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‘Social worker’ perceptions of organisational and professional changes to their work in Canada, England and South Africa

Gary Christopher Spolander

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Key Words

Social Work, comparative study, New Public Management, globalisation, managerialism, marketisation, austerity, social justice.

Abstract

Growing global inequality, austerity and retrogressive social policy (Basu et al., 2017) provide the context for social work practice. The profession is committed to empowering people and addressing social justice, inequality and social cohesion but is struggling to achieve its mandate under pressure from shifting social policy; ever-changing organisational structures and austerity. This study explored this impact through guided conversations with 18 social workers in both rural and urban areas in Canada, England and South Africa. Using a three-legged case study design, participants discussed and explored their perceptions of organisational and professional change, impact on their work, how management practice modified decision making and focus, professional risk and trust, and how these were accommodated.

The presentation of social work voices explored their experiences under three broad themes. These were: professional identity and development, social work practice and work with service users and other professionals. The discussion theorises these voiced experiences through the review of contemporary literature.

The results highlighted that preventative services have all but disappeared with participants feeling compromised ethically, emotionally and professionally by mediating service demands, organizational delivery, service user needs and their own professional judgements. Changing professional structures, new public management, managerialism, and marketisation have introduced new pressures and requirements to practice, affecting their relationships with colleagues, service users and their managers. Surprisingly, no comprehensive research has been undertaken on the impact of these changes for social work.

The repercussions of these changes have been experienced at macro, mezzo and micro levels, with rising demand for services but reduced resources to help those in distress. Participants highlighted the main challenges of undertaking work within this context, the personal challenges and impact, and how they attempt to manage these competing pressures. As a profession, social work must seek, understand and theorise the impact of these changes to their practice context and how it might exacerbate de-professionalisation within the profession, undermine its contribution to relieving social distress, challenge public support and demoralise the existing and future workforce. The study concludes that the profession must therefore critically consider these impacts, or it may become the victim of these changes.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This study explores the perceptions of front-line social workers concerning organisational and professional changes to their working practice in Canada, England and South Africa. In this chapter, I introduce the changes to the social work profession and practice environment and outline my broad rationale for researching this topic in the three countries. I will consider the context for these changes, exploring the changing professional landscape, introduce the research background, outline the research objective and aims, key terms and the research context.

1.1 Changing Practice Landscapes: Practice in Context

Social Work is a global profession, practiced in 114 countries (International Association of Schools of Social Work [IASSW], 2002). Commonalities of professional practice include anti-oppressive practice, recognition of diversity, linking macro and micro levels of practice and a commitment to social justice (Dominelli, 2007; Harris, 2003; Healy, 2001; Lundy, 2011; Payne & Shardlow, 2002). While social work has also had success professionalising and expanding in many countries (Aldridge, 1996; Weiss et al., 2004), in some countries it has endured a process of de-professionalisation and retrenchment (Leighninger & Midgley, 1997). The current international definition defines social work as:

> *…a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and*

> *liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledges, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing.* (International Federation of Social Work (IFSW), 2014a)

The last three decades have witnessed significant changes to the social policy environment in relation to social welfare and health (Lorenz, 2006, 2016) . The demise of Keynesian economics and the rise of neoliberal ideology and its principles of governance have resulted in changes to the UK welfare state along with welfare systems globally (Lynn, 2006). These changes have included marketisation, governance and managerialism with altered service and organisational structures, a drive to achieve efficiencies, altered citizen relationships with the state, promoting individual responsibility and self-reliance, and on social work itself (Lorenz, 2016).

Neoliberal ideology provided a political rationality, which interpreted social context as being economic with reductions to state social welfare and security due to greater "personal responsibility" and "self-care" being undertaken (Lemke, 2001, p. 203; Pyysiäinen et al., 2017). Proponents of globalisation argue that markets freed of national self-interest and regulation (for instance Saul, 2004) would encourage trade and increase economic outcomes. These shifts have influenced mainstream UK and other global political parties, and in the context of social welfare policy, legitimised many "austerity" initiatives. Critics (see Wacquant, 2009, 2012) argue that neoliberal policy has promoted greater governance, regulation and penalty of the poor and the

self-governing citizen, along with promoting interventionist functions for social work through initiatives such as "troubled families" (Featherstone et al., 2014). Consequently, policy and practice perspectives have become more authoritarian through targeting specific populations including that of child protection practice (Bywaters, 2013; Bywaters, Brady, Sparks, & Bos, 2014; Parton, 2014). Authors such as Ferguson (2004) state that this approach has demonstrated the importance of *neo* in the context of neoliberal governance, as the policies of "new" punitiveness had origins in the Poor Laws and notions of the "deserving" and "undeserving". Consequently, social work's function and position, at the nexus of the poor and the powerful, has offered the profession a unique insight, resulting in distinguishing knowledge forms, i.e. the socio-legal (Parton, 1991), socio-technical (Munro, 2010) and socio-political (Gray & Webb, 2013). Furthermore, changes to governability have often been used to detect, identify and analyse forms of neoliberal governance (Lemke, 2001; Rose, O'Malley, & Valverde, 2006).

Social work has a well-recognised and valuable function in supporting those experiencing social distress (Jones, 2001), uniquely recognising the structural and social contexts that influence the profession and its ability to resolve these problems. Social work is rooted in values and a commitment to social justice (see Lundy, 2011), recognising that service users experience social distress due to one or a combination of social, political or economic conditions (Munro, 2010). Despite this recognised function, the profession has ongoing and recurring debates on how it should be involved in resolving these problems, including strengthening the profession (Hackett, Kuronen, Matthies, & Kresal, 2003; Higham, 2012; Hugman, 2011; Jarman-Rohde, McFall, Kolar, & Strom, 1997), bolstering its identity (Aronson

& Smith, 2011; Miehls & Moffatt, 2000), promoting social change (Parton, 1994; Smale, Tuson, & Statham, 2010; Smith, 2008) and promoting greater community change (Christens, 2010; Shamai & Boehm, 2001). However, few of these proposals also consider the complex interrelationship with structural influences or impacts on the profession. This study recognises the importance of understanding social distress as manifested by individuals, families, communities and macro influences, which either support or hinder both individuals and groups, as well as collective efforts to resolve them.

In seeking to address its professional context, social work as a profession has often not prioritised or given sufficient consideration to its historical development (Pierson, 2011). These historical perspectives are supportive and understanding of current political challenges, purposes, ontology and context. Contemporary social work qualifying education often has not explored these historical perspectives in any depth (Lorenz, 2008), due to tight regulatory training requirements and practice related pressures. Practice challenges often require the prioritising of immediate practice requirements and service results with demands for effectiveness (Harris & White, 2001), risk management (Hardy, 2015) and efficiency (Camasso & Jagannathan, 2014; Munro, 2011; Munro & Hubbard, 2011), all of which reduce space for critical reflection of structural factors. Consequently, safeguarding and practice outcomes have created an immediate priority with a perception that there is continual social work quality improvement over time i.e. service structures (Pollitt, 2008), all of which obviate the need for professional reflection. This lack of critical historical perspective has enabled negative aspects of the professions past, for instance its negative links to eugenicist perspectives (Cummins, 2015), ideas that problem families replicate

social disadvantage (Fronek & Chester, 2016), and that "welfare dependency" and social vice were linked (Cummins, 2015).

Historically, social work emerged from a growing middle class Christian morality, which resulted in efforts to undertake social reform i.e. prison and slave reform; temperance and animal cruelty (Jennissen & Lundy, 2011). Poverty was viewed during this time as a result of individual weakness and a lack of personal responsibility (see for instance Pierson, 2011). Consequently, tougher approaches were taken in the nineteenth century towards the poor, with greater discrimination in the provision of charity. The introduction of "New Poor Law" ensured the poor obtained moral support and guidance to encourage their responsible behaviour (Pierson, 2011). However, Poor Law was criticised for taxing the rich to pay for the poor (Leighninger, 2012) and its interference with the establishment of labour markets being a threat to the economy. Social welfare institutions supporting the poor, older people and the disabled at that time, were viewed as a mechanism to reduce the cost of care, and discourage others from seeking help (Leighninger, 2012). The effectiveness and efficiency of these large-scale institutional responses (see Leighninger, 2012) later raised questions and resulted in a shift to more individual approaches towards poverty, dependency, and social problems. Consequently, personal character was viewed as the most significant aspect in determining those needing support, and their ability and success in life (Popple & Leighninger, 2011). The echoes of these charges can still be heard in successive UK government policies.

