also include a description of an educational context that promotes social justice as meaningful and purposeful in

education, based upon classical and contemporary education theories and approaches in the areas of experiential learning, critical pedagogy, anti-oppressive education, andragogy, and transformative learning. These theories and approaches focus on the importance of how social justice is taught to adult learners, including radical, transformational educational processes that engage students through their experience with the goals of liberation and social action (Dewey, 1938; Freire, 1970; hooks, 2003; Kumahiro, 2004; Van Soest & Garcia, 2003).

The section concludes with a description of the contributions of social work scholars to educational literature on social justice. These scholars provide a rationale for the inclusion of social justice in social work education and address educational processes that they view as fundamental in social work (Abramovitz, 1993; Van Soest & Garcia, 2003).

2.5.1 Connections

There were no schools of social work when prominent Settlement House Movement leader Jane Addams opened Hull House in 1889 and developed a generalist approach to education that was based on the notions of lived experience, participation, reciprocity, community service and social justice (Glaser, 2001; Haynes & White, 1999; Lundblad, 1995; Shields, 2006). Addams believed that, in order to achieve social justice, education needed to be based on meaningful interpersonal relationships, relevancy, and humanity rather than on elitist content and class procurement of knowledge (Lundblad, 1995). Addams became an advocate for experiential learning within early social work training and education curriculums and Hull House became a training center for social worker students (Kendall, 2000; Leighninger, 2000; Lundblad, 1995).

Addams' early views on education and social justice were influenced by her friend and colleague John Dewey. Dewey (1859-1952) was a philosopher and educational theorist at the University of Chicago and an activist social researcher at Hull-House. Dewey believed that the educational process was crucial in the development of participatory citizenship and for achieving social justice (Lundblad, 1995). In his book *Experience & Education* (1938), Dewey distinguishes between traditional and progressive education. He describes a traditional educational scheme as a mechanism for social control that is "imposed from above and from outside . . . (and) teachers are the agents through which knowledge and skills are communicated and rules of conduct enforced." (p. 18). Dewey (1938) then describes progressive education as participatory, reflexive, just, and developed through "an intimate and necessary relation between the processes of actual experience and education" (p. 20). Dewey (1938) was also an early proponent of justice-centered and experiential educational principles including: participatory learning, active learning, beginning where the learner is, critical thinking, the significance of inquiry as a learning process, reflection as key to learning, and teaching and learning as a continuous process of reconstruction of experience. As fervent supporters of learner-centered curriculum and activists in participatory citizenship, Addams' and Dewey's work supported their passion for accessible and justice-centered education.

A common objection to Addams' and Dewey's liberatory approach to education is that educators should decide the educational processes that advances peoples' best interests and not what people are interested in or what is relevant to their lives as determining factors in what they study (Selman, Cooke, Selman, & Dampier, 1998).

The connection between Addams and Dewey reveals lengthy and strong associations between social work, education theory, and social justice. For social work, education theories, such as Dewey's classical theory of experience, "supply us with direction and assurance that teaching can accomplish the complex knowledge, skill, and conative learning outcomes sought in social justice education; aims that include adding knowledge but, also, social consciousness, desire, volition, and striving for social justice" (Pogue, 2011, p. 34). Contemporary education theories and approaches, that include critical pedagogy, anti-oppressive education, andragogy, and transformative learning, have further contributed to the meaning of social justice in social work education based on justice-centered, experiential, and transformative educational principles.

2.5.2 Education Theories and Approaches

Critical pedagogy, anti-oppressive education, andragogy, and transformative learning are approaches to social justice in education that tend to share a dedication to social change. Critical pedagogy advocates the development of a philosophy of praxis guided by a Marxist humanism and the struggle for liberatory democracy (Mclaren, 2008). It is opposed to liberalism which serves to facilitate the reproduction of capitalism and advocates for multiracial social movements dedicated to opposing racism, sexism, heterosexism, hierarchies based on social class, as well as other forms of oppression. Critical pedagogy draws its inspiration from philosophers of radical praxis, such as Paulo Freire, social theorists, and political activists (Mclaren, 2008). In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), Freire's critique of the "banking method" of education and argument for "problem-posing" education provides insight into how educational processes are experienced by people and how these experiences can oppress or transform humanity.

Freire insisted upon locating educational activity within the lived experience of adult learners. He was interested in praxis (experiencing reflection and action within education), the need for educational dialogue based on reciprocity, humility, humanity, hope, critical thinking, and 'conscientization' (consciousness that has the power to transform reality) (Freire, 1970).

Anti-oppressive education is related to "praxis" in that it explicitly works against multiple forms of oppression and brings about the re-centering of education on issues of social justice (Kumashiro, 2004). Anti-oppressive education "draws on many activist traditions, crafting links between feminist, critical, multicultural, queer, postcolonial, and other movements toward social justice" (Kumashiro, 2004, p. XXVI). bell hooks (2003) provides her view of anti-oppressive education and social justice:

Education needs to work for justice, changing our educational system so that schooling is not a site where students are indoctrinated to support imperialist white-supremist capitalist patriarchy or any ideology, but rather where they learn to open their minds, to engage in rigorous inquiry and to think critically. . . .In the last twenty years, educators who have dared to study and learn new ways of thinking and teaching so that the work we do does not reinforce systems of domination, of imperialism, racism, sexism or class elitism have created a pedagogy of hope. . . . Progressive education, education as the practice of freedom, enables us to confront feelings of loss and restore our sense of connection. It teaches us how to create community . . . [and] to make the classroom a place that is life-sustaining and mind-expanding, a place of liberating mutuality where teacher and student together work in partnership. . . .We have to

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believe that by engaging in dialogue with another person, we have the possibility of making change within ourselves, that we can become deeper (pp. xiii-xvi). hooks' view of progressive education is shared by Shor (1992) and Roche, Dewees, Trailweaver, Alexander, Cuddy, and Handy (1999), all of whom discuss radical and feminist pedagogies that support a focus on empowerment and social justice issues in education (Jarvis, 2002).

Andragogy is a theory of adult learning that delineates adult learning from pedagogy, a Greek word meaning the art and science of teaching children, and challenges the status quo of traditional education (Knowles, 1980). It can be viewed as supporting hook's notion of progressive education as it is based upon liberatory assumptions that adults have a desire to know why they are learning and to derive meaning from their learning; experience plays a greater role in the education of adults; and adults have a self-concept of being responsible for their own lives and decisions and strive to be self-directed learners (Knowles, Holton III, & Swanson, 2005).

Transformative learning theory builds on the education theories and approaches of experiential learning, critical pedagogy, anti-oppressive education, and andragogy. It integrates the experiential, progressive, and liberatory educational intentions of these previously discussed approaches with 'perspective transformation' (Pogue, 2011). Cranton (1994) describes transformative learning as occurring "when, through critical self-reflection, an individual revises old or develops new assumptions, beliefs, or ways of seeing the world" (p. 4). Cranton (2006) characterizes the process of transformative learning as self-directed, experiential, collaborative and participatory, contextual, self-reflective, liberatory, anti-oppressive, and emancipatory based on the ideas of Dewey,

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1938; Freire, 1970; Habermas, 1984; Kolb, 1984; Mezirow, 1991; Brookfield, 2001; and Kumashiro, 2004.

Mezirow (1991) discusses transformative learning theory as growing out of constructivism, critical theory, and deconstructivism in social theory. He describes the intent of transformative learning theory as explaining "how adult learners make sense or meaning of their experiences, the nature of the structures that influence the way they construe experience, the dynamics involved in modifying meanings, and the way the structures of meaning themselves undergo changes when learners find them to be dysfunctional" (p. xii). King (2005) also discusses transformative learning as "a new orientation and a new focus to learners" (p.10). Transformative learning is considered particularly relevant to social justice in social work education "because of its humanistic and humanitarian orientation" (Pogue, 2011, p. 39) and its justice-centered stance (Mezirow, 1991).

Education theories and approaches provide conceptual frameworks and processes for teaching social justice in social work education. They have significantly influenced contemporary thinking and writing on social justice in social work education which continues to have advocates who argue that progressive, transformational education is central to social work students' experiences and understandings of social justice.

2.5.3 Contemporary Social Work Education

Some social work scholars have been subsequently challenged to develop educational processes and approaches that are congruent with this transformative agenda and translate this into practice. Abramovitz (1993) provides a rationale for a transformative approach to educational processes in social work. According to her, social

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justice in social work education can prevent social work from becoming a handmaiden of the increasingly conservative status quo; teach social workers that a real difference exists between alleviating personal problems and addressing their root causes in unequal and unjust social conditions, and that effective social work practice must be good at both; and address the personal issues of the people that they serve and practice politically. Education must therefore prepare students who may be moved or called upon as practitioners to promote social change, even when this is not their primary professional role. Abramovitz (1993) stated that:

> All social work is already political, because it deals either with consciousness or the allocation of resources. Because it is impossible to avoid politics in this respect, it is far better to address these issues explicitly than to pretend that they do not exist. The political character of all social work and the adverse effects of the market economy on personal well-being suggest that teaching students how to foster individual and social change may be a more ethical option than endorsing apolitical social work. The latter, after all, typically blames the victim and deflects attention from the more systemic causes of many personal and social problems. (p. 1)

Van Soest and Garcia (2003) more fully depicted the transformative role of social justice in social work education by describing educational approaches that they view as fundamental in social work. These approaches included: focusing on power and privilege related to social identity and the meaning of difference; ensuring that diversity issues include everyone in the equation both oppressor and oppressed; emphasizing self-awareness of practitioners; promoting the development of a spirit of inquiry; focusing on

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the role of social policy and practices that create barriers to fundamental social change; developing an understanding of the historical context and intergenerational dynamics of diversity issues; advancing different ways of knowing and including those historically marginalized in the construction of knowledge; and utilizing advocacy and activism as a means to create change (pp. xi-xii). An educational commitment to social justice from this perspective means supporting students to develop conceptual understandings of social justice as a basis for formulating advocacy actions; opening up conversations for student engagement in critical analysis of oppressive social trends; promoting curriculum development in critical and structural approaches to practice; and encouraging student participation in goal identification, knowledge development, and grading processes (Van Soest & Garcia, 2003).

Campbell (2003b) expanded the discussion on transformative educational approaches and focused on the congruency between content and process in anti-oppressive social work education. From her research, she identified a set of interconnected educational principles and practices that further informs anti-oppressive education. She also discussed the need for social work educators to have a strong formulation of their roles and responsibilities as educators including a solid pedagogical grounding; awareness of the privilege and authority of the position and the institution in society; responsible course preparation; accessibility to students; and multiple teaching and learning methods. She promoted critical analysis in social work education that includes rejection of the expert role; and deconstruction of knowledge, concepts, and practices.

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Campbell (2003c) also highlighted the importance of student engagement in learning through participatory, active learning processes; use of formative and summative feedback to modify course content and process; and acknowledging that students are adults with lives outside the academic setting. She described the importance of developing mentoring relationships and a community of learners with students; and how these relationships contribute to creating respectful learning environment for sharing and developing awareness of oppression and domination. Campbell supported the use of student experience as a pedagogical base and discussed how student sharing of experiences contributes to their own learning, the learning of others in the classroom, and forms the basis for reflective and reflexive thinking. She described facilitating classroom and practice connections to encourage the transfer of student classroom experiences to practice as well as providing opportunities for community engagement. Lastly, Campbell acknowledged the importance of working with affect in the classroom when educators are engaged in the transformative content and processes of anti-oppressive education.

Classic and contemporary educational theorists and social work scholars have continued to view progressive education and transformative learning as central to social justice in educational settings. This theme, as noted in the previous sections, is exemplified in the early work of Addams and Dewey (1938) on progressive, justice-centered education. It is also supported in the work of Friere (1970) and Mezirow (1991) on how emancipation, liberation, and justice are discovered through transformative learning. Abramovitz (1993), Campbell (2003b), Campbell (2003c), and Van Soest and Garcia (2003) argued that transformative learning is a fundamental educational process in social work.

This section focused on the various educational frameworks and teaching processes that offer insight into and encourage further exploration of the educational experiences of social work students in social justice. Dewey (1938) acknowledged these educational processes when he stated, "I do not wish to close, however, without recording my firm belief that the fundamental issue is not of new versus old education nor of progressive against traditional education but a question of what anything whatever must be to be worthy of the name *education*" (p. 90).

The next section discusses the various approaches to social justice in social work practice and the range of practice approaches that social work students can experience within their classroom and practicum settings.

2.6 Translations – Social Justice in Social Work Practice

Social justice has been previously discussed as a complex phenomenon with divergent interpretations. Therefore, no single straightforward definition of social justice has been agreed upon by theorists and social justice, as it is reflected in social work practice, shares this interpretive diversity (Galambos, 2008; Hong & Hodge, 2011; McLaughlin, 2006; Pelton, 2001; Reisch, 2002; Scanlon & Longres, 2001). Social work, from a social justice perspective, involves embracing diverse meanings of social justice and teaching various interpretations of the ways that social workers can work toward creating just societies.

O'Brien (2010) provides a framework for conceptualizing social work practice, adapted from Dominelli's (2004) framework, based on the micro, meso, and macro dimensions of social justice-based practice. Micro practices are embodied in social work

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practice with individuals and families focusing on empowerment work. Meso practices are actions taken by social workers to shift social policies and organizational procedures and practices which lead to social injustice with a focus on advocacy work. Macro practices are participation by social workers in activities and social movements directed at social, economic, political, and environmental change with a focus on activism work (O'Brien, 2010). This section will further discuss these various approaches to practice which elicit different meanings of social justice, its role in practice, and reveal the diverse range of practice approaches that social work students can be introduced to through their course work and practicum experiences.

Social justice in social work practice can be understood as "individualized and personalized in that it is primarily focused on the individual and personal experiences of individual and families" (O'Brien, 2010, p. 181). From this perspective, social work practice is directed toward obtaining socially just outcomes for the specific clients and families social workers are serving. Social workers work with clients on issues such as rights, equality, discrimination, access, services, and opportunities. Empowerment practice refers to social work practice which seeks to reduce and eliminate oppression by working with populations of people, individually or collectively, to reduce alienation and powerlessness and gain control over their own lives and environments through personal and social change (Lundy, 2004; Mullaly, 2010). This individualized or micro perspective on social justice in social work practice acknowledges that the structural nature of oppression creates interpersonal and cultural struggles for oppressed people and is considered a translation of social justice values into daily practice (Lundy, 2004; Mullaly,

2010; O'Brien, 2010). Put another way, "social justice is met in the lives of our clients" (O'Brien, 2010, p. 182).

Schneider and Lester (2001) discuss social justice in practice as representative social work advocacy. This is an action-oriented form of advocacy that focuses on creating opportunities and developing skills to participate in raising awareness and educating the public, decision makers, and policy makers on social issues. They developed a definition of social justice-based practice as social action by social workers encompassing "individual or group activity designed to influence a change in social policy" (pp. 71-72). Advocacy has also been described as working toward social justice when social workers take action to ensure human rights, eliminate oppressive practices with their clients, client groups, and within their agencies; develop new anti-oppressive programs; and educate colleagues and members of related disciplines about social justice principles (Lundy, 2004; Reisch, 2002). According to Ife (2001), human rights-based social work practice is the "moral basis for social justice and a legal basis for the pursuit of social justice requiring rights to be properly defined in a public forum so that they are clearly understood by all and adequately guaranteed through various measures such as legislations, tribunals, human rights commissions, and courts" (pp. 70-71). O'Brien (2010) describes these types of social work practices as meso practices and discusses them as actions taken by social workers to change organizational policies, procedures, and practices which lead to injustice. Social workers are "looking to bring about changes which have a wider application than being limited to the situation of the user whom they are currently concerned" (p. 182).

Mullaly (2002) and McNicoll (2003) also discuss social action as social justice-oriented practice when social workers participate in activities such as lobbying, rallies, campaigns, and social movements as a way of changing social policy and "giving voice to those who where previously silenced" (Mullaly, 2002, p. 197). Participation in political activism is another way to advance social justice in social work practice. Barter (2003) and Mullaly (2002) identify that the profession's ethical and value commitments to social and economic justice imply challenging social injustices and that social work is inherently political if it is to meet its commitment to social justice and avoid supporting the status quo. From this perspective, working toward social justice in social work practice involves challenging capitalist ideology and elitism by participating in activities such as peace rallies, political demonstrations, political campaigns connected to "antiwar sentiments, opposition to economic globalization and its consequences, or the need to reorder national priorities" (Reisch, 2002, p. 349). This type of practice is currently exemplified by the Occupy Movement. The Occupy Movement "is a leaderless resistance movement which began as a call to action from Adbusters, a Canadian-based anti-consumerist organization" (http://www.occupytogether.org/occupy-wall-st/). Subsequently, on September 17, 2011, "men and women of all races, backgrounds, political and religious beliefs, began to organize in nonviolent protest. These men and women represent the 99% with the goal of ending the greed and corruption of the wealthiest 1% of America" (http://www.occupytogether.org/occupy-wall-st/).

Social justice in social work practice also includes advocacy for the environment. The *Green* movement is a radical approach to environmental advocacy that views

environmental problems as symptoms of structural social, economic, and political issues which are unsustainable, and thus need to be changed. Conventional, linear, and technological solutions to environmental problems may be adequate (even essential) in the short term, but in the long term they will prove inadequate unless fundamental structural change occurs (Ife, 1995). Little Bear (2000) contributes an indigenous perspective on the importance of environmental advocacy in social work practice when he discusses indigenous people's connection to the land. He writes:

> The land is a very important referent in the Native American mind. Events, patterns, cycles, and happenings occur at certain places. . . . Animal migrations, cycles of plant life, seasons, and cosmic movements are detected from particular spatial locations; hence, medicine wheels and other sacred observatory sites. Each tribal territory has its sacred sites, and its particular environmental and ecological combinations resulting in particular relational networks. All of this happens on the Earth; hence, the sacredness of the Earth in the Native American mind. The Earth is so sacred that it is referred to as Mother, the source of life (p. xi).

O'Brien (2010) describes these types of practice as macro practices which work toward "broader social change questions around economic, social, and cultural structures" (p. 184).

O'Brien's (2010) analysis of the micro, meso, and macro dimensions of social justice in social work practice discusses this framework as a way to integrate the spectrum of social justice practice "from work with individuals and families through organizational and social change activities . . . (linking) these three dimensions together rather than

treating them as comparatively separate and discrete entities" (p. 179). He argues that the literature and discourse on social justice practice in social work has been primarily focused on broader social change agendas and limiting to social workers struggling to work with issues of marginalization, discrimination, and disenfranchisement in their daily practice with clients. He readily admits that he is not arguing against the importance of broader social change and social activism which is necessary given the current economic, social, environmental crises and the deepening gap between the rich and the poor, but he is also supporting "broader analysis and critical discussion of the relationship between social justice and social work" (p. 185). According to Reisch and Andrews (2002), "the test of social work's commitment to its underlying values lies in the willingness to struggle on an often mundane, day-to-day basis to translate these values into deeds, as our professional forebears did individually and collectively" (p. 231).

The further development of a spectrum of practices in social work embraces the ability to hold differing views of the meaning and the nature of social justice and allow a "both/and position [thereby] avoiding either/or sterility" (Walker, 2001, p. 37). This may "enable the social work profession to develop and refine new practice principles for the difficult years ahead" (Reisch, 2002, p. 347) and encourage further exploration of the meaning and implications of social justice in social work education that is a focus for this study.

The next section summarizes the research literature relevant to examining and exploring social work students' commitment to and understanding of social justice and identifies a gap in the research which this study was designed to address.

2.7 Research Literature

Research inquiry into the meaning and role of social justice in social work education has developed and grown as a body of knowledge over the past twenty years. The research literature reviewed in this section positions the focus of this dissertation within the context of current research and in particular areas that require more investigation into the interest area of this study – the meaning of social justice to BSW students and the educational experiences that have shaped this meaning. Current research includes studies focused on social work students' beliefs about social justice; social work students' commitment to promoting social justice; preparing social work students for social justice practice; and professional socialization of social work students.

2.7.1 Beliefs about Social Justice

Research studies by Van Soest (1994) and Morrison Van Voorhis and Hostetter (2006) address the impact of social work education on students' beliefs about social justice.

A pioneering study by Van Soest (1994) examined the impact of social work education on MSW students' social justice beliefs and actions. Van Soest's literature review revealed that, at the time of the study, "no other studies reported on the impact of social work education on students' belief in a just world or commitment to social justice advocacy" (Van Soest, 1994, p. 4). The study used a "quasi-experimental research design with pre-and post-measurements with two comparison groups and a post-test with two comparison groups" (Van Soest, 1994, p. iii). The sample population for the study was 222 MSW students from two universities in the U.S. The sample included "185 first and second year MSW students at Catholic University who took the oppression course

and 37 first and second year MSW students from the University of St. Thomas/College of St. Catherine as comparison groups" (Van Soest, 1994, p. iii). Three instruments were used and two are of particular interest in this review. The first is the Belief in a Just World Scale (BJWS) developed by Rubin and Peplau (1975). The BJWS, a 20-item standardized instrument that uses a 6-point Likert continuum of 3 degrees of agreement or disagreement, is based on the assumption that just world thinking is an attitudinal continuum ranging from total acceptance to total rejection of the idea that the world is a just place. The second instrument was the Social Justice Advocacy Scale (SJAS). This was developed by Van Soest (1994) from student and faculty vignettes/case studies/stories of real-life situations. The SJAS consists of 80 items comprised of 5 subscales that measure self-reported advocacy behaviours. Each subscale explores the frequency with which students engage in 15 advocacy behaviours.

There were two significant findings from this study. First, the findings indicated that social work education has a positive impact on the MSW students' commitment to social justice advocacy. Secondly, the findings revealed that in general the MSW students tended to accept the just world ideology and this acceptance increased after completion of the oppression course. This second finding was an unanticipated finding and it raised concerns that social work education seemed to be positively associated with students' belief that the world is socially just. The statistically significant increase in the student's belief in a just world and the apparent positive correlation between MSW students' self-reported commitment to social justice advocacy and their belief that the world was socially just was unexpected because a negative correlation between acceptance of a just world and commitment to social and political activism was

previously indicated in the use of the BJWS instrument (Rubin & Peplau, 1973). According to Rubin and Peplau (1975), "many people believe that the world is a place where good people are rewarded and bad people are punished. Believers in a just world have been found to be more likely than nonbelievers to admire fortunate people and to derogate victims, thus permitting the believers to maintain the perception that people in fact get what they deserve" (p. 65).

