Lynelle Watts · David Hodgson

Social Justice Theory and Practice for Social Work

Critical and Philosophical Perspectives

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ISBN 978-981-13-3620-1 ISBN 978-981-13-3621-8 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-3621-8

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018964014

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The registered company address is: 152 Beach Road, #21-01/04 Gateway East, Singapore 189721, Singapore

This book is dedicated to people everywhere in their struggles for recognition and the pursuit of social justice.
All monies the authors earn from commission or sale of this book will be donated to the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre in Australia https://www.asrc.org.au/.

Preface

In recent years, social justice has moved to become a central principle and value within social work. As social work educators, we found that many of our conversations with students and our colleagues centred on understanding, explaining and debating different approaches to addressing the many forms of injustice that require attention. We also found this area to be a slippery and difficult terrain to cover with students as it is replete with competing approaches, different conceptions of social justice and different levels of analysis. For example, the view of social justice changes with the level of resolution, depending on whether we are conceptualising justice at the level of individuals or groups and communities. This changes the kinds of questions we can ask about what should be done and why?

To address some of these issues, we turned to the literature to try and bring clarity to our discussions about social justice. We figured that others have experienced similar issues in grappling with the complexity of addressing social justice and engaging students in thinking and acting about it. In doing so, we could see there was an opportunity to initiate a dialogue between social work understandings of social justice—built from long engagement with people experiencing poverty, disadvantage, injustice, oppression, stigma and discrimination—and the critical and philosophical literature concerned with developing concepts and principles of social justice. We found that the philosophical literature can offer significant clarity in terms of tracing concepts such as freedom, democracy, theories of distribution and justice, and that critical theories offer a corpus of resources to theorise the way social structures perpetuate oppression, discrimination and stigma. We also found that many of these theoretical ideas have been tested and given significant expression in social work practices. Hence, we have used a mix of influential classic literature, as well as more contemporary sources.

This book, therefore, represents something of an interchange between social work literature and a range of critical and philosophical literatures that have considered issues of social justice. We see this as an important critical and practical activity intended to extend the conversation about social justice within social work. Thus, in writing this book, we have taken seriously the notion that critical reflection means testing the limits of the present with a view to transforming the conditions of

possibility, and thereby, going beyond them. Doing so means starting where we are, and that means engaging in dialogue about these issues with students and colleagues through writing this book.

Thus, a key aim with the book has been to contribute to the clarity about foundational concepts for illuminating social justice. These will be familiar to our readers: human rights, democracy, dignity, equality and fairness in distribution and outcome—all important values and practices for extending the reach of justice. We have done so in an open-ended fashion recognising the essentially contested nature of many of these values. The book has also offered a description of various problematics that work against these values and practices. Here, we are thinking of economic liberalisation and ongoing imperialisms, forms of structural oppression and discrimination, ramified patterns of poverty and disadvantage—all of which have been described and theorised extensively in critical social work literatures.

The book also has some limits. We have not provided a definitive outline of how social justice *ought* to be thought about, nor do we seek to legislate a single program of action or thought for social work to take. For example, the book is critical to the extent that it interrogates various limits to current theoretical thought but it is not specifying a particular version of critical theory. Rather, we have presented critical theories as important resources that may increase the resolution of specific forms of injustice. For example, Marxism has long been useful for descriptions of alienation but it has limits for helping to illuminate specific issues for peoples experiencing colonisation of land and culture. Other theories may have more explanatory power for this. Our aim has been to demonstrate putting theoretical resources to *work*.

The goal of the book is twofold. First, the book is aimed at students and educators in social work and provides resources to initiate and support discussions about social justice informed by a range of theoretical ideas drawn from the discipline of social work, the social sciences and areas of political and moral philosophy. Second, the book will support the work of practitioners and provide theoretical resources to consider different areas of practice within social work. We hope that with these goals the book will contribute to extending the conversation about social justice practice in social work.

Overview of the Structure and Layout of This Book

This book is organised into three main sections. The first part of this book (Chaps. 1–5) establishes the foundations for later chapters by reviewing the way that social work has developed social justice into its thinking, mission and ethics. We begin with an overview of injustice, outline a social work ethical conception of social justice and describe a history of social work's methods and forms that have sought to bring about social justice. Part I of this book seeks to address the question: 'what are we thinking of when we think of social justice in social work?' Specifically, Chap. 1 explains what injustice is and gives examples of the forms of injustice, and it offers some

explanations as to why injustice persists. Chapter 2 explores the concept of social justice in social work ethics, and our aim here is to explore the way that social work has engaged with and conceptualised social justice; in particular, by looking at the articulation of social justice in social work codes of ethics. Chapter 3 continues this discussion by exploring the development of social work as a discipline and profession, which has always been engaged in the pursuit of social justice. We have done this from a historical vantage point by describing in general terms the different methods and approaches that give social work its form. We surveyed the history and major methodologies of social work, contending that social work has always been engaged in the pursuit of social justice, albeit in different ways. Chapters 4 and 5 broaden the discussion to problematise some macro level forces that create significant challenges for social work in the pursuit of social justice, such as the history and contemporary manifestation of capitalism and neoliberalism, and a critical analysis of power and its intersection with knowledge (especially biopower, risk and the new human sciences). Specifically, Chap. 4 explains liberal, Marxist and Keynesian critiques of capitalism, as well as outlining political economy and governmentality perspectives on neoliberalism. Chapter 5 explores structural and poststructural perspectives of power. Our concern in Chaps. 4 and 5 is to give shape to some enduring and emerging problems that social work must grapple with. These problematic factors are writ large as major challenges for the future of social justice, and deconstructing them is central to critically reflective and socially just social work practice.

Part II of this book draws primarily from political philosophy and we survey four major approaches that offer theoretical frameworks and concepts that can be articulated into a social work response for social justice. These critical and philosophical perspectives include: (1) critical social science and critical theory; (2) distributive theories of justice; (3) human rights and autonomy; and (4) democracy, participation and deep diversity. Specifically, Chap. 6 discusses the place of critical social science and critical theory to a transformative and critical account of social work and social justice. Chapter 6 has a particular emphasis on Marxist, feminist and postcolonial perspectives. Chapter 7 explains distributive theories of justice by outlining in detail the position advocated by John Rawls, and what this means for a focus on distribution and equality of opportunity, particularly in relation to the promotion of fair and just institutions. In Chap. 8, we draw from political and social philosophy, in the critical sense, to examine the role of democracy, participation and deep diversity as important concepts of social justice. Chapter 9 engages with social work's stated commitment to human rights, and then focuses specifically on the concept of autonomy and its relation to both social justice and human rights. We begin with liberal conceptions of autonomy, and then critique and reconstruct autonomy from feminist perspectives.

Part III of this book closes our discussion by bringing together summaries of the extant theory together into two chapters that offer a new synthesis and practical account of social justice theory and praxis for social work, and for social work education for social justice. In this sense, the final two chapters seek to answer the question: 'what should be done for social work to maintain its engagement in social justice thinking, practice and teaching and learning?' Specifically, Chap. 10

presents a reflexive framework for social justice theory by connecting the four critical and philosophical perspectives discussed in Chaps. 6–9, with social work literature on social work theories and practices for social justice. Finally, Chap. 11 describes a social justice oriented curriculum for social work education by introducing 48 learning outcomes that could be used to build a clear focus on social justice teaching and learning for social work. In Chap. 11, we explain curriculum design frameworks that will help social work educators plan and design curricula and teaching and learning processes that reflect a commitment to social justice.

How to Approach This Book

Our approach in this book has been to try to explain the main concepts, theories and arguments in a way that makes them open to discussion, critique and understanding. This is why many of the concepts and key ideas we introduce are discussed at length, and we have tried where possible to include reference to many original sources and key thinkers. Careful reading over these ideas may take some time, and we encourage readers to track down the sources we cite to deepen their engagement in the discussion. We would anticipate that readers should think critically about the ideas presented so as to arrive at their own view of them. As mentioned, we do not present this book as a definitive account of social justice, rather, it should be read as one part in an ongoing dialogue about social justice and what it means for social work. In presenting the main ideas, we have attempted to explain the historical, contextual and philosophical principles that inform them. Engaging with these ideas will help readers develop an understanding not only of the central ideas and what they might offer social work but also of their limits.

Bunbury, Australia

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Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which this book was written, the Wardandi people of the Nyungar Nation. We wish to pay our respects to ancestors and Elders of the community, past and present. We extend our recognition and respect to their descendants and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and acknowledge their continuing culture and the contribution to the life of this place, region and land. We also wish to acknowledge that the issue of Australian Aboriginal sovereignty is an ongoing struggle and that Australia remains territory that was never ceded by its original inhabitants.

Writing a book is not easy and we are grateful for the support of many people in our lives who have offered assistance and encouragement when most needed.

We would like to thank Illaria Walker and Ambrose Berkumans at Springer, who have supported this project from the beginning and assisted with us with advice and direction.

We would like to thank our families who have been with us through the whole journey. David would like to thank Andrea, Xavier and Sienna. Lynelle would like to thank Peter, Kate, Beth, and Megan.

Special thanks to Graham Hodgson for helping with proofreading. Our thanks to Mia and Alan Crookes for the use of their house to get the project underway. Thanks also to Merilyn and Ed Reid for offering their house just in time for the final push—it was a lovely space in which to bring the project to a close.

Thanks to our colleagues at Edith Cowan University (ECU). Collegial spaces are so important to this kind of work and we appreciated the conversations and space to think these topics through. Our thinking has certainly benefited from various discussions with Dr. Hossein Adibi, Prof. Kathy Boxall, Rebecca Burns, Meisha Chalk, Dr. Colleen Carlon, Jeni Henderson, Dr. Lucy Hopkins, Karen McDavitt and Dr. Marilyn Palmer. Special thanks to Dr. Marilyn Palmer for reading and giving feedback on Chap. 4. Our thanks to Dr. Vicki Banham for her support to undertake the project.

We are also very grateful for what could best be described as an ongoing *hallelujah chorus* of supporters (listed here in no particular order): Alicia and Shaun Byatt, Cherryl Beard and the ECU South West Student Central Crew—Gemma Phanupen, Sarah Jones, Beth de Sales, Maddie House and Glenys Grigg—Merle Ann Cochrane, Gayle Hall, Jennifer Alamdar, Mike Groom, Gareth Braid, Prof. Donna Chung, Dr. Vahri McKenzie, Charmaine Lobo, Michael Berry, Sue Tencer, Carol Squire, Ross Litterick, Hovea Wilkes, Darcee Schultz, Sarah Anderson, Amy Warren, Priscilla Vindin and Jacquie Tarrant.

Last but by no means least, we thank our students at ECU—particularly the classes of 2017–2018. These folks often hear what we have been reading and thinking about first and they always offer us critical and important feedback on the ideas and their application to social work. It is these conversations that often push us to keep working at putting the ideas to work.

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Chapter 1
Injustice and Its Many Forms

Abstract What is social injustice and why does it persist? Every day we read about, hear about or see various forms of injustice. Poverty and deprivation exists side by side with conspicuous wealth and enormous privilege; numerous humanitarian crises seem to overwhelm the capacity and political will of nation-states; violence at a regional, local and interpersonal level continues to inflict harm and misery on millions of people; discrimination, endemic racism and prejudice in many forms have become a normalised form of political capital. In order to develop a conceptualisation of injustice, this chapter begins by describing the injustices associated with inequality, refugees and people seeking asylum, stigmatised groups, violence, racism, poverty and the environment. The general mechanisms of injustice are explained before focusing specifically on the role of discrimination, prejudice and privilege in perpetuating and maintaining injustice.

Introduction

> In a way, to be indifferent to that suffering is what makes the human being inhuman. Indifference, after all, is more dangerous than anger and hatred. Anger can at times be creative. One writes a great poem, a great symphony. One does something special for the sake of humanity because one is angry at the injustice that one witnesses. But indifference is never creative. Even hatred at times may elicit a response. You fight it. You denounce it. You disarm it. (extract from a speech by Elie Wiesel, 1999)

The central contention of this book is that social injustice exists, it is not inevitable, and, given that, social workers represent an organised attempt to redress injustice and pursue social justice (see Chaps. 2 and 3). Indeed, the pursuit of social justice is a core value and aim of social work internationally (Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers, 2015; Australian Association of Social Workers, 2010; British Association of Social Workers, 2012; Canadian Association of Social Workers, 2005; International Federation of Social Workers, 2012, 2014; National Association of Social Workers, 2008; Singapore Association of Social Workers, 2004) (see Chap. 2). By drawing on a range of philosophical, sociological, political and psychological perspectives, this book represents an attempt to explore a wide range of theories and

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L. Watts and D. Hodgson, *Social Justice Theory and Practice for Social Work*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-3621-8_1

practices of social justice for social work. In doing so, it aims to outline and discuss a repertoire of intellectual and practical resources that social workers may draw from to support practice towards social justice. Before we begin to tackle the concept of social justice, we need to explore what we mean by injustice, and consider some reasons that explain why injustice persists, such as prejudice, discrimination and privilege.

Injustice and Its Many Forms

The Oxford Dictionary defines injustice as a condition that is recognisable as a 'lack of fairness or justice', or something that is 'an unjust act or occurrence' (Oxford Dictionaries, 2017). Its Latin meaning concerns that which is not *just*, or not *right*. Although frequently related together in practice, social and economic injustice (which is our concern in this chapter) can be conceptually contrasted from legal justice—the law is a juridical and state-based instrument that can deliver just or unjust outcomes according to formally sanctioned rules. Laws are bound up in the functions of nation-states, whereas social justice concerns broader moral, political and economic questions such as: How and on what basis should society's rewards and burdens be distributed? How should recognition, inclusion and participation be achieved? In what ways do social attitudes, values and behaviours help or hinder the pursuit of what is right and fair? And what do we mean by things such as right and fair anyway?

At the same time, Sadurski (1984) criticises this distinction between social and legal justice, stating that 'what we usually call "legal justice" is either an application of the more fundamental notion of "social justice" to legal rules and decisions or is not a matter of justice at all' (p. 330). In other words, law is but one institution where matters of social justice or otherwise can find their expression, and law constitutes a practical field where social and legal justice are held as interdependent (Sadurski, 1984). Hence, we cannot dispense with the law as an instrument of social (in)justice. However, we still need to consider social justice in its moral and philosophical sense. We also need to consider the influence of norms and everyday conduct that can lead to social injustice and either frustrate or deliver social justice. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to fully unpack this distinction and debate. Suffice to say, the combined influence of juridical, normative and biopolitical accounts of social justice, along with an explication of distributive theories of justice, and theories of recognition, and how these relate to social work are themes developed throughout this book.

In following the definition of injustice introduced earlier as something that is not *right* or not *fair*, it would be reasonable to argue that society generally is not a utopian vision of social justice, as there are wide disparities between ownership, social status and moral desert. Such disparities exist broadly along lines of gender, class and race (Hick & Murray, 2009; Sen, 1995). For example, it has long been observed in the Marxist analysis that wage distribution and the ownership of property and the means of production is unequal, and that certain groups are thereby able to leverage profit through the control, exploitation and appropriation of the labour of others (Mullaly,

2007; Sen, 1995; Tong, 2009). This situation is neither natural nor inevitable, meaning that privilege (and its corollary, disadvantage) is largely circumstantial, historical, and it is socially and politically engineered, even implicitly through acts of indifference and ignorance (Pease, 2016). Hence, Kallen contends that although social injustice has a definite material reality, the foundations of injustice are often perpetuated by many socially constructed erroneous myths. These myths may include the myth of racial or gender superiority, and the myth that distinctions between majority/minority groups is a numerical one only—in fact, classifications of majority/minority should point towards *unequal power relations* 'not inequalities in numbers (population size)' (Kallen, 2004, p. 32). The social construction of injustice also includes the myth in the epistemological legitimacy of expert, scientific or pseudo-religious power to define truth and reality, thereby rationalising the truth value in oppressive and invalidating labels, categories and arguments for the subordination and subjugation of different knowledges and experiences, cultures and ways of being (Kallen, 2004).

We can further grasp the meaning of social and economic injustice by exploring some specific examples. What follows is not an exhaustive portrait of this formation of injustice, but rather serves to give some illustrations and examples of the definition of social injustice outlined prior.

Inequality

According to Dorling, inequality is both the background and outcome of injustice. He writes:

> Social inequality within rich countries persists because of a continued belief in the tenets of injustice, and it can be a shock for people to realise that there might be something wrong with much of the ideological fabric of the society we live in. Just as those whose families once owned slave plantations will have seen such ownership as natural in a time of slavery, and just as not allowing women to vote was once portrayed as 'nature's way', so too the great injustices of our times are, for many, simply part of the landscape of normality. (Dorling, 2010, p. 13)

One of the big markers of social and economic injustice is the scale and magnitude of wealth inequality, which can appear, in Dorling's terms, to be just *the way things are*. Others may object to this kind of inequality and unsettle its status of being normal. The reason that these examples of inequality strike a sense of injustice in many people (and force them to pause and reflect) is because such a situation seems so unfair, and it is a situation that many people see as being engineered to the advantage of some and disadvantages of a great many others. If it is engineered, then it is not natural and, both in theory and practice, can be altered.

Consider for example data from a report by Oxfam (2017), which notes that 'just eight men own the same wealth as the poorest half of the world' (p. 1). This is a staggering statistic, and equally as staggering as the following, quoted from the same report:

- Since 2015, the richest 1% has owned more wealth as the rest of the planet.
- The incomes of the poorest 10% of people increased by less than $3 a year between 1988 and 2011, while the incomes of the richest 1% increased by 182 times as much.
- A FTSE-100 CEO earns as much in a year as 10,000 people working in garment factories in Bangladesh.
- In the US, in the last 30 years, the growth in the incomes of the bottom 50% has been zero, whereas the incomes of the top 1% have grown by 300%. (Oxfam, 2017, p. 2)

As noted by the Oxfam report, this level of inequality—a widening gap between the haves and have-nots—is a breeding ground for conflict, crime, fear, disillusionment and the rise of racism and alt-right political groups capitalising on people's hardship and disenfranchisement (Oxfam, 2017). The root causes of this situation are many and varied, but include: the way that corporations systematically arrange their activities to benefit wealthy shareholders; downward pressure on wages and workers to maximise profit and extract through exploitation maximum labour value; business and political corruption; cronyism and tax evasion; a political system and political discourse that is favourable to business interests (Oxfam, 2017); and the subordination of human and environmental values under the weight of instrumentally narrow economics, driven relentlessly by the machinery of neoliberalism and capitalism (Hamilton, 2003; Sennett, 2006). This situation may also be seen as an artefact of the shifting forms of western imperialism. Imperialism here refers to a ruling power—historically, these were European powers and empires—that is exercised in order to dominate lands and peoples in distant locations, the purpose of which is to exploit people and resources to economically benefit the imperialist empires (Nayar, 2015). While imperialism points to the manifestation of this ruling power, colonisation refers to the specific processes of conquest, settlement and subordination of Indigenous peoples by distant imperial powers. Colonisation entails 'systematic administrative control' (Nayar, 2015, p. 30) as well as the imposition of 'religion, education, language' and the establishment of racial binaries of superiority (said to be the colonisers) and inferiority (said to be the colonised) (Nayar, 2015, p. 31).

This shift in Western imperialism involved the dismantling of the massive colonies associated with the period of 'high imperialism' (Go, 2013, p. 3). Post World War Two, as these same empires crumbled, the world was reconfigured into nation-states. Go (2013, p. 4) suggests that for millions of people, this was a time of hope because 'National independence portended a blessed future—a future whereby colonial exploitation would be replaced with economic "development" and social "progress."' Unfortunately, these hopes have been unrealised due to new forms of imperialism—cultural and economic. Decolonisation resulted in the creation of a 'new, non-colonial ensemble of global institutions [that] came together to govern the persisting imperial network of relationships of dependency, inequality, and economic exploitation' (Tully, 2008, p. 463). The idea that this network of global institutions are a continuance of western imperialism is widely accepted.

Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Displaced People

According to Nipperess and Clark (2016), 'refugees and asylum seekers are forced migrants as opposed to voluntary migrants who leave their own country for a range of economic and other reasons' (p. 196). Indeed, extreme economic poverty or material deprivation are not considered grounds for seeking asylum, nor is displacement due to environmental damage (Benhabib, 2017, online). Displaced people are people who are forced to leave their homes, due to war, persecution or natural catastrophe. Benhabib (2017, online) makes the point that the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol continue to hold legal force but are modelled on refugees as dissidents, prisoners of conscience or resistance fighters—a state of affairs that continues place administrative burdens with regard to proof of threat on nation-states as well as those seeking asylum. Many people seek asylum in other countries, whereas others are internally displaced from their homes but remain within their home country. These people are referred to as internally displaced people (IDP) and this usually refers to 'the forced movement of people from their locality or environment or occupational activities' (UNESCO, 2017, paragraph one). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) review of displaced peoples reveals that in 2015, there were 65.3 million people who were forcibly displaced (an average of 24 people every minute of every day) (UNHCR, 2015). Of this number, 21.3 million people were accepted as refugees; 3.2 million people were still seeking asylum at the close of 2015 and there were just under 100,000 unaccompanied and separated children (UNHCR, 2015). As noted by Nipperess and Clark (2016), 'most people seeking asylum have experienced significant discrimination and oppression' (p. 199), and stateless people are particularly vulnerable to human rights abuses, persecution and other hazards as they cannot access the safety and support that comes with citizenship and the protection of the rule of law (UNHCR, 2014). Women and children are especially vulnerable within refugee camps. Furthermore, people seeking asylum and refugees are often demonised by governments in attempts to harness political support for tighter and more restrictive border and immigration policies (Nipperess & Clark, 2016).

Discrimination and Stigma

Discrimination is 'the differential treatment of groups or individuals on the basis of their group membership' (Jackson, 2011, p. 21), and stigma concerns a 'stereotypical view of certain groups of people' (Burke, 2006, p. 11). Both can result in patterns of persistently negative treatment towards certain groups and individuals, which may induce in people feelings of rejection, self-stigmatisation, internalised feelings of shame and lowered self-worth (Burke, 2006). Two examples can illustrate how this accounts for injustices: the discrimination and stigmatisation of people with mental illness, and people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning and allied (LGBTIQA).

According to the National Mental Health and Consumer Forum (2010), 'people with a mental illness are among the most disadvantaged in society, and many experience social and economic hardship as a direct result of their illness' (p. 1). An international survey on depression and the workplace reveals that a majority of people do not disclose their depression to their employers or colleagues for the fear of being discriminated against and stigmatised (SANE, n.d.). Further, a large survey of the experience of discrimination of people with mental health problems found that although people with mental illness may experience positive treatment, they also experienced discrimination in relation to work, family and friends (Reavley & Jorm, 2015). In particular, they experienced avoidance, rejection and being shunned in the domains of family, friends and intimate relationships (Reavley & Jorm, 2015). The prejudices and stigma associated with mental illness underpins discrimination and disadvantage, which can result in social isolation and exclusion, emotional harm, human rights abuses and barriers accessing social and other resources (National Mental Health Consumer & Carer Forum, 2010).

Relatedly, heterosexism and heteronormativity result in homophobia, sexual stigmatisation, discrimination (Kallen, 2004), violence, denigration and crimes towards LGBTIQA people and populations (Irwin, 2016). People with diverse sexualities and genders are more likely than the general community to experience 'violence, harassment and bullying' (Australian Human Rights Commission, n.d., p. 5) in their homes, schools, workplaces, online and in public places. This includes homophobic abuse and violence, sexual violence, assault, verbal abuse, threats and damage to property (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2014, n.d.; Human Rights Campaign, n.d.). This increased violence manifests as human rights violations in the areas of poor health, problems with access to education, decreased standards of living, increased stigmatisation, threats to privacy and security of person (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2014, n.d.; Human Rights Campaign, n.d.), and the prevalence of (poorly understood) intimate partner violence and stalking (Irwin, 2016; National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, n.d.).

Violence, Abuse and Mistreatment

According to philosopher Iris Marion Young, violence is a key component of oppression, and violence is perpetuated on certain groups disproportionately (Young, 1990). Despite legislative instruments to protect certain groups in society from discrimination and abuse (for example, Australian Human Rights Commission, 2012), paternalism and disproportionate distributions of power still lead to the abuse and mistreatment of children, women, older people and people with disabilities (Kallen, 2004). For example, it is well established that although men and women experience domestic violence, 'domestic and sexual violence is overwhelmingly committed by men against women' (ANROWS, n.d.-b, p. 1). Violence against women is a result of gender inequality and assumptions about gender roles and the normalisation of the use of violence in relationships (World Health Organization, 2016). Violence

is considered a major social determining factor in negatively influencing women's health, mental health, the well-being of children, economic inequality, human rights abuses and injuries and mortality (World Health Organization, 2016).

Turning to other examples, in the US, African Americans (particularly lower socioeconomic younger males) are far more vulnerable to fatal and non-fatal violent crime than other groups (Harrell, 2007). Adults and children with disabilities and mental illness are far more likely to experience violence and abuse than those without a disability or mental illness (World Health Organization, n.d.). Violence, sexual assault and victimisation of women and girls with disabilities is 'far more extensive than violence amongst the general population' (Frohmader, 2014, p. 1). In Australia, 'Indigenous people are between two and five times more likely than non-Indigenous people to experience violence as victims or offenders' (ANROWS, n.d.-a, p. 1). Finally, war is a conspicuous and horrific illustration of the injustices of violence and conflict. Just over 100 million people died in wars during the twentieth century, many of them civilians, women and children. More recently, it is estimated in 2016 that between 270,000 and 490,000 people have been killed in the Syrian conflict (Black, 2016). The long-term costs and consequences of war and civil conflict (for example, economic costs, health problems, environmental degradation, displacement, psychological harm and trauma, physical injury and disability, and so on) stretch out for many decades, well after the conflict has ended.

Racism

Cultural genocide and imperialism (Young, 1990), and the forced assimilation of Indigenous peoples through colonisation and violence in places like Australia, Canada, New Zealand and North America, has resulted in enduring racisms and contemporary inequalities and injustices (Kallen, 2004). This is not just a historical problem of past generations; for example, the 2017 travel bans and attempts at mass deportation by the Trump administration in the US may be seen as overt illustrations of racial profiling, but as Hernandez points out, racism has always been at the foundation of a 'settler mentality' in the US, and 'immigration control is one of the least constitutional and most racist realms of governance in U.S. law and life' (Hernandez, 2017, paragraph four). Racism is harmful in terms of health and well-being, but also culturally and socially. For example, the ugly history of the 'white Australia policy' and the stolen generations of Aboriginal peoples in Australia stand as a testament to institutionalised racism and discrimination (Briskman, 2007). Aboriginal peoples in Australia are incarcerated at a much higher rate than the general population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016), and the health and life expectancy of Aboriginal Australians falls way behind the national average (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2014). The background to this is a local and contextually based form of racism bound up in Australia's colonial history and Eurocentrism, which 'include differentiating people and their traditions in ranked orders and placing value on those beliefs that emanate from the West to the detriment of those who do not share those

beliefs and behaviours' (Young & Zubrzycki, 2011, p. 161). The consequences for Aboriginal peoples in Australia are described by Bennett (2013) to include dispossession from land, genocide, protectionist and assimilationist policies that led to further marginalisation and cultural oppression, disadvantage and the subordination of Aboriginal knowledge and experiences to the 'universalisation and normalisation of whiteness as the representation of humanity' (Moreton-Robinson, 2004, p. 77). A similar pattern is outlined by MacDonald and Gillis (2017) in the Canadian context, where they note that 'settler institutions [sought] to contain and re-subjectify Indigenous identities and either reform or destroy them' (p. 51). As stated by Menzies and Gilbert (2013), a commitment to social justice is important for confronting racism and enabling the kinds of knowledge, values and skills that are necessary for guarding against practice that may further compound injustices.

Poverty

A further marker of injustice is poverty, particularly when it is examined in light of the way that wealth is pooled and accumulated unevenly, resulting in the kinds of inequalities discussed in this chapter prior. In 2013, '767 million people are estimated to have been living below the international poverty line of US$1.90 per person per day' (World Bank, 2016, p. 3). Poverty inflicts an injustice on people because it is so harmful to their well-being. This harm is referred to as structural violence, which is a violence metered out from a distance through the conditions and consequences of poverty (Hosken, 2016). Poverty often impacts people who are already vulnerable. For example, it is estimated that 80% of the one billion people with disabilities worldwide live in developing countries, and 20% of people with disabilities live in dire poverty—they endure substandard living conditions and have severely restricted access to health care (Caritas Australia, n.d.).

Poverty is an injustice because amidst the human capacity to produce so much excess wealth and surplus resources, it simply need not exist, and, therefore, poverty is indicative of economic, political and moral failure. The United Nations Millennium Development Goals Report 2015 (United Nations, 2015) notes that since 1990, extreme poverty has declined, and there have been several other global improvements in the areas of universal education, gender equality, child mortality, maternal health, infectious diseases, water and sanitation and debt reduction and technological advancement. This is a positive development and demonstrates that things *can* improve, but such improvements require continual attention and investment of effort if they are to be sustained (United Nations, 2015). At the same time, there is evidence of widespread poverty and disadvantage throughout countries with more advanced economies. In the UK, 'Over 30 million people (almost half the population) are suffering to some degree of financial insecurity' and 'almost 18 million in the UK today cannot afford adequate housing conditions' (Gordon et al., 2013, p. 2). Meanwhile, in Australia, some '2.25 million people (13.9% of all people) were living below the poverty line, after taking in account of their housing costs' and 'one in seven people,

including one in six children, lived below the most austere poverty line widely used in international research (50% of median income)' (Australian Council of Social Services, 2014, p. 8).

Environmental Injustice

Injustice has also been elaborated in relation to ecological and environmental concerns by particularly focusing on global inequality (Roberts & Parks, 2007). Roberts and Parks (2007) explain that despite a burgeoning literature on the many and varied problems associated with climate change and ecological problems, until recently, global inequality as an environmental concern has received little attention. Global and local inequality needs to be factored into serious attempts to resolving ecological problems because inequality:

> dampens utility-enhancing cooperative efforts by reinforcing structuralist worldviews and causal beliefs, creating incentives for zero-sum and negative-sum behavior, polarizing preferences, generating divergent unstable expectations about future behavior, eroding trust and civic norms among different social groups, destabilizing policy coalitions, and making it different to coalesce around a socially shared understanding of what is "fair". (Roberts & Parks, 2007, p. 6)

Their point is that inequality drives non-cooperative behaviour between nation-states, largely due to differential and asymmetrical relations of power, privilege and influence (Roberts & Parks, 2007). Both the causes and consequences of climate change are disproportionately distributed. For example, the global emissions produced by the US is comparable to 136 developing countries, yet the impact of climate change means that 'some populations suffer worst and first, and they are often not those who caused the problem' (Roberts & Parks, 2007, p. 10). The same argument could be made on a smaller scale: inequality and injustice is an anathema to cooperative behaviour, trust, and norms of reciprocity that are important to well-being generally. The protests at the Standing Rock Sioux reservation over the North Dakota oil pipeline (Montgomery, 2016) and the disposal of toxic coal ash in Puerto Rico (Lloréns, 2016) illustrate clearly that environmental issues are inseparable from histories of colonisation, power, economic development, money, and, organised local resistance to the brute force of large corporations over people and the environment (Brueckner & Ross, 2010).

This inequality extends to the use of knowledge about the relation between environments and human beings. In their *Annual Review of Environmental Resources,* Russell and colleagues provide a synthesis of evidence about the effects of nature on human health and well-being (Russell et al., 2013). Their review demonstrated unequivocally that nature has positive effects for the physiological and psychological health of human beings. Moreover, they found that the 'strong positive effects of nature on identity and spirituality are robustly demonstrated for indigenous groups but poorly documented for other cultures' (Russell et al., 2013, p. 494). This review used primarily scientific data that left out anthropological and ethnographic accounts

and data and, as a result 'was skewed toward the individualist, psychological, clinical, experimental, and reductionist studies, and away from more holistic narratives and the anthropological and sociological disciplines' (Russell et al., 2013, p. 476). Yet, it is within these disciplines and narratives that knowledge about the effects of inequality, colonisation, marginalisation and oppression and respectful relations between humans and nature is documented. Thus, despite calls for holistic approaches to understanding and mitigating climate change, the unequal nature of science works against including groups of people who may have different and important knowledges about this relation between human beings and ecosystems.

This is an insight that has informed the emerging field of ecological social work that is increasingly taken up the orientation to justice that includes a holistic approach to the issue of people in their environments (Boetto & McKinnon, 2018). Boetto and McKinnon (2018, p. 278) suggest therefore that social workers need to urgently acquaint themselves with 'knowledge about the science behind global warming and the implications of environmental degradation on human wellbeing'. This approach to social work encompasses an orientation to justice that includes concerns with environments and ecosystems, recognising the inherent interdependence of humans and their environments. Central to this is a focus on engaging with Indigenous worldviews and ways of knowing (Young & Zubrizycki, 2011). Ife (2013, p. 57) too has suggested that an ecological approach within social work that emphasises holism, sustainability, interdependence, diversity and equilibrium is important but that must be combined with a social justice perspective that 'deals with social equity, oppression [and] human rights'. One of the key ways social work internationally is engaging with environmental injustice is through a focus on the UN Social Development Goals (SDGs) within developing ecological social work frameworks for practice.

The UN Social Development Goals (SDGs) are aimed at addressing these issues of sustainability and sustainable development having been designed to build on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (O'Manique & Fourie, 2016, p. 121). Despite the emphasis on environmental justice, it remains to be seen whether SDGs are able to address the imperialism inherent in systems of development relations between multinational corporations, the private sector and multinational not-for-profit aid agencies that often 'render invisible their current role in the intensification of inequality, environmental destruction, and gender injustice' (O'Manique & Fourie, 2016, p. 122).

Explaining Injustice: Some Organising Concepts

The position of this book is that social (in)justice is not straight line or one dimensional. Each of these states (social injustice or social justice) is contingent on a complex interplay between philosophical and political arguments about human nature, rights, moral principles, and political and economic theories. It includes historical and cultural forces associated with structural and sociological conditions, and it includes psychological attitudes and dispositions that condition and shape belief, general outlook, and interpersonal conduct and behaviours. These perspectives allow

us to consider what sorts of forces are at work that create the conditions for various injustices to flourish. In corollary, it is important to engage with and harness a range of intellectual and practical resources in the interest of the pursuit of social justice. These themes are developed throughout this book, but for now, we move to briefly survey some explanatory concepts that are helpful to give a conceptual language to explaining the mechanisms behind injustice.

In picking up this multifarious point about social (in)justice, Barry (2005) cites Donnison to invoke the phrase 'the machinery of social injustice' as a metaphor that refers to the way that injustice can be thought of as a consequence of many and varied interrelated mechanisms, which need to be understood as working together. That is to say, injustice is the result of a systemic situation, and not merely an isolated event or the result of a single action, situation or problem. Hence, the perspective that must be adopted in order to grasp what injustice is, and what social justice demands, is one that is broadly *systemic* and *holistic*. To think about social injustice means to identify the machinery at work, which may include: the weight of history and circumstance; the dominance of certain social norms and conventions; the particular arrangement of social and economic structures; the acceptability of certain moral propositions, values and beliefs; attitudes, thought patterns and assumptions; behaviours, actions, decisions and forms of conduct; political rationalities and arguments; discourses, conceptual vocabularies, and epistemological positions concerning truth and human nature; and ontological positions concerning reality and how the world is and ought to be (see Chap. 5, this volume).

A key point to take from this concept of the machinery of injustice is the influence of normative ideas about injustice being inevitable. Inevitability is a problematic assumption, but one that has a powerful influence over the way that injustice is rationalised. For example, suffering can be conflated with injustice and take on its own moral rationalisation to such an extent that suffering is imbued with a 'moral authority' (Moore, 1978, p. 80). This moral authority may include an aesthetic idealisation of self-imposed suffering right through to the idea that suffering and injustice that is imposed on people is 'unavoidable or even inevitable' and therefore rationalised as 'morally desirable' (Moore, 1978, p. 80). In both cases, injustice and suffering are assumed to be normal and unavoidable. There are many philosophical and religious positions that contend that not all suffering is necessarily bad, and this may have some merit depending on the situation. For example, the philosopher Frederick Nietzsche argued that suffering was 'positively necessary for the cultivation of human excellence' (Leiter, 2015, p. 9) and any ethical system that promotes happiness or the alleviation of suffering may stultify growth and development. In a similar sense, Buddhism accepts that life and existence is itself suffering, but contends this can be alleviated with thought and practice (Siderits, 2015). But suffering and injustice—although frequently related—are conceptually distinct phenomena, and at some point people will individually or collectively reject the normalisation and inevitability of certain injustices, and this rejection is a site for action and analysis.

In fact, such a rejection is actually necessary to achieve a change. Countering injustice requires a fundamental rejection of it 'at the level of culture, social structure, and individual personality, as groups of people cease to take their social surroundings

for granted and come to reject or actively oppose them' (Moore, 1978, p. 81). Moore explains how this occurs:

> The main process of cultural transformation amounts to an undermining of the prevailing system of beliefs that confer legitimacy, or at least naturalness and some degree of correspondence with ordinary expectations, upon the existing social order. (Moore, 1978, pp. 81–82)

Rejecting the moral authority and inevitability of injustice first requires identifying and problematising the beliefs that prop it up and sustain it. Dorling's (2010) book *Injustice: Why Social Inequality Persists* outlines in great empirical detail five myths or faces that perpetuate and sustain injustice, and each of these can be challenged, critiqued and rejected. These are: elitism is efficient; exclusion is necessary; prejudice is natural; greed is good; and, despair is inevitable.

Elitism is efficient concerns the funnelling of scarce resources to educational institutions and systems that benefit the already well-off in ways that create and sustain hierarchies of education, qualifications and credentialism (Dorling, 2010). The effect of this is a false belief that injustice and inequality is a natural and inevitable result of the divisions between different groups in society. Since different groups have received different educational experiences and opportunities, the result is a patterning of educated haves and have-nots. The 'haves' can use this educational head start to leverage and access further advantages and benefits, which they then claim they are entitled to. Education and university systems are complicit in this division through sorting, assessing, categorising and labelling achievement and failure. Higher education in particular propagates the idea that knowledge is very complex or difficult, and that only specially educated people could possibly understand such matters of complexity; therefore, they receive special benefits and rewards that only they are legitimately entitled to (Dorling, 2010).

As mentioned, poverty and inequality is an example of a widespread injustice. Pushing people into poverty results in a *necessary exclusion* from participation in social, economic and civic life; life that is defined by certain norms (Dorling, 2010). These norms might include having enough to eat, adequate shelter, ability to purchase essentials and participate in leisure activities. These norms are constituted within a social mean or average. Yet, very affluent people can voluntarily exclude themselves from these norms in the upward direction through extreme forms of conspicuous consumption that most people would find impossible to emulate. The problem is that this conspicuous and extreme consumption twists and distorts norms in way that end up artificially manufacturing increasing levels of want and it perpetuates involuntary exclusion from social norms. This exclusion contributes to false beliefs in the necessity of inequality, often fuelled by eugenicist ideologies and discourses about individualism and consumerism (Dorling, 2010).

A consequence of the view that social and economic exclusion is natural and necessary is *prejudice*, which Dorling (2010) says 'grows like mould, based on elitist myths in times of exclusion' (p. 21). From a prejudicial view, inequality is assumed to be the result of individual differences and individual weaknesses and failings. Such assumptions are often based in essentialist views of human nature, which contend that there are certain inherent qualities in some groups of people that makes their

social position (be it privileged or disadvantaged) simply the result of the natural order of things. For example, 'the poor in particular are now subject to a widespread prejudice whereby, it is nastily and quietly said, they must have something wrong with them if they are not able to work their way out of poverty' (Dorling, 2010, p. 28).

The unrestrained normativity of *greed* as a human value is part of the fabric of injustice. In the 1987 movie 'Wall Street', fictional character Gordon Gekko—a corporate raider addressing a meeting of shareholders—outlines his argument concerning the human nature and righteousness of greed. He states:

> Greed, for lack of a better word, is good. Greed is right. Greed works. Greed clarifies and cuts through the essence, of the evolutionary spirit. Greed, in all of its forms – greed for life, for money, for love, for knowledge – has marked the upward surge of mankind. (Stone, 1987).

In reality, proponents of this view have just learnt to be less blatant about it than Gordon Gekko. Nonetheless, this view that greed is natural and right is widespread and institutionalised, even though according to Dorling (2010) it is actually a fairly recent view associated with individualism and advanced capitalism. The problem with such a view is that it has dangerous consequences and side effects, which render its so-called moral 'goodness' suspect. These side effects include: a falsely propagated view that children who benefit from large inheritances must have worked hard for it themselves when they perhaps did not; growing inequalities and prejudices that are normalised and naturalised; increased, and at times, spectacular and bizarre levels of consumption and its associative inefficiencies and waste; corruption of institutions, but also a corrupted false consciousness that contends the super-wealthy are vitally needed in order to create a trickle-down of jobs and taxes that benefit the less well-off; and, increasing insensitivity and general lack of social empathy to the plights and struggles of the disadvantaged (Dorling, 2010).

Finally, the *inevitability of despair* arises out of injustice (Dorling, 2010). Despair creeps into our social existence and consciousness in the form of mental ill health (particularly persisting and rising anxiety and depression), poor and inequitable health outcomes, the ever-increasing use of medications, alcohol and other drugs, and materialist acquisition as distractions and panaceas to the deleterious effects of the inevitability of despair (Dorling, 2010).

Prejudice, Discrimination and the Links to Injustice

Dorling's (2010) analysis includes the role of prejudice in perpetuating and sustaining injustice. Prejudice is a form of 'prejudgment', which refers to 'making assumptions about others in the absence of knowledge about them' (Jackson, 2011, p. 10). This proclivity for early judgment in the absence of information happens to be common to the way people think and make judgments generally. Laden (2001) suggests that the social aspects of a person's identity serve as shorthand ways to locate each

other socially. These aspects are generally non-reciprocal and do not rely on actual relationships with other people. Further, prejudice appears to be common across all groups and societies (Blumenfeld & Raymond, 2000), precisely because prejudice serves certain social functions. These functions are:

- *Utilitarian*—prejudice is a way of helping people fit in with peer groups to gain benefits and avoid punishments
- *Self-esteem*—prejudice is a response to differences and unfamiliarity, which may threaten a sense of self
- *Value-expressive*—prejudice is a way of safeguarding 'the security social norms provide' (Blumenfeld & Raymond, 2000, p. 26)
- *Cognitive*—prejudice is a cognitive process of organising the complexity of reality into parts, concepts, heuristics and categories (Blumenfeld & Raymond, 2000).

Psychological factors such as frustration, anger, insecurity and feelings of rejection can drive people's prejudices and make them 'impervious to the sorts of logical arguments that could expose fallacies in their beliefs' (Blumenfeld & Raymond, 2000, p. 27). Hence, people tend not to make judgments about justice rationally or analytically; rather, judgments are generally spontaneous and based on intuition, and although nuanced, this intuition is generally automatic and devoid of conscious reflection or scrutiny (Robinson, 2013). The problem is when this human capability operates uncritically and unreflectively, because it results in a patterning and general acceptance of stereotypes and essentialist ideas about human beings, which, when supported by dubious scientific claims, reach the level of accepted wisdom and consensus (Jackson, 2011).

Prejudices and stereotypes are perpetuated and circulated in everyday discourses, habits, attitudes, beliefs and under the ambit of what may sometimes appear as ordinary harmless behaviour (Blumenfeld & Raymond, 2000). However, these are not harmless: prejudices and stereotypes are a kind of knowledge—they masquerade as 'truths' that profoundly shape people's perceptions of each other. Prejudices and stereotypes shape how people behave and interact towards each other and they are a particular contributory factor in discrimination. For example:

> The boss who negatively evaluates gay employees, the teacher who gives preferential treatment to children from affluent families, and the landlord who refuses to rent to certain groups all show interpersonal discrimination. (Jackson, 2011, p. 21)

This interpersonal discrimination—which concerns individual behaviours—is patterned and layered into the conduct and operations of institutions, resulting in situations that 'systematically disadvantage some groups' (Jackson, 2011, p. 21), and, by corollary, other groups are able to maintain and shore up their privilege and advantage over others (Blumenfeld & Raymond, 2000; Jackson, 2011; Pincus, 2000). While institutional discrimination has an intentionality to it—and may sometimes include overt acts of discriminating against people based on their gender, age or ethnicity—structural discrimination is more pervasive and difficult to detect and respond to because it is often based on a form of *neutrality* (Pincus, 2000). For example, the lending practices of banks may favour middle-class people with assets and secure

jobs they can use to securitise their loans, and when companies downsize staff, they may shed part-time or casual staff first—who are more likely to belong to minority groups—thereby retaining their permanent and executive managerial class, who are more likely to belong to dominant groups (Pincus, 2000). These decisions may not be overt acts of discrimination per se, and they may not break any particular anti-discriminatory laws, but, as examples of structural discrimination, their net effects serve to shore up the interests, advantages and privilege of some groups of people, while further disenfranchising others (Pincus, 2000).

Privilege

Privilege is deeply connected to social norms, which includes judgments on what is considered *normal*: the way things are and ought to be, the correct measure of things, the right way to be, what is proper, and so on (Wildman & Davis, 2000). Individuals and groups in society will identify and become identified with these norms that confer privilege upon some, but not others. The maintenance of systems and patterns of privilege can serve to perpetuate and reinforce injustices.

What do we mean by privileged groups and individuals? Goodman (2011) begins with a broad classification of privileged or dominant groups as generally including white, male, upper middle class, able-bodied, heterosexual and gender conforming. This is a fairly broad-brush classification that is commonly used to suggest a description of a privileged group, but it may contain several exceptions and there are limits to how far we can push categorical notions of privilege. Therefore, Goodman (2011) expands the concept of privilege to include a range of intersecting *attributes*, which we have summarised following:

- *Normalcy*—privileged groups exercise their dominance by propagating norms that are taken to be standards of acceptability against which other groups are contrasted and judged. For example, norms associated with speech, dress and comportment.
- *Superiority*—privileged groups promote the idea (sometimes unconsciously) that their culture, norms and standards are superior to others. For example, arguments that appeal to assimilation typically adopt the idea of superior versus inferior cultures and lifestyles.
- *Cultural and institutional power and domination*—privileged groups are able to monopolise power, ideology and worldviews in such a way that these manifest in institutional discourse, norms, policies, rules, laws and behaviours. For example, a corpus of psychological knowledge where research subjects were white male college students, and this knowledge is then used to develop diagnostic and assessment tools, which are institutionalised in mental health services.
- *Privilege*—privileged groups are able to use their privilege to leverage 'benefits or unearned advantages' (Goodman, 2011, p. 18). Such benefits accrue to people in ways that makes them appear natural or invisible. For example, heterosexual

couples can display their affection in public without fear of reprisal or recrimination in ways that homosexual couples often cannot.

- *Lack of consciousness*—privileged individuals do not have to constantly think about their social identity, or negotiate their social environment. For example, holding an important community meeting in a venue that does not have wheelchair access, or calling an after-hours business meeting at short notice, which may present difficulties in attending for an employee who is a sole parent with caring responsibilities for young children.
- *Denial and avoidance of oppression*—privileged individuals may deny the existence of oppression precisely because they do not bear the brunt of it, or because acknowledging oppression causes discomfort. For example, when a privileged person chooses to define racism as only consisting of slurs and insults, this denies and avoids racism that includes institutional discrimination and widespread injustice.
- *Sense of superiority and entitlement*—Privileged individuals may become accustomed to their social and political advantage and its benefits in such a way that they expect that they are entitled to further benefits, even at the expense of others, and even if such benefits are unearned. For example, expecting preferential treatment for no other reason than believing that 'you deserve it'.
- *Multiple identities and experience of privilege*—privilege is the result of differential, combinatory and intersecting identities and positions that result in different experiences of privilege and disadvantage. For example, the combination of being white, male, middle class, is different from being black, male and middle class. Both may carry elements of privilege for different reasons, but this privilege is divergent rather than symbiotic.
- *Resistance to seeing oneself as privileged*—privileged individuals may not *feel* privileged because all people experience difficulties and struggles of some kind by virtue of being human, which is phenomenologically unique and personal to them. Further, the concept of privilege may have negative connotations, which may conflict with a person's sense of themselves as being a 'good person' (adapted from Goodman, 2011, pp. 12–31).