In recent years, the global south has pressured the profession to be more intellectual and address structural causes of oppression more directly (International Federation of Social Work (IFSW), 2014; Jones & Truell, 2012; Ornellas, Spolander, & Engelbrecht, 2016; Paulsen, 2012) to counter some of the macro challenges. The previous global definition (International Federation of Social Work (IFSW), 2010) was criticised for not sufficiently addressing the profession's commitment to social and economic justice (Council on Social Work Education, 2009). This revised definition recognised that many other societies in the world had a tradition that promoted greater cooperative, collective and collaborative approaches (Rankopo & Osei-Hwedie, 2011). In contrast, global north approaches were viewed as endorsing the empowerment of individuals to escape their personal challenges and improve their life chances through developing moral and physical proficiency, with support from change agents and society (Hopps & Lowe, 2008). Rather, the revised global definition has promoted greater emphasis on collective approaches to resolve individual problems (International Federation of Social Work (IFSW), 2014a; Paulsen, 2012) through addressing structural influences on the profession, individuals and society. Importantly, these changes promoted the importance of scientific theory and understanding, recognition of macro influences on inequality and social justice and emboldened a collective focus, which encouraged the importance of indigenous knowledge, frameworks and ideas (International Federation of Social Work (IFSW), 2014a). This also underlined the need to consider the professional challenges for individual practitioners more holistically.

Alongside debates about the function of the profession, what constitutes a profession and social work as a profession (Aldridge, 1996) have been debated. The "attributes"

(traits) approach and the “power” (control) approaches on the nature of professions, have both been used to explain the hierarchies of professions (Hall, 1994). The “attributes” approach highlighted the development of the profession within society and their continued existence, while the attributes school stresses a systematic body of knowledge, professional authority, community sanctions, regulatory code of ethics and professional culture (Greenwood, 1957). In contrast, the “power” approach has explored how occupational groups manage to dominate areas of professional practice when faced by competing professional groups or stakeholders that employ them (Popple, 1985). This approach identified the power of the profession to retain exclusive rights to perform specific aspects of its function and its conflict with other groups over power, boundaries resources and licencing (Hall, 1994). The professional process has involved, being able to control key aspects of the work, determine techniques, undertake professional training and selection or to provide or rescind licences and to decide the nature of services and who is able to receive them (Johnson, 1972). More recently, these approaches have been criticised for not having supported an understanding of power in occupational groups (i.e. law) and not aiding the understanding of the power of occupational groups (historically law and medicine) or the appeal of the language of professionalism in occupations (Evetts, 2014). Consequently, it is necessary to separate professions and occupations for the purposes of analysis (Evetts, 2014). Despite this, the power model has been more widely used in social work research and considerable differences exist between the levels of monopoly experienced by social work in different countries (Weiss et al., 2004).

The importance of macroeconomic policies and governance in social work is underlined by the uniqueness of the profession, its lack of a wholly discrete knowledge base, as well as its perspective on the causes of social distress. Consequently, the profession seeks to understand:

> *...the inter-connectedness and interdependence of individuals with their society, believing that "private troubles" and "public issues" are intimately related. The knowledge base, therefore, is derived from research about individuals and society and, more importantly, about the dynamic relationship between the two...* (James, 1986, p. 4)

Changes to governance have impacted on the social work professional function, resulted in greater marginalisation of service users through the restriction of services (Murray, 1994), reduced access to preventative services (Dominelli & Hoogvelt, 1996; Lombard, 2008) and increased managerial supervision or management processes (Berggren et al., 2010; Marobela, 2008; Wastell, White, Broadhurst, Peckover, & Pithouse, 2010). New Public Management (NPM) has long emphasised the use of corporate management in public service as well as outsourcing public sector work to the corporate sector (Monbiot, 2000). Countries like India, through development of corporate social responsibility programmes, extended the role of the private sector by encouraging for-profit involvement, beyond the privatisation of social welfare services seen in many other countries. NPM has therefore been a useful tool in neoliberal governance efforts to transform public services into liberal markets (Davidson, 1993). Consequently, this has required a change in the role of the state as the buffer against poverty (Gregory & Holloway, 2005) and resulted in

greater responsibility for remedies being placed on civil society and corporate social responsibility (Sivakumar, 2007) for the funding of health and care.

The impact of neoliberal policy on social welfare has not been significantly researched. That being said, new liberal governance has demonstrated seven key characteristics of policy and implementation (Hood, 1995, p. 96):

(A) The development and use of explicit standards and performance measures
(B) The development of professional management within the public sector
(C) A focus on results rather than processes
(D) Disaggregation of the public sector
(E) Increased competition in public sector service provision, with competition being provided by the market
(F) The use and promotion of private sector management techniques
(G) The use of increased discipline in resource utilisation

Additionally, other characteristics have also been acknowledged (Pollitt, 2002) including:

- Management focus shifts from input and process to that of outcome and output
- Greater use of measurement, for instance performance management
- Increased use of specialised, flat and autonomous organisational units in preference to large, hierarchical bureaucracies within organisations
- Promotion and use of contract type relationships within services and organisations

- Use of market mechanisms to deliver public services i.e. privatisation, internal markets
- Shift in norms from equity, security, universalism and resilience to individualism and efficiency
- Blurring of the edges between public and private sectors (links to the earlier point regarding the use of markets)

As "social work is a contingent activity, conditioned by and dependent upon the context from which it emerges and which it engages" (Harris, 2008, p. 662), the structure and organisation of the state and welfare systems have a significant influence and impact on the way in which the profession is both organised and practiced (Wallace & Pease, 2011).

The impact of changed governance and market ideology can be considered at several levels from the macro through to the micro. Macro impacts have been at the level of the "welfare state", with resulting impacts on policy and resourcing; mezzo influences including the structures, regulation, management, marketisation and employment of the profession; while micro impacts include the direct influence on social workers' enactment of their professional function, values and function (Baines, 2006, 2008, 2010; Dominelli, 1999; Ferguson & Lavalette, 2004; Gray & Mcdonald, 2006; Jones, 2001; Mendes, 2009; Spolander et al., 2014, 2016). Social workers have acknowledged the constraints that this places on their work and professional lives (Baines, 2006), resulted in some (for instance Lorenz, 2005, 2016) stating that a key challenge for the profession has been achieving the balance between collectively and individual freedom in its practice. As a result, the profession has

increasingly focussed on individual interventions and been encouraged in this process by policy such as personalisation. Although critics (see Lorenz, 2016) argued this has resulted in the profession no longer mediating between social policy and the professional pressures of universalism and individualism.

1.2 Austerity, Globalisation and Increasing Social Inequality

Critics (for instance Vaccaro, 2014) have argued that a “crisis” narrative was used to justify increased corporate profits, while reducing the welfare state and using public finances to reduce financial sector debt incurred in the last financial crisis. Likewise, reducing corporate and higher earners taxation along with widening opportunities for legal tax avoidance (Streeck, 2014) has hollowed out the state and reduced funding for state expenditure, including that of social welfare. This in turn, was used as a reason for greater austerity and further reduced social welfare spending.

Following the most recent financial crisis (see Jordan & Drakeford, 2012), austerity was promoted by successive governments as a policy response. The consequences of which include; resource reductions to educational, social welfare and health services, rising dependency on food banks and visible homelessness in urban centres (Strier, 2013). The impact of the socio-economic crisis, along with an altered political economic consensus, provide an important backdrop to the aetiology, nature and extent to which social distress was experienced individually, and collectively by communities. This resulting professional debate concerned the function of social work and whether the profession should be more actively engaged in seeking to reduce or manage this distress though macro interventions (Gal & Weiss-Gal, 2014;

Hyslop, 2016; O'Brien, 2011; Reisch, 2016). Simultaneously, changes to the UK social welfare system i.e. state agencies, as well as social security payments to support those in need, have resulted in greater marginalisation and weakening of families, communities and groups (Schrecker & Bambra, 2015). Marginalised groups have arguably experienced the brunt of these reductions, although social work has witnessed, documented and itself been impacted by these changes (Strier, 2013).