This unanticipated and counterintuitive finding in Van Soest's (1994) study was discussed by the author as a possible reaction to the course content that challenged the students' fundamental worldviews and a necessary stage in the process of personal transformation. Based on the findings, the author recommended more research on the role that social justice plays in social work education and on the effectiveness of new pedagogical models and instructional tools. Van Soest (1996) admitted that "the study seems to raise more questions than it answers, it points to the complexity of educating students for the role of social justice advocate and may thus stimulate further research and creative curriculum development in this important area" (p. 10).

Twelve years later, Morrison Van Voorhis and Hostetter (2006) sought to expand this area of inquiry using Van Soest's (1994) original research as their primary literary, methodological, and analytic guide. The research study by these authors examined changes among MSW students in perception of social worker empowerment and commitment to client empowerment through social justice advocacy during their graduate education. The literature review and the data analysis based on previous research sections of their study, which discussed the impact of social work education on student commitment to social justice, relied on the findings from the Van Soest (1994) study.

The Morrison Van Voorhis and Hostetter (2006) study used a quasi-experimental research design with pre-and post-measurements upon entry and completion of the graduate program. The sample population was 55 MSW students in one university graduate program in the U.S. Four instruments were administered in this study and two are of particular interest in this review. Morrison Van Voorhis and Hostetter (2006), similar to the Van Soest (1994) study, used the Belief in a Just World Scale (BJWS) and the Social Justice Advocacy Scale (SJAS). Similar to Van Soest (1994), these authors thought that believing in a just world would be incompatible with being committed to social justice advocacy and they wanted to further explore these variables.

Morrison Van Voorhis and Hostetter's (2006) study findings revealed that social work education strengthened and enhanced this MSW cohort's sense of empowerment and commitment to client empowerment through social justice advocacy. This supported the earlier research by Van Soest (1994) which found that MSW students increased their commitment to social justice advocacy during their graduate education. These areas are also being explored further by this study.

Another finding for Morrison Van Voorhis and Hostetter(2006) was that MSW students' beliefs in a just world were positively associated with their commitment to social justice advocacy which increased during their graduate education. This was also a similar finding to the Van Soest (1994) study. Continuing to be a counterintuitive finding as with the Van Soest (1994) study, Morrison Van Voorhis and Hostetter's (2006) discussion suggested that "believing in a just world contributes to an internal locus of control and strengthens the respondents' belief in their efficacy as social workers" (p. 116). According to the authors, this could help explain why findings from their study and

from Van Soest's research (1994) suggest that belief in a just world is positively associated with worker empowerment and is not negatively associated with commitment to social justice advocacy as had been hypothesized in both studies. Based on their findings, Morrison Van Voorhis and Hostetter's recommended further research to explain what aspects of the social work educational experience leads to social worker empowerment and commitment to social justice advocacy and to further investigate this complex process.

Both of the previous studies' findings revealed that social work education has some positive impact on students' commitment to social justice. Surprisingly, these same studies raised significant concerns that social work education also seemed to have a positive association with students' belief that society is just. The authors of these studies could offer only speculative reasons for their concerning and counterintuitive findings and identified being limited in their exploration by their quasi-experimental research designs. Their recommendations, however, offered insight into the complexity of social justice in social work education and provided direction and support for further exploratory research. The gap in this research on the impact of social work education on students' beliefs about social justice was one of the factors that led to the qualitative study into the meaning of social justice to social work students and to explore their experiences of social justice within their social work education described in this dissertation.

2.7.2 Commitment to Promoting Social Justice

This next group of research studies, that informed and motivated this dissertation study, attempted to ascertain social work students' commitment to promoting social justice. Weiss (2006) studied "the commitment of social work in various countries to its

declared dual mission - enhancing individual well-being and promoting social justice . . .

by examining the mode of practice preference of graduating BSW students from seven

countries" (p. 135). Based on a cluster analysis, Weiss (2006) found that a majority of

BSW students preferred micro practice and were less likely to engage in macro, social

justice-based practice. Gilligan (2007) examined ways in which social work students'

viewed social problems from the perspective of either individual or structural causes.

Based on a frame analysis from applicant essays, this study revealed that social work

students were more likely to suggest individual rather than social causes and to suggest

neoliberal rather than social justice solutions to social problems (Gilligan, 2007). Kim

(2008) examined "to what extent MSW students perceive they are dedicated to social

justice values and how much they are influenced by the capitalistic values that contradict

social justice" (p. 1). This quasi-experimental study indicated a significant lack of

dialogue and education on social justice and the need to modify the MSW curriculum to

address the systemic causes of poverty, racism, sexism, and other social issues.

This group of studies found a lack of commitment to and understanding of social

justice by the social work students that participated in these quasi-experimental studies.

A common theme in these studies was that they recommended further in-depth,

exploratory research into social justice due to its espoused importance within the social

work education and practice.

2.7.3 Preparing Students for Practice

Another group of studies explored social work curriculums and pedagogy in order

to gain a better understanding of the content and process involved in preparing social

work students to practice from a social justice perspective. Longres and Scanlon (2001)

studied justice as a concept and value in social work research curriculum. Twelve researchers and instructors were asked to "define justice, discuss how it informed their work, and indicate whether a justice focus required special topics, theories, and methods" (p. 447). The outcome of this qualitative study was that most of the respondents struggled to define justice; did not perceive the need to discuss theories or methods particularly related to justice; and that justice was not systemically discussed in classes, syllabi, or textbooks. As discussed previously, Campbell (2003b) studied the "congruency between the content and process of anti-oppressive social work practice" (p. 1) which she described as "the current nomenclature for a social work approach committed to social justice" (p.1). The findings of Campbell's (2003b) qualitative study supported further exploration in examining anti-oppressive classroom practices, and institutional and structural support to promote social justice initiatives and anti-oppressive pedagogy.

Weiss, Gal, and Katan (2006) examined the existing social policy literature in social work to provide a process for more comprehensively integrating social justice into social work education. This literature survey revealed the lack of social justice content in social policy courses and then offered suggestions on goals, content, and preferred teaching methods to improve social policy courses.

Finally, Morley (2008) provided a reflective account of her experiences of teaching critical practice to undergraduate social work students. She contended that "critical reflection is an important part of social work education and practice that is committed to enhancing citizenship, human rights, social justice and social change ideals" (p. 407).

This group of studies revealed that social justice is an ambiguous and challenging area for social work educators to address within social work education, and social work educators' responses to preparing social work students for practice from a social justice perspective were highly variable ranging from dismissive to embracing. A theme common to this group of studies is, as in the previous research on student beliefs about and commitment to social justice, the recommendation for further in-depth, exploratory research into social justice due to its espoused value and unfulfilled role within social work education and practice.

2.7.4 Professional Socialization in Social Work Education

The complexity of professional social work education and need for further exploratory research into social work students' educational experiences are themes also reiterated in the research on professional socialization conducted by Barretti (2004) and Daniel (2007). Barretti (2004) studied the empirical literature that relates to the professional socialization of social work students and then contrasted it with medical and nursing studies in this area. She analyzed 29 empirical articles in this study – 14 of those studies were on professional socialization in social work. According to Barretti (2004), one of the purposes of social work education is to prepare competent and effective professionals through the integration of professional and personal identity and the acquisition or development of professional values, attitudes, knowledge and skills (such as social justice). Barretti's analysis of articles related to professional socialization revealed that the primarily quantitative nature of the studies oversimplified and diminished the socialization process to single dimensions or variables preventing the possibility of further discovery; and, despite curriculum intervention, students actively

construct their professional socialization through peer groups, social work role models, and faculty mentoring relationships. Based on the findings, Barretti (2004) recommended the need for more inductive inquiry research to gain a deeper understanding of the student experience in social work education; and expansion of the definition of socialization beyond curriculum to include unintended experiences or growth of students that support professionalism.

A more recent qualitative study by Daniel (2007) expands the research on professional socialization in social work education by focusing on the student experience, which was one of Barretti's (2004) recommendations. The Daniel (2007) study was designed to examine the experiences and narratives of minority social work students in order to identify factors that influence and contribute to their professional socialization. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with 15 minority MSW students in one university program. Daniel's (2007) findings revealed that marginalization experiences, such as cultural and racial isolation, lack of relevance of the curriculum to minority issues, stereotyping interactions with faculty and peers, and lack of minority faculty and field instructors for mentoring, support, and supervision, seemed to characterize these minority students' socialization into the profession. The perspectives of the minority students in their own voices provided critical insights into actions that social work education programs could take to create a more hospitable environment for minority students. These actions included increasing the number of minority faculty and students; establishing a more culturally relevant curriculum; and the inclusion of race and other cross cultural content in the curriculum (Daniel, 2007). Daniel (2007) concluded that improving the educational experiences of minority social work students is not just a

matter of fairness, but is central to the profession's ability to uphold its commitment to social justice.

These studies offer valuable insight into students' educational experiences of becoming a professional social worker and discuss a number of factors, including faculty mentoring, modeling, peer relationships, marginalization, inequality, and inclusion that influence this professional development process. These research studies also demonstrated the value of student voice and the need for increased student voice in social work research which is one of the purposes of this dissertation.

2.8 Chapter Summary

As no universally agreed upon definition of social justice exists and the meaning of social justice is not self-evident, this chapter explored the multiple meanings and diverse interpretations of social justice in social work education and practice that inform the current views, academic teachings, and the conceptual understandings and practice perspectives of students. The chapter examined five contexts for further derivation of the meanings of social justice - historical, philosophical, theoretical, educational, and practice contexts. Each of these contexts contributed to the meaning of social justice and offered a plethora of conceptual understandings and practice perspectives that could be integrated into the educational experience of social work students.

The chapter also illustrated the tensions and complexities of social justice within social work education and practice that continue to influence the educational experience of social work students, academics, and practitioners.

Finally, the research literature relevant to examining and exploring social work students' commitment to and conceptual understanding of social justice was discussed in this chapter. The literature that was reviewed revealed social justice to be a complex, enigmatic, and challenging educational area for researchers and social work educators. A theme common within this literature was the recommendation for further in-depth, exploratory research into social justice due to the espoused importance of its role within the social work education and practice. This thematic recommendation presented a gap in the qualitative research in this area which provided direction for the research project described in the dissertation. This research literature also demonstrated the value of student voice and the need for increased student voice in social work research which is one of the purposes of this dissertation.

This literature review is substantial, relevant, and purposeful for this dissertation, but it is by no means exhaustive. Other contexts, theoretical frameworks, and research studies could always be explored on this subject in future research. The next chapter will discuss the transcendental phenomenological research approach that was used to explore the meaning of social justice to graduating BSW students and how their educational experiences have shaped this meaning.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This qualitative study explores the meaning of social justice to social work students and how their educational experiences have shaped this meaning using a transcendental phenomenological approach. There are two major approaches to phenomenological studies, hermeneutic phenomenology and transcendental. Each of these approaches "represent philosophical assumptions about experience and ways to organizing and analyze phenomenological data" (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004, p. 2). These two major approaches "differ in their historical advocates (e.g., Heidegger or Husserl), methodological procedures (Laverty, 2003), and their current proponents (van Manen, 1990, for hermeneutic phenomenology and Moustakas, 1994, for transcendental phenomenology)" (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004, p. 2). Hermeneutic phenomenology involves the reflective reading and interpretation of text for the purpose of more fully understanding the meaning or intentions within the text. Transcendental phenomenology explores the meaning of lived experiences for the purpose of explicating and describing the essences of these experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological approach was chosen as the research method for this study because the focus of this study is to explore the meaning and experiences of social justice in social work education from the perspective of graduating BSW students. This approach was also chosen because it provides clear, detailed data organizing and analysis procedures, as well as a systematic approach to phenomenological data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2003; Moerer-Urdahl &

Creswell, 2004). The chapter will further discuss transcendental phenomenology and in particular Moustakas' (1994) approach to transcendental phenomenological inquiry.

This chapter also identifies the research question and sub questions that guided this study and their relationship to Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological approach. A full discussion of participant recruitment, data collection, data analysis, and the ethical considerations of informed consent, confidentiality, risks to the participants, and inclusion follows.

As a qualitative research approach, phenomenological studies can be assessed for their trustworthiness. Trustworthiness refers to processes and procedures which are used in the research to ensure that the findings are accurate (Creswell, 2003; Willis, 2007). Discussion of the trustworthiness of this qualitative study, as well as, the limitations of this study completes this chapter on methodology.

3.2 Research Questions

The research question that guided this study was:

1. What does social justice mean to graduating BSW students and how have their educational experiences shaped this meaning?

Participants' experiences of social justice in social work education were further explored through two sub questions intended to focus on participants' educational experiences of social justice in two areas: conceptual understandings and practice perspectives. These sub questions were:

1. How have social work educational experiences contributed to graduating social work students' conceptual understanding of social justice?

2. How have social work educational experiences informed graduating social work students' social justice practice perspectives?

A third sub question was developed to honour and acknowledge participants' knowledge and experience with social justice during their educational journey and to gain insight into improving the student experience of social justice in social work education. This sub question was:

3. What recommendations would graduating social work students offer to social work educators regarding social justice in social work education?

These research questions lend themselves to transcendental phenomenological inquiry because they focus on comprehending and describing the meaning of social justice (which is an ambiguous social phenomenon with diverse interpretations) through individual experiences of a social process (social work education) from the perspective of the people involved (graduating BSW students) (Raffanti, 2008, p. 59). This study also focused on bringing the student voice forward into social work education discourse on social justice. This was identified as a gap in the current research literature in social work education. Transcendental phenomenological inquiry is particularly interested in and provides a systemic process for distilling and describing common features within experiences and bringing forth a collective voice about what these experiences mean (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). Together, the research questions explore the meaning of social justice and further inform social work educators about the experiences of social justice from the voices of graduating BSW students who are central to social work's educational practices and processes.

3.3 Research Design

Transcendental phenomenological inquiry is located within the qualitative research realm (Creswell, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Qualitative research is described as "a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. . . . This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3). Qualitative research is 'increasingly used within the field of social work research as a means to harness and explore the lived experience of the participant" (Tufford & Newman, 2010, pg. 80). It also ascribes to an "avowed humanistic and social justice commitment to study the social world from the perspective of the interacting individual" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. xvi). These interpretations of qualitative research also fit with the intent of this qualitative study.

Creswell (2007) describes five approaches to qualitative research which include "narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case studies" (p. 53). According to Creswell (2007), "a phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their experiences of a concept or a phenomenon" (p. 57). In phenomenology, knowledge is generated when abstract concepts are more fully understood through the distillation of meaning from individual lived experiences (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). This study focused on describing the meaning of social justice from the voices of graduating social work students and bringing student voice forward into social work education discourse. According to Tufford and Newman (2010), "the commitment to view the participant from a shifting center, allowing new voices to rise

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and shape the discourse, is consonant with the practice of social work which is anchored in the educational, political, medical, and economic structures whereby social work practitioners intervene and mediate to effect change " (p.92).

3.3.1 Transcendental Phenomenology

The origins of phenomenology can be traced back to 18th & 19th century Western philosophers Kant, Hegel, and Descartes. The term "*phenomenology* was used as early as 1765 in philosophy and occasionally in Kant's writings, but only with Hegel was a well-defined technical meaning constructed" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26). According to Hegel, "phenomenology referred to knowledge as it appears to consciousness, the science of describing what one perceives, senses, and knows in one's immediate awareness and experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26). The German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), building upon the writings of Kant and Hegel and significantly influenced by the work of Descartes, is considered the pioneer of transcendental phenomenology (Groenewald, 2004; Moustakas, 1994).

Husserl's transcendental phenomenology "emphasizes subjectivity and discovery of the essences of experience" (Husserl, 1965, pp. 5-6). It is the generation of knowledge through;

> a scientific study of the appearance of things, of phenomena just as we see them and as they appear to us in consciousness. Any phenomenon represents a suitable starting point for phenomenological reflection. The very appearance of something makes it a phenomenon. The challenge is to explicate the phenomenon in terms of its constituents and possible meanings, thus discerning the features of

consciousness and arriving at an understanding of the essences of the experiences. (Moustakas, 1994, p. 49)

Moustakas (1994), elaborating on Husserl's (1931) work, describes transcendental phenomenological inquiry as a search for the essence or the central underlying meaning of the experience. This search for meaning incorporates an understanding that all lived experiences hold essential meaning and, therefore, data analysis becomes a process of methodological reduction in which there is analysis of specific statements and themes, and a search for all the possible meanings. Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological approach fits particularly well with this study because the intent of this study is to elicit meaning and gain an in-depth understanding of social justice in social work education from the experiences of social work students and to offer a rich construction of students' voices to further inform social justice education.

3.3.2 Participant Selection

Administrative permission was granted from one accredited baccalaureate social work program in Canada to identify and recruit graduating BSW student participants for this study. Criterion sampling was used to identify and recruit participants. The criteria were that participants have completed all of their BSW program requirements and were graduating, and they were interested in exploring the meanings of social justice and their social work educational experiences that contributed to their meanings in collaboration with this researcher.

As a social work educator, this researcher was familiar with the Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE) Standards for Accreditation (June 2007) that reflected social justice as a fundamental principle to be advanced in Canadian social work

education. According to these standards, both undergraduate and graduate, students will have "analysis and practice skills pertaining to the origins and manifestations of social injustices in Canada, and the multiple and intersecting bases of oppression, domination and exploitation" (CASWE, SB 5.10.4, p.8; CASWE, SM 5.7.3, p. 16). The June 2007 standards were current when these student participants were graduating from their BSW program, and when they participated in this study in 2010. Since then the standards have been revised, but continue to reflect social justice as a key component of Canadian social work education (CASWE Accreditation Standards, May 2012). These accreditation standards have various interpretations and implementation throughout Canadian schools of social work. For this particular BSW program, these standards were addressed by requiring students to complete specific courses related to diversity, oppression, critical approaches to practice, social policy, and social justice in order to graduate. All of the BSW students in this program, therefore, had experiences with social justice through their coursework.

For the purpose of maintaining the anonymity of the student participants in this study, detailed participant demographic information has been non-identified, and the particular baccalaureate program and further program details including size of the student population, campus location, and geographic location of the student participants, will not be revealed.

All of the graduating BSW students from this program were invited to participate through an information notice circulated on student email lists sent out by a student services program staff member. E-notices included an overview of the study including purpose, structure, processes, uses, and contact information (See Appendix 1: Student

Participant Recruitment Email).   This email was circulated three separate times over a

five month period in order to recruit potential participants. Potential student participants

who contacted the researcher were provided with a detailed written description of the

study including the purpose and structure of the study, the nature of their participation

and the interview process, and the use of audio-taping during interviews. They also were

provided with informed consent procedures including consent for audio-taping of the

interviews; confidentiality of information; the opportunity to participate in a member

check; security of the information during the study; and disposal and retention of

information upon conclusion of the study (See Appendix 2: Participant Information

Sheet).   Graduating BSW students, who agreed to participate, were individually

contacted by email to arrange with the researcher a mutually agreed upon interview date,

time, and a private location away from the school of social work.

Ten graduating BSW students from one Canadian school of social work agreed to

participate in this study and to explore their meanings of social justice and their

educational experiences with this researcher.   Since the goal of transcendental

phenomenological inquiry is in-depth and rich data collection, a small number of

participants are suggested in order to gather rich, detailed information (Creswell, 2003;

Giorgi, 1997; Leedy & Ormond, 2001; Moustakas, 1994). There is no clear direction in

the literature to determine how many participants are sufficient (Onwuegbuzie & Leech,

2007) and recommendations vary for this type of research. Polkinghorne (1989)

recommended 5 to 25 participants; Creswell (2003) offered a recommendation of three to

ten participants; and Starks and Brown Trinidad (2007) suggested 1-10 participants as a

typical sample for phenomenological studies. Ten participants were within the range of

these recommendations. They provided substantive, detailed data that allowed this researcher to explore the phenomenon thoroughly.

3.3.3 Data Collection

Individual face-to-face interviews were conducted with the ten student participants between May and August 2010. The researcher was required to travel to various urban and rural locations because the participants completed their studies and returned to their own communities. The interviews were held in various private locations including campus meeting rooms, library meeting rooms, and hotel conference rooms.

Prior to commencing each interview, the researcher and prospective participants became acquainted with each other with general social conversation. Participants were encouraged to ask any questions about the research and/or the researcher. The researcher was aware of her responsibility to create a comfortable climate for the student participants and to support them in responding openly and comprehensively (Moustakas, 1994). With fifteen years of social work practice and ten years in social work education, this researcher was able to engage with participants, build rapport, and elicit in-depth narratives during the interviews.

The consent form (Appendix 3) was discussed with each prospective participant addressing the purpose and structure of the study, their rights as voluntary participants, the nature of their participation, and the possible risks and anticipated benefits of participating in the study. Issues related to confidentiality, anonymity, informed consent, and participants' right to withdraw from the study at any time were re-explained to them. Only after it was clear that the students understood the nature of the study and what was expected of them, and they agreed to participate, were they asked to sign the consent

form. After receiving consent to audio-tape the interviews, the researcher placed the two digital recorders in full view of the participants and began the recordings.

As is typical of transcendental phenomenological studies, the individual interviews were semi-structured with open-ended questions to elicit full stories and experiences from the participants. This type of individual interview process was chosen because "typically in the phenomenological investigation the long interview is the method through which data is collected on the topic and questions" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 114). The individual interview approach worked well for exploring student participants' meanings of social justice and their lived experiences, and elicited substantive and detailed information for analysis. The tremendous amount of information gathered was, at times, overwhelming for this researcher. It took several months of repeatedly reviewing the transcripts, re-listening to the audio recordings, and returning to the bracketing of her assumptions and biases for the researcher to feel confident in her ability to hear the student participants' voices.

The recorded interviews began with the researcher asking student participants to provide any background information they wished to share, deemed important for this researcher to know, and/or thought was relevant to a conversation about social justice. This offered an opportunity for contemplation on the topic and for student participants to openly share their agendas or the experiences that brought them to the interview. Although an interview guide was developed in advance in order to evoke a comprehensive account of the participants' experiences of the phenomenon, the guide was modified as the participants shared their full stories (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001;

Moustakas, 1994). An overview of the interview guide is provided in Figure 1. A complete interview guide is in Appendix 4.