Years of conditioning can manifest in deeply ingrained emotional responses and attitudes and values that are hard to dispense with. The socialisation process that all people experience from birth onwards is pervasive and formative. It is built out of and reinforced by family, tradition, culture, school, media, norms, values, rules, sanctions, punishments, rewards and benefits (Harro, 2000). Despite being constrained intellectually by reasoning and conscious intent, prejudice may seep out in subtle and indirect ways, gently influencing the way people feel, the way they interact with each other, the way they filter their perceptions, make judgments and decisions, and how they directly or even symbolically defend and 'protect conventional values' (Jackson, 2011, pp. 14–15). This defence may be used to justify injustices and inequalities as being normal, natural, or the way things are or ought to be. This may also apply to stereotypes that on face value actually seem positive:

> …positive stereotypes may serve to perpetuate inequality. Stereotypes that depict women as supportive, kind and nurturing have not shattered the glass ceiling, brought women's salaries on par with men's, or eliminated violence against women. (Jackson, 2011, p. 19)

It is the positivity of some stereotypes that contribute to their currency, traction and social acceptability. Because privilege is associated with group membership it should be seen as 'inherited rather than earned' (Jackson, 2011, p. 23). People may be very reluctant to accept this proposition and reflect critically on their privilege, because:

> Acknowledging that privilege exists on a group level implies that one may have benefited personally from it. Recognizing this requires that one critically evaluate the belief that society functions fairly and also the belief that everything one personally has, one deserves. (Jackson, 2011, p. 23)

Social workers are not infallible to this turn of events. Although social workers should be alert to interpersonal discrimination that may function in their practice, they also need a critical analysis and response to the way that organisations, policies and rules and norms operate to produce discriminatory effects, such as reproducing truths and knowledge that continue the cycle of prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination. The proclivity for social work to unwittingly contribute to injustice even at the same time it professes an allegiance to social justice is well documented (Morley, 2016; Pease & Nipperess, 2016). The concepts of White privilege and critical Whiteness theory are gaining purchase in social work theory and education in places like Australia, as a way to critically interrogate the invisible and largely unexamined epistemological and ontological Eurocentric assumptions in social work theory and practice (Moreton-Robinson, 2004; Walter, Taylor, & Habibis, 2011; Young & Zubrzycki, 2011). White privilege here refers to the social and political benefits that being White delivers people, benefits which are typically unconscious, invisible and devoid of critical scrutiny (Walter et al., 2011). Engaging with whiteness 'can uncover new knowledge into race-based barriers to practice and that this is especially pertinent to social work's practice with Indigenous people and peoples' (Walter et al., 2011, p. 7). In social work, critical reflection is also offered as a form of knowledge and method for practice to assist social workers to critically examine their values, attitudes, beliefs, prejudices, privileges and actions (Fook & Gardner, 2007; Morley, 2008, 2012). Other examples to attune social workers to their reflective capabilities on their social positioning and privilege may include cultural competence education (Abrams & Moio, 2009), service user perspectives (Beresford & Boxall, 2012), Indigenous knowledges (Calma & Priday, 2011; Fejo-King, 2011; Rowe, Baldry, & Earles, 2015), critical supervision models (Noble, 2016), and dialogical and transformative social work education pedagogies (Jones, 2009).

Conclusion

Social welfare arrangements and social policies are the practical expressions of contested positions on social justice (Colby, Dulmus, & Sowers, 2012). Social work is

located in the context of these welfare and social policy arrangements, and the practice of social work means confronting the realities of social injustice daily. Therefore, social workers are in a prime position to throw a spotlight on injustices, and to contribute to debates, arguments and actions towards social justice, and how these might be translated into policy and social welfare arrangements (Colby et al., 2012). This contribution may also include connecting with various social and political movements to challenge and critique neoliberal capitalism and globalisation (Ferguson, 2007). In support, Gay (2012) draws on a Kantian moral principle to argue that peace and justice are not only possible, but that we are morally bound to pursue these ideals by rejecting the homogenising tendencies of domination and militarism, expressed in discourses and techniques that include 'sexism, heterosexism, racism, ethnocentrism, nationalism, and classism' (Gay, 2012, p. 7). Chapters 2 and 3 extend this discussion by considering the formation of social justice in the ethics, mission and purpose of social work, as well as tracing the history and practice of social justice work in social work.

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Chapter 2
Social Justice as an Ethic of Social Work

Abstract Social justice has long been an important aim and driving aspiration for social work. The pursuit of social justice is enshrined in ethical codes, practice standards and social work literature around the world, and social work may be considered as an organised attempt at working for social justice. This chapter explains the historical background and meaning of social justice before exploring how social justice is understood in the discipline of social work. Particular emphasis will explore the conceptualisation of social justice in social work ethical codes and theory texts, noting the tension between structural and individual accounts of social justice.

Introduction

Social justice is a core value of social work and has remained a central focus of social work's mission and purpose since its establishment (Chenoweth & McAuliffe, 2015; Marsh, 2005; Payne, 2005). Marsh (2005) states that 'social and economic justice is the organizing value for the social work profession' (p. 293). It should be said that social justice is not just the purview of social work—it has been taken up in many other professional contexts, such as youth work, policy, disability studies, women's studies, and Indigenous studies. Ideas about social justice are also located in various traditions in philosophy and political science, and it is a guiding ideal in terms of many rights-based movements, such as workers' rights, women's rights, and disability rights movements. Furthermore, social work's commitment to social justice is said to derive its moral foundations (such as compassion) through its early links to Christian charity organisations. It is said that social work and some faith groups often share social justice interests, particularly in relation to social inclusion and ensuring that all people have access to the resources that provide for their needs and ability for self-determination (Judd, 2013).

As suggested in chapter one, social work's stated commitment to social justice is becoming increasingly urgent—in light of the march of globalisation and capitalism—'to address human concerns that transcend national, geographic, and cultural borders and domains of practice' (Finn & Jacobson, 2003, p. 57). Hence, the ideas

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L. Watts and D. Hodgson, *Social Justice Theory and Practice for Social Work*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-3621-8_2

surrounding social justice and what it points to are diverse, meaning that social justice is an essentially contested concept (Ruben, 2010) with different philosophical, political and practical orientations. Nevertheless, the purpose of this chapter is to explore how social justice is conceptualised in the social work ethics literature, and in particular, the development of social justice in social work codes of ethics. Some of the debates about social justice in social work include distributive versus critical theories, structural (social) versus micro (individual) focus of social justice work, and universal versus specific levels of analysis. This brief discussion will lay the foundations for later chapters, where several of the key themes identified here are explored later in more detail.

Defining Social Justice

The modern concept of *social justice* (not simply justice) is actually a fairly recent idea in the long history of philosophy and debates about justice generally (Jackson, 2005). Although social work has had a focus on social justice since its inception through its work with poor and disadvantaged people and communities, the concept and theory of social justice as an ethical value is more recent. It is to be expected, then, that social justice—despite its universal adoption and acceptance in the discipline of social work—will hold various and contested meanings and interpretations. Solas (2008a, p. 124) states that although social justice is a 'cardinal value' of social work, its meaning remains unclear (see also Bonnycastle, 2011). The reason for this is because the development of social work values, which include social justice, 'lack…philosophical foundations, application of ethical theory or any reference to important normative concepts' (Stewart, 2013, p. 165). This problem leads to confusing and often arbitrary lists and descriptions of core social work values, which include social justice.

At the same time, social and economic justice shows promise in serving as a central organising principle for social work generally, but what it means and how it should be obtained is by no means settled (Stewart, 2013). For example, Cournoyer (2014, p. 118) explains that the term social justice can be broken down to include distributive justice (the fair and just distribution of a society's resources, opportunities and burdens), procedural justice (the fair and just means of decision-making in institutions, organisations and policies), retributive justice (fairness and justice associated with punishment and reparations for harm done to others), restorative justice (the repairing of damage done through compensation or rehabilitation), intergenerational justice (the benefits or burdens left from one generation to another), and environmental justice (concerning who has access to a clean environment, who does not). While social work ethical codes cover common ground in explaining social justice, there are many and varying ideas in these descriptions, some of which seem arbitrary and ad hoc (see below). Immediately we can see that social justice may contain different orientations, different levels of analysis and different applications in practice.

Some Background to Social Justice

Social justice, as broadly understood today, is said to have emerged in the political philosophy literature around the late eighteenth century (Jackson, 2005). Its historical formation presupposes a number of assumptions and conditions for it to make any sense. These are summed up by Jackson (2005) following a review of key research texts into the history of social justice. First, as Jackson points out, social justice emerged as a social virtue because people began to see that social (in)justice was not simply due to destiny, or divine command, or what individuals did or did not do. Instead, it became accepted that social institutions are implicated in the distribution of resources and social positions (power), and social institutions can make or break social justice. Accepting that social institutions are implicated in social (in)justice is to acknowledge that 'there is some agency, classically the state, that is capable of initiating and directing the institutional changes necessary to create social justice' (Jackson, 2005, p. 357). Social workers have long held this view in regard to the role of the welfare state and social institutions to create the potential for social justice (Clark, 1999). But the state also holds a darker propensity to perpetuate oppression and injustice (Arendt, 1958). Hence, the birth of the state is important to the ability to deliver or frustrate programmes of social justice. When social workers critique the nation-state and its institutions and benefactors for failing to deliver social justice (or for perpetuating injustice, violence and oppression), they are intimating that the state is reflexive, has agency and exists *in potentia* to different arrangements that *ought* to deliver social justice. There are good reasons to see the *state* in this way, and it is due to the long history of social contract theory in political philosophy. This conception, traced back to Thomas Hobbes, considers the *state* as a third person. In this conception, the state is a creation, and while it can be seen as a fiction, it nevertheless has had a strong effect on the emergence of welfare states. In this conception, the state is *not* the people, because they have ceded some power in a covenant in order to create a society, and it is also not a sovereign as the *head* of the body politic of the society. Instead, it is an authorisation given to a third entity which we have come to call 'the person of the state' (Skinner, 2016, online). It is on this authorised power that social workers are calling in their claims for redress of social injustice.

Second, Jackson (2005) states that social justice emerged as a political idea because the goal of reducing poverty and inequality gradually became framed as 'a matter of justice rather than charity' (p. 360). While some forms of social work have, and perhaps continue to be, predicated on charity models, more recent advances in social work thinking along the lines of critical and radical traditions reject a charity approach in favour of the political aspects of social justice as *justice* (Bailey & Brake, 1975; Ferguson, 2007; Fook, 2016; Pease & Nipperess, 2016). This emphasis on the political aspects may be traced to protests and activism against the approach of the Charity Organisation Societies (COS) by early socialists Sidney and Beatrice Webb (Burnham, 2011). The underpinning theoretical and philosophical view that supports an approach to justice as politics (as opposed to justice as charity)

was due to an increasing acceptance—backed by a voluminous social science evidence base—that inequality is not a matter of destiny or divine luck. Rather, fortune and misfortune, wealth and poverty, distribution and redistribution, are the result of human-made systems (Jackson, 2005). Again, there is a reflexive notion of agency here in the belief that people *could* and *should* collectivise in struggles for justice. Injustice, by extension, is now morally problematic, particularly insofar as it became increasingly obvious that injustice causes such harm, not just to individuals, but to society generally. This is certainly the position adopted by social work: to see that injustice is not inevitable, that social justice is possible and morally desirable and worthwhile, and to see that it can be pursued and attained through organised human effort—like social work.

The Structural Analysis in Social Justice

In social work, social justice has largely been conceptualised in structural terms to include a focus on the sociopolitical organisation of society, including a critique of the limits of market mechanisms to meet human need, and the role that capitalism as a socio-economic system plays in creating injustice (Ferguson, 2007; Ife, 2016; Mullaly, 2007). Craig (2002) argues that market systems are the root cause behind so much social and economic injustice, and injustice must be addressed through the development of 'social, economic, environmental and political policies, based on acceptance of difference and diversity' (pp. 671–672). According to Craig (2002), the values that ought to underpin such policies include fairness and equality, dignity and worth, meeting needs, reducing inequality and participation of the most disadvantaged; the latter of which may include much greater attention towards service user involvement in 'shaping service provision and related matters of planning, evaluation and education and training' (Thompson, 2002, p. 717).

This structural focus situates the attainment of social justice at the level of policy and service development (Marsh, 2005), and importantly, highlights the centrality of values and ideologies for social workers seeking after social justice. It is along these lines that Ife (2016) argues that social justice must address structural disadvantage and inequality through empowerment and attention to locally and contextually derived concepts of human need. A structural focus also includes a human rights perspective that moves beyond individual notions of civil and political rights, to include '*economic, social and cultural rights*, namely, the right to health care, to housing, to education, to employment, to adequate social security and so on' (Ife, 2002, p. 67, original italics). Similarly, Finn and Jacobson (2003) outline what they refer to as a 'just practice framework' (p. 69), which is a structural analysis framework oriented towards (1) the interpretations people hold about the world and their experience in it, (2) 'the circumstances and conditions that surround and influence particular events and situations' (p. 70), (3) an analysis of the operation of power, particularly in relation to inequalities of power, (4) the way that historical conditions and circumstances

shape present situations, and (5) the possibilities and hopes for change and social transformation.

Solas (2008a) argues that social justice ought to entail a commitment to radical egalitarianism, which is a strict form of equality that at the same time promotes cultural diversity and difference. For Solas (2008a), social justice along these lines would involve institutionally sanctioned corrective measures to bring equality to fruition through maximising people's capabilities, opportunities and collective rights. In a similar way, Hodge (2010) outlines an approach for social justice education for social work to include three key principles. These are 'epistemic pluralism; client-centred conceptualisations of social justice; and fundamental human rights' (p. 202). Like Solas, essentially what Hodge is appealing to is wider appreciation of a diversity of experience and perspectives, especially the inclusion of service user perspectives on social justice and how service user experiences are often marginalised, silenced and subject to institutional discrimination and oppression and rights violations. In this sense, social justice concerns both a structural analysis of sociopolitical arrangements of society, as well as valuing diversity and difference (Mullaly, 2007). These key points are also reflected in social work ethical codes, a point we return to later in this chapter.

The Therapeutic Turn: Whither Social Justice?

This twin focus of sociopolitical structural factors as well as the identity politics of various groups seeking after justice points to some parallels between social work and broader social movements and social activism. Thompson (2002) suggests that although social work cannot be seen itself as a social movement, its focus on 'empowerment and social transformation' (p. 720) means that social work may align well with the transformative force of various social movements striving for social justice. Aligning with social movements may support Thompson's point that social work is:

> Now in a much stronger position to move away from the traditional individualistic approach which paid little or no attention to wider cultural and structural factors and acts as a force for social amelioration and the challenging of injustice, discrimination and oppression. (Thompson, 2002, p. 721)

However, how much of a focus on social reform and activism really goes on in social work practice? This is a matter of contention. The provocative book *Unfaithful Angels* by Specht and Courtney (1994) chronicles in detail the way that social work in the United States in the twentieth century inexorably shifted from its historical focus of working in solidarity with poor and disadvantaged people and communities, to an almost wholesale adoption of psychotherapeutic techniques concerned with therapy and self-improvement in private practice settings. In Specht and Courtney's analysis, social work has abandoned its central concern with social justice, because, as they say, social workers in droves have embraced individualistic therapeutic modes of practice, styling themselves as 'secular priests in the church of individual repair'

(1994, p. 28). Likewise, Kam (2014) is critical of the way that the 'social' has been expunged from much social work practice, diminishing the capacity for social justice. For example, by 'moving into private practice to serve clients predominantly from the middle class' (p. 726), by emphasising the technical-rational aspects of practice to a general neglect of social and political causes of injustice, and to what Kam calls the 'therapization of social work' (p. 727), which is characterised by the 'increasing dominance of casework, clinical models and therapies' (p. 727).

This tension is driven by the changing context of practice, which includes the privatisation of social welfare, and a political and cultural valorisation on individual responsibility and self-reliance; the effect is that services are rationed out not according to need, but on provision that people adhere to prescribed compliance obligations. In following, Asquith and Rice (2005) state that social workers have become fixated with following correct bureaucratic procedure at the expense of the needs and interests of service users. This situation also seems to be driven by the context of practice. A Canadian study into Master of Social Work (MSW) graduate's uptake of social justice knowledge and anti-oppressive practice in their field placements, found that clinical or case-based practice settings were perceived by students to be *less amenable* to the pursuit of social justice practice due to their focus on competencies and clinical knowledge and skills (Bhuyan, Bejan, & Jeyapal, 2017). An artefact of this situation, according to Kam, is that although social work espouses the rhetoric of social justice, it is invariably more concerned with the professional project of being in 'competition with other professions in order to achieve legitimacy and respectability as a profession' (Kam, 2014, p. 729).

For those working in clinical practice settings who are committed to the value and ideal of social justice, this kind of analysis may seem unfair. Furthermore, it is the case that the majority of social workers are actually employed in state-sponsored organisations, where the main technologies of practice require specialised skills in working with *individuals* (Chenoweth & McAuliffe, 2015). What happens to social justice under these arrangements? The question of whether or not social justice practice is even possible in clinical settings has been the subject of research, mainly through unpacking a dichotomy that has slowly developed in social work between traditional/progressive, individualist/collectivist, problem/strengths, and casework/community-work practices (Maschi, Baer, & Turner, 2011; McLaughlin, 2011; Parker, 2003). Many students entering social work are introduced to this dichotomy when the history of social work is presented to them as a dualism between community organising and social casework. Regardless of this dichotomy, we think that even in these settings there are opportunities for social workers to act in socially just ways and enact practices that increase the agency, voice and opportunities for vulnerable people.

For example, Parker (2003) explains that therapy is political and is therefore ripe for integrating a focus on power and privilege into the therapeutic process; for example, through the use of critical, narrative, feminist, empowerment, strengths, ecological and constructivist approaches to therapeutic and clinical work (Maschi et al., 2011; McLaughlin, 2011). Maschi et al. (2011) conducted a content analysis on articles about clinical social work and social justice. They identified numerous

examples and illustrations of the way that social justice can be incorporated into clinical work, concluding that 'clinical social workers…have a wealth of information as to how a theory of social justice translates into practice' (p. 249).

In a similar vein, Breton, Cox, and Taylor (2003) are critical of the way that social work makes a demarcation between macro, mezzo and micro practice (another common heuristic in social work). They say that this unhelpfully splits up social work thinking and separates social work's concern for social justice away from the domain of social policy. It is better, they say, to explore the ways that social workers might fruitfully work across these levels, rather than see them as domain-specific silos. Given that policy can be the cause of much injustice, this macro/micro schism creates a disjuncture between social work's stated aim for social justice and the pursuit of just policies. Instead, they argue for an interdependent model of social work *qua* policy, where social workers can develop a practice specialisation that may be clinical but one that is at the same time deeply connected with the institutional arrangements of service delivery and policy making. In other words, social workers should remain connected to questions of social justice at all levels of practice so as to 'develop partnerships with individuals and groups who have diverse issues and interests related to the pursuit of social justice' (Breton et al., 2003, p. 19).

Still, the question of social work adopting therapeutic, psychological and even biological and neuroscientific theories and discourses of practice is an important critique to engage with, namely, due to the way that this orientation may, little by little, move social work away from the *social* and, by extension, further away from its social justice roots (see further in chapter five, this volume). It is this appeal to the *social* in social work that Kam (2014) argues for as a key way to keep social justice central to the mission and purpose of social work. The social framework proposed by Kam includes:

- Being informed and aware of what is happening at a social and political level.
- Making sure practice reaches the most disadvantaged and oppressed groups in society as a matter of priority.
- Using systems and person-in-environment theories and perspectives.
- Recognising that many social and individual problems are the result of socially constructed forces.
- Seeking change at the level of community and society, not merely focussing on the individual as the site for change.
- Striving to achieve equality and human rights (Kam, 2014).

A shorthand way to keep the central focus of social justice priorities front and centre in the thinking and practice of social work is through an explicit focus on social justice in social work ethical codes.

Social Justice and Social Work Ethical Codes

Social justice is a core value that is defined and articulated in social work codes of ethics globally (for example, Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers, 2017; Australian Association of Social Workers, 2010; Canadian Association of Social Workers, 2005; National Association of Social Workers, 2017; Singapore Association of Social Workers, 2004; The British Association of Social Workers, 2012) and social work education and practice standards mandate the inclusion of social justice knowledge and ethics in curriculum and practice standards (for example, Australian Association of Social Workers, 2013a, 2013b; International Federation of Social Workers, 2012). Hence, looking to ethical codes can illuminate much about how social work portends to understand what social justice is and how it should be achieved.

However, despite being a repository for statements of value that can guide social work, we should be aware that social work ethics and ethical codes are themselves products of the historical and intellectual ideas of their age (Hugman, 2003). Social work ethics are relatively new, although they constitute a burgeoning field of research and education (Banks, 2008). Although social work ethics have been formed and developed with a social work disciplinary frame in mind, they are still indebted to wider philosophical and intellectual periods in history. This history has included the Enlightenment ethical theories of utilitarianism and deontology, the subsequent modernist exposition of objectivist and rational models of ethical decision-making and judgment, through to recent postmodern ethics that include a more subjectivist and pluralist approach to ethics (Banks, 2008; Hugman, 2003). Hence, Reamer (1998) explains that social work codes of ethics have evolved over time, beginning with a focus in the early twentieth century on the moral conduct of the poor, to an exploration of the values of social work in the 1940s and 1950s where the focus of ethics and morality turned towards social work itself. Following advancements in applied ethics generally, social work took upon itself in the 1970s and 1980s to develop discipline-specific ethical concepts out of moral philosophy and produced decision-making models and tools for practice. Reamer (1998) notes particularly that revisions to the US code sought to capture the ever-increasing complexities of social work practice, including a focus on accountability and risk management. And more recently still, critics have argued for a stronger focus on Indigenous knowledges in social work ethics on recognition that social work ethics are laden with assumptions about Western moral universalism (Briskman, 2001; Young & Zubrzycki, 2011). Ethical codes, therefore, are subject to an evolving process of critique, revision and reformation.

While ethical codes may act as repositories for the ethics and values of social work, their translation into practice is more complicated, largely due to the fact that employing organisations and bureaucracies carry considerable weight and influence over their own ethics and standards, some of which may be at odds with social work ethics (Clark, 1999). Furthermore, social work codes of ethics are criticised on the grounds that they are often unclear, contain conflicting priorities and principles, are ignored, and they should not be used as a substitute for moral judgment (Clark, 1999).

Consequently, Hugman (2003) raises questions about the form and function of social work ethical codes by asking: how useful and relevant are ethical codes and ethical decision-making tools if they are narrow and prescriptive (see also, Gray & Gibbons, 2007)? Particularly, to what extent do codes capture and express a multiplicity of different voices and perspectives so important in multicultural contexts (Hugman, 2003)? Likewise, Healy (2007) asks whether or not social work ethics should be unifying and universal, or within the context of globalisation, multiculturalism and diversity, should perhaps social work ethics be more diverse and culturally relative? This is essentially a debate between universal and relativist conceptions of ethics. In moral philosophy, it is most often captured as a debate between the universalist and categorical deontological moral philosophy of Kant (that is, Kant's categorical imperative emphasises the development of moral rules and principles that ought to have universal application) and the context-specific and potentially relativist position of Act Utilitarianism (Barcalow, 2007). This may be seen along a continuum, from strict universal positions at one end, and complete cultural relativism at the other. According to Healy (2007), social work ethics may be best served by adopting a mid-range position, by adhering to universal ethical principles that may be adapted or interpreted in relation to diverse cultures and contexts.

How this is to be achieved is less clear. An example of a mid-range position might be a distributive notion of social justice, which appears to have universal appeal at the level of generality, even though its interpretation and adoption into practice may be subject to local and cultural variability; for example, by focusing on specific groups who are identified as being disadvantaged and having particular needs for distributive justice. Yet, Pelton (2001) argues that social justice should be non-discriminatory, that is, it should be applied even-handedly to everyone and should not be administered as a means to an end. In making this argument, he is critical of programmes of social justice that single out *groups* of people for special treatment, rather than being targeted to the need itself, which may be individually felt and experienced. He writes that:

> Policies based on group constructs, statistical or otherwise, are discriminatory in that they make of fiction of individual realities. (Pelton, 2001, p. 434)

Scanlon and Longres (2001) respond directly to Pelton's argument firstly by exploring the full force of his claim, particularly the point Pelton makes that 'a desire to seek justice for some groups should not be used to exclude needy individuals from other groups' (2001, p. 442). Examples of categorical groupings based on statistical or stereotyping models in policy and programmes include class, gender, race and so on. As shown below, social work ethical codes adopt this position to hone the social justice focus on specific groups. There may be good reasons to use a group categorical model for social justice aims, such as 'levelling the playing field when some groups are much more disadvantaged than others' (Scanlon & Longres, 2001, p. 443). But the problem is that this approach risks pitting different groups against each other in struggles for justice, rather than building political solidarity across groups that might be united by common concern and experiences (Scanlon & Longres, 2001). They explain that:

> Only social justice movements with goals that will benefit large numbers of citizens and which recognize the shared human rights of all individuals are likely to foster widespread political engagement. (Scanlon & Longres, 2001, p. 442)

This is a question concerning what, and who, social justice is for? However, we are still left with the problem of the exact conceptualisation of social justice, what it covers and what it omits, and how social workers interpret and apply these ideas to their practice. According to Solas (2008a, 2008b), social work ethical codes need to conceptualise equality and social justice more broadly than simply a focus on economic distribution, to include cultural, social and political equality as well.

Furthermore, research cited by Congress and McAullife (2006) demonstrates that social workers may not actually use ethical codes to directly inform and support their practice. As mentioned, ethical codes are subject to periodic revision and redevelopment, taking into account regional variations and different circumstances and contexts (Congress & McAuliffe, 2006). Therefore, while there may be some similarities between different national social work ethical codes, there are differences as well, begging questions on how useful codes of ethics are for an effective description of social justice. Nonetheless, Clark suggests that 'a code of ethics should function like a lighthouse, as a point of light in the darkness' (p. 264). Likewise, Higham (2006) states that a focus on social justice can provide direction to social work, particularly insofar that this focus should be critical of the way that services have become plagued by managerialism, privatisation and bureaucracy. Instead, social justice helps social workers to prioritise empowerment, emancipation, rights and advocacy as central to achieving a more socially just society.

With this background and these caveats of social work ethical codes in mind, we present select extracts of the way that social justice is conceptualised in various social work ethical codes.

Australia

> The social work profession: promotes justice and social fairness, by acting to reduce barriers and to expand choice and potential for all persons, with special regard for those who are disadvantaged, vulnerable, oppressed or have exceptional needs…advocates change to social systems and structures that preserve inequalities and injustice…opposes and works to eliminate all violations of human rights and affirms that civil and political rights must be accompanied by economic, social and cultural rights…promotes the protection of the natural environment as inherent to social wellbeing…promotes community participation in societal processes and decisions and in the development and implementation of social policies and services. (Australian Association of Social Workers, 2010, p. 13)

Canada

> Social workers believe in the obligation of people, individually and collectively, to provide resources, services and opportunities for the overall benefit of humanity and to afford them protection from harm. Social workers promote social fairness and the equitable distribution of resources, and act to reduce barriers and expand choice for all persons, with special regard for those who are marginalized, disadvantaged, vulnerable, and/or have exceptional needs. Social workers oppose prejudice and discrimination against any person or group of persons, on any grounds, and specifically challenge views and actions that stereotype particular persons or groups. (Canadian Association of Social Workers, 2005, online)

International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and British Association of Social Workers

> challenging discrimination on the basis of characteristics such as ability, age, culture, gender or sex, marital status, socio-economic status, political opinions, skin colour, racial or other physical characteristics, sexual orientation or spiritual beliefs…recognise and respect the diversity of the societies in which they practise, taking into account individual, family, group and community differences…ensure that resources at their disposal are distributed fairly, according to need…bring to the attention of their employers, policy makers, politicians and the general public situations where resources are inadequate or where distribution of resources, policies and practice are oppressive, unfair, harmful or illegal…challenge social conditions that contribute to social exclusion, stigmatisation or subjugation, and work towards an inclusive society. (British Association of Social Workers, 2012, online; International Federation of Social Workers, 2012, online)

Japan

> Social workers shall seek to realize social justice founded on liberty, equality and coexistence which are free from discrimination. (Japanese Association of Certified Social Workers, 2004, online)

New Zealand

> Members advocate social justice and principles of inclusion and choice for all members of society, having particular regard for disadvantaged minorities. They act to prevent and eliminate discrimination against any person or group based on age beliefs, culture, gender, marital, legal or family status, intellectual, psychological and physical abilities, race, religion, sexual orientation, and social or economic status. (Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers, 2015, pp. 8–9)

United States

> Social workers pursue social change, particularly with and on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups of people. Social workers' social change efforts are focused primarily on issues of poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and other forms of social injustice. These activities seek to promote sensitivity to and knowledge about oppression and cultural and ethnic diversity. Social workers strive to ensure access to needed information, services, and resources; equality of opportunity; and meaningful participation in decision making for all people. (National Association of Social Workers, 2017, online)

Conclusion

There are several points of orientation in social work definitions and discussions about social justice that will be picked up and explored in later chapters in this book. These include theories and philosophical orientations towards:

- *Critical theories*—that respond to questions concerning discrimination, oppression, challenging injustice, and seeking social change and transformation.
- *Distributive theories*—that respond to questions concerning the fair distribution of resources, social fairness and equality of opportunity.
- *Democracy and participation*—that respond to questions concerning participation, inclusion and citizenship.
- *Perspectives on human rights and autonomy*—that respond to human rights violations and abuses, and promoting freedom, choice, opportunity and respect for cultural diversity.

It is apparent that a commitment to social justice means that social workers need to value diversity and difference and promote the attainment of social justice through the promotion of well-being at individual and sociopolitical levels using multiple

Table 2.1 Select attributes of social justice as reflected in social work codes of ethics

Problem foci	Levels of analysis	Broad practice approach
Discrimination, stigmatisation, oppression	Individual, group	Promote inclusion, diversity, tolerance. Challenge discrimination. Promote social change and anti-discrimination. Advocate. Human rights
Inequitable distribution of resources	Group, society	Promote fair and equitable distribution of resources. Policy change and advocacy. Change social systems and structures. Increase participation
Vulnerability, disadvantage	Individual, group	Promote inclusion, reduce barriers. Increase participation. Empowerment. Advocate

perspectives and methods of practice. What this means and how it might be achieved will be developed in later chapters. For now, this chapter concludes with a summary of the key themes of social justice as identified in the social work literature and codes of ethics. These are presented in Table 2.1.

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Chapter 3
A Critical History of the Social Work Response to Social Justice

Abstract Social work has had a long concern for people experiencing different forms of social injustice. This chapter sets out the history of social work debates about knowledge concerned with the shape of the discipline and profession of social work and then traces a history of practice responses that give social work its distinctive form. Despite changes in contemporary conditions, since its beginnings, social work continues to adapt its focus to challenge forms of injustice, disadvantage and social conditions that impact the well-being of individuals, families, groups, communities and societies.

Introduction

The Problems of Presenting a History of Social Work

What does it mean to lay out a history of social work responses to social injustice? Would we be better served to, as Payne (2005) suggests, acknowledge that there is no such thing as a single 'social work' but instead there are various *social works?* Payne (2005, p. 6) makes a case that various *social works* have emerged since the nineteenth century and describes these as being based on a 'form of personal, family and community assistance … [that] because of the global influence of Western culture…has had an impact on welfare and social provision in other societies'. This description of social work is fairly general and nonspecific. And yet, Payne also suggests that any narrative of social work history must in some respects be multiple and necessarily bound to the context in which the particular organisation of *social work* has arisen.

Payne (2005) outlines a range of criticisms of social work history when it does not take this multiple stance. For example, such a history would more likely emphasise continuity over change, thereby making it possible to only 'honour the great and good' (Payne, 2005, p. 9). Such as history also assists in smoothing over differences, and provides a fairly Eurocentric and ultimately institutional and organisational account of the profession. This kind of history also makes it possible to claim a kind of

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L. Watts and D. Hodgson, *Social Justice Theory and Practice for Social Work*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-3621-8_3

universalism with regard to the mission, values and practices that have come to be inscribed as *social work.* An example of this is the way many historical treatments of social work as a profession mention social work as a set of practices for helping the poor and destitute in England leading to the emergence of Charity Organisation Societies (COS) (Chenoweth & McAuliffe, 2015; Cox & Pawar, 2013), somewhat despite these responses being located in a particular context.

Social work has taken root on every continent and is considered to be a global profession (Healy, 2012). How it has done so means there are local histories that cannot be captured here and this represents a dilemma. What history should we represent here? We have chosen to offer a history that is focused on the practices of social work rather than attempting to provide a single narrative. Considering the practices assists with seeing the relation between the activities of social work and knowledge *about* social work. We think this gives a picture of social work as an ongoing developing response to contingent social relations. Moreover, it encompasses the reality that *social work* is tied to contexts that are diverse and changing. This gives us an opportunity to also trace the various social work responses to social injustice as part of the account. So our guiding question has been: what are the social work *practices* in relation to social injustice?

We begin the chapter with a discussion of knowledge in social work and the various struggles over definition as a background to the second half of the chapter where we outline the various practices that we think have given social work its *form*. We hope that in doing so we can situate social work as one of a number of professional projects that emerged (Rose, 2008) as part of a 'regime of government that takes as its object 'the population' … [including] the health, welfare prosperity and happiness of the population' (Dean, 1999, p. 19). As Kessl (2009, p. 310) points out:

> social work was part of the design for a publicly organised normalisation process which became largely established institutionally and professionally at the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth.

Much of this process of establishment involved developments and debates about knowledge in social work, so it is to this we now turn.

Knowledge and Social Work

Theorising about social conditions was part of the social work curriculum in early attempts to create a profession similar to medicine (Kendall, 2000). The relation between knowledge and the practical activities of the profession has been a long source of debate within social work (Hudson, 1997; Sheppard, 1998). Moreover, whether the problem of injustice was seen as that of individuals or social conditions also caused significant disagreement. Such disagreement is often traced back to the beginning of the social work profession and the different approaches to poverty and suffering between the COS and the Settlement House Movement (SHM) (Bamford, 2015; Chenoweth & McAuliffe, 2015).

Hicks (2016), in a recent conceptual review of contemporary theory in social work, points out that one of the most striking disagreements in social work about knowledge is the divide between positivist and interpretivist approaches to knowledge across the twentieth century. For positivists, the purpose of theory is to describe, explain and predict social phenomena. For those with an interpretivist approach to knowledge, the goal of knowledge is about understanding the meaning of phenomena and therefore it should be informed by an explicit emphasis on human knowing. This debate can take many forms but one that has come to dominate is the question of whether social work can be conceptualised as a *practical-moral* or *rational-technical* profession (Parton, 2000). First, practical-moral professions place an emphasis on knowledge built from practical activities. Such activities produce knowledge and skills that are based in experience. Knowledge generated in this way is also more likely to be passed on orally (Tsang, 2007). Hicks (2016, p. 404) suggests that practice wisdom and this oral culture in social work often results in theories generated *from* practice. These are often referred to as *practice theories* (Shannon & Young, 2004). Indeed, practice theories often become highly prized and are seen as 'authentic and unquestionable, to be prioritised over others' (Hicks, 2016, p. 404). Social work is often characterised as being a practical-moral profession because it has this orientation to experience.

In contrast, a rational-technical profession primarily uses knowledge drawn from a scientific paradigm and this knowledge is often, but not always, based in positivist methods (Parton, 2000). Knowledge, in this respect, tends to be formal, found in textbooks and 'takes the form of either hypothesis-testing or a methods application model' (Hicks, 2016, p. 406). Curnock and Hardiker (1979, cited in Hicks, 2016, p. 402) called theories developed outside social work practice as *theories of practice.* These theories are adapted into social work practice. An example of a theory of practice is attachment theory.

This division between *practice theory* and *theories of practice* is sometimes characterised as the difference between practice as an art versus practice as a science (Samson, 2014). The extent to which social work emphasises rational-technical knowledge or the practical-moral aspect will depend greatly on the trajectory of development of social work as a profession within particular national contexts. For instance, social work in the United States has long adopted scientific methods in social science associated with positivist methods, and as such, has had a stronger emphasis on the rational-technical side. In contrast, social work in Australia has emphasised the practical aspects of professional activity (Lawrence, 1975). In this way the adoption of practice theory and theories of practice, and by extension knowledge, will differ depending on the country of origin of the social work program (Cox & Pawar, 2013).

In reality, social work, in all contexts, will have elements of both the rational-technical and the practical-moral because the focus of social work is to be both a 'practice-based profession and an academic discipline' (International Federation of Social Workers, 2017) that 'promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people'. The last point is key to considering what practical, explanatory and scientific knowledge is more likely to find purchase in the social work knowledge toolkit. For example, Mary Richmond and

others combined a practice theory (casework) with knowledge from sociology and psychology resulting in a specific method of social work called *social casework* (Toikko, 1999). Further, Toikko makes the point that social casework incorporated significant sociological knowledge in its earliest iteration. Later, this mode of social work became more explicitly psychological through the influence of Virginia Robinson. Nevertheless, this model of social work activity was a very influential approach and was exported around the world as a method of social work (Mwansa, 2012; Queiro-Tajalli, 2012; Watkins & Lundy, 2012).

Social casework, and the various iterations it has undergone (for example, psychosocial model, functional model, problem-solving methods, behavioural model, task-centred work, and generalist practice), have been important to the development of theories for social change within social work. They have provided a base from which many descriptions of what is wrong with professional or 'traditional' social work could be made. Casework was also a part of establishing a technique of social work that worked for professionalisation purposes across the 1950s and 1960s (Burnham, 2011). A decade later it became a point of contrast that radical, then feminist, critical and structural social work theorists used in presenting alternative explanations and programs of action for social workers. The aim of such alternatives was to attack social disadvantage, inequality and exclusion at the level of *causes,* rather than merely addressing the effects of these conditions through charity or casework. Indeed, Howe (2009) points out that radical social work was the first wave to critique the incorporation of psychological knowledge into traditional casework methods. Traditional casework became to be seen as a band-aid measure that does little to address the conditions that lead to inequality, poverty and disadvantage. This critique spread throughout social work, leading to internal debates about the purpose and uses of social work generally in society.

These debates fed the development of practice theories such as anti-oppressive practice (Baines, 2007; Dominelli, 2002), radical and structural social work (Mullaly, 2007; Mullaly & Keating, 1991) and critical postmodern perspectives (Pease & Fook, 1999). While there are differences among these perspectives and practice theories, they share a common concern with the effects of social inequality and social structures and institutions that perpetuate racism, sexism, ableism, heteronormativity and class disadvantage. Informed by successive waves of critical social theory, these perspectives have provided many resources for social workers to engage in emancipatory practices. Indeed Mullaly and Keating (1991) point out the significant contribution of feminist analyses to the development of these social work perspectives, particularly where focussed on decoding of patriarchal and sexist relations to highlight how the personal and political are connected. Black feminists (Collins, 1990; Hooks, 1981) challenged many of the precepts of feminist theories and this has led to theorising that must have 'the ability to capture inequality and oppression within groups of women, and not only among women and men' (Mattson, 2014, p. 10). This approach has become known as intersectionality. As Day (1992) suggests 'issues of race, class and gender' are crucial to our understanding of how women social workers and service-users encounter each other.

Sometimes these critiques and debates centre on methods and practice. Sometimes they are about theory or knowledge and its use, or not, in practice (Parton, 2000; Pease, 1993). Sometimes the disagreement is about what counts as evidence (Sheldon, 1978; Sheldon & Macdonald, 2008), what 'good' practice is and how to achieve it, and, if desired, the pursuit of professional status (Flexner, 2001). All of the debates involve advocating for specific practice activities, often seen as more appropriate to the purposes of social work. Generally, these debates are sparked off by changes in the social conditions of social work and society itself.

In summary, social work has developed a range of theoretical resources for practice and has adapted theories from other disciplines to its purposes. These sources of knowledge are often contested, particularly in the area of addressing social suffering. Nevertheless, we can take these debates as a sign of on-going healthy growth as a discipline, and appropriate to the changing circumstances of social work and social conditions. Despite such disagreements, social work is united in its desire to promote social conditions that increase well-being and challenge injustice and disadvantage. In the next section, we describe five broad techniques (or practices) that have arisen across the history of social work. We see these as core responses to forms of injustice and disadvantage, but we acknowledge that the list is general and many specific techniques and practices are not captured here.

Social Work Techniques

The techniques presented here are somewhat ungrounded in specific theoretical ideas. Instead, we provide a description of them as productive techniques that have given form to the profession of *social work* over a long period. There are five main techniques in this description. These are *visiting*, *casework*, *group work*, *community organising* and *policy*. All of these techniques have been, and continue to be, important and productive in developing knowledge, skills and shaping the values and mission of social work. The establishment of organisations within welfare states contributed to the growth of social work as it conferred various forms of authority on the professional project for working with risky populations (Kessl, 2009). At the same time, these forms of authority also elicited resistance via a growing critique centred on delineating the mission and practices of social work and what it ought to be in relation to addressing social injustice (Rojek, Collins, & Peacock, 1988).

Given this, it is important to acknowledge that this description outlines the way in which social work developed out of the experiences and exchanges between the United Kingdom (UK), Europe and the United States (US). To do so is to place the development of social work within a specific Western Enlightenment tradition. This is uncomfortable because we agree with Gray (2005) when she discusses the dilemma of international social work as involving three trends. One trend seeks to universalise social work by finding common values and goals across contexts and supports the contention of social work as a global profession (Healy, 2012). A second trend is that of imperialism, where there is a dominant form of social work that is promoted at

the expense of local formations. The third trend describes efforts to Indigenise social work. Gray (2005, p. 231) suggests this:

> refers to the extent to which social work practice fits local contexts. Social work practice is, in turn, shaped by the extent to which local social, political, economic, historical and cultural factors, as well as local voices, mould and shape social work responses.

As mentioned in the introduction there are many possible histories of social work. Our goal is not to promote a dominant view of social work but instead to acknowledge the specificity of our account here. We have chosen to speak from our own context, a context that has a dominant view of social work largely inherited from the UK and US. Further, delineating the case this way is also not to legislate it as the only set of practices called *social work* that might be aimed at addressing social injustice. Our description does not preclude the need for other critical work that traces the history of social work practices developed under different regimes of government with different political arrangements and in different social conditions. We start with the earliest developing practice, that of visiting.

Visiting

Visiting of various kinds has been a long-term practice in social work. Initially, it grew from the processes of administering relief as a response to widespread poverty and destitution (Kendall, 2000; Young & Ashton, 1956). As Bamford (2015) suggests, the poor laws in the UK cast a long shadow over the development of social work. Whether it is prisons, slums, factories or workhouses (Young & Ashton, 1956) much early social work occurred through the attention of people, usually women, who paid visits to the poor, sick, elderly, infirm and incarcerated. Indeed, visiting 'was the chief organ of poor relief' in Germany, which was called the Elberfield Movement (Kendall, 2000, pp. 30–31). The model from Germany was well admired in the UK and in the US, and aspects of it shaped visiting in those contexts.

What is the activity of visiting like? Early in the formation of *social work,* in England at least, it took the form of collecting rents through the administration of housing for the poor (Kendall, 2000). It was called 'friendly visiting' and the emphasis was on administering to those less fortunate as part of developing a good character and/or contributing to the amelioration of suffering. Tannenbaum and Reisch (2001, p. 6) characterise these 'friendly visitors' as untrained proto-social workers saying they 'sought to help poor individuals through moral persuasion and personal example.' Nevertheless, visiting also involved building understanding about the circumstances of the people being visited and creating and maintaining relationships with them. Doing so often led to other practices and initiatives to address the need, such as establishing schools and other services for people in various slums and neighbourhoods. Burnham (2011) suggests that despite the orthodoxy that associates visiting primarily with COS the practice continued after the decline of these societies. It was largely supported via public sector institutions and authorities established as

'attitudes in the UK to poverty, crime and health changed and the state's role developed towards actively helping ameliorate distress' (Burnham, 2011, p. 9). Key aspects of successful visiting were the ability to show sympathy and care for the people with whom one was visiting, not least because the visitor was frequently of a different class to those being visited. An early example of visiting was described by Octavia Hill (Kendall, 2000) and it led to the establishment of training schools using Hill's approach.

In contemporary times, visiting has much the same form as it did in the past with one major exception. Visiting now is conducted within the auspice of an organisation or institution within the society with specific powers usually set down in legislation, policy and within formalised organisational processes and procedures (McDonald, Craik, Hawkins, & Williams, 2011). Visiting in some Australian states was patchy and dependent on the specific colonisation history of the state or colony. For example, in Melbourne visiting was associated with a COS, whereas in other colonies, early visiting and then later social work proper was more associated with Catholic orders and organisations setting up schools and refuges (McMahon, 2002). Visiting in South Australia, by contrast, started within the colonial government and was aimed at administering to the needs of newly arrived people on issues of housing, employment, illness and care for women and children (Dickey, 1986). In the early formation of social work, visiting was undertaken by volunteers and eventually knowledge of how to undertake the practice became formalised into training. This later became known as 'social work'. Burt (2008) suggests that:

> The Poor Law relieving officers, the friendly visitors of the Charity Organisation Society, the settlement workers of the settlement movement, the school attendance officers under the Education Act and the inspectors of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) were identified as the main roles from which social work evolved during the latter part of the nineteenth century.

Visiting has had a range of purposes in the history of social work. It might be about helping poor people help themselves. This was to be undertaken primarily by paying attention to their moral character (Stayaert, 2013). Visiting was a core aspect of Thomas Chalmers' influential approach to helping the poor help themselves, which was predominant in the early formation of social work (Stayaert, 2014). Visiting was also conducted for the purposes of collecting social 'facts' (Shaw, 2015, p. 43). The social 'facts' gathered by visitors about poverty, the plight of women and children, prisoners, the aged and infirm, were utilised to create government responses in forms of legislation (for example, child protection legislation, various Social Security regimes) and policy. These 'social facts' also contributed to the creation of social scientific knowledge about the impact of economic conditions on individuals, families and communities, health conditions arising from urban density, social housing and poverty. Moreover, visiting social workers assisted with creating research methods for documenting the effects of a range of social problems such as mobility, poverty, migration, urban environments and unemployment (Shaw, 2015). Likewise, visiting played a significant role in the establishment of childcare and welfare services in Canada, an example outlined by Chambon, Johnstone, and Winckler (2011).

As mentioned previously, visits to people's homes still form a significant part of social work practice (Ferguson, 2009). There was another effect that came from this practice of visiting, which included an assessment of whether people could be given assistance at all. This investigation side of 'friendly visiting' was important to the early development of the technique of casework (Young & Ashton, 1956). The development of investigative techniques and assessment processes would be the focus of considerable debate about the role of visitors and the Charity Organisation Societies in England, in particular, (Kendall, 2000, p. 34). Moreover, the role of casework has been debated for almost the entirety of the professional project of social work.

Casework

Casework, or as Young and Ashton (1956, p. 98) call it in its earliest configuration, 'the organisation of charity', involved the application of a number of principles that were considered important to the administration of charity or relief amongst the poor, ill or destitute. The first is cooperation and this is seen as important to the overall relief effort, but also it was meant to be an aspect of the relationship between the visitor and the poor family or person. The second principle centred on whether the person or family was deserving of relief or assistance. Casework processes were designed to establish this aspect (Young & Ashton, 1956) and to ensure that if the family or person was deserving then the giving of relief would not induce demoralisation. The methods of casework included investigations that involve 'careful enquiry into the facts of the economic and social life of the family, its previous history, its friends and relations, and above all a clear understanding of the way the client himself (sic) thought he could be helped' (Young & Ashton, 1956, p. 103). These investigations formed the basis of discussion in regular meetings designed to ensure that the wisdom of more experienced *social workers* was included in deliberations about whether to assist. This debate about the purpose of home visiting and the needs of interviewing to establish *eligibility* for assistance established a long-standing ethos within social work that encounters between social workers and clients should be authorised (Kessl, 2009) and purposeful (Healy, 2014). Casework processes could also be taught and this led to the establishment of training and education in the conduct of social work that involved casework practice (Kendall, 2000). Also included in such training was the processes of interviewing and assessment (Kendall, 2000). Payne (2005) suggests that social casework could be seen as a key innovation that led to the establishment of social work as a profession, not least due to keeping systematic records. Burnham (2011, p. 14) agrees with Payne on this account suggesting that casework was part of 'the agitation for professionalisation … associated with the identification and refinement of a body of knowledge for social workers, each profession having to secure one [in order to] lay claim to professional status.'

While casework has undergone a number of iterations, the basics of it within social work have remained remarkably similar enough for it to be seen as a core social work practice. It is one that has been elaborated (Fook, 1990; Perlman, 1957), theorised (Cedersund, 1999), critiqued and transmitted to students and practitioners (Reid, 1977; Turner & Jaco, 1996). At its base, casework is a technique for fact-gathering, which may involve 'encounters between social workers and clients' (Jokinen, Juhila, & Poso, 1999, p. 8), and encounters with relevant others (family, friends, employers, other professionals) in order to build understanding of the circumstances and needs of the person or people at the centre of the 'case' work. The key site in which these practices are often transmitted to students is in field education. This makes casework practice the 'practical activity' (Bosquanet, 1903 cited in Kendall, 2000, p. 66) of the discipline of social work, which was designed:

> on the principle that, as practical work at once raises the questions of the theory and methods of relief, of the structure and basis of society, and the economic laws of the industrial world, so the course of study must combine these three departments and treat them simultaneously.

The three departments outlined by Bosquanet (1903, cited in Kendall, 2000, p. 67) include: (1) theories about society; (2) economic principles; and, (3) theories and methods of relief (casework processes). Kendall (2000, p. 67) recounts that theorising society included consideration of Hobbes' *Leviathan,* reading Plato's *Republic,* and engaging with Rousseau's *Social Contract*. Economic theory included John Stuart Mill's *Political Economy,* for example. Interestingly, in a recent chapter undertaking a census of social work Bachelor and Masters curriculums across the world, Barret-Herman (2012, p. 359) found that:

> 60 to 73 percent of the member schools [in the IASSW] require bachelor's-degree students to undertake a course or have course content in human behaviour and development; race, ethnicity, and cultural issues; and the ethics and values of social work as recommended by the Global Standards.