Within the field of social welfare, terms such as "social inclusion" and "social exclusion" are polemical concepts, and may be considered as inseparable (Labonte, 2004). Social exclusion has been identified (see Silver & Miller, 2006) as comprising multi-layered deprivation combined with low levels of social, economic and political participation and reduced acceptance of mainstream norms and values. Its complex aetiology (see Garrett, 2002; Mantle & Backwith, 2010), included the social isolation of excluded groups from society and a variety of factors. Economic inactivity and worklessness were key causes of social exclusion (Pemberton & Mason, 2007) these had resulted in financial crisis, extreme isolation, social welfare dependency, increased levels of multiple deprivation as well as internalised societal oppression (Strier, 2013). Social isolation resulted from this multi-layered structural deprivation (Taket et al., 2009), along with stigmatisation and isolation of some groups who have attributes which threaten "normalcy". This social construction of difference resulted from institutional practices that proliferate and encourage inequality (Kurzban & Leary, 2001) i.e. the stigmatisation and stereotype of the working class as "chavs" within the UK (see Jones, 2011). Invisibility of individuals or communities has further increased social isolation (Hooks, 2003), with excluded populations being a marker of the last financial crisis (Strier, 2013). This has resulted in tens of millions of

people being trapped in extreme poverty globally, while those living regularly with hunger having risen to one billion people in 2011 (United Nations, 2012). Economic isolation for marginalised groups such as the unemployed, migrant workers, youth, undocumented workers and those with low social visibility has therefore increased (Strier, 2013).

Two important studies highlight the importance of universal social welfare provision in an environment of declining resources (Danson et al., 2015). Wilkinson & Pickett (2009) in their work on social inequality highlight the correlation between life expectancy; infant mortality; murder rates; imprisonment; teenage parents; trust; obesity; mental illness; literacy (and mathematics) as well as social mobility and more equal societies. The Oxfam Humankind Index (Oxfam Scotland, 2013) likewise highlighted the correlation between the importance of health, a home, meaningful work/ activity, a degree of status and respect, security and reduced fear about keeping or maintaining these elements for a good life and a healthy society.

This work, amongst others, has highlighted the importance of the historical and cultural protective features of welfare regimes in supporting societal risk taking, moderation and security (De Vogli, Kouvonen, Elovainio, & Marmot, 2014; Offer, Pechey, & Ulijaszek, 2010). Indeed Wilkinson and Picket (2009) argued that further research was necessary to understand the linkages between individual behaviour and aspects of collectivism such as unionisation and state welfare systems. Furthermore, critics (see Offer et al., 2010) argued the introduction of unregulated markets pose a level of danger due to the strong correlation between their introduction, resultant increases in levels of stress and insecurity, and increases in

obesity in that society. Connell (2013) argues reductions to public services, combined with the use of markets in care have resulted in increased inequality through design, rather than only as a by-product of the system. The complex interrelationships between socio-economics, inequality, social distress, social values and norms provide the fertile and challenging grounds in which social work is practiced.

1.3 Shifting Structures and Rising Precarity

At a macro level, globalisation has been associated with greater social and economic instability and crisis, along with increased wealth (International Labour Organization (ILO), 2005) for the wealthy, while those on lower incomes become poorer (Harvey, 2010). The International Labour Organization (ILO) (2005) stated that insecurity and inequality are closely associated, while economic security and economic growth are weekly associated. Politicians have promoted increased labour flexibility to encourage economic development and improve the life chances of people, despite the concerns of those employed about its negative impact on their livelihoods (Kalleberg & Hewison, 2013). In countries with traditionally higher levels of “labour and socio-economic” development, workers have been subjected to more precarious working conditions (Kalleberg, 2009, 2011), with many workers needing to undertake unpaid activity to retain their existing jobs or ensure their own survival in the workplace (Bernstein, 2007). The resulting precarity has often been associated with increased work insecurity, risk related to employment shifting from employers to employees (including pensions often as deferred income), reduced workplace safety, increased levels of stress, higher levels of bullying and harassment, accompanied by declines in skill development (ILO, 2005; Kalleberg, 2009, 2011; Vosko, 2010). This

form of labour market has challenged universal systems for the provision of employment benefits and pensions (Danson et al., 2015). In recent years for example, UK policy discourse has been dominated by austerity, along with demands for increased governance of social welfare payments and support i.e. universal credit and employment (O'Hara, 2014). However, these debates about the need for austerity fail to address the needs of working people already in low wage employment, who the state subsidises via social welfare. It is interesting to note that countries not pursuing these social policies i.e. neighbouring European countries, who have similar cultures, economic development, but higher levels of social support and no austerity, have achieved better economic outcomes (Bennett, 2014).

The introduction of care markets, privatisation of state services and reductions in social protection, have increased associated economic insecurity and inequality (Farber, 2008; Kalleberg, 2009, 2011; Lee & Kofman, 2012) and poverty (Connell, 2013). This has led to the rise of the "precariat" (Standing, 2011) or what others have called the "employed but exposed" (Clark & Heath, 2014), perhaps best exemplified by UK "zero hour" contracts, which offer little or no guaranteed or minimum hours of work. While this has been reality for a substantial proportion of the global south, it was a relatively recent phenomenon in the UK with an estimated 1.4 million UK workers directly affected (Seymour, 2014). This has led some (see Arnold & Bongiovi, 2012) to argue that the terms precarious work, precarity, informalisation and casualisation should be used interchangeably. Precariousness has been associated with low or no income, a lack of control over labour practices (including diminished collective representation) and reduced regulatory protection (Rodgers, 1989). At an individual and family level, precariousness has wider consequences

through reduced autonomy, loss of status, restricted resources, increased stress, distressed social relationships (Sirviö et al., 2012), and increased social stratification in communities (Kalleberg, 2009; Sennett, 1998). Reduced social mobility and unemployment has forced some to accept lower paid work rather than risk unemployment (Korpi, 2001). Furthermore, there is a link between precariousness and work related illness (Quinlan et al., 2001; Quinlan & Bohle, 2009).

Workers who have retained employment have experienced a narrowing of their employment options, reductions to their employment conditions, greater employment precarity, intensified poverty, increased inequality, lowered security, wages, temporary work and increased deregulation of the workplace (Cranford et al., 2003; Picot, 2014; Vosko, 2006). This has been worsened by racial and gender inequality, commodification of state services and devaluing of certain social roles i.e. woman and lone mother (Breitkreuz, 2005; Fudge & Owens, 2006; Mills, 2003; Vosko, 2006). Consequently, disproportionately high numbers of women are represented in low wage, high precarity employment (Vosko, 2006). The consequences of this challenging economic climate with its associated long-term unemployment has resulted in worsening physical and social wellbeing (Sullivan & von Wachter, 2009) with unemployed people experiencing feelings of shame and embarrassment (Sharone, 2013).

Globalisation has promoted informalisation within capitalist economies (Chang, 2009), with the most common examples being through outsourcing, home based activities or self-employment. These flexible employment practices are associated with financialisation and the export of employment, particularly manufacturing, to

parts of the global south. Casualisation has replaced regular, full time work with part-time work, resulting in a loss of employment security, benefits, earnings and hours (Cranford et al., 2003; Standing, 2008). Labour casualisation has become more prevalent in countries with low levels of full-time employment, high levels of fixed term contracts and contractualisation, together with increasing agency work (Chang, 2009). Groups at higher risk include those under 25 years old as well as women both of whose traditional employment was supplanted by recent immigrants or minorities. Consequently, a higher proportion of women work in part-time, temporary and marginal employment compared to their male contemporaries (Cranford et al., 2003). This is evidenced in both the UK and South Africa.

These economic policy and strategic options place enormous strain on individuals and families and in turn increase private debt levels for citizens. Survival strategies particularly impact on middle and lower class households due to their dependence on taxable salaries (Vaccaro, 2014). These complex socio-economic conditions effect citizens with the macro and mezzo implications providing a context for the many challenges, difficulties and social distress that social work is called to address. Thus, the consequences of the increased precarity and the inability of families and communities to meet their basic needs, results in increased demand for social welfare services experience and for social work support (McLeod, 2010).