Figure 1: Overview of interview guide

1. Questions about participants' background: for example, participants were asked to offer background information which they deemed important for the researcher to know and relevant to a conversation about social justice.

2. Questions about participants' understanding of social justice: for example, how would you define social justice; what does social justice mean to you?

3. Questions about how participants' social work education has contributed to their understanding of social justice: for example, tell me about some of your social work educational experiences in the classroom that have contributed to your understanding of social justice (i.e. courses, class discussions, peers, activities, instructors, mentors); tell me about some of your practicum experiences that have contributed to your understanding of social justice (i.e. supervisors, supervision activities, agencies, colleagues, clients, professional development activities, community events).

4. Questions about how the participants' educational experiences have informed their social justice practice perspective: for example, what is social justice practice in social work from your perspective; what does this practice entail; how has your BSW program shifted your perspective on social justice?

5. What recommendations would you have for social work educators regarding social justice in social work education? For example: classroom education; practicum education.

6. Is there anything else about your experiences with social justice in social work education that we haven't talked about that you would like to add?

The interviews lasted between one and two hours. The researcher did not take notes during the interviews, but made significant reflective notes prior to and after the interviews. These notes contributed to the research by allowing the researcher to account for her own thoughts, biases, perceptions before and during the interview process, and

aiding in becoming reacquainted with these reactions and perceptions during the data analysis process (Allen, 2008).

The interviews were concluded when the participants indicated they had nothing more to add. At this time, they were thanked for participating and the digital recorders were turned off. Participants were also asked if they had any further questions about the research process. They were informed that transcripts of their interview would be emailed to them for feedback and/or revisions (See Appendix 5: Transcript Review and Feedback Invitation). The audio recorded interviews were then transcribed allowing the researcher to remain 'close to the data' as recommended in phenomenological research (Creswell, 2004).

3.3.4 Data Analysis

Transcendental phenomenological data analysis is used to "grasp and elucidate the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of the phenomenon for the person or group of people" (Patton, 2002, p. 482). Data analysis becomes a process of methodological reduction in which there is analysis of specific statements, categorization of meaning units or themes, and a search for a collective essence or universal description to the phenomena (Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenological data analysis method used in this study was Moustakas' (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method. This method, taken from the work of Stevick (1971), Colaizzi (1973), and Keen (1975), and developed by Moustakas (1994) provides a clear, rigorous and systematic procedure for analyzing qualitative data. Moerer-Urdahl and Creswell (2004) provide a step by step application of the procedure that was used in this study. This data analysis procedure is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Data Analysis Procedure

Step 1: Epoche process:
The researcher sets aside, as far as is humanly possible, preconceived ideas and experiences to best understand the experiences of participants in the study.

↓

Step 2: Horizontalization:
Each statement in the transcript is considered with respect to its significance for description of the experience. The researcher lists all of the significant statements that are relevant to the topic and gives them equal value.

↓

Step 3: Meaning Units or Themes:
The researcher clusters the statements into meaning units or themes and removes the overlapping and repetitive statements. A list of the meaning units or themes is formulated, including verbatim examples.

↓

Step 4: Individual descriptions:
The meaning units or themes are synthesized and descriptions of what was experienced (textural descriptions) and how it was experienced (structural descriptions) by each participant is distilled from the data and an individual description is developed for each participant.

↓

Step 5: Exhaustive or universal description:
Common themes are developed from the individual descriptions of all the participants into an exhaustive or universal descriptive statement that represents the essence of the experience for all of the participants. It represents the collective experience of the participants in the study and becomes the 'essential' findings of the study.

(Creswell, 2007; Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004; Moustakas, 1994)

This method begins with the researcher engaging in the epoche process, wherein the researcher puts aside her own views of the phenomenon being explored in order to focus entirely on the views and voices of the participants. According to Moustakas (1994), this is the process in data analysis where, as much as is humanly possible, the researcher sets aside all preconceived notions and experiences in order to better understand the experiences of the participants in the study. "Epoche" is a Greek word

meaning to refrain from judgment and the process is called transcendental because the researcher sees the phenomenon "freshly, as for the first time" and is open to its totality (p. 34). The epoche process can be undertaken at the beginning of the study or throughout the study depending upon the researcher (Tufford & Newman, 2010).

At the beginning of the study, this researcher cleared her mind through the epoche process. She recalled her own preconceptions of the meaning of social justice in social work practice and education grounded in her history of oppression based on gender, class, and ethnicity; and her own backpack of privilege based on race, education, socio-economic status, and academic employment. The memories (faces, names, stories, and feelings) from fifteen years of experience as a front line social worker serving vulnerable and disenfranchised families in their homes and communities came flooding back and gained awareness. This researcher also reflected on a decade of experiences as a social work educator who embraced social justice principles within the classroom with adult learners (both wondrous and disheartening), within mentoring relationships (both supportive and challenging), within academic culture (both fascinating and disappointing), and within the reciprocity of the teaching and learning process (both energizing and exhausting). She became aware how all of her paradoxical, recurrent, and reflexive experiences influenced the conception of this inquiry into the meaning of social justice. This researcher reflected on these preconceptions and these (recent and long ago) experiences and set aside any relevance that they might have to this research by suspending those memories. This reflection was ongoing as this researcher moved toward openness and a feeling of true curiousity enabling her to fully concentrate, to listen, and

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to hear the voices and the experiences of the student participants with a 'freshness' and without interference from her own judgments and notions.

This researcher continued to engage in reflection and bracketing throughout this study as a way to suspend her daily assumptions, biases, and judgments and stay focused on the voices and experiences of the student participants. This bracketing process will be further discussed in the trustworthiness section of this chapter.

Upon conclusion of the interviews and completion of the transcriptions, the transcripts are analyzed for significant statements which are extracted from them. This is a process called horizontalization by Moustakas (1994). Up to this point, the statements are viewed as having equal value; the next step removes those statements which are irrelevant to the topic or which are repeated or overlapping (Moerer-Urdahl & Cresswell, 2004). After careful consideration and analysis, these horizontal statements are clustered into meaning units or themes. From these meaning units or themes, descriptions of what was experienced (textural descriptions) and how it was experienced (structural descriptions) by each participant is distilled from the data and an individual description is developed for each participant (Moustakas, 1994).

The analysis proceeds and themes are extrapolated from the individual descriptions for each participant, and finally a synthesis of these themes leads to an exhaustive, also called universal, descriptive statement of the essence of the phenomenon which becomes the findings of the study (Moustakas, 1994; Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). Moustakas' (1994) data analysis method enables the uniqueness of each participant to be explored while also allowing for the emergence of themes and collective essence amongst the participant group.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethics approval was obtained, according to the Tri-council Policy Statement on Research Ethics, from the Memorial University Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) (See Appendix 6: Memorial University ICEHR Ethics Approval). The areas of informed consent, confidentiality, risks to the participants, and inclusion were constant considerations throughout this study and will be discussed further.

3.4.1 Informed consent

Informed consent was a priority with each participant in this study. The consent form (See Appendix 3: Consent Form) was reviewed and discussed with each prospective student participant prior to commencing each interview. Students were asked to sign the consent form only after it was clear that the students understood the nature of the study and what was expected of them, and they agreed to participate. All of the student participants for this research study were adults, over the age of 19, graduating from one Canadian baccalaureate social work program, and capable of understanding and providing informed consent. Participants were informed of the right to withdraw from the study in all communications, including the informed consent documents. If a student participant withdrew following data collection but prior to the initial publication of results, his or her data would be destroyed immediately and not be part of the analysis or any dissemination of findings, such as papers and presentations. There were no participants who chose to withdraw from this study. All ten student participants requested a copy of their transcript during the informed consent process.

3.4.2 Confidentiality

To protect the confidentiality of student participants, interviews were held in mutually agreed-upon private locations away from the social work program facilities. The campus and social work baccalaureate program where the students attended would not be disclosed within this study for confidentiality purposes. No faculty member or person from the baccalaureate program sampling site, who may have an influence over the student participants' current or future education, was given knowledge of the students' participation in the study. No names or detailed information that identifies the student participants will be released and all participants were informed that quotations used to highlight findings would not contain information that could identify them. The student participants also chose their own pseudonym identifier, during the interview process, for this purpose.

All information and data collected for the study, the signed informed consent documents, original audio-tapes, and researcher notes were stored in a secure cabinet in the researcher's office. Only the researcher and her supervisor had access to the raw data collected for this study. These will be destroyed five years after the data collection for the study is completed (approximately July 1, 2015) as per Memorial University's retention of data requirement. Digitized interview transcriptions and participant comments were stored in password-protected files on the researcher's computer.

All efforts were made to ensure the anonymity of participants in this study. However because all of the potential participants were from one BSW program and may be known to one another and/or to this researcher, potential participants were advised of these issues during the informed consent process.

3.4.3 Risks to participants

There was minimal risk of participants becoming emotionally distressed when discussing their educational experiences. Through the informed consent process, all participants were aware that they could decline to answer any question or withdraw participation at anytime without negative consequences. Should a participant have become emotionally distressed during an interview, the researcher would not continue data collection until assured of the participant's comfort and willingness to proceed, and if necessary, would discontinue the interview and destroy the taped recording and any notes taken. There were no participants who became distressed during this study and all of the interviews continued to a mutually satisfactory conclusion.

The likelihood that participants experienced coercion regarding the study was minimal. To guard against this possibility, no incentives to elicit participation were offered. Completion of the BSW program (including final grade submissions) was necessary prior to scheduling interviews. Voluntary participation, withdrawal options, and lack of negative and positive consequences were stressed during each phase of the research and in each contact between the researcher and participants (or potential participants).

3.4.4 Inclusion

This research methodology honoured the lived experiences and stories of the students who choose to participate in this study. The methodology supported this researcher's ability "to hear previously silenced voices and shifting centers of oppression relies on the ability to silence, for a time, his or her own voice and give precedence to the voice of the participant" (Tufford & Newman, 2010, p.92). The voice of the Indigenous

student who chose to participate was honoured and acknowledged within a context of historical colonization, oppression, discrimination, and cultural genocide.

This study also supported emerging ethical considerations in qualitative research which are grounded in the pursuit of social justice and assert that all qualitative inquiry should be reviewed based on their ability to make a difference in everyday lives by promoting human dignity and social justice (Denzin & Giardina, 2009). According to Denzin & Giardina 2009);

> The need for social justice has never been greater. This is a historical present that cries out for emancipatory visions, for visions that inspire transformative inquiries, and for inquiries that can provide moral authority to move people to struggle and resist oppression. The pursuit of social justice within a transformative paradigm challenges prevailing forms of human oppression and injustice. This paradigm is firmly rooted in a human rights agenda. It requires an ethical framework that is rights- and social justice based. (pp. 11-12)

These ethical considerations have also been applied to social work research. According to Humphries (2008), ethical social work research must be committed to the pursuit of social justice. Social work researchers are ethically responsible and professionally well placed to accumulate and disseminate knowledge that explores the oppressive conditions of ordinary people as well as the institutions and structures of oppression. A research commitment "not to be impartial to human suffering, to identify unjust (not just inefficient) processes and make them known, to ensure that subordinate voices are heard and heeded, are entirely compatible with the best traditions (of social work research)" (Humphries, 2008, p. 31). This study is focused on bringing student voice forward and

into the discussion on social justice in social work education and it is grounded in the voices of the next generation of social workers.

3.5. Trustworthiness of Research

As a qualitative research approach, transcendental phenomenological studies can be assessed for their trustworthiness. Trustworthiness refers to processes and procedures which will be used in the research to ensure that the findings are accurate (Creswell, 2003; Willis, 2007). This study used four processes for establishing trustworthiness or credibility of the study: audio taping and verbatim transcription of the interviews; member checking; bracketing; and rich, thick description to convey the findings (Creswell, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). All of the participant interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim by this researcher. The purpose was to ensure accuracy and representativeness of the data and to enhance confirmability of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Member checking is a strategy for establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research in which "the researcher solicits participants' views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations" (Creswell, 2007, p. 208). It is also strongly recommended by Moustakas (1994) for establishing credibility of transcendental phenomenological studies. In this study, member checking involved taking the data (transcriptions) and preliminary analyses (individual descriptions) back to the participants so that they could judge the accuracy and credibility of both the data and preliminary analyses. Specifically, all ten participants were emailed their full transcript and their individual description by this researcher and invited to comment on the accuracy and credibility of the information

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provided and provide any other feedback. All ten participants had requested a copy of their transcript during the informed consent process. Five of the ten participants responded to the researcher's invitation and provided written comments. All five participants confirmed the accuracy of their transcripts and commented on how well the researcher had represented their voices within the individual descriptions. One participant commented that this researcher had "captured the essence" of her voice within her individual description. None of the five responding participants requested any corrections, additions or other changes to their documents. This researcher had no follow-up contact with or correspondence from the other five participants.

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary data collection instrument and it is up to the researcher to discover meaning in the interactions and narratives of the participants within the study (Creswell, 1998). From a transcendental phenomenological approach, the data collection is subjective and relies upon the researcher's interpretations and observations. The researcher is responsible for formulating concepts, discovering themes, and constructing essences that have developed from a full array of data which is scrutinized bit by bit to create an understanding of the phenomenon (Allen, 2008).

Within the transcendental phenomenological approach, the researcher was expected to undertake an epoche process which was previously described in this chapter. The bracketing of everyday, unreflective assumptions and biases through ongoing reflection and awareness was also undertaken by this researcher, prior to each interview and during the data analysis process, in order to clarify her recurrent biases and assumptions and better understand the meaning of social justice from voices of the ten graduating BSW students (Creswell, 1998; Gubrium & Holstein, 1997; Le Vasseur, 2003;

Moustakas, 1994; Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). According to Tufford & Newman (2010), bracketing "as a reflexive process can assist social work researchers to gain awareness of power differentials between themselves and research participants, . . . to develop a new appreciation for the context or person in environment, as well as for their own social location and the impact of this location on research" (p.93).

This researcher used reflective journaling throughout the research process as a bracketing strategy. Reflective journaling was undertaken prior to and during the data collection process to set aside her preconceived notions and biases about social justice in social work education and practice and more fully hear the participants' voices. She then became reacquainted with her assumptions and biases prior to and during the transcription process, and then again during the data analysis process. Bracketing is a strategy for establishing trustworthiness within transcendental phenomenological studies that was used by this researcher with the intent that "the researcher does not influence the participants' understanding of the phenomenon. Thus, it is their reality. Essentially, each participant can present the researcher with new knowledge and new understanding in the search for the essence" (Hamill & Sinclair, 2010, p. 17).

According to Creswell (2007), all qualitative research reporting is a representation by the author and the strength of qualitative research is in the rich, detailed descriptions of the participants' experiences which add accuracy and transparency of representation and construction of participants' voices to the study. The data presentation for this study offered rich, detailed descriptions of the participant's experiences of social justice in social work education supported by verbatim quotations from the interviews as evidence

of transparency in the representation and construction of participants' voices by this researcher.

Trustworthiness was an ongoing, reflexive process in qualitative research focused upon throughout this study as it explored the meaning of social justice from the voices of ten graduating BSW students.

3.6 Limitations

Transcendental phenomenology, as a qualitative research approach, has its challenges and limitations. From a qualitative research perspective, the findings from this study are not representative of all of the graduating BSW students from this one Canadian baccalaureate social work program nor may the findings be generalized to a larger social work student population. The purpose of this study was exploratory with the intent of delving deeper into social work students' experiences with social justice. The findings represented the voices of the ten graduating BSW students and what they had to offer social work educators from their experiences with social justice in social work education.

Within transcendental phenomenological research, the process of bracketing can be a struggle for researchers to achieve. Bracketing is "difficult to achieve because it can be impossible for researchers to suspend their presuppositions totally, particularly if they are unaware they have them" (Hamill & Sinclair, 2010, p. 19). For this researcher, it began with the epoche process and continued with reflection and bracketing in order to become aware of her preconceptions and bias about the meaning of social justice in social work education, freshly view the phenomenon, and more fully hear the participants'

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voices. The process of bracketing is also controversial within qualitative research because it can be interpreted as researcher objectivity and separating the researcher from the participants (van Manen, 2002). According to Hamill and Sinclair (2010), "if one is unaware of personal feelings and preconceptions, it is impossible to set aside these issues, this issue is more a function of one's reflectivity rather than one's objectivity" (p. 19). The debate over the process of bracketing "as a method to more clearly and accurately construct participants' perspectives and phenomena under investigation will and should continue. Such debate is integral as new research methodologies emerge and are adopted into the paradigm of qualitative research" (Tufford & Newman, 2010, p.83).

Transcendental phenomenological research strives for engagement in a reflexive research process by which bias and prejudice are suspended through reflection and awareness in order to focus attention upon and to better understand a phenomenon from the participants' voices (Creswell, 2003; Gubrium & Holstein, 1997; Moustakas, 1994). This researcher strived to actively and fully engage in these processes in order to listen, hear, and honour the meaning of social justice and the experiences that shaped this meaning from the voices of the ten BSW students who participated in this study.

3.7 Chapter Summary

This study was designed to explore the meaning of social justice to BSW students and how their educational experiences shaped this meaning and, in doing so, addressed a gap in the qualitative research in social justice and the need for increased student voice in social work research. Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological approach was discussed and its application to the purpose and process of this study was presented. Ten

graduating BSW students were recruited to participate in this study through criterion

sampling strategies. Each student was interviewed using an in-depth, semi-structured

interview process. The interviews were audiotaped, transcribed, and analyzed using a

modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method developed by Moustakas (1994). This

phenomenological data analysis method and set of procedures was instrumental in

providing rich, detailed representations of the individual student participants' voices,

identifying themes, and constructing an exhaustive description representing the essence of

the meaning and experience of social justice in social work education from the

participants' collective voice.

A discussion of the ethical considerations of informed consent, confidentiality,

risks to the participants, and inclusion followed. Discussion of the trustworthiness of this

qualitative study, as well as, the limitations of this study completed this chapter on

methodology. The rich, detailed representations of student participants' voices, that were

important in establishing the trustworthiness of this study, will be presented in the next

chapter.

Chapter 4 – Data Presentation

4.1 Introduction

This chapter honours the individual voices of the ten graduating BSW students who participated in this study. These ten individuals were interviewed by this researcher and openly shared their thoughts about and their experiences of social justice in social work education. The semi-structured interview format provided focus for each interview while offering ample opportunity for participants to describe and discuss their experiences at length. All of the interviews began by asking participants to describe their location to social justice and any background information that they deemed relevant to the conversations. From this researcher's perspective, this approach gathered meaningful data and immersed the participants and researcher in the discussions. The interviews took on a conversational format as participants actively engaged in these discussions.

The interviews ranged from one to two hours in length. The length and depth of the conversations were driven by the participants and the interviews ended when the participants had addressed the research questions to their satisfaction and stated that they had nothing more to talk about. This accounts for the variance in the length and depth of data that were gathered, analyzed, and presented for each participant.

The data presentation format was organized by participant to provide context to the participants' statements as they addressed the research questions and to provide the reader with the strongest possible sense of the participants' voices. The integration of participants' quotes and the researcher's comments was selected to best represent and exemplify the student participants' voices (Moustakas, 1994). This format was used to

maintain a transparent connection between the original interviews and the presented data (Tranter, 2005).

This chapter will begin by presenting a participant profile to provide the reader with a context for the study. Next, the individual voices of each of the participants (in no particular order) will be represented in rich, thick detail, including verbatim examples, as they described their location to social justice and discussed the research questions. Individual descriptions representing the participants' unique voices were constructed by the researcher through synthesizing the interview data from each of the participants and will be presented. These descriptions reveal the meanings of social justice and the educational experiences that shaped this meaning for each participant in this study.

The chapter will conclude with a summative discussion of the common and divergent features that emerged within the participants' responses to the research questions. The intent of this chapter is to honour the unique voices and contributions of the participants throughout this data presentation process and to gain insight into the emergence of participants' collective experiences and sharing meanings.

4.2 Participant Profile

An aggregate, general profile of the participant group will set a context for readers. This profile will be followed by the rich, thick descriptions of the participants' location to social justice and social work education allowing the readers to become acquainted with the participants through their own voices.

The participants consisted of one male (Al) and nine females (Marie, Emily, Unheard, Ella, Rebecca, Alanna, Amanda, Hope, and Cassidy). Each participant chose

their own pseudonyms during their interviews. Participants ranged in age from early twenties to mid forties and eight of the student participants were described as mature students. They resided in various locations including large urban, small urban and rural areas. Eight participants had completed a post-secondary degree or diploma program prior to their BSW education. Seven participants were currently working (part-time or full-time) for a social service agency. Three participants were continuing on with further post-secondary education upon graduation from the BSW program.

This general participant profile provides a context for readers. In the next sections, the individual voices of each of the participants will be represented offering rich, thick descriptions of their location to social justice, and the meaning of social justice to them and the educational experiences that shaped this meaning.

4.3 Al's Discussion

Al was the lone male BSW student who participated in this study. He described himself as a mature student who was always sort of politically aware. Al's connection to social justice is reflected in "I did a lot of war protest really peace activism and a lot of antiracist action" He further stated that his personal experiences of being "totally impoverished", "very marginalized" and often without a home contributed to his social justice orientation, including his political perspective and structural analysis of social justice.

Al's initial response to being asked about the meaning of social justice was "I think it's an ideal and it's something that you can work with and towards if you choose to. In my mind, it's almost evolved thinking because it's asking people to share, and to be kind

to each other, and to be just". Al went on to describe the meaning of social justice as complex, subjective, and multifaceted encompassing a social work belief system and making the world a better place. He discussed the meaning of social justice in terms of social activism through acknowledgement of human rights; sharing capital, resources, land, and redistribution; social accountability and responsibility to others; challenging the status quo; challenging classism and racism, having more voice democratically, and environmentalism. Al engaged in a lengthy conversation on social justice as a political construct that is meant to challenge capitalist, neo-conservative society that focuses on entitlement, accumulation of wealth and power, and military force – "from everything I know and I've seen, if you have the money then you have the law and justice on your side. If you don't have the money, you're going to struggle to actually achieve any kind of justice". From Al's perspective, social justice was a "passion" and he had "hope that society can actually embrace it, but I'm not sure".