The impetus to recommend these kinds of topics for study represents the professional response to the internationalisation of the social work curriculum in a way that addresses significant cultural issues of social justice. When social work schools were established in the UK across the 1950s and 1960s many of the previous workers such as relieving officers, education and welfare officers, and health visitors were left out—the almoners, childcare workers and psychiatric social workers were included. This made the fit between casework, as imported from the US, a better fit in terms of method and it established a number of elite branches of social work that persist in some places today—hospital social work (almoner), mental health social work (psychiatric) and family and child protection social work (child welfare) (Burnham, 2011).

The other important statistic from this world census of social work schools is that some 81% of schools include social work theory and methods in their curricula (Barrett-Herman, 2012). It is worth noting that there is a significant psychological component in social work education today that was not apparent from early social work training documents. Rose (2008, p. 447) may be right in saying that

'psychology is a generous discipline' and social work has certainly made use of its knowledge. Casework was a key site for the adoption of early psychodynamic knowledge, humanistic and cognitive-behavioural psychological approaches. The adoption of 'psy' knowledge led to a number of debates and crises about the purposes of casework within the broad mission of social work with regard to social justice.

The link between COS, the establishment of social work schools for transmission of the techniques such as casework and visiting led to a 'vital divide' with consequences still felt today (Rojek et al., 1988, p. 19). This divide has led to ongoing contests over the shape of social work and its professional project. And despite attempts aimed at 'uniting in an effective demand for [more just] social conditions' (Addams, 1910, p. 68), each social work generation appears to have rehearsed a division between techniques aimed assisting individual and family functioning, and techniques aimed at broader social change (Bailey & Brake, 1975; Dominelli, 2002; Fook, 1993; Lundy, 2011; Mullaly, 2007; Pease & Nipperess, 2016; Rojek et al., 1988). We turn now to consider the third social work technique of group work.

Group Work

Dominelli (2008) makes the claim that group work has a long history in social work and may be traced back to Victorian England. Indeed, in Dominelli's view, group work is one of three methods that characterise social work generally. The other methods are community work and one-to-one casework. Group work began with the observation of the everyday life practices of groups observed by early social workers. Dominelli coined the term *groups in everyday life practices* (GELPs) to capture this dimension. In terms of addressing social justice, group work has long been part of the social work response. It has been part of a tradition of group solidarity based on mutual aid. The term mutual aid was first introduced to social work by William Schwartz and it broadly means 'people helping one another as they think things through' (Steinberg, 2014, p. 2). Trade unions, guilds, cooperatives, educational and recreational groups are examples of these early mutual aid groups. The mutual aid idea is often said to have emerged from the SHM and is often contrasted with the more individually oriented approach of the COS from this early period.

Indeed, according to Dominelli (2008, p. 477) the SHM 'created many resources for poor people'. These resources were rooted in a solidarity with people in the neighbourhood surrounding the various Settlement Houses. Jane Addams famously brought group work approaches to the United States with the establishment of Hull House. There were many other Settlement Houses established during this period including a number for supporting African Americans (Leighninger, 2012). Mutual aid work relies on the member to member interaction as the basis for the intervention itself, rather than the social worker being at the centre of the process. Steinberg (2014, p. 10) describes it this way:

> all theoretical fingers point to mutual aid as a cause and effect of social work with groups. As cause, mutual aid is why we use groups as a helping medium … As effect mutual aid is the result of our interventions – that is, what people experience as a result of having participated in a group … [however] it does not come automatically.

Group work as a modality requires three main elements if it is to be based on notions of mutual aid. One is it requires a communication process that promotes a member to member interaction that is non-directive. Second, it needs a climate of companionship and cooperation. Third, mutual aid groups need to have a purpose (Steinberg, 2014, pp. 10–12). Without an agreed-on purpose 'individual goal achievement takes centre stage and, as a result, the group simply becomes a context for *casework in a group* … instead of one for group work' (Steinberg, 2014, p. 13; emphasis original). Not all group work since these early beginnings has incorporated these elements. For example, some group work is directive and has more emphasis on the role of leaders. Different models of group work have emerged and some of the differences can be explained by the knowledge development trajectories over the last century.

Ragg (2008, p. 447) suggests that three main areas of knowledge development have been important to understanding this modality within social work. These are *sociotechnical systems*, the *recreation* and *group psychotherapy movements.* The sociotechnical systems movement emerged from studies of industrial work settings and later was used to understand groups and teams within organisations. The focus of work here was on how to democratise work systems by sharing decision-making and independence for the purpose of increasing productivity (Ragg, 2008). The recreational movement arose from observations by social workers involved in recreational youth groups and educational settings. According to Hansen (2011) group work was largely considered peripheral to core social work in the US, not least due to its early association with recreational organisations such as the Young Women's Christian Association. Grace L. Coyle was an influential advocate for group work in this context. It was increasingly taken into more mainstream social work agencies after the 1935 Annual Meeting of the National Council of Social Work in Montreal, following the inclusion of a set of papers at the meeting on group work (Hansen, 2011). Groups in this movement are seen as an important mechanism for supporting the belonging and settlement needs of particular groups within societies (Ragg, 2008).

In contrast, the psychotherapy movement has been influential in conceiving of group work as useful for dealing with psychological problems. In its early formation, it was largely based on ideas from psychoanalysis, however, this has changed somewhat with the advent of other psychological modalities such as interpersonal and cognitive-behavioural approaches. A key figure here is Wilfred Bion (1897–1979), a British psychoanalyst who applied these ideas to behaviour in groups. It was Bion, along with his colleague John Rickman, who pioneered groups as therapeutic communities during the Second World War as a way to address shell-shock (Glover, n.d.). Psychotherapy groups provided mechanisms for dealing with psychological experiences through their focus on individual and group dynamics. Leaders in these groups play specific roles to enable change using the dynamics that develop through the process. Ragg (2008, p. 449) suggests that:

> The convergence of these three movements provides social work with a rich foundation of group knowledge with multiple potential applications. Each movement provides a specific perspective on knowledge. Sociotechnical systems focus on promoting outcomes, group psychotherapy expands knowledge on member experiences, and the recreational approach advances our knowledge on working with the whole group.

This convergence has meant that social work has developed approaches to group work that operate for different needs within diverse settings (McMaster, 2016).

For example, Dominelli (2008, p. 480) describes five types of group. These are the GELP (mentioned previously), therapeutic, educational, community action-oriented, and identity-based social action groups. Dominelli (2008) considers these groups share some common characteristics; for example, all these types of groups offer opportunities for social bonding and change. However, there are also significant differences between them. For instance, therapeutic groups are more aimed at individual change than community-action oriented or identity-based groups, which are interested in structural change or are formed for the purpose of consciousness-raising about social issues affecting specific members or communities. When radical and structural social workers discuss programs for action they often call for collective action and group work is considered key to this approach (Leonard, 1975; Mullaly, 2007; Turbett, 2014). This brings our discussion to the practices of community organising and its relation to social work for social justice.

Community Organising

There are clear links between group work and community organising as these are considered to have common roots within the SHM (Bamford, 2015). Community organising can be seen as part of the history of social work response to poverty due to this link. The idea within the SHM was to enable university students to live and work amongst the poor in order to understand their circumstances. However, settlement houses did more than this because they developed local responses to need and they began to establish proto-social services. These early workers also continued to document the circumstances of the people in their neighbourhood and provided access to educational and social opportunities (Bamford, 2015; Tannenbaum & Reisch, 2001). The focus of these settlement houses is widely considered to be different than that of COS due to their attention on environmental conditions and the collective nature of the practice. The other key difference is that people accessed the House, rather than house residents visiting the homes of locals. Bamford (2015) suggests that the emphasis on neighbourliness and finding common interests was a forerunner of community development. Community organising and community work are also associated with early women's movements in Australia (McMahon, 2002), social reform, self-help, education for workers, social pedagogy, trade unionism (Payne, 2005) and other forms of social development and radical movements for change (Mullaly, 2007).

Like social group work in the US context, it appears that social workers interested in practices of community organising had to argue for its place within the definition of social work (Pray, 1947). In the US context, community organising tends to be discussed as macro social work where social problems and issues are considered at the community, global and organisational levels (Brueggemann, 2002). In the UK, these collective approaches are called community work, and here too, there has been some debate about its place within social work. This became particularly keen during the Thatcher years and after the legal establishment of social work as a statutory profession (Healy, 2012, cited in Teater, 2014, p. 221). Notwithstanding this development, community work in the UK context is described as 'a set of approaches focused on understanding individuals as part of a community and on building the capacity of that community to address the social, economic or political challenges facing its members' (Teater, 2014). Much of the debate about the place of community work in social work more broadly has been driven in industrialised nations as they contend with the crisis in welfare provision (Ife, 2000). Community organising or macro approaches to social betterment have been important practices in contexts dealing with the effects of colonisation, because this has provided more opportunity for connection to Indigenous practices where the assumed social infrastructure embedded in European and US models of practice may be absent or inappropriate (Mwansa, 2012). A recent example is *Puente al Desarrollo*—A Bridge to Development in Costa Rico, which involves social workers who facilitate a process of community work. Cristian Rodríguez Barrantes says that in doing so 'Communities identify their own solutions. This brings people together and they think beyond normal services. They want programmes to end violence, community-wide empowerment charters for women and girls, drug prevention clinics and basic schooling for all generations. When people are given options, they take them' (cited in Truell, 2018, online).

Hardcastle, Powers and Wenocur (2004, cited in Fuchs, 2008, p. 489) make a case that a focus on community is essential for social work given its focus on people within environments. Fuchs draws attention to the fact that social workers—whether engaged in individually focused practice or at the community or societal level—are working for similar ends: to end suffering and improve well-being. Indeed, this is echoed in the IFSW commitment to assisting people within communities and environments (International Federation of Social Workers, 2017). We turn now to consider the role of policy and advocacy work as the fifth set of practices that characterise social work.

Policy and Advocacy

Alongside community organising and group work, policy and advocacy work also have a history in social work back from its early focus on responding to the issue of poverty. However, Kendall (2000, p. vii) suggests that early progenitors of 'social work' were interested in reform, not revolution:

> Christian socialism, with its general aim of brotherhood and mitigation of class differences, inspired Octavia Hill and other reformers of the second half of the [nineteenth] century … Even the more militant socialism of the Fabians held that reasonable and conciliatory measures … would in time bring about the social, economic, and political benefits of a socialist state.

In Kendall's view, the difference between the approach of the COS versus the Fabians, (such as Sidney and Beatrice Webb) turns on the role of legislation and state intervention in reforming social and economic conditions. COS adherents did not believe state intervention was necessary, preferring to focus their efforts with individuals and families (Kendall, 2000). In contrast, the Fabians had a vast influence on many people including William Beveridge, a resident of Toynbee Hall, and who would go on to become a key architect of the British Welfare system (Attar, n.d.). Kendall (2000) believes that while the Settlement House Movement (SHM) was influential in terms of the use of policy and advocacy, the COS was to hold sway for many years to come. Thus, policy and advocacy is closely related to the reformist tradition within social work and to community organising where it is understood as:

> redress[ing] the imbalance of social and economic power in society. Community organizers seek to mobilize disadvantaged citizens to recognize their shared oppression and take joint action to achieve a better deal for their communities. (Healy, 2012, cited in Teater, 2014, p. 224)

Kendall (2000) suggests that while Beatrice Webb was not seen as a supporter of the COS approach she had a definite influence on social work through her relationship with Edith Abbott, later Dean of the Chicago School of Social Service Administration. This school was the first to establish graduate education in social work and the curriculum had a focus on the economic and political forces that create poverty. From this rather auspicious beginning, policy and advocacy interventions waned somewhat in social work in the US as the profession became influenced by the advent of psychological approaches for addressing social functioning (Specht & Courtney, 1994). According to Ezell (2001), social work, especially in the US context, would remain this way for several decades.

Policy work and advocacy work has four main rationales according to Jansson (2003, p. 34). These are: to promote the values of social justice and fairness; to promote the well-being of clients and society; to act in opposition to processes and policies that run counter to social justice, fairness and overall societal and individual well-being; and, to challenge the 'composition of government so that legislators and decision-makers are more likely to advance values such as fairness and social justice, and promote the well-being of citizens' (Jansson, 2003, p. 34). This is, of course, in a national context, and much policy and advocacy work occurs at both the national and international level, at the community and at the organisational level.

Conclusion

In this chapter, our goal was to provide a brief history of the knowledge and practices of social work in response to social suffering and injustice. We have presented a case that social work knowledge has developed two main orientations to knowledge—one that is rational-technical and the other is along practical-moral lines—and concluded that, while there are differences between them, both remain relevant and important for informing contemporary social work practice. From the ration-technical, the social work profession is able to adapt theory and knowledge drawn from research and inquiry in other settings for social work purposes. The practical-moral offers us a store of practice wisdom and methods that have been through the trial and error process of social work practice. In this chapter, we have also outlined a range of social work practices that have developed for ameliorating and addressing social injustices of many kinds such as poverty, disadvantage, exclusion, oppression and domination. We acknowledge that these are drawn from a limited case and do not represent the full panoply of social work practices aimed at redressing social justice. Nevertheless, from the description of practices here—visiting, casework, group work, community organising, policy and advocacy—it is possible to conclude that social work has developed practices aimed at the whole spectrum from working with individuals to interventions with communities and societies. This should be heartening. Social injustice has many faces and occurs in many different configurations and the social work response has proved adaptable and responsive to the challenge.

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Chapter 4
Capitalism and Neoliberalism

Abstract Capitalism and neoliberalism are widely critiqued in social work. Neoliberalism in particular is considered a problematic form of economic and social philosophy that is detrimental to human and ecological well-being and leads to the dismantling of social welfare. As such, neoliberalism is criticised on the grounds that it is an anathema to social justice. Critiques of neoliberalism in the social work literature posit that neoliberalism is deeply implicated in various injustices and contend that social work must challenge neoliberal discourses, hegemony and practice. However, these descriptions of neoliberalism suffer from a lack of conceptual clarity. This chapter will draw on critical and post-structural literature to explain the liberal, Marxist and Keynesian perspectives on capitalism, outline the neoliberal critique in social work, and describe in detail the historical and contemporary formation of neoliberalism.

Introduction

As explained in chapter three, much of the history of social work has been in response to the problems associated with the introduction of industrial capitalism, urbanisation, and modernity generally. Inequality, poverty, dangerous and alienating work, the fragmentation of communities and families, social divisions and conflict—all of these problems are said to have their roots, at least in part, in the capitalist mode of production and in capitalist society. At the same time, capitalism delivers wealth, innovation, and creative solutions to improving human welfare. Capitalism promises wealth and prosperity and a better life, but it delivers these unevenly. It is the failure to deliver on its core promise, the way its benefits are unevenly distributed, and the harmful by-products of this dynamic and pervasive system that prompt much outrage and cries of unfairness and injustice. Many of the criticisms that radical and critical social work make about capitalism, are based in arguments that capitalism is a key factor in much of the economic and social injustice we described in chapter one, and therefore, it is a system that is not right or fair. In particular, radical and critical social work perspectives posit that capitalism is founded on the unequal and

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L. Watts and D. Hodgson, *Social Justice Theory and Practice for Social Work*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-3621-8_4

unfair distribution of the ownership of property (including assets and resources that generate wealth), and the way it privileges market values (such as efficiency and enterprise) above human and environmental values (such as relations of care and sustainability). These perspectives also contend that the profit motive built into the capitalist system means that economic and social systems are fundamentally geared towards exploitation, greed, accumulation and inequality.

These criticisms are valid, but they can sometimes seem odd in the face of competing social and political values and discourses that valorise individual enterprise and making money (even staggering amounts of it) as a legitimate and worthy human endeavour, and one that is distinctly tied to the pursuit of happiness and notions of freedom (Bowles, 2007). In fact, this notion of *freedom* is important to capitalism's appeal and durability. Advocates of the free market, such as the economist Milton Friedman, say that the capitalist market economy is the best way to maximise individual choice and freedom, because market forces are less oppressive and dominating than interfering states, which have a tendency to control too much of what people do with their lives. Under capitalism, it is presupposed that people are free to choose how they want to live their lives, and can exercise choices over what sort of work they do, under what conditions they live and express their lives, and how to spend their money. In this way, capitalism can be thought of as an economic and social system that gives expression to some of the values of liberalism.

More recently, capitalism has accelerated globally on the back of what is referred to as *neoliberalism*. Neoliberalism is widely critiqued in social work (for example, Ife, 2016; Morley, 2004; Mullaly, 2007; Pease & Nipperess, 2016). It is considered a pernicious form of economic and social philosophy that is detrimental to human and ecological well-being, and is said to be central to the dismantling and cutting back of social welfare (Ife, 2016). As such, neoliberalism is conceptualised as an anathema to social justice. Critics of neoliberalism in the social work literature contend that social work must challenge neoliberal discourses, hegemony and practice (Morley, 2004). However, what neoliberalism is and how social work might critically engage with it along these lines is less clear.

This chapter will begin by explaining the basic logic of capitalism by surmising in very general terms arguments for and against it. It will then draw on critical and post-structural literature (for example, Brenner, Peck, & Theodore, 2010a, 2010b; Dean, 1999, 2014; Flew, 2014; Peck, Theodore, & Brenner, 2009) to explain what neoliberalism is, its historical background, and how it manifests in policy, practice, ideology, and human subjectivity. For space reasons, the chapter does not discuss in detail how social work might counter neoliberalism. This task is taken up in later chapters, particularly in relation to our discussion on critical social work, deep diversity, and participatory democracy.

What Is Capitalism?

Capitalism is tenacious. It has a long history extending back almost 500 years in the emergence of trading routes in Europe (Bowles, 2007). Extending its reach globally, capitalism fends off challenges from alternative economic and social systems, such as socialism (Bowles, 2007). As an adaptive and flexible economic and social system, capitalism has proven its ability to move and reshape under new and different guises, invariably referred to as monetarism, neoliberalism, post-Fordism, and globalisation. Capitalism seems like it has a life of its own, incomprehensible to many people, and existing as a thing 'out there' beyond human control. We refer to it in abstractions such as 'the market', 'the economy', or 'the system'—each of which seem to be imbued with human-like qualities, such as when we refer to the market as being 'nervous' or 'unstable', and something not to be diced with. The volatility of capitalism can result in rapid and unanticipated economic shocks to nations, communities and individuals, who may find themselves restructured out of their jobs, unemployed, or left to pick over casual, low-paid and insecure work. But what is it, and what do defenders of capitalism have to say about it?

A Mode of Production Concerning Private Property and Profit

It is important to think about capitalism as a system for organising economic and social activity. For Bowles, capitalism is:

> a system for organizing production which is based upon the institutions of private property and the market, and which relies upon the pursuit of private profit as its driving force. (Bowles, 2007, p. 8)

There are three points of orientation important here: (1) a system or mode of production; (2) private property; and, (3) the profit motive. Early arguments for capitalism emphasised its effectiveness and efficiency in producing and exchanging things that human beings need and value. This is its mode of production and exchange, and generally, it is thought that there should be some degree of freedom or non-interference from the state or ruling sovereign in how this system runs.

One of the oldest arguments along these lines in favour of free market capitalism system comes from Adam Smith (1723–1790), who argued that capitalism is (or could be) an efficient and effective way of creating and distributing things through a division of labour and agreed upon mechanisms and norms for exchange (Smith, 2000). One does not need to be proficient in absolutely everything in order to survive, so we specialise, and it is through this specialisation that we can create surplus. If you are a builder, you may end up building many more houses over a lifetime than you can actually live in. If you are a farmer, you may end up growing much more food than you can eat. But the farmer needs a house, and the builder needs food, so they can exchange their respective surpluses for mutual benefit. This, according to Smith, is an efficient use of each person's talents. Each engages in a self-interested

pursuit to hone their craft and create surpluses that can be put to their own and others benefits (Bowles, 2007). According to Smith, this market approach to meeting human need can bring about social cooperation and will lead to an improvement in living standards. Over generations, builders get better at what they do, and so do farmers. Everyone benefits from these improvements. Proponents of free market capitalism say that when governments interfere too heavily in this arrangement, they cut across and undermine something fundamental about human nature, and dominate behaviours that are perfectly natural things for human beings to do—exercise their freedom to improve their talents in certain areas, and trade with others for mutual benefit. The role of government, according to Smith, is simply to make sure that there are fair rules in play, so that the builder does not rip off the farmer, or vice versa. This is akin to being an umpire of a sporting game (Bowles, 2007). There are rules, people agree to them, and the umpire arbitrates.

Assuming for a minute that the rules of the game are actually fair—or that the umpire is impartial—something else that capitalism delivers as a function of its profit-making capability is private property. The ownership of private property, including self-ownership, has a long history in Western philosophy as an argument for natural rights and non-arbitrary inference from sovereign powers (Wall, 2001). In a more narrow sense, private property in the capitalist mode of production is seen as a necessary condition of *justice* in the form of an entitlement to the benefits of one's labour. Relatedly, private property is also argued as a necessary requirement for capitalism to *function* effectively (Bowles, 2007). Referring to the above example, the builder must have ownership over their tools and equipment, and the farmer must have ownership over their land and resources, otherwise, it is said that the market system would not function and this would cause an injustice. Private property, it is said, gives stability and predictability to people, which is necessary if they are to invest their resources, time and efforts into particular pursuits. For example, would the builder invest in tools and equipment and sign-up for the long term in the building industry if they thought that this property might be arbitrarily seized at any moment? Would the farmer plant out their field if they thought that their crops might be seized upon ripening, or their land subject to compulsory acquisition? By the early 1990s, some thinkers contended that because capitalism is so efficient at producing *stuff*, more efficient than any other hitherto system ever witnessed, human beings have arrived at a final point in the evolution of economic and social systems, and we have witnessed the end of history and the triumph of capitalist Western liberalism in the history of human evolution and civilisation (Fukuyama, 1992). This means that capitalism is ideological, and as an ideology, it is persuasive to such extent that it is a taken-for-granted form of common-sense. Mostly.

A Requisite Condition for Democracy and Freedom

Aside from efficiency arguments, other more recent arguments in favour of capitalism equate it with democracy and freedom. Proponents of this view point to the range of societies that are capitalist *and* have some form of representative or constitutional democracy, *and* espouse the values of freedom (Bowles, 2007). Putting this phenomenon together, we may conclude that capitalism produces democracy and freedom. This would be a causal error, because there are also examples of capitalist societies that are not democratic, and maybe fascist or authoritarian (Bowles, 2007). Furthermore, many now argue that free market capitalism intentionally undermines democracy (see Keane, 2016). But this is to conceive of democracy at an institutional level simply in terms of representativeness and a constitutional state that works for the public good. The other more capitalist and market-driven way to think about democracy is not to focus on the overarching political structure, or notions of political citizenship, but instead to adopt a market view of democracy by considering the countless tiny decisions and choices that billions of people make every day in their engagement in capitalist society. This might include decisions and choices concerning their purchases, how they set prices or agree or not agree to pay for things, the kinds of investments people make in terms of money, time, financial and other risks, commitment to things like courses of study, or employment, where to live, how to spend one's leisure time, or whether or not to have a family. No government or institution can truly fathom the full range of these countless tiny decisions, or the reasons for them, and to intervene in the agency that people use in going about their lives risks undermining the organic and self-organising nature of social and economic arrangements. When governments intervene in the affairs of individuals and institutions (and even markets and non-state actors), people become worried that such governments may become tyrannical and dysfunctional (Hayek, 1988). This argument basically says that freedom, choice and democracy are best delivered via free market capitalism and not under the remit of some ruling authority, like a state or some other sovereign power. But what if people cannot realise themselves and their freedoms in the market economy, and what if they do not have the means to buy the things they need or use markets as a vehicle for freedom and choice? What then?

Marxist and Keynesian Critiques of Capitalism

Not everyone agrees with the rather optimistic and particularly naïve picture of capitalism painted above, least not of all many communities, activist, and radical and critical traditions in the history of social work. Social work, as an organised system of helping and social change, works directly with the daily realities of many injustices, miseries, inequalities, forms of exploitation (human, environmental), violence, displacement and discrimination (see chapter one, this volume). When pausing to

reflect on the origins of many of these problems, the capitalist economy and society are typically highlighted as a root cause, and therefore, a legitimate site of critique, reform, and change (Dominelli, 2004; Mullaly, 2007). From a radical or critical social work perspective, if we want to bring about a more just, fair and sustainable society, we simply must change the social, political and economic foundations that cause injustice and threaten the environment. The origins of radical and critical social work perspectives lay in both Marxist and Keynesian critiques of capitalism and unregulated capitalism, and more recently, a wider critique of neoliberalism (Ferguson, 2007; Gray, Dean, Agllias, Howard, & Schubert, 2015).

Marxist Critique of Capitalism

The revolutionary philosopher and theorist Karl Marx (1818–1883) offers an enduring, insightful and influential analysis of capitalism. Marx's insights into capitalism have informed generations of theoretical and empirical work in the humanities and social sciences, entire social movements, many aspects of social work theory and practice, and it has launched wholesale revolutions. From the Marxist point of view, capitalism is an elaborate form of exploitation and organised theft, where the few (ruling elite, owners of the means of production, bourgeoisie) control and preside over the activities and lives of the many (working class, wage earners, proletariat) (Marx & Engels, 1967). In this analysis, capitalism is a system that divides people into antagonistic class groups and pits them against each other, leading to social conflict and division. The ruling class, the wealthy, and the owners of the means of production and distribution have considerable economic, social and political power, and they benefit from much of the wealth that capitalism so efficiently creates. They are able to squeeze the wages and conditions of the workers as low as possible in order to maximise the profit and surplus value that workers create through their labour. The working class is forced to accept poor quality, dangerous and badly paid jobs because the relations of power between employers and employees are often unequal (Marx & Engels, 1967).

To shore up and maintain their privileged position, the ruling elite and their business interests co-opt the institutions of the state in order to create legal and policy conditions that are favourable to their interests and to the interests of capital. This is why we see policies that give tax breaks and other 'free passes' to businesses, meanwhile tightening and restricting benefits and social goods to the most disadvantaged. The ruling elite own and control the means of mass media communication, which is then used to propagate a capitalist ideology to convince the working class that capitalism is natural, inevitable, and a good thing that is in their interests (Allen & O'Boyle, 2011). The Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) considered this a form of hegemony—a kind of dominating social and cultural engineering that ensures that the working class remains docile and ignorant to their true interests and the reality of their historical and material circumstances (Van Krieken et al., 2006). We may see evidence of this when poor and dispossessed people are pushed to vote

for political parties on the (false) belief that these parties actually represent their interests, when they do not. We see this when people are told they can shop their way to happiness and a good life, despite evidence to the contrary (Hamilton, 2003).

This false ideology also means that the masses of working class, exploited and disadvantaged people are also pitted against each other in the competition for scarce resources, and in the ensuing battle, are unlikely to unite together to create the sort of social and economic revolution needed to overthrow capitalism—a revolution that Marx predicted would come about when the internal conflicts and contradictions of the capitalist system caused it to collapse and transform into socialism. An example of a contradiction in the capitalist system is where there is persistent unemployment even while there is much work to be done and good sections of the workforce find themselves working long hours in unpaid overtime (Janda, 2017). Another contradiction is the continuation of poverty side-by-side with extreme levels of wealth (Cooper & Dumpleton, 2013; Gordon et al., 2013; Oxfam, 2017). Another is where people may work extremely hard on important work, for long hours, in difficult and challenging circumstances, for very little pay, and with little recognition; whereas, others seem to enjoy high pay for not much effort and in some cases their contribution to society may even be dubious (Bowles, 2007).

Marxist class analysis has been critiqued and extended by feminist and post-colonial thinking and scholarship. Feminists point to a gendered division of labour as a key force of inequality. They argue that a hegemonic patriarchal system—one that facilitates men's general dominance over women in homes, schools, businesses and workplaces—is really an extension of capitalist modes of production and exploitation into the domestic sphere (Tong, 2009). In short, for Marxists and others following in this vein, far from being a system of freedom and fellow feeling, capitalism is contradictory, breeds conflict and disunity, and is built on the back of the systematic and extensive exploitation of people and the natural environment.

Keynes' Critique of Unregulated Capitalism

In most if not all Western liberal democracies, Marxism took hold as a dissenting critical theory in academic and activist circles (see chapter six, this volume), but it was not widely embraced in the West as a central organising economic and social system (non-Western exceptions were the former USSR, China and various other Eastern European, South American, Asian and African regions that adopted some variant of Marxist or Marxist-Leninist socialist or communist system involving a planned economy and a central coordinating state). Aside from Marx, there were other critics of unregulated capitalism who *did* have influence over the central architecture of economic and social policy in Western democracies. The British economist John Maynard Keynes (1883–1946) was influential in this respect.

Keynes was less radical in his outlook than Marx, but like Marx, Keynes still viewed capitalism as riddled with instabilities and injustices. Unlike Marx, however, Keynes thought that the core of capitalism could be retained, and that the inherent

instability of capitalism could be remedied by a program of reforms, adjustments, and interventions by the state and through government (Bowles, 2007). This proposes that capitalism can be managed, regulated, and controlled through the deployment of a strong state with regulatory oversight of the capitalist economy and its institutions. In the shadow of the Great Depression of 1929–1939, Keynes' views were influential. For nearly 30 years following World War Two, Keynes' interventionism was the dominant economic approach to post-war capitalism (Bowles, 2007), backed by a Fabian socialist ideology that values democracy *and* support for social welfare (George & Wilding, 1985). This model of a managed economy and welfare state took hold in most Anglophone and Western countries, albeit in different forms and configurations. Social work enjoyed a place in this emerging context. Its legitimacy and many of its activities were sponsored and funded through government, under broad remit of the welfare state and welfarism generally (Kessl, 2009). However, since at least the 1980s, this legitimacy has been under attack and the welfare state entered a period of fiscal and ideological crisis (Ife, 2002). The acceleration of capitalism into the global arena has presented further complications to the Keynesian approach. The ascendancy of capitalist ideology worldwide led to the weakening of nation-states in the face of massive financial imperatives and the rise and rise of multi-national and transnational corporate power and influence (Cox, 2001; Mishra, 1999).

Globalisation

Capitalism is not just a nation-centric phenomena. The historical emergence of European capitalism enabled wealthy nations to use military power to plunder other regions and continents, bringing forth the long and violent history of colonisation, and more recently, globalisation (Robertson, 2003). Riding on the most recent wave of free market globalisation in the 1980s and 1990s, multi-national corporations move money around the globe, searching out cheap labour and lax environmental and industrial laws within which to situate their enterprises (Pilger, 2006). Structural Adjustment Programs in the 1980s and 1990s, brokered and funded by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), provided loans to developing countries on condition that they transformed their economies along the lines of neoliberal free market principles (Prigoff, 2000). Capitalism may produce cheap running shoes and smartphones for the world market, but they are made in the vast sweatshops of the developing South (Pilger, 2006).

Capitalism is now a global enterprise. How effective, successful, morally virtuous, right or wrong, appropriate or sustainable or unsustainable we judge it to be is a matter of massive contention and debate. Where one sits on this debate can often turn on their place in the global economic order, and their perspectival or ideological view of capitalism. It is difficult to draw a neat line around this question. Under globalisation, the traditional Marxist analysis of two great warring classes duking it out in the industrial complex is untenable in today's diverse post-industrial and globalised

society. Class positions are highly fragmented, and people's location in the global economy are far more divergent than they are unified. For example, someone may be fantastically wealthy not because they own farms, casinos, businesses or factories, but because they can trade on their fame in a media-soaked culture fascinated with celebrity (Sternheimer, 2011). Likewise, someone may own a business, but that does not mean they are part of the well-off elite—many small businesses, for example, are financially precarious and when they fail, can suddenly thrust their owners and employees (often family members) into unemployment, bankruptcy and financial ruin.

However, there is some evidence to show that—notwithstanding the more brutal sides of the unfolding of the history of early European and later global capitalism—many people have enjoyed and continue to enjoy improved standards of living. Since, 2000, it is estimated that about a billion people have been lifted out of extreme poverty (Cruz, Foster, Quillin, & Schellekens, 2015), mainly in China and India (Edward & Sumner, 2018). In tandem with poverty reduction, we can also see improvements in levels of health, education, and other benefits that come with an improved standard of living. This is frequently touted as a success, and it gives weight to proponents of the free market to push for *more freedom* and *more market*.

At the same time, the gains made in global poverty reduction are contested and the informing data is open to interpretation and revision depending on the values used to measure poverty. Adjustment of the absolute poverty indicator from $1.25 USD per day to $1.90 USD per day will demonstrate a marked improvement in extreme poverty, but as Edward and Sumner note, a 'difference here of just 10 cents can add 100 million people to poverty headcounts' (2018, p. 499), and it is estimated that 'as much as half of the world's population lives below $5 per day, and two-thirds live below $10 a day' (Edward & Sumner, 2018, p. 502). Kharas and Rogerson (2017) explain that global poverty reduction will slow considerably over the 5-year period from 2017–2022 because the notable gains made in Asia will have peaked, and poverty may worsen in fragile states in Africa. Whatever benefits we may attribute to global capitalism, it is clear that these are unevenly dispersed and contain many irregularities and dysfunctions (for example, environmental degradation, climate change, and the durability and enormous capitalist market associated with war and militarism) (Hall & Lamont, 2013). Even in wealthy nations such as the United States, Canada, Australia and in the United Kingdom, poverty is still a problem and in some cases increasing, even at the same time as those at the top end of the wealth distribution tiers are getting richer (Australian Council of Social Services, 2014; Gordon et al., 2013; Hall & Lamont, 2013; United Nations, 2013).

Neoliberalism

Capitalism today is nothing like Smith imagined and it would barely be recognisable to Marx or Keynes. Marx's revolution has not arrived; the regulatory constraints on capital and the welfare model that followed Keynes have been dismantled. Capitalism

is now free to reign, and its liberator is *neoliberalism.* This concept refers to a break or rupture in the development of capitalism towards a radical free market ideology and practice. The term 'neoliberalism' has reached the status of a preeminent buzzword, a catch-all term that points to almost anything and everything (Dean, 2014). It is a phenomenon that has captured the interests of many, including activists who contest it, and economists and politicians who have promoted it. From an academic point of view it has swept through the social sciences, humanities, economics, research, literature and cultural studies disciplines, to name a few (Flew, 2014; Peck et al., 2009). It is said we live in neoliberal times. We work in neoliberal workplaces, and study in neoliberal universities, run by neoliberal hacks who push neoliberal policies, informed by neoliberal ideologies, circulated through neoliberal discourses—all of which shape human nature itself into a neoliberal subject. If human beings were fish, neoliberalism would be the water we swim in. Or so it seems.

If neoliberalism were considered a good thing, we could all celebrate this state of affairs. But many think that neoliberalism is not a good thing and should be challenged, critiqued, rejected and overturned. For many writers in social work, neoliberalism is the central force behind the creation and perpetuation of social, economic and environmental injustices, and violence (Hosken, 2016; Ife, 2016; Mullaly, 2007; Pease & Nipperess, 2016). Ife (2016) explains that neoliberalism has eroded the welfare state, resulting in a crisis that includes:

> Continuing cut-backs in public services, lowering of the quality of service as overburdened workers are urged to 'do more with less', longer waiting lists and waiting periods, lack of access to health care (except for those who can afford private insurance), the deterioration of the public education system, poor staff morale, and a general lack of confidence in the capacity of the public system to cope. (pp. 21–22)

Morley (2004) argues that neoliberalism has led to the increased marginalisation of social work. Neoliberalism means cuts to social policies and welfare spending, which ultimately 'sanction competition and the creation of power hierarchies between staff, resulting in an individualized culture of control and mistrust, instead of teamwork and collaboration' (Morley, 2004, p. 300). Relatedly, others see neoliberalism as the cause of increasing workloads and loss of professional autonomy (Baines, 2006), diminishing social work activism (Carrington, 2016), and leading to divisions between social work field education and academic learning (Morley & Dunstan, 2012).

Social work is not alone in its critique, as neoliberalism is rarely discussed in the literature in sympathetic tones (Thorsen, 2010). Yet, Flew (2014) argues that the overuse of neoliberalism as an 'all-purpose denunciatory category' (p. 51) that points to 'the way things are' (p. 53) weakens our intellectual engagement with it. If neoliberalism points to anything and everything then it loses all meaning. It has been referred to as a 'conceptual trash heap' (Boas & Gans-Morse, 2009, p. 156), frequently talked about with 'moral vehemence' (Flew, 2014, p. 67). Others have referred to it as a 'rascal concept—promiscuously pervasive, yet inconsistently defined, empirically imprecise and frequently contested' (Brenner et al., 2010b, p. 182). The concept is frequently invoked in the literature, yet rarely explained (Flew, 2014). Given this,

arriving at a clear, concise and uncontested definition of neoliberalism is unlikely, if not impossible.

In a very general sense, 'neoliberalism is understood variously as a bundle of (favoured) policies, as a tendential process of institutional transformation, as an emergent form of subjectivity, as a reflection of realigned hegemonic interests, or as some combination of the latter' (Brenner et al., 2010b, p. 183). Keeping in view the three main elements of this definition—(1) favoured policies, (2) an uneven process of change and institutional transformation (3) an emergent subjectivity and realigned hegemonic interests—we can see that social work seems to have organised its critique of neoliberalism at every point of this conjecture, by harnessing the intellectual resources of two main trajectories: the Marxist and neo-Keynesian inspired historical materialist analyses of the international political economy of neoliberalism, and, to a lesser extent, the governmentality critiques of neoliberalism that can be traced back to Michel Foucault.

Specifically, social work has mounted, and continues to mount, a criticism of neoliberalism along the following lines:

- *Harm*—neoliberalism is an especially harmful and damaging ideology and set of policies and practices, particularly unfriendly towards vulnerable and disadvantaged people, and unfriendly and damaging to the environment.
- *Unfairness*—neoliberalism produces highly patterned forms of inequality along the lines of wealth, power and privilege. While some people, groups, regions and nations benefit from neoliberalism, others do not and are disadvantaged by it.
- *Dismantling the welfare state and the social contract*—neoliberalism has resulted in diminishing and in some cases the outright removal of distributive policies, safety nets, and principles of a fair go that were central to the welfare state.
- *Commodification of everything*—neoliberalism turns all aspects of life into a product to be bought and sold in the capitalist market, and in doing so, has weakened or destroyed many other important human values, such as democracy, citizenship, fellow feeling, community and solidarity.
- *Individualism*—neoliberalism has taken the liberal value of the individual and twisted it beyond recognition, so that now ethics and norms are articulated as personal entrepreneurialism, rational prudentialism, and the responsibilisation of the human subject.
- *Economic ends as the highest good*—neoliberalism makes the mistake of elevating economic ends above all other values, so that everything is now structured as a means to achieve those ends. In this situation, notions of rights, justice, or ecological sustainability are subordinated to economic ends.

Neoliberalism as a Favoured Policy Program

Neoliberalism became the favourable economic theory following a number of economic disasters rooted in the seemingly irreconcilable conflicts between labour and capital in the 1970s and early 1980s. This heralded the end of Keynesian interventionism (Brenner et al., 2010b; Dean, 2014). The solution to the many economic and industrial problems of the 1970s and 1980s was to allow capital and markets to achieve full ascendency, and at the same time, severely diminish the collective bargaining power of labour (Bowles, 2007). Under neoliberalism, the role of the state was reduced to a minimal one, namely to ensure law and order and create conditions that favour economic functioning and growth. At the policy level this shift away from Keynes included the intensification of free market principles, such as weakening labour power (for example, union busting), cutting government expenditure, reducing the size of government, and deregulating many aspects of the market economy (Brenner et al., 2010b).

Reagan in the United States and Thatcher in the UK were the vanguards of this new economic order in the early 1980s (Brenner et al., 2010b). Economic growth, efficiency and individual responsibility were cemented as the highest values or goods to aspire to, demoting other values such as welfare, social justice, community, and environmental sustainability. Under this view, if someone does not or cannot succeed in the new economic order then they only have themselves to blame. The state was critiqued for its role in breeding dependency and stifling innovation (Murray, 1984). Free of the shackles of government interference, individuals are pushed to become more actuarial, more personally responsible for managing the many risks and hazards that beset modern life (McDonald, 2010). They become more entrepreneurial in their outlook and conduct in life, encouraged to invest in themselves through things like education, and pushed to narrowly look after their own interests. Workers are forced to be more flexible, mobile and adaptable to a rapidly changing and uncertain labour market marked by casual, part-time, contract work. This context is often referred to as post-Fordism (Kumar, 1992). In a post-Fordist labour market, workers are forced to undertake a program of lifelong learning and ceaseless self-improvement and credentialism so that they themselves become ‘products’ that are traded in the highly competitive employment market-place.

Institutional Transformation

These neoliberal policy formulations and initiatives unfold unevenly and sporadically in waves. Each wave constitutes an element in the broader project of *neoliberalisation,* as a process. Each wave may consist of locally or institutionally embedded neoliberal projects that produces a double movement (Brenner et al., 2010b). First, there is the introduction of a *specific* neoliberal project or initiative. For example, a specific initiative to deregulate a once regulated industry, or a specific initiative

to impose severe mutual obligation and compliance conditions on people seeking income support. Second, there is a *disruption* to the local or historical character of the site of the neoliberal intervention (Brenner et al., 2010b). This may look like rapid change, restructuring, a technical innovation, and it may involve conflict, resistance, disruption and crisis. In the case of deregulation, this may include businesses suddenly closing and jobs being lost or moving off-shore. In the case of mutual obligation, this may involve a sudden spike in people being sanctioned and penalised for non-compliance to new social security regulations. Like waves hitting on a shore, each character of the neoliberal project is unique, even if viewed from a distance it has a distinctive patterning effect (deregulation everywhere, punitive welfare everywhere). Like waves, some may be gentle incursions, gradually eroding the shoreline over time in imperceptible ways. This is often the case with successive waves of technological innovation in workplaces that gradually subject people to increasing layers of surveillance and efficiency measures. But some neoliberal waves are violent shocks that drastically alter and change the landscape, suddenly and abruptly changing with it the circumstances and living arrangements of communities, families and individuals who inhabit these spaces. For example, large-scale economic restructuring programs such as privatisation or deregulation. Neoliberalism is creatively destructive, and it brings its own disruptive crises into the living rooms, dinner tables and workplaces of ordinary people everywhere. The effects of neoliberal policy and practices are also felt unevenly across communities and even within nation-states and bringing with it 'different opportunity structures [where]…some people gain but others lose' (Hall & Lamont, 2013, p. 7).

There is a backstory to this major shift in political, economic and policy thinking that took hold in the early 1980s and which continues to this day, and we can understand this backstory by considering the historical and intellectual origins of neoliberalism. Dean (2014) refers to neoliberalism as a 'thought collective' (p. 5), and by thought collective he means 'an organized group of individuals exchanging ideas within a common intellectual framework' (p. 5). This exchange of ideas has been characterised more by disagreement and dissent than consensus, but regardless, Dean states that neoliberalism began as an organised and militant *movement* rather than as a fully fleshed out coherent political philosophy.

The origins of this movement go back to the '1930s and 1940s, when it was formulated as a dissenting ideological movement in opposition to the Keynesian political-economic order' (Brenner et al., 2010b, p. 211). Although early neoliberalism promulgated certain ideas to do with human nature and market liberalisation (see below), it also draws much of its power from its opposition to a managed economy. Its chief target that it sought to attack and discredit was, and remains, the Keynesian approach to economic management and intervention, and the distributive welfare state. These were criticised by neoliberals for interfering too much with individual freedoms, and giving too much leeway to the restrictive, oppressive and dominating tendencies of state power (Dean, 2014). Furthermore, early neoliberals thought that a large interventionist state was one that pandered too heavily to special interest groups, and would invariably become clogged up and weakened by the 'pathologies

of democracy' (Dean, 2014, p. 55). A strong and effective state, neoliberals argue, is one that promotes economic freedom of individuals and capital, while putting a lid on democracy and appeals to special 'social' interests.

Neoliberal Subjectivity and Hegemony

A particular intellectual influence in this historical movement was the German Ordoliberal and Chicago neoliberal economic schools, which have been examined in detail in Foucault's historical analyses of the history of neoliberal rationality and biopolitics (Lemke, 2001). Foucault has noted that the formation of neoliberal rationality included the idea that economic systems and institutions might function better if they create the conditions that result in wider cultural and moral dispositions towards enterprise and economy. In other words, an attempt 'to anchor the entrepreneurial form at the very heart of society' (Lemke, 2001, p. 196). To anchor the entrepreneurial spirit at the heart of society means that *all* aspects of human existence, right down to the fine-grained level of subjectivity, are subject to, and defined by, economic concepts, values and categories. For example, under this model human labour is not just an activity we perform in order to produce and exchange value, but becomes central to one's subjectivity and how we think about ourselves and relate to each other and to the world. The human being ceases to be a person or a citizen outside of the frame of being someone who is and *becomes* an economic subject, or a vessel for continual capital potential. If there is anything left of human nature, that nature is now entrepreneurial. That nature is one driven to rationally calculate economic costs, benefits and risks at the level of individuals, families, workplaces and nations. It is one that enters into continual examination and reflection upon one's existence and one's mode of being as being primarily economically focused and narrowly entrepreneurial about one's individual and collective interests. It is one that engages in a certain performativity (a way of living and behaving) of an economically rationalist form. In doing so, we move from *homo-sapiens* to become *homo-economicus*.

What dark forces of power are at work to push human nature into an economic form? Who or what is pulling all the levers and tugging on all the strings? The answer, confusingly, is no one and everyone, everything and nothing. Under neoliberalism, although the government still retains some of its traditional regulating forms, it also takes on new forms. These are inconspicuous forms of power entailing 'indirect techniques for leading and controlling individual subjects without at the same time being responsible for them' (Lemke, 2001, p. 201). This has been referred to as governing from a distance (Dean, 1999) and involves both direct and indirect, subtle and not so subtle techniques for moving human thought and conduct in ways that might construct a 'responsible and moral individual and economic rational actor' (Lemke, 2001, p. 201) who is fully responsible for his or her actions. For example, the role that psychology plays in promoting therapies and medications that cohere as 'moral injunctions to work on the self to attain greater autonomy, to accept responsibility for one's choices and circumstances, to strive to realise one's potential, and to increase

one's quality of life' (Sugarman, 2015, p. 108). Therefore, we govern ourselves and we govern all those around us, in what Foucault calls the *conduct of conduct* (Simons & Masschelein, 2006). Under this arrangement, socio-economic and political problems and risks, and the responsibilities for managing them, are transferred to the individual:

> Neo-liberalism encourages individuals to give their lives a specific entrepreneurial form. It responds to stronger 'demand' for individual scope for self-determination and desired autonomy by 'supplying' individuals and collectives with the possibility of actively participating in the solution of specific matters and problems which had hitherto been the domain of state agencies specifically empowered to undertake such tasks. (Lemke, 2001, pp. 201–202)

On one hand, we 'freely' enter into this arrangement of self-government. On the other hand, we are subject to the authoritarian nature of neoliberal governmentality (Dean, 1999). This makes a fiction out of ideas that human beings are free, autonomous or have some essentialist nature. The rational economic subject is not an a priori naturally occurring human condition after all but is the result of the conditions and forces of the market (Lemke, 2001). People are *products* of the market, and being a certain kind of consumer or worker or citizen is a market invention (Lemke, 2001). This is a grim and rather hopeless picture of human beings devoid of any agency outside of an economic model of being. As indicated further in this chapter, and elsewhere in this book, recovering human agency in political, deliberative and citizenship modes of being is key to contesting neoliberalism.

Contesting Neoliberalism

Contrary to some views in the literature, neoliberalism is much more than an ideology or a discourse expressed in language games. It is a deeply institutional form of practice that constitutes human subjectivity. In its institutional form, neoliberalism is first and foremost a political, social and economic philosophy, but as a 'guiding framework' (Flew, 2014, p. 64) it develops into highly specific proposals, policies and practices that are embedded in institutions. Flew states this framework is:

> the enterprise model for society as whole; legal and regulatory frameworks that promote competition, rather than acting to constrict it in the name of other social goals; social policy that acts as a support rather than a corrective to the market economy; policy actions to promote markets and competition; and judicial activism to limit the discretionary application of state power. (Flew, 2014, p. 64)

Although ostensibly a global economic doctrine (Brenner et al., 2010b), the exact forms that neoliberalism takes, how it may manifest in practice, the way it is adopted, promoted, resisted, critiqued, revised, changed and altered is subject to considerable variation and change (Hall & Lamont, 2013). What does happen is *continuous institutional transformation*: restructuring, blending, merging and morphing into new forms that follow the general logic and path dependency of capitalism. With its partner in globalisation, neoliberalism elevates the power of capital well above that of

the nation-state, and above that of citizen democracy (Brenner et al., 2010b). This creates considerable pressure on governments, institutions, organisations and ordinary citizens to follow the path dependent logic of global capitalism, because the consequences of not doing so are perceived as being too risky, and institutions are essentially designed and function with that logic in mind (Brenner et al., 2010b).