1.4 Structural Impacts and Social Work

Socio-economic environments provide an important backdrop for the practice of social work, particularly as social work is practiced in the space between the powerful and the disempowered (Philp, 1979). The origin and function of social work

within the UK and internationally is often fraught with rival histories, chronicles and assorted discourse on its origins, role and identity (Lorenz, 2007; Lowe & Reid, 1999; Pierson, 2011). Consequently, historical, political and socio-economic contexts of social work are important (Lorenz, 2012, 2016).

Likewise, the development of professional social work has not been a linear progression (Jones, 2014), with the structural context of the profession being important for the construction of the function attributed to the profession, its enactment and structure. This led critics (see Munro, 2011) to argue that the profession is less certain of its function and purpose, has been compromised by procedures and guidance, and feels unable to exert its professional expertise. These debates occurred around the time of the Social Work Taskforce and the work of Munro and others, which appears to have subsequently not been as prominent in shaping the discourse surrounding social work. This context may be further complicated by the profession being “a dynamic weaving of a multiplicity of different strands of identity” (Lorenz, 2007, p. 608), whose character has been influenced by socio-economic policy changes. As a result, socio-economic and political history is important and should not only be understood chronologically, but also in relation to history being the intersection of forces that impact on people’s lives, institutions and on disciplines (Harmon, 2008).

Discourse about social work has constructed social inequality through several lenses: social isolation, dependency, multiple deprivation and internalised oppression (Strier, 2013). As members of society, individual practitioners also experience the implications of these factors personally in their lives, with knock on

impacts in their work and decision making. Of critical importance has been the need for social workers to understand how these structural forces impact on society, the resulting challenges for social welfare as well as the consequences these have for social work practice.

The social work profession has been buffeted by the same structural political and economic forces as society more generally. While these forces have been global in reach, English social work has been at the cutting edge through reforms introduced in response to these structural forces. The profession has not conceded without a fight. An early response to constrain the profession to this new orthodoxy was marked by the UK publication of "Radical Social Work" by Bailey & Brake (1975), which advocated professional intervention to address the impact of capitalist modes of production rather than casework, which was criticised for the maintenance of the social and economic system. Despite Bailey and Brake's (1975) significant impact on UK social work practice, there is little or no reference to their approach having had a substantial impact on either Canadian or South African social work practice.

The winter of discontent (1978-1979), the rise to power of Margaret Thatcher's Government along with the growth of the New Right, and the entrenchment of a neoliberal policy agenda have all combined to reduce the importance of socialist political activity as a legitimate part of social work practice (see Bandelj et al., 2011; Mullaly, 2001; Sklair, 1991). The policy drift from 1979 promoted market-based solutions to society's ills and the growth of managerialism. Greater influence of market-based solutions and managerial control resulted in professional resistance on three fronts: Race, Social Class and Poverty, Role, Boundaries and Deprofessionalisation (as discussed below).

Race

During the 1980s and early 1990s, the radical wing of the social work profession embraced critical theory through promotion of anti-oppressive practice, which required examination of the structural impact of power (see Schmid, 2019). This included politically engaged conscientisation interventions amongst service users, citizens and professionals. However, calls for anti-oppressive practice have resulted in practitioners, as well as victims of oppression, failing to adequately theorise the complexities of power dynamics in society (see Yee, 2016); in particular, how power and domination are hidden and replicated through privilege. The hegemonic impact being that the status quo and the dominant discourses that underpin it, were not adequately challenged (see Dumbrill & Yee, 2019). The emphasis on inequality, discrimination and oppression within the social work profession at the time drew political attention, which resulted in media attacks on social work and action by the Department of Health to curtail aspects of the social work curriculum taught on professional qualifying programmes. The response by the profession was to shift to more generic anti-oppressive practice and use of cultural competences (for instance Dominelli, 2009), which has reduced the profession's impetus to address institutional racism (Fekete, 2018; Gupta & Featherstone, 2016).

Social Class and Poverty

The radical model has been criticised (see Knights & McCabe, 2002) for viewing professional challenge through the lens of class struggle along with being overly simplistic, rather than recognising its effort to address class and poverty in opposition to the prevailing government climate. Furthermore, the late Stuart Hall (1998) warned of national states of emergency being used to attack the working class, which occurred after the 2008 economic crisis and subsequent austerity (see Bywaters et al., 2018; Taylor-Gooby, 2012). These crises facilitated further reshaping and reductions to the welfare state.

Right wing ideology, policy initiatives and language minimise the structural causes of poverty (see for instance Scrase & Ockwell, 2010), promote ideas of individual pathology in benefit dependency and worklessness (see Wigan, 2012) and encourage punitiveness as a solution for a broken and uncompetitive society. Use of "social care" rather than social work has also depoliticised the profession (for instance Roose & Bouverne-De Bie, 2012). So too, service users wrestle with their own agency impacts on social work relationships (see Gibson, 2013), which require critical consideration of the inter-relationship between personal problems and structural problems (see Gupta, 2015). As a consequence, recognition of difference in voice, context, outcomes and complexity are key (see for instance Thomas & Davies, 2005), along with addressing management and professional under-theorisation. This intricacy and the resulting decision making to undertake ethical action is complex (see for instance Banks, 2004; Stanford, 2011) and relates to factors such as career stage, commitment to ideals, employment status, availability of support and family circumstances. Accordingly, social workers (see Musíl et al., 2004; Papadaki & Papadaki, 2008) may not address work-based injustices due to fear, lack of trust and the need for control in managerially dominated practice (Parton, 2001; Titterton, 2006). So too, ethical intervention in support of service users may be diminished due to professionalism being defined by organisations (see Fenton, 2016) rather than by social workers. Occupational professionalism (Fenton, 2016) therefore requires ethical understanding, alignment of legal, ethical and theoretical knowledge. Accordingly, understanding social work practice (see for instance Munro & Hubbard, 2011), requires an understanding of professional decision making within a context of organisational rules, procedures, tasks and working conditions.

Role, Boundaries and Deprofessionalisation

The rise of neoliberal and new public management approaches promoted greater managerialism within social work, resulting in both shifting of boundaries between the role of social workers and other professional groups and the deprofessionalisation of social work as an activity. This has occurred for example through performance driven practice, risk management and resource constrained practice (see Rogowski, 2010, 2012; Turbett, 2014). As a consequence, social work has been promoted as a practical profession (Grunwald & Thiersch, 2009; MacKinnon, 2009) with an increasingly demarcated remit, evidenced, for example, through the removal of the link between probation and social work (see Parsloe, 2001). Consequently, social workers experienced increasingly limited opportunities for radical practice, in the context of a bureaucratic, statutory and constrained practice environment (for instance see Jones, 2001; Parsloe, 2001) resulting in much reduced opportunities for face-to-face practice, as the emphasis of social work shifted to desk-bound computer-based activities (Munro, 2011), risk management processes, and personalisation policy implementation (see Ellis, 2014). These changes have all promoted standardised decision-making processes and have undermined efforts to develop organisational cultures (see for instance Ash, 2013), which support professional challenges to quality, resourcing and professional managerial interventions. Moreover, professional resistance to managerial demands has weakened (see White, 2009), resulting in calls for greater recognition of practice complexity (for instance White, 2009) rather than social workers being criticised for practice uncertainty in managerially dominant organisational cultures.

In addition, changes to supervisory relationships and inter-agency working have resulted in greater defensive practitioner practice (see for instance Carey (2009a), along with higher agency worker usage due to market forces and ethical practitioner ambiguity. Increased managerial demands for practice reporting (see for instance Cartwright & Munro, 2010; Munro & Hubbard, 2011) has resulted in professional and managerial conflict in respect of what constitutes good practice

outcomes. Managerialism and new public management models, particularly in England, have demoralised and demotivated the social work workforce, widening the gap between professional practice and training reality (McDonald, Postle, & Dawson, (2008).

The attack on the profession has not been constrained to the practice environment, resulting in the irony that while promising to raise professional status, reforms have simultaneously deskilled and hamstrung the profession (see for instance Jordan & Jordan, 2000). By way of example, the promotion of competencies, technical training, managerial practice, requirements for anti-intellectual and a-political interventions (see Green, 2006), have weakened professional consideration of inequalities, values, critical theory and knowledge-based intervention.