Al's passion for social justice brought him into the social work program. He stated that "before social work, there already was this idea of social justice for me. When I went into the program it was nice to see. There was that congruency and I felt like yes this was an introduction to social justice but it was just sort of reaffirming that social work and I were quite compatible". Al discussed how his social work educational experiences contributed to his understanding of social justice by challenging objective reality and supporting flexible, subjective understandings of the world; acknowledging and deconstructing western viewpoints; and developing students' understanding of oppression. He clearly articulated his understanding of class-based oppression from his practicum experience with disenfranchised teenagers – "I think you show up quickly with

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poverty because you don't have the resources to mask it and you don't have the resources to privately take care of the trouble so it shows up publicly". Al also discussed his experience with social justice in social work education as engaging in critical thinking; understanding colonization; and identifying the relationship between social justice, morality, social work ethics, and professional boundaries.

Al's experience (and frustration) with social justice as educational rhetoric within the social work program was expressed as follows:

My own classroom experience is that there are people exiting who don't actually buy into it. I find that frightening in a sense. There's a lot of people who think the idea of oppression and social justice [are] ... bullshit, there's no oppression, I've lived my whole life and I've been fine, I don't get it, what are you talking about. I was like well look at you, your comfortable, white, middle class, everything has been fine. Everything is great for you, but that's the whole point. You're supposed to look at everyone else. Look at who you're going to work with. Look at other people and empathize and figure it out. There's a lot of people who just didn't buy it. You can read the concept and you can repeat it enough to pass because I can tell you what you want to hear, but if you don't actually buy it and you're going out just knowing your supposed to say the words, but really it's bullshit. That's not going to do anyone any good.

Al articulated that social justice is "definitely essential, definitely a foundation" for social work practice. He described both the benefits and challenges of practicing social work from a social justice perspective. Al discussed how, as a result of his social work education, he now understood that providing mandated services did not have to be

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oppressive. He described that services could be provided in partnership with the client and that client engagement was essential to this partnership process. He offered an example from his practicum experience working with disenfranchised teenagers. Al described how he had six weeks to "find out what was happening" for these youth and that partnership and client engagement were essential elements for this assessment process. Al discussed that social justice in social work education had further developed his understanding about how to work with marginalized and disenfranchised people within government systems and that social justice practice is possible in social work.

Al also identified the challenges of social justice practice in social work citing: ethical decision-making challenges in deciding which people are the 'most vulnerable' and receive limited services and resources; social work positions that pay a living wage are primarily government jobs which also support and reinforce capitalism; and the professional marginalization of social workers who believe in social justice and engage in social action. As a social activist, Al was discouraged by the ongoing labeling of people engaged in social activism - "the media always portrays the protestors at these social justice events as radicals or a little out there or destructive forces instead of being people saying we want our living wage to increase as inflation goes – like so radical". His conclusion about social justice in social work practice was "if you really pushed for social justice, I would imagine you get pushed out".

Al had two recommendations for social work educators. He recommended:

- Actively engage students in social justice ideas through experiential learning projects that support creating diverse and interest-based social action plans and then implementing these social action plans, and

- Engage students in conversations about social justice that challenge their objective realities; broaden their views on oppression, marginalization, and political disenfranchisement; and acknowledge and deconstruct their western viewpoint.

A representative, individual description of Al's voice on the meaning of social justice and his experiences with social justice in social work education was constructed from his interview transcript by this researcher and shared with him as preliminary data analysis during the member-checking process. His individual description was constructed as follows: Social justice is a personal belief, a professional value, and a political perspective which embraces peace, equity, human rights, democracy, eco-justice, and global justice. It is a complex and vague ideal that confronts objective reality and supports flexible, subjective understandings of the world. Social justice means challenging capitalist ideology, political agendas of the elite, and entitlement which maintain the disparity between rich and poor and support the status quo. Social justice is experienced as injustice; understood as hope, passion, and voice; learned through critical thinking, exploring diverse world views, understanding oppression, acknowledging and deconstructing western viewpoints, and engaging in open discussion and experiential activities; and practiced through engaging in social action and political activism. Social justice is the ethical and moral foundation of social work practice.

4.4 Marie's Discussion

Marie is a mature student who described herself as having tried university when she was in her twenties, but it didn't really work out. She returned to pursue post secondary

education in her thirties. In describing her location to social justice, she began by saying, "I'm white so I'm in a field where that has its own stuff attached to it. I'm also female and that has its own other stuff attached to it so those are important things to know I think". Marie grew up as an only child, and described herself as "a child of divorce".

Marie has considerable experience working with children;

All my jobs, even before social work, were with kids. I was a teacher's aide for a while. I did special needs and ESL. Then I did before and after school care for a really long time. I've worked mostly with kids, but I also worked with adults with mental disabilities. Lots of different things even before I went into social work.

Marie went on to describe the personal meaning of her social work education – a key element being that she is the first woman on either side of her family to get a university education - and her personal connection to social justice:

I'm really cognizant of the fact that, even though I loved to help make a difference or do this or that, that I am coming in from a standpoint of being a Canadian, I'm white, and I've had privilege. Like I said, I wasn't rich but I still feel like there's been privilege and I get it. . . . . I've never really been on the other side of it, so I know that I come at it a bit of skewed. Just in my own family, there's a lot of interesting characters. I have an Uncle, my Mom's younger brother, who actually works at [a] university now which is amazing. He lived on the streets for about 10 years – he was homeless and I can remember going with my Mom to pick him up at a park. My Mom just went into the bushes and out came my Uncle. He stayed in our basement for a while. Things like that – I kind of had that sense, I didn't know

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about homelessness, but I kind of knew that there was something else there. I knew it wasn't just my nice little middle class world because this is my Uncle.

Marie's personal and educational journey with social justice was an experience in critical reflection on the role of social justice education and structural social work within the profession. Marie described the meaning of social justice as "To me, social justice would be that I'm fighting with the system that is creating this option of where we have to pick and choose people who get help instead of everybody's getting help". She discussed social justice as equity of resources; political engagement; social action; and changing and creating social policies that ensure necessary resources and services for all of the people that need them in society – "you create this policy and you have a better opportunity to affect more people at once than just one person at a time. . . . So that is why to me social justice would be fixing the big picture and not just the individual". Marie also described the meaning of social justice as advocacy; community development; passion for helping; and hope. Marie's uncle, who had been homeless for many years, symbolized hope for her - "(he's) only one person and one personal experience, but I can see that maybe there's a possibility right. It's always what gives me hope".

Marie's interest in social justice influenced her decision to pursue social work education - "I really am interested in social justice not rhetoric, really interested in that – it's kind of why I chose social work". Marie discussed her educational experiences with social justice as both informative and disappointing. For Marie, social work education offered an understanding into the connection between social justice and policy; a focus on the relationship between structural change and individual issues; a further understanding of morality and professional ethics; and developing self awareness and a broader world

view. Marie also experienced collective social action by social work students and saw change within the social work program as a result – "this is a social work program and we don't feel like we're part of the community or that we're as important as the other people in the community. It shouldn't be the feeling or the sense for people, this is social work. We kind of felt like [faculty] were listening and they did make some changes".

Marie discussed feeling disappointed in her educational experience because of a lack of focus on structural social work, social action, and political activism – "I always thought that there should have been some courses to help us understand how the big picture works". She described her disappointment as "not everyone wants to do clinical work. Some of us want to do the community development and social action – let's organize a protest". She also expressed disappointment in her practicums because she felt they supported and reinforced the status quo and lacked the opportunity for diverse practice experiences due to accreditation standards for social work supervision within the practicum program –"so really you're doing your practicums in the system places like for the government. . . . To me it felt like it was perpetuating that whole 'working for the man' type thing, working for the government". Marie also reflected upon her disappointment with the disconnect between the focus on social justice within the social work program which she described as "when you're in social work education we talk about social justice all the time" and her experience with a social work program administrator – "I had actually gone to talk to the [administrator] on my own which was a very unpleasant experience. Talk about social justice and social work, this is a social work program and I felt like I was demeaned and spoken down to".

Marie's perspective on social justice in social work practice was that social justice was simply educational discourse and not evident in social work practice – "we always talk about it. Yet, in my experience and just through some of my friends who are now working in the world, I don't really see it outside of the classroom. So it's something we all talk about and we agree, yeah for sure of course, but where is it in practice? I don't see it in practice". She discussed social justice in social work practice as community development work, political activism, and policy making practice for addressing and ensuring adequate resources and services for marginalized and disenfranchised people. She expressed frustration with the social work profession and its lack on focus on these activities:

> How many social workers run for [political] office? How many people get into those positions where they might actually have a real handle on being able to make those changes? They all talk about how this isn't great, so why don't people run for government, why don't people run for things like that? Where are the social workers on those upper levels? Where are the social workers as policy makers? Where are they? Maybe that's just the nature of our job that people don't want to and would rather be on the frontline doing whatever, but where are they in those positions?

Marie also identified the tension of social work being a regulating profession and having a social justice mandate – "social worker as gatekeeper seems to contradict social work as social justice . . . . We shouldn't be elitist we're social workers. It's such a dichotomy. We get the education, but at the same time that's sort of what makes it elitist". From her educational and practice experiences, Marie questions the role of social

justice in social work – "maybe social justice shouldn't be part of the definition of social work"?

Marie had four recommendations for social work educators:

- Social work education needs to place more emphasis and value on structural social work, structural change, social action, and political activism by offering more community work, political-economic and social action courses.

- Reviewing the social work field education accreditation standards to see if the current standards inadvertently support traditional social work practice through restrictive practicum supervision regulations and models. If necessary, revising the social work field education accreditation standards to support the use of various supervision models for social work students that choose diverse and nontraditional practicum settings.

- Restoring the value of community development work within the social work profession by lobbying for and achieving adequate funding levels and pay equity with the government sector.

- Social workers need to actively participate in politics if we want the voices of the marginalized and disenfranchised people that we serve to be represented in Canadian policies and legislation.

A representation of Marie's voice is contained within her individual description which was constructed by this researcher from her interview transcript and shared with Marie during the member checking process. Marie's individual description of the meaning of social justice was constructed as follows: Social justice is challenging

inequity and creating structural change at the societal level to ensure adequate resources

and services for all of the people in need. Social justice is demonstrated as hope and

passion; experienced as injustice; understood as privilege; learned through engaging in

meaningful discussions to develop a broader world view, understanding social policy, and

struggling with the gate keeping and regulatory tensions and casework traditions within

social work education and the profession. It is practiced as advocacy, policy-making,

community work, political activism, and collective social action. Social justice is also

educational discourse and practice rhetoric in social work when it is de-valued, de-

emphasized, and de-politicized in our educational programs and professional

organizations. Social work needs to reflect again on its social justice mandate and its

professional status.

4.5 Emily's Discussion

Emily is a young woman who was originally from a small town where she lived for

ten years. In describing herself and her location to social justice, Emily points out that

she and her family were somewhat outsiders in the town;

[We] didn't grow up there and so we, especially my brother, were ridiculed. So we

were definitely not on the inside of the small town. . . After I left there I never

wanted to live in a small town again. I think that is a part of me in the sense that I

appreciate anonymity in bigger towns and diversity. I don't like homogenous

societies and cultures because you're expected and you're judged based on

stereotypes. In a sense, this is a part of social justice. In the small [community] that

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I was living in, in that community you don't get to be who you want to be or who

you feel you are, you are who society tells you to be.

Emily further described her connection to social justice as injustice – "judgment, this is

what I am going through right now in my own life, is how can I judge someone based on

my experiences because I am judging somebody else or somebody else is judging me

based on their life".

Emily's experiences of injustice within her personal journey were reflected in her

commitment to and discussion of social justice. From Emily's perspective, "social justice

is a part of everything that we do and essentially it is what we do. The reason why

programs are created in the first place is to strive for equality. There are definitely some

catch phrases like anti-oppressive practice, but it is the essence of what social work is".

She described the meaning of social justice as unconditional acceptance; being

understanding; being non-judgmental, advocating for others; a passion for making a

difference; equality; having a voice; and social action – "social justice can be a part of

your everyday life . . . making the conscious effort or saying – okay these are some

things that I can do on my part to negate oppression. You kind of build a rapport of what

you can do next and what steps you can take next".

Emily's educational experiences with social justice contributed to her

understanding of colonization, oppression, and diversity – "You don't know what other

people's experiences have been or how they view who you are – unless you ask them.

You can't even build relationships if you are judging them or stereotyping them based on

their diversity". Emily developed a broader understanding of social justice by integrating

her personal experiences of injustice with her social work educational experiences – "I

think it's taught as such a macro issue when really it can be so micro. It's both, but in order to really understand the macro you need to know the micro and you need to live it". But her educational experiences of social justice in the social work program were also fraught with significant challenges and frustrations. She described her experiences of powerlessness, lack of dignity and respect, and lack of voice within the student role – "I learned how to deal with difficult people. I learned how keep my own voice. I can't tell you how difficult it was" including a classroom experience with a faculty member – "how can he call himself a social worker - coming in and judging us, being a bully, abusing power, oppressing students"?

Emily's frustration with the social work program extended to her practicums where she described encountering a lack of respect for and honouring of her experience; a lack of opportunity to demonstrate her knowledge, skills, and abilities; and low expectations:

I don't know how much I actually learned in my practicums professionally. I think that I learned a lot personally, but because I felt like you're not supposed to know anything, so I felt like I didn't know anything and I wasn't confident in my skills and abilities because I was put in this role as a student. So, you're not supposed to know anything and I took that on. I owned that. To a degree, I have to take responsibility for that, but it's tough. I needed to advocate for myself, but when you're in something it's a lot more difficult than when you are out of it.

Emily's challenging practicum experiences were exacerbated by a lack of faculty support when she was in the field – "I think the biggest thing was that I didn't have any support from the faculty". Emily described a lack of self confidence in her abilities and feelings

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of confusion and resentment as she was about to graduate from the social work program – "here is what I find completely fascinating – being a social work practicum student and then you magically pass this barrier, graduation, and then you're expected to know everything yet as a practicum student you're expected to know nothing. So what happens in a day that suddenly I know everything"?

Emily's perspective on social justice in social work practice was that social justice is the essence of social work, but it continues to be understated and ignored within social work practice - "I don't know if it's understated, but just talking to other professionals who have been through this program, they don't get it. That's the essence of social work, how can you ignore it? That's what you are doing"! She described social justice practice as ensuring respect and dignity, and honouring the lived experiences of others. Emily's reflection on how social justice would inform her practice was that "as a social worker, you are expected to be so much more. You are supposed to live by morals, and ethics, and values". That is something that you can't turn off and on when you go to an office. That is expected of you".

Emily had two recommendations for social work educators:

- Social justice starts personally and understanding social justice begins with having people identify it in their own lives. "There is a question that everyone is asked and it gets tiring after a while but I think it is important – why did you come into social work? I think that 9 times out of 10 it is because of an injustice, most likely personal. It is because of that people get into this field".

- Social justice should be taught as both a macro and a micro concept. In order to understand the macro concepts, such as oppression and diversity, students need to connect to their own experience and then translate their experience into the social action and activities that they can practice at a micro level on a daily basis.

A representation of Emily's voice is contained within her individual description which was constructed by this researcher from her interview transcript and shared with her during the member checking process. Emily's individual description of the meaning of social justice was constructed as follows: Social justice is the essence or core of social work. It is a macro level concept that is practiced through micro level actions/activities on a daily basis. It requires conscious awareness of our social work practice activities and understanding that all of our daily activities are working towards making a difference in people's lives, negating oppression, and creating a more equal and just society. Social justice is experienced as injustice and oppression; demonstrated as respect, dignity, and a passion for making a difference; and understood as having a voice and honouring lived experiences. Social justice is practicing and living our social work values and ethics.

4.6 Unheard's Discussion

Unheard was the pseudonym chosen by this student participant which she felt reflected her experience of social justice in social work education. Unheard is a mature student who described herself as a single parent who has just finished her first Bachelor's degree. She grew up in and around [a large Canadian city], which she says informed her social justice perspective:

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My experience of [that city] is that people there aren't about change. I always felt different. People would complain a lot – people were judgmental. It is hugely multicultural, but yet not necessarily accepting of such. But change - nobody would pursue change. The status quo, they didn't like it, but we didn't necessarily pursue change. So, that's how I felt growing up. I never really felt like I connected.

Unheard located herself to social justice and social work education by reflecting upon her experience in an introductory social work course and with her first social work instructor – "I almost didn't go into social work because I thought that if this is truly what social work is all about – once we get the power we can misuse that – that's not who I want to be – that's not how I want to identify myself".

Unheard's personal journey and early educational experiences contributed to her focus on personal and professional congruency as a frame for understanding the meaning of social justice. Unheard described the meaning of social justice as making a difference in people's lives, having a voice; empowerment; and advocacy work – "it's about esteem and about empowerment, but it's also about how do [clients] get esteem and empowerment - by being connected to community, to employment, and other kinds of support systems". Unheard also discussed the meaning of social justice as treating each other with dignity and respect; and congruency between social workers' values and ethics and their daily actions and practices – "I think, especially as social workers, whether you're a professor or whether I'm a BSW practicum student . . . or I'm in a master's level counseling position, we have to live consciously and understand when we aren't being the

person that we are asking others to be". For Unheard, social justice was also reflected in people who "are passionate about what they do and you can see that".

Unheard's educational experiences with social justice both contributed to and significantly challenged her understanding of social justice. Unheard described how social work education had contributed to her understanding of structural oppression and the political barriers that impact service provision for marginalized people in the community - "people don't see the value in [social] services at all. So they don't do the cost-benefit [analysis] because there is no value to begin with. That would be my understanding – there is no political value in the service and the women who are benefiting from the service don't have any voice or any political power". She discussed becoming more aware of her use of language during her practicums – "I became very conscious of how I was writing something down. So somebody would tell me their story and I would be writing it down even after the conversation, typing it up more formally, I could see how it could be interpreted completely differently".

Unheard's experiences in the social work program also significantly challenged her understanding of social justice. She struggled with the incongruency between the educational teachings about social justice and her experiences of injustice within the social work program – "I didn't see social justice – it's something you're taught – it's not something you have to do once you graduate". Unheard extensively described her experiences of injustice within the social work program. She described her lack of voice:

> The one thing that I have learned now is to keep my mouth shut because I want to graduate. So this whole last semester, I had to live a lie to get to the end. That

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doesn't feel right and it goes against everything I believe in and it was so very

difficult.

She also cited a situation with a program administrator as an example of injustice. She

had emailed an administrator and raised a concern about a social work course and the

course instructor:

> [The administrator], without asking my permission, flipped my email to the course
>
> [instructor] that I was referencing and asked what to do with it. I was livid to say
>
> the least . . . because in my opinion [the administrator] breached confidentiality
>
> which is in our code of ethics. . . . But I wanted to graduate, so I said nothing.

Unheard further discussed her perspective on the social work program and her

experiences of injustice – "I keep hearing that they are looking for people to apply [here]

and I can't, in good conscience, ask anyone to apply to this [social work program]

because my experience was extremely unethical [and] unprofessional". Unheard further

described her experiences of "power over" by faculty members and her current feelings of

mistrust and powerlessness within the social work program as a result of her experiences.

She stated that her trust is very low: "I don't know if I have trust and this is a small

[professional] community and all of the faculty are connected to people that I want to get

jobs from".

Unheard's perspective on social justice in social work practice was that there

needed to be congruency between social workers' values and ethics and their daily

actions and practices. She discussed the importance of valuing diverse viewpoints in

practice settings - "I have expectations of being able to have conversations with people

and have difference of opinions respectfully", honouring lived experience, and being

treated equally in practice settings. Unheard also identified the risk to social workers who challenge the status quo and engage in social action –"if I rocked the boat, then I rocked the boat. But for some people, if I rock the boat and it's something you didn't like, then I fit. But if it's something that you believed in, then I don't fit, and I'll never work here".

Unheard has three recommendations for social work educators:

- Self reflection by faculty instructors on their own educational experiences, their passion for social work, their use and misuse of power with adult learners, and how they create a supportive, safe, and reciprocal learning environment based on respect, dignity, equality, and honouring student diversity and voice.

- Congruency between faculty instructors' discourse about social justice and social work values and ethics and their own behaviour in the academic setting.

- Student feedback and evaluations need to be meaningful and result in change – "I don't want to fill out your evaluation because, if they are read, nobody cares. I saw no changes, therefore why would I spend any more of my time to tell you what I think could happen".

A representation of Unheard's voice is contained within her individual description which was constructed by this researcher from her interview transcript and shared with her during the member checking process. Unheard's individual description of the meaning of social justice was constructed as follows: Social justice is ensuring equality, honouring diversity and voice, and making a difference in the lives of others. It is the result of congruency between social workers' values and ethics and their daily actions and practices as incongruency results in social justice becoming meaningless educational

discourse. Social justice is demonstrated as passion; experienced as injustice; understood as living and practicing our social work values and ethics; learned through modeling, sharing, open discussions, and meaningful reflection; learned in a supportive, safe, and reciprocal learning environment; and practiced as respect, dignity, power with, and advocacy.

4.7 Ella's Discussion

Ella is a young woman who was graduating with her first university degree. She had previous experience working with youth in the community and was hoping to return to this area of work with her BSW degree. Ella described herself and her location to social justice as:

> I don't feel that I am particularly qualified in any special way to be having a social justice conversation or that it is a huge part of my life or passion – I'm not going around picketing or something like that - the clichés. It is a theme that we always talk about and, at some point during my schooling, it irked me a little bit because it just seems like a lot of talk and we are over inflating something that should just be a core value. It shouldn't be talked about – it should just be – and we should just embrace it. I think that's it".

Ella experienced social justice as a personal and practice value and her educational experience in social work provided her with opportunities to reflect upon this core value and to learn ways to practice social work from a social justice perspective. Ella identified the meaning of social justice as "advocating for our clients". She discussed social justice as a value that should be embraced and an expectation that social workers

will stand up against oppression and injustice and work towards social justice in their daily practice – "It was difficult to make the time to speak up if something wasn't right. I did". She further described social justice as actions that are meaningful and helpful to clients; and creating opportunity and choice for others – "I was working with youth, so instead of picketing against issues that might affect youth, what I did was create an activity book for them – ways that they could take part in the community". Ella also described the meaning of social justice as being passionate about the population of people that you are serving – "[Youth] that's what brought me into social work. I am going back working with youth".