This institutional and governmental perspective outlined earlier explains the pervasiveness and tenacity of neoliberalism. It explains how neoliberalism is embedded in social and political practice, *all the way down*—policy concepts and methods; legal instruments; rules and procedures; daily work routines for coordinating work; organisational arrangements; funding models; accounting systems; reporting methodologies and databases; metrics and performance indicators; operational manuals and procedural handbooks; ethical codes and codes of conduct; governance arrangements and constitutional forms; the use and design of architectural space; information and communication technologies; norms of behaviour, speech, dress, conduct and communication; the resume and Curriculum Vitae; habits of mind and body, such as self-imposed routines and norms of exercise, diet, sleep and recreation; beliefs and concepts of one's subjective experience and outlook as an economically rational, entrepreneurial self-maximising individual.

There is no head to the body of this beast that can be cut off, and by this, we mean that neoliberalism 'is not simply an expression of the *zeitgeist* of global capitalism or as a conspiracy of ruling elites' (Flew, 2014, p. 67, original italics). Although the idea of an organised neoliberal movement implies some notion of conscious planning behind closed doors in lofty boardrooms, the historical unfolding of neoliberal thought and practice was not subject to a central coordinating authority and nor was it a secret capitalist plot. As Brenner et al. (2010b) explain, it was an eclectic and disarticulated series of initiatives and experiments spanning several decades in a multitude of different sites such as think tanks, universities, economic and business departments, financial institutions, military centres and authoritarian governments.

This is not to say that people and organisations do not benefit from neoliberalism and do not hold meetings behind closed doors in lofty boardrooms to figure out how to game the system—undoubtedly they do. But neoliberalism is not a single thing and it can shapeshift in different forms and iterations. Because its origins were born out of the crisis of the Great Depression in the 1930s (Dean, 2014; Peck et al., 2009), as a crisis adaptive theory it is well equipped with the capacity to mutate and adapt to the various shocks in the capitalist economy (Peck et al., 2009). That is its point, and that is why it might be better to think of it as a mutating virus, rather than operating as a single unified body topped with a consciously governing head. Neoliberalism has hybrid forms, is 'variegated' (p. 182) and patterned, as opposed to being totalising and uniform (Brenner et al., 2010b). Furthermore, it is not a total integrated and interconnected system and it is a not a single entity, so even if one part fails or mutates, other aspects of neoliberalism may be reinvented in new and creatively destructive ways (Peck et al., 2009), much like the multi-headed hydra-snake—cut off one head and two more grow back. Neoliberalism persists because its mechanisms are sewn deep into society's institutions and deep into human consciousness (Dean, 2014; Peck et al., 2009). It is so ingrained in the thought patterns of many of the world's

leaders and decision-makers that it becomes hard to see any viable alternatives (Flew, 2014). This gives the sense that neoliberalism is total and has uniformity, and may explain why we often hear politicians say things like '*jobs and growth, jobs and growth, jobs and growth…*' and on and on, like there are no other ideas left to talk about.

For example, the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) of 2008 did not overturn capitalism, nor did it lead to any fundamental changes in the system. Many people hoping for the sudden fall of neoliberal capitalism would be disappointed; instead we may simply be witnessing what Peck et al. (2009) call the 'slow death' of neoliberalism (p. 100). The GFC galvanised widespread dissent, criticism and protest to capitalism and its institutions, and neoliberalism copped a sustained attacked from critics, particularly from those on the left. Even proponents of free market ideology were questioning its legitimacy because its intellectual foundations were revealed to be so patently flawed, and its status as a *bona fide* economic theory was now in tatters (Peck et al., 2009). If it is in terminal decline, what might this slow death look like?

In seeking to look beyond the present neoliberal horizon, Brenner et al. (2010a) speculatively sketch four possible scenarios for a post-neoliberalism. These are useful points of consideration for locating social work's thinking and action towards working towards a post-neoliberal future. As it seems, the present situation resembles a mix of scenarios one and two, but the complete reformation of neoliberalism necessitates scenarios three and four. This will require work across local, national and global spatial levels.

1. *Zombie neoliberalisation*. In this scenario, neoliberalism lumbers forward more or less in its current form. The ideological 'head' of neoliberal ideology may already be dormant, but the working mechanisms of the neoliberal 'body' have been systematically and thoroughly integrated into all levels of society, from the institutional level all the way down to the level of one's subjectivity. It is a ghastly metaphor, but under this scenario, neoliberalism may lurch and blunder from one crisis to the next, despite having no ideological or philosophical coherence or economic legitimacy.
2. *Disarticulated counter-neoliberalisation*. In this scenario, neoliberalism persists more or less in its current form, but it is under sustained critique and attack from local and nationally organised pockets of resistance, such as workers' rights movements, environmental groups and various other social movements, including right-wing populist and nationalist movements. This scenario is disarticulated because these movements are disparate, mostly localised or nation-based, and they may not cohere or join together to create the kind of unified frontal assault needed to reach a long-term restructuring of the global economic system.
3. *Orchestrated counter-neoliberalisation*. In this scenario, the degree of organised resistance to neoliberalism is accelerated and mobilised into widely networked coalitions that may actively and systematically experiment with 'neo-Keynesian, social democratic, or eco-socialist national, regional or local governments' forms of government and policy (Brenner et al., 2010a, p. 341). Despite the highly coordinated, networked and sustained efforts in this scenario, it will still be insuffi-

cient to fully penetrate and unravel the depths of neoliberalism from the 'echelons of global political-economic power, such as multilateral agencies, supranational trading blocs, and powerful national governments' (Brenner et al., 2010a, p. 341).

4. *Deep socialisation*. In this scenario, neoliberalism is 'subjected to greater public scrutiny and popular critique' (Brenner et al., 2010a, p. 342). It is not just the broad ideological tenets of neoliberalism that are under attack, but the minutiae of its institutional and policy driven fibres and tentacles—the critique of neoliberalism is total and all the way down to its core and its roots.

Deep socialisation has a strong affinity to many progressive, critical and radical social work approaches, as indicated through the following scenarios, eloquently explained by Brenner et al. (2010a) as follows:

> These might include capital and exchange controls; debt forgiveness; progressive tax regimes; non-profit based, cooperatively run, deglobalized credit schemes; more systematic global redistribution; public works investments; and the decommodification of basic social needs such as shelter, water, transportation, health care, and utilities. Out of the ashes of the neoliberalized global rule-regime emerges an alternative social democratic, solidaristic, and/or eco-socialist model of global regulation. (p. 342)

Brenner et al. (2010a) admit that this vision is an unapologetically 'progressive, solidaristic, and radically democratic normative vision' (p. 342) and this fits with current leftist and progressive visions of social, economic and ecological justice. While this vision is far from guaranteed, there are reasons to be somewhat optimistic. As Kymlicka (2013) suggests, 'wherever neoliberal reforms have been implemented, they have operated within a dense set of social relations that conditions the impact…if neoliberalism has shaped social relations, it is equally true that those relations have shaped neoliberalism…' (p. 99). The slow lumbering death (and perhaps instead its gradual mutation and rebirth into new and different forms) is due in part to the absence of a consensus on what to do next, and an absence of any serious ideological rival to neoliberalism (Peck et al., 2009). We may loathe neoliberalism and complain about it, but it is hegemonic and still-standing centre stage. This is not to deny that there are, of course, alternative ideological and philosophical positions that *could* stand in for neoliberalism (for example, social democratic, ecological, localism, protectionist populism), but as Peck et al. (2009) state, 'there is no crisp clean divide between its "inside" and its "outside"; there is no iron curtain between neoliberalism and its others' (p. 105). A post-neoliberal future may be driven by forces that are hardly based on social justice. Out of the ashes of neoliberalism 'any number of regressive, even barbaric, scenarios are possible, including various forms of neoconservative, neototalitarian, and neofundamentalist reaction, hyperpolarization, neo-imperialism, remilitarization, and ecological degradation' (p. 342).

Conclusion

Clearly, much is at stake for attempts to deliver social justice in light of neoliberalism and our post-neoliberal futures. The question of 'where to next' is not obvious to everyone and there are no guarantees as to what that might look like. It is still an open question, but it is one that could be addressed via further deliberation and local and global resistance politics—something that is already emerging on the left and the right of the political spectrum (for example, the radical alt-left and alt-right populist movements in the US are both rooted in critiques of neoliberalism). Resistance to neoliberalism is likely to be locally and institutionally based because the target is not some giant 'out there' conspiracy, but something that is more ordinary and mundane, and aspects of it are *in the contexts and forms of practice*. Given the fluidity and variability of institutional forms, social work activism is pivotally located to influence the kinds of practices that embed themselves into institutional practice, even in covert forms (see, for example, Greenslade, McAuliffe, & Chenoweth, 2015). At the same time, given the institutional and material nature of neoliberalism, much of it is not ontologically and phenomenologically separate from the actions and intentions of individual people, many of whom are caught up in the institutional machinery of neoliberalism, albeit in different ways. Resistance and transformation demand a closer examination and critique of the material and extra-discursive ways that neoliberalism takes root in the structures, routines, norms and technologies of practice (see Chap. 5, this volume).

As a form of resistance, the role of social work is to promote a progressive and socially just vision of a post-neoliberalism. But neoliberalism has, over many decades, weakened and undermined democracy, delegitimised the nation-state, fragmented communities and prioritised the needs of capital and corporate interest over those of citizens. The capacity for people to come together to deliberate in a democratic way over what we may want from an economic and social system has been severely curtailed. We need to urgently rescue this capability from the clutches of neoliberalism if we are to make serious progress on charting a way forward.

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Chapter 5
Power and Knowledge

Abstract Conceptions of power are important to consider how best to address discrimination and oppression within social work practice. Early social theory accounts tended to consider power as a property that some institutions, individuals and groups accrued by virtue of unequal social arrangements of various kinds. Later poststructural accounts considered power as constituting norms, forms of knowledge and various social practices. This chapter outlines both theoretical positions to present contemporary understandings of power where they may be seen as important element in critical social work practice towards social justice. Specifically, the chapter explains structural and behavioural accounts of power, as well as pastoral power, biopower and the emergence of neuro-bio-psychological knowledge and what this means for social justice, now and into the future.

Introduction

Power is something that is deeply connected to the thoughts and actions of human beings. As stated by Russell (1975), human beings are imaginative and restless—people typically engage in a variety of activities and pursuits even long after their basic needs have been more than satisfied. Attainment of both basic needs and higher order pursuits depends on acquiring and using power. What power actually is and what it means defies simple explanation:

> We speak and write about power, in innumerable situations, and we usually know, or think we know, perfectly well what we mean. In daily life and in scholarly works, we discuss its location and its extent, who has more and who has less, how to gain, resist, seize, harness, secure, tame, share, spread, distribute, equalize, or maximize it, how to render it more effective and how to limit or avoid its effects. (Lukes, 2005, p. 61)

Barnes (1988, p. iv) says that power is 'like gravity or electricity' in that it is always around us. And like gravity or electricity, we may experience power's effects without actually understanding or observing power as a phenomenon itself. In a common-sense way, we tend to associate power with people who may be physically powerful, possess powerful or influential personalities or qualities, or occupy posi-

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L. Watts and D. Hodgson, *Social Justice Theory and Practice for Social Work*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-3621-8_5

tions or offices of power (Barnes, 1988). As Lukes (2005) points out, the concept of power has 'multiple and diverse meanings' (p. 61). Power may include everything from the use of physical force over the body, to elaborate social systems of rewards or punishments, to large-scale programmes of propaganda (Russell, 1986). Power is also a *capacity,* not simply a property that is exercised. Furthermore, power can be used in beneficial ways, so not all power is bad (Lukes, 2005), even though, of course, power can be abusive, destructive and violent. Power also has a practical aspect concerning how we might use power in the world to achieve things; however, these things may be defined. Power also has a moral dimension because we make judgments about the extent to which it is used either for good or evil, and power contains an evaluative aspect because we make judgments about its distribution within society, which may involve comparisons between who has power, and who does not (Lukes, 2005).

An important point to recall here—and one relevant to our discussion—is that power is often linked to domination and oppression. For Iris Young, concern with domination ought to be the main point of orientation for any serious discussion and action concerning social justice (Young, 1990). Addressing domination and oppression involves ongoing struggle because they are significant forces in the ways societies are constructed and maintained (Stewart, 2000). Power and domination are also central concerns for social work, especially for radical and critical social work that locates power and domination in social, political and economic contexts (Ferguson & Woodward, 2009; Healy, 2014). Although some forms of domination would seem reprehensible today to most (for example, slavery, systematic violence against ethnic groups, genocide), this does not mean such practices are confined to the dustbin of history—far from it. Yet, other forms of domination and oppression are more subtle, invisible and even tolerated, like forms of compulsory responsibilism that take place in counselling confessionals (Lukes, 2005).

Power can also be grounded in economic domination through the uneven possession of resources, the unequal distribution of marketable skills, or in the arrangements of institutions that enable some people to control the behaviours and freedoms of others through management of their labour (Weber, 1986). Some workers in the modern economy are dominated by corporations and technologies, and may feel like they have few freedoms and choices available to them. We may take this situation very personally and feel like there is no escape from it because it is hard to see where this power that is dominating our freedoms is emanating from and how it operates as a force in our lives (think, for example, of the archetypical 'faceless corporation' with no centre). At the same time, according to the sociologist Simmel (1986), domination can occur through interactions between individual people, so it is not just an economic or systemic phenomena, but it is about what individual people do to one another in interpersonal encounters. In this sense, people may feel dominated or bullied or controlled by known individuals (in their families and workplaces for example) and can pinpoint in a precise way their experience of being dominated by another person's power.

Some forms of domination are overt and manifest as outright violence. For Hannah Arendt, violence is 'the most flagrant display of power' (Arendt, 1986, p. 59) and it

can be easy to spot and object to. While violence is often overt and put towards specific purposes, there are subtle background factors that support it, which may include the interests and arrangements of collectives and groups from which individual acts of power and violence spring forward and are *made possible* (Arendt, 1986). As Simmel explains 'a super-individual power—state, church, school, family or military organizations—clothes a person with a reputation, a dignity, a power of ultimate decision, which would never flow from his (sic) individuality' (Simmel, 1986, p. 205). For example, radical feminists have long argued that patriarchy is the enabling culture behind men's oppression of women (Tong, 2009). Likewise, power and its abuse can be made possible through role, status and tradition. So there are both individual factors and social and institutional factors operating together, and it is important for social workers to be able to work with such multiple levels of analysis.

Social workers are rightly interested in redressing domination, but as pointed about by Stewart (2000), power and domination are not the same thing, and in order to understand one (domination) we must have a solid analysis of the other (power). It is the latter that is the focus of this chapter. The books, volumes and treatises that have been written about power are enormous and wide-ranging. There is simply no way that we can capture the full breadth of this literature in a single chapter. Hence, our focus is necessarily constrained to a couple of points of orientation. The first is to consider power in structural and behavioural terms. The second is to briefly discuss power in poststructural terms, specifically the work of Michel Foucault in relation pastoral power and biopower. The third is to consider power in relation to knowledge, particularly drawing on the work of Nikolas Rose on the rise of psychological and biological knowledges of the human subject. It is important to consider these perspectives as operating in dialogue with each other; for example, Foucault's analysis of power does not replace or supersede structural or juridical accounts of power, but rather, provides a useful perspective of power in the context of neoliberalisation and the administrative and regulative state. Each of these perspectives can assist social workers to conceptualise the role of power in social injustices.

Structural and Behavioural Accounts of Power

Here, we consider power as a structural and behavioural phenomenon. Galbraith (1986) states that power is an instrument with three dimensions. First, power is made possible through the threat of an adverse or painful situation where one actor can make and carry out a threat of some kind, while another is subjected to it. Behaviourally, the person subjected to the threat is placed in an invidious situation where they are forced to choose or enact a preference in order to avoid adversity or pain. In this sense, power is conceptualised as a *punishment*. For example, a policy to revoke people's unemployment benefits if they do not comply with mandatory job-seeking requirements draws on this dimension. In this example, it is presumed that losing one's benefits would yield a higher pain, discomfort or adversity, than the pain or discomfort involved in the act of complying with mandatory job-seeking

activities. Such a policy introduces the threat of an adverse consequence in order to yield behavioural compliance. Second, power is *compensatory* because it can be used to reward certain actions or behaviours. For example, the agency manager who makes sure their service stringently meets funding requirements may be rewarded with further funding. The power of the reward drives behaviour. Finally, power is a kind of *conditioning.* It is conditioning because power can be used to persuade people to believe things or change their minds and beliefs. Here, power may be ideological, normative, discursive or rational in the form of a well-reasoned argument. For example, politicians may leverage media channels to persuade large numbers of people to accept a particular argument, adopt a belief or commit themselves to an ideological position.

For Galbraith (1986), there are three additional sources that operate in the background to bring forth the overall instrumental nature of power. The first is personality (especially in relation to leadership or status), which is important to 'conditioned power—with the ability to persuade or create belief' (p. 214). People who are articulate, educated, have access to knowledge and information, can converse in the dominant language and can use dominantly accepted speech conventions can leverage these attributes into an instrument of *conditioned power* in order to persuade and influence others. Second, the ownership of property and wealth supports the instrument of *compensatory power*, because variance in the distribution of resources enables some people (that is, those people who own or control resources) to reward others (that is, those people who do not own or control resources) in ways that control and shape the behaviour of those who lack such resources. Third, organisational and institutional arrangements themselves can be the source of *punishment*, because punishments or sanctions rely on organisational or institutional backing (in the form of laws, rules or policies, for example).

In summary, power under this theory is conceptualised as a series of instrumental mechanisms and conditions that are largely observable and focused on the behavioural influences of decisions over conflicting interests. But to view power in this way alone is to only consider it in terms of behaviours, interests and conflict over decisions. Lukes (2005) contends that this is an insufficient analysis (p. 18). We must also consider the exercise and capability of power to effect *nondecision-making*, 'in which decisions are prevented from being taken on *potential issues* over which there is an observable *conflict'* (Lukes, 2005, p. 25, italics in original). Nondecision-making concerns the way that people control and shape agendas, can control what can be discussed and what can't, and can control who can participate and who is to be excluded from discussion and decision-making. Important as this is, Lukes contends again that this is an insufficient analysis of power, and following, he advances what he terms a three-dimensional view of power, which includes (1) the behavioural analysis of the capacity and exertion over decision-making; (2) the aspect of nondecision-making to consider; and crucially, (3) the way that the systemic context of power is biased in ways by 'socially structured and culturally patterned behaviour of groups, and practices of institutions' (p. 26). This is now an expansive and encompassing concept of power, moving way beyond the behaviours of individuals to include society, culture, groups and institutional practice.

Social work theory and practice has long cherished its focus on the interplay between person and context, and so an analysis of power must also oscillate between individual factors and the broader social, cultural, economic and political milieu. We take this milieu as a point of orientation to now consider power particularly in relation to knowledge and practice—one that involves an analysis of the regulation of human conduct through knowledge, including the invention of theoretical resources and technological practices that inform and influence the theory and practice of social work.

Poststructural Accounts of Power

We restrict our discussion here to philosopher Michel Foucault who is famous for his analysis of power as being inseparable from knowledge, particularly knowledge of and about human beings; for example, knowledge produced by the human and social sciences, which is underscored by a whole range of philosophical principles and assumptions that are elementary to the Western intellectual tradition going as far back as Aristotle, but particularly since the Enlightenment. For Foucault (1986), power, by its necessity, inescapably produces certain truths and forms of knowledge. This is why Foucault semantically links power with knowledge by invoking the term 'power/knowledge' (Foucault & Gordon, 1980). Truth is not something that describes or reports on an objective empirical reality. Rather, truth operates to 'permeate, characterize and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse' (Foucault & Gordon, 1980, p. 229). Truth is not neutral or objective, and is not simply a thing that can be verified scientifically because its 'truth value' is dependent on the operation and circulation of power (think, for example, the oft-quoted phrase that 'truth is whatever the powerful say it is'). In the context of the human and social sciences, power creates knowledge and is also a force for the *translation* of knowledge of and about human beings into practice. Foucault writes:

> Power never ceases its interrogation, its inquisition, its registration of truth: it institutionalizes, professionalizes and rewards its pursuit…In the end, we are judged, condemned, classified, determined in our undertakings, destined to a certain mode of living or dying, as a function of true discourses which are the bearers of the specific effects of power (Foucault & Gordon, 1980, p. 230).

Knowledge here may include theories, diagnostic and assessment tools, classification systems, labels, and terminology, causal or correlated hypotheses about human behaviour, assumptions about risk, trauma, personality disorders, mental illness and so on. It also includes established routines of practice, which are norms associated with 'how things are done', to whom, by whom and on what justification, and it would even include all those forms of knowledge and practice that are invented and institutionalised in the pursuit of noble or moral ends. Knowledge (theory and prac-

tice) is not always benign and innocent, but can be containers and repositories for power.

From Foucault's (1986) point of view, there is not really some kind of overarching ruling sovereign or monarch at the root of domination. Instead, power is everywhere (even across the pages of this book) and therefore we should focus our level of analysis to 'power at its extremities, in its ultimate destinations, with those points where it becomes capillary, that is, in its more regional and local forms and institutions' (Foucault, 1986, p. 232). For social work, this fine-grained space for locating power is in practice—its methods, methodologies, interactions, vocabularies, bodies of knowledge, assessment tools, forms, and technologies, rules, norms and processes. Social work may have well-rehearsed approaches to organising action and criticisms of 'out there' structures of power (government, business, bureaucracy, managerial neoliberalism), and these certainly have their place in social and political activism and advocacy (see elsewhere, this volume). But what Foucault offers instead is a critically reflective problematisation of knowledge and practice itself. Foucault encourages us to confront and understand the location and formation and reformation of power at its capillary level, in sites of practice within organisations and institutions.

As Foucault has pointed out, power is a 'polyvalent force that runs through multiple sites in the social network' (Newman, 2005, p. 51). From this position, there is no outside of power, no 'power out there' perspective that we can reasonably adopt. Power is said to be everywhere and it is built into the very substrate of subjectivity itself (Newman, 2005). Drawing on Foucault's analysis, Butler (1997) explains that power is a force that constitutes the subject and makes us who and what we are. This is not the result of a straightforward internalisation of power into subjectivity because power is 'what we depend on for our existence and what we harbor and preserve in the beings that we are' (p. 2). For example, the moment we speak into existence the concept of something as commonplace as 'human being' or 'human rights' or 'social justice' we are using some form of power (truth) to render such things thinkable and knowable as *things in the world*. And we do this, for better or worse, using a vast repertoire of different and overlapping nomenclatures for describing the human subject. So, power is seductive precisely for the things it makes happen—not just for material things or the exercise of will or force, this much is true—but for subjectivity and knowledge itself.

Foucault is not without criticism, not least of all for what his dispersed view of power means for a radical politics and organised resistance against the state and its compatriots (see Healy, 2000, pp. 56–59). In some sense, resistance needs to be (re)orientated towards 'the ideological dimension through which structures and relations of power are sustained, articulated and extended' (Newman, 2005, p. 66). This means that from a poststructural view, resistance and critique are directed towards knowledge (epistemology) and practices (techniques, technologies of power), rather than people or institutions per se (this does not absolve individual or institutional abuses of power by the way, but rather, it extends the analysis deeper into their epistemological and ideological rationalities). There is much at stake here. Foucault points us to focus a critical gaze on disciplinary power, because, as he states, disciplinary

power is key to 'the constitution of industrial capitalism and of the type of society that is its accompaniment' (Foucault, 1986, p. 239). Hence, what is operating together is both a juridical sovereign power through state-based and corporate structures and institutions, but also a disciplinary pastoral power inscribed in everyday 'ordinary' practice. The two exist together in modern states and neoliberal societies.

Pastoral Power

To give a specific example of the way that disciplining power operates as a form of everyday knowledge and practice, we focus here on the concept of the pastoral. The pastoral is conceptualised by Foucault by invoking the metaphor of the *shepherd* who looks after, watches over and guides the *flock*. In the pastoral, the teacher may be seen as a shepherd of her students who are vulnerable to ignorance, or the doctor the shepherd of her patients who are vulnerable to disease (Foucault, 2007). One can immediately see how the social worker may exercise pastoral power in relation to service users, who are thought to be vulnerable to risk or disordered conduct. Another example of pastoral power proffered by Rose (2001) is eugenically based genetic screening and counselling.

Fundamentally, the shepherd (for example, teacher, counsellor, social worker) exercises power over the flock, and through their actions (such as counselling or tutelage) the shepherd intervenes in the conduct of others (for example, student, patient, service user), guiding them towards normatively defined ends (Foucault, 1988a). Such ends may be based in a statistical norm or average, or a socially conditioned judgment or assessment of what is proper and acceptable, or good enough. Hence, pastoral power/care is an individualising power that is concerned with 'the lives of individuals' (Foucault, 1988a, p. 67) and the role of the pastoral is 'to constantly ensure, sustain, and improve the lives of each and every one' (Foucault, 1988a, p. 67). How this aim is achieved may depend on a variety of individually focused and often self-sanctioned practices towards self-improvement, such as 'self-examination and the guidance of conscience' (Foucault, 1988a, p. 69). In part, the aim of pastoral power is to elicit an awareness of oneself as vulnerable or flawed, and one must protect oneself from risks and dangers and carefully follow the strictures of truth and knowledge (for example, watch one's diet, follow the advice of a counsellor, insure one's life and assets, dutifully take one's medication) (Foucault, 1988a). To do this requires a heightened sense of self-awareness and personal individual reflection, but it also involves sharing aspects of one's personal self in the form of a confession, such as the kinds of confessions that transpire during counselling (Besley, 2005), or by sharing on social media one's weight-loss transformation or journey, or sharing stories of healing and efforts to be a better person, or by allowing a physician access to one's body, or by allowing a psychologist to conduct a mental examination or assessment. An examined and deconstructed self can be pieced together towards some kind of norm, through careful and diligent self-practices (Foucault, 1988a).

This form of pastoral power relies heavily on making the private self visible and open to inspection, examination and evaluation. During the eighteenth century, social and political organisation involved attempts towards *erasing spaces of darkness* and working towards a condition whereby people were rendered visible, knowable and subject to an individualising gaze (Foucault, 1980). Visibility and statistical aggregation generates ideas of what is 'normal', and this visibility and proliferation of norms sets into place social and political expectations of what proper conduct looks like (Rose, 1996a). This means that people may feel as though they are under permanent moral scrutiny (Foucault, 1977), even at the same time as they may willingly take on the role of policing themselves and the conduct of others (think, for example, the way that people frequently make judgments about others' parenting styles, or chastise friends and family for not eating enough kale).

The practices of health and welfare professions are not always organised to punish wrongdoings through corporal or capital means (although sometimes this does happen), but much practice is engineered in ways that attempt to shape the thoughts, actions, beliefs and behaviours of individuals at the level of their subjectivity using the latest science and knowledge as a point for reference and comparison (Foucault, 1977). Social work scholar Epstein (1999, p. 8) suggests that this is the art of non-influential influencing where 'to be effective, to show results, it must influence people, motivate them to adopt the normative views inherent in the intentions of social work practice'. As people are subjected to permanent inspection (for example, assessments, examinations, performance reviews, tests, social media depictions of the perfect body and perfect life), Foucault (1977) contends that individuals will invariably engage in forms of self-inspection, self-evaluation, private reflections and internalised judgments of how well they perform and fit in. In following, the individual is constructed as a biological and psychological entity, in charge of and responsible for their own physical and mental health and welfare, or seeking expert guidance and support where needed, either voluntarily or involuntarily. Hence, as Foucault states, the operation of modern forms of power are far more complicated and involved than 'a set of laws or a state apparatus' (1980, p. 158), but power also involves a vast machinery of disciplinary knowledge and practices aimed at self-improvement, regulation and the conduct of oneself and others.

Risk and Biopolitics

Within the metaphor of the pastoral, the flock is typically seen to be in some kind of danger, or posing a danger to others, so the shepherd is there to know each and every one, and protect them. The management of risk plays on this idea, particularly through the designation of certain groups of people who are most risky or at risk (Rose, 2001). The emphasis on calculating, predicting and managing risk sits with professionals, whose training and responsibilities are largely organised in relation to risks. Constantly expanding knowledge does not necessarily make things more certain and more predictable. Rather paradoxically, more knowledge and information

introduces uncertainty because new knowledge opens up more terrains of understanding and increases choice, introduces different perspectives and introduces more and more variables to consider. Professionals in this context are tasked with having to weigh competing and contested forms of knowledge, in order to decide what to do in relation to ever-increasing levels of complexity and uncertainty (Rose, 2005). When their interventions fail, as they inevitably sometimes do, public trust is undermined and professionals resort to exploiting objective science and the regulation and technocratic bureaucratisation of their craft, in an attempt to bolster credibility and public trust. Hence, it is not just the conduct of risky individuals and populations that is under scrutiny—risk assessment is 'about governing the activities of psychiatric professionals themselves' (Rose, 2005, p. 19). Therefore, it is the social worker's conduct inasmuch as service user's conduct that is under scrutiny, albeit in different ways.

For example, in the fields of criminal justice and mental health, neuroscience is enabling new possibilities for pre-emptive risk assessments of people who may pose a criminological risk to society, as well as predicting which individuals are likely to pose a risk to themselves (Rose, 2010). But while probabilistic risk assessments are not new, what is new, according to Rose, is a shift from probabilistic risk assessments derived from sociological frameworks (such as a social determinants or behavioural theoretical risk analysis), towards biologically deterministic accounts of risk rooted in neurobiology, using methods such as DNA and genetic profiling, and brain scanning (Rose, 2010).

This turn of events towards biological concepts of human behaviour and the explicit linking of biology to politics has a long history, captured in the term 'biopolitics'. Biopolitics denotes the connections made in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries between biological and genetic conceptions of human beings and forms of state power and administration. Biopower is an overall strategy for dealing with ideas about risks that are presented by whole populations (Rose, 2001). Biopower is explained by Dean to be 'concerning the administration of life, particularly as it appears at the level of populations…it is concerned with matters of life and death, with birth and propagation, with health and illness, both physical and mental, and with the processes that sustain or retard the optimization of the life of a population' (Dean, 1999, p. 99). Rabinow and Rose explain this idea further:

> Across the twentieth century, the management of collective life and health became a key objective of governmentalized states, with identifiable configurations of truth, power and subjectivity underpinning the rationalities of welfare and security as well as those of health and hygiene. (Rabinow & Rose, 2003, p. 14)

In theory, human aspirations to be healthy, wealthy and happy are infinite (or at least expansive) and yet the capacity for individuals, community and state-based institutions to meet these aspirations are, rather unsurprisingly, finite (Foucault, 1988b, p. 163). A gap exists between what we desire and what we can achieve. We may all want to have long, healthy, prosperous lives, but the allocation of resources to meet this is capped (by nature and society), and in many cases, resources are dispersed in uneven and unequal ways. So, for example, some people and societies have access

to enormous medical technologies and resources and others do not. But the push to extend life and have it manifest itself in the most functional, prosperous and eudemonic ways exists nonetheless. So instead of power being largely used to end or eliminate life, biopower is a form of power concerned with the biological politics of human populations in ways that seek to enhance, regulate and control the biological features of human existence and populations, such as power that intervenes in and controls and regulates birth, death, illness, the need for food, security, reproduction and sanitation (Foucault, 1988b, 2003).

The political problems that arise by the emergence of the human species as a *population* and their biological needs both individually and *en masse* are turned into forms of knowledge (Foucault, 2003). The invention of statistics within the disciplines of demography, public health, education, environmental design, management and sociology—to name a few—are able to quantify and give shape to the various health and welfare problems experienced and generated by particular *population groups* (Foucault, 2003). Medical knowledge of various kinds have shaped the way human life has unfolded, enabled new forms of expertise and basically functioned to open up new vistas of possibility in human thought about human subjectivity and potential (Rose, 2007). The human and social sciences provide the conceptual and methodological tools for how problems are thought about and understood, including predictions on future problems, and models and methods of intervention (Foucault, 2003, p. 246; Rose, 1988, 1996b). For example:

> The psychological assessment produces a peculiar mode of inscription of the powers of the individual. It is a form of writing whose destiny and rationale is the dossier: a diagnosis, a profile, a score…Accumulated in the file or case notes, pored over in the case conference, the courtroom, or the clinic, the inscriptions of individuality invented by the psychological sciences are thus fundamental to programmes for the government of subjectivity and management of individual difference. (Rose, 1988, p. 194)

This extenuation of political power into the domain of the corporeal human biological subject has traversed from public health and medicine, to psychology, to psychiatry, to pharmacology, through to what Rose refers to as ‘molecular politics’ (Rose, 2001, p. 12).

The history of biopower in the twentieth century involved strategies towards population health and fitness using programmes of public health, and large-scale interventions and regulatory activities concerned with reproduction, ‘to modulate the wish or ability of individuals in certain categories to procreate—those judged to have hereditary disease, to be deranged, feeble-minded or physically defective, those who were deemed habitually or incorrigibly immoral or anti-social, especially those guilty of sexual crimes, and alcoholics’ (Rose, 2001, p. 4). These are biopolitical interventions that seek to shape and regulate the conduct of individuals and populations using coercive and regulatory instruments in order to achieve the ends of optimal health and well-being. The welfare state was the container for a range of practices, some of which were subtle and pastoral, designed to counsel or ‘shepherd’ individual conduct towards desired norms and ends (Foucault, 1988a, 1991; Rose, 2001).

Power, Knowledge and the Human Sciences

As should be clear by now, the human, social and psychological sciences function to sort, organise, classify, order and regulate human beings and their conduct, behaviours, thoughts and gestures, in ways that produce the human subject within and against a detailed institutional regulatory and disciplinary, technological, and administrative apparatus (Rose, 1988). Therapeutic expertise is imbued with various rationalities and technologies to produce a widely dispersed authority that acts to act on people's sense of themselves, by intervening on and through their subjectivity (Miller & Rose, 1994). Hence, as stated, power is not merely repressive, but it is also productive, making things possible, thinkable and sayable (Rose, 1988). In the twentieth century, the forms of knowledge that made certain things about human beings thinkable and sayable included the social sciences (sociology, anthropology and economics), the 'psy' disciplines (psychology, psychoanalysis and psychiatry), and medicine and biology. The biological basis to understanding and interpreting what it means to be human—including a whole edifice of theory, research and knowledge on the biological aspects of the human subject or self—has increasingly become a major organising principle in psychology, medicine and neuroscience (Rose, 2003).

One such example of the biological foundation to human behaviour is the rise of therapeutic drugs to treat mental illness, so much so that sociologist Nikolas Rose has coined the term 'psychopharmacological societies' (Rose, 2003, p. 46) to capture the way that 'human subjective capacities have become routinely re-shaped by psychiatric drugs' (Rose, 2003, p. 46). This situation raises critical questions over who owns and controls the advancement of new technologies that enable the politicisation and monetisation of human life itself (Rose, 2001). Elsewhere, Rose outlines the staggering growth and influence in psychiatric drugs in places like the United States, Europe and Japan (for example, in the year 2000 in the US, an average of 70 doses of psychiatric medication was prescribed per person—see Rose, 2003, pp. 52–53). No doubt, this explosion in influence has been driven by market forces and the global commercialisation of pharmacological intellectual property and its profitability, but it has also been fuelled by an appetite by consumers and 'psy' practitioners for drug-related interventions (Rose, 2003) and for the way that mental health practice is cloaked in risk management and risk thinking (Rose, 1996b, 2005). Although medication plays a role in mental health practice and many people derive benefits, the point that Rose makes goes well beyond the spread of psychiatric medication to pose a deeper question for what this now signals for how we understand the human person, who is now more than ever conceptualised in neuroscientific terms. The self—what it means to be human—is now somatic. Rose explains what this means:

> By somatic individuality, I mean the tendency to define key aspects of one's individuality in bodily terms, that is to say to think of oneself as "embodied", and to understand that body in the language of contemporary biomedicine. To be a "somatic" individual, in this sense, is to code one's hopes and fears in terms of this biomedical body, and to try to reform, cure or improve oneself by acting on that body. At one end of the spectrum this involved reshaping the visible body, through diet, exercise and tattooing. At the other end, it involves

> understanding troubles and desires in terms of interior "organic" functioning of the body, and seeking to reshape that—usually by pharmacological interventions. (Rose, 2003, p. 54)

What is at stake here is that the domains of social work theory and practice that draw on and intervene in individual biography and narrative, social and environmental context, and important life experiences such as abuse and trauma, are only relevant factors now in terms of how they are thought to *impact the brain*. For example, poverty is recoded away from being an economic and political problem towards one that focuses on what it does to brains of developing children (Hayasaki, 2016). And if the brain is the focal point for poverty symptomology, then the brain is the treatment zone where psychological and psychiatric talking and drug therapies land (Rose, 2003). As Rose points out, the twentieth century introduced the idea of the psychological interior as the domain of the self and for intervention for human problems (think of the enormous influence of behaviourism and psychoanalysis on human life and professional practice, even in everyday common-sense terms), but the twenty-first century is shaping up to extend this interiority in neurochemical and neurobiological ways (Rose, 2003).

The opening up of this new territory goes well beyond the helping professions and social services. Recent advancements in brain research have enabled the real possibility of being able to map in detail and make legible the specific contents of people's thinking, their minds and their intentions, in *pre-emptive* and *predictive* ways (Rose, 2016). The political and financial imperatives here are connected to strategic directions in criminal justice, anti-terrorism and the military. But the applications and implications of these sorts of technologies have much wider reach, including redefining what we mean by 'human' (Rose, 2016). It presents the possibility of being able to 'read' the human mind not just a matter of theory, but of practice too (Rose, 2016). As Rose points out, none of this is particularly new—scientists have been attempting to get inside the human brain for over a century, from phrenology (now discredited) to X-rays, electroencephalography, infrared spectroscopy and, more recently, functional magnetic imagining (fMRI) (Rose, 2016); the latter of which generates around 100,000 publications per year (Rose, 2014). Much recent practice into child development, trauma theory and therapy (to limit to just these examples) is made possible by leveraging the voluminous neuroscience research literature that seeks to map and bring into the light brain functioning. In this sense, the pastoral is becoming neutral. When thinking about justice, we can ask who will be doing the reading and who will be read? What are the social and political implications of this technological and pharmacological incursion into the biopolitical administration of human beings?

A further problem with this is that knowledge generated in a laboratory focusing in on the cellular or molecular level is context independent. Practice that blindly follows this new science ignores all the context-dependent variables, making it less possible to raise questions, discuss, examine or intervene in social context situations (Wastell & White, 2012). For example, a fixation on trauma discourses make it difficult to have a robust conversation about poverty or austerity—it just does not feature when it is crowded out by discourses of neuroscience and social work. So, it is neither the utopian or dystopian visions about mind reading nor the 'Minority Report'

scenario that we should be concerned with. Rather, as Rose points out, it is the more mundane, ordinary and less obvious ways that these 'mutation[s] in ontology' (Rose, 2016, p. 159) become layered into existing social work practice modalities, subtly conditioning our shifting view of human beings, sidestepping important questions for social workers, such as what do we understand what it is to be human? What sort of social, economic and political questions should populate our thinking about social justice? What work should be done to integrate questions of rights, responsibility, ethics and privacy into new advancements of such forms of knowledge (Rose, 2014)?

Conclusion

Politics is increasingly concerned with managing life itself—reproduction, disease, family relations and population flows (Rose, 2001). As Rose (2001) cautions, enthusiasm for new biotechnologies, which are being patterned into health and welfare, gloss over the very real risks that such technologies—despite their supposed neutralities—may lead to increasingly divisive and coercive policies and practices. This is because biotechnologies have a tendency to individualise and essentialise human nature in ways that make contrasts between 'normal' and 'deviant' more profound, more stark and more likely that certain groups and individuals are subject to increasing levels of surveillance, regulation and control (Rose, 2001). Although we should not uncritically conflate the proclivity for human prejudice with an automatic descent into neo-Darwinist eugenics, we should not forget or lose sight of how biological determinism can take root in science, knowledge and policy in ways that can spill over into racism and eugenics (Murray, 1984). As pointed out by Sidanius and Pratto (1999), human beings have biological and psychological predispositions towards in-group loyalties, so these tendencies and prejudices are never far away (see chapter one, this volume). The nineteenth- and twentieth-century racist and eugenics movements were rooted in a biological account of human beings (Rose, 2001), and biological determinism and reductionism is inherent in a lot of twentieth-century sociological thinking too (Rose, 2009, p. 68). Even modern practices such as genetic counselling can sometimes (not always, of course) be cloaked in eugenic tendencies; for example, the recent forced sterilisation of women in Californian prisons is a good example of an extenuation of 'explicit and implicit eugenics programs in the United States' (Guenther, n.d., p. 2). The biological and evolved aspects of human beings are patterned and structured into social, cultural and political institutions. This may be understandable, even if it is problematic. But understanding this helps explain, in part, why we see, for example, ultra-right nationalistic movements so bent on protecting or preserving their sense of racial superiority, such as the proponents of the deeply flawed 'Great Replacement' argument, that suggest that white people in Europe are being 'replaced' by non-white foreigners. For social workers interested in social justice, an analysis of power/knowledge and a critical reflection on new developments in knowledge about human beings helps to keep in view a central critique of the lurking spectre of eugenics. It helps social workers work to arrest the threat of an

ugly biopolitics in politics and public policy. It helps social workers to surface and debate the problems associated with risk and prevention science, and to be mindful of the subtle domination of the pastoral. Finally, it helps social workers to critique and work against the increasing emphasis on individualisation, responsibilism, risk management and the radical neoliberalisation of human subjectivity.

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Chapter 6
Critical Social Science and Critical Theory

Abstract This chapter examines critical theory as a way of explaining, contesting and acting upon social injustice. Critical theories, of which there are many, have been a significant source of explanatory power and motivating action for social work. As will be shown, there are a number of different generations and formulations of critical theory. What links these different theories is that they combine explanations of social reality with practical aims for addressing social injustices. The chapter explains what makes critical social science critical, and then outlines Marxist, feminist and postcolonial theory by explaining each position in relation to a theory of false consciousness, theory of crisis, theory of education and a theory of transformative action.

Introduction

This chapter begins by describing ways to assess theories for their critical potential, and then outlines three main bodies of critical social theory: Marx' theory of alienation, feminism and postcolonialism. These theories are chosen because they have been influential in the development of radical, critical and structural social work theories that aim at addressing social injustice. But first, we need to clarify what is meant by critical theory? Alvesson and Skoldberg (2009, p. 145) state that "critical theory is characterised by an interpretative approach combined with a pronounced interest in critically disputing *actual* social realities…its guiding principle is an emancipatory interest in knowledge…[and] it maintains a dialectical view of society, claiming that social phenomena must always be viewed within their historical contexts". Fraser (1989, p. 113) suggests that Marx' explanation is that critical theory is the "self-clarification of the struggles and wishes of the age". At the level of initial definitions, there is no special appeal to a theory or body of knowledge, but simply a concern to speak to the everyday concerns and struggles of people everywhere (Fraser, 1989). It should be pointed out that early social workers were involved in all kinds of struggles for justice, such as workers collectives, first wave feminist actions and the socialist movement of the early twentieth century. Therefore, the history of social work has

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L. Watts and D. Hodgson, *Social Justice Theory and Practice for Social Work*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-3621-8_6

an affinity to the development of critical theory with a shared interest in social justice and emancipation. Still, critical theories—as explanations of struggle and social relations of domination and oppression—did not really become fully translated and articulated in social work theory and methods until the 1970s (Rojek, Collins, & Peacock, 1988). This was about the same time as critical theories also made an impact in the wider social sciences (Sayer, 2011).

What do all these ideas actually mean in the context of our discussion on social justice? Moreover, what role do they have in informing social work practice? In this chapter, we will consider the issue of what makes social theory *critical* and then move to consider the varieties of critical theory that share an interest in emancipation from social injustice. First, we need to clear up some confusions about the term critical theory.

Critical Social Science or Critical Theory?

A number of authors suggests there is considerable confusion about the term critical theory (Bohman, 2005; Fay, 1987; Gray & Webb, 2009). For Bohman (2005, n.p.) this confusion is due to critical theory having both "a narrow and a broad meaning in philosophy and in the history of social sciences". The narrow sense is where critical theory is used to describe several generations of specific theorists inspired by Marxism, which are collectively known as the Frankfurt School. Fay (1987) suggests these should be considered as *theories of society*. As theories of society, critical theories in this narrow sense can be distinguished from "traditional" social theories. *Critical* theories are typically political and ideological because they have a vision of how things could be (normative), as well as descriptions of how things are (explanatory) and they propose ideas about what needs to happen for desired change to occur (practical goals) (Horkheimer, 1993, cited in Bohman, 2005, n.p.). Because critical theories have a normative element and include ideas about social change, they can be distinguished from other kinds of social theory, such as positivism and interpretivist theories, which tend to largely stick with explanation, description and interpretation of social phenomenon (Agger, 2006). Post-structural theories are another category again. There is no single explanatory post-structural theory of everything; rather there are a number of theorists whose work has contributed resources for thinking about contemporary conditions without legislating a normative ideal.

There is a broader meaning for critical theory as well. This broader meaning can be traced back to philosophy and the way that philosophy has entailed various forms of reflection on the human condition more generally. Critical theories in this broader sense generally emerge from processes of "…philosophical reflection on and analysis of the apparent limits of thought and action in the present and, second, reflection on and analysis of the forms of thought one practices and their relation to the present" (Tully, 1999, p. 91). In other words, critical theory—in the broadest sense of the term—is an Enlightenment sensibility where the use of reason, argument and various other methods of rational inquiry may be brought to bear on the conditions under

which human beings live. Still, the purpose for doing so is not merely to describe these conditions, but to find ways of going beyond their limits as a form of transformation (Foucault & Rabinow, 1984). For Bohman, too, this broader meaning of critical theory combines the "poles of philosophy and the social sciences: explanation and understanding, structure and agency, regularity and normativity" (Bohman, 2005, n.p.). This link to an Enlightenment sensibility, *post*-Kant, gives support to Fay's contention that we can see critical theory as a "metatheoretical analysis of social science" (Fay, 1987, p. 5). It is because of this that Fay prefers the term Critical Social Science (CSS).

In summary, Agger (2006, pp. 4–5) suggests that for a social science theory to be discussed as *critical,* it will have the following characteristics:

1. Opposition to seeing the world as waiting to be discovered and instead seeing the world, and social conditions, as "[A]n active construction by scientists and theorists who make certain assumptions about the worlds they study and thus are not strictly value-free" (Agger, 2006, p. 4). This is a criticism of positivism and is an enduring influence of critical theory on the social and psychological sciences (Agger, 2006). Positivism is a social theory aimed at providing a set of general laws that describe social life, but these laws are generally context independent. That is, such laws would be seen as applicable everywhere regardless of specific circumstances or context. Critical theory and critical social work are sceptical of such suppositions, because so much of social life and human experience is context dependent, and therefore, positivist knowledge itself can be limited when used in a context-independent way.
2. Critical social theories use ideas about the *state of nature*. Nature may be something negative from which human action can provide escape, or, more nostalgically, as a state to which people might return if only current social conditions were changed for the better; for example, if we could escape from the clutches of modernity and techno-capitalism to return to a more traditional community lifestyle in harmony with each other and with nature. Somewhat regardless of which assumption is driving the perspective, critical social science considers that "society is characterized by historicity (susceptibility to change)" (Agger, 2006, p. 4). For critical social work, the transformative aspect is to intervene in social structures and conditions, and change them for the better.
3. It follows, then, that critical social science considers that oppression and domination emerge from social structures. The term "social structure" is a central concept in sociology and it is used to describe "social relations [that] are organized along patterned lines that endure over time and that act as a constraint on the individuals living within them, even though they may not be aware of it" (van Krieken et al., 2014, p. 5). For example, class, gender and race are social structures that can be sources of oppression and injustice, and are therefore of interest to social work.
4. Critical social science has a number of explanations for why people reproduce structures that contribute to domination or oppression. These are often explained by theories of false consciousness (Fay, 1987). Agger (2006, p. 5) contends

that there are many forms this false consciousness can take, such as "…ideology (Marx); reification (Georg Lukács); hegemony (Antonio Gramsci), one-dimensional thinking (Marcuse) and the metaphysic of presence (Derrida)". Critical social science includes programs of education that is aimed at illuminating the relations of domination and oppression that come about from false consciousness. These programs emphasise the "power of agency, both personal and collective, to transform society" (Agger, 2006, p. 5) through education, awareness raising and collective solidarity.