Chapter 5 explores the implications for training in further detail, but needless to say, there remains a need for a greater link between social work theory and practice (Anscombe, 2001; Orme, 2001). Furthermore, the deprofessionalisation process has limited practitioner engagement in policy practice and political change, resulting in new graduates struggling to confidently articulate their political identity and purpose as agents of social change and their early-stage career abilities (see Marston & McDonald, 2012). The promotion of alternative models of training and “new” forms of professional qualification (see Thoburn, 2017) along with their introduction of new values and depoliticisation (for instance Murphy, 2016) have further undermined the profession. The promotion of relationship-based practice, collective solutions to social concerns rather than pathologising individuals, and enabling service users to understand the challenges of market-based care have continued in traditional training programmes (see for instance Cowden & Singh, 2007, 2014, Featherstone et al., 2014, Singh & Cowden, 2009). Thus, encouraging

right wing led efforts for intensified social work deprofessionalisation in England through further reform.

1.5 Research Objective and Aims

Austerity, and globalisation have had global impact, although these trends have articulated and enacted differently in various national contexts. This economic, financial and policy environment has affected the financing, function, structure, organisation and governance of social welfare services. Consequently, the implementation of neoliberal governance with market driven delivery systems, changed organisational and professional structures has impacted on policy and lived professional experience. The growing literature highlights the influences of global governance changes on professional practice, but there remains a scarcity of empirical studies that seek to understand their impact. This study seeks to contribute to our understanding of the impact of these forces.

1.5.1 Research Objective

The objective of this research was to explore "Social workers' perceptions of organisational and professional changes to their work in Canada, England and South Africa."

1.5.2 Aims of the Study

The aims of the study were to determine:

1. How social workers experience and perceive organisational and professional changes within their professional practice
2. How management practice impacts on social workers for instance; decision making, focus of their work and perceptions of professional risk and trust
3. How social workers accommodate their professional role, responsibility, accountability and contradictions with their managers and their profession.

1.6 Key Terms

Social welfare has been broadly defined (see Cammett & MacLean, 2011) to include both direct and indirect services, programs and infrastructure that support well-being and security for vulnerable populations i.e. disabled, older people and the poor by means of health, education and support. Throughout this study reference to social welfare has been based on the notion of ''state welfare'' type systems (see Gough et al., 2004) (including non-state actors supported by the state), rather than ''informal security regimes'' or ''insecurity regimes'' (Wood & Gough, 2006). While the nature and extent of state welfare systems differ between countries, in the three countries studied, the state has accepted responsibility for social welfare, social work and the management of these whether they exist within the state, private or third sector. Despite differences in the three countries welfare systems there is no linear process that links industrialisation to the development of state welfare, regardless of broadly similar trends occurring albeit with differing levels of structure, funding and scale (Castles, 2004). This is important considering the international nature of this study i.e. located in both the global north and south and it reinforces the importance of context for the history, present and future of social work.

New public management (NPM) is a key concept in this study and is taken to be a global movement with its underpinnings in neoliberal theory to improve efficiency and capital accumulation through emphasising markets, devolution, managerialism and contractual relationships (Christensen & Laegreid, 2007). *Neoliberalism* as a concept has been used in varying ways in contemporary scholarship and relates to the macroeconomic doctrine in which public services are “run like a business” (Ferguson, 2009, p. 170).

A further key concept, *governmentality*, seeks to explain how neoliberal rationalities, technologies and ethical problematisation support how governance and rule (often by the state) can be undertaken remotely and circuitously via subjectification (Barnett et al., 2008; Hamann, 2009; Lemke, 2001). Governance, subjectification and responsibilisation are interlinked, with the latter providing a subjective or self-hood i.e. the enterprising self, enabling the remote and indirect action of the state (McNay, 2009; Rose, 1992), resulting in the individual producing the outcomes of government through self-fulfilment rather than obedience (Rose et al., 2006). As a result, authority and rule are self-imposed by enrolment, responsibilisation and empowerment rather than directed by an external agent such as a democratic government (Barrry, Osborne, & Rose, 1996). Thus, neoliberal political rationality utilises governmentality to associate reductions to state welfare services to calls for personal responsibility and self-care (Lemke, 2001). Consequently, individuals seek to explain or rationalise concerns or problems that they experience away from being a result of external forces/agents to that of the self. By attributing freedom and autonomy to individuals acting as autonomous consumers, while concurrently

promoting the responsibility of the individual and the need for self-care, the process encourages responsibilisation (Barnett et al., 2008; Shamir, 2008). Neoliberal social welfare policy relates to the service user as if they have responsibility for their difficulties, with the individual potentially and ideally able to ensure their own existence (Rose, 1996). Reductions in social welfare are then focussed towards the individual being responsible, economically independent and a responsibility taking self-agent (Clarke, 2007).

As a mechanism of liberal governmentality, responsibilisation entreaties the positive expectations of the individual, their hopes and desires, while also appealing to their fears of control and uncertainty (Foucault, 2008; Lemke, Larsen, & Hvidbak, 2011). When threatened, the individual's need for psychological control will depend on their situational perception and result in either passivity or attempts to restore personal control; the latter being completed by a sense of personal effort and responsibility (Pyysiäinen et al., 2017).

The notion of governing mirrors its use in management of the private sector, such that it promotes the free-market in the decision making of the state (Ives, 2015). In this context, Ives (2015) viewed terms such as "stakeholders" used in the public sector as reducing the role of the state as a decision maker to being just one of the interested actors (albeit with a competing interest), with the private sector being an equal negotiating partner and public interest being achieved through multiple actors.

Neoliberal governance has operated in public administration through NPM, which consisted of two basic streams: managerialism and modes of control. Managerialism

being defined as the search for continuous improvements in efficiency, greater use of technology, a productive disciplined labour force, and clear professional management roles to manage (Pollitt, 2008). Modes of control, related to the emergence of indirect control or centralised decentralisation as a way of managing from a distance, operationalised through processes such as continuous quality improvement, devolution, information systems, contracts and markets and performance (Christensen & Laegreid, 2007).

A further important clarification is an understanding of what is meant by the notions of “developed countries”, “global north” and the “global south”. In this context, “developed country” is taken to mean countries that have experienced and continue to experience industrialised economic growth, have extensive state support structures that manage and encourage growth and seek to support the welfare needs of their citizens (Alcock & Craig, 2009). Despite ‘’welfare state’’ support being under attack in recent years, it remains very different to the social and economic development (Gough et al., 2004) that might exist in the so called “developing’’ world or ‘’global south’’ of which South Africa is a member. “Global north” is used to relate to “developed countries”, while the “global south” refers to those nations that might in some literature be referred to as “developing”.

1.7 Research Context

This study was undertaken in three countries of which two exemplify the so called “global north” (England and Canada), as well as the “global south” (South Africa). Canada and South Africa are also former colonies of the UK as well as members of the Commonwealth. All three countries have experienced different economic, social

and political trajectories, such as the participation in international trade agreements i.e. Canada's participation in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) which influenced economic growth, socio-economic structures and their social welfare and health systems. Of the countries in which the study is undertaken, Canada and England have the most developed "welfare states", whilst South Africa has a less comprehensive "welfare state" (Wood & Gough, 2006).

Economic ideology directly and indirectly has shaped the development of social policy, its articulation, implementation and governmentality. The trajectory of global economic policy and governance over the past thirty years with its consequential organisational changes and shifts towards managerialism, efficiency, effectiveness and austerity (Solimano, 2016) requires a critical understanding of the impact on the profession and appreciates that these extend beyond national policy and political party contexts.

Comparative research across economic, national, cultural, religious, historical and linguistic boundaries facilitates the observation, analysis and consideration of practice implications and helps to identify universal trends (Hantrais, 2009). The increased focus on managerialism, targets, performance measures and risk, has resulted in the profession struggling to maintain its focus on relationship based interventions (Coleman & Harris, 2006; Thompson & Wadley, 2018). Structural changes have been a global phenomenon, with a range of intended and unintended consequences, but within social work its impact includes that on training, practice and professional autonomy (Carey, 2008a, 2008b; Spolander et al., 2014). The

speed, lumpiness and impact of this policy implementation has varied, making comparative research useful to understand impact.