Ella described her educational experiences with social justice in the social work program as a very positive learning experience for her. She described faculty members as supportive role models that provided safe places for students to explore their values and learn ways they could implement or adopt social justice in our practice. For Ella:

[The classroom] was a very safe place to explore how we could actually be proactive in our practicums and with the agencies we were with and accomplish some sort of change. We were really encouraged, as a student that's a time when you can really explore where your values lie and if you feel like something is not right you should be able to take a stand against that. So, there was a lot of positive modeling by my profs in that regard.

Ella's experience with one particular social work instructor really influenced her social justice education – "the prof was very passionate and she was a character. She made sure that every class was structured, but we always did different activities. Different ways of reflecting on our experiences was really helpful".

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Ella's practicum experiences also contributed to her understanding of social justice and revealed the organizational barriers to social action – "It [social justice] wasn't a core value of the agency I think, but is was a recurring theme because we had clients who were – it was an immigrant serving agency and just so many injustices that you saw on a daily basis". She went on describing her practicum experience – "Advocacy was a word that was used a lot. As an agency, I don't think they ever took ownership of their role as effecting social policy or social change like that". Ella acknowledged that her educational experience had offered her support, modeling, and ways to engage in social justice within her social work practice, but she also offered some critical reflection on her educational experience:

> Our profs all had very practical ways that we could implement or adopt social justice in our practice. I think that by giving a label to it and saying this is social justice – it almost subtracts or it takes it away from what is social work and it kind of compartmentalizes that and says it is a package or a thing that you bring with you as a social worker or something like that. Not, okay I'm a social worker and part of where I come from and why this is a profession is change and doing what is right. . . . I really embrace ideas. I don't need things to be labeled as I am being taught them – just modeled or just talked about through open discussion. To me, this is more meaningful.

Ella also discussed the challenge of having limited opportunities to engage in social justice within her practicum settings. She described one of her practicums as "a very entry level position as a practicum student there. You weren't really expected to do too much. There wasn't really a lot of room to advocate for changes".

Ella's social work education significantly contributed to the development of her social justice practice perspective. She had learned that social justice can be practiced in diverse ways including large scale social activism and small social action activities, and both can be meaningful social justice experiences:

> I had some notions that I would somehow find a protest and relate it to my field and I would go watch that and then satisfy this quota that I had to meet for social justice. In the end, I ended up creating an activity book [to connect youth to their community] for the program that I was working with. . . . That to me was a really powerful experience and I think that was social justice as well. . . . Creating an activity book is not for every other person just like affecting policy change and more political activities are not for everyone too.

Ella also described how social justice will be reflected in her daily social work practice – "I think now I will be more comfortable having open conversations with people that I work with and giving a little bit more I think. I am more aware of the repercussions of conversations [about oppression, injustice, and social action]. Not that they are negative, but I think before I was more hesitant to bring up difficult issues".

Ella had two recommendations for social work educators:

- Student engagement in social justice depends upon faculty members' support, modeling, and passion for social justice. The reciprocal sharing of passion, personal histories, and approaches to social action between faculty and students is empowering for students and helpful in validating the reasons that students came into social work and how students can practice social justice in their careers.

- To continue to share and embrace social justice as part of our everyday social work practice.

A representation of Ella's voice is contained within her individual description which was constructed by this researcher from her interview transcript and shared with her during the member checking process. Ella's individual description of the meaning of social justice was constructed as follows: Social justice is a core social work value to be embraced. Social justice is about taking a stand against injustice and oppression and challenging the status quo through meaningful social action. These are the small actions that we engage in everyday that empower others, create choice, and offer opportunity to the people that we serve; as well as the larger social action events that we can participate in that protest injustice. Social justice is demonstrated through passion; experienced as injustice; and learned through modeling by social workers, sharing of personal histories, engaging in open discussion, and reflecting on our experiences. Social justice is a part of who we are as social workers and it is part of our everyday practice.

4.8. Rebecca's Discussion

Rebecca is a mature student who has a previous university degree and significant human service work experience. Her experience included working in group care with "street connected youth", women's shelters, and addictions counseling programs.

Rebecca discussed her connection to social justice as a "passion for food systems". She described her active involvement in a food connections program that has "written a food charter for the city to make sure that everyone has equitable access to sustainable, healthy food". Rebecca is also the local representative for a provincial food security

program that helps shape social policy. She also went on to say that "day to day, I am very conscious about my consumer dollars and where I spend it. It mostly goes back to food. Food is such a passion area for me, but I also think that that's an area where there's a lot of discrepancy [and] in the context of what we are talking about today".

Rebecca discussed the meaningfulness of social justice within her personal and professional life and her experiences of injustice, privilege, and passion within her social work education. Rebecca described the meaning of social justice as "fairness I guess, societal fairness, address gaps, a balance of wealth, power, resources, mostly I think a lot about social action – what can I do?" She also described it as recognizing and challenging injustice that is happening; standing up for rights and speaking out against injustice – "I speak up a lot about those sort of things when I perceive that somebody is being inappropriate or unjust"; equitable access to sustainable, healthy food; addressing food security issues through social policy development; value based; hopeful for change; passion; and being supported. Rebecca stated that social justice is "understanding the 'us' versus 'them' dichotomy – we are all us!"

Rebecca's understanding of social justice was enhanced through her educational experiences in the social work program - "I think that my first idea of what social justice was came through being in the social work program. It's words that pop up all the time. The same with the idea of anti-oppressive practice, that's something that I believe in, but I never labeled it as such before". Rebecca discussed how social work education contributed to her understanding of privilege and her own position of privilege; development of a holistic view of world and self; and learning about power and oppression - "recognizing how my actions can be oppressive without even really being

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conscious of them and working toward being more intentional"; and how she began to examine the concept of social justice within her personal and professional realms. Rebecca also discussed a personal experience of injustice in the classroom that prompted her to reflect upon the impact of injustice and the need to advocate:

I had personal experience with injustice in that class where I felt like I was treated unfairly. . . I felt like I was identified at the beginning as being [different] and I felt, in that class, that I was singled out and being constantly cut down. I felt like I was being treated unfairly and that was a different situation for me where I had to be really reflective and understand is this something that I am bringing into my life or is this something else? But then I was able to take the feeling of injustice and move it into advocacy and it worked out fine. . . . I was really scared to stand up for myself because I felt like there was injustice.

Rebecca's practicum experiences also contributed to her understanding of social justice. She expressed astonishment at the inequity of services between rural and urban communities that she experienced during her rural practicum. She described the counseling and support services accessed by high needs individuals and families in rural areas as under funded, de-valued, and unhelpful – "45 minutes once a month isn't really service. Maybe the halo effect of accessing services, so [the clients] feel better. They are not doing a lot of work in 45 minutes. That's the only therapy in town". She praised the social workers and staff that facilitated her practicum for providing her with a supportive work environment and for their commitment to the rural people that they served – "they are working with bare bones and everyone is just throwing their whole selves into it to make it work"!

Rebecca spoke about the personal change that she experienced as a result of her social work education - "the biggest change for me in going into the social work program is how much it changed my personality outside of class actually". She described this personal change as intentionality of her actions and language; passion for social action; and integrating learning into her personal life that has facilitated her active involvement in food systems.

Rebecca's social work education deepened her understanding of social work practice and helping relationships within the context of social justice. She discussed social work practice as consisting of recognizing, questioning, and challenging inequities in all realms including the workplace. She described this practice as identifying and challenging structural injustices in the professional setting such as inaccessible office hours, stigmatization of clients, discriminatory forms, and lack of access to services for rural communities. For Rebecca, social work education in social justice transformed her practice perspective – "I am questioning things more often and at least causing a stir. I am not always making changes, but I find myself causing more of a kafuffle and that's something I hope to carry forward in my practice. It's something that I am proud about".

Rebecca also discussed some of the challenges of social justice in social work practice. She described the difficulty of addressing some of the organizational barriers and structural issues, time constraints, and finding ways to do more proactive social action as opposed to just reactive. Rebecca was "hopeful" that social justice practice makes a difference and she wished that she could do more.

Rebecca has three recommendations for social work educators:

- Increased active and experiential learning. Engaging in activities that demonstrate injustice and then creating opportunities to engage in social action.

- Self-directed learning that focuses on identifying gaps in our own community, province, nation, or internationally and then finding ways to address these gaps through social action.

- Emphasize the importance and value of student sharing and discussion in the classroom.

A representation of Rebecca's voice is contained within her individual description which was constructed by this researcher from her interview transcript and shared with her during the member checking process. Rebecca's individual description of the meaning of social justice was constructed as follows: Social justice is recognizing, questioning, and challenging inequity in our daily lives and within our professional social work practice. Social justice is speaking up against injustice and struggling to address societal issues of fairness; equity; accessibility of services, gaps in services; the balance of wealth, power, and resources; and rights through social action – what we can do to create change at the personal, practice and/or policy levels. Social justice is demonstrated as passion; experienced as injustice; understood as privilege; learned through experiential learning opportunities, discussions, peer sharing, meaningful reflection, supportive colleagues, creating programs, and research; and practiced with intentionality of actions and language. Social justice practice creates hopefulness and the need to do more.

4.9 Alanna's Discussion

Alanna is a mature student who describes herself as being engaged in political activities from a very early age. She states that: "my parents were hugely political and they engaged me in all kinds of political activities that, I didn't realize, kind of wasn't the norm". Alanna recalled her parents campaigning for the NDP when she was five and, one of her fondest memories being:

> I was watching the Paul Simon freedom concert for Nelson Mandela when I was [a child] and I could not believe that somebody was in jail for 27 years because they didn't believe in what the majority believed and that was Nelson Mandela. I just remember being [young] and shocked. That was a huge part of my life. . . . It really impacted me. I was brought up politicized without really realizing it.

Alanna's early personal experiences with the politics of injustice became integrated with her social work educational experiences and is reflected in her political, structural, and global analysis of social justice. Alanna discussed social justice as a belief and a value that means that governments value human rights, other species rights, and eco-justice; everyone has equality and an equitable standard of living reducing the disparity between rich and poor; and everyone has a voice in the democratic process. Alanna described her view of a just society:

> If there were social justice, there wouldn't have to be a fight for it. If we had social justice as a part of our day to day lives, we wouldn't really have to deal with feminism, we wouldn't really have to deal with any sort of inequality, pay equity, all of those things because social justice would be the thing that runs the show".

For Alanna, social justice was also directly related to socialist political ideology - "social justice cannot occur in a system that is run through free market capitalism".

Alanna's political experience and passion for social justice brought her into the social work program – "I went in [into the social work program] because of the social justice component and the counseling to me was kind of an aside". Alanna discussed how the social work program contributed to her understanding of social justice by enhancing her understanding of the individualization of western culture; the connection between world view and social justice; and the social construction of language in the maintenance of dominant societal views. Alanna also experienced social justice in action within her practicum settings. She discussed her first practicum as promoting social justice through a feminist lens –"people that needed services and needed help and got it. . . . There was no, I don't know if anyone else refers to it as this but I do, politics of giving which is who deserves what is based on whether or not I think that you're worthy". In Alanna's second practicum at a government agency, "[the social workers] had a very clear view of what social justice was. The government mandate was this and they lived up to that but also the workers that were dispersed throughout recognized the importance of working toward social justice. That was a really good experience."

Alanna also acknowledged being surprised and, at times, frustrated with the social work program's focus on counseling and with the indifference of some students to social justice issues - "I was just completely surprised how little [social justice] seemed to matter. It just didn't seem to matter as much as I thought it was going to. There were a few of us who were like 'this is not right' and there were quite a few of [the students] who where just okay with the status quo". The counseling focus of the program was also

reflected in Alanna's disappointing experience with a community development course that lacked depth and community organizing processes. Despite her frustrations with the social work program, Alanna summarized her experiences of social justice in social work education by stating that "[the social work program] really reinforced what I already believed [about social justice]. That's what I'm taking with me".

Alanna articulated that social work education contributed to her social justice practice perspective by supporting and reinforcing her values and beliefs about social justice. She discussed that she had come to understand that social justice can be practiced in diverse social work settings including mandated services, however she still believed that social justice was best practiced in social work through collective social action - "what I am taking from this program is that I personally can't fix everything and it's kind of arrogant to think that looking back on it, and kind of oppressive". Alanna discussed that she was interested in practicing in the area of poverty reduction upon graduation and commented about social justice practice - "I'm striving to do what I can, but I'm just one person and realizing that".

Alanna had four recommendations for social work educators:

- "Keep the conversations going"! Continue to facilitate classroom conversations that support student discussions because this is where students started to think differently.
- Circular seating arrangements in classrooms are a key component for encouraging participation and discussion - "If everybody in a classroom is facing forward than that is a really individualized experience. If everybody is facing each other, that

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encourages and facilitates participation and discussion in the classroom and changes the whole experience".

- Stronger community development component in BSW curriculum.
- Encourage students to consider the importance of language to social justice and develop an understanding that the social construction of language is related to world view and the maintenance of dominant views and discourse in society.

A representation of Alanna's voice is contained within her individual description which was constructed by this researcher from her interview transcript and shared with her during the member checking process. Alanna's individual description was constructed as follows: Social justice is a personal belief, a professional value, and a political perspective which embraces peace, human rights, other species' rights, eco-justice, equality, and equity. It means challenging capitalist political ideology and political agendas that seek to maintain the disparity between rich and poor and to support the status quo. Social justice is experienced as injustice; understood as passion and hope; learned through modeling, engaging in open discussion, and exploring diverse world views; and practiced through engaging in meaningful democratic processes and collective social action.

4.10 Amanda's Discussion

Amanda is a mature student who described herself as a Native Aboriginal woman. She is a band member and currently lives in a First Nation's community. Amanda described her history:

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I went to residential school, but before I went there we lived a very cultural way

of life with my grandparents and my parents. They taught me what they could

before I was taken to residential school, so with that I tend to go back to that a lot.

I believe that's where I get my inner strength from, from what I learned before

going to residential school, that we as Native people have had a way of life.

Amanda described her location to social justice as an understanding of her history of

"assimilation" and "segregation". She said "it's all about segregation; put us away while

you get to the resources. In the meantime, we're segregated on these reserves, but now

they want that reserve too for the resources". Amanda went on to describe her personal

search for "a better understanding of why we are the way we are" and "is it possible for

our people to heal"? Her journey took her into social work because she "understood that

before we can move forward we have to heal. We have to heal and I wanted to be part of

that healing".

Amanda's experiences of colonization and oppression as an Indigenous woman

and as a First Nation's community member became the impetus for her social justice

journey. Amanda discussed her personal and communal experiences of injustice

including discrimination, racism, homelessness, negative stereotyping within mainstream

society, and residential school as integral to her understanding of social justice. She

discussed the meaning of social justice as equity of resources; access to services;

understanding the impact of assimilation, segregation, and integration on First Nation's

people; understanding the environment and what is happening to Mother Earth today;

healing; and having a voice - "I want to participate wherever I can to help my people and

that is part of social justice. I might be a small voice but it will be part of a bigger voice".

Amanda also framed social justice as hope – "social justice is that hope and what you do with that hope"!

Amanda's search for understanding, healing, and hope brought her into the social work program - "actually what took me to the social work program is that I wanted to do something in my community and there were things that I did not like and did not fully understand. I started looking around and thinking what can I do to help make changes in my community". Her traditional beliefs and values and perspective on education also encouraged her involvement in the social work program - "He [an Elder] said education is the new buffalo of today. It will provide for you today like the buffalo once did for you back then". Amanda discussed how social work education contributed to her understanding of social justice by developing her understanding of structural, cultural, and personal oppression – "as a student in social work, I learned a lot about myself. When I ran into discrimination and racism, I used to think it was just all about me and as I went along I realized and learned about marginalized people. . . . As I went along through social work, I realized okay first of all I'm poor, second I'm a woman, third I'm Native".

Amanda also discussed that the social work program provided her with opportunities to research social issues such as addictions, mental health, suicide, and child welfare that impact the lives of First Nation's people; to engage in practicums that honoured her lived experience and supported her creative approach in working with her people and contributing to their healing journey; and to receive encouragement from faculty members and peers to continue on her personal learning journey. Amanda gained insight into social justice during her social work education - "I started to understand more

about what social justice was - it was a process" and she summarized her educational experience with social justice as "something that I really value, something that I learned in social work is finding that strength within a person and empowering that person. That is a value that I'm going to take with me or wherever I go".

Amanda clearly articulated that, from her perspective, social justice in social work practice was about hope - "I want to be where I have hope. I've got to be somewhere that brings hope". She discussed that her social justice practice perspective was guided by traditional values, beliefs, and education to better serve clients; created paths for healing journeys; and educating residential school survivors about colonization, intergenerational trauma, and that they are not alone. Amanda also described social justice in social work practice as life long learning - "I always learn and there's always really something that stands out and those are the things that I take with me. That's what I use as guidance to keep going along in this very tough journey I'm on".

Amanda had one recommendation for social work educators:

- Social work education needs to be teaching about the impact of residential schools and the history of assimilation, segregation, and integration of First Nation's people in Canada as part of core BSW curriculum. "Social work students need to understand what residential school was and how it impacted Native people".

A representation of Amanda's voice is contained within her individual description which was constructed by this researcher from her interview transcript and shared with her during the member checking process. Amanda's individual description was constructed as follows: Social justice is hope and understanding what can be done with that hope. Social justice is about understanding the impact of residential schools and the

history of assimilation, segregation, and integration of First Nation's people in Canada, and connecting these experiences with the social, interpersonal, community, and intergenerational trauma issues being experienced by First Nation's people today. Social justice is demonstrated through passionate participation for making a difference and having a voice; experienced as injustice; further understood through the social work education process; learned through traditional and modern teachings; sustained through traditional values, beliefs, and renewal ceremonies; and practiced by creating paths for healing journeys for First Nations people.

4.11 Hope's Discussion

Hope is a mature student who had immigrated to Canada from Eastern Europe nine years ago. She described herself as having "lots of experience with discrimination" and stated that social work training gave her "an understanding about the roots of the discrimination". As Hope says about people and discrimination, "it is inside of them and they just don't know".

Hope's personal experiences of discrimination and injustice as an immigrant woman were further understood through her social work educational experiences which contributed to her structural analysis of social justice and offered her "hope". Hope described the meaning of social justice as "making changes, making a difference, contributing to society, and giving back to society". She further discussed the meaning of social justice as being passionate about social work; changing social policy; being culturally sensitive and aware of our western world view; being compassionate and empathic; equality; inclusion; and accessibility of services including employment,

education, and support. Hope also believed that personally experiencing injustice was important to developing an understanding social justice and to challenging injustice - "when they experience injustice and they remember their own hurt, then they want to help other people". For Hope, social justice meant hope - "we really have to be more positive about [Canadian society] and not just look at the negatives"!

Hope described her social work educational experiences as transformative to her understanding of social justice. She discussed that social work education contributed to her understanding of structural and personal oppression; the impact of social policies and political ideology on marginalized and disenfranchised people; institutionalized discrimination; and colonization of Indigenous peoples. Hope stated:

I didn't have any idea about social policy or barriers for immigrants before my Introduction to Social Work class – it was an eye opener . . . to social justice in Canada. Before that, all of my failures I would connect to my own inadequacies. I was not inadequate. I just don't know and don't have enough knowledge. I don't have social skills and that is what I would blame myself for and all of my failures in Canada during my first years. When I took the Introduction to Social Work and I learned that it is not all about me.

Hope also discussed that social work education had provided her with an understanding of how social work can challenge discriminatory policies and contribute to changing social policies - "social work training gave me an understanding about the roots of the discrimination"; opportunities to research social issues; and to understand more about social policy and social justice. Practicums were also social justice learning opportunities. Hope described her educational experiences with social justice in the

social work program as broadening her worldview and empowering her to create social change - "professors take us on the mountain and from the top we can see so much. . . . we see the whole picture, the whole world". Hope also acknowledged her experience (and sadness) with social justice as simply educational discourse amongst some of her classmates within the social work program – "[Some of the people in my class] went to university to get any degree and social work may have been the easiest way to get a degree. They are not really passionate about the profession and they don't really understand the purpose".

Hope's social work education also contributed to her social justice practice perspective. She discussed the importance of supporting and upholding human rights in practice; valuing diversity and equality; ensuring confidentiality and privacy in service provision; protecting vulnerable and marginalized people from ongoing cycles of violence and abuse; acknowledging the subjectivity and power differentials in client relationships; and trying to understand "the pain of discrimination". Hope believed that social justice was also practiced in social work through building community capacity, collegial support, and empowering and self-reflective practice.

Hope had four recommendations for social work educators:

- Social work education needs to continue to teach students "from the top of the mountain" so that students begin by learning the whole or bigger picture and then subsequently integrate and connect the individual subjects and skills to a larger world view.

- Social justice could be better understood if social workers learn to be more self-reflective and understand that social justice comes from within us and from our personal experiences.

- Social work education needs to focus more on developing empathy, compassion, and emotional intelligence with social work students.

- Social work education needs to teach more about the subjectivity of the profession, power differentials between social workers and their clients, and how to use, and not misuse, power within professional social work practice.

A representation of Hope's voice is contained within her individual description which was constructed by this researcher from her interview transcript and shared with her through the member checking process. Hope's individual description of the meaning of social justice was constructed as follows: Social justice is the passion for making a difference in people's lives. Social justice is developed through personal experiences of injustice which are further understood through the social work education process. Social work education provides insight into societal oppression and structural barriers for marginalized and disenfranchised populations of people; an understanding that social policies can be challenged and changed through social action; and the development of a broader world view. Social justice in social work practice comes from integrating this broader world view with micro topics and skills. Social justice is focused on creating hope and is demonstrated through empathy and compassion, and emotional intelligence.

4.12 Cassidy's Discussion

Cassidy is a mature student with previous human service education, practica, and group care work experience. She says that during her BSW degree "my age [and experience] did differentiate me from my classmates" and that she saw a difference in how she integrated the coursework, benefited from feedback and "handled the practicums". Cassidy explained how her marriage to a man of the Muslim faith made her question many things previously unquestioned, and was related to her personal connection to social justice:

> You see the difference in assumptions and the lack of knowledge, almost ignorance and arrogance, out there. People ask if women in [this African country] have to cover their faces, do they have to pray five times a day, do they have to be fully covered – no that is Afghanistan or Arabia – Google it! People do not want to take the time to learn. They would rather jump straight in with their assumptions. Like if you mention or poll people on what is the first thing they think when you say Muslim or Islam, they will say terrorists".