5. Critical social science theories usually have a perspective that social change begins with the personal circumstances of people. Many theories in CSS emphasise that the *personal is political* (Wearing, 1996). Social work has long worked to trace the links between personal struggles and public issues, particularly in regards to social policy activism and community organising, as well as individual and group consciousness-raising and social action.
6. Most critical social science theories, especially those influenced by Marxism, emphasise the connections between *agency* and *structure*. This is sometimes discussed as a *dialectical* relation (Allen & O'Boyle, 2011). Dialectical relations stretch back to Plato but in social theory, they usually have their origins from the philosopher Hegel. The idea here is that there are opposing and contradictory sides to any relation of knowledge, thought or social condition (a thesis versus an antithesis), which combine to contribute to a synthesis and thus new relations emerge. Marx adapted this idea to consider that it is the material economy of society that is in constant tension and struggle insofar as we can see society as constantly evolving and changing. The result is that society is in a process of continual transformation, and it is from this transformation that new problems and potentials will emerge. It also means that there is a debate over the role that individual agency and social structure play in human affairs—how much of each is constraining and enabling of what human beings do and how they live their lives? It should be noted that there is a group of critical social theories that do not take a dialectical approach to structure and agency, but rather, have explored the various language, power and knowledge constructions that create limits to human freedom. These are often grouped together as post-structural theories. They include people such as Jacques Derrida (Deconstruction) Jacques Lacan (Psychoanalysis), Roland Barthes (Language) and Michel Foucault (Human Sciences, Power and Ethics) (Sarup, 1993). Post-structural theories are considered critical because they "insist on the inevitable plurality and instability of meaning, [and] a distrust in systematic scientificity…" (Macey, 2000a, p. 309).
7. Critical social science generally considers people to be responsible for their own lives and liberation, and thus, does not always advocate full-scale revolution as this has in the past led to further rounds of oppression and the birth of murderous regimes. This emphasis on responsibility can be seen as a view about human *agency* often embedded within many of these social theories.

In the next section, we will consider three broad clusters of critical social science. These are theories from the Frankfurt School, feminism, and postcolonial theorists.

There is much—indeed many volumes—that can be written about these theories. To help elucidate some key points about each theory, we draw on Fay's (1987) schema of four key elements of critical social science to organise our discussion. These points of orientation help us to consider critical theories in relation to: (1) a theory of false consciousness; (2) a theory of crisis; (3) a theory of education; and (4) a theory of transformation (Fay, 1987, pp. 31–32).

- *Theory of false consciousness*—this explains how and why "the self-understandings of a group of people are false or incoherent" (Fay, 1987, p. 31). It explains how such self-misunderstandings are acquired and maintained. The theory provides a contrasting view—or at least an alternative self-understanding—which is purported to be superior to the false consciousness.
- *Theory of crisis*—the theory should explain what a social crisis is, indicate how a particular society is in such a crisis, and explain the impact on particular groups of people affected. In addition, the theory shows how these impacts cannot be relieved under current social conditions, and therefore, the theory proposes necessary changes to social conditions to address the crisis.
- *Theory of education*—the theory "offers an account of the conditions necessary and sufficient for the sort of enlightenment envisioned by the theory" (Fay, 1987, p. 32).
- *Theory of transformative action*—the theory "isolates those aspects of a society that must be altered if the social crisis is to be resolved and the dissatisfactions of its members addressed…[and] details a plan of action indicating who are to be the "carriers" of the anticipated social transformation, and a least some general idea of how they might do this" (Fay, 1987, p. 32).

It is unlikely that all critical theories capture each of these points in their entirety (Fay, 1987). Nevertheless, the schema does provide a way of conceptualising the various social science theories for their critical potential in addressing issues of social injustice. It is also a useful way of understanding the limits of these theories. Not all theories considered will have fully developed programs of education for example, or clear programs of transformative action. Some theories may be more able to offer *explanation* for the conditions of social crisis. Thus, it gives social workers a way to analyse, evaluate and suggest programs of action that might be helpful to addressing social injustice.

Frankfurt School of Critical Theory

The Frankfurt School of critical theory is widely considered to have begun in the 1930s at the Institute for Social Research (Bohman, 2005). The school was influenced by a number of generations of critical scholars, beginning with Max Horkheimer (1895–1973) and including Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979), Theodor Adorno (1903–1969), and stretching to the present day through Jurgen Habermas (1929–) and the current Chair of the Institute, Axel Honneth (1949–). The Frankfurt

School began as a way of "defending the Marxist legacy" (Agger, 2006, p. 78) after the widespread social revolutions forecast by Marx did not occur as thought (Agger, 1991). The Frankfurt School is widely considered to have taken Marxist ideas well beyond their original economic formulations to venture into areas such as communication theory, aesthetics and psychoanalysis (Agger, 2006). In recent times, Honneth has taken the third generation of critical theory in a new direction by looking at struggles for recognition (van den Brink & Owen, 2007).

The legacy of critical theory from the Frankfurt school offers much for a radical and critical social work approach to social justice. However, in light of the breadth of critical theories we can discuss, we restrict our example to Marx's theory of alienation. Our reason for doing so is that alienation provides an explanatory and critical analysis of social and labour conditions in the contemporary neoliberal period.

Theory of False Consciousness

Alienation is the idea that people (notably workers who lack control over their work) experience psychological and social estrangement, a loss of a sense of direction or purpose from life and a general disconnection from themselves and other people. For Marx, the root cause of this problem is the capitalist mode of production, particularly our relationship with work and consumption in the modern era. Although touted as an essential part of human fulfilment and meeting one's needs, modern workplaces, consumer culture and their associated by-products can actually be detrimental to human and ecological well-being. Personal and social problems associated with alienation may appear to us as though the fault somehow lies within us as individuals, but in fact, the root of alienation is in the capitalist system and the conditions of the labour market.

Alienation is actually based on an older and perhaps nostalgic idea about a past state of nature when it was thought people were able to live in harmony with nature, and each other, an idea expounded by philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The assumption here is clear: processes associated with work, consumption, accumulation and the general modes of production are not natural, but are human-made. And if they are human-made, they are not inevitable and should be amenable to change. For Marx (1844, p. 31) this state of nature was displaced by the establishment of a political economy based on a "…separation of labour, capital and land, and of wages, profit of capital, and rent of land". In Marx' view, when this kind of political economy emerges, workers themselves become commodified. This commodification results in different forms of alienation as the products of human labour became appropriated by others through these relations of production. Hence, people cease to be human in the broader sense of the word and become more like cogs in a giant machine.

This is not to say that work is unimportant, on the contrary. Marx viewed labour as a central way in which human essences become expressed and a key route to ways that people realise themselves. But this only happens if workers are able to

see themselves in the products and efforts of their labour; when they have some attachment or investment in their labour and its fruits. When they cannot see their own essences, and have no control over the shape or form of their work or product of their efforts, then Marx suggested this result in an alienation. In other words, people start to see their labour as *external* to themselves, which is very dispiriting.

Second, workers can also become alienated from the very act of labouring, especially when they have no control over the way in which the work is to be undertaken. An example of this is found in factories or offices where each component part of a product or enterprise is produced or worked on by many different workers with none of them having control over the process because their time and attention is completely regulated and overseen by others not engaged in the work. This actually happens in social work workplaces where the practice is routinised, heavily regulated, and conducted in piecemeal fashion. In such a situation, workers are only themselves outside of work; work becomes "a labour of self-sacrifice, of mortification" (Marx, 1844, p. 35). Far from being a space of self-realisation and fulfilment, work is a space of dread. For Marx, a key aspect of this problem is that control over labour rested with the owners or managers of the means of production, who appropriate the value of the labour of workers by paying them less than the actual value of the product they create. This results in people experiencing forms of estrangement from not only the products of their efforts but also from their own essences as human beings because they are unable to enact their capacities as sentient beings endowed with reason and sentiment (Marx, 1932/2000).

The third way in which workers can become alienated is through the estrangement from their subjectivity that occurs when workers must subordinate their *human nature* in the process of working for others. People are forced to engage in labour even against their best interests because they must satisfy their needs for income. In other words, people sell their labour and sell themselves in order to live.

Lastly, workers become alienated from each other as they are reduced to competing against each other in a market to sell their labour. This leads to a fracturing of community and is implicated in the experience of isolation. Marx considered this relation to be one of false consciousness because it prevents the development of class consciousness and collective solidarity, because people eventually believe they have no choice but to sell their labour, and in doing so, see competition against themselves and each other as natural (Marx & Engels, 1967).

Theory of Crisis

The crisis that informs this theory of alienation relates to how capitalism operates (see chapter four, this volume). Briefly, capitalism results in a separation between capital, workers and land. Part of this separation process is the formation of different but antagonistic classes. Marx and Engels (1848) described two main competing classes: the *proletariat* (working class) and the *bourgeoisie* (ruling class). The proletariat are the labouring class who must sell their labour in the market. The bourgeoisie

are the owner class who generally own the means of production and thus are able to appropriate the value of the labour produced by the proletariat. This leads to inequality, unfairness, and gross differences in power between different classes, groups and individuals. It makes society conflictual, and is the breeding ground for a good deal of human anguish and suffering. As more and more work becomes mechanised this leads to less work available for the labouring class. Work that can be found is generally demeaning, repetitive, boring, dangerous, poorly paid and insecure (Marx & Engels, 1848, p. 43). The inherent conflicts between class groups, the problems of worker alienation, and the overall instability of capitalism are seen as the root causes of various social, ecological and economic crises.

Theory of Education

Education in the form of consciousness raising is key to a theory of transformation and addressing the false consciousness that gives capitalism is supposed natural veneer and social and political acceptability. Marx (1844) considered that only when workers came to see themselves as having common interests and were able to stand in solidarity with each other would they be able to fight the effects of alienation and capitalist exploitation. This is difficult given that alienation tends to turn people against each other. However, Marx thought that collective action is possible, but only if people in the proletariat are able to develop a class consciousness centred on their common interests and in opposition to the bourgeoisie interests. This would mean becoming a *class for itself* (van Krieken et al., 2014, p. 211), rather than a *class in itself.* In other words, critical education helps people to organise in solidarity around collective and shared interests by forming social and political movements towards workers' rights and social justice. Education can be transformative and may lead to substantial changes in the capitalist system, to at least ameliorate the worst effects of capitalism, if not overthrow it entirely.

Theory of Transformative Action

According to van Krieken et al. (2014), Marx viewed trade unions as a key mechanism for transformative action in relation to addressing alienation. Indeed, in many countries, the development of common interests has happened through worker cooperatives and unionised labour (Fay, 1987). Such cooperatives and unions have been able to argue for better working conditions and pay for workers all around the world (International Labour Organization, 2017). This may manifest in organised strike action, advocating for change in legislation, or public protests and demonstrations. Given the problems of alienation, false consciousness and exploitation described earlier, the gains made by organised labour and unions should not be taken for granted. The early union movement was also responsible for providing support in workplaces

as well as the means for workers to participate in learning and education activities through the establishment of learning institutes. It remains today an important program of action to redress the effects of exploitative labour conditions in many places in the world (International Labour Organization, 2017).

Marx' theory of alienation continues to be an important theory about the effects on working for people who must sell their labour in conditions often characterised by exploitative social relations. Marxist theory has been both influential *and* challenging to social work, particularly by embarking on a deeper consideration of social work in relation to the position of women, capitalism and the nation-state. For example, the premises of Marx' theory of alienation rests on presumed *natural* relations of production that ignores the labour of women. This means that women's labour was considered to "fall outside of a capitalist 'economy'" (Nicholson, 1987, p. 18) and, therefore, much of the experiences of women—such as reproductive and household work—was largely ignored within Marxist analyses. Marxism has been applied in various ways to social work practice. The first is a progressive position, where social work (following Marxism) can be seen as a profession that promotes social change and reform (Rojek et al., 1988). The second position was the *reproductive* position, in which social work is critiqued for being co-opted as part of the machinery of the capitalist state. In this analysis, social work may unwittingly end up assisting in maintaining the subordination of working-class interests by smoothing over capitalism through the use of individual therapeutic interventions on what are really structural problems. This problem is often expressed in a criticism of what has been called "traditional" or conservative social work. The last position is a contradictory position in which social work stands *Janus-faced* with regard to worker interests. Here, social work is both an agent of the state *and* an agent of social change (Rojek et al., 1988) because it is trying to deal with individual problems even at the same time it is holding a structural analysis of the deeper social, economic and political origins of personal matters. These positions have influenced a range of radical, critical and postmodern theories inspired by Marxist ideas (Rojek et al., 1988).

Feminisms

You may notice that we are using the plural with regard to feminism. This is because it is widely accepted that there is no single feminist theory, but rather, there are different kinds of feminism. These were originally tied to particular ideological positions—liberal and socialist feminism, for example (Hekman, 1999). Indeed, Jaggar and Struhl (1978, 1984, cited in Mullaly & Keating, 1991) posit four different positions: radical, liberal, socialist and Marxist. Since then, different theoretical positions have emerged in addition to these positions—these are postmodern or post-structural, standpoint and intersectional or Africana feminism (Agger, 2006). What these perspectives share in common is a concern with the status of women. Each perspective has different explanations about the current state of women and are shaped by their position with regard to global–local relations (Demos & Segal, 2006).

The earliest feminist perspectives were tied to first wave feminism and came out of the metropole, by which we mean they emerged as part of the Anglophone adoption of natural and political rights that were extended from men to women (Lake, 2003, p. 349). Likewise, second-wave feminism emerged in many Anglophone countries across the 1960s and 1970s. However, it has been said that much of this early theorising and activism did not adequately address the issues concerning Black women and women in postcolonialist or settler colonialist countries. Hence, later waves of feminist scholarship have attempted to address this through studies of intersectionality (for a description, see Hodgson & Watts, 2017, pp. 90–94; Mehrotra, 2010). In terms of the overall historical development of social theory, women and the experiences of women were barely considered. As a result of a legacy of feminist activism and scholarship, feminist theories nowadays are widely regarded as a core to the entire corpus of critical social science because they have provided important explanations and challenges to the women's domination and oppression in society. This scholarship has demonstrated quite clearly the invisibility of women from every sphere of social life, except perhaps the household and family.

Grounded in the experiences of women, feminism is less doctrinaire perhaps than Marxist critical theory (Agger, 2006). Nevertheless, there has developed a range of feminist positions as well as several generations of feminist theorising that utilise the concept of *patriarchy* as a key explanatory idea in the oppression and experience of women. Generally, patriarchy can be defined as "the dominance of men and the subordination of women in society at large" (Heywood, 1998, p. 335).

Another significant theory that has been able to explain women's absence from public life is the *sexual division of labour* (Pateman, 1988). Agger (2006) suggests that this division between the public and private spheres of life can be traced back to the Greek notion of household. As mentioned above, women's participation in reproductive relations that support capitalist production was ignored but it has become a core feature of a radical and socialist feminist activism and theorising. Feminists have made the point that women's invisibility is also an artefact of being non-citizens in the historical creation of nation-states (Lister, 1997). It has taken significant activism to achieve even the minimal voting franchise for women in Western countries across the early decades of the twentieth century. Activism to extend the voting franchise for women outside the metropole has continued across the world.

Contemporary social work scholars have embedded various aspects of the extensive feminist corpus of theorising into anti-oppressive, radical, structural, critical and critical post-modern social work theories. For example, due to a "resurgence of feminism and the women's movement in the 1970s" (Ablett & Morley, 2016, p. 11), early radical social work took up the issue of "patriarchy as the fundamental cause of oppression" (Mullaly & Keating, 1991, p. 55). By the 1980s gender had become "widely recognised as a major form of structural oppression" (Ablett & Morley, 2016, p. 11). Due to the influence of structural social work emerging from Canada (Mullaly, 1997, 2007), and anti-oppressive perspectives (Baines, 2007; Dominelli, 2002a, 2002b), present-day critical scholars have adopted an intersectional framework to encompass the dynamic interplay between social structures and categories in order to understand oppression and discrimination.

Theory of False Consciousness

The theory of false consciousness here concerns the assumed natural divide between the public and private spheres of life. This divide resulted in feminists turning their attention to aspects of women's experience that did not traditionally garner the attention from male social theorists: sexuality, intimate relations, childcare and power (Agger, 2006). This focus has resulted in extensive feminist scholarship that cemented the connections between the personal and the political (Griffiths, 1995), the role of gender and sexuality (Butler, 2011; Pateman, 1988), and violence and oppression operating in women's lives (Dominelli, 2002a, 2002b). One area of false consciousness was located within feminism itself where much early theorising suppressed the views of Black women about the "intersection of race and class in structuring gender" (Collins, 1990, p. 7). Kimberle Crenshaw would coin the term intersectionality in order to "grapple with the overlapping race and gender discrimination that often confronts Black women" (MacLean, 2017, p. 1). As mentioned above, intersectionality is a key theoretical body of work that informs anti-oppressive social work perspectives; however, it is not without its challenges. One of these is the increase in complexity that accompanies analyses that include "multiple dimensions of social life" (McCall, 2005, p. 1772). This has resulted in critiques emerging that suggest that "intersectionality is often misapplied in ways that accommodate neoliberal practices and/or re-marginalize the ideas and experiences of women of colour" (MacLean, 2017, p. 2). As a result, McCall (2005) suggests that intersectionality makes particular demands for complexity, and as such, there have emerged three distinct categories for addressing this complexity. Mattsson (2014) suggests that forms of critical reflection may offer a way to encompass this complexity for social work practitioners, so long as structural analysis remains central to the reflective process.

Another area that has also come about as a result of feminist work is the increasing literature and theorising on sexuality and how patriarchal social relations cement social norms associated with heterosexism. This has paved the way for a significant body of theorising in the area of Queer theory and activism on challenging sexual norms that contribute to oppression for both genders (Demos & Segal, 2006). In sum, feminist perspectives offer an extensive corpus of critical social science from which to consider the relations of gender, power, sexuality, and family. Moreover, this corpus of critical social science continues across the fronts of explanatory theory, education and transformative action, as we will see below.

Theory of Crisis

Fay (1987) suggests critical social science theories spell out what kind of crisis is resulting from current social arrangements. For feminists, this has been most challenging—explicating why the oppression of women is a crisis when in fact gender and gendered relations are widely viewed in society as part of a "natural order". Recently,

feminist philosopher Allen (2010, p. 22) asked critical theorist Axel Honneth to consider in his critical theory of recognition, relations of domination that interweave forms of recognition resulting in the possibility that domination can "function so seamlessly…that it produces no signs of struggle in its targets." Allen is referring to forms of domination experienced by women through processes and structures of gender subordination. Nevertheless, feminists have been instrumental in describing the oppression of women and detailing the significant "felt" dissatisfactions, including the violence and harm that women routinely face in all societies (for example, sexual assault in homes and workplaces), and pointing out that many aspects of gender and gendered relations are socially constructed and maintained. In this respect, feminist theories of all kinds have demonstrated how ongoing gendered oppression, discrimination and violence threaten the cohesion of a given society and ought to be addressed (Dominelli, 2002a, 2002b; Young, 1990).

Theory of Education

In the early history of feminism, education was seen as an important way in which to change attitudes to women and this approach continues today. This can take many forms such as advocating for access to education for women and girls. It could also mean working to increase the participation of girls completing high school or taking up higher education through universities, or it could be through offering community education programs through libraries, health and community facilities. Education may also include programs that challenge rigid and dominant gender and sexual norms and stereotypes, or educating around safe, respectful and consensual relationships.

Theory of Transformative Action

Much feminist action often involves group work and community organising, but it has also encompassed individual therapeutic work. Collective action has certainly been a key strategy in the movement through successive waves of feminist action. Areas that need transforming are relations between the genders, access to equal citizenship, changes in attitudes to women and children to protect them from exploitation and violence, and to pave the way for an expanded role in public and private institutional life.

While social work has a long engagement with feminist theories of various kinds, the discipline was slow to incorporate these into its mainstream work, even despite the fact that a majority of social workers are women and a majority of social work practice occurs with female service users (Rojek et al., 1988). However, more recent feminist work has been foundational to anti-oppressive social work frameworks developed by Dominelli (2002a, 2002b). In Australia, the radical social work movement was

substantially informed by early feminist theorising (Fook, 1990, 1993; Wearing & Marchant, 1986). As mentioned earlier, critical and critical postmodern social work theories incorporate intersectional ideas and also often utilise post-structural feminist analysis on the issue of power (Fook, 2002; 2016).

Postcolonialism

Postcolonial theory is a wide and varied body of literature and scholarship concerned with a critical examination of the effects and aftermath of the long history of colonisation and its postcolonial legacies. Postcolonial theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Spivak & Harasym, 1990, cited in Go, 2013, p. 6) states that "We live in a post-colonial neo colonized world". Spivak is pointing out a simple fact, but one that was barely considered by metropole social theorising at the time of Marx or even by early twentieth century social theorists. Postcolonial writing and theorising began in the 1950s and 1960s, first in the humanities, and leading to a movement across many other disciplines such as history, philosophy, art and anthropology. Different postcolonial theorists have been influenced by different social theories effectively meaning the field is "far from being…unified" (Williams & Chrisma, 1994, p. 5). For example, while postcolonial thinker Edward Said is said to have been influenced by the discourse analysis of Michel Foucault, others like Homi Bhabha were influenced by psychoanalysis. Feminism influenced Chandra Mohanty, and Spivak utilised deconstruction to consider the relation between imperialism and colonialism (Williams & Chrisman, 1994).

Ghandi (1998) suggests that postcolonialism can be seen as another major body of critical theory, taking its place with post-structuralism, feminism, and psychoanalysis. Yet, the place of postcolonial thinking in social work is just emerging and yet to be fully developed. Go (2013) suggests sociology (which is his focus) was also rather late in engaging with postcolonialism. The same might be said for psychology. According to Macleod and Bhatia (2008), postcolonial psychology is at the embryonic stage, although this may have changed in recent years.

Theory of False Consciousness

Postcolonialism has become a very important framework contesting the assumptions of universalism embedded within a great deal of social theory concerned with human beings, society and by extension, issues of justice and human well-being (Connell, 2007). Thus, postcolonial scholars challenge the blindness of "European myths of progress and humanism" (Gandhi, 1998, p. 21). They do so by presenting alternative histories, literatures and narratives that include the colonial *others* who have been excluded, oppressed and colonised by the grand narratives of European modernity. In following the work of Edward Said—and the later work of Michel Foucault—Tully

(2008) argues that human beings should be thought of as existing and arising from within relationships of power, which is influential on the meaning we give our lives, and how human subjectivity is formed. Human relations in the postcolonial theoretical context are *agonistic*. That is, they are characterised by struggle (for example, Indigenous struggles for reconciliation, land rights, cultural recognition and justice). Such struggles are situated within the contested histories of *imperialism*, and it is this relation to imperialism that occupies various postcolonial projects of research, scholarship and activism. This emphasis on agonism means that postcolonial theories see even the imposition of *principles* of social justice and Enlightenment epistemology as a symptom of colonisation, and thus something to be examined and possibly resisted, especially if such principles carry with them "imposed image[s]…that are degrading, subordinating and alienating" (Capeheart & Milovanovic, 2007, p. 120).

A key theoretical idea in postcolonial thought is expressed by the term *subaltern*, which came into the postcolonial lexicon through the scholarship of a South East Asian collective, known as the Subaltern Studies Group (Macey, 2000b). The term subaltern is used to denote "…groups that have been made subordinate in terms of class, caste, age, gender, office or 'in any other way'" (Macey, 2000b, p. 362). Subaltern positions and subordination can only become understandable through an analysis of power and ruling authority, and how this power and authority intersects with and oppresses and silences subaltern others.

The kind of power used to explain how subordination occurs is known as hegemony, which is derived from the Greek term *hegemon*. Broadly speaking, in the Greek conceptual field, hegemon means a ruling class. The theory of hegemony has been elaborated further by Antonio Gramsci, and it has come to be used in a wide range of contexts to describe the process by which some groups become dominant through the cultural engineering and legitimising of certain dominant ideas, norms and knowledges (Heywood, 1998). Gramsci's term hegemony has been applied in popular culture studies (Durham & Kellner, 2004) and in studies of gender (Connell, 1987; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Hegemony has come to refer to a form of power deployed by people in society who occupy positions of dominance in relation to other people who are conversely positioned as subaltern subjects. Particularly, hegemony refers to the use of dominant kinds of knowledge and norms (for example, we may say that psychiatric and medical knowledge is hegemonic when used to subordinate and perhaps belittle alternative understandings of what constitutes health and well-being). This positioning that goes on is precisely the relation described by postcolonial scholars as "mutually constitutive", which means the hegemonic actors and the subaltern subjects are equally products of history (Tully, 2008). Thus, Tully (2008, p. 160) asserts that subjects in these relations are positioned differently where "…subalterns are constrained to act 'tactically' …because of their unequal and subordinate position, [and] hegemons act 'tactically'…[to] structure the field of possible responses". It is in this way that Spivak (1999, cited in Capeheart & Milovanovic, 2007, p. 121) is able to build a conception of justice that is not built on pre-existing principles or presuppositions of western Enlightenment thought, but is instead cre-

ated out of an "orientation to the other, a duty to the other…making room for the other to speak and be heard". In other words, to subvert top-down hegemonic power so that different forms of justice can arise from agnostic struggle from below.

Theory of Crisis

The crisis outlined in postcolonial thought is the history of early European colonisation, which continues in various iterations today. The issue of "colonisation" versus "settlement" continues as a form of contest over history (Capeheart & Milovanovic, 2007; Williams & Chrisman, 1994) and current ongoing projects of colonisation. For example, in the US context scholars Arvin et al. (2013, p. 12) draw attention to settler colonialism as a "persistent social and political formation in which newcomers/colonizers/settlers come to a place, claim it as their own, and do whatever it takes to disappear the Indigenous people that are there". They further suggest that this settler colonialism interacts with structures of gender and heteropatriarchy that make invisible the lives and struggles of Indigenous women (Arvin et al., 2013). This same pattern can be seen in many places around the word. Go (2013, p. 3) suggests that two great events have occurred, and this has situated the present relation between the metropole and periphery, the North and South, the West and the rest of the world. The first event is "the violent imperial expansion of the European and Anglo-American states…in the late nineteenth century and continuing through the early twentieth century…" (Go, 2013, p. 3). This expansion spread these practices and structures that made European modes of human social life appear natural and thus elided other forms. The second event was the withdrawal from, and dismantling of, the same colonial empires built during early colonisation. This second event largely took place after World War Two (Go, 2013) and in the place of colonial empires has seen the rise of nation-states and the shoring up of state power. Therefore, it is within both nation-states and the current and ongoing imperialist globalisation project that the crises and contestations of post-colonisation continues. It is perhaps not surprising in the wake of these events that theories of social justice and calls for human rights started to become more widespread and urgent across the late twentieth century.

Theory of Education

In light of the history of colonisation, it becomes clear that for postcolonial scholars the educative space for addressing colonisation is bottom-up through diverse forms of struggle and the development of local knowledges that contest the universal assumptions of Enlightenment thinking. These may be through literary interventions or through the educative process itself (see for example the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges in social work education in Australia, Australian Association of

Social Workers, 2010; Bessarab et al., 2014). One of the most developed articulations of a postcolonial theory of education is that of Paulo Freire in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1972). Freire's book sparked a critical pedagogical movement in education and it has influenced social work too. Freire's approach contends that education should be a process of conscientisation and liberation derived from engagement in dialogue about the conditions in which people find themselves. This dialogical process of learning is thought to offer the best route to achieving freedom from false ideologies and alienation associated with colonisation, and freedom from modes of mass education that rely on expert knowledges delivered in didactic, uniform and sometimes brutal ways. This postcolonial theory of education has been influential in critical and structural social work, particularly developing processes of critical reflection (Bay & Macfarlane, 2010; Brookfield, 2009; Fook, 1990, 2016; Smith, 2008).

Theory of Transformative Action

Ashcroft (2001) suggests that not all postcolonial theories are transformative. Some are aimed at the diagnosis of present conditions, and involve detailed descriptions of the relations and conditions that have arisen from colonialism and imperialism. These are usually more engaged with postmodern discourse theory. Others are more explicitly aimed at processes of conscientisation, and emphasise the activist struggle through which societies can be transformed. Such postcolonial theories with this aspect are often engaged with Marxist and structural theories. We can see that *postcolonial* theorists are diverse, and consequently, efforts at transformation and struggle occur across many fronts, in history, language, art and narratives, as well as through interventions in social processes and structures. Such efforts are by their nature historical and dependent on the specific contexts from which they emerge.

Conclusion

Critical social science is characterised by a concern with the social conditions that contribute to relations of domination and oppression. Moreover, this cluster of theories incorporates explanation, evaluation and programs of action for addressing injustice by pursuing social change. It is this focus on social change that has made critical social science so important to social justice work. These broad social theories (such as Marxism, feminism and postcolonialism) have been operationalised for the practical-moral purposes of addressing social injustice through social work practice (Dominelli, 2002a, 2002b; Fook, 1993; Howe, 2009; Lundy, 2011; Pease & Fook, 1999). In social work, radical, critical, structural and anti-oppressive social work have their origins in the critical social sciences that became more prominent in the 1970s, (Galper, 1975; Rojek et al., 1988; Turbett, 2014), and each of these approaches

can be traced back to core ideas developed at different times in the social sciences. By this, we can say that each of the anti-oppressive approaches in social work has incorporated the evaluative, practical and explanatory aspects of wider critical social theory.

The critiques from radical, critical and structural social work traditions also speak to one of the enduring problematics of social work: where and *how* should social work act in the world on issues of social inequality and conditions of exclusion and injustice. Such approaches in social work have sought to apply these ideas to various contemporary social dilemmas facing service users for the purpose of social change and reform. This also dovetailed with many social and political movements that continue today, such as those concerned with women's rights, workers and union movements, recognition and justice movements for Indigenous and First Nations peoples, LGBTIQA movements for equality and tolerance, disability rights movements, peace movements, environmental and animal rights activism and movements, and the establishment of NGOs concerned with human rights across the globe. Hence, critical social science provides important theoretical and practical resources for social work, and inspiration for working towards social justice.

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Chapter 7
Distributive Theories of Justice

Abstract Social justice in the social work literature is frequently equated with fairness and equality in the distribution and access to resources, opportunities and rights and liberties. This is a version of social justice known as the distributive theory of justice. The most influential exponent of this theory is philosopher John Rawls, outlined primarily in his book *A Theory of Justice*. Given the influence of the distributive theory on social work specifically, and the welfare state generally, this chapter explains the distributive theory of justice according to Rawls. The location of justice as the first virtue of institutions is explained, as are Rawls' two main principles of justice: (1) justice as equal rights and opportunities; and (2) the difference principle, which may be seen as socially just inequality. How and why Rawls arrived at these principles is explained, as are his objections to utilitarian and meritocratic conceptions of justice.

Introduction

Suppose you were tasked with deciding how and on what basis a society's goods, benefits, burdens and responsibilities should be distributed and allocated. What principle should be chosen to guide the distribution of society's benefits and burdens? How should we decide and agree on this? Who should get what, and why? And what institutional arrangements need to be put in place to ensure that your social justice vision is enacted in practice? These are the sorts of questions that distributive theories of justice seek to grapple with. They are also the sorts of questions that occupy social work's approaches towards social justice, evidenced by the long history that social work has in addressing poverty, inequality, disadvantage, marginalisation and exclusion. As we saw in chapter two, social work codes of ethics that describe social justice make frequent reference to the combined efforts of social work to bring about a fair and equitable distribution of resources, benefits and opportunities.

Let us explore this further by considering a definition of social justice along distributive lines:

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L. Watts and D. Hodgson, *Social Justice Theory and Practice for Social Work*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-3621-8_7

> Social justice…stands for a morally defensible distribution of benefits or rewards in society, evaluated in terms of wages, profits, housing, medical care, welfare benefits and so forth. Social justice is therefore about 'who *should* get what'. (Heywood, 1994, p. 235, original italics)

Notice in this definition that the focus is on the distribution of "benefits or rewards", and notice also Heywood's use of the term "morally defensible". Distributive theories of justice represent a broad paradigm of thinking concerned to outline a morally defensible position of who should get what, with a particular emphasis on wealth, income and goods, but also to include the distribution of non-material goods such as "rights, opportunity, power, and self-respect" (Young, 1990, p. 16). It basically concerns attempts to achieve a fair distribution of a society's benefits and burdens (Capeheart & Milovanovic, 2007).

A key instrument to try and bring about some degree of fairness and equality in the way a society's benefits are distributed in advanced liberal economies is the welfare state; although the claim that the welfare state actually delivers on *social justice* would be contested by both the left and the right in politics (George & Wilding, 1985). What did develop in advanced liberal democracies following World War Two is some commitment to welfarism, which is "the belief that social well-being is properly the responsibility of the community and that this responsibility should be met through government" (Heywood, 1994, p. 248). The sorts of community and government responsibilities to promote well-being include things like various social services, publically funded education, health services, public health and safety, housing, tax concessions for lower incomes and families and a range of different pensions and income support policies. Commitment to funding and delivering these is highly contested. For example, the welfare state has endured sustained critique and attack under neoliberalism, which favours more individual responsibility and less government involvement, and substantially reduced public funding in the provision of services and resources to meet need (Ife, 2016) (see Chap. 4, this volume).

The philosophical backdrop to the development of the distributing welfare state is arguably utilitarian, which is concerned to maximise the greatest good for the greatest number and alleviate suffering and deprivation (Farrelly, 2004). Furthermore, Marxist and other radical social movements have influenced policies to bring about more social and economic equality (we briefly discuss Marxism and utilitarianism in the context of distributive theories of justice later in this chapter). At the same time, the development of the welfare state has followed the lines of liberalism, which is an attempt to initiate and sustain a governmental state that includes institutions of security, laws and a judiciary, social and economic welfare, and economic growth and stability—all the while allowing for personal freedoms and liberties to flourish (Heywood, 2007). All this presents a tricky balancing act. Too much governmental control and intervention in people's lives can become oppressive, and too much emphasis on free-market ideologies and smaller government can lead to inequality.

Liberalism, Fairness and Equality

Modern theories of distributive justice are deeply indebted to the overarching influence of liberalism going back to Immanuel Kant, because they try to articulate questions of individual rights, whilst drawing on concepts of fairness and justice, and with due regard for how these can be fruitfully developed within political and social systems and institutions that are characterised by pluralism and liberalism (Rawls, 1996; Sandel, 1998). Liberalism, according to Heywood, is a political ideology that seeks to protect citizens from tyrannical rule by balancing the rule of law and minimal government together with personal liberties and freedoms, and with tolerance for difference and diversity of views and values. Liberalism relies on reason and social contract theory to work out how a society's benefits, burdens and obligations should be distributed (Heywood, 2007). Liberal notions of egalitarianism are central to distributive conceptions of social justice as *fairness* and *equality* (Farrelly, 2004). What do we mean by fairness? According to Raphael, fairness usually means "the requital of desert; impartiality, including equal treatment in the absence of relevant reasons for discrimination; and perhaps, but questionably, special help for the needy" (Raphael, 2001, p. 237). What do we mean by *equality*? In political theory, the term equality does not imply that all things (people, relations, status, wealth, and so on) need to be *exactly* the same. Rather, it is about creating the necessary political and economic conditions that allow people to live well and enjoy the same basic rights and opportunities as others (Heywood, 1994).

There are different kinds of equality too. Formal equality is foundational and presupposes that all people, by virtue of belonging to the human family, have common needs and experiences that should receive equal treatment and favour. For example, to not be exploited or persecuted or treated differentially under the law. In fact, the law is a commonly used instrument to bring about formal equality; for example, to eliminate racial or gendered discrimination (Heywood, 1994). Equality of opportunity refers to establishing a level playing field (such as universal access to education) and it is widely embraced as being central to bringing about social justice. Equality of opportunity is largely meritocratic because success depends on individual talent and how much effort someone invests into the opportunity they are presented with. Despite equal opportunities, differences in outcomes are likely. In contrast, equality of outcome is more radical and egalitarian. It requires high degrees of political and economic intervention and coordination to bring about a situation where everyone has equal income, wealth and social well-being and ownership or resources. An implication of this position is that individual liberties, freedoms and differences may be subordinated in order to achieve the higher value of equality of outcome (Heywood, 1994).

Utilitarianism, Marxism and the Welfare State

For much of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the dominant political theories of distribution were either utilitarian or Marxist, both of which were under attack from scientific positivism that sought to expunge values and normative statements from political theory (Fleischacker, 2004). Talk of fairness and equality, and slogans like "greatest good for the greatest number" (utilitarian) and "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" (Marx) were considered unscientific. The rise of positivism in the social and political sciences stalled progress in developing a robust account of distributive justice, on the argument that it was pointless to try and resolve moral questions within a scientific paradigm. Furthermore, social Darwinist ideas of the survival of the fittest, particularly as expounded by libertarian thinker Herbert Spencer, aggressively opposed distributive justice for the poor (Fleischacker, 2004). Spencer's view has not gone away, particularly in relation to arguments that redistributing resources to the poor will breed dependency and that redistribution policies step on the rights of the rich to be entitled to their wealth (Fleischacker, 2004). Despite these critiques, the core essence of utilitarianism and Marxism is deeply intuitive and attractive to many, and they have been extremely influential on the development *and* critique of the welfare state, and, as noted earlier, the welfare state has classically occupied a central place in debates, critiques and attempts at social justice.

Utilitarianism is a moral and political philosophy influentially associated with nineteenth-century thinkers Jeremey Bentham and John Stuart Mill (Fleischacker, 2004). Utilitarianism says that the right course of action is that which promotes the greatest good for the greatest number of people concerned (Raphael, 2001), and hence, many utilitarians considered that socialism was the best political system to bring about utilitarian ends (Fleischacker, 2004). The aims of utilitarianism are to increase the net amount of well-being in any situation. It has a focus on ends, rather than means, and these ends are typically defined as the good, happiness or pleasure, and the removal or avoidance of pain, suffering and deprivation. Furthermore, utilitarianism is not merely high-brow philosophy, because the point of utilitarianism is to solve practical problems and make the world a better place (Fleischacker, 2004).

It is for these reasons that utilitarianism makes sense intuitively, and it has proven to be an extremely influential philosophy in the fields of ethics, politics and economics. Furthermore, utilitarianism has been absolutely influential to the development of the welfare state, and to various reforms and social movements to introduce public health, public education, better and safer working conditions (Fleischacker, 2004), early arguments for women's suffrage (Mill & Mill, 2009), and even non-human animal rights (Singer, 1976). From a social justice point of view, utilitarianism states that the right thing to do—the best decision or policy to choose and to advance—would be the one that maximises the well-being and happiness of the most number of people who are affected by the decision being considered.

A parallel influence on social justice theories generally (particularly in relation to workers' rights and a penetrating critique of capitalism as the root cause of much injustice) has been the Marxist influence on social theory, politics and social reform movements. Marxism has also informed much of the critical and radical traditions in social work (see Chap. 6, this volume). Although it is tempting to see Marx as a champion of distributive justice, according to Fleischacker (2004) this is a mistake. Although Marx made an important class distinction between the wealthy and powerful bourgeoisie and the poorer and less powerful proletariat (divided as they are by unequal ownership and control of the means of production), he rejected redistribution on the grounds that it sidesteps questions concerning the means of production, thereby leaving the beating heart of capitalism untouched. For Marx, redistribution does not humanise the inner workings of capitalism and it does not address alienation. Think for example, of all the people who may be comfortably well off today but find themselves labouring in soul-destroying jobs with little sense of meaning or connection to wider purpose—a situation that undermines solidarity and rationalises human life as a banal technical activity (Capeheart & Milovanovic, 2007).

It is along these lines that Young (1990) is critical of the entire distributive paradigm of thinking about justice, stating that the emphasis on distribution in social justice thinking diverts attention away from the institutions and social structures that are at the root of social injustice in the first place. As Marx noted, the ideas of the ruling elite at the same time constitute ideologies of justice, so that "justice, in short, is what the ruling class defines from its self-interested position to maximize profit (surplus value)" (Capeheart & Milovanovic, 2007, p. 38). Consequently, we see different interest groups engaged in struggles to have their experiences and subjective positions recognised in principles of justice, so that felt experience is combined with legal and juridical authority, like a dance, with one informing the other. An example might be workers' rights movements and unions, or more recent movements to have the lived experience and voices of service users (such as in the disability rights movements) recognised in law and policy to achieve justice as a struggle for recognition, rather than settling on questions of distribution per se (Capeheart & Milovanovic, 2007). Still, amidst massive economic inequalities and glaring disparities in power, opportunities and liberties, questions of distribution are vitally important to conceptions of social justice.

John Rawls—"A Theory of Justice"

The American political philosopher John Rawls is said to be one of the most influential exponents of a distributive conception of social justice since World War Two (Heywood, 1994). As noted by Banerjee (2005), social work has drawn heavily—although problematically—on Rawls to support its social justice aims. Although the idea of a fair distribution of resources and opportunities has its roots in nineteenth-century political and social movements, particularly amidst the French revolution and

socialist movements in England, *distributive justice* as a refined conceptual and theoretical idea is a post-World War Two phenomenon (Fleischacker, 2004), and much of this is owed to Rawls. Rawls is neither utilitarian nor Marxist; his theory of justice is Kantian and deontological and has been characterised as welfare state liberalism (Sandel, 1998), or egalitarian liberalism (Farrelly, 2004).

Rawls' book *A Theory of Justice* (TJ) (1971)—which was later revised in his book *Political Liberalism* (1996) in response to several criticisms (Raphael, 2001)—is extremely precise in both meaning and intent. Each point, concept and claim is explained and defended in meticulous detail. Spanning over 500 pages, the purpose of TJ is to elaborate a *theory* of justice (and not just tropes and slogans of justice) within a strongly defended intellectual framework, the purpose of which is to give a coherent philosophical account of the deeply held intuition that most people subscribe to—that a good and just society is one that is, at its foundations and core, *fair* (Fleischacker, 2004). Rawls belongs to the Enlightenment tradition of moral and political philosophy, which says that morality and politics are human constructs, and therefore they do not arise from divine or mystical sources, such as religion or ancient tradition (Fleischacker, 2004). For Rawls and others following the Enlightenment legacy, we cannot look to divinity or tradition to figure out questions of justice. We must, instead, use our reason and critical faculties to construct principles of justice that would be persuasive, rational and favourable to everyone. How does Rawls propose we do this?

The Veil of Ignorance, the Original Position and Principles of Justice

Given his intention that human beings need to work out for themselves questions of justice, Rawls proposes an intriguing thought experiment to consider how such questions are to be resolved by people in discussion and deliberation with one another. In this thought experiment, he argues that principles of justice are best decided from behind a veil of ignorance, from an original position of not knowing anything about yourself. Assume for a minute that you do not know anything about your life circumstances, your current situation, or your family. You know nothing about any special talents or gifts you may possess. You know nothing about your present social and economic context, or your generation. From a position of ignorance about your circumstances, only then can you really reasonably deliberate on principles of justice that would be suitable for everyone and *not just you*.

Why is this position of ignorance so important to a reasonable debate about justice? Rawls gives an example of how easy it is to argue for conditions of justice that are favourable to our *known* circumstances and self-interests:

> if a man (sic) knew he was wealthy, he might find it rational to advance the principle that various taxes for welfare measures be counted unjust; if he knew he was poor, he would most likely propose the contrary principle. (Rawls, 1999, p. 17)

Actually, this is what really does happen. And given that people with wealth and power are typically able to influence social and political concepts of justice, we often end up with policies that favour the well off (see the Marxist point made earlier about the way power distorts our views of justice). For example, we frequently hear that giving tax breaks to corporations while cutting welfare benefits to the poor is just plain old common sense, and "Economics 101". This is presented as unquestionably economically rational, but it is not obvious that that is a reasonable way to figure out questions of social justice. But what if, in following Rawls, we did not know anything of our circumstances and interests? What principles of justice would we choose then? From behind the veil of ignorance, what kind of deliberation would we see, what would go on?

It should be made clear that Rawls contends that it ought to be individuals and not institutions or their delegates who should be responsible for working out principles of justice. Although people behind the veil are ignorant of their particular circumstances, and ignorant of the probabilities that determine their life chances, they have at least a basic understanding of what society might look like once the veil is lifted. This basic understanding is informed by a general knowledge of the psychological and sociological sciences (Rawls, 1971). Therefore, people behind the veil are aware of the *potential* of social injustice and inequality, and aware of the *potential* for deprivation and suffering. But people behind the veil do not know what probabilities will determine their life chances against these potentials, and so they are motivated to choose principles of justice that will not unduly harm them or put them at risk. They are motivated to use reason to choose principles of justice (for example, a rational person behind the veil would hardly choose principles that result in inequality, oppression, abuse of power and deprivation of liberty). Likewise, a reasonable person without knowledge of their particular circumstances would not make choices rooted in envy, or by some desire to inflict suffering on others. They will not gamble with choices that put one's own well-being at risk even if the very same choice guarantees that others will be punished or disadvantaged (Kukathas & Pettit, 1990). As an aside, we actually see this punishment approach in policies that penalise the poor for their poverty, or stigmatise and criminalise the mentally ill, and those with various addictions. So Rawls' instinct to design a theory of justice that removes potentials to punish the disadvantaged seems right.

Having said all this, what principles of justice does Rawls suppose would be chosen from behind the veil of ignorance, and from within such a context of reasonable and reasoned discourse? Rawls theorises that individuals would choose what they would reasonably expect everyone else would also choose. In the end, sound principles would appear to be ones that everyone would agree to, and therefore adherence to the principles that make up the basic structure of society would be expected. The principles of justice would enjoy widespread endorsement, thereby bringing about cooperation and an enduring notion of justice from one generation to the next. What principles, exactly, does Rawls say would be chosen from behind the veil of ignorance? There are two that Rawls has revised since his original publication, and they are quoted below as follows:

> (a) Each person has the same indefeasible claim to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic liberties, which scheme is compatible with the same scheme of liberties for all; and
>
> (b) Social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions: first, they are to be attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity; and second, they are to be to the greatest benefit of the least-advantaged members of society (the difference principle). (Rawls, 2004, p. 15)

By *basic liberties* Rawls is referring to:

> …political liberty (the right to vote and hold public office) and freedom of speech and assembly; liberty of conscience and freedom of thought; freedom of the person, which includes freedom of psychological oppression and physical assault and dismemberment (integrity of the person); the right to hold personal property and freedom from arbitrary arrest and seizure as defined in the concept of the rule of law. (Rawls, 1999, p. 53)

By *offices and positions open to all* Rawls (1999) basically means "positions of responsibility and authority" (p. 53), and by *least-advantaged* Rawls means (1) people who have disadvantaged family or class origins or locations (for example, lower socio-economic status, but more specifically, he is referring to working poor or those willing to work but unable to do so), (2) disadvantage in relation to "natural endowments" (p. 83) (for example, chronic illness, disability) and (3) misfortune or bad luck (for example, the result of ecological or economic disaster, ill-health, family tragedy).

Rawls' argument is that these are the principles that *would* be chosen from behind the veil because these are principles that rational people would want to govern the basic structure of the society they live in (Kukathas & Pettit, 1990; Rawls, 1971). For example, people *would* choose the second principle of justice because it guarantees that once the veil is lifted, if one finds oneself disadvantaged or in a minimal social position, then one is afforded a level of protection through the difference principle (Raphael, 2001). Furthermore, people *would* choose these principles because no one stands to be grossly harmed or disadvantaged by them and therefore the principles would enjoy widespread support thus promoting social and political stability, cooperation and fellow feeling towards one another (Kukathas & Pettit, 1990; Rawls, 1971). People tend to have an in-built sensitivity for fairness and unfairness, and justice as fairness appeals to a psychological need that human beings possess for fairness, making Rawls' principles intuitively attractive (Kukathas & Pettit, 1990).

Rawls' principles are presented in serial order so that the first principle concerning equal basic liberties should be satisfied first, followed by the second principle (Raphael, 2001). Regarding the second principle itself, the condition of fair equality of opportunity should be satisfied before the difference principle, which concerns the least-advantaged (Rawls, 2004). So, in serial order, the principles are to be (1) equality of liberty, (2) equality of opportunity and (3) if there is to be inequality, it should be arranged so as to benefit the least well off (Kukathas & Pettit, 1990). This serial ordering is arguably subject to a good deal of contestation in practice. For example, should we accept a situation where material needs are guaranteed at the expense of some liberties, thereby reversing the ordering of the principles (Raphael,

2001)? Some policies regarding national and economic security follow this thinking, arguing that people need to give up some basic liberties (privacy or religious freedom, for example) in exchange for material security and comfort.

Against Utilitarianism

For Rawls, the natural home for the principles of justice is in society's institutions—the rules, laws, policies and decisions that build a political and social structure. Justice demands that a society's institutions delivery equality of liberty, equality of opportunity, and inequalities to be arranged to benefit the least advantaged. They should not be based on moral or religious dogma (Kukathas & Pettit, 1990; Rawls, 1971). Furthermore, economic and environmental justice demands that the current generation does not plunder resources from future generations. If a society's institutions are not arranged to deliver on these principles, then they are not, according to Rawls, just, and injustices and all their associated by-products may proliferate.

There are, of course, competing philosophical positions to Rawls' deontological liberalism. We could argue that utilitarianism can provide the philosophical framework to deliver programs of social justice, as evidenced in many social reforms with utilitarian roots (see the point made earlier in this chapter). But Rawls rejects a utilitarian foundation for social justice (Capeheart & Milovanovic, 2007; Sandel, 1998) because utilitarianism (in theory and in practice) may lead to a situation where the interests and rights of individuals become subordinated by the principal of greatest good for the greatest number. This is because utilitarianism is unable to take the distinction between persons seriously in terms of distribution and in relation to democracy. Laden (2005, p. 57) contends that in a democracy people are fundamentally seen as individuals, going so far as to assert that "questions of justice arise only insofar as there exist distinct individuals with competing claims" and that these claims emerge from intersubjective relations between citizens. Fleischacker (2004) also notes, "utilitarianism is not a doctrine friendly to the idea that individuals have any absolute rights" (p. 103). From a utilitarian point of view, the unit of analysis is typically the common good, rather than the individual. Thus, individual choices are treated together and aggregated into a whole losing the focus on individuals. Instead, Rawls' theory is deontological because principles of justice should be chosen because of their inherent moral value and worth, and not simply because they are a means to some other ends or good (Kukathas & Pettit, 1990). The other aspect is that principles of justice and "their justification must be publicly known (or knowable) by all citizens and their application can [then] proceed in light of such knowledge" (Laden, 2005, p. 53). Moreover, basic to Kantian deontological moral reasoning is the demand that principles of justice are ones on which others can *act* (O'Neill, 1995). O'Neill illustrates this with the example of the norm of injuring others.