Social research is normally undertaken for three purposes: exploration, explanation and description (Babbie & Mouton, 2007). This study utilised an explorative-descriptive methodology, which is useful for understanding the impact of structural and organisational change, and where further insight and understanding is needed. The relative lack of empirical literature on this topic in social work highlights the importance for investigation. The three countries studied have infrequently been the subject of comparison (Spolander et al., 2011). This research is located at the crossroads of three important aspects of social work, namely the national context of practice, its organisation and structure, and the lived professional experience of social workers. Social workers from front-line practice or academia provide their local perspectives (Babbie, 2014). The starting point of this research was therefore the impact of organisational and practice changes on the practice of social work.

1.8 Structure

Chapter one explores the changing practice landscape and seeks to contextualise social work practice by exploring changes to social welfare policy and resulting debates around the function of social work in dealing with distress and inequality. Important too are the historical contexts of the profession and how globalisation and neoliberal policy has shaped professional and organisational change. The resultant changes to society due to increased precariousness, impaired livelihoods and how social inequality impacts on the social structures and social distress are presented before considering the structural impact on professional social work practice. The

remainder of the chapter provides an overview of the research objective and aims, key terms to be used and the context of the research. Each chapter will also contain a chapter summary.

Chapter two contains the review of contemporary literature on organisational, regulatory, policy professional change, for instance NPM and marketisation, and recognises the key function of social work in social welfare and addressing social injustice. It examines gaps in published literature that this research aims to address and how these have influenced practice environments.

Chapter three seeks to explore social work practice in the three countries studied, taking each of the countries in turn to provide a country context, outline the care sector structure and organisation, practice context, qualifying training and professional accountability structures.

Chapter four outlines the study design and methodology, detailing the data collection procedures through a series of guided conversations with a sample of 18 social workers and academics from Canada, England and South Africa. This chapter also explores the analytical procedures before concluding with an outline of the study sample.

Chapter five presents the lived experience of social work voices as a result of the guided conversations. It explores their experiences of professional and organisational change and how these have impacted participants professional

training, levels of discretion, risk assessment, resourcing and their professional opinions and practice.

Chapter six explores and theorises the lived experience of social workers and the main ideas discussed in this thesis, with the aid of the key research aims. It explores contextual social work practice environment and looks at professional perceptions and how these impact on their working lives.

Chapter seven draws the research to a final conclusion, highlighting participants concerns, challenges and the impact from undertaking their professional functions and on service users. This chapter also explores the strengths and weaknesses of the study, the contributions of the study and existing theory, and practical implications of the research before reflecting on the researcher’s development.

1.9 Chapter Summary

Social work is a global profession and practiced in 114 countries, with a universal commitment to social justice. Recent changes to the international social work definition (see IFSW, 2014) has highlighted the profession as being practice-based and an academic discipline, which promotes social change and development, social cohesion and the empowerment and liberation of people. Furthermore, social work is recognised as having a valuable function in supporting those experiencing social distress as a result of a myriad of structural and interpersonal issues.

The context in which social work is practice is challenging has been subjected to substantial changes over the past three to four decades, particularly as a result of

the implementation of NPM, marketisation, managerialism, neoliberal policy implementation and their resulting impact on society and organisations.

These changes have resulted in a variety of challenges for social work as it is forced to consider its function in the welfare state, its forms of analysis and intervention, its professional standing and its future. Changes to systems of governance have resulted in increased involvement of managers in decision making, the use of market mechanisms to drive change in public services, the promotion of individual responsibility and restrictions related to resources. These changes have had a wide-ranging impact for practitioners including the enactment of the professional function, the profession's values and functions and constraining professional practice. Despite this impact, little is published regarding the impact on individual social workers and this study seeks to address the gaps identified in the literature.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The overall purpose of this literature review is to explore, understand and establish the significance of organisational and professional change for contemporary social work. In doing so, it seeks to identify gaps in the literature that this thesis and future research needs to address. These gaps include the impact of implementation of austerity, the impact of organisational and professional change and the use of managerialism in the social work professional practice environment.

To understand the impact of change in and to social work, it was necessary to acknowledge that the profession has historically held a key function in the delivery of social welfare and the promotion of social justice. Indeed some (see for instance Grenier & Bidgoli, 2015) have highlighted that the change to health and social care systems over the last three decades have altered organisational structures, promoted more fluid care priorities and resulted in a greater organisational focus on cost saving. Consequently, these system changes have altered the nature of social work organisations. For example, Grover and Piggott (2007) argued that a focus on organisational goals within a rational management paradigm has resulted in the functions of employed staff being re-aligned to ensure delivery of the revised organisational purpose. These global organisational realignments have often been undertaken under the guise of increased cost containment, the challenges posed by an aging population (Rizzo, 2006; Wimbush, Young, & Robertson, 2007) and the

implementation of new public management or managerialism policies (Ball, 2006; Hood, 1995; Stark, 2018). Consequently, Kettl (2000) highlighted how standardisation of tasks and alterations to the nature of previously provided services, such as the use of risk assessment, has increased and policies promoted to energetically “encourage” unemployed people into employment. These changes have resulted in some (see for instance Grover & Piggott, 2007) contending that social work has been drawn into the enactment of an increased authoritarian policy regime.

Social work practitioners, academics and professional organisations have always recognised the blurred boundaries of its different functions, which at times, have resulted in conflicts in managing tensions. Nevertheless, the ability of the profession to manage this and adapt to rapidly changing demographics, economics and social structures has been its strength (Blewett, Lewis, & Tunstill, 2007). Indeed, role conflict between collectivist or individual interventions (Staniforth, Fouche, & O’Brien, 2011; Trevithick, 2008) have encouraged professional identity debates, its intervention focus, professional enactment (Jones, 2014) and consideration of the wider issues of social inequality (Jones, 2001; Jordan, 2004). Grenier and Guberman (2009) argued that organisational change resulted in a more rational, technocratic style of management. However, critics have been sceptical on whether the changes resulted in greater efficiency and have questioned whether cost reductions occur simultaneously with improved levels of quality and the impact of service changes on those receiving or providing services (see Bezes et al., 2012; Clarke & Newman, 2012; Hoggett, Mayo, & Miller, 2006). Consequently, Parker (2002) questioned

whether organisations are rational structures or whether they result in structures where staff work in contradictory ways.

Research on the impact of these changes has largely neglected the workplace and its associated human effects (see Delbridge & Keenoy, 2010) in particular, how the meaning of change is interpreted, the impact on emotions or how change affects human actors. This has resulted in some (see Graham & Shier, 2010), arguing that there is insufficient understanding of how these changes have effected social work practice or its organisational practice context. While proponents of new public management have articulated organisational change as a necessity. Others such as Glynos (2008), counter that underlying neoliberal ideology implementation has had a hidden, implicit and unarticulated influence, making impact assessment difficult. According to Fourcade and Healy (2007), the results of this implementation have been experienced in both the lives of workers and national economies due to the impact of marketisation, welfare state change including governance, organisations and practice. Cooper & Ellem (2008) claim there have been reductions to collective bargaining, regulation and increased privatisation as a result of imposed labour flexibility such as flexible recruitment and dismissal, and performance related pay. These sought to drive productivity gains, increase organisational efficiency and productivity (Cappelli, 1999). Consequently, proponents of NPM and governance reform considered the proposed benefits of flexible labour reform, reduced regulation, and increased managerial oversight and organisational restructuring as reducing costs and improving efficiency. Although the unintended costs may undermine the contemporary working environment, and the functioning and success of care services.

It is therefore unsurprising that organisational structures influence practice. This has led to Hughes and Wearing (2017) calling for social work to critically recognise and analyse organisational agendas, particularly in relation to their impact on service users. They claimed that this critical engagement would enable intervention to alleviate potential organisational impact while simultaneously supporting users of services and their families to address their social distress. Consequently, they argue that a defining feature of social work, compared to other non-professional groups, is the socialised and internalised professional values from qualifying training combined with individual professional commitment.