Cassidy's personal experience with discrimination, and previous human service education and practice contributed to her client focused approach to social justice. She described the meaning of social justice as - "it's about going through struggles and processes with people and being able to give them an extra stepping stone across that river". Cassidy discussed the meaning of social justice as a social work ideal and value that encompasses advocating for and with clients; building relationships; experiencing client suffering and injustice; building community to better serve clients, and empowering people to have a voice and be heard. She believed that social justice was a complex

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construct that is difficult to define and label, but that it can be identified and experienced as actions that challenge injustice and structural barriers - "as a social worker that is what we are here for. We are supposed to be that person to push some doors open".

Cassidy's educational experiences with social justice in the social work program contributed to her understanding of the structural barriers that impact social work practice. She described these structural barriers as a lack of political priority and negative societal assumptions and stereotypes that create chronic de-valuing and under funding of services for marginalized and disenfranchised people. Cassidy also discussed that her educational experience supported her personal and professional growth through honouring her previous experience; mentoring and support from faculty members; and learning from others through discussion and sharing - "in the classroom, I think that a lot of growth and understanding does come from discussion". Cassidy summed up her educational experience with social justice as the "one thing that we learned in the program was always, constantly learn . . . . I have definitely seen growth in myself".

Cassidy's educational experience also contributed to her social justice practice perspective. She discussed social justice in social work practice as taking the time to hear client voices; modeling congruency in language and actions; reflecting on your practice; building relationships with clients; developing strategies and techniques for effective advocacy with clients; and providing clients with self-advocacy strategies – "I see it as reaching a societal hurdle that stops you from meeting a client's needs and how you get past that hurdle in order to bring some sort of progress or success to your client". Cassidy also described collaborating with clients, agencies, and colleagues; understanding the use and misuse of power in social work relationships; becoming a life-long learner;

and recognizing that the system is flawed and that it does need to change as part of her social justice practice perspective. She discussed social work practice as encompassing social action in order to improve the lives of the marginalized people - "we kind of have to rock the boat – we have to stir the pot"!

Cassidy had three recommendations for social work educators:

- Maintaining the flexibility of course work and content to meet diverse learning styles, needs, and interests of students within the structured curriculum and helping students understand and support this diversity amongst their peers.

- Increased accessibility of courses including electives and more online courses.

- Increased number of practicums that are shorter in duration in order to gain more diverse experience in the field.

A representation of Cassidy's voice is contained within her individual description which was constructed by this researcher from her interview transcript and shared with her during the member checking process. Cassidy's individual description of the meaning of social justice was constructed as follows: Social justice is a social work ideal and a practice objective. It is ensuring people gain access to the services that they need; helping people overcome structural, societal, and interdisciplinary barriers; empowering people to have a voice and be heard; improving people's lives; building community; and engaging in social action. Social justice is demonstrated through passion; experienced as injustice; learned through active learning opportunities, mentoring, sharing experiences, engaging in open discussion, and understanding your own biases; and practiced through collaboration, advocacy, client self-advocacy, building trusting relationships, modeling,

and life-long learning. Social justice is a complex construct that is difficult to define but can be identified and experienced in action.

4.13 Common and Divergent Features

The conversations with student participants offered insight into their diverse backgrounds and their unique connections to social justice in social work education. These conversations reflected participants' meanings, conceptual understandings, and experiences of social justice, but cannot reflect the effort and thoughtfulness that each participant engaged in during the interview process. The intent of this section is to provide a summary of the common and divergent features that emerged from the participants' individual responses to the four research questions that they addressed during their interviews.

4.13.1 What does social justice mean to graduating BSW students and how have their educational experiences shaped this meaning?

This conversation was challenging for all of the participants because of the scope of the question. The interview format supported participants in their struggle to construct and articulate in-depth narratives about the meaning of social justice to them and the experiences that had shaped these meanings. Collective meanings began to emerge as the participants described themselves as having experienced injustice. Student participants' lived experiences of injustice came from their personal reactions to experiences in diverse settings, including familial interactions, community settings, practicum agencies, classroom settings, and the social work program, however they offered consistent messages about the relevance of lived experiences in developing their meaning of social

justice. Participants also consistently described social justice as a value, and revealed a common association with social justice as passion for making a difference and hope for the future.

Participants' discussions about the meaning of social justice also revealed divergent features that were not collectively enunciated and/or were unique to their voices. These divergent features included various definitions of social justice as distributive justice including: fairness; sharing capital resources, land, and redistribution of wealth; addressing service gaps; equity of resources; and access to resources and services. Other participants described social justice as a political construct including acknowledgement of human rights; embracing peace; eco-justice; critical thinking; equality; embracing global justice; inclusion; social accountability and responsibility to others; and democracy. While still other participants described social justice in behavioural terms such as unconditional acceptance; understanding; empathy; and a non-judgmental attitude.

These conversations reflected participants' efforts to construct and articulate their meaning of social justice and, as discussed previously in this chapter, with these descriptions came many of the experiences that had shaped this meaning.

4.13.2 How have social work educational experiences contributed to graduating social work students' conceptual understanding of social justice?

These conversations reflected BSW student participants' experiences within their classrooms and practicum settings. They were emotionally charged conversations with participants discussing their educational experiences and relationships with program administrators, faculty members, peers, clients, elders, practicum supervisors, social

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workers, and their communities. Participants collectively discussed how social work education had contributed to their understanding of oppression and had broadened their world view. Many of the participants (Al, Unheard, Ella, Rebecca, Alanna, Hope, and Cassidy) also discussed how they came to understand that social justice is learned through collaborative and participatory educational processes including sharing; reflection; open discussion; experiential learning; and the positive modeling and mentoring by faculty members and practicum supervisors.

Participants' comments about the contributions of social work education to their understanding of social justice also had divergent features. One participant, Marie, described experiencing collective social action by students. A few participants described learning to think about language differently; learning effective communication skills; learning very practical ways to implement social justice into practice; and experiencing social justice in action in practicum settings.

Many participants (Al, Marie, Emily, Unheard, Ella, Rebecca, Alanna, and Hope) described disappointment in their social work program and how their experiences had created barriers to their learning and understanding of social justice. Some of the participants were particularly frustrated and confused by the disrespectful treatment they felt they had received within the social work program. Participants' disappointment and frustrations came from different sources including experiences of feeling disrespected by administrators, faculty members, practicum supervisors, and peers. Other participants discussed incongruency between what social workers' say about social justice and how they practice in educational and practicum settings and how social justice can become meaningless as a result. Some participants also described a lack of honouring of their

lived experiences within the program. All of the participants concurred that, as a result of their educational experiences, they now understood that social justice is about having a voice.

Participants' descriptions of their disappointment and frustrations with their social work education also had divergent features and they discussed how these experiences created barriers to their understanding of social justice. Some participants discussed disappointment with a lack of focus on and learning about 'macro social work' within their program including structural social work, social policy, social action, community development, and political activism. Another participant, Emily, felt a lack of focus on 'micro' social justice in social work. Other participants described frustrations with practicums including access to primarily 'traditional' practicums which supported and reinforced the status quo; lack of opportunity for diverse practicum experiences; lowered expectations for 'practicum students'; and a lack of dignity and respect for students in the practicum role. Some participants also described that a lack of engagement in social justice by classmates, oppression and bullying by a faculty member, and the misuse of power by faculty members and practicum supervisors was frustrating for them within the program.

It was evident from these conversations that common and divergent experiences of social justice in social work education played a significant role in participants' understanding of social justice, and it both contributed to and detracted from their experience within their BSW program.

4.13.3 How have social work educational experiences informed graduating social work students' social justice practice perspective?

BSW student participants readily discussed their social justice practice perspectives and collectively focused on social justice as challenging oppression with action in social work practice. The types of practices that emerged from their conversations were broad based and encompassed a spectrum of micro, meso, and macro practices. Their collective practices that were discussed in the data presentation included empowerment practice, advocacy work, and social action.

Participants' conversations about their social justice practice perspective also offered divergent features. Some of the participants described social justice in social work practice in specific value based and ethical terms such as congruency between social workers' values and ethics and their daily actions; ethical decision-making; compassion; empathy; and ensuring respect and dignity for others. Other participants described social justice in social work practice in political terms such as political activism; protecting the environment; and running for political office. Some participants described social justice in practice as intentionality of actions and language; educating residential school survivors about colonization and intergenerational trauma; collegial support; engaging in open conversations with people; and engaging in proactive rather than reactive social action.

Social work education had contributed to participants' social justice practice perspective by opening up a range of normative, ethical, and action practices that participants could engage in. This group of participants collectively agreed upon empowerment practice, advocacy work, and social action.

4.13.4 What recommendations would graduating social work students offer to social work educators regarding social justice in social work education?

All of the participants took the opportunity to offer one or more recommendations to social work educators at the conclusion of their interviews. Their recommendations provided direct feedback to social work educators in four major areas: improving teaching and learning processes; improving the BSW program including curriculum and course content; engaging social work educators in social justice; and engaging social work students in social justice. Table 1 below summarizes the student participants' recommendations within each of these areas.

Table 1: Summary of Participants' Recommendations

Improving teaching and learning processes	- Actively engage students in social justice ideas through experiential learning projects that support creating diverse and interest-based social action plans and then implementing these social action plans. - Social justice should be taught as both a macro and a micro concept. In order to understand the macro concepts, such as oppression and diversity, students need to connect to their own experience and then translate their experience into social action and activities that they can practice at a micro level on a daily basis. - Social work education needs to continue to teach students "from the top of the mountain" so that students begin by learning the whole or bigger picture and then subsequently integrate and connect the individual subjects and skills to a larger world view. - Increased active and experiential learning. Engaging in activities that demonstrate injustice and then creating opportunities to engage in social action. - Self-directed learning that focuses on identifying gaps in our own community, province, nation, or internationally and then finding ways to address these gaps through social action. - Continue to facilitate classroom conversations that

	support student discussions because this is where students start to think differently. • Circular seating arrangements in classrooms are a key component for encouraging participation and discussion.
Improving the BSW program including curriculum and course content	• Stronger community development component in BSW curriculum. • Social work education needs to place more emphasis and value on structural social work, structural change, social action, and political activism by offering more community work, political-economic and social action courses. • Reviewing the social work field education accreditation standards to see if the current standards inadvertently support traditional social work practice through restrictive practicum supervision regulations and models. If necessary, revising the social work field education accreditation standards to support the use of various supervision models for social work students that choose diverse and nontraditional practicum settings. • Social work education needs to be teaching about the impact of residential schools and the history of assimilation, segregation, and integration of First Nation's people in Canada as part of core BSW curriculum. • Restoring the value of community development work within the social work profession. • Social work education needs to teach more about the subjectivity of the profession, power differentials between social workers and their clients, and how to use, and not misuse, power within professional social work practice. • Maintaining the flexibility of course work and content to meet diverse learning styles, needs, and interests of students within the structured curriculum and helping students understand and support this diversity amongst their peers. • Increased accessibility of courses including electives and more online courses. • Increased number of practicums that are shorter in duration in order to gain more diverse experience in the field.

Engagement of social work educators in social justice	• Self reflection by faculty instructors on their own educational experiences, their passion for social work, their use and misuse of power with adult learners, and how they create a supportive, safe, and reciprocal learning environment based on respect, dignity, equality, and honouring student diversity and voice.
	• Congruency between faculty instructors' discourse about social justice and social work values and ethics and their own behaviour in the academic setting.
	• Student feedback and evaluations need to be meaningful and result in change.
Engagement of social work students in social justice.	• Social work education needs to focus more on developing empathy, compassion, and emotional intelligence with social work students.
	• Social worker students need to be actively engaged in politics if we want the voices of the marginalized and disenfranchised people that we serve to be represented in Canadian policies and legislation.
	• Social justice starts personally and understanding social justice begins with having people identify it in their own lives.
	• Engage students in conversations about social justice that challenge their objective realities; broaden their views on oppression, marginalization, and political disenfranchisement; and acknowledge and deconstruct their western viewpoint.
	• Student engagement in social justice depends upon faculty members' support, modeling and passion for social justice. The reciprocal sharing of passion, personal histories, and approaches to social action between faculty and students is empowering for students and helpful in validating the reasons that students came into social work and how students can practice social justice in their careers.
	• To continue to share and embrace social justice as part of our everyday social work practice.
	• Emphasize the importance and value of student sharing and discussion in the classroom.
	• Encourage students to consider the importance of language to social justice and develop an understanding that the social construction of language is related to world view and the maintenance of dominant views and discourse in society.
	• Social justice could be better understood if social work

	students learn to be more self-reflective and understand that social justice comes from within us and from our personal experiences.

These recommendations provided an opportunity for the social work student participants in this study to contribute their voices to the educational discourse on social justice in social work education.

This summative discussion revealed the common and divergent features within the participants' responses to the research questions. It was a process which was intended to offer insight into the emergence of participants' shared meanings and collective experiences and continue to honour participants' unique voices, recommendations, and contributions to this study.

4.14 Chapter Summary

This chapter explored the meaning of social justice from the voices of ten graduating BSW student participants and provided insight into their conceptual understandings, practice perspectives, and related experiences of social justice in social work education. The chapter presented a general profile to familiarize the reader with the participants in this study and then, the individual voices of each of the participants, in no particular order, were represented in thick, rich detail as they shared their connections to social justice and responded to the research questions. A process of methodological reduction, developed by Moustakas (1994), was used by this researcher to construct individual descriptions from the interview data for each of the participants. These individual descriptions, which summarized and represented the unique voices of each of

the participants, were presented in this chapter. Their individual descriptions (along with their full transcripts) were shared with participants as preliminary data analysis for member checking purposes.

A discussion of the common and divergent features the emerged from the data concluded this chapter and collective meanings of social justice began to emerge. All of the participants also provided recommendations to social work educators and their recommendations were themed in four major areas: improving teaching and learning processes; improving the BSW program including curriculum and course content; engaging social work educators in social justice; and engaging social work students in social justice.

The following chapter provides discussion and analysis of the six themes that emerged from the data and constructs the final exhaustive description or 'essence' of this study which addresses the research question and offers the findings from this study.

Chapter 5 - Data Analysis

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the themes from the data that addressed the research question and sub questions. This step in the data analysis process was developed by Moustakas (1994) to organize the data into themes by further reducing the participants' individual descriptions and seeking the themes that resonated within the participants' voices. This methodological reduction process yielded six themes:

1. Experience with injustice;

2. Social justice as a value;

3. A deeper understanding of oppression;

4. Challenging oppression with action;

5. Passion and Hope; and

6. Incongruency.

Each of the themes will be discussed in this chapter with respect to their relationship to the research questions, to the participants' collective voice, and to the literature on social justice in social work education.

The final step in the data analysis process was construction of an exhaustive description from the six themes. The exhaustive description is a reduction of the data to the "essentials" of the experience or essence (Moustakas, 1994). This description captures the 'essence' or meaning ascribed to social justice and the experience of social justice in social work education and represents the participants' collective voice. Through this analytic process, the six themes were further integrated and contextualized into an exhaustive description that addressed the main research question and revealed the

findings of this transcendental phenomenological study. A discussion of the findings

from this study and their relevancy to social work education will conclude this chapter.

5.2 Discussion of Themes

Each of the six themes that were extrapolated from the data will be discussed

further in this section.

5.2.1 Theme 1: Experience with injustice

All of the BSW student participants described experience with injustice during

their interviews. Participants' lived experience with injustice came from two main

sources: personal experience with injustice prior to admission to the social work

program; and educational experience with injustice in the social work program. There

were also participants who described experience with injustice from both sources.

Some participants shared their personal experiences of racism, oppression,

colonization, poverty, homelessness, and discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender,

class, age, geography, citizenship, and political views prior to involvement in the social

work education program. They described their experiences of injustice as "I ran into

discrimination and racism", "I experienced lots of discrimination", "I was totally

impoverished", and "when you say Muslim or Islam, they will say terrorists".

Other student participants shared their familial experiences of becoming aware of

injustice by growing up with a homeless family member, growing up in a politically

activist family, or moving to a small town as a youth and being excluded. Emily

described her experiences of familial exclusion as "[We] didn't grow up there and so we,

especially my brother, were ridiculed. So we were definitely not on the inside of the

small town". This group of students described their personal experiences with injustice prior to their social work education.

Many of the participants discussed their experiences with injustice in social work education. Within their social work program, they expressed "experience with injustice in that class", "feeling different" from others students in the social work program; and being "demeaned and spoken down to" by faculty members. Emily, who had familial experience with injustice prior to coming into the social work program, also described her experience with a faculty member "coming in and judging us, being a bully, abusing power, [and] oppressing students". Yet other participants experienced injustice through their practicums in their direct work with marginalized and disenfranchised people. One participant, Ella, described her practicum experience at an immigrant serving agency as "just so many injustices . . . on a daily basis".

Participants also made recommendations for social work educators to support and facilitate students' connections to their lived experiences within social work education. One participant, Emily, reminded social work educators that social justice starts personally and understanding social justice begins with having students identify it in their own lives. Another participant, Hope, suggested to social work educators that social justice could be better understood if social workers learned to be more self-reflective and understood that social justice comes from within us and from our personal experiences. Participant Ella encouraged faculty members to discuss and describe their experiences with injustice in order to connect with the student experience in the social work program.

Although their experiences were contextually diverse based upon variations of personal, familial, and educational experiences, social justice became meaningful to all of

the participants because of their lived experience with injustice. Dewey (1938) explained this as experiential learning which he described as a continuous process of reconstructing experience through the reflection upon that experience within education. This is also consistent with Campbell (2003) who supported the use of student experiences as a pedagogical base in anti-oppressive social work education and discussed how engaging students in their experience contributes to their own learning, the learning of others in the classroom, and forms the basis for critical, reflective, and reflexive thinking.

Participants' experience with injustice in this dissertation could also indicate a contrast with the findings from the earlier studies on social justice in social work education by Van Soest (1994) and Morrison Van Voorhis and Hostetter (2006) as discussed previously. These earlier quasi-experimental studies reported that social work students believed that the world was a just place and this contributed to their social justice advocacy framework. Both studies acknowledged the counterintuitive nature of their findings and suggested further exploratory research in this area.

In addressing the gap in the exploratory research, this dissertation indicates that lived experience with injustice (the world being experienced as an unjust place) contributed to social work students' commitment to social justice, and that the use of students' lived experience with injustice has a role to play in educating social workers who practice from a social justice perspective. Further consideration of the participants' experiences with injustice in this dissertation may provide some insight into the seemingly counterintuitive findings of these earlier studies and into the difference between these earlier studies and this dissertation. To be speculated upon and considered further is whether participants' experience with injustice in this dissertation is possibly

reflective of the experiences of other social work students. If other social work students have experience with injustice, then this may have different implications than if the group of student participants in this dissertation was unique in their connection to social justice. This is an area that would benefit from further study in social work education.

The tension between mainstream social work education and social justice has been discussed at length and it is clear that this tension continues to be reflected in the nature of (and divisions within) social work education (Dominelli, 2002; Mullaly, 2010). As speculation, if the group of students that participated in this dissertation potentially reflects the experiences of other social work students, this may indicate a tension between current mainstream social work education and the lived experiences of students in social work programs - social work education occupying a space dominated by mainstream casework values and practices and social work students occupying a space consistent with reformist, social change ideals. If the students that participated in this dissertation are unique in their experience with injustice, this may indicate a similar tension between mainstream casework values and practices (social control function) and the reformist, social change ideals (social care function) in social work education within the social work student population.

The findings from the earlier studies by Van Soest (1994) and Morrison Van Voorhis and Hostetter's (2006) could also be further understood as indicative of this tension between mainstream social work education and social justice. If this is the case, then the findings of these earlier studies and this dissertation similarly reveal that this tension influences student experience of social justice in social work education, and the difference between the findings of these earlier studies and this dissertation appears to be

in the student participants' opportunity to reflect upon and describe this tension based on methodological differences.

The influence of this tension between mainstream social work education and social justice on student experience in social work programs presents interesting opportunities for social work educators to address this tension including locating educational activity within the lived experience of adult learners (Freire, 1970; Mclaren, 2008) and the use of student experience with injustice as a pedagogical base in educating for social justice in social work (Campbell, 2003b).

5.2.2 Theme 2: Social justice as a value

Participants discussed social justice as a value. Some participants described social justice as a normative construct in terms such as "foundational value", "traditional value", "personal value", "a belief and value", and "living by morals, and ethics, and values". As a normative profession, social work education offered validation of social justice as a value within these participants' personal lives.

Other student participants described social justice as an ethical responsibility in terms such as "core value", "professional value" and "social work value". One explanation of why students adopted this view is that the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) Code of Ethics (2005), Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) Guidelines for Ethical Practice (2005), and the Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE) Standards for Accreditation (July 2007) all contain social justice education and practice expectations for Canadian social work educators, social workers, and social work students. For this group of participants, social work education

contributed to their knowledge and understanding of social justice as a professional value and ethical responsibility.

For most student participants, social justice was a value that they had integrated into their personal and professional lives. One participant, Emily, described social justice as "the essence of social work". Many participants discussed embracing social justice as a value because it personally inspired and professionally challenged them to "do more", "make a difference" and "contribute to society". Another participant, Ella, described how faculty members had mentored and modeled social justice as a value and provided practical ways to engage in social justice in their practice. Ella also recommended that social work educators support student engagement in social justice by embracing social justice as a value and part of everyday social work practice. This integration process is described by Barretti (2004) and Daniel (2007) as professional socialization in social work education - when social work students construct their professional values, beyond curriculum intervention, through the integration of prior values, prior experiences, peer groups, social work role models, faculty mentoring relationships, inclusion, and unintended experiences of marginalization and inequality. This is supported by Goldstein (2001) who described this integrative socialization process for social work students as a seamless blending of the personal and professional selves as students are inspired to identify with and become part of the mission, ethos, and culture of the social work profession.

For this group of student participants, their social work educational experience validated social justice as a value in their personal lives; informed them of their ethical responsibilities; and supported the integration of social justice into their personal and

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professional lives through socialization processes. This meaning of social justice as a value that is validated, informed, and shaped through professional socialization within social work education offers a challenge for social work educators. The challenge for educators is to address the need for congruency between the process (integration of personal and professional values through socialization processes such as peer groups and faculty mentorship) and the content (teaching professional ethics and ethical decision-making skills) within social work programs in order to support an educational and professional commitment to social justice as a primary social work value (Campbell, 2003; Van Soest & Garcia, 2003).