> A commitment to injury—by violence, by coercion, by intimidation, by deception, by poverty or by patriarchy—will always be a commitment that is possible for perpetrators but not for victims. It cannot be enacted by all, so is unjust. (O'Neill, 1995, p. 147)

Deontology is a form of categorical moral reasoning, contending that some things are good in and of themselves, uncoupled from consideration of ends or consequences. In contrast, utilitarianism is a type of consequential moral reasoning, contending that the right thing to do is determined by the goodness of its outcome or benefit. As mentioned, utilitarianism relies on a calculus that works in aggregate form around some notion of the good that is specified in advance, whereas Rawls argued that an acceptable form of justice needs to work at the level of individual's specific interests around some notion of their rights, which, as a matter of principle, are *prior to* and of a higher order importance to the greater good (Sandel, 1998):

> By asserting a priority of the right over the good Rawls seeks to avoid the injustices which may be made in the name of maximizing utility. (Farrelly, 2004, p. 4)

One of the problems with utilitarianism is the way it can get hijacked by economic rationalism and neoliberalism, which are underpinned by theories of rational choice. For example, economic growth and prosperity is often touted as a higher good that we should aspire to. Growth and prosperity are promoted as the *good*, and following, economically rationalist rules and laws are promulgated as being the *right* ones to lead to this conception of the good (Farrelly, 2004). This arrangement means that what is right is merely whatever serves the good. And therefore, unjust means can be put into place and morally legitimated. For example, cutting welfare to the poorest people is often politically justified on wider economic grounds if such cutting leads to more national wealth (Farrelly, 2004). It appeals to some notion of utilitarianism often expressed in words like "*we need to make these tough decisions in the national economic interest*" and "*our focus is on jobs and growth, which is good for everyone, especially the economy*". But taking a position like this sidesteps, an equally viable utilitarian decision to distribute wealth far and wide, especially to alleviate suffering (Raphael, 2001; Singer, 1993). Rawls asks: would it not be better to have a theory of justice that focused on what is right in and of itself, without recourse to the good, or without using principles of right only insofar as they are means to some teleologically defined ends?

A system that prioritises ends such as maximum efficiency, profit, or economic growth as desirable goods offers no guarantees there will be social justice (Kukathas & Pettit, 1990). Furthermore, a utilitarian system, in general, would be rejected according to Rawls because people may end up endorsing situations that they would find intolerable if only they were on the receiving end of it (Kukathas & Pettit, 1990). Cutting health and welfare for the "good of the economy" are twisted utilitarian decisions sometimes argued on the grounds of the "greater good" (usually couched in the language of economic growth). But these are hardly decisions that one would take as a matter of fundamental principle, lest they themselves be disadvantaged or harmed by decisions when schools and health services they depend on are closed down or rendered inaccessible.

Against Meritocracy

Utilitarian considerations aside, further arguments about who should get what—particularly in relation to moral desert and entitlement—is the meritocratic idea of justice. This view says that people are entitled to things based on merit and effort, and it is an extremely influential idea in modern political discourse. Simply stated, this idea says that if you work hard for something, you are entitled to its rewards and benefits, and people do not have the right to take that away. On face value, this can seem eminently reasonable. Nozick (1974) expounds this view and has argued against Rawls, and against a distributing welfare state that would corrode entitlement based on merit and effort. Nozick argued that justice demands that people look after their own needs, and that proper distribution should be based on merit and effort. Consequently, the state should play a minimal role in people's affairs (Raphael, 2001). As Nozick argues, if choice, freedom and liberty are so important, why would we legislate and put in place a large an interventionist state that may remove personal liberties in order to engineer or structure equality? He also argues that in practice, questions of justice and distribution are worked out in a chaotic and organic way, and to supersede that with a planned and orchestrated system of distribution would result in all kinds of inconsistencies and contradictions. This is why macro-level policies can result in all kinds of weird anomalies at the individual or small group level.

For example, distributing marks and grades using a distributive curve is often an institutional requirement designed to increase the level of overall fairness and impartiality in how grades are awarded and assigned in schools and universities. It is also intended to ensure that grades correspond to what would be a "normal" distribution across whole groups of students, even across a whole institution. But suppose for a moment that a small group of students in a single class work very hard together. They form a really supportive study group, and they go above and beyond in their efforts and they really excel in their exam. Their combined efforts have upset the "normal" distribution, and so their instructor scales the class marks at the upper level down accordingly. The students complain that this is unfair and that they are entitled to their marks due to their effort, and they conclude that their extra effort was not valued. They resolve not to do the same thing in their next class, and they subsequently get average grades. Is this desirable?

This may be a trite example included only to illustrate a simple point. In contrast, Rawls' distributive theory that says distribution should be determined by fairness and need and not merit per se (Raphael, 2001). However, Rawls does argue that those entitled to distributive justice must be in a position where they can work or seek work (Banerjee, 2005). Still, the reason that Rawls rejects a strictly meritocratic account as a sound basis for who gets what is that merit and effort are often the result of factors that are arbitrary to the person, and therefore, the results that people seek to claim benefit from are not entirely of their doing or deserving. For example, Sasha grows up in a very wealthy family—a family whom has lots of connections in the law fraternity—and Sasha gets access to a good private schooling and goes to

study law at a top university. Upon graduating, Sasha immediately lands a job in a prestigious law firm. Amelie grows up in a low-income family, none of whom have ever been to university, and she lives in a neighbourhood with a disadvantaged and struggling school. Amelie is truant a lot due to being bullied, and she falls behind and does not succeed very well in school. Amelie ends up with limited employment prospects. Sasha may claim that she is entitled to her job in a prestigious law firm because of her merit and effort, but many of the background factors that resulted in this situation are not of her doing. Likewise, Amelie is unemployed due to factors that are not especially of her doing or choosing, and so she is not entirely deserving of the poverty that comes with being unemployed. Rawls thinks that a society and a political structure built purely on principles of merit and effort as the arbitrating factors of who gets what is not one that we would consider fair once we consider factors that are arbitrary to questions of moral desert. It is not fair that Sasha can claim all the benefit as a moral entitlement, while Amelie is blamed for her situation as a moral failure on her part.

The Primacy of the Individual

Social work tends to come down on the side of Rawls' focus on fairness and need, and given that so much social work practice takes place at the level of working with individual needs, this is often expressed intuitively in social work discourse, rather than through a fully formulated philosophical framework. One problem with an intuitive account of justice is a lack of clarity in how to resolve conflicting principles (Raphael, 2001). For example, should justice be about the welfare of the common good (a largely utilitarian view that social work subscribes to), or should it be about the principles of rights for individuals (a largely deontological view that social work also subscribes to)? In practice, social work may have to defend both simultaneously, but these positions may be working at odds.

Rawls' theory elevates the interests and needs of individuals above utilitarian ends, but in doing so, he has been criticised for his individualism. On one hand, this assumes that individuals can be thought of as possessing unfettered autonomy and agency, which they can put to use in service of reasoning and deliberation about questions of justice, among other things (Kukathas & Pettit, 1990). Poststructural thinkers such as Foucault and feminists would be sceptical of this claim, and social work generally may have an uneasy stance on such an individualist ontology, because social work tends more towards a social-structural and somewhat deterministic view of the person as product of social, cultural, economic and historical forces—the person is not an autonomous island, but utterly dependent on and shaped by relations with others (see Chap. 9, this volume).

But Rawls is referring to individuals not individualism in the sense of a culture or ideology of self-interest and consumerism. Rawls gives primary importance to individuals as moral agents and his theory states that individual interests should not come at the expense of greater interests (Fleischacker, 2004), which may be arbitrary from

a moral point of view (as mentioned, economic efficiency for example, is a morally arbitrary end that frequently guides institutional practice). This specific connotation of individuals as moral agents may be more concomitant with social work's view of social justice, and can be understood as moral individualism (not consumer or capitalist individualism). By moral individualism it means that the individual is of primary moral concern. His view of the person is Kantian, emphasising "autonomy, freedom of choice, and action as the vital constituent of the person" (Raphael, 2001, p. 204). It follows then, that any socio-economic system worth its salt must advance and protect the interests and moral value of those who live within it and under it—it must be a system (such as a state) that is essentially good *for* people (Kukathas & Pettit, 1990).

This position may have more of an affinity to social work's *telos*, which is, in part, to work to build environments that are essentially good *for* people. Although, as Banerjee (2011) points out, Rawls' conception of least advantaged is largely limited with a focus on able-bodied people who work or desire to work by cooperating with a system of mutual responsibility, and his theory expunges considerations of inherent moral worth as the arbitrating criterion for meeting the need. In this respect, we can see the limits of Rawls specifically. A social work interpretation, however, would seek to advance a social and political system that is good for people—one that preserves and values their inherent moral dignity and worth, and promotes self-determination. In following, we should be wary of moral justifications for the greatest good, particularly if in practice, the most vulnerable are deemed expendable to meet such ends. In seeking to value an individual's inherent moral worth, social work has included attempts to expand individual choice and autonomy through principles such as empowerment and self-determination.

Choice and Autonomy

According to Rawls' thought experiment, what goes on behind the veil of ignorance are essentially deliberations and the making of choices (Sandel, 1998). Choice and autonomy are the moral virtues that are extolled in the theory. If justice is being defined in advance by an appeal to predefined ends, or some utility principle, then the capacity for individuals to enter into a contract with each other at their choosing and uninhibited from considerations of utility is compromised, because the terms and conditions of justice are already set—in the utilitarian case, the terms and conditions are defined by utility and the greatest good for the greatest number. Furthermore, utilitarianism makes the error of lumping individual preferences together even while being fully cognizant that this process of aggregation might actually be harmful at the level of individuals (Farrelly, 2004). For example, while economic efficiency might make utilitarian sense when calculated at the level of society, its attainment could cause many harms and injustices to individuals along the way. In this example, efficiency is placed as good superior to justice as a right, which Rawls thought was a mistake (Farrelly, 2004).

Rawls' thought experiment seats the justification for a principle of justice in the choices and agreements that individual actors make about questions of justice. Like Kant argued, this means that individuals are the legislators of their moral universe without recourse or appeal to externally provided terms and conditions—be those specified by appeals to ends, tradition, external authority, religion and so on. For Rawls, a principle of justice is the result of rational choices and contractual agreements that different actors with competing interests and outlooks can make with each other. If we can arrive at a hypothetical position of justice that rational actors would consent to from behind the veil of ignorance, then this proves promising for a theory of justice that promotes cooperation and something that people would be very likely to assent to in practice. However, this still begs all kinds of questions even in a hypothetical sense—let alone in actual practice—about the role of reason and choice in developing principles of justice. Who deliberates, who chooses and what moral presuppositions and a priori considerations influence the conception of justice?

Cooperation

Finally, Rawls' theory suggests that social and political cooperation is likely, because the principles of justice that underpin institutions promote fairness, and are publically articulated and rationally acceptable principles. This level of clarity and consensus allows for relations of trust and cooperation to emerge. A just society is at the same time a fair society, and a fair society promotes cooperative relations between citizens. There are three key points about this. First, cooperative relations emerge from clearly articulated and rationally acceptable rules of conduct that provide reciprocal benefits. These rules of conduct are not derived from some essentialist nature, or hierarchies, or from autocratic or religious dogma (Rawls, 1996). Cooperation loses its meaning if it is forced upon people, and so consent and autonomous input into how principles of justice are derived, articulated, discussed and debated promote cooperation. Second, and relatedly, there must be a degree of freedom and equality among citizens for cooperative relations to emerge and be sustained. This includes the freedom to conceive of oneself as a political person, one who can participate and express through dialogue with others what a reasonable and reasoned account of what is good and what is just might look like. Third, there must be some form of political structure, what Rawls refers to as a "well ordered society" (Rawls, 1996, p. 35), which conveys a shared and publically declared notion of justice, that is satisfied and delivered by social and political institutions. A well-ordered political structure provides people with a basis to adjudicate their own conduct and the conduct of others, including the conduct of institutions. Held (1999) contends that this form of liberalism is based on the social contract tradition designed to mediate relations is a stranger society. This is important for institutions but it needs restraint in areas involved in care relations. For example, we might want fairness and impartiality in social institutions that calculate our tax but we may not want impartiality when we are accessing care when we are vulnerable.

Conclusion

Rawls' theory of justice is a distributive theory that has had a significant influence on social justice thinking, particularly in relation to what role the modern state could play in shoring up liberties, whilst creating a political and social structure that advantages the least advantaged. As a theory of distribution, it is limited by its focus to liberties, opportunities and the difference principle. For social work, this limit presents some problems, notably that Rawls' focus of the claims of need for justice are all citizens who are disadvantaged in regards to work and income, but it does not single out specific group for special attention where other serious questions of justice may be found (Banerjee, 2011). This begs questions about what else could be subject to fair and reasonable principles of justice, such as land rights; access and inclusion to public spaces; opportunities to develop one's capabilities; self-respect, status and esteem; political and cultural recognition; and even the distribution of genetic technology (Fleischacker, 2004). And, furthermore, should considerations for distribution be extended beyond the borders of the nation-state, into the global arena, to include non-citizens or stateless peoples? (Fleischacker, 2004). Social work certainly engages in all of these issues in various ways in the pursuit of social justice. Rawls' theory of distributive justice is deontological and liberal egalitarian. It owes a debt to Kantian conceptions of the person and the public use of reason as central to reasoned deliberations about social justice. Part of the way that social work has engaged with social justice is concomitant with questions of fair distribution and meeting the needs of the least advantaged, and so Rawls distributive theory of justice offers a framework for critical analysis of the distributive aspects of social justice as evident in social work theory, ethics and practice.

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Chapter 8
Democracy and Participation

Abstract What is the relation of democracy and participation to social justice? While the distributive theory offers an account of social justice at the level of abstracted principle, others focus their attention on specific conditions and practices that allow social injustice to emerge as a condition of social arrangements. Work by the philosopher Iris Marion Young offers a critical account of social justice, particularly in relation to concepts such as difference and oppression, and how these are implicated in social injustices such as exclusion, marginalisation and silencing. There are a number of key aspects related to issues of democracy and participation that could support social work efforts at empowerment, self-determination and inclusion. These are the nation-state and civil society, constitutionalism, freedom and liberty and the options for dealing with diversity within societies.

Introduction

Democracy has been seen as an important process for furthering social justice and as an antidote to the crisis of neoliberalism. But precisely, how and in what ways does it offer this hope? In order to consider the role of democracy and participation, we describe four major aspects that are important in understanding why democracy is important to social justice. The concepts we cover are: (1) the nation-state and civil society; (2) principles of constitutionalism and democracy; (3) conceptions of freedom; and (4) the idea of deep diversity for furthering processes of inclusion.

Nation-States and Civil Society

The state refers to "A political association that establishes sovereign power within a defined territorial area and possesses a monopoly of legitimate violence" (Harrison & Boyd, 2013, p. 17). This can be contrasted to the idea of the *nation,* which is based on identity and belonging, language, cultural and religious aspects as well as a sense

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L. Watts and D. Hodgson, *Social Justice Theory and Practice for Social Work*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-3621-8_8

of history (Harrison & Boyd, 2013). Nation and state are often linked and here the term refers to "a form or political organisation and a political idea" (Heywood, 2000, pp. 252–253). Despite a history of being associated with cultural boundaries, most modern nation-states are considered to be deeply pluralist. Pluralism can also mean different things. In democratic terms, pluralism refers to the freedom of association. In liberal philosophical terms, pluralism relates to the idea of a public arena in which the state is an impartial arbiter of social and political life (Young, 1990).

The long history of thinking about the state has seen different ideological perspectives emerge about the source of the state's legitimacy. For liberals and socialists, the nation-state emerges from the *will* of those people subject to the rules, processes and practices of government. In contrast, for nationalists and conservatives, the nation-state is still primarily considered to be "based upon [an] ethnic or organic unity" (Heywood, 2000, p. 253). These different conceptions about where states derive legitimacy results in different arguments about inclusion and exclusion within states. Such arguments also lead to varying responses to minorities within the population. Indeed, sovereign power rests within the nation-state but it can sometimes rest uneasily alongside nationalist sentiments. This has posed problems for various *states* where conservative or nationalist forces have attempted to reassert particular forms of nationhood, sometimes with violent and oppressive consequences. A contemporary example is the rise of white nationalism across Poland that led to a 60,000 strong march with slogans reminiscent of Nazi chants from the 1930s (The Guardian, 2017). Such populism can pose significant issues for democratic nation-states.

Despite its unsettling history, the nation-state "provides the conceptual foundation for most national studies of social policies, politics and ideologies" within the social policy field (Clarke, 2005, p. 410), and it both enables and constrains the field of social work. Nation-states may have different political and constitutional regimes at work. For example, they can be authoritarian, totalitarian, led by dictators, religious leaders or they may be democratic. Somewhat regardless of their regime, nation-states remain the foremost mechanism for the delivery of human rights and the distribution of welfare, even as they can be sites for violence and oppression. As Dauvergne (2008, cited in Kesby, 2012, p. 15) points out "there is no empty, non-national space where people can live beyond the reach of [a] nation". It is unlikely that we can simply do away with nation-states in the foreseeable future, and thus any hopes for social justice rest on ensuring nation-states implement just and fair institutions.

Social Justice in the Nation-State

Amartya Sen (2009, cited in Tully, 2013) outlines two main Enlightenment traditions for thinking about justice significant to our discussion of democracy and participation here: one is the *transcendental-institutional* approach and the other is *realisation-focused* approach. The transcendental-institutional approach will be familiar to social work as it is based on social contract theories, whereby states are formed from the collective agreement of people within a territory, who cede their power to the state to

act on their behalf. The ideas of justice within this social contract tradition have been explicated in different ways by famous thinkers such as Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Kant, and in the twentieth century, John Rawls (Sen, 2015). This tradition focuses on what ideals institutions within nation states must live up to if they are to deliver justice. It also is the basis of modern nation-states being seen as the key mechanism for "the legal status of nationality …[without which] there is nowhere left for the stateless person to reside, leaving them perilously exposed" (Kesby, 2012, p. 14). This tradition has primarily "…concentrated on identifying perfectly *just* social arrangements and took the characterisation of perfectly *just institutions* to be the principle and often the only identified task of a theory of justice" (Sen, 2015, online). For social work, the critical question and site of analysis, critique and work are institutions within the nation-state: Are they just? If not, what would be ideal?

In contrast, the realisation-focused approach comes to us via a range of diverse Enlightenment thinkers such as Smith, Wollstonecraft, Marx and Mill. These thinkers had different approaches from each other, but they all had a common interest in considering injustice from the perspective of how it operates in "people's lives and [through] the actual development of their capacities" (Tully, 2013, p. 222). Sen (2015, online) states that this includes "their behaviour, their social interaction and other factors that significantly impact on what actually happens". This approach does not begin with asking what a *just* society would be like, but instead, asks what *remedies for injustice* might be possible within society. Moreover, Sen suggests that any remedy for injustice must be tested through forms of public reasoning and reflection. In other words, the test for justice is people's experiences and the *degree to which they can voice them*. Such discussion and debate occurs primarily within the context of nation-states. Thus, Sen claims that:

> [D]emocracy is more than a collection of specific institutions, such as balloting and elections – these institutions are important too, but as parts of a bigger engagement involving dialogue, freedom of information, and unrestricted discussion. (Sen, 2011, p. 2)

Moreover, Tully (2013) argues that this distinction between these Enlightenment traditions (institutions and public discourse) logically leads to Sen's main thesis that "…democracy as public reason and government by discussion is internally related to the realization of justice" (p. 222). Hence, in this conception of justice, participation within society is considered a crucial aspect of social justice (Carlson, Nguyen, & Reinardy, 2013). We see this as a prime site for social work engagement by ensuring that the institutions of society are tested through the use of public reason and reflection to ensure that they are not contributing to forms of exclusion and oppression. In short, institutions must be critically examined; lived experience must be given a voice.

The Nation-State as Coordinating Activities

Now that we have discussed the relation between the nation-state and the need for democratic discussion and participation, we would like to propose adopting Young's

(2000, p. 158) suggestion that it is helpful to move away from seeing the nation-state as a *place*, although clearly nation-states constitute a territory. Instead, it is possible to see the nation-state as a series of coordinating activities. This helps social work to see where democratic participation might be possible. In this vein the nation-state can be seen as the coordination of:

> activities and institutions of legal regulation, enforcement backed by coercion, legislatively mandated co-ordination and public services, along with the managerial and technical apparatus necessary to carry out these functions effectively. (Young, 2000, p. 158)

Here, it is clear that Young is conceptualising the nation-state also as a set of institutions. Cohen and Arato (1992, cited in Young, 2000) developed an analysis, based on the philosophy of Jurgen Habermas, about the distinction between lifeworld and system. Based on this distinction, we can differentiate nation-state, economy and civil society by the different mediums of coordination activities. For example, authorised power is the medium for nation-states, money is the medium for the economy, and for civil society, the medium is *communication* (Young, 2000); the latter is a central space for social work engagement. Thus, the space for democratic deliberation and reasoned reflection on injustice, including proposals for what to do about it, often happens within the sphere of civil society.

Civil Society

Civil society has a fairly contested history and somewhat defies exact definition. Conceptions of it stretch back to Aristotle and the notion of the *polis* as the "association of associations" (Hodgkinson & Foley, 2009, p. 4). Howard et al. (2009) contend that "most contemporary scholars define civil society today as that public space between the state, market place, and the informal personalized life of the family" (p. 76). However, Young (2000) proposes to distinguish between the state, the economy and the various interpersonal and associations that form independently from the state and the economy. Young (2000, p. 158) makes the point that distinguishing the economy from the civil sphere is important to her analysis of how the civil sphere might have a "role in promoting social justice". In light of this, Young (2000, p, 158) defines civil society as:

> a third sector of private associations that are relatively autonomous from both state and economy. They are voluntary, in the sense that they are neither mandated nor run by state institutions, but spring from the everyday lives and activities of communities of interest. The associations of this third sector, moreover, operate not for profit.

Civil society is sometimes referred to as the third sector and this remains a significant site of action for social work—considerable numbers of social workers practice within civil society. In Australia, and increasingly in other countries, a significant proportion of social support to vulnerable people is delivered through organisations and activities situated in this sector. It has become complicated in recent years by

contractual arrangements that have injected market approaches to service delivery into this previously protected sector (McDonald, 2006). Nevertheless, the civil sphere remains an important site for possible democratic action and participation. The other reason for the significance of this sector is the role it can play in limiting state power via activism and strategies of democratic deliberation. Moreover, activities in civil societies within nation-states can have impacts in global terms, in the area of environmental issues and human rights for example (Farris & Dancy, 2017). Wilson (2012) gives examples to include "citizen's groups including labor organizations; community groups; faith-related and ecumenical coalitions; women's, environmental, indigenous peoples', seniors', and student organizations; anti-poverty alliances; and nongovernmental organizations…" (p. 19). Relatedly, the Social Development Goals (SDGs) are an example where "the highly consultative process of civil society engagement…[lead] to the final consensus [and] created [a] potentially transformative document that contrasts with the technocratic and top-down nature of the [Millennium Development Goals] MDGs" (O'Manique & Fourie, 2016, p. 122). Despite the hope for a global version of civil society we should be cautious in adopting an uncritical stance.

The reason for caution is because global civil society does not have the same interdependence with a state or economy (Bowden, 2006), and therefore, its ability to hold global institutions accountable is more limited. This is because within nation-states, the market, state and civil society should be in balance with each other in order to promote rule of law and to provide some guarantees against despots and other forms of tyranny (Bowden, 2006). Actually, some nation-states have very small civil spheres and larger state institutions, while others have larger market economies and smaller numbers of state institutions. Young (2000, p. 156) argues that the while "associational life of civil society can do much to promote self-determination" and thus social justice, state institutions remain important to efforts to address structural oppression and discrimination. Social justice work requires not only engagement and struggle to expand democratic engagement within civil society, but also needs to support and struggle for fair and *just* state institutions as well. The role of institutions in distributive theories as outlined by Rawls is discussed in Chap. 7 (this volume). This question about the role of institutions and democratic deliberation within nation-states and civil society is taken up in the next section where we explain a particular conception of constitutionalism.

Constitutionalism and the Limits to Democracy

There is, in political philosophy, two main ways in which philosophers approach the question of politics. The first is through its subject matter, and this kind of philosophy is to inquire into political matters. In this tradition, philosophers take as their subject questions pertaining to structures of society and how power is utilised (Nichols & Singh, 2014). John Rawls and Ronald Dworkin are examples of political philosophers in this tradition. The other tradition, according to Nichols and Singh (2014), is one

concerned with the *function* of politics. Philosophers in this tradition "ask the question of how it is that philosophy…can perform an act, exercise a function, or have an effect beyond itself" (Nichols & Singh, 2014, p. 4). Thinkers in this tradition include Michel Foucault, Hannah Arendt and James Tully. In this tradition, politics is seen as a practice where the *struggle itself constitutes a form of freedom*. The role of politics in this tradition:

> [S]tarts from the present struggles and problems of politics and seeks to clarify and transform the normal understanding of them so as to open up the field of possible ways of thinking and acting freely in response. (Tully, 2008, cited in Nichols & Singh, 2014, p. 4)

This tradition is in line with the realisation approach discussed earlier, but it picks up another way of seeing justice as a "tradition of democracy as non-violent cooperative self-government: of the people exercising the capabilities of self-government together in their social and economic activities on the commons" (Tully, 2013, p. 223). This tradition draws attention to the fact that people have always engaged in forms of self-rule outside conceptions of the nation-state, and outside of social contracts, and various forms of representative government. These ideas have been taken forward in order to think about democracy and constitutionalism differently, that is, to think about it outside current discourses of Western liberal democracies that rely too much on a normative and statist Western world-view. These ideas will have powerful resonances for social work, particularly in areas of practice such as group work, community organising and advocacy. For example, it might help us clarify when and where processes are democratic and where and when they can be utilised to facilitate hearing people's points of view about the conditions of their lives.

However, we need to move beyond a purely Western conception of constitutionalism. In order to look at this issue of constitutional democracy differently, Tully (1995, p. 1) turned his attention to recovering the meaning of constitutionalism in order to answer the question: can a modern constitution recognise and accommodate cultural diversity? He says yes, but only if we move beyond the narrow versions outlined within the age of imperialism associated with the Enlightenment. We need to recognise the complex array of languages and cultures in existence in order to answer questions about how to live together and to accord due recognition to others. There are, in existence, familiar aspects of constitutionalism that come to us in the modern period through three dominant schools of political thought: liberalism, nationalism and communitarianism. These dominant ways of thinking have cut across and marginalised other practices and responses to democracy that may provide more avenues for engaging with cultural diversity (Tully, 1995).

At the same time, constitutions do a number of things important to thinking about participation. They set the conditions of possibility for how people live and treat each other; they establish a field of recognition; and, they specify how and what way claims can be made for things like fair treatment, recognition of need and redress, and claims for care and justice. Thus, we can state that constitutionalism is a requirement that the *exercise of power* in a given political association or territory "should be exercised in accordance with, and through a general system of principles, rules and procedures, including procedures for amending any principle, rule or procedure"

(Tully, 2002, p. 205). This is sometimes referred to as the rule of law, however, this is not to specify the kinds of law—it might also include common and customary law. Institutions within a constitutional frame are part of the coordinating mechanisms of the state described previously by Young. What this means is that a constitution is the basis of authorised power within a state, but even in democratic societies, such constitutions operate with:

> A degree of separation or disembeddedness from the activities of those who are subject to it [but it] has the compliance capacity to structure or even constitute the field of recognition and interaction of the people subject to it. (Tully, 2008a, p. 466)

The specific field of recognition that becomes established may be an area of contestation, but as Tully suggests, constitutions must have procedures and processes by which the rules can be amended. One example to illustrate this point is the way modern nation-states establish entry requirements for people visiting or migrating to their territory. Borders and sovereignty were largely established through successive waves of imperialism that have established nation-states across the world. In fact, international law outlines territory and there are few "non-governed spaces" (Kesby, 2012, p. 15) in the world now. International law also sets out processes for recognition between states, which involves rules about who resides where and on what basis. The approach is described by Heywood (2000, p. 247) as *intergovernmentalism* because this involves interaction between entities on the basis of "sovereign independence" thus preserving the power of entities to regulate their own affairs.

Second, modern states establish a set of principles, rules and procedures aimed at recognising some claims for entry into their territory (citizens, holiday visitors, employment migration, humans) against others (stateless people, ineligible humans, noncitizens). Kesby (2012, p. 16) suggests that "[I]n customary international law, and international human rights, admission to a state primarily depends upon a person's nationality". The mandate for these rules rests within the relation between governed and governments and within the territory in question. However, with an increase in international law regimes this relation between governed and governments has become increasingly distant, which may explain why many people feel like they no longer have a voice. The principles, rules and procedures should be subject to amendment via law and democratic deliberation under this conception of constitutionalism. Moreover, associations within civil society can influence this through lobbying representatives, holding public forums, creating media campaigns and through other forms of activism. Such activism need not be inclusive. We have seen in recent years many nation-states exercising their discretion toward admitting people who are not considered their own nationals (Kesby, 2012). This emphasis on nationality for nation-states can have important consequences for people who become stateless as it "relegates a person to a no man's land of arbitrary treatment" (Kesby, 2012, p. 19).

Constitutionalism and Popular Sovereignty

The fact that laws, procedures, processes and policies are made at some distance from those subjected to them is called the *autonomy principle* and it is a key feature of these forms of constitutional democratic states. Tully (2008) points out that this form of constitutionalism is found not only at the nation-state level but also in international law and supra-national organisations such as the European Union, the United Nations and the World Trade Organisation. International legal regimes, however, are negotiated outside of another key principle that Tully considers important to the prospects of justice. This is a principle of popular sovereignty. Popular sovereignty is the idea that there should be a meaningful link between the people and their representatives who take decisions on their behalf. In many international regimes, this is not the case. Popular sovereignty emerges from the people within a given political association/territory who are subject to same rules and processes, but are also able to engage in the "exchange of public reasons in democratic practices of deliberation" (Tully, 2002, p. 205). This kind of discussion can happen via polls and elections, but picking up on our earlier point, it also occurs within the civil society via political participation.

In summary, the two principles of *democratic legitimacy* and *constitutionalism* can be considered as "guiding norms for the critical discussion of the conditions of *legitimacy* of contemporary forms of political association". (Tully, 2002, p. 205) There are six features that characterise democratic government (Tully, 2002), and these are presented in Table 8.1 with examples.

It should be clear from these examples that engaging in democratic participation can happen at a number of levels within nation-states and civil society, which is the key point. Tully suggests that engagement in different kinds of political dialogues, democratic discussion and struggles is what makes people citizens and is a core part of contesting forms of social suffering and exclusion.

Three trends complicate this situation (Tully, 2002). The first is the way supranational organisations facilitate the globalisation of capital (see Chap. 4, this volume). The impost of "hundreds of global regulatory regimes, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement and the World Trade Organisation…constitute complex processes of global constitutionalism" (Tully, 2002, p. 211) but they do so without the principle of democratic legitimacy. This trend of globalised capital affects even great initiatives like the Social Development Goals because the underlying unequal economic and social relations remain unaddressed (O'Manique & Fourie, 2016). In other words, they are *not* subject to adequate forms of democratic discussion and debate.

The second trend is where political associations and political power has become dispersed across ever smaller subunits, levels, cities, nation-states, regions, communities and networks. This trend is partly fuelled by an increasing politics of recognition, which can be seen as a positive. This dispersing and fracturing of political associations and political power has, however, also meant that there is less collective solidarity against the relative power of transnational corporations and the

Table 8.1 Features of democratic legitimacy

	Features of democratic legitimacy	Example
1	These principles act as critical and abstract guides that orient participants to norms of cooperation and communication	A group of residents from different cultural and social backgrounds come together to engage in discussion about the building of a bypass road proposed by their local government
2	Each principle is equally basic and both should be present for a democratic association to be considered legitimate	A society with an overemphasis on democracy without any rules of procedure will be at the mercy of the majority—this is populism, which can result in a form of ethnic or racist exclusion. A society that follows only the rules and does not allow these to be contested or amended suffers from a democratic deficit—it is a bureaucratic environment that does not incorporate natural justice
3	People must have room to disagree on matters before them. All aspects, including the rules under which they deliberate, are open to disagreement	A group comes together to engage in deliberation and in doing so they create a set of rules for the process of deliberation. As the process progresses, some members begin to express disagreement with the process of deliberation itself as well as the substantive content of the issues. This is to be recognised as a normal aspect to democratic legitimation
4	Constitutional rules are always in the position of beginning again or of being capable of amendment via democratic deliberation and struggle	A private members bill is introduced in parliament to initiate measures for medically assisted dying. The bill represents years of democratic deliberation and activism amongst citizens, interest groups, churches and politicians
5	Practices of government are dispersed both within and beyond nation-states and are characterised by deep diversity and forms of political globalisation	Deliberation s about the use of fracking involves action coordination across government, non-government, voluntary organisations, researchers, amongst citizens and networks at the local, nation-state and global levels
6	Citizenship is a *process* of engagement in practices of deliberation via conferral of rights and duties within the constitutional rules and processes. This is called *citizenisation* (Tully, 2002, p. 210)	A person takes part in a Reconciliation Study Circle (Broughton & Durnan, 1993) to learn about the history of Indigenous people; a resident joins in with an action against development that will destroy their local wetland; a citizen hands out “how to vote cards” at the local election booth

regulatory regimes of the international bodies such as the World Trade Organisation or the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The third trend is the decline of mechanisms enabling public exchange of reasons in the deliberative sense. This has meant a reduction in spaces and processes of democratic deliberation about the conditions of our lives. Increasingly, the political class is shaped by their experiences within government or corporations where processes of democratic deliberation are absent and where there is little likelihood of *citizenisation* occurring. These three trends work together to insulate growing global social and economic inequalities from public awareness, democratic discussion, and reform (Tully, 2002, p. 213).

Why is this important to social work's hopes for social justice? It seems that one of the key ways to struggle effectively against these enormous inequalities in wealth and well-being is through the exercise of democratic freedoms in the most effective forums we can find, at every level, and in every field of practice. Such forums can be on a local scale, but they may, at times, be within larger social movements that call attention to unjust relations and practices.

Tully (2002, pp. 226–227) has four suggestions on this front that social work might take up. First, we should look for opportunities to engage and initiate processes to "expose, criticise and overcome local relations of exclusion and to enter prevailing institutions or invent *ad hoc* practices of deliberation". An example might be where social workers raise issues within their area about practices that further marginalise homeless people by excluding them from public amenities. This is just a first step to being able to call on others to engage in the practice of deliberation which Tully (2002) refers to as *negotiations*.

Second, if these bids to enter into negotiation are successful then deliberations about the issues can begin and this will involve an exchange of reasons about the issues, but these should embed processes of reciprocity and inclusion appropriate to the situation. An example might be where the issues result in a public forum to discuss the issue of homelessness. Such a forum should include people most directly affected in as well as concerned others.

Third, once agreements have been reached the process should not stop there: "critical analysis should proceed beyond the agreement because the agreement…will always be less than perfect, partial, subject to reasonable disagreement" (Tully, 2002, p. 227). Social workers involved could engage in analysis of agreements to see if they are still meeting the needs of the affected group.

Fourth, we should attend to the implementation of any agreements using the same deliberative negotiation principles as in the previous steps. This means we should not consider implementation to be a different matter to the process of reaching an agreement, because implementation is also subject to democratic discussion and process (Tully, 2002). Moreover, all this is always capable of starting again. An example is where implementation does not go according to the interpretation of people who participated in the forum, and therefore, it would precipitate another round of negotiation. This is Tully's main point: that constitutional rules, understood as the conditions that form the way we live together, are always subject to democratic debate and are therefore subject to amendment and struggle. Contesting these and

holding them to account, in big or small ways, is to engage in "practices of freedom" (Tully, 2000, p. 469).

Why is democratic participation and deliberation important to the aims of social justice held by social work? The reason is that it places some practices social work already regularly undertakes within a wider frame, and we can utilise this picture of the guiding norms of constitutional democracy to help us see further ways to deliberate, contest and agree on the rules and claims made for justice. We also think a more encompassing idea of democratic constitutionalism can widen our scope for action with people currently not included due to narrow conceptions of what it means to be a citizen. For example, extending democratic deliberation beyond the nation-state is a central plank of Sen's (2015) approach to justice. Young (2000) also sees deliberative mechanisms as key to contesting forms of injustice. The other key aspect to democratic deliberation and participation is the notion of freedom.

Freedom and Equality

According to scholar Skinner (2016), freedom (or liberty, used here interchangeably) is a concept with a long history, and as such, it can be traced genealogically. What this means is that there are different conceptions of liberty in operation and these are not reducible to a single narrative, but instead, represent a variety of valid ways of conceiving of freedom. In reality, they represent different trajectories of thought, deliberation and debate about what it means to be free. Further, each has different implications when thinking about the issue of social justice, and by extension, democracy and participation (Skinner, 2012). In this discussion, we will be considering the different conceptions of freedom and what barriers prevent its expression in people's lives.

Skinner (2016) discusses freedom in relation to what he describes as the Anglophone case. He acknowledges that there are likely other conceptions of freedom, but concentration on this specific case acknowledges the extensive influence that modernity has had on contemporary alliterations about freedom. As social work is a child of this tradition, it has some resonances for our purposes. Second, Skinner discusses freedom in the context of notions of the nation-state and therefore the discussion presumes that it is citizens of a *state* with whom we are concerned. We will discuss why this is problematic later. Nonetheless, in this genealogical view of liberty it is possible to claim that:

> For individuals to enjoy freedom as citizens of a state, [*they must have*] (1) POWER to act in pursuit of a given option (or least alternative) and (2) [*not be subject to forms of*] DEPENDENCE OR INTERFERENCE OR [*be prevented from exercising aspects of*] SELF REALISATION. (Skinner, 2016, emphasis in brackets added)

Aspects of this statement require clarification and comment but space forbids an extended discussion. Instead, this discussion will start with the issue of *power to act* and discuss what is meant by *non-interference*, *dependence*, and *self-realisation*.

The power to act to pursue your own options is a deeply held value in liberal ideology and is closely related to discussions of democracy and autonomy. It has a central place in any discussion of freedom. It presumes that a person can act on their own behalf, can formulate intentions, make plans and pursue their own goals. Human beings employ a range of capacities to do this and these powers are considered to be inherent to human beings (Sayer, 2011). It is this aspect that is at the core of Sen's conception of freedom, which is "seen in the form of individual capabilities to do things that a person has reason to value" (Sen, 1999, cited in Carlson et al., 2013, p. 273). This means people exercise choices about how and where to live, and they invariably pursue meaningful relations and projects. Liberals consider this power as paramount to the opportunity for human beings to realise their potential. Democrats see this power as central to democratic discussion and participation. The problem is that there are many conditions that may represent barriers to the exercise of such freedoms. Such barriers may be structural (Young, 2000) and/or cultural. Young (2007) outlines what structural injustice as a barrier to freedom means:

> Persons suffer injustice by virtue of structural inequality when their group social positioning means that the operation of diverse institutions and practices *conspires to limit their opportunities to achieve well-being*. (p. 61, emphasis added)

By well-being, Young (2007) means exercising choices and pursuing projects that people value—in the broadest sense of the term. Culture-based injustice is where:

> they are not free to express themselves as they wish, to associate with others with whom they share forms of expression and practices, or to socialise their children in the cultural ways they value, or when their group situation is such that they bear significant economic or political cost in trying to pursue a distinctive way of life. (Young, 2007, p. 61)

Civil society, described above, remains a key site for contesting these forms of structural and cultural injustice. There is, however, another aspect that constitutes a significant barrier to freedom for many people, and that is different forms of dependence.

Dependence—Freedom as Non-domination

Skinner refers to dependence in his genealogy of freedom, but Pettit (1997) refers to it as non-domination. The concept of non-domination began with debates about the *content* of freedom, and can be traced back to discussions in Ancient Rome about what makes a man [sic] a *liber homo,* or a free man (Skinner, 2016). Freedom as non-domination is an argument about what prevents a person from being free, and it is different in kind to arguments about non-interference, which we discuss below. Pettit (1997, p. 5) asserts that:

> Being unfree consists rather in being subject to arbitrary sway: being subject to the potentially capricious will or the potentially idiosyncratic judgement of another.

Skinner (2016) and Pettit (1997) argue for a reacquaintance with this conception of freedom because it picks up on the experience of domination that many people experience, which ideas of freedom as non-interference simply do not capture. In this formulation, a person is not free if someone or something can interfere with their interests or pursuit of goals. They are not free if they are dependent on another's arbitrary will. Likewise, when Sen makes a case for the capabilities approach, he emphasises a "connection between freedom and non-dependency" (Pettit, 2001, p. 18). Situations of dependency will be familiar to social workers—for instance: employees who cannot raise issues with their employer for fear of losing their jobs; women who fear their partner's violence; people who rely on benefits from the state where there are mandatory obligations; and, older people who rely on their adult children for care and support.

Awareness of dependence on the arbitrary will of another can create self-censorship that may undermine a person's power to form an intention to pursue a given action. This is the second way in which relations of dependence undermine freedom. In this view, a state of dependence does not turn on being a particular category of person. Rather, the lack of freedom is based on the concrete existence of subjection to the arbitrary power of another. Nevertheless, as is clear from Young's (2007) description of structural and cultural inequality, forms of dependence can become ramified in institutions and social processes that position people and make them *more likely* to experience arbitrary treatment; for example, people who are unemployed; people with disabilities; and, people in institutional care. Furthermore, this may be domain specific—it could be that a person enjoys the full formal rights to vote and participate in democratic deliberation, but in another domain may be subject to the arbitrary will of their carer. In this case, we might say that even though they may be able to vote, they are not free if they experience a state of dependence in their home. We will return to the implications of this for democratic participation below, but for now, we turn our attention to what non-interference refers to in relation to freedom.

Non-interference

Of all the conceptions of liberty in the West, non-interference has the longest pedigree, primarily due to its use in liberal political theories (Skinner, 1998). Indeed, Pettit (2001, p. 19) suggests that:

> When reformers like Bentham and Paley expanded the constituency of the state's concern to include women and servants, they replaced the old idea that the state should promote the freedom as non-domination of its subjects - an ideal of freedom that had been feasible when only mainstream, propertied males were in the picture - with the idea that it would be enough to promote their freedom as non-interference. This allowed them to think that women and servants who lived under supposedly kindly masters would be free.

The situation in this example is highly problematic because it illustrates the exchange of one form of domination for another under the pretence of liberation.

Non-interference can mean that there should be *no* interference by external agencies (other agents, or the state, for example) in the pursuit of an individual's aims and intentions. In terms of democracy, non-interference constitutes a form of negative liberty where the nation-state guarantees basic civil rights of non-interference with citizens, but it does nothing to address barriers to participation.

It is hard to discuss non-interference without discussing the ways in which interference might limit people's freedom. Interference can consist of two main types associated with external agencies. It can be physical, or by acting on the will of another through forms of coercion (Skinner, 2016). In terms of physical interference, this refers to actions that render the pursuit of your own goals and purposes impossible. An example might be where you are prevented from accessing your own property or you are compelled to do something under threats of harm. In this case, you would not be considered free. The second way is by external agencies interfering with your will through coercion (Skinner, 2016). For instance, mandatory drug testing for citizens who are welfare recipients. If you do not comply, the state (an external agent) will cut off your only form of support making this a credible and serious threat to your wellbeing.

There is another way in which interference may occur to prevent freedom and this is a fairly new addition to modern conceptions of freedom. This form of interference is on a person's will, but it is not from an external agency. Rather, it is from within the person themselves. It might be that they misperceive the social and economic forces that create their social positioning and are acting against their best interests under a false ideology or false consciousness. This idea will be familiar to critical and structural social workers who attempt to work at raising people's consciousness about these relations of interference so that people can live more authentically (Ferguson & Woodward, 2009; Mullaly, 2007). According to Skinner (2016), other sources of internal interference are those due to passions and forms of inauthenticity. An example of a passion-based internal interference familiar to social workers is where people use violence (Chung, 2018). In terms of inauthenticity, we might also see this in people who are undertaking a job they hate because they see it as socially acceptable or where people undergo plastic surgery in order to fit a particular standard of beauty.

Self-realisation

Self-realisation is the final aspect of freedom. This is where human beings use opportunities to develop their human nature and capabilities (Nussbaum, 2011), and may include steps towards self-realisation as a political or spiritual being (Skinner, 2012). Other forms of self-realisation might include being able to engage in cultural practices and the use of one's "senses, imagination and thought" (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 33). The capabilities approach picks up many of the aspects of self-realisation as a form of freedom and it is a central part of Nussbaum's (2011) list of capabilities. For some people, simply coming to have a voice is central part of realising their agency and

is often a first step towards freedom. Napoleon and Friedland (2014) suggest that "[moving] out [from] these silences [within]…is a vital aspect to recognizing agency and understanding oneself as a citizen" (p. 207). Many things may interfere with this kind of development and flourishing: poverty, war, violence, structural and cultural oppression, lack of access to opportunity, and lack of access to forms of redress are just a few examples (see also Chap. 1, this volume). Social work with people experiencing marginalisation, oppression, violence and poverty uses practices of self-determination and empowerment that emphasise human agency (Parsell, Eggins, & Marston, 2017). These kinds of practices support the development of this kind of freedom for people.

Having discussed these different conceptions of freedom it is possible to see all three conceptions at work throughout social work practice (dependence, non-interference, and self-realisation). Any conception of democratic participation relies on ideas of free interchange about the conditions in which people live. From this discussion, it is possible to see how this free exchange is complicated by a number of factors: forms of interference, both physical and internal; relations of domination that create forms of dependence and thus become barriers to freedom; and, the lack of opportunities that people face in developing their capabilities. We turn now to consider the last of our four aspects we see as important ideas for supporting democratic participation, that of deep diversity.

Deep Diversity

Most of us now live in conditions of deep diversity. What does this mean? It is a phrase used by Taylor (1992) to describe the fact that human diversity is deeper than conceptualised by liberal and other political theorists. Laden (2001) explains:

> As both political activity and political theorizing have become more inclusive of the full panoply of human diversity, older answers to this question [of how to share political associations and principles] have been found wanting, charged with relying on exclusion and assimilation to achieve their purported legitimating agreement. One theme that emerges from this critical literature is that human diversity is deep: it is not a surface phenomenon that covers over a common human core. Robust accounts of our common human nature have always erased or excluded some people. *Forging legitimate political principles that neither exclude nor assimilate thus requires coming to terms with the fact of deep diversity*. (p. 1, emphasis added)

One of the key outcomes of this recognition of deep diversity has been a turn to thinking about how to engage with this fact through our political systems and in response to the many struggles and claims for recognition around the world (Tully, 1995). Indeed, leading multiculturalism philosopher Kymlicka (2009, p. 371) suggests that there has been a large corpus of work published in recent years that "attempts at formulating a normative theory of minority rights and examining how minority rights relate to broader political values (such as freedom, equality, democracy, and citizenship) and broader normative frameworks (such as liberalism, com-

munitarianism, and republicanism)". This is why we have included it here. Laden and Owen (2007, p. 9) argue that "many philosophers and political theorists…found th[e] basic liberal framework inadequate for handling questions of diversity that are broader and touch on different matters than those that stem from doctrinal disputes among European Christians".