Social work models or conceptual schemas have sought to help the profession explain and critically understand its function and values amidst the context of health and social care policy. Use of models, such as the ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Houston, 2015) in recognising macro, mezzo or micro influences, encourages social welfare policy development and implementation, particularly within a dynamic economic, political and social context. Structural and organisational change has not affected the profession alone. According to Pratt (2006), changes to society, both nationally and globally, have also had an effect at political, economic and cultural levels. Less regulated models of capitalism, reductions to the welfare state, amended corporate and public sector structures and accountability modifications have resulted in workforce casualisation, the promotion of a consumer market economy, and the cultivation of a more entrepreneurial, self-reliant and risk-aware population (Pratt, 2006).

The macro-environment too influences care policy and practice environments through international and national policy agreements, governance, government and institutional structures, along with historical social welfare and health care system development (Spolander, Engelbrecht, & Pullen Sansfaçon, 2016). It is therefore not surprising that shrinking state provision along with increased marketisation, and greater use of provider contracts (Harris & White, 2009) have all been implicated in shaping service delivery within a competitive market driven economy of care. Despite this need for macro understanding, Harms Smith, (2015); Khan and Dominelli, (2000); Manthorpe et al., (2009) argue that social distress and problems must also be addressed at the level of individuals and families, highlighting the profession's orientation towards intervention at multiple levels. Consequently, professional ontological lenses play an important role as the profession has grappled with how to analyse, explore and intervene to address social problems (M. Gray & Webb, 2009; Longhofer & Floersch, 2012; Marsh, 2012; Ornellas et al., 2016; Shaw, 2014).

Market-based solutions to resolve what might otherwise be viewed as organisational and professional challenges (Davis, 2009), have resulted from the promotion of free markets for all sectors of the economy, including health and social welfare organisations. According to Davis (2009), this has resulted in recurrent organisational restructuring, promotion of strict task directed work and greater use of electronic monitoring of work and workers. Indeed, as previously discussed in Chapter one, economic reorganisation and consequent policy changes have impacted on individuals and society (Kalleberg, 2013; Lin & Tomaskovic-Devey, 2013; Vidal, 2013) and have been associated with increases in social distress. While

little is known about social workers lived experience of organisational and professional change in the three countries (Canada, England and South Africa), this study explores those transformations, its impact and the implications for social work professionals.

2.2 Approach

In exploring the impact of marketisation, economic and managerial change on social work organisations and professionals, the literature highlighted three key themes. Theme one relates to employing organisations and the structural implications for delivery of services, including the enactment of discretion and risk. Theme two is concerned with social worker role perceptions and professional support, including professional training, service accessibility, their perceptions of the profession as well as the factors that support or hinder their practice. The third theme is related to perceptions of professional practice challenges, how social work is valued, social work's aspirations and how social workers manage this change.

The literature review was undertaken to ensure that up-to-date sources relevant to the research area were identified, with the review methodology informed by Bryman (2016). Key terms for a Boolean search of publications in English were "(social work OR social care) AND (new public management OR governance OR neoliberal OR marketisation) AND (impact OR effect OR influence OR outcome OR result)". Other searches were undertaken, which included "(social work OR social care) AND (organisational change) AND (empirical studies) AND (England OR United Kingdom OR Canada OR South Africa)". Searches were limited to English language,

scholarly, peer-reviewed and relevant professional grey literature using social work databases.

My initial searches focussed on seeking empirical comparative studies on social work responses to organisational and professional change in all three countries or in any two pairs of these countries. No published materials were however identified that dealt with all three countries or two pairs of these countries, although there were single country studies. The lack of comparative published materials dealing with all three countries reflects a gap in the current social work knowledge base on this subject.

Some prominent authorities highlighted that the organisational context typically impacts on social work practice at several levels: decision making (Ellis, 2014; Evans, 2010; Raeymaeckers & Dierckx, 2013), attitude to service users (Concannon, 2006; Lymbery, 2014b; Scourfield, 2010), the quality of assessment and risk management (Brown, Shoveller, Chabot, & LaMontagne, 2013; Hardy, 2015), performance management (Harlow et al., 2012), the quality and availability of care resources (Munro & Hubbard, 2011; Rogowski, 2012) and the retention of practitioners (Curtis, Moriarty, & Netten, 2009; Engelbrecht, 2006; Evans & Huxley, 2009; McDonald, Postle, & Dawson, 2008).

The literature highlighted a number of challenges for the profession including that of stress, retention, organisation of the workforce and workload challenges. One such study of 237 mental health social workers from across England and Wales (see Huxley et al., 2005) identified high workloads, inadequate resources and elevated

levels of occupational stress. A further survey of staff and employers of 997 staff in Wales (see Evans & Huxley, 2009) identified that almost a quarter of social workers wished to leave their jobs within six months, mainly due to job and employer dissatisfaction and negative feelings about pay. Another study of 2,050 staff working in five English social work practices (see Hussein et al., 2014), stressed the importance of practitioners being able to control their work and burnout as a result of spending insufficient time on direct work with children and their access into services. Interestingly, Hussein et al. (2014) found no significant difference in these key research outcomes when social work practice staff were compared to those who worked for local authorities. This was surprising, given that social work practices were championed as providing more flexibility for practitioners (see Stanley et al., 2012) and would resolve the problems of local authority bureaucracy. The Local Government Association (LGA), 2009) cited the results of the Guardian Social Lives Survey of 500 social workers in England and Wales, which found that an overwhelming majority of social workers (87%) felt that their work demands were greater than in the past, with insufficient time (66%) to devote to their cases and inappropriate remuneration and benefits. Further evidence came from a recent study of 140 social care staff in England, (see Moriarty, Manthorpe, & Harris, 2018) in which social workers highlighted that increased work requirements had reduced job satisfaction and morale, and they reported a reduction in the availability of peer support. These workload changes have been argued to be a result of efficiency savings by employers (Holmes, Robin, & Miscampbell, 2013). Furthermore, social workers highlighted increased numbers of short-term “agency” contracts, with social workers attracted to this employment due to pay, to reduce work-related stress and achieve a better work life balance (Moriarty et al., 2018). Attempting to understand

these workforce challenges through an alternative lens of why child protection social workers in England, Italy and Sweden stayed in their posts, Frost, Hojer, Campanini, Sicora, and Kullburg (2018) identified that many felt rewarded by improving lives, but a lack of resources, time, ability to undertake preventative and supportive interventions had reduced job satisfaction and motivation. Within this context of pressurised working, performance targets and supportive supervision, social workers continued to value encouraging working relationships, opportunities for co-operation, trusting relationships, and supportive rather than managerial supervision (Frost et al., 2018). This supported the importance of organisational and relational factors in social work productivity and remaining committed to service delivery for service users and their families (Collins, 2008).

The stressors experienced by social workers were highlighted in the literature concerning burnout (Lloyd, King, & Chenoweth, 2002), and identified role ambiguity, role conflict, challenging work, lack of job autonomy and conflicting role expectations as challenges to the need to deliver services with reduced autonomy and resources. Role conflict included examples such as the rationing of resources or the amount of time that can be spent with families (Coyle, Edwards, Hannigan, Fothergill, & Burnard, 2005). In contrast, role ambiguity occurred when social workers were unclear about their responsibilities or performance (Blomberg et al., 2015). Role conflict and role ambiguity are a significant cause of stress in the profession (Blomberg et al., 2015; Coyle et al., 2005; Kim, 2011; Pasupuleti, Allen, Lambert, & Cluse-Tolar, 2009; Webb, & Carpenter, 2012) and have been highlighted by students (Higgins, 2016) and newly qualified social workers (Burgess & Carpenter, 2008;

Carpenter, Shardlow, Patsios, & Wood, 2015; Hussein, Moriarty, Stevens, Sharpe, & Manthorpe, 2013).