5.2.3 Theme 3: A deeper understanding of oppression

Participants expressed developing a deeper understanding of oppression as a result of their social work educational experience. The student participants collectively discussed that social work education had contributed to their understanding of structural, cultural, and personal oppression. They described their learnings about "oppression", "colonization", "assimilation", "diversity", "power", "acknowledging and deconstructing western viewpoints", "marginalization", "poverty", "privilege", "elitism", "capitalism", "political ideology", "social policy", "structural barriers" and "societal barriers". Abramovitz (1993) and Van Soest & Garcia (2003) suggest that an understanding of oppression (the oppressive political, structural, and institutional practices and processes that maintain injustice) is fundamental in educating for social justice in social work.

Participants also discussed developing a broader world view as an outcome of their understanding of oppression. Participants described this shift in their world view as "seeing the big picture", "challenging subjective reality", developing self-awareness", "a

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more holistic look at the world and myself", and a need to be "constantly learning". One participant, Hope, described her educational experience as "professors take us on the mountain and from the top we can see so much . . . we can see the whole picture, the whole world". Participants Amanda and Hope also discussed the transformative nature of their learnings about oppression as they gained insight into their own experiences of oppression and discrimination as marginalized women in Canadian society. Amanda stated that "as I went along in the social work program, I realized okay first I'm poor, second I'm a woman, third I'm Native". Hope stated that "before [social work education on oppression] all of my failures [as an immigrant] I would connect to my own inadequacies. I was not inadequate!" Participants developed critical consciousness and a broadening of their world view as they gained a deeper understanding of oppression contextualized within their own experiences with injustice. This process is similar to what Freire (1970) described as 'conscientization' (consciousness that has the power to transform reality).

Two participants, Al and Rebecca, recommended that social work educators engage students in conversations about social justice that challenge their subjective realities, broaden their views on oppression, marginalization, and acknowledge and deconstruct their world view and the maintenance of dominant views and discourse in society. This shift in consciousness and world view is described by Cranton (1994) as transformative learning. Cranton (1994) states that transformative learning occurs "when, through critical self-reflection, an individual revises old or develops new assumptions, beliefs, or ways of seeing the world" (p. 4).

Understanding oppression was an integrative and transformative learning experience in social work education for participants. In this theme, they described the development of a deeper understanding of oppression and its relationship to their lived experiences with injustice, their educational experiences in social work and their meaning of social justice as they each began to reconstruct their lived and educational experiences and world view from a more critical perspective.

Participants also described their experiences with educational approaches that contributed to their understanding of oppression in their social work program. Student participants described "open discussions", "sharing", "reflection", "experiential learning", "modeling", and "mentoring" and a "respectful" learning environment that honours student voice as being significant experiences that facilitated their understanding of oppression. This is supported by Campbell (2003) who discussed the importance of student engagement in learning through participatory and active learning processes; and also describes mentoring relationships, sharing, reflective thinking, and a respectful, reciprocal learning environment as contributing to the development of awareness and understanding of oppression and domination in social work education. Van Soest & Garcia (2003) also support that an educational commitment to social justice means opening up conversations for student engagement in critical analysis of oppressive social trends.

In this theme, participants further discussed that participatory and collaborative educational experiences were important in honouring and sharing their lived experiences, developing a respectful adult learning environment, and deepening their understanding of oppression which contributed to their meaning of social justice.

5.2.4 Theme 4: Challenging oppression with action

BSW student participants shared how their social work educational experiences had informed their social justice practice perspectives. Participants' deeper understanding of oppression contributed to their focus on social justice in social work practice as challenging oppression. They described challenging oppression in terms of "challenging the status quo", "fighting with the system", "having a voice", "standing up for rights", "speaking out against injustice", "speaking up if something isn't right", "pushing some doors open", and "anti-oppressive practice". Benjamin (2007) described this as resistance which occurs when "an individual or individuals take a stand in opposition to a belief, an idea, an ideology, a climate, a practice or an action that is oppressive and damaging to an individual and social well-being" (p. 196). Mullaly (2010) also discusses how this type of resistance was an early and powerful tool for confronting and challenging oppression. Critical social work literature also supports resistance to oppression as challenging the dominant social structures, power, and knowledge claims that produce increasing numbers of poor and marginalized populations of people (Soloman, 2005).

Social work educational experiences also provided validation, knowledge, and application of social justice in action for this group of student participants. The actions that participants associated with challenging oppression were three-fold: empowerment practice; advocacy work; and social action. Empowerment practice was described by some participants in terms of "empowering others", "client empowerment", and "micro practice". One participant, Amanda, commented that "something that I learned in social work is finding the strength within a person and empowering that person". The

empowerment practices that participants identified were: hearing clients' voices; engaging clients in their own planning processes; healing work; helping clients and colleagues understand the implications of poverty on people's lives; becoming allies with clients; building collaborative relationships with professionals and agencies that also provide services with oppressed populations of people; and creating a GLBT friendly work environments.

Lundy (2004) and Mullaly (2010) agree that empowerment practice refers to social work practice which seeks to reduce and eliminate oppression by working with oppressed populations of people, individually or collectively, to reduce alienation and powerlessness and gain increasing control over their own lives and environments through personal and social change. These practices acknowledge that the structural nature of oppression creates personal, interpersonal, and cultural struggles for oppressed people and engages social workers in a wide range of activities including consciousness-raising; self-definitions of identity; reclaiming of history; solidarity group work; becoming allies with oppressed people; liberatory education; developing anti-oppressive workplace practices and programs; and ensuring human rights (Bishop, 1994; Freire, 1970; Lundy, 2004; Mullaly, 2010; Reisch, 2002). For Lundy (2004), empowerment practice is "viewed as both a goal and process and has an action component" (p. 129). For this group of participants, social justice meant challenging oppression through individual and collective empowerment work within their daily social work practice.

Advocacy work was also discussed by participants as important to challenging oppression in social work practice. Some participants described advocacy work as "advocating for our clients", "advocating for others" and "advocating for social policy

and social change". Other participants described advocacy work in ways such as educating social workers about residential schools and the history of assimilation, segregation, and integration of First Nation's people in Canada; human rights work; educating colleagues and other professionals about social justice principles; confronting funders with the societal impacts of inadequate social service funding; creating new programs that identify and address service gaps; community capacity building; community development work; and involvement in partnership and community service initiatives. Schneider & Lester (2001) support the use of advocacy in social work practice to challenge oppression and describe 'representative' advocacy work as an action-oriented form of advocacy that focuses on creating opportunities for oppressed groups of people by participating in raising awareness and educating the public, decision-makers, and policy makers about social justice issues. These participants recognized that social justice in social work practice meant challenging oppression through advocacy work that creates shifts in social policies and organizational procedures and practices which lead to social injustice.

Many participants discussed social action as challenging oppression in social work practice. They described social action as "causing a stir", "social activism", and "collective social action" that creates social change. One participant, Cassidy, described social action as "we kind of have to rock the boat – we have to stir the pot"! Activities that participants discussed as social action were: environmental lobbying; protecting Mother Earth; having a voice; public policy campaigns; and participating in children's' rights, food systems, anti-poverty, and anti-racism movements. One participant, Marie, commented on social action by saying "let's organize a protest" and recommended to

social work educators that social work education needs to place more emphasis on structural social work, structural change, social action, and political activism by offering more community work, political-economic, and social action courses. Another participant, Rebecca, suggested that social work educators engage students in activities that demonstrate injustice and then create opportunities to engage in social action.

Social action as social justice in social work practice is supported by Schneider & Lester (2001), Mullaly (2002), McNicoll (2003), and Hoefer (2012). According to these authors, social action in social work practice encompasses both individual and group activities, such as lobbying, rallies, campaigns, and social movements, that are designed to influence political structures, promote social change and give "voice to those who were previously silenced" (Mullaly, 2002, p. 197). For these participants, social justice in social work practice meant "getting involved" in social action as a way of creating broader social change.

In this theme, participants focused on the meaning of social justice in social work practice as challenging oppression through empowerment practice, advocacy work, and social action. Participants embraced a spectrum of individual and collective actions as social justice in social work practice and discussed their social work educational experiences as validating, informing, and supporting these actions. Participants also demonstrated insight into the construction of inclusive social work practice that comes from a 'both/and' position as they work toward creating just societies within their daily social work practice. Mullaly (2010) and O'Brien (2010) support the need for social work educators to become more inclusive and integrative of this spectrum of practices that can address social justice issues in social work practice.

5.2.5 Theme 5: Passion and Hope

All of the participants in this study discussed that a commitment to social justice created passion and hope in social workers. Participants' educational experiences contributed to their ability to identify the passion and hope within themselves as graduating social workers and within the social workers that they encountered in the social work program. Some participants described this passion within themselves such as "I have a passion for social work and for making a difference" and "I am passionate about making a difference in the lives of others". One participant, Rebecca, described herself as "I am passionate about food [systems]" and another participant, Al, described social justice as a "passion" for him. Other participants described their experiences within the social work program - "the prof was very passionate", and "the social workers in [this practicum agency] were very passionate". Bishop (2002) explains this passion as "the drive behind the impulse to work for social change" (p. 149).

Participants described being "hopeful" that social justice makes a difference; "hoping" that social justice will create social change; and having "hope that society can actually embrace [social justice]". One participant, Amanda, stated that "social justice is that hope and what you do with that hope"! Another participant, Ella, described a faculty member's discussion of "social justice and hope" in the classroom. Bishop (2002) explains that hope is believing that "people do change and heal and grow. People change individually and collectively, changing structures along the way" (p. 146). Bishop (2002) also supports the need for creating and maintaining hope as critical to social justice because a commitment to social justice is a difficult, discouraging, and mysterious journey. In *Pedagogy of Hope* (1992), Freire describes hope as imperative to social

justice. According to Freire (1992), hope, inspired by an understanding of oppression, helps to "understand human existence, and the struggle needed to improve it . . . After all, without hope there is little we can do" (p. 3). For this group of participants, commitments to social justice meant creating passion and hope within social workers that were revealed through their social work educational experiences and which will motivate and inspire them along their social work journeys.

5.2.6 Theme 6: Incongruency

Participants collectively discussed their educational experiences of incongruency within their social work program. Some participants voiced disappointment, frustration, and challenges with their experiences of incongruency between the espoused commitment to social justice within social work education and practice (as reflected in the CASW Code of Ethics, 2005; CASWE Accreditation Standards, June 2007; and schools' of social work mission and vision statements), and the apparent lack of commitment to social justice demonstrated through the unjust behaviours and practices by social work administrators, educators, and social work students within the social work program. One participant, Unheard, stated that "I didn't see social justice – it's something that you're taught – it's not something that you have to do once you graduate". Another participant, Al, stated that "there's a lot of people [in the social work program] who think the idea of oppression and social justice [are] . . . bullshit". These participants described experiencing "oppression", "powerlessness", "disrespect", "no voice", "lack of honouring of experience", and "lack of faculty support", within their student role. One participant, Alanna, discussed her experience with social justice in the social work program as "I was

just completely surprised how little [social justice] seemed to matter. It just didn't seem to matter as much as I thought it was going to".

Other participants experienced this incongruency within their practicum agency settings. Marie discussed social justice as "something that we all talk about and we agree, yeah-for sure-of course, but where is it in practice? I don't see it in practice!" Ella discussed her practicum agency and stated that "advocacy was a word that was used a lot. As an agency, I don't think they ever took ownership of their role as effecting social policy or social change". One participant, Unheard, recommended that social work educators self reflect on their own educational experiences, their passion for social work, their use and misuse of power with adult learners, and how they can create supportive, safe, and reciprocal learning environments based on respect, dignity, equality, and honouring student diversity and voice. This group of participants recognized and questioned the incongruency between what social workers say about social justice and what they do in both educational and practice settings.

This incongruency reflects the tension that continues to exist between social work education and practice and its commitment to social justice. Colton (2002) describes this tension as "social justice and social work are inexplicably linked, but the relationship between the two is fraught with tension, contradiction, and conflict at both the ideological, conceptual and theoretical levels of policy and practice" (p. 659). This is supported by Jennissen & Lundy (2011) who describes this tension as an artifact of the development, growth and interaction of the Settlement House Movement and Charitable Organization Society as dual approaches in early social work. They discuss that the reformist ideals of the Settlement House Movement and subsequent development of

radical and critical approaches to social work (focusing on emancipatory, liberatory, and social action practices in order to eliminate oppression and create just societies) have continued to struggle within the hegemony of dominant capitalist society and the influence of mainstream social work which have continued to question the relevancy of social justice in social work education and practice. Participants' experiences of incongruency appear to be well founded and grounded within the turbulent historic relationship between social justice and social work education and practice.

Dominelli (2002) further supports this tension as creating dissonance particularly within social work education. Dominelli (2002) discusses that social justice has been de-valued within mainstream social work education and that social justice values, ideas, and educational practices challenge the hegemony of traditional education which supports elitism and expert based knowledge transmission and requires changes to educational systems. These changes would focus on "progressive", "liberatory", "problem-posing" and "anti-oppressive" education that works against oppression and focuses on empowerment, liberation, and creating just education and just societies (Dewey, 1938; Freire, 1970; hooks, 2003; Kumashiro, 2004). According to Lundblad (1995), early Settlement House Movement leader Jane Addams believed that education, if it was to achieve social justice, needed to be provided through just means and based on meaningful interpersonal relationships, relevancy, and humanity, rather than on elitist content and class procurement of knowledge. Freire (1970) described educating for liberation and social justice as the need for educational dialogue based on reciprocity, humility, hope, critical thinking, and 'conscientization'. Participants in this study clearly reflected that social justice is learned through just social work education.

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Another outcome of this tension between mainstream social work education and practice and social justice is that social justice has become de-emphasized and de-politicized in social work practice and is now being used as an "all embracing" term that lacks clarity and meaning (Jennissen & Lundy, 2011). Jennissen & Lundy (2011) state that "the consequences of this has been that many social workers espouse practicing from a social and economic justice framework, but this framework is not reflected in either their ideological positions or their practices" (pp. 301-302). Dominelli (2002) also discusses this de-emphasis and de-politicization of social justice and explains that social justice in social work practice is considered risky and avoided by social workers:

> The idea that social work itself could be responsible for perpetuating oppressive practices was considered professional heresy. Addressing issues of oppression in and through social work practice has been deemed a politically subversive operation and not condoned by the protagonists of traditional mainstream social work practice (p. 60).

One of the participants drew a similar conclusion about social justice in social work practice; Al stated "if you really pushed for social justice, I would imagine you'd get pushed out".

This participant group described experiences with social justice that exacerbated their lived and educational experiences with injustice, challenged their commitment to social justice in social work practice, and became a focus of participants' critical analysis on the incongruent relationship between social justice and social work education and practice. One participant, Marie, summed up her challenges by stating that "maybe social justice shouldn't be part of the definition of social work". The incongruent educational

experiences encountered by this group of students offers cause for further consideration of the pervasiveness and influence of the tension between social justice and social work education on student experience in current social work education programs.

Six themes emerged from the data to represent the collective voice of the ten graduating BSW student participants in this study. These themes: Experience with injustice; Social justice as a value; A deeper understanding of oppression; Challenging oppression with action; Passion and Hope; and Incongruency emerged as layers that developed into collective meanings and experiences of social justice in social work education. The literature was elucidative and offered insight in these themes. The following section will discuss the final step in the data analysis process which was the construction of an exhaustive description from the themes which responds to the main research question and represents the findings of this study.

5.3 Exhaustive Description

The exhaustive description responds to the main research question - what does social justice mean to graduating BSW students and how have their educational experiences shaped this meaning?, and represents the 'essence' or findings of this study. It is a reduction of the data to the "essentials" of the experience or essence (Moustakas, 1994). The exhaustive description was a weaving together of the six themes that emerged from the data. This was a process of 'intuitive integration' (Moustakas, 1994) of the themes in order to contextualize the themes and capture the 'essence' or meaning ascribed to social justice and the experiences with social justice in social work education from the participants' collective voice. The exhaustive description that was constructed by this

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researcher is as follows: *Social justice becomes meaningful when lived experiences with injustice are honoured, reflected upon, and critically understood within the context of oppression. Social justice is a value to be embraced and a practice perspective that challenges oppression through empowerment practice, advocacy work, and social action. Social justice is learned through social work education that facilitates open discussions, sharing, reflection, modeling, mentoring, and experiential learning processes within a respectful environment. A commitment to social justice creates passion and hope in social workers. Social justice becomes meaningless educational discourse and practice rhetoric when it is de-valued, de-emphasized, and de-politicized within social work education and practice settings.*

5.4 Discussion of the Findings

5.4.1 Transformative Learning

The findings of this study revealed that the graduating BSW students participating in this study constructed their meaning of social justice through a process of integrating their lived and educational experiences with social justice within their social work education. This integrative process created sophistication in participants' theoretical and normative constructs, their analytic schemas, and their practice perspectives on social justice. This type of integrative process in education is reflected in the literature on transformative learning. Transformative learning has been previously defined by Cranton (1994) as learning "which revises old and develops new assumptions, beliefs, or way of seeing the world" (p. 4). Transformative learning processes in social work education are described by Campbell (2003b), Campbell (2003c) and Van Soest & Garcia (2003) as

processes that: promote the honouring and sharing of lived experiences which form the basis for reflective and reflexive thinking; develop understandings of oppression; engage in participatory, active learning processes; encourage mentoring relationships; create respectful learning environments; and translate conceptual understandings into action practice. These transformative learning processes also promote critical analysis in social work education that includes rejections of the expert role; and deconstruction of knowledge, concepts, and practices. Many of these processes were consistently described by participants in this study as formative and/or necessary within their educational experience of social justice in social work education and are indicated in the exhaustive description or findings of this study.

Contemporary social work literature also views transformative learning as central and fundamental to educating for social justice and challenges social work educators to continue to develop educational approaches that are congruent with this transformative agenda, translates into practice, and move beyond educational discourse (Abramovitz, 1993; Campbell, 2003b; Mullaly, 2010; Van Soest & Garcia, 2003). Transformative learning also "centers on hope that change is possible toward a vision for a more just society" (Hope & Timmel, 1995, p. 16) and hope was central to the meaning of social justice for this group of student participants.

A discussion on transformative learning requires acknowledgement of the ethical issues that can arise for educators who ascribe to and practice from the theoretical perspective of transformative learning (Ettling, 2006). According to Ettling (2006), "as early as 1985, Paulo Freire addressed the question of ethics of transformative education. . . . Freire contended that the dialogical educator never has the right to impose his or her

position but nonetheless should never stay silent on social questions" (p. 61). Ettling (2006) also poses the ethical questions "how does one decide how far to engage students in the practice of looking at underlying assumptions and beliefs? Do educators have the right to ask people to examine and change their basic assumptions as part of our educational programs? And do adult educators have the (ability) to lead participants through the transforming experience?" (pp. 62-63). These are ethical considerations that require thoughtful reflection by social work educators that intend to work within transformative learning frameworks.

For this group of graduating BSW students, the integration of their lived and social work educational experiences appears to have created a meaningful commitment to social justice in social work practice which could be further understood within the context of transformative learning in social work education. Further consideration and exploration of transformative learning processes in educating for social justice in social work is suggested within this study.

5.4.2 Existing Tension

The findings from this study also indicated that this group of BSW student participants discussed incongruency between the espoused commitment to social justice in social work and a lack of commitment to social justice demonstrated within their educational and practicum settings. This incongruency could be explained as participants' experience with the tension that continues to exist between mainstream social work education and practice and social justice within their social work program. This well documented tension has been described as an ongoing struggle as social justice challenges and calls for the reform of mainstream casework social work and the hegemony of

traditional education which supports elitism and expert based knowledge transmission (Dominelli, 2002; Jennissen & Lundy, 2011).

This study revealed that, for this group of graduating BSW students, this tension challenged their commitment to social justice, presented educational barriers, and was reflected in their recommendations for congruency between what social workers in social work education say about social justice and what they actually do in social work programs. Further consideration of the pervasiveness of the tension between social justice and mainstream social work education and practice and the influence on the student experience within current social work programs is suggested within this study.

The findings from this study were further discussed to reveal that the integration of student participants' lived and educational experiences created a meaningful commitment to social justice which could be further understood within the context of transformative learning, and that their experiences with the existing tension between mainstream social work education and practice and social justice in their social work program presented challenges to this commitment to social justice.

5.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter explored the collective voice of the ten graduating BSW students who participated in this study. It discussed each of the six themes that were extrapolated from the data by this researcher - Experience with injustice; Social justice as a value; A deeper understanding of oppression; Challenging oppression with action; Passion and Hope; and Incongruency. These themes were then constructed by this researcher into an

exhaustive description responding to the main research question and representing the findings of this study.

This chapter concluded with a discussion of these findings. Two areas within the findings were elucidated: transformative learning and existing tension. This discussion revealed that, for this group of graduating BSW students, the integration of their lived and educational experiences created a meaningful commitment to social justice which could be further understood within the context of transformative learning. Further consideration and exploration of transformative learning processes in educating for social justice in social work was suggested.

The discussion of findings also indicated that student participants collectively experienced incongruency between the espoused commitment to social justice in social work and a lack of commitment to social justice demonstrated within their educational and practice settings. This was potentially explained as participants experiencing the tension that continues to exist between social justice and mainstream social work education and practice within their social work program. Further consideration of the pervasiveness and influence of this tension on the social work student experience was suggested.

The next and final chapter of this study will provide a summary of this study; discuss the implications of this study for social justice in social work education; address the limitations of this study, and offer recommendations for future research in this area.

Chapter 6 – Summary and Conclusions

This concluding chapter will provide a summary of this study; a discussion of the implications for social work education; address the limitations of this study; and offer recommendations for future research.

6.1 Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the meaning of social justice to students graduating from a baccalaureate program in social work, and their experiences with social justice in social work education. The intent was to gain insight into and further inform social work education about the meaning and relevancy of social justice from the perspectives of the adult learners who are central to social work's educational practices and processes. This study focused on bringing the student voice forward into the discussion about social justice in social work education and was grounded in the voices of the next generation of social workers who will be pivotal in the pursuit of social justice with the people and communities they will serve.