Deep diversity has implications for democracies because deliberation depends on communication with diverse others. With the increase of different minorities and ethnic groups claiming recognition within nation-states, Kymlicka (1995, p. 189) argues that "if there is a viable way to promote a sense of solidarity and common purpose in a multination state, it will involve accommodating, rather than subordinating, national identities". It is not just that there are minorities to be accommodated, but there are also groups within nation-states that have diverse ways of acting politically too. This is why Charles Taylor proposed the process of deep diversity in the context of Canada grappling with these issues in the 1990s. Kymlicka (1995) draws on Taylor in his discussion about how a nation-state can hold together under the tensions of different cultural groups and claims for recognition. He suggests that not only do we need a diversity of approaches but we also need a commitment to the *value* of diversity. Taylor offers one such approach which we think is promising due to its dialogical format. We think it fits with existing social work empowerment and critical practices. Taylor's approach, summarised by Tully (2012), has four main components:

1. Deep diversity refers to the **kinds of belonging of peoples within a national context**—this point recognises the existence of different modes of belonging within nation-states. Historically, these modes of belonging have been based on civil and other rights, but this is no longer enough to recognise diverse modes of being. Taylor suggested that to engage with diversity, we should adopt a first-person perspective rather than trying to understand these modes of being through third person (objective) concepts usually borrowed from the law. This means asking the question of oneself: *what language do I use about the issue of culture?* And *what is the language that we use with each other in public space?* To take a first-person perspective allows for diverse people to belong to a wider polity, but they can belong to that polity in different ways. An example is where you have three people all from different cultural groups but they all identify as Australian or British. They are bearers of civil liberties and belong together in a common polity, but *how* they belong may have particular cultural differences.
2. **Mutual recognition**—the idea that partners in negotiations about these modes of belonging to the polity must engage with each other mutually and from a first-person perspective, rather than at the level of abstraction of the third person, or through some kind of legal or social category of the label. This means that people act in these negotiations as free people with affiliations and capabilities specific to them, and they recognise this freedom in their negotiating partners too.
3. **Dialogue**—the main mechanism for engaging with deep diversity is dialogue. This category has three features:

a. Dialogue involves a process of each party bringing their prejudgements into the dialogue for critical examination. These prejudgements are called into question, along with the very structures of injustice that have been the reason for the forms of misrecognition at the centre of the engagement in the first place.
b. The *form* of dialogue is not oriented to agreement, but is instead oriented to mutual understanding. Thus, parties to a dialogue exchange reasons as to why they want forms of recognition to occur in particular ways. This is important to understanding the various kinds of social suffering caused by different forms of misrecognition and injustice.
c. Dialogue partners should expect to be changed by their participation in the process as they move to mutual understanding. That is, each party should be transformed by the encounter so that their view may be changed, enlarged, or to become more nuanced.

4. **Fusion of horizons**—this is where the partners begin to create a new space and language, which is "constructed in the course of dialogue but is not the language of the hegemon, or of the dominant majority, it's not a language handed to us by a court or by a political theorist, it's not the language of the subaltern—it's the language of the middle ground" (Tully, 2012, online).

This kind of approach to deep diversity offers a hope for addressing the recognition struggles for peoples who have experienced past and ongoing injustices, as well as addressing contemporary issues of how to live together in multicultural and multinational states. Tully (2012) suggests that such dialogues allow us to see our interdependencies in ways that using languages of law—developed outside of the dialogue—cannot deliver. The other benefit is that this approach embeds an ethic of mutual care as fellow citizens with different modes of belonging. Lastly, Tully contends that this dialogical practice of deep diversity involves using a particular practical approach—one must enter the dialogue process using the very mode of being that the dialogue calls forth. In other words, the nature of the dialogue must be its own model of justice in action, and should not be conducted as further forms of silencing, domination or abuse. We think this approach has resonances for engaging in deliberations about the kinds of structural and cultural injustice outlined by Young earlier in this chapter.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have surveyed four major conceptual areas important for considering democracy and participation: the nation-state and civil society; constitutionalism; freedom and liberty; and, deep diversity. The presumption we hold is that democratic participation is key to addressing social injustices within and outside of diverse nation-states. We think social work has a role to play in this aspect of con-

testing structural and cultural injustice, but we need good understandings of where and how to focus our efforts. Recall that we are seeing democratic participation as:

> the participation of citizens in the ways in which their conduct is governed by the exercise of political power in any system or practice of governance. Citizens participate by 'having a say' and 'negotiating' how power is exercised and who exercises it. (Tully, 2008b, p. 145)

Thus, social workers are called on to support, advocate and work with people in their struggles over systems or practices that are unfair or unjust. This expansive notion of democratic participation offers a significant resource for social work in the struggle for social justice. This will entail using processes to advocate for fair and just institutions within their respective nation-states, by engaging the twin principles of constitutionalism and democracy. It seems to us that social workers everywhere work with people—whose freedom, whether from domination, oppression or forms of interference—often struggle to take up their powers as citizens to contest the conditions in which they find themselves. If we are to take the mission of social justice seriously, forms of democratic participation are an important part of our professional toolkit. It means looking for opportunities to support people in developing their voices and engaging in the processes of speaking back to power—a familiar practice for social workers. It might also mean taking up our own citizenship responsibilities as a "social worker/citizen", and thereby engaging in democratic processes of dialogue and deliberation, wherever we are.

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Chapter 9
Human Rights and Autonomy

Abstract Human dignity and worth are important values for social workers, and these values are enshrined in many social work codes of ethics around the world. This often translates into discussions about human rights and service user self-determination, otherwise referred to as autonomy. Human rights have become a significant part of the global landscape. Given the fact that people live in plural societies, we need better ways to account for issues of rights, autonomy, difference and diversity with respect to equality and social justice. This chapter explores human rights and social work and considers the role that social work can take in relation to the potentials and limits of human rights instruments and agreements. Second, the chapter explores a related concept—autonomy—from liberal, Kantian and feminist perspectives. The centrality of autonomy as a socially and politically constituted phenomena is examined in relation to implications for social justice and human rights.

Introduction

Social work is considered to have played a significant role in the development of human rights internationally (Reichert, 2006) and has continued to take human rights to be a central concern of the profession (Healy, 2008).What do we mean when we talk about human rights and autonomy? Who and what are we discussing? What subjects, agents, persons, entities or identities do we mean? Both rights and autonomy can be considered as normative, by which we mean that they contain various arguments about the way in which human affairs *should* or *ought* to be conducted (Heywood, 2000). The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 2016) sets out a series of statements about human rights and this may represent something of a consensus about their relevance and importance. However, the nature, character and compliance with human rights legislation in different jurisdictions is still a matter of contention across many places in the world. Likewise, the topic of autonomy, its character, content and procedural aspects are still the focus of debate within philosophy (Freyenhagen, 2017). If, as we have claimed in other chapters we live

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L. Watts and D. Hodgson, *Social Justice Theory and Practice for Social Work*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-3621-8_9

in conditions of deep diversity, then it is not surprising that conceptions of human rights and autonomy may also be the focus of reasonable disagreement. But what is at stake here?

Ideas about autonomy underpin, for social work at least, significant professional norms concerned with consent (Twomey, 2015), self-determination, ideas about empowerment, and justice. Autonomy of personhood, of thought and expression, and of the enactment of a reasonable public discourse is a route out of oppression, domination and tyranny. When we discuss autonomy in social work, we often think about individuals, although autonomy can also be used to think about nation-states and other institutional entities (Heywood, 2000). Christman (2018) points out that the concept of autonomy bears considerable weight and is 'very much at the vortex of the complex (re)consideration of modernity' (paragraph 2). Ideas about autonomy are embedded in some of the human rights foundations and in social work this may be the key aspect that presents itself in the various practice arenas in which we find ourselves. Our goal in this chapter is to present some of these arguments and discussions with a view to arriving at some implications for social justice that are important for social work to consider. We think that there are ways to consider human rights and autonomy that do not rely on a conception of human beings as individualistic atoms. This conception of autonomy is important so that we can acknowledge the intersubjective and relational nature of human life (Sayer, 2011).

This chapter has two main sections. The first section deals with the issue of human rights and the role social work may play in various national and international human rights debates and issues. We begin the discussion by outlining the moral basis for human rights, before considering the international context of human rights regimes. This international context raises critical questions that follows a question raised by Hannah Arendt on the issue of who has the 'right to have rights' (Benhabib, 2015, online). Such a question allows us to highlight the pressing issues of place, dependence and the role of nation-states. This allows us to discuss international human rights instruments, their connection to international norms, and their respective limits and powers.

The second section turns our attention to autonomy and this section proceeds in three ways. First, we give an overview of the concept of autonomy in definitional terms. Second, we consider autonomy from a liberal point of view paying particular attention to its relation to public communication and the relationship of autonomy to practical and social identities. Third, we address the issue of autonomy via a feminist critique and reconstruction. This feminist lens helps us to consider not only issues of care and vulnerability in our discussion of human autonomy—including intersubjective relations of human development—but also where these relations take place. This picks up the issue of autonomy when people become displaced by various events and social factors. There is a crucial role for social workers in contesting abuses of human rights as well as advocating for a greater attention to the links between intersubjective human social relations of home, place and community to the realisation of social justice.

Human Rights

The Moral Basis for Human Rights

Many discussions of human rights begin with the issue of human dignity and worth. One of the key assumptions of human rights conventions is to be found in Article 1 of the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR):

> All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. (United Nations, 2016)

The universal application of this conception of human beings is outlined further in the UNDHR Article 2, which states:

> Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty. (United Nations, 2016)

Tasioulas (2015, p. 70) provides a pluralist argument for human rights to be:

> understood as moral rights possessed by all human beings simply in virtue of their humanity—are grounded in the universal interests of their holders, all of whom possess the equal moral status of human dignity.

As indicated in Article 1 of the UNDHR, dignity is an important concept to discussions of human rights and this is also reflected in many social work codes of ethics (for example, Australian Association of Social Workers, 2010; The British Association of Social Workers, 2012). However, like many ethical concepts dignity is normative and thus it remains difficult to define. Nevertheless, people generally understand what is meant by dignity and they certainly recognise when it is not afforded to them. This is due to the relational aspect to dignity. People may see dignity as an inherent quality of being human, but they also need others to *recognise* their dignity in order for it to have salience (Sayer, 2011).

Despite the everyday discourse about rights and what they might be, it remains the case that philosophers disagree somewhat about the foundations for thinking about human dignity and rights (Tasioulas, 2015). They have turned their attention to the problem stating that if human rights are to be useful in addressing injustice, a deep philosophical justification is required that goes beyond the various accessions of governments and institutions. As O'Neill (2015) points out:

> For better or for worse, human rights are seen as formulating valid moral claims that human beings can make on one another, and in particular on states and their institutions and officials, even (or especially) when existing institutional structures fail to protect or secure those claims. (p. 71)

But what might be the basis of these claims to rights? Who can make such claims? And, on who or what can they be claimed? There have been a range of justifications offered, but the question remains: how should rights be situated and what they should be orientated towards—capacities, agency, protection, needs? And what does this tell us about duties and obligations?

A pluralist conception of human rights is capable of incorporating particular interests but does not undermine the universal aim of human rights as being about everyone. Note that this philosophical discussion so far does not specify any particular kind of lifestyle other than that which is compatible with the rights of others. Hence, the moral basis of these claims is that they ought to apply to everyone.

Social Work and Human Rights

Social workers claim a particular role in the development of human rights internationally (Healy, 2008). Indeed, in 1988 the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) outlined this position as follows:

> social work has, from its conception, been a human rights profession, having as its basic tenet the intrinsic value of every human being and as one of its main aims the promotion of equitable social structures, which can offer people security and development while upholding their dignity. (Healy, 2008, pp. 735–736)

Prior to World War Two, social workers were involved in many non-government organisations (NGOs) that were instrumental in identifying and responding to humanitarian issues. Healy (2008) outlines a number of significant social work leaders who were involved in human rights such as Jane Addams (US), Sophonisba Breckinridge (US), Eglantyne Jebb (UK) and Alice Salomon (Germany). Each of these social work leaders played a role in bringing conditions of injustice to light and by emphasising the moral dignity of people. Ife (2012) points out that social workers created the International Federation of Social Workers in 1929, and a key goal was to enable work across national borders on humanitarian issues. Post-war social workers were involved in the process that led to the Universal Declaration (Reichert, 2006), but Healy (2008) acknowledges that it is more difficult to assess the contribution here by looking just at specific individuals. Social work human rights practice may also be seen through broader participation in various social movements and social justice and human rights actions in local and global fora.

Social work in the contemporary period is now looking at developing human rights responses to globalisation in social work education (Nipperess, 2013), because as Staub-Bernasconi (2014, p. 27) points out, ‘the influences of globalization and world society on social problems cannot be ignored anymore’. This may mean looking critically at the way in which social work as a profession has become entrenched in national contexts, and working harder to transcend this by ‘explicitly reflecting its roles and activities from a transnational perspective’ (Walliman, 2014, p. 15). Such a focus would involve understanding and responding to: the global mobility of people,

capital and ideas; relations of unequal exchange in transnational contexts, particularly in relation to inequality; knowledge of transnational and internal conflicts; and, greater international policy exchange and cooperation (Walliman, 2014, pp. 22–23). It is our view that embedding this focus within national social work education and practice would go towards a much needed international human rights focus within national contexts.

Human Rights and Globalisation

When the Universal Declaration was first handed down it was widely assumed that human rights were situated within national borders. Moreover, the Declaration drew on understandings of sovereignty as 'the right of a collectivity to define itself by asserting power over a bounded territory' (Benhabib, 1999). This has meant that many of the other covenants still presume the relation between citizens, rule of law, and nation-state institutions through which human rights may be realised. Speaking post-World War Two, in the context of large numbers of displaced people, Hannah Arendt (1951, cited in Benhabib, 1999, pp. 710–711) said:

> From the beginning the paradox involved in the declaration of inalienable human rights was that it reckoned with an "abstract" human being who seemed to exist nowhere…The whole question of human rights, therefore, was quickly and inextricably blended with the question of national emancipation; only emancipated sovereignty of the people, of one's own people, seemed to insure them.

When rights are situated and conferred upon citizens within nation-states this becomes problematic. Where does that leave people made stateless due to war and other factors? This group—the stateless, the displaced and people seeking asylum—are those that social work must ask questions about in addition to our responsibilities within national policy contexts. Benhabib suggests that '…universal human rights transcend the rights of citizens and extend to all persons considered as moral beings' (Benhabib, 1999, p. 711). This raises an important question regarding how best to respond to global movements of displaced people and those seeking asylum, by considering '[W]hat kinds of immigration, naturalization, and citizenship practices then would be compatible with the commitments of liberal democracies to human rights?' (Benhabib, 1999, p. 711).

The Limitations to Juridical Human Rights

The UN Declaration is an aspirational document meant to secure a range of human rights for populations around the globe. Indeed, there have also been a number of other declarations and covenants that also contribute to a global focus on the rights of a number of groups considered particularly vulnerable (Reichert, 2006). These documents increasingly represent a global juridical system of rights binding on signatory

states. Moreover, counting human rights treaties and associated international human rights instruments is an inexact science (Farris & Dancy, 2017), due to conceptual differences within different kinds of measurement. Farris and Dancy (2017) state that since the first multilateral treaties signed in 1966, the number of multilateral treaties has risen to nine, with nine optional protocols. Three regional bodies of law have emerged and there are 99 international instruments. Further, these authors state that the impact of human rights law in specific jurisdictions has seen a proliferation of instruments to be used as indicators of both protection and violations. We can see that 'the world is now awash in laws and indicators of legal violations' of human rights (Farris & Dancy, 2017, p. 273).

A key outcome of this juridical situation is that once rights treaties are ratified then states must enact laws and create institutions, practices and report this to various international bodies. Human rights law, compliance and the creation and implementation of monitoring instruments are mutually constitutive phenomena (Farris & Dancy, 2017, p. 283). What this means is that they arise together and inform each other. This constitutes a compliance regime that operates at the international level. Organisations situated within civil society, within nations and in international contexts, also contribute to this compliance regime as they connect with domestic institutions and can also engage in monitoring and the collection of information (Farris & Dancy, 2017). It is in civil society, within states and in international arenas, that the profession of social work may play a role in advocating and monitoring the compliance of institutions to human rights law (Walliman, 2014).

For example, Weiner et al. (2012, p. 1) recommend that closer attention should be paid to the intersection between human rights instruments, national legislatures and different political orders. This was in light of the *Kadi case* heard in the European Court of Justice. Briefly, a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) directive to member states to freeze assets of suspected terrorists was deemed to violate the rights of a Saudi Arabian national with assets in the European Union (Shekhtman, 2011). The problem here was that a non-state institutional authority operating across juridical borders was deemed to violate Mr. Kadi's rights to 'fair hearing, the right to judicial review, and the respect for property and principle of proportionality' (Shekhtman, 2011, pp. 90–91). In the context of challenging the UNSC judgement, the European Court of Justice opened a compelling rationale for attention to global constitutionalism (Weiner et al., 2012). The relevance here is that increasingly the claims for human rights and their defence are occurring beyond or outside the perimeters of various states and their obligations or adherence to human rights instruments. Furthermore, many regional and internationally based agreements and practices may be unconstitutional and operate outside—or at least in a contested dialogue with—the rule of law and acceptable norms. This may pose a problem for when, where and how juridical human rights instruments apply, or do not apply.

For example, the world is seeing an unprecedented rise in stateless and displaced people. Displaced people can be held in camps within bordering states. Although these camps are maintained by global and domestic NGOs, people in these camps are effectively without opportunities to exercise their capacities to develop any mechanisms for their own autonomy and self-government within the camps, or to access

legal recourse and rights as citizens. This makes people in this situation effectively non-persons (Benhabib, 2015) and extremely vulnerable to human rights abuses and violations because they are denied the opportunities to exercise self-government over their own futures. To a significant extent, these situations create modern forms of *unfreedom* in the sense that people are dependent on the arbitrary will of faceless others. Social work must resist and challenge state and non-state arrangements that perpetuate this situation of unfreedom and the violation of human rights. As Tully (2008, p. 305) says:

> it should not be the burden of the wretched of the earth to refuse to submit and act otherwise, as in the dominant theories of resistance, but of the most powerful and privileged to refuse to comply and engage in the work of glocal citizenship.

In other words, it behoves social work to draw attention to, contest, resist and seek to transform human rights violations and abuses both within *and* outside the confines of the jurisdictions of the nation-state.

Autonomy

So far, we have considered human rights and the aspiration they hold for everyone. We have also outlined how increasingly human rights law, politics and compliance regimes are creating a global human rights regime. This regime relies also on significant national and international NGOs operating within civil society and how this may be a prime site for local and transnational social work involvement to progress human rights aspirations. In this next section, we want to turn our attention to the more micro level of enacting a human rights focus within everyday interactions in practice. We start from the premise that social work has an important role to play in fostering the human dignity and worth of people everywhere, and a key route to doing so is to foster the opportunities for exercising autonomy in our interactions with others.

Preliminary Definitions and Concepts of Autonomy

Ideas about autonomy can be traced to philosophical arguments about human nature, the uses of reason, and the role of emotion in practices of freedom and struggle. In some respects, this is the link between human rights and autonomy—both involve ideas about human nature and the relationship to society, and both are considered normative aspirations in struggles for freedom and justice. If people are to be considered the authors of their own will, able to make choices, and treated as moral agents, what then does this suggest about the nature of the *self* that is doing the choosing or the exercising of will? What role does autonomy play in fostering a just society? And what impacts do external social conditions such as inequality, poverty,

violence and processes of imperialism and oppression have on the autonomous will of individuals?

In trying to untangle these issues, Christman (2018) suggests that it is important to start with a working definition of autonomy. In simple terms, autonomy refers 'to the independence and authenticity of the desires (values, emotions, etc.) that move one to act in the first place' (Christman, 2018, paragraph five). Autonomy is typically associated with a personal capability, trait or ability to act freely and without constraint (Dworkin, cited in Christman, 2018). An example of personal autonomy might be where a person exercises their will and desire to live healthily and are consequently moved to carry out the actions of exercising regularly, eating moderately and getting sufficient sleep so as to achieve that desire or aspiration. In moral and political philosophy, autonomy is typically conceptualised to include self-ownership and self-government. We can situate the idea of autonomy within the Western tradition where it means to 'be one's own person, to be directed by considerations, desires, conditions, and characteristics that are not simply imposed externally upon one, but are part of what can somehow be considered one's authentic self' (Christman, 2018, paragraph two). Citing Feinberg (1989), Christman (2018) outlines the basic features of autonomy as 'the capacity to govern oneself, the actual condition of self-government, a personal ideal, and a set of rights expressive of one's sovereignty over oneself' (paragraph nine). It is from this idea of self-ownership that autonomy and freedom are often related together. Both the concepts of autonomy and freedom have considerable history and carry normative weight as being desirable. As mentioned previously, freedom refers to the power that people have to act without interference from external agencies, or to act within conditions of independence from the arbitrary will of others (Skinner, 2012). Freedom can also include opportunities for self-realisation across a range of essences: political, moral or spiritual.

So far we can see that autonomy is thought to be phenomenologically internal to the person. However, there are several external and contextual considerations that are important to understanding autonomy, even at its most basic level. Given that human beings are invariably subject to debilitating circumstances or oppressive and constricting conditions, to be autonomous is an 'achievement [where a] person is maximally authentic and free of manipulative, self-distorting influences' (Christman, 2018, paragraph one).

Furthermore, Ben-Ishai (2008) suggests that there is another aspect to autonomy, not captured in these particular conceptualisations, which concerns the *status* and *recognition* of autonomy in socially mediated contexts. In order to be autonomous, not only does one have to be able to think, act and express a personal sovereignty, a person must also be *recognised* by others as being autonomous. Failure to recognise that people are or might be able to be autonomous may result in misrecognition and oppression (Ben-Ishai, 2008). For example, a stateless person or someone with low social or economic status frequently suffers from a misrecognition of their autonomous potential, and therefore, may be subject to controlling, paternalistic or oppressive relations that constitute significant threats to their well-being (Lamont, Guetzkow, & Herzog, 2016; Sayer, 2005).

In the above conceptual sketch of the basic level of autonomy, embedded is a key assumption that an autonomous person is able to 'act, reflect, and choose on the basis of factors that are somehow her own (authentic in some sense)' (Christman, 2018, paragraph eight). This feature of autonomy as self-reflecting and as able to respond to reasons, and able to think and decide, is central to liberal and Kantian notions of autonomy.

Liberal and Kantian Notions of Autonomy

There are many liberalisms but central to all of them is the individual. Under liberalism, it is individuals who contribute to the formulation of social contracts through which free people come to govern themselves. How the individual is conceptualised within liberal thought has led to divergent views about the nature of freedom and the conditions of government. For example, some versions of liberal thought see society as an aggregation of the rational choices and interests of individuals, while others see individuals as embedded in social relations and thus society should take these relations into account. Each of these divergent forms of liberalism emphasises different aspects of autonomy situated within individuals (Webb, 2018).

Individual autonomy is central to the most influential version of liberalism today, known as political liberalism (Christman, 2018). This is a version of liberal justice formulated by John Rawls, first in his *Theory of Justice* (1971) and extended later in his work *Political Liberalism* (1996) (see also chapter seven, this volume). Rawls' particular conception of autonomy argues that persons are capable of reasoned deliberative processes by virtue of their status as free and equal citizens. Note that this assumes a society in which institutions are fair and just, and in which there are actually opportunities for deliberation on social issues and conditions. This implies that we need some conditions that are central to the pursuit of social justice as fairness; for example, a state that is neutral towards citizens' pursuit of the good life is seen as foundational (O'Neill, 1996). The implication is that in the absence of fair and just institutions and opportunities for deliberation on social issues and conditions, then autonomy and the pursuit of justice is severely limited.

The principles, proposals and matters of importance that are subject to public deliberation within this conception of social justice take the autonomy of individuals as citizens seriously and 'these [proposals, invitations, and communications] will only be successful if they can be addressed to each citizen individually' (Laden, 2005, p. 53). Social workers do the work of taking the distinction between persons seriously when they recognise individuals as having moral status first and foremost as human beings, and second, when they support or enable the right of self-ownership, which includes individual capacity for free thought and expression on matters of justice. The philosophical origins of this notion of autonomy as indicative of the public use of reason and thinking for oneself can be traced to Immanuel Kant.

Autonomy is a core aspect of Kant's conception of practical reason (Christman, 2018). In the Kantian view, autonomy is linked to the human ability to subject our-

selves to moral laws via the use of our reason. Thus, in this conception of autonomy, we are subject to moral laws and can derive and debate principles and conditions of justice, but these laws are of our own making. For example, Kant's famous Categorical Imperative is stated as 'Act only on that maxim whereby thou canst at the same time will that it should be a universal law' (Kant, [1785]1952, p. 268). This is an example of the deployment of autonomy to develop and use one's reason and critical faculties to conceive of a moral law without recourse to tradition, imposed authority, or religious or superstitious metaphysical sources of knowledge, or ideological dogma. Free from external constraints and impositions, Kant thought that human beings can realise their true autonomous nature via the activation of reason and critical thought.

Communication, Speech and Deliberation

An important requisite condition for the use of reasoned communication and public discourse is tolerance for diverse views and opinions. O'Neill (1986) suggests that liberals contend that 'diversity of belief and its expression should be tolerated in order to respect either individuals or reason' (p. 523). However, not everything can or should be tolerated. In O'Neill's view, there is a problem if toleration means leaving the most vulnerable to their own devices, and if it means doing nothing about conditions of oppression. It all hangs on the meaning of toleration in the context of both liberalism and in relation to notions of autonomy. For liberals, toleration means 'forbearance, a willingness to allow people to think, speak and act in ways in which we disapprove' (Heywood, 1998, p. 36). Heywood (1998) points out that this does not mean that we accept all forms of communication, or that there are no limits to toleration, but generally it can come to mean that in public life no real action to suppress speech is taken unless forms of communication and social conditions become very intolerable to others. This is because if we allow intolerant speech, for example it might undermine the very conditions from which public deliberation actually occurs in the first place. An example of this might be hate speech. Most liberal democracies will not tolerate forms of speech and acts that demean or infringe on the rights of others.

It is *how* communication impacts on the development of public reason that provides a link to our discussion of autonomy (O'Neill, 1986). Communication is seen in this context as a practical problem, rather than a theoretical problem. People simply must learn to engage with the views of others if they are to become autonomous. In other words, engaging with the views of others helps foster a Kantian sense of maturity, which is where people become capable of thinking for themselves. Communications in this sense must: (1) be capable of being interpreted by others; (2) be deemed as sensible reasons that are unconfined or restricted by externally imposed authority; and, (3) constitute engagement in the public exchange of reasons that is between free and equal people, without the use of threats, violence or intimidation (O'Neill, 1986).

Autonomy and Practical and Social Identities

Some authors have taken these Kantian distinctions about reason and communication and considered how they rest on ideas about the identities of persons (Korsgaard, 1996, cited in Laden, 2001, p. 13). Such ideas are aimed at understanding how practical identities operate and contribute to the goals of a reasonable citizenry able to engage in political deliberation. The concept used here to make this point is that of *practical identity*. Practical identities have both a personal and social aspect (Laden, 2001). The personal side includes those aspects that 'are particular…things that serve to differentiate and thus individualize us' (Laden, 2001, p. 88). An example might be the fact of being the spouse of someone, the daughter or son of a specific person, which situates us within our relations to specific others. This characteristic generally involves reciprocal relationships that have both a public and private aspect. For example, your identity as the spouse of someone might be known but the quality of that specific relationship might be a private matter. It is often information about this side of people's practical identities that social workers collect in their engagement with service users and how the social worker relates and communicates with the service user is a reciprocal one that takes in their autonomy and identity as a person seriously.

The other feature of a practical identity as outlined by Laden is that of the *social*. The social identity is 'better thought of as arising from membership in various and sundry socially salient groups: being of a particular gender or race or ethnicity or religious group or profession' (Laden, 2001, p. 88). Social aspects are characterised as *non-reciprocal* and indicate where we stand in relation to each other in *salient* social structures or groups. This will be familiar to social work readers as this social aspect is often emphasised in structural and critical accounts of society when considering issues of marginalisation and oppression. As with the personal side of people's practical identity, social workers are often privy to the effects of misrecognition, stigma, discrimination and violence perpetrated on people based on perceptions of their membership in specific social groups. In other words, some notion of a person's autonomy is shaped by and through their social identity.

Why is this significant to our conception here of liberal autonomy? The practical identities of each of us provide us with salient information through which we form our capacities to engage in self-government and exercise choices and preferences. In other words, our autonomy and how we enter into communications and deliberations with others is not just a matter of reasoning, but is shaped by and expressed through our practical and social identities, which will be subject to limits and constraints. In this way, Laden (2001) has addressed one of the criticisms of earlier conceptions of autonomy: that they do not adequately account for difference and diversity. To be clear, autonomy is a variable quality and we should not assume or expect that the capacity to enter into self-government, speech, reasoning and communication modes will be the same for everyone.

This notion of a practical identity helps us understand how autonomy is a matter of bringing both the personal and social into relation with each other. It also addresses a

significant feminist critique (see below) about how the form of autonomy discussed by many liberals above can be seen as deeply gendered. Feminist notions of autonomy will be taken up in the next section as these have offered a robust critique of many assumptions embedded within Kantian and liberal notions of autonomy that we wish to take seriously. This does not mean, however, that we consider liberal notions as unimportant—quite the contrary. The liberal notion of justice as fairness by taking the distinction between persons seriously is a key basis for a social work emphasis on the moral status of individuals with a respect for difference and diversity. We do not think that this should be discarded, but included and critiqued in any practice that is aimed at fostering social justice.

Feminist Critique and Reconstruction of the Concept of Autonomy

O'Neill suggests that liberalism has been criticised for utilising '…a fictional conception of the solitary and unaffiliated self, which is both empirically false and morally offensive' (1995, p. 151). The discussion about practical and social identities covered earlier further illustrates the point that there is no such thing as individuals who exist as autonomous islands in discussion and relation with other autonomous individual islands. This is a central critique by feminists, particularly through the way that gender is conceptualised as a formative and significant social division. Feminists have mounted a number of significant challenges to many of the erroneous assumptions about women that have permeated philosophical accounts of relations between women and men, and that have also found their way into liberal notions of reason and autonomy. Patriarchy is a term used to denote these relations (Heywood, 1998), although this term is used differently among the different kinds of feminisms. It is fairly familiar to characterise these as 'waves' of feminist movements or theorising. Alternatively, we can see them in terms of deconstruction and reconstruction (Benhabib & Cornell, 1987).

First Wave Feminism

Strictly speaking, at least in the West, feminism began as a women's movement that situated its claims within the social contract tradition via arguments about the rights of women that unfolded at the same time as arguments about the rights of men were also being discussed and debated (Tong, 2009; Wearing, 1996). In this respect, early feminists accepted the existence of the public and private spheres and sought to extend the rights of women into the public sphere that was largely dominated by men. This continues to be a considerably influential approach to extending the rights of women and is often described as liberal feminism (Tong, 2009; Wearing, 1996).

In this sense, liberal feminists argued (and continue to argue) that women should enjoy the same autonomy as men, such as being able to take up public positions and offices, being able to vote and engage in democratic deliberation, and being able to enjoy the benefits of education. These notions were incredibly influential in social work especially via the influence of Beatrice Webb (Nyland, 1994). In short, this perspective pushes to extend the franchise to women so that autonomy in the public sphere between the genders is one of equality.

Second Wave and Radical Feminism

A second wave of feminism began in the early to mid-twentieth century spawning radical and socialist feminist forms. Radical feminist critique centres on the issue of patriarchy as a fundamental social cleavage. This perspective sees people as gendered first and foremost and there have been divergent perspectives about whether women should embrace or elide these differences (Heywood, 1998; Tong, 2009). For socialist feminists, patriarchy can be understood in both social and economic terms but the economic implications have been an important site of critique (Tong, 2009). Socialist feminists found a crucial resource in the work of Marx with the contention that gender inequality has its roots in the capitalist economic and social system (Tong, 2009). Marxist theory provided a historical account and critique of the separation of spheres of life from those based on kinship (family) and those that are public. This separation occurred with the development of the capitalist state. It is this separation that ushered in new capitalist economic relations leading to various inequalities and alienation associated with it. In this way, socialist feminists help us to see that the autonomy of individuals is seriously undermined by their position within economic relations, especially where this position induces experiences of alienation. For example, when women are confined to domestic labour and child care duties and have access to education and paid employment restricted, this can lead to economic dependency and a loss of autonomy. Another example is the spectre and reality of gendered violence against women, which impacts on autonomy regarding safety and mobility.

The reason Marx became a central figure for socialist feminists was due to his 'recognition that the seeming autonomous operation of the economy belied its interdependence with other aspects of social life' (Nicholson, 1987, p. 16). Social work scholars have taken up this analysis too (Dominelli, 2002). While Marx recognised the interdependence between 'family, state and economy', Nicholson (1987, p. 16) suggests this was developed inconsistently in his theory, particularly the philosophical and anthropological aspects. As a result, it has been socialist feminists who have theorised this relation further. For our purposes, we can see that autonomy is *not* referring to individuals per se, as in the liberal tradition. Instead, autonomy (or lack thereof) is a feature of an economic system that entrenches gender marginalisation because it decouples economic production from everything else that has been relegated to the private sphere, or not considered at all. The consequence is that as a result of the patriarchal capitalist economy, women have had significantly less auton-

omy than men, making a fiction out of liberal ideas of equality as applicable to all. A recent critique from this point of view is that of O'Manique and Fourie (2016, p. 124) where they suggest that the work and 'costs of producing labouring bodies for capital …is largely (although not exclusively) the invisible work of women and girls'. The continued invisibility of this 'work' casts doubt on the extent to which the realisation of gender equality through Social Development Goals (SDGs) is possible without attention to underlying neoliberal global economic relations.

Postcolonial Feminism

Another way in which our understanding of autonomy has been further broadened is by work that includes experiences of previously excluded others. Much of this has meant a dialogical engagement with postcolonial scholarship for thinking through notions of identity, belonging and authenticity. A good example of this is Morwenna Griffith's work on self and identity (Griffiths, 1995). Griffiths uses the experience of various poets, authors and her own experience as a British feminist scholar to consider how identity and the self might be constructed. She finds that far from being an essence, identity is a fluid construction based on the social relations in which people are embedded. Here, Griffiths engages in a feminist explanatory-diagnostic analysis of the limits to conceptions of autonomy that has typically been tied to notions of a disembodied and disembedded being (Benhabib, 1992). In social work, this insight about the relational nature of self-making and autonomy is captured by the *person-in-environment* construct used in social work practice. Again, the point is that autonomy is not a matter of individual disembodied agency. Rather, autonomy is socially embedded and mediated.

Feminists have demonstrated that the 'theoretical and practical exclusion of women from the universalist public is no mere accident or aberration' (Young, 1987, p. 59). Moreover, this exclusion shapes the very relations of identity that women form, in addition to relations that contribute to oppressive conditions that exclude women's interests and concerns from debate and deliberations associated with the public sphere (Young, 1987). This exclusion effects the whole edifice of normative reason that underpins conceptions of autonomy because the relevant reasons that might be communicated in discussions about justice are—for a vast proportion of the population—simply not counted as part of the *will* of the people (Benhabib, 1987). It should be said that women are not the only excluded others—people of colour, and people marginalised by their membership of certain groups are also excluded (Young, 1990). In summary, this is a conception of autonomy that does not assume an essential human nature or argue for 'the unity of a transcendent impartiality' (Young, 1987, p. 59). This is a version of autonomy based on recognising that the personal is political, and, therefore, both the personal and social aspects of a person's practical identity are seen to have salience in and for public life.

Poststructural Feminism

A further challenge to the essentialised notion of the autonomous self is offered via another wave of feminist thinking, namely poststructural feminism. Broadly speaking, poststructuralism (sometimes used interchangeably with the US term, postmodernism) signalled 'A crisis of confidence in Western conceptual systems' (Lather, 1991 cited in Gannon & Davies, 2012, p. 70). As with liberalisms and feminisms there are different variations of poststructuralism (Sarup, 1993) and it is beyond the scope here to offer an extensive discussion. The main aspect of poststructural feminism that concerns us here is the debate about subjectivity, identity and autonomy. Like other feminists, poststructural feminists have critiqued the assumptions of an essential human being modelled on a generalised masculine archetypical subject (Gannon & Davies, 2012). Indeed, Gannon and Davies (2006, cited in Gannon and Davies, 2012, p. 72) suggest that 'Post-structuralism troubles the individualism of humanist approaches, seeing the humanist individual as a (sometimes) troubling and fictional accomplishment of social and discursive practices'. Thus, for poststructural feminists, autonomy is not anchored in the existence of an essential human subject, rather it is a product of power and discourse.

Some authors associate this idea particularly with archaeological and genealogical work by Michel Foucault and in social work this has meant that this understanding of discourse sits uneasily with the deeply humanist project of the profession (Ife, 1999). Nevertheless, there has been a reappraisal of Foucault's work on the issue of autonomy relevant to our discussion and this has emerged from feminist philosopher Amy Allen. Without rehearsing the full discussion, Allen (2011, p. 44) suggests that we can understand autonomy as '…the twin capacities to reflect critically upon the power–knowledge relations that have constituted one's subjectivity and to engage in practices of self-transformation'. Allen (2011, p. 44) suggests that this means a subject is constituted within power relations, not one '…that stands outside of society or power relations'. This notion of autonomy is built in part from two aspects in Allen's work—a deep engagement with Foucauldian thought as a diagnostic on the present, and 'thinking through power and autonomy simultaneously…in order to chart paths of possible emancipatory transformation' (Allen, 2008, p. 21). For social work, this notion of autonomy is not separate from relations of power but is integral to how people engage with the conditions in which they find themselves. Given that this perspective argues that the autonomous subject is an artefact of power relations, there is no essentialist quality to human subjectivity. And if there is no essentialist quality, this should be a hopeful position to adopt because it means that if we achieve an emancipatory transformation of power relations, then we can positively influence the constitution of autonomy in subjugated individuals, and this is a route towards social justice.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have presented and discussed the issue of human rights and its links to ideas about human dignity and worth. Despite the focus on individual human dignity, when human rights practice is described in social work it often lends itself to more macro descriptions of the policy and practice environments at national and international levels. There is, however, another dimension that we have tried to capture here through the discussion of autonomy that would be applicable in everyday practice. Here, somewhat regardless of the field of practice, social workers can engage in practices that foster autonomy and dignity, such as respectful communication that embeds principles of listening, recognition and enabling choice and creating authentic relations. Although autonomy has a history within the liberal and Kantian traditions associated with freedom and the use of reason, it is important to note the contemporary criticisms of autonomy, as outlined, for example from different feminist perspectives. From this feminist critique, we can conclude that it is important to be wary of accounts of autonomy that do not take into account the practical and social identities of people, and that ignore the socially mediated side of autonomy. Practicing social work by paying due regard to people's capacities for autonomy is something that can occur in any practice arena and we believe this can contribute significantly to the human rights and social justice aspirations of the profession.

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Chapter 10
Social Justice and Social Work Practice

Abstract The previous chapters have outlined the theoretical ideas pertinent to understanding social justice. This chapter synthesises these ideas into a coherent framework that includes a summary of the critical, distributive, participatory democracy and autonomy and rights philosophies presented in earlier chapters. We present this framework as an integrated and reflexive way to think about social justice practice, and the chapter then draws on social work literature to outline in brief form a wide range of indicative activities and practices that social work could undertake in the pursuit of social justice.

Introduction

Social workers seeking after social justice face a challenge. There are many global contextual drivers and social, political and economic changes that have developed over the past few decades that have reshaped social and political institutions around the world (McDonald, 2006). Mullaly (2007) suggests that after the oil crisis of the 1970s the world became vastly more connected via forces of economic globalisation. This meant further rounds of economic imperialism asnation-states asserted economic liberalisation through global institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Tully (2012) also points out that this new imperialism acted in the name of protecting the negative rights of citizens (in the West) to free(er) markets. The widespread adoption of a *globalisation thesis* Mullaly (2007) by governments, policy elites and corporations was used as a rationale for further reductions in social spending on citizens within nation-state borders. Any previous consensus enjoyed by Keynesian inspired social policy gave way to what is now referred to as neoliberalism and this has marked the shift from the welfare to workfare state (McDonald, 2006).

In tandem with neoliberal globalisation, the conservative right have attacked (and continue to attack) the welfare state on the grounds that *state* delivered welfare creates

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L. Watts and D. Hodgson, *Social Justice Theory and Practice for Social Work*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-3621-8_10

conditions that are at odds with the needs of markets for free trade. Those on the right have aggressively made a case for 'the moral superiority of individual choice compared to the tyranny of collective decision-making; the necessity for a strong state apparatus in terms of law and order compared to the weakness exhibited by welfare models of justice' (Leonard, 1997, p. 4). Nation-states that had established welfare states rolled back expenditure and focused instead on liberalisation and deregulation of protections and trade in order to ensure a flow of money. Trade unions and other forms of worker protection were undermined by the widespread acceptance of free market economics. In following, we are left with massive cutbacks on government spending and austerity, a punishment and coercive approach to welfare as workfare, the rise of risk management, a focus on individual responsibilism and entrepreneurialism, and the neuro-psycho-bio-medicalisation of human andsocial problems (Ife, 2016; McDonald, 2006, 2010; Rose, 2007, 2010, 2013). For a discipline and profession like social work that had a long and established place in the institutions of the welfare state delivering *social work*, this has presented some problems. Because welfare states in advanced economies found themselves severely curtailed, Mullaly (2007) suggests '…this bought a crisis in confidence in social work among people both within, and outside, the profession' (p. 2). We agree with McDonald (2006) that the changes that have been reshaping the world generally—and the world of social work particularly—are truly far-reaching, and this will require some innovative thinking about what social work is, where it is going, and how it will position itself in this new and unfolding context.

In this book, we have attempted to contribute to thinking about social justice by reviewing and discussing a range of critical and philosophical perspectives to help elucidate the concept of social justice. This chapter brings the discussion together in summary form, and it turns to social work literature to indicate the sorts of practices and approaches that social work may seek to develop, as informed by each approach. In doing so, our aim is to outline a framework for social work practice that emphasises *social* and *structural* aspects of human experience and social work practice.

We should point out a number of limitations to our brief summary below. First, our discussion is necessarily brief and our suggestions are indicative only. Social work has shown a remarkable ability to draw on diverse theories, knowledges and perspectives to craft an impressive array of practical and theoretical resources with which to respond to diversity and complexity in practice. Although we offer suggestions, we have refrained from being too prescriptive because social work practices and the methods and theories it draws from are highly situated and contextual, requiring reflexive adaptation in situ. Our intention is to only offer somewhat of a summary, and outline a range of possible practices that would align well with the philosophical orientations discussed earlier in this book. We have included references to key sources so that readers can explore these examples in more detail.

Second, the presentation of the different social work approaches and examples we have grouped and classified under each perspective in no way suggests that they are mutually exclusive, incommensurable or antagonistic. This classification and grouping of examples and illustrations have been done only insofar as it makes it easier to organise the text for clarity. In reality, many of the methods, examples and

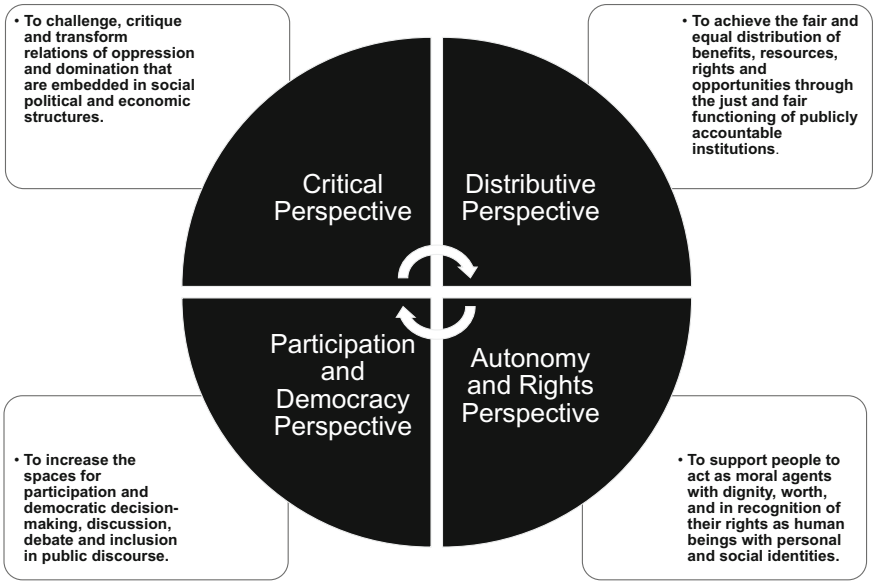

Fig. 10.1 An integrated model of social justice theory and practice

illustrations we present below may very well equally apply more or less under each or all perspectives and would depend on the orientating theory—we would expect there to be significant cross over and intersection of each approach. In fact, it is our contention that a practice approach for social justice needs to utilise and integrate a range of different methods, and it should be reflexive and adaptive about how this is done. Finally, what is suggested below is not an exhaustive portrait of where socially just practice may go. We encourage readers to consider how they may take the insights from the four critical and philosophical orientations to social justice as a point of departure for analysis, critique, insight and reflection on practice.

Figure 10.1 outlines the critical and philosophical perspectives we have discussed thus far in this book.

Summary of the Four Approaches and Indicative Practices

Critical Social Science, Critical Theory and Social Work

Critical social scienceincludes a wide range of theories and bodies of knowledge that seek to transform the social, economic and political structures and relations that oppress, dominate, marginalise, exploit and discriminate. Critical social theories develop explanations for ‘what’s going on’, but they also include a normative and

politically motivated vision for how things could or ought to be, along with some propositions for how we might get there. Critical social science has its roots in Marxist, feminist, postcolonial and post-structural theorising, critique and social action. This strong critique and social change focus means efforts are made towards organising action to address the root causes of injustice that are embedded into the fabric of society—its economic superstructure, political system, and its social norms, values and discourses that are implicated in perpetuating injustices. With a twin focus on personal problems and public issues (the personal is political), critical approaches seek to attack and transform the root causes of injustice.

In social work there are a cluster of theories that draw from this legacy (albeit in different ways), including critical, radical, structural, anti-oppressive, anti-racist, feminist, postcolonial, postmodern and post-structural approaches in social work (see Allan, Pease, & Briskman, 2009; Briskman, Pease, & Allan, 2009; Ferguson & Woodward, 2009; Mullaly, 2007; Orme, 2009; Pease & Nipperess, 2016; Turbett, 2014). Chief targets of critical theories include: neoliberal capitalism; elitist political cultures; oppressive and discriminatory social structures and relations; racism; sexism; prejudice and discrimination; biomedical and biopolitical discourses and practices of power, control and domination; professionalism and notions of 'the expert'; and, in some instances, the universalist assumptions andnorms associated with the Enlightenment, colonisation and modernity (Briskman, 2003).

The transformative and action side of critical and radical approaches in social work includes: collective solidarity and action (Allan, 2003; Ferguson & Woodward, 2009); joining and supporting local and global social and political movements (Mullaly, 2007; Whitmore & Wilson, 2005); collective or cause advocacy (Allan, 2003); covert and overt activism (Briskman, 2014; Greenslade, McAuliffe, & Chenoweth, 2015); public protest, demonstrations and lobbying (Fraser & Briskman, 2005); civil resistance and non-violent resistance (for a review, see Schock, 2015); consciousness raising, power sharing and dialogical relationship building (Allan, 2003); critique and subversion of dominant discourse andnorms (Fook, 2002; Healy, 2005); critical empowerment (Fook & Morley, 2005); lived experience research and education (Dorozenko, Ridley, Martin, & Mahboub, 2016); service user informed knowledge and practice (Beresford, 2000; Beresford & Boxall, 2012); critical education and critical pedagogy (Fook & Askeland, 2007); critical supervision (Noble, 2016); critical reflection (Fook & Gardner, 2007; Hodgson & Watts, 2017, pp. 228–241; Morley, 2016); critical thinking and judgment (Taylor & White, 2006; Tilbury, Osmond, & Scott, 2009); bottom-up ecological and socially just community work (Ife, 2016); social justice group-work (Sullivan, Mesbur, Lang, Goodman, & Mitchell, 2003); radical casework (Fook, 1993); and, organisational resistance politics (Ferguson & Woodward, 2009, pp. 157–159).

Social Work and Approaches Towards Distributive Justice

Social justice from a distributive perspective pursues a fair and equitable distribution of resources, benefits and opportunities. The influence of John Rawls (see Chap. 7) on the philosophical paradigm of distributive justice has been substantial, particularly on articulating a non-utilitarian, non-meritocratic conception of justice. This deontological and politically left-liberal position seeks to advance and maintain a political and social structure that guarantees equality of basic liberties and rights, while at the same time ensuring that the least advantaged are not further disadvantaged, and in fact, ought to benefit from the way that society is organised. For Rawls, an assumed condition of a distributive form of justice is a legal, policy and institutional structure that can articulate, coordinate and moderate and refine through the public use of reason, discussion and debate what principles of distributive justice ought to be adopted and in what ways. This may take the form of, for example: a system to collect and redistribute national wealth in areas of need; publically funded and accessible minimal social subsistence; a legal system that is fair and open and accessible to all; non-discriminatory policies and laws that enable wide access to social institutions and offices of power and responsibility; a coordinated policy approach to support equality of opportunity; protection from discrimination and arbitrary abuses of state and corporate power; forums and opportunities for citizen and civic engagement; maintenance of a civil and open public sphere; and, a commitment to a social contract.

For social work, realising Rawls' vision of a fair distributive system of benefits, opportunities and basic liberties presupposes skills and practices in these sorts of areas: advocacy (both individual and cause advocacy) (Ezell, 2001); deep policy and legislative knowledge (Bateman, 1995; Jansson, 2003); effective and strategic use of organisational systems, procedures and resources (Gardner, 2006); organisational systems thinking and analysis (Hodgson & Watts, 2017, pp. 161–167); networking and coalition building (Ife, 2016, pp. 50–51); research and analysis and using research to influence policy and practice (Alston & Bowles, 2013); applying—or developing, educating, training—and using principles of equal opportunity or anti-discrimination in legislation and practice (Thompson, 2012); argumentation, critical thinking, persuasion and assertiveness in communication across diverse audiences (Bateman, 1995; Cournoyer, 2014; Payne, Adams, & Dominelli, 2009); policy submission/proposal writing (Jansson, 2003); public speaking and presentation skills; knowledge of the policy-making process and how to influence it (Bridgman & Davis, 2004); understanding of natural justice and mechanisms for appeals (Australian Association of Social Workers, 2010); and, leadership (Lawler & Bilson, 2010).