This study explored the meaning and experiences of social justice in social work education through qualitative interviews with ten adult learners who had completed their Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree from a Canadian school of social work and were awaiting convocation. All of the interviews focused on the following research question: What is the meaning of social justice to graduating BSW students and how have their educational experiences shaped this meaning? And three sub-questions: how have social work educational experiences contributed to graduating social work students' conceptual understanding of social justice?; how have social work educational experiences informed

graduating social work students' social justice practice perspective?; and what recommendations would graduating social work students offer to social work educators regarding social justice in social work education?

A transcendental phenomenological approach supported the exploratory and descriptive nature of this study (Moustakas, 1994). The method of data analysis used in this study was a modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method developed by Moustakas (1994). This phenomenological method and set of procedures was instrumental in providing rich, detailed representations of the individual student participants' voices, identifying themes, and constructing an exhaustive description representing the meaning of social justice and the social work educational experiences that shaped this meaning from the collective voice of the ten graduating BSW student participants. The exhaustive description that was constructed by this researcher was: *Social justice becomes meaningful when lived experiences with injustice are honoured, reflected upon, and critically understood within the context of oppression. Social justice is a value to be embraced and a practice perspective that challenges oppression through empowerment practice, advocacy work, and social action. Social justice is learned through social work education that facilitates open discussions, sharing, reflection, modeling, mentoring, and experiential learning processes within a respectful environment. A commitment to social justice creates passion and hope in social workers. Social justice becomes meaningless educational discourse and practice rhetoric when it is de-valued, de-emphasized, and de-politicized within social work education and practice settings.*

A discussion of these findings revealed that, for this group of graduating BSW students, the integration of their lived and educational experiences created a meaningful commitment to social justice which could be further understood within the context of transformative learning in social work education. The findings also revealed that the student participants' discussions of incongruency and recommendations for congruency between what social workers in social work education say about social justice and what they actually do in social work programs could reflect their experiences with the tension that continues to exist between social justice and mainstream social work education and practice.

6.2 Implications

6.2.1 Transformative Social Work Education

The findings from this study suggest a need for social work educators who wish to promote social justice to further embrace transformative learning processes in social work education, both within the classroom and practicum settings, as a way of continuing to support meaningful commitment to social justice and action for social change in their work with social work students. Transformative learning theory and processes are based upon the premise that educational experiences can revise and develop students' perspectives about themselves and their world in ways that create and inspire a commitment to social justice and social change action (Schroeder & Pogue, 2011). For the group of graduating BSW students that participated in this study, transformative learning was described as collaborative and participatory educational processes including

sharing; reflection; open discussion; experiential learning; and positive modeling and mentoring by faculty members and practicum supervisors.

While transformative learning in social work education can inspire meaning, hope, and passion for social justice (Bishop, 2002; Freire, 1992), it also provides an educational linkage between the theoretical frameworks (critical theory, conflict theories, anti-oppressive social work, and critical social work) and the practice approaches (empowerment practice, representative advocacy, and social activism) that address social issues from a social justice perspective. Transformative learning offers an educational framework and instructional methods that have humanistic and humanitarian orientations and are well suited for curriculum design, evaluation, and research in social work education (Schroeder & Pogue, 2011).

The literature on transformative learning in social work education also suggests that "student learning regarding macro-level issues can be effectively enhanced through the use of innovative [experiential, participatory, and collaborative] educational approaches" (Thomas, 2011, p. 173). These approaches have demonstrated benefit by increasing student knowledge, understanding, experience, and civic engagement with complex and nuanced concepts such as social justice (Thomas, 2011). Transformative learning in social work education could be one way of addressing concerns about social work students' struggles to engage in macro, social justice-based practice and their lack of commitment to and understanding of social justice as evidenced in the findings by Weiss (2006), Gilligan (2007), and Kim (2008) discussed previously in this dissertation.

Transformative learning has been viewed as an educational response to oppression and social injustice challenging the hegemony of dominant education and grounded in

emancipatory, liberatory, and social reform values creating just education and just societies (Dewey, 1938; Freire, 1970, 1990; hooks, 2003; Kumashiro, 2004), which fits well with social work's professional and educational commitment to social justice.

6.2.2 Social Justice Education

This study revealed that the student participants also had experiences of incongruency between the espoused commitment to social justice in social work and a lack of commitment to social justice demonstrated within their social work educational and practice settings. They expected more than a rhetorical commitment to social justice as reflected in the Code of Ethics (CASW, 2005) and Accreditation Standards (CASWE, June 2007), and gained first-hand experience with the well-documented tension between social justice and mainstream social work education and practice. Student participants in this study called for improved congruency between what social work educators say about social justice and what they actually do in classrooms, at practicums, and administratively within social work programs. These findings appear to indicate a need for further development of social justice education within social work programs.

Social justice in social work education has been considered by some to be a topic area that is typically infused, integrated, or strategically placed within courses or curriculums in social work programs, with much of the content of this topic area presented in a fairly general, non-critical, non-theoretical, and narrow fashion having little connection to actual social work practice (Reisch, 2011; Schroeder & Pogue, 2011; Van Soest & Garcia, 2003). From a critical perspective, this relative obscurity exists because social justice challenges and calls for the reform of mainstream casework social work and the hegemony of traditional education which supports elitism and expert based

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knowledge transmission (Dominelli, 2002; Jennissen & Lundy, 2011). From a more pragmatic perspective, social justice is a complex concept with nuanced interpretations that lacks a universal definition, and has created ongoing struggles for the social work profession over the years (Birkenmaier et al, 2011).

Social justice education in social work programs offers an academic forum for rigorous inquiry, meaningful dialogue, evaluative methods, and substantive research in this area. Social justice education is informed by theoretical frameworks (social justice theories and education theories) that are used in its design, planning, implementation, and evaluation (Pogue, 2011). Development of principles and practices of social justice education in social work and the need for congruency between them is supported by the participants in this study and in Campbell's (2003b) discussion on the need for congruency between principles and practices of anti-oppression education. This view of social justice education "provides not only the language students need to understand the breadth, depth, and nuance of social justice, but the means to inspire students and move them to seek social justice" (Pogue, 2011, p. 45). Consequently, social work programs, curriculum, field education, and courses could delve deeply into the meaning of social justice and the implications and opportunities for practice that a commitment to social justice inspires in social workers.

6.2.3 Hearing Student Voice

This study was focused on bringing the student voice forward into the discussion about social justice in social work education and was grounded in the voices of a group of student participants who are the next generation of social workers. The participants offered recommendations to social work educators in four main areas: improving

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teaching and learning processes; improving the BSW program including curriculum and course contents; engaging social work educators in social justice; and engaging social work students in social justice. In the first area, improving teaching and learning processes, students recommended increased participatory, active, and experiential teaching and learning approaches that challenge students to broaden their world views and engages them in action.

Improving the BSW program was a second major area focused on by the student participants. Participants recommended that the BSW program place more emphasis on social justice and social justice related curriculum including: courses on structural social work, social action, political activism, and the impact of residential schools; and stronger community development components; and increased diversity of practicum placements. They also recommended improvements to program delivery that were more consistent with social justice principles including: acknowledgement of professional use and misuse of power; and increased flexibility and accessibility of the program to meet diverse learning needs.

A third major area focused upon in the participants' recommendations was engagement of social work educators in social justice. Participants recommended that social work faculty instructors self reflect on their own educational experiences, their approaches to teaching and learning, and their commitment to social justice in order to create congruency between what faculty members say about social justice in social work and what they actually do in the academic setting.

In the fourth and final major area, engagement of social work students in social justice, participants recommended increased socialization of students from a social justice

perspective. They described social justice as being learned through social work education that facilitates political awareness, self reflection, compassion and empathy for others, modeling and passion by educators, and dominant discourse analysis within a respectful environment that honours student voice.

Student participants' recommendations offer insight for social work educators and hope for the future of social justice in social work education.

6.3 Limitations

The limitations of this qualitative study are that the findings represent the voices of the ten BSW students graduating from one Canadian baccalaureate social work program that participated in this study and any implications or conclusions drawn from the study are tentative. Also, the self selection nature of the participant sample included only those participants who viewed social justice as relevant to their social work education and practice. Minimal information about the BSW program design that the student participants' were graduating from limited the programmatic analysis of data. Finally, participant profile information described in the study included the following: nine out of ten (9/10) student participants were female and eight out of ten (8/10) student participants were described as mature. Further analysis of this information is limited because of the self selection nature of the participant sample. While these limitations are acknowledged and future research needs to be done to lend support and validation, this study contributes student experience and student voice to the discussion of social justice in social work education.

6.4 Recommendations for Future Research

This study explored the meaning of social justice to ten graduating BSW students and how their educational experiences in one Canadian school of social work program shaped this meaning. In order to obtain results that are more generalizable, there is a need for the replication of this study with a larger student participant sample, possibly even the development of a quantitative survey study that uses a sample representative of social work students in Canada.

Given the limited sample size of this study, there is a need for a broader study that explores how the lived experiences of injustice that BSW students may bring to their social work programs influence their understanding of and experience with social justice in social work education and the potential dynamics between these two phenomena. Another recommendation in this area is the need for further research on how social work educators can effectively impact those students who have not directly experienced injustice.

Further research that addresses the scholarship of teaching and learning in social justice education is also an area to be explored based on the results of this study. Research projects that explore transformative learning approaches and their application to social justice education within the classroom and practicums of social work programs would be of benefit to schools of social work.

Another area for further research based on the results of this study is participatory action research and appreciative inquiry exploring the existing tension between social justice and mainstream social work education and practice. This research has the potential to open up dialogue between social work educators and explore contemporary

courses of action to bridge this historical tension which continues to challenge social workers, social work educators, and social work students.

Finally, future research should continue to bring student voice forward into the discussion about social justice in social work education. Research that is inclusive of student voice and continues to explore how social work educational processes shape the meaning of and commitment to social justice within the next generation of social workers will support a firm grounding for the social work profession in the challenging years to come.

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Appendix 1: Student Participant Recruitment Email

Email Header: Invitation to participate in research on the Meaning of Social Justice to Graduating BSW Students

This email is an invitation to graduating BSW students to participate in a research study entitled: The Meaning of Social Justice to Social Work Students. This is a qualitative study and I am interested in exploring your understanding of social justice and how social work education has contributed to your understanding of social justice and informs your social justice practice perspective. The intent of this study is to contribute to social work education in social justice from your perspective and through inclusion of your voice in this area. This research study is being conducted as dissertation research by Linda Fehr MSW, RSW, a PhD student at Memorial University.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and your decision about whether or not to participate will in no way, positively or negatively, affect your grades or your relationship with the faculty and/or faculty members. All interviews will be planned for May, June, or possible July, 2010 when grades have been submitted and you are awaiting convocation or possibly just have convocated. I am prepared to travel to various locations to facilitate these conversations.

If you are a graduating BSW student and are interested in collaborating with me, please reply to me at linda.fehr@uleth.ca and I will follow-up with more detailed information about the study and how you can participate. Replying to this email does not commit you to participating in the study. I look forward to hearing from interested BSW students.

Take care,
Linda Fehr, MSW, RSW
PhD Student
School of Social Work
Memorial University of Newfoundland
Email: linda.fehr@uleth.ca
Phone: 403-329-2795

Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet

Email Header: Information Sheet on the Meaning of Social Justice to Social Work
Students

Thank you for replying to my email notice and indicating that you are interested in finding out more about my research study - The Meaning of Social Justice to Social Work Students. This email more fully describes the purpose of this study, what your participation would involve and, if interested, next steps. Please remember that your participation is voluntary and that there will be no negative consequences for participating, not participating, or for withdrawing your participation later.

Introduction:
Canadian social work is placing increasing emphasis on educational processes that graduate critically reflective social workers who can address social issues with a social justice focus. Both the Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE) Standards for Accreditation (June 2007) and the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) Code of Ethics (2005) specify social justice education and practice expectations for Canadian social workers. This social justice mandate is unique to social work among the helping professions and few other professions identify challenging social injustice as a primary educational and practice mission.

Purpose of Study:
This study is a qualitative examination of the meaning of social justice to students graduating from a Canadian Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program. It will explore social work students' understanding of social justice and how social work education has contributed to their understanding of social justice and informs their social justice practice focus. I am particularly interested in BSW students because they are typically our profession's 'front-line workers' engaged in direct practice with diverse, often the most marginalized and disenfranchised, populations of people. The intent is to engage in research that contributes to social work education in the area of social justice from the perspective of the adult learners for whom our educational practices and processes are offered.

What you will do in this study:
If you choose to be involved, you will be asked to participate in an in-depth, semi-structured interview facilitated by this researcher. You will be asked to discuss your understanding of social justice, how social work education has contributed to your understanding of social justice, and how your educational experience has informed your social justice practice perspective. Interviews will be audio-taped and later transcribed. After your interview, and before the data are included in the final report, the researcher will email you a copy of the transcript of your interview. You will be invited to review your transcript, and to make written comments and/or suggestions including adding, changing, or deleting information from the transcripts as you choose. Should you wish to

email replies regarding the transcription, you will have a 10 day period within which to do so.

Length of time:
It is anticipated that the interview will last from 1 – 2 hours and will be scheduled on a day and time that are mutually convenient. We will arrange to meet in an agreed upon location that is private and away from the social work school.

Possible Benefits:
Your participation will provide you with an opportunity to collaborate in a research study that is focused on hearing your voice about the meaning of social justice and that plans to contribute to improving knowledge in the area of social justice and social work education.

Possible risks:
There are no anticipated risks associated with your participation in this study. If you find any interview question upsetting, you can decline to answer or withdraw participation at anytime with no negative consequences. Should you become upset during the interview, the researcher will not continue the interview until she is assured that you are ready and willing to continue, or the interview can be terminated and the recording and any notes taken will be destroyed immediately.

Confidentiality:
To protect your confidentiality, interviews will be held in mutually agreed-upon private locations away from the school facilities. No faculty member or person from the University sampling site, who may have an influence over your current or future education, will be given knowledge of your participation in the study. The information that you provide through participation in this study, including personal information, interview transcripts, and additional comments, will be confidential.
All efforts will be made to ensure your confidentiality in this study, however there are limitations to confidentiality with respect to information disclosed during the interview that is related to the harming of yourself or others.

Anonymity:
All efforts will be made to ensure your anonymity in this study. You should know, however that because all of the potential participants in this study will be graduating students from one university BSW program and may be known to one another and/or to this researcher, it is possible that you may be identifiable to other people on the basis of what you said.

Reporting of Results:
The data from this research will become the basis of my doctoral dissertation and will be presented to my dissertation committee, a PhD defense committee at Memorial University, and will be published and presented at conferences; however, your identity will be kept confidential. Although I may report direct quotations from the interview to support the findings, you will be given a pseudonym, and all identifying information

including any personal information and the school of social work that you attended will be removed.

Storage of Data:
All information collected (including audio-tapes, consent forms, and researcher notes) will be stored securely in this researcher's office, will be accessible only by this researcher and her supervisor, and will be destroyed five years after the study is completed, July 2015 according to Memorial University's retention of data requirement. Digitized interview transcriptions and participant comments will be cleaned of identifying participant information by the researcher. Once cleaned, digital interview transcriptions and participant comments will be stored in password-protected files on the researcher's computer. If you choose to participate in this study and then decide later (before the results are published) that you want to withdraw, I will not use any of the information you have provided.

Thank you for your time. If you continue to be interested in participating in the study, please reply to this email and let me know. The next steps will be to arrange an interview date, time, and location in May or June, prior to or just after your convocation from the BSW program.

Linda Fehr, MSW, RSW
PhD Student
School of Social Work
Memorial University of Newfoundland
Email: linda.fehr@uleth.ca
Phone: 403-329-2795

Appendix 3: Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research project entitled "The Meaning of Social Justice to Social Work Students".

The Information Sheet and this form are part of the process of informed consent. The Information Sheet, attached to this form, provides a written description of this research study and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read both parts carefully.

It is entirely up to you to decide whether to take part in this research. If you choose not to take part in the research or if you decide to withdraw from the research once it has started, there will be no negative consequences for you, now or in the future.

Participation in Interview:
Do you agree to be interviewed for this study?
_____ Yes, I agree to be interviewed for this study
_____ No, I do not agree to be interviewed for this study

Recording of Interview:
Do you agree to the audio-taping of your interview for this study?
_____ Yes, I agree to the audio-taping of my interview.
_____ No, I do not agree to the audio-taping of my interview

Copy of Transcript:
Are you interested in receiving a copy of the interview transcript via email? Please note that you will be invited (not in any way required) to check for accuracy and comment via reply email on what was discussed.
_____ Yes, please send me a copy of the interview transcript via email. I understand that, if I want to comment on the transcript, I will have 10 days to reply by return email.
_____ No, I am not interested in receiving a copy of the interview transcript.

Questions:
You are welcome to ask questions at any time during your participation in this research. If you would like more information about this study, please contact:

Researcher: PhD Supervisor:
Linda Fehr, MSW, RSW   Dr. Ross Klein
PhD Student, School of Social Work   Professor, School of Social Work
Memorial University of Newfoundland   Memorial University of Newfoundland
Email: linda.fehr@uleth.ca   Email: rklein@mun.ca
Phone: 403-329-2795   Phone: 709-737-8147

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research (such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant), you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-737-8363.

Consent:
Your signature on this form means that:
- You have read the information about the research
- You have been able to ask questions about this study
- You are satisfied with the answers to all of your questions
- You understand what the study is about and what you will be doing
- You understand that you are free to withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason, and that doing so will not affect you now or in the future

If you sign this form, you do not give up your legal rights, and do not release the researcher from her professional responsibilities.

The researcher will give you a copy of this form for your records.

Your Signature:
I have read and understood the description provided; I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project, understanding that I may withdraw my consent at any time with no negative consequences for me, now or in the future. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

_____   _____
Signature of participant   Date

Email address: _____   Phone number: _____

Researcher's Signature:
I have explained this study to the best of my ability. I invited questions and gave answers. I believe that the participant fully understands what is involved in being in the study, any potential risks of the study, and that he or she has freely chosen to be in the study.

_____   _____
Signature of investigator   Date
Email address: linda.fehr@uleth.ca   Phone number: 403-329-2795

Appendix 4: Interview Guide

The interview begins only after the informed consent process has been completed with the student participants. The participants will have had full opportunity to ask questions regarding the study and should feel satisfied with the answers.

The interview is intended to be semi-structured and, therefore, the questions provide a guide to the interview. Probes and follow-up questions can be used as appropriate to develop full and rich responses from participants. As much as comfortable and possible, the researcher is intending to encourage discussion with the participant.

II.   **Background Information**
1. Can you please describe your level of education prior to coming into the BSW program?
2. Can you please describe your experience in human services prior coming into social work?
3. How would you describe yourself with relationship to age, gender, and location?

III.   **Questions about participants' understanding of social justice**
1. Social justice has been called a primary mission of social work – what do you think of that statement?
2. How would you define social justice?
3. What does social justice mean to you?

IV.   **Questions about how participants' social work education has contributed to their understanding of social justice**
1. Tell me about some of your social work educational experiences in the classroom that have contributed to your understanding of social justice? For example courses, class discussions, peers, activities, instructors, mentors.
2. Tell me about some of your practicum experiences that have contributed to your understanding of social justice? For example supervisors, supervision activities, agencies, colleagues, clients, professional development activities, community events.
3. Can you describe any barriers to incorporating a social justice perspective within your social work education?

V.   **Questions about how the participants' education experiences have informed their social justice practice perspective.**
1. What is social justice practice in social work from your perspective?
2. What does this practice entail?
3. Can you describe any barriers to incorporating a social justice perspective within your practicums?

4. How has your BSW education contributed to your ability to practice social work from a social justice perspective? How has your BSW program shifted your perspective on social justice? Provide some examples?

VI. **Concluding Questions**
1. What recommendations would you have for social work educators regarding social justice in social work education?
    i. Classroom education
    ii. Practicum education
2. Is there anything else about your experiences with social justice in social work education that we haven't talked about that you would like to add?

VII. **Final Comments**
1. Thank you for participating in this research project and for sharing your perspective and experiences.
2. I will prepare your transcript, email you a copy for your review if you wish, and I look forward to your comments.

Appendix 5: Transcript Review and Feedback Invitation

Email Header: Social Justice Research Transcript and Feedback Invitation

Thank you again for participating in my research study on "The Meaning of Social Justice to Social Work Students". You indicated at that time that you would be interested in receiving a copy of your interview transcript via email. I know that it has been a while since our conversation, however I have finally completed the transcription and initial analysis process. Please find attached a copy of your transcript from our audio-taped conversation (which I typed myself); and a document with my initial analysis and understanding of your description of social justice in social work education and your recommendations for social work educators regarding social justice in social work education. I would like to invite you (you are not in any way required) to review these documents in order to check for accuracy and/or to provide me with any comments or feedback that you may have about them.

Please note that, if you want to comment or provide feedback on the attached documents, you have 10 days to reply by return email to me. Thank you again for your support with my research process.

Take care,
Linda Fehr, MSW, RSW
PhD Student
School of Social Work
Memorial University of Newfoundland
Email: linda.fehr@uleth.ca
Phone: 403-329-2795

Appendix 6: Memorial University ICEHR Ethics Approval

February 4, 2010
ICEHR No. 2009/10-057-SW

Ms. Linda Fehr
School of Social Work
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Dear Ms. Fehr:

Thank you for your submission to the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) entitled *"The meaning of social justice to social work students".*
The Committee has reviewed the proposal and appreciates the care and diligence with which you have prepared your application. We agree that the proposed project is consistent with the guidelines of the *Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (TCPS). *Full ethics approval* is granted for <u>one year</u> from the date of this letter.
If you intend to make changes during the course of the project which may give rise to ethical concerns, please forward a description of these changes to the ICEHR Coordinator, Mrs. Eleanor Butler, at <u>ebutler@mun.ca</u> for the Committee's consideration.

The TCPS requires that you submit an annual status report on your project to ICEHR, should the research carry on beyond February 2011. Also, to comply with the TCPS, please notify us upon completion of your project.

We wish you success with your research.

Yours sincerely,
Lawrence F. Felt, Ph.D.
Chair, Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research
LF/bl

cc: Supervisor – Dr. Nancy Sullivan, School of Social Work