Social Work Approaches Towards Participation and Democracy

As mentioned in chapter four on capitalism and neoliberalism, the rise of neoliberalism has seriously eroded the welfare state and the spaces for meaningful democracy and engaged citizenship. This is why we contend that enhancing the spaces and practices for democracy and reasonable deliberation is an important antidote to neoliberal hegemony. We recall here the statement by Brenner, Peck, and Theodore (2010), who argue that a post-neoliberal future should aspire to a 'progressive, solidaristic, and radically democratic normative vision' (p. 342). This is a speculative broad-brush vision for a future beyond the current neoliberal order, the exact details of which remain unspecified—and rightfully so. Hence, working out this vision and addressing what sort of society we want and how can we attain justice requires extensive, engaged and ongoing deliberation and participation in reasonable debate, discussion and public discourse. This is work that social workers can initiate and sustain as part of their practice.

There are many different forms of democracy. These include direct democracy (direct and unmediated citizen engagement in government), representative democracy (a political class who rule on others behalf, often selected through some form of election or vote), constitutional democracy (the historical legal architecture that is the legacy from the rise and emergence of nation-states, which have sought to establish and impose sovereignty over people and territory), and deliberative democracy (which includes participation and collective decision-making over matters that directly impact people). It is the latter aspect of deliberative democracy that we focus on here as we think that social work can enact spaces and practices to support robust modes of participatory and deliberative forms of democracy. Participation is both enabled and constrained by: the nation-state and its relation to, and articulation ofcivil society; national and global constitutional governance arrangements; interference on agency and freedom, such as oppression and domination; and, deep diversity, which can be supported and enabled as an ethic of democratic participation, or dominated by policies of assimilation and group-based stereotyping.

Participation, deliberation and making decisions over matters of importance may take the form of small-scale, face-to-face spaces, where people from diverse backgrounds can enter into discussion and debate, to exchange ideas and reasons for and against various proposals or problems under deliberation. In doing so, the deliberative approach aims to increase the degree of accountability towards discussion and decision-making through the exchange of views, and through the public airing, testing and critical evaluation of reasons and arguments. The form this takes should be done in a manner that promotes: the development of well-informed opinions; the reasonableness to change one's mind upon further discussion and reflection; a deep diversity approach towards tolerance and engagement of different modes of speech, expression, ways of talking and of giving reasons; and, a tolerance for *reasonable disagreement* rather than simply trying to engineer or force consensus or having the discussion collapse into petty arguments, point scoring and one-upmanship.

Creating spaces and practices of participatory and deliberative democracy may take many forms, such as: service user involvement in service development, governance, research and education (Beresford, 2010; Beresford & Boxall, 2012); civic engagement, such as local meetings and discussion groups of people who come together to deliberate over local and global topical matters to achieve social and economic justice (for international examples, see IASSW, ICSW, and IFSW, 2014) ; community organising to help set up meetings and public forums to share and debate proposals and make decisions (Alston, 2009); truth and reconciliation study circles and commissions (Androff, 2018, 2010); consciousness-raising groups (Healy, 2000; Mullaly, 2007); peoples inquiries into matters of public interest (Briskman & Goddard, 2007; Briskman, Latham, & Goddard, 2008); advocacy and support for people to contest the rules under which they and others are governed (such as contesting or reviewing the rules and policies in organisations, governments, NGOs and other institutions) (Ezell, 2001); service user partnerships and structures for deliberation (Beresford, 2010); advocacy and empowerment to bring lived experience into the public domain; for example programs to enable refugees to share experiences and contribute to discussion about refugees and people seeking asylum (Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, 2018); local and national boards of governance and advisory groups with substantial stakeholder involvement and inclusion (Beresford, 2010); and, participatory action research or cooperative research inquiries (Heron, 1996; Reason & Bradbury, 2008).

Social Work and the Pursuit of Human Rights and Autonomy

Human rights provide a significant moral resource and discourse for social work to consider questions of social justice and rights generally (Ife, 2012). Much of what is expressed through international human rights instruments and norms resonates with social work more broadly, such as ideas that people everywhere are deserving of dignity and respect, the intrinsic value of every human being, and the promotion of equitable social structures (International Federation of Social Workers 2012). Social work can play an important role in highlighting humanitarian issues and, work towards achieving acivil society within states and within the international arena. Social work can also play an active role in advocating and monitoring the compliance of institutions andnation-state obligations towards human rights (Briskman, 2014; Briskman et al., 2008). This is particularly the case in relation to people who may be stateless due to war and other factors, or those seeking asylum. Stateless and displaced people are particularly vulnerable to human rights abuses and violations because they are in a state of ‘unfreedom’ and are dependent and vulnerable to the arbitrary use and abuse of power (Kesby, 2012; Skinner, 2012; Tully, 2002). This is the link to autonomy, which in general terms points to the capability for someone to be their own person, and to make choices and decisions that are not arbitrarily subject to and constrained by externally imposed forces. Autonomy is also an important aspect of how people conceive of themselves as authentic. In situations of domination,

oppression and rights abuses, to what extent can people pursue choices, exercise their agency, and achieve a state of authenticity? Under conditions of oppression, domination and human rights abuse, what then becomes of autonomy?

Many values and norms in social work circle around the concept of autonomy; for example consent, self-determination and empowerment (Reamer, 2013). Autonomy is also an idea deeply ingrained in the liberal conception of the person as one who is (or ought to be) the author of their own will and their own choices, often expressed by the term 'freedom' (Christman, 2018). This condition of freedom is seen as an important route to becoming a moral agent. A moral agent is a conception of the human person as one who is able to act, reflect and make choices on the basis of factors that are somehow their own (authentic in some sense). This degree of agency possessed by individuals towards various aspects of their lives refers to the power they have to act without interference from external agencies, to act under conditions of independence from the arbitrary will of others, and to achieve a vision of self-realisation that may be political, moral or spiritual.

We can immediately see how human rights violations (and domination and oppression generally) is a barrier to people achieving their full humanity. Furthermore, under the conditions of domination—and in particular, secrecy, fear, violence, persecution and totalitarianism—we are less likely to develop the capabilities of reasoning and free thought that is central to public deliberations and discourse. Kant's conception of autonomy is linked to practical reason, which is a form of public reason and deliberation undertaken by participating free *citizens*. Under these conditions, people become capable of thinking for themselves (Christman, 2018). This is a core Enlightenment value and one that is related to other institutions such as modern forms of democracy, critical thinking, science and knowledge, and the development of a public sphere.

As mentioned in chapter nine, autonomy should not rest purely on a view of human beings as individualistic atoms or beings who think, reason, choose and decide in isolation from each other. An atomistic and individual account of autonomy is a limited conception because it falsely assumes that autonomy is disembodied and disembedded, when it is not. Autonomy also points to the intersubjective and relational nature of human life. For example, although people may see themselves as having more or less, or greater or lesser degrees of freedom and autonomy, it also matters whether or not their status as autonomous beings is recognised *by others* in socially and institutionally embedded relationships (Laden, 2001; Laden, 2005). It is all very well to say that people are free and autonomous, but this falls apart very quickly when they are not treated accordingly. It begs a question: what opportunities are there for the exercise of autonomy within relations of care that pay attention to aspects of vulnerability, domination and human rights transgressions? A critical and socially informed notion of autonomy means to conceive of autonomy as formed from within power relations, and thus these power relations are always present and formative on the autonomous subjectivity of people engaging with each other in working out how to relate to one another, to think, choose, decide, reason and communicate with each other (Allen, 2011). It means to see autonomy as a way people struggle for recognition and fulfilment within a practical field of social relations, power and contextual

circumstances that bear down upon and shape on the phenomenological experience as autonomy.

The kinds of activities and practices for social work along these lines may include: human rights advocacyand activism (Briskman, 2014; Briskman & Cemlyn, 2005); human rights education (Ife, 2012; Nipperess, 2013); community development (Ife, 2016); education and consciousness-raising (Mullaly, 2007); consent and informed decision-making (Reamer, 2013); shared decision-making, power sharing and enabling a voice for marginalised or oppressed groups or individuals (Heather & Shulamit, 2017); critical empowerment (Fook & Morley, 2005); promotion of self-determination (Murdach, 2011; Steen, Mann, Restivo, Mazany, & Chapple, 2017); compassion and empathy (Gerdes, Segal, Jackson, & Mullins, 2011; Reamer, 2013); promote discussion, debate and public discourse (MacKinnon, 2009); tolerance and respect for diversity of opinion and modes of expression within a human rights framework (Ife, 2012); interpersonal skills of communication, negation and empowerment (Trevithick, 2011); interpersonal skills of respect and promotion of dignity (Hodgson & Watts, 2017, pp. 100–113); fostering relations of care and respectful interdependence (Lloyd, 2006); non-violence (Ife, 2012); virtue ethics (McBeath & Webb, 2002); building trust in organisations and working towards civil and harmonious workplaces and organisations (Roberts, Scherer, & Bowyer, 2011; Six, 2007); working with and promoting schemes of redress (Murray, 2015); environmental justice and community participation and action (Pyles, 2017); support for safe and accessible public space and community commons (Toolis, 2017; Ware, Bryant, & Zannettino, 2011); and, promote cultural diversity and create spaces for cultural expression (Garcia & Van Soest, 2006).

Conclusion

This chapter has summarised distributive, critical, democratic and rights perspectives on social justice and made some links between these theoretical and philosophical perspectives to the social work literature. In doing so, our aim has been to offer a synthesis of these perspectives by indicating in brief form the sorts of activities and actions that social workers may develop. Taken together, activities and actions will assist social workers to push their practice towards the broad aim of social justice. By way of conclusion, we present this summary in Table 10.1.

Table 10.1 Summary of philosophical and critical perspectives on social justice and indicative social work practices

Perspective	Summary	Indicative activities of practice
Critical Perspective	To challenge, critique and transform relations of oppression and domination that are embedded in social political and economic structures	Use direct and indirect activism to achieve access, inclusion and natural justice Promote and support social movements and collective action for social change Facilitate consciousness raising activities and spaces Critique and moderate the use of power and knowledge so as to address domination and oppression Practice critical education and learning through critical reflection Utilise community development/organising to build collective solidarity and inclusive communities Support union movements and workers cooperatives to facilitate workers' rights and class consciousness Adopt anti-racist and pro-feminist practice approaches Support and develop Indigenous knowledge and practice Develop ecologically sustainable practices Critique the limits and impacts of positivist and biomedical knowledge on human welfare Critique and transform capitalist neoliberalism in favour of local cooperatives, economic regulation, public ownership of assets, and the sustainable meeting of human and ecological needs
	Critical/Radical/Structural/Anti-Oppressive social work Radical casework Group-work Community work Activism	
Distributive Perspective	To achieve the fair and equal distribution of benefits, resources, rights and opportunities through the just and fair functioning of publicly accountable institutions	Conduct policy research and policyadvocacy to support justice as fairness Support the functioning of the welfare state and its institutions Work towards just, transparent and accountable institutions Foster and enable access and inclusion to decision-making in institutions and organisations Promote equality of opportunity and access to resources and opportunities, especially for the most disadvantaged Support and promote freedom of speech and assembly (with an ethic of toleration and reasonableness) Advocate for *socially just, ethical* and appropriate income support schemes and systems and responses that address disadvantage
	Structural/Macro social work Case and cause advocacy Organisational development Legal and policy research and advocacy	

(continued)

Table 10.1 (continued)

Perspective	Summary	Indicative activities of practice
Participatory Democracy Perspective	To increase the spaces for participation and democratic decision-making, discussion, debate and inclusion in public discourse	Practice and support active participation and inclusion in decision-making about the rules, norms, methods and processes of inclusion and decision-making Adopt service user perspectives and include service user involvement in the development, governance and delivery of services and knowledge creation Promote citizenship and advocate for citizen rights and recognition by nation-states Develop spaces for dialogical face-to-face debate and discourse to support the public use of reason and knowledge Create and sustain local and institutionally embedded models of participation and decision-making Promote and support freedom from coercion (for example, freedom from non-arbitrary interference from state and corporate actors) Promote and practice collective decision-making as an ethos of practice and service governance Legislative debates, political campaigns, demonstrations
	Participation in political fora Small group-work Citizen's juries Co and shared decision-making Organisational and institutional change and development Public and open reasoning and debate	
Autonomy and Rights Perspective	To support people to act as moral agents with dignity , worth, and in recognition of their rights as human beings with personal and social identities	Use excellent communication skills that focus on address, recognition and acknowledgement of others Build and foster toleration and respect for difference Support and foster human capabilities and the conditions necessary for self-determination and self-fulfilment of individual and collective capabilities Uphold human rights and advocate for human rights policy and legislation Practice different forms of recognition as an ethic of practice (for example, affiliation, love, relations of care) Advocate for the importance of place, space, culture and social relations in human well-being
	Human rights practice Social advocacy and public empathy Advocate for freedom and liberty from violence, oppression and arbitrary dependence and interference Solidarity with disadvantaged and marginalised peoples Sanctuaries for freedom and safety Cultural competence and safety	

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Chapter 11
Social Justice and Social Work Education

Abstract Social work is a discipline and a profession, and learning about social work typically commences with a course of study in a university or tertiary institution. Hence, teaching and learning about social work is key to a solid consideration of social justice. However, given the complex and contested nature of social justice, the approach to teaching social justice needs to be thought through and systematic. This chapter is focussed on teaching and learning for social justice in social work curriculums. In this chapter, we present 48 learning outcomes that would assist in developing an explicit focus on social justice in social work education. We introduce three curriculum design frameworks, and these are used to structure learning outcomes for social justice. These learning outcomes will be useful for educators, students, practitioners and researchers who aim to incorporate social justice knowledge, values and skills into their practice.

Introduction

Social work is a profession and also an academic discipline and is now '"established on every inhabited continent, and on every continent, organised educational programs in social work have existed for more than half a century' (Healy, 2012, p. 9). This means that social work is applied in practice, but it also is concerned with scholarly activities such as research, theory development, education and learning. Social work has developed its own rich body of disciplinary knowledge as well as adapting and interpreting knowledge from other disciplines such as sociology, political science, psychology, philosophy and anthropology (Barrett-Herman, 2012). Teaching and learning about social work means acquiring the knowledge, values and skills for practice, as well as studying and learning disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge. Learning social work often commences with a course of study in a university or tertiary institution, and as Birkenmaier (2013) points out, 'practitioners must be trained while they are students to make the connections and be assisted in their justice-based practice' (p. 53). Being a social worker with a commitment to social

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L. Watts and D. Hodgson, *Social Justice Theory and Practice for Social Work*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-3621-8_11

justice is also a lifelong journey of learning, reflection and personal and professional development.

As mentioned in the preface in this book, one of the reasons that motivated us to write about social justice was for us to learn more about what social justice is, how we might do better at teaching it, and how to engage students into robust conversations and discussions about what social justice means, and how we might practice in a way that has social justice as a central concern. As educators, we are also interested in how social work curriculums might be structured or organised to better integrate and align theories, concepts and practices that promote critical engagement with social justice. This final chapter considers the education, curriculum and learning side of social justice thinking and understanding and we focus specifically on designing social work *curricula* with social justice in view. We have developed a focus on learning outcomes, and include a learning outcomes map for educators who may wish to adapt and integrate a specific focus on social justice to their curriculums and teaching (see Table 11.1).

There are many curriculum design systems. For our purposes, we have chosen three main approaches to develop and design a social justice curriculum. The first approach we have utilised in our thinking is the idea of *constructive alignment* (Biggs & Tang, 2007). The second approach incorporates the insights of constructive alignment with specific design steps and is called *backward design* (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). The third approach is Bloom's revised taxonomy of educational objectives (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Curriculum mapping and design have become an increasingly important form of research on social work education (Ballantyne, Beddoe, Hay, Maidment, & Walker, 2017; Watts & Hodgson, 2015). Curriculum design is also fundamental to the aim of internationalising the social work curriculum for the purposes of facing the significant economic, social and political challenges of globalisation (Healy & Link, 2012). We begin the discussion with constructive alignment.

Curriculum Frameworks

Constructive Alignment

Biggs (1996) suggests that there were two main currents with regard to designing curriculum—these are the objectivist and the constructivist traditions. Objectivist approaches see a separation between knowledge and learner whereas constructivist approaches see meaning as emerging from the interaction of the learner and their learning experiences. There are a number of other distinctions within the constructivist camp, however, we shall set these aside for this discussion. In social work, constructivist approaches to curriculum development and learning were taken up in the 1980s and remain a prevalent approach to social work education (Gray & Gibbons, 2002; Harrison, Walsh, & Healy, 2011). Constructive alignment combines this *constructivist approach* to learning with *alignment* between learning outcomes,

Table 11.1 A learning outcome map for social justice curricula

	Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyse	Evaluate	Create
Factual	**Summarise** the definition of social justice in relevant social work codes of ethics (*for example, the relevant passage in the applicable social work code of ethics*) **Describe** what injustice is and its main forms with examples (*for example, inequality, poverty, racism, violence, discrimination, stigma*)	**Discuss** the history and role of social work ethics in orientating social work towards social justice (*for example, in codes of ethics and social work ethics literature*) **Explain** the different classifications of oppression and injustice including examples (*for example, violence, discrimination, exclusion*)	**Explain** what would be considered reliable and authoritative sources about social justice issues and responses (*for example, peer-reviewed literature, credible sources, good sources of information*) **Prepare** a general outline of social work's historical engagement with the pursuit of social justice (*for example, a comparison between early and modern social work, and international comparison of social work and work for social justice*)	**Categorise** the main ideas in each of the social work approaches to social justice (*for example, casework, group-work, visiting, community organising, policy and advocacy*) **Explain** in a non-reductive, empathic and explanatory way the systemic causes of injustice (*for example, the systemic and structural origins and causes of poverty and inequality*)	**Evaluate** the efficacy of social work ethics, standards and affiliations for their ability or otherwise to promote social justice (*for example, critique social work ethics and organised social work*) **Assess** empirical claims made for or against programs of social justice (*for example, critical thinking of knowledge—science, political and social discourses*)	**Develop** a vocabulary for transformative social relations for social justice (*for example, through dialogue, conscientisation, mutual attunement*) **Produce** knowledge and factual descriptions of injustice (*for example, research and data gathering, voiced/participatory/lived experience research, position papers, submissions*)

(continued)

Table 11.1 (continued)

	Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyse	Evaluate	Create
Conceptual	**List** a range of philosophies or ethical theories concerned with social justice (*for example, distributive, critical, rights, empowerment, self-determination, ethics of care*) **Describe** practice situations or cases that present a social justice issue or problem (*for example, Indigenous struggles for reconciliation; people seeking asylum and refugees; stigma and discrimination in relation to mental illness and disability*)	**Describe** relevant theoretical and philosophical ideas about social justice (*for example, deontology, utilitarianism, distributive, rights, critical theories, and virtue ethics of care*) **Describe** relevant social work ethical principles and concepts in relation to social justice (*for example, empowerment, self-determination, emancipation, procedural fairness, natural justice*)	**Interpret** case material and apply relevant theoretical ideas that may promote social justice (*for example, cases of discrimination and stigma and a social work and social justice response*) **Review** novel cases of injustice and interpret them in relation to conceptual knowledge about social justice (*for example, new forms of exclusion; intersectionality; contemporary social justice crises due to conflict or policy changes; environmental issues*)	**Describe** a repertoire of behaviours and circumstances caused by forms of misrecognition, stigma, discrimination, violence and oppression (*for example, ill-health, anger, mental illness, trauma, suicidality, addiction, violence, apathy, alienation, silence*) **Trace** the bodies of knowledge that inform social work theories of social justice (*for example, critical, radical, structural, anti-oppressive theories*)	**Deconstruct** social, economic, political theories and philosophical bodies of knowledge (*for example, language, discourses, power, norms, culture and values in knowledge*) **Justify** and **critique** social work's role in advancing social justice (*for example, expose the gap between the ideal and realpolitik of social work*)	**Design** principles, classifications, theories and models for socially just social work practice (*for example, new approaches for social action on poverty or exclusion*) **Combine** existing bodies of social work knowledge with other knowledge to invent new approaches for addressing social injustice (*for example, from business, sustainability and philosophy to create new social work approaches towards social justice*)

(continued)

Table 11.1 (continued)

	Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyse	Evaluate	Create
Procedural	**List** core social work skills or processes that promote social justice (*for example, empathic listening, respectful communication, advocacy, engagement, facilitation, group-work, community organising*) **Describe** the use of consent in practice (*for example, the process of asking for a service user consent for the use of and sharing of personal information*)	**Compare** macro/meso/micro level social work processes aimed at social justice (*for example, radical casework, policy advocacy, organisational development, group-work, listening and communication skills*) **Explain** how to use processes of natural justice, inclusion and participation in social work practice (*for example, routes of appeal in systems, service user involvement*)	**Practice** engagement skills that incorporate knowledge of the effects of stigma and discrimination (*for example, role play, field education, decolonising communication, empowerment and strengths-based communication, intercultural communication*) **Organise** resources effectively to ameliorate injustice (*for example, community organising, funding and project development, organisational development practice, networking and coalition building*)	**Compare** social work methods for their efficacy in addressing social justice (*for example, counselling/community work/casework/ advocacygroup-work/activism*) **Analyse** organisational and policy responses to a particular social justice issues (*for example, critical analysis of systems and policy responses*)	**Critique** social, economic and political arrangements and institutions that perpetuate injustice (*for example, neoliberalism, policy, state institutions, international institutions and agreements, dominant discourses*) **Critique** macro/meso/micro practices that perpetuate injustice, oppression and marginalisation (*for example, service criterion and rules, funding arrangements, laws, policies, language around service users*)	**Create** new technologies and methods of research, teaching and learning for social justice (*for example, combining deliberative democratic dialogical processes in field education, teaching non-violent resistance using improvisation, drama and arts*) **Create and test** new methods of communicating and relating in situations of deep diversity for social justice (*for example, teach mutual attunment processes* via *integration in class based group-work*)

(continued)

Table 11.1 (continued)

	Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyse	Evaluate	Create
Metacognitive	**Describe** the role of self-awareness and values in social work (*for example, personal and professional values, core social work values in the literature and codes of ethics*) **State** the purpose of reflection for learning about social work and social justice (*for example, what is reflection and what role does it play in social work?*)	**Outline** learning strategies for acquiring factual, conceptual and procedural knowledge about social justice (*for example, reading and viewing, note-taking, create concept maps, discussion with peers, learning journal*) **Relate** learning strategies about social justice to own performance (*for example, reflect on self, peer and tutor feedback to improve performance*)	**Explain** own beliefs and values about social work responses to injustice (*for example, journal, personal narrative of origins of beliefs and values*) **Reflect** on own moral and philosophical beliefs about human nature and individual and social problems and how this shapes an identification to social work (*for example, reflection on social work and self-identity*)	**Analyse** the strengths and limits of methods used to acquire and integrate knowledge into one's own practice (*for example, field education, supervision, reflective practice*) **Develop** awareness of own biases in analysis and thinking (*for example, fallacies, dogma, confirmation bias, effects of emotion and experience*)	**Review** own choices of knowledge and methods for social justice practice (*for example, through supervision, reflection on practice, field education*) **Critically reflect** on the use of own power in social work practice (*for example, critical reflection, deconstruction of power using group-work or supervision models and processes*)	**Critically reflect** on own culture, ethics and beliefs for transformative practice development (*for example, lifelong learning, develop a critical reflection repertoire*) **Evaluate** own creativity and willingness to risk uncertainty in engaging with diverse others (*for example, engage in transformative practice*)

assessment and teaching and learning activities. Biggs (1996) uses a systems approach to curriculum development and this approach will make sense to social work as systems thinking is a theoretical perspective familiar from our work with service users. Here, the goal is to ensure that the learning outcomes, assessment and teaching and learning activities *align* with each other within a system, that is, within a curriculum (Biggs & Tang, 2007). This alignment may be applied at a number of levels. It can be applied to individual modules, or within whole programs. It may also be applied at the institutional level and for disciplines as a 'statement of what the graduates of the university [or discipline] are supposed to be able to do' (Biggs & Tang, 2007, p. 113). This articulation of purpose is important to social work in order to go beyond nation-state borders to develop a global response to issues of social justice. We turn now to consider backward design, which takes up the alignment process but does so with an explicit design focus. We think this is useful for addressing ways to achieve both breadth and depth of content and activity in social work education.

Backward Design

Backward design is a process that allows educators to start their curriculum design process from the position of results, and work backwards rather than focus on what content should be taught (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). What does it mean here to speak of results? These are the 'priority learnings' (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 17), which are ideas about what students should be able to understand and do after engaging in a learning experience or process. In this case, we considered the question of how we could design a whole curriculum in which *understanding* of social justice might take centre-stage. Wiggins and McTighe (2005, p. 17) suggest that this emphasis on understanding is a reversal of the usual curriculum design where the focus is on either establishing a slew of activities, or starting from the view of what should be covered, usually referred to as content. Activity-based curriculums are often characterised by lots of experience(s) without much integration of these with other forms of knowledge. Coverage refers to instances where 'students march through a textbook…in a valiant attempt to traverse all the factual material within a prescribed time' (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 16).

The other reason for adopting the backward design approach to curriculum design is that this approach increases the likelihood of coherence and integration across the curriculum. Coherence is important for professional socialisation and, by extension, the development of a commitment to social work purpose, values and identity. Tatto (1996, p. 176), speaking in the context of researching teacher education, contends that coherence develops from:

> shared understandings among faculty and in the manner in which opportunities to learn have been arranged (organizationally, logistically) to achieve a common goal - that of educating professional teachers with the knowledge, skills and dispositions necessary to more effectively teach diverse students.

Despite originally being formulated for K-12 curriculum development, backward curriculum design processes embed the development of shared understanding within the design process and therefore it has good alignment with university curriculums with a student-centred focus (Linder, Cooper, McKenzie, Raesch, & Reeve, 2013). The process has three main steps: (1) identify desired results; (2) determine acceptable evidence; and, (3) plan learning experiences and instruction (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Step one involves faculty discussion about the goals, accreditation, practice standards and other factors (local and international) that are pertinent to designing a curriculum. The backward design process begins from the question of: 'what should students know, understand and be able to do? What content is worthy of understanding? And what *enduring* understandings are desired?' (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 17, emphasis original). It is in this step that designers set learning outcomes. This first step is also important to the consideration of alignment, both externally (for example, national tertiary and professional accreditation or registration and international practice standards) and internally (for example, vertical and horizontal subjects or modules within the program). This will depend on the focus of the design process.

Step two requires faculty to assess how they will be able to determine if students have achieved or acquired the understandings. This means thinking upfront about assessment as part of the process of design rather than as the last step. In this step, educators can consider the authenticity (Edmonds-Cady & Sosulski, 2012; Maclellan, 2004) and disciplinary appropriateness of assessment tasks (Tilbury, Osmond, & Scott, 2009). This is an important step as it facilitates shared understandings between faculty about assessment and the knowledge and skills thought to be essential. This does not preclude teaching diverse perspectives, rather, it places different methods of teaching and theories or perspectives within a shared framework.

Lastly, it is at step three that faculty create learning plans that incorporate activities and experiences, and it is here, finally, that they consider content (topics to be studied) and resources (for example, core readings, textbooks). It should be said that while this sounds like a linear process, in practice it is more subject to iterative cycles (Tornwall, 2017). The process can also be applied to single subject units or whole curriculums. For social workers familiar with action research, it is possible to see some parallels with backward design cycles of improvement if an added evaluation step is included. The core premise is to start with the end in mind, and this is how we have incorporated backward design thinking by asking: what kinds of understandings and applications of social justice ideas and principles are important for social work students to acquire? We turn now to consider the use of Bloom's revised taxonomy of learning as a way to scaffold learning about social justice nested within this framework of constructive alignment and backward design principles.

Bloom's Revised Taxonomy of Learning

Bloom's taxonomy of learning, originally published in 1956, has had a major impact on the educational literature, particularly in regards to curriculum design and the development of authentic assessment methodologies (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). A taxonomy of learning is helpful to intentionally focus educators and student's attention and effort in a particular direction; in our example, to focus attention and effort to learning about social justice. Bloom's revised taxonomy assists in structuring curricula to scaffold learning in a sequential manner, from simple through to more complex higher order cognitive and knowledge dimensions. A learning outcome depicts the scope of what is intended and what is reasoned—that is, what is considered *valuable* and *important* (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Learning outcomes can then be used as platform to figure out how to design authentic assessment, to work out what resources and learning materials are needed, to map how the learning outcomes connect to other parts of the curricula or standards of social work education, and to put in place the mode of instruction that would best facilitate deep learning. Educators can use this form of scaffolding to consider the alignment of learning outcomes in a backward design process. In this section, we draw on Anderson and Krathwohl's (2001) revision of Bloom's original taxonomy as a way of developing a map of learning outcomes. We restrict our discussion below to defining the central concepts in Bloom's revised taxonomy that are used to structure the learning outcomes as depicted in Table 11.1.

Concepts in Bloom's Revised Taxonomy

The Knowledge Dimension

The authors of Bloom's revised taxonomy acknowledge there are many philosophical and psychological approaches to conceptualise knowledge, but in this particular case they have drawn on cognitive psychology (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). This means the knowledge dimension outlined below is based on developments in problem-solving theory, as well as the development of expertise through experience. Thus, it fits well with a constructivist orientation and comfortably within the framework of constructive alignment. The premises of this taxonomy also fit comfortably with social work's orientation to knowledge as constructed, domain-specific and applied. Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) acknowledge that there are a range of different terms for describing knowledge, but they have designated four types for use in the taxonomy. These are: '(1) factual knowledge; (2) conceptual knowledge; (3) procedural knowledge; and (4) metacognitive knowledge' (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001, p. 41). We will outline here what each of these mean within this taxonomy.

First, a distinction between *factual* and *conceptual* needs explaining. Sometimes knowledge is distinguished between knowing that and knowing how. Within the

category of *knowing that*—sometimes called declarative knowledge—Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) introduce a distinction to address the way in which learners can acquire facts and discrete bits of information, but not necessarily attain connections about how such facts relate to each other, or indeed, how knowledge is organised as a whole within their discipline. Thus, conceptual knowledge picks up this second aspect, relating to the attainment of schemas, models and theories.

Factual knowledge is understood here as 'the basic elements that experts use in communicating about their academic discipline, understanding it, and organising it systematically' (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001, p. 45). These are often isolated symbols and concepts that require little modification to be applicable. There are two subtypes important here: one is the 'knowledge of terminology', which is the language of the discipline and the other is 'knowledge of specific details and elements' (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001, p. 45). An example of terminology in social work would be the language that describes violence and oppression in a way that other social workers recognise the subject matter being communicated. An example of specific details would be where educators ask social work students to find facts about social work responses to violence. Factual knowledge is considered to be the lowest level in terms of abstract knowledge.

Cognitive knowledge is more complex and refers to models, schemas, theories and concepts that indicate 'how a particular subject matter is organized and structured, how different parts or bits of information are interconnected and interrelated in a more systematic manner, and how these parts function together' (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001, p. 48). As with factual knowledge this level includes three subtypes: *knowledge of classifications and categories; principles and generalisations;* and, *theories, models and structures.* Classifications and categorisations denote disciplinary approaches to dealing with information—each discipline engages in this as a way of developing knowledge and demonstrating expertise. Acquiring an understanding of a discipline-specific problem is a way for students to demonstrate learning. It might mean asking students to research social work ways of classifying forms of violence or oppression. Principles and generalisations are usually more abstract than classifying and categorising knowledge about distinct phenomena. Anderson and Krathwohl (2001, p. 51) suggest that 'abstractions…summarize observations of phenomena [and]…have the greatest value in describing, predicting, explaining, or determining the most appropriate and relevant action or direction to be taken.' For example, students might be asked to explain violence as a general pattern across a population, or alternatively they may be asked to explain the principles of non-violent action.

The final category here focuses on theories, models and structures and these are at the highest level of abstraction. This subtype is different from the previous two as it considers the interrelationships between principles and abstractions. For example, theories that explain violence as part of a gendered pattern of relating would be included here as it encompasses paradigms, theories and epistemological stances towards the subject matter. Students acquire these 'different paradigms and epistemologies for structuring inquiry, and …come to know these different ways

of conceptualizing and organizing subject matter and areas of research within the subject matter' (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001, p. 52).

Procedural knowledge refers to knowledge within a discipline about how to do something. Knowledge here is about the sequence of doing, but it also includes criteria for choosing specific actions and procedures. The key distinction here from factual and conceptual knowledge is that those dimensions involve 'knowing that', whereas procedural knowledge involves 'knowing how'—a distinction made famous by Ryle (1963). Again, Anderson and Krathwohl (2001, pp. 53–55) have divided this category into subtypes: *subject-specific skills and algorithms; techniques and methods; and, criteria for determining when to use appropriate procedures.* Skills and algorithms refers to 'series or sequence of steps, collectively known as a procedure' (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001, p. 53). An example is communication skills for building rapport, which includes open and closed questions in addition to reflecting content and feelings (Cournoyer, 2013). Techniques and methods are those disciplinary ways of doing things that arise from practice and there is usually a considerable consensus about their efficacy. An example from social work is the helping process with the sequence of engagement-assessment-intervention-termination-review (Chenoweth & McAuliffe, 2015), or the process for establishing group norms for group work (McDermott, 2002). Lastly, criteria for determining when to use appropriate procedures or processes is important to assist in making decisions about when to use a particular process. The differences between group-work aimed at community building versus that for addressing behaviour change in men who use violence in intimate relationships is used for determining appropriate procedures of group-work facilitation.

Metacognitive knowledge refers to learner's knowledge about their own thinking. Anderson and Krathwohl (2001, p. 55) state 'the labels for this…vary from theory to theory but include metacognitive knowledge, metacognitive awareness, self-awareness, self-reflection, and self-regulation'. The category has three subtypes: *strategic knowledge; knowledge of cognitive tasks, including contextual and conditional knowledge; and self-knowledge.* Strategic knowledge refers to the strategies for learning, thinking and solving problems and involves ways of rehearsing, elaborating and organising knowledge from the other knowledge dimensions in order to memorise it. An example might be students taking notes and devising concept maps (organising), recalling dates and maxims to commit them to memory (rehearsing), or summarising and paraphrasing key concepts and applying these to situations (elaborating).

Knowledge of cognitive tasks refers to students developing an understanding of what tasks call on them to expend in terms of cognitive resources. This is about the level of difficulty and knowledge of what tools would assist with completing different cognitive tasks for learning and development. For example, paraphrasing theoretical ideas developed by social workers about violence involves more effort than simply recalling dates for a test about the key events in social work history. Both tasks are more cognitively demanding than recognition tasks, which asks a 'person to discriminate among alternatives and select the correct or most appropriate answer' (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001, p. 57). Self-knowledge refers to the knowledge learners acquire

about their own preferences for some learning strategies and approaches over others, as well as their own strengths and weaknesses as a learner. It is also the knowledge learners have about the limits and breadth of their own knowledge. It is not enough, however, to just know these limits and breadth—learners need to develop accuracy about it as well. Thus, students need to develop knowledge about what they do *not* know as much as what they do. Now that we have outlined the different knowledge types we turn now to describe the cognitive dimension of Bloom's revised taxonomy.

The Cognitive Dimension

The taxonomy has a cognitive dimension that is intended to provide a wider repertoire of cognitive processes from simple rote memorisation to more meaningful learning that has transferability (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). This taxonomy includes *remember, understand, apply, analyse, evaluate* and *create*. As Anderson and Krathwohl state, remember, understand and apply are more commonly prescribed in curricula than analyse, evaluate and create. In social work, apply typically relates to the transfer of knowledge to practice, and evaluate is a higher order classification that would include critique. There is a general logic to how learning proceeds from simple to more complex cognitive tasks; for example, one must *remember* and *understand* something before engaging into an *evaluation* or *creative reconstruction* of it. A simple audit of social work curriculums in the form of mapping would reveal gaps both in cognitive focus but also whether or not there is coherence in terms of how learning is structured from one subject to the next, from one year to the next, and they way that threads of content are organised in the curriculum. The learning outcome map in Table 11.1 tries to move the learning focus both vertically (the knowledge dimension) and horizontally (the cognitive dimension). In simple terms, we can define the elements in the cognitive dimension as follows:

Remember refers to the retention and recall of material, which requires recognising and identifying the connections between new information and prior knowledge, and recalling and retrieving information from memory when prompted (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001, p. 66). For example, remembering specific concrete details about a piece of legislation and a procedure to do with mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect. In this case, the student may identify connections between new details about the legislation and link that with their prior knowledge of child abuse, and they would be able to recall that information when required or prompted. This capability is essential for more complex cognitive tasks, such as an analysis and evaluation of the legislation.

Understand refers to the process of constructing meaningful connections between new knowledge and prior knowledge and experience. Understanding involves the act of: interpreting information; summarising information into themes or key points and explaining them; making inferences about abstract ideas, or finding relationships between them; and, comparing information, ideas and phenomena to locate their differences and similarities (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). For example, the act of

summarising a principle of natural justice, inferring from it how and where it might apply, comparing or relating it to other ethical principles (such as procedural fairness) to explore how they are alike or different, and then explaining this understanding in oral or written form.

Apply refers to the performative use of knowledge to solve problems, and execute or carry out tasks. As Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) state, when there is a known solution to a given problem, the use of knowledge is algorithmic following a set-down procedure. But for ill-structured problems where there is uncertainty, the cognitive task is to decide what knowledge is applicable, and why. In social work, this is often captured in the 'theory-to-practice' concept, and field placement is classically used for the application of knowledge to specific contexts and situations, many of them complex and ill-structured.

Analyse refers to 'breaking material into constituent parts and determining how the parts are related together and to an overall structure' (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001, p. 79). Breaking material into parts involves being able to take a whole structure and differentiate its component parts (for example, to differentiate fact from opinion), organise pieces of information coherently (for example, to organise a relationship between a philosophical principle of social justice and a practice and skill of culturally respective communication), and make attributions (for example, to be able to deconstruct implicit and explicit assumptions or locate subtext, motives or ideological codes in information) (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

Evaluate refers to making judgements about information, knowledge, situations or phenomenon using particular criterion (for example, does this meet ethical standards? Is this sufficient, or good enough?) (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). In social work, this is frequently captured in the terms *critique*, *critical* and *critically*. Evaluate uses processes of checking or testing for errors, fallacies, inconsistencies and weaknesses. Evaluation involves a critique, which is to make a judgement about the merits or value of something—for example, to judge something as ethical/not ethical, just/unjust, valid/invalid (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

Create refers to being able to draw on the other cognitive dimensions and learning and experience 'to form a coherent or functioning whole' (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001, p. 84). This is a complex cognitive process that may combine elements of free expression with a synthesis of prior learning. In Anderson and Krathwohl's (2001) schema, create involves the ability to generate new or different insights into something, which may include thinking that diverges from accepted rules or norms that structure knowledge and thought in fixed ways. Create also requires planning novel solutions to problems, and it includes the ability to carry out or implement the plan. In social work, this cognitive ability is actually very important to being able to devise novel plans and solutions to situations of complexity and diversity. It is a valuable antidote to practice that is increasingly a technical–rational activity that follows pre-structured bureaucratically driven rules and formulations.

Definitions for Learning Outcomes

So far, we have explained the concepts used in the vertical and horizontal axis of Bloom's revised taxonomy. This taxonomy is used to create learning outcomes that accord with the intersections of the horizontal and vertical axis (see Table 11.1). Learning outcomes should be prefaced with a directive word that indicates the verb action in the outcome. Given we have created 48 learning outcomes, we have defined the directive words for them in Box 11.1 and Box 11.2. The following directive words and their definitions in Box 11.1 are quoted directly from Marshall and Rowland (1993, p. 74).

Box 11.1 List of directive words from Marshall and Rowland (1993)

Analyse—show the essence of something by breaking it down into its component parts and examining each part in detail.
Compare—look for similarities and differences between propositions.
Critique—give your judgement about the merit of theories or opinions, about the truth of facts, and back your judgement by a discussion of the evidence.
Describe—give a detailed or graphic account of.
Discuss—investigate or examine by argument, sift and debate, giving reasons for and against.
Evaluate—make an appraisal of the worth of something, in the light of its apparent general truth or utility; including your own position.
Examine—present in depth and investigate the implications.
Explain—make plain, interpret, and account for in detail.
Interpret—bring out the meaning of and make clear and explicit; usually also giving your own judgement.
Justify—show adequate grounds for decisions and conclusions.
Outline—give the main features or general principles of a subject, omitting minor details, and emphasising structure and relationship.
Relate—narrate/show how things are connected to each other, and to what extent they are alike or affect each other.
Review—make a survey of, examining the subject critically.
Summarise—give a concise account of the chief points or substance of a matter, omitting details and examples.
Trace—identify and describe the development or history of a topic from some point of origin.

In addition to this selective list of directive words from Marshall and Rowland (1993), we have created our own directive words and definitions (see Box 11.2), largely to reflect both the applied nature of social work learning, but also more towards the 'metacognitive' and 'create' spectrums in Blooms revised taxonomy of learning.

In fact, Blooms argued that educators should adapt the taxonomy for their own disciplinary purposes (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001), and so the following—along with the learning outcome map in Table 11.1—reflects a step towards that adaptation.

Box 11.2 Additional directive words for learning outcomes

Assess—judge phenomena, ideas, topics, concepts and practice for their applicability or relevance to a given context or purpose.
Categorise—classification of topics, ideas and concepts according to their similarity or like features.
Combine—unite different ideas, concepts, topics, and approaches into a new or novel whole.
Create—production of novel approaches through a process of invention or art.
Critically reflect—apply critical theory in the process of reflection.
Deconstruct—'to examine (something, such as a work of literature) using the methods of deconstruction; to take apart or examine (something) in order to reveal the basis or composition often with the intention of exposing biases, flaws, or inconsistencies' (Merriam-Webster, 2018).
Design—create plans for new approaches.
Develop—advance ideas, concepts and topics to a more elaborate level.
List—an arrangement of topics, concepts and key ideas.
Organise—arrange elements (topics, ideas, concepts, practices) in a coherent manner.
Practice—repeated application of behaviours, skills and ideas to achieve proficiency.
Prepare—make something that may be used for a specific purpose.
Produce—to bring an idea, concept, understanding, or approach into existence.
Reflect—returning to and considering an experience for the purpose of learning from it.
Test—determining through trial and error the applicability and worth of an idea or approach to given situations.

So far, we have explained the main design frameworks used to produce the learning outcomes map in Table 11.1, the format of which is adapted from Anderson and Krathwohl (2001). We have also explained the terminology and all the elements that constituted the basic structure of the learning outcomes and how they are organised. We should point out that we anticipate that educators could draw on this map to critically examine and focus their teaching, and adapt or interpret it into how they create their curriculums. We would expect a good deal of interpretation and reflexive adaptation of what we present, so that the adoption of social justice learning outcomes meets locally specific needs. For example, the learning outcomes in Table 11.1 each contain an illustrative example. These examples are to illustrate the central idea contained in the learning outcome and are not intended to be prescriptive.

		Mode of instruction	For example, student led; show and tell; explain; experiential; simulated; reflective; practicum.
		Resources	For example, required readings; texts; audio/video; samples; cases.
Cognitive and Knowledge dimensions in Bloom's revised taxonomy	**A single Learning Outcome**	**Telos**	The purpose or point to the learning outcome in regards to higher order values, ethics, principles or pedagogical goals.
		Curriculum alignment (internal)	How the learning outcome relates to other parts of the social work curriculum (internal and horizontal alignment) and how it functions as a scaffold towards higher level cognitive tasks, or other more complex forms of knowledge, values and skills.
		Curriculum alignment (external)	How the learning outcome relates to institutional standards or social work accreditation or practice standards.
		Mode of assessment and assurance	An assessment mode that promotes deep learning and logically relates to or aligns with the learning outcome.

Fig. 11.1 Conceptual model of learning outcome to teaching and learning processes

Students wishing to self-reflect on their learning can use the map to evaluate their learning and focus on social justice. There is one final caveat to the learning outcome map: when we were creating it we were mindful that there is so much more that could have been developed and included in the map, and so what is presented is not intended to be a final definitive account of a social justice oriented curriculum, but rather, an indication of the sorts of directions that a social work curriculum might travel towards a clear focus on social justice.

The learning outcomes presented in Table 11.1 require translation and development if they are to function as an effective curriculum. Using backward design principles, it logically follows that in order to attain the learning outcome there needs to be a mode of instruction, relevant resources, some point or purpose to the outcome, an alignment or connection to internal and external conditions (this is the point about constructive alignment) and an appropriate mode of assessment. Figure 11.1 depicts the relationship between a learning outcome and other elements in the teaching and learning process. Using backward design thinking, the steps move from learning outcomes through to other teaching processes, resources and internal and external alignments.

In Fig. 11.2 we have chosen to illustrate—by way of a worked example—how to apply the principles of constructive alignment and backward design to a single learning outcome from Table 11.1. We chose to focus the discussion on the knowledge dimension of *conceptual* and the cognitive process of *understanding*. The learning outcome in our example is: *Describe relevant theoretical and philosophical ideas about social justice*. The worked example in Fig. 11.2 reflects our Australian context of teaching in a Bachelor-level social work curriculum, but as before, we would anticipate that educators would adopt this general idea to their own purposes. The point of the worked example in Fig. 11.2 is to depict how to move from a single

		Mode of instruction	The mode of instruction may include a lecture or presentation of key concepts, background, and main theoretical and philosophical ideas. A case discussion or class debate in tutorial form will help with cognitive understanding.
		Resources	Key resources for this learning outcome: Banks (2006); Bowles et al (2006); Capeheart and Milanovic (2007); Fleishacker (2004); McAuliffe (2014).
Aspects from Bloom's revised taxonomy Conceptual (Knowledge) Understand (Cognitive process).	**Learning Outcome** Describe relevant theoretical and philosophical ideas about social justice.	**Telos**	The higher order pedagogical goals are: critical and conceptual thinking; reasoning skills; theoretical interpretation; historical and contextual knowledge; and, debate and argumentation skills.
		Curriculum alignment (internal)	This learning outcome has internal alignment with other aspects of social work curricula, such as: social work ethics; the theory and practice nexus; social work mission and purpose; legal concepts and knowledge; policy concepts and knowledge; knowledge from other disciplines (interdisciplinary perspective), and, a person-in-environment perspective. Alignment with other learning outcomes in Table 11.1 that moves from: remember/conceptual knowledge (list) → understand/conceptual knowledge (describe) → apply/conceptual knowledge (interpret) → evaluate/conceptual knowledge (deconstruct) → create/conceptual knowledge (design).
		Curriculum alignment (external)	This learning outcome has external alignment with social work ethics, practice standards, accreditation standards and tertiary education standards in the Australian higher education context, such as: International Federation of Social Work (2014) *Definition of Social Work*; Australian Association of Social Workers (2010) *Code of Ethics* social work values—specifically, respect for persons (s.3.1.), social justice (s.3.2), professional integrity (s.3.3), and commitment to social justice and human rights (s.5.1.3); Australian Association of Social Workers (2013) *Practice Standards*—specifically, values (p. 7), values and ethics (1.1a, p, 9), knowledge for practice (4.1a and 4.2b, p. 12); the Australian Qualifications Framework (2013) specifications for a Level 7 Bachelor degree to include broad and coherent theoretical knowledge, cognitive skills, judgement and autonomy in decision-making, and knowledge of theoretical principles (pp. 12-13, p. 16); and, Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards (2012, v.1.4), specifically, knowledge of social work ethics (s.3.3.2) and knowledge from other disciplines (s.3.3.7).
		Mode of assessment and assurance	Assessment may include forms to deepen and evaluate cognitive understanding, such as (1) short answer questions summarising key ideas (2) a class symposium where groups present and discuss concept maps of how key ideas relate to social work (3) a topic essay.

Fig. 11.2 Worked example of learning outcome to teaching and learning processes

learning outcome to the practice of teaching and learning. If such a process were repeated for all 48 learning outcomes in Table 11.1, then we would have established a complete, logically sequenced and aligned curriculum focused on social justice learning.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have presented 48 learning outcomes that may serve as orientations for educating for social justice in social work education. We have also explained in detail the design frameworks, concepts and terminology that we used to produce the learning outcome map. As mentioned, we recognise that this will always be a work in progress. Social justice is a complex and essentially contested concept, and learning and thinking about social justice requires: engagement with multiple perspectives; attention to clarity in the concepts and ideas used; and, grounding in practical examples and in the aims, purposes and ethics of social work. To do this requires a willingness to enter into a continual discussion, dialogue and debate with others about what social justice means, why it is important, how we should think about it, and how we shall work for it. It has been our aim in this book to engage with this topic widely and present a rich account of social justice thinking, philosophy and theory for social work. We admit that this has been a challenging and daunting task, and one that by no means we feel is settled. However, we see that it is important for social work to reinvigorate a discussion about social justice, and to continue to make social justice a central point of orientation, meaning, and sustenance for social work practice.

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https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-3621-8

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