Burnout has been described as the prolonged psychological response to chronic workplace stressors, which included emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation or cynicism and a weakened sense of personal accomplishment (Maslach et al., 2001). Others (see Collins, 2007; Um & Harrison, 1998) have highlighted how supportive environments with organisational, professional and personal workplace encouragement, have lowered burnout rates. Further evidence from Stanley, Manthorpe, and White's (2007) telephone interview study with 50 social workers showed that supportive supervision, professional role boundaries and work flexibility facilitated greater retention of social workers. Similarly, Carpenter et al. (2012), Dickinson and Perry (2002), Huxley et al. (2005) and Mor Barak, Levin, Nissly, & Lane (2006) have highlighted that a sense of belonging and commitment in the workplace resulted in greater retention of social workers. Supervision was therefore identified as an essential practice and development mechanism, despite Kadushin and Harkness (2002) noting that the professional environment had changed. This resulted in a move away from a professional ethos, to an administrative model with greater management control and audit of professional practice (Morrison & Wonnacott, 2010). Other prominent social workers, such as Baginsky et al. (2010), claimed that social work supervision has developed contradictory and conflicting aims with intervention processes needing to be educative, restorative, administrative and involve mediation. This has led Noble and Irwin (2009) to highlight that professional supervision echoes the complexity of social work practice, with the need to ensure support while delivering on organisational goals and standards.

Consequently, the importance of positive workplace relationships have been viewed as more influential for the wellbeing of social workers than the personal attributes of the individual (Landsman, 2007).

Practice difficulties due to reduced autonomy and the lack of supportive work relationships and supervision, manifest themselves in management terms through recruitment and retention strains. The workforce problems in England have resulted in programmes to encourage overseas recruitment (Bowcott, 2009; Engelbrecht, 2006; Pullen-Sansfacon, Spolander, & Engelbrecht, 2012; Walsh, Wilson, & O'Connor, 2010), along with initiatives to improve pay and benefits, working conditions or professional development (Evans & Huxley, 2009). Similarly, in South Africa recruitment and retention has been problematic (Kasiram, 2009; Lund, 2010; Mhlambiso, 2004) resulting in efforts to improve salaries (Skweyiya, 2006), although counterforces have encouraged social workers to migrate to the UK to fill vacancies in that country (Engelbrecht, 2006; Pullen-Sansfaçon, Spolander, & Engelbrecht, 2011).

In returning to the changes in the practice context and the rise of managerialist practice, Aronson and Smith (2011) in their study of 13 Canadian women in social service management positions, note the often-contradictory positions of participants who disagreed with managerial practices they were required to implement. These participants were simultaneously in positions of influence with greater opportunity to resist. However, they described the challenge of managing financial constraints and performance targets, using masculine type roles of being business-like, authoritative, strategic and flexible, all of which required long hours and lessened the importance

of their private lives to meet organisational requirements. Participants also described being aware of the danger of losing themselves within their organisational identity and their experience of divided loyalties. In a further qualitative study of social workers in practitioner and management positions employed in England, Evans (2010) claimed that the majority of social work qualified managers continued to view themselves as social workers. The professional status of these participants influenced both the way that they exercised discretion and the way this might be managed, with both groups of participants seeking to maximise service user outcomes and promote professional discretion. However, the degree to which social workers had substantial discretion in previous organisational cultures is questioned by Harris (1998). Nevertheless, the conclusion drawn from both studies was that the commitment to core social work values results in personal conflict and divided loyalties in the use of professional discretion and managing organisational and professional demands.

The next section summarises the key themes, developments and current debates on the impact of social work organisational and professional change on the profession.

2.3 Social Work Organisations

The literature about social work organisations has identified organisational type, structure and the nature of staff relationships within those organisations as being important. While detailed exploration and analysis of organisational psychology and strategic and operational management theory was beyond the scope of this study, differing definitions of an "organisation" in the context of social work can be found.

One of the most cogent and the one that has been utilised in this thesis is that based on Schein's work:

> *An organization is the rational coordination of the activities of a number of people for the achievement of some common explicit purpose or goal, through the division of labor or function, and through a hierarchy of authority and responsibility* (Schein, 1970, p. 9)

While this definition highlights the importance of co-ordination of resources to achieve a common goal, this form of social services management approach gained increased prominence in the 1980s (Bissell, 2012). This resulted in some prominent authorities arguing that an increased managerialist agenda in social work ensured good service delivery (Coulshed, Mullender, Jones, & Thompson, 2006). This approach was initially seen as unproblematic, with authors such as Balloch, McLean, and Fisher (1999) arguing that many of the skills utilised by managers at the time were similar to social work skills. However, Lymbery and Butler (2004) challenged this view, arguing that the profession needed to contest the professional debate of whether social work was a professional activity, or whether it was equivalent to organisational work. Consequently, these critics argued that social workers may limit their potential professional contributions to ensure that they meet the demands of their work environment and not their profession. One example of this dilemma relates to the demand for social work skills to be shaped by organisational requirements (Hasenfeld, 2000), thus enabling social workers to solely function at the level of their job descriptions. The outcome of this debate is conflict between the

importance of relationship-based practice and demands for efficiency, effectiveness and even profitability or an organisational market share (Hasenfeld, 2000).

According to Couldry (2010), the UK has been a proponent of global economic reform and restructuring, with the terms marketisation and privatisation often being used interchangeably. Marketisation has been viewed as routine market transactions and price-based competition. Thus supporting the exchange of goods or services and enabling new care provider competition, therefore ensuring that the price provided a mechanism for exchange and increased market-driven activity (Greer & Doellgast, 2013). However, these efforts in marketisation have been frustrated by local government organisational structures, along with the professional ethos of public sector workers, public opposition, and political and managerial tension (West, 1997). The adoption of the Health and Social Care Act (2012) provided further impetus to support privatisation of the remaining health and care services. Privatisation has however resulted in changes to service or organisational ownership, along with the withdrawal of the state services from the delivery of services, and encouraged work to be contracted out across other sectors of the economy (Peedel, 2011). Marketisation was thus introduced in the initial stages of reform, according to Krachler and Greer (2014), to promote “internal markets” and later according to Propper & Bartlett (1997), to limit state and organisational financial borrowing and purchasing.

Marketisation has also been promoted through other policy initiatives for instance, personalisation in the UK (see Ferguson, 2007), which has been strongly associated with the promotion of individualist policies, together with responsibilisation and the

transfer of state risk to individuals. The care sector has been profoundly impacted by the experience of service users and carers in contracting care and the privatisation of services, resulting in increased bureaucracy, workforce casualization and instability, and reduced responsiveness on the part of services to the needs of children and their carers (Carey, 2009a). Consequently, service user and carer participation (SUCP) has promoted the development and evaluation of services and encouraged the demand for further marketisation of provision (Carey, 2009a). Furthermore, the consequence of increased social inequality has highlighted the sectors weaknesses in confronting structural disadvantage and oppression (Carey, 2009b). As a result, Ferguson (2007) argued that a lack of critical review of the personalisation policy has neglected poverty and inequality, while increasing the risks of welfare stigmatisation and promoting the de-professionalisation of social work.

This policy environment, along with organisational and practice changes through excessive standardisation, further rules, procedures and performance targets have not reduced rising levels of social inequality, nor improved service delivery (see Featherstone, Broadhurst, & Holt, 2012) but increased partnership difficulties between social workers, young people and their families. Further partnership challenges have resulted in an increased professional focus on child protection, and resulted in critics calling for social work to find mechanisms to resist these organisational changes (Featherstone et al., 2012). Fronek and Crawshaw (2015) have highlighted the importance of professional critical voices in ethical, policy and practice debates, particularly where the use of care markets have been promoted as a mechanism to support initiatives such as the “right to parent” and encourage wider

family reproduction reform, i.e. adoption and marketisation. Indeed, Jones (2015) argued that the increased marketisation of children's services, including that of child protection, has not resulted in any significant debate regarding the appropriateness of this policy direction, possible service fragmentation, or even the potential impact of marketisation.

NPM has been an important driver of the state reform agenda, with its focus on privatisation, reducing trade union power and managerialism, through the restructuring of work, performance and organisations (Eliassen & Sitter, 2008,; Gualmini, 2008). The consequence of marketisation and NPM has varied significantly between countries (Lynn, 2006; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004) with the altered function of social welfare services being a direct consequence of the altered role of the state (Bordogna, 2008). This has led critics (see Connell, 2002; Mitchell, 1971; O'Donnell, Allan, & Peetz, 2001) to argue that initial support for marketisation was a result of citizens being mis-sold the idealised benefits of improved quality, availability and accessibility of services. They viewed this policy as having negatively impacted on the poor and the social welfare sector through reduced status, service conditions and pay. A key question, therefore, is what impact do these structural system changes have on social work and the services it delivers?

2.4 The Role and Function of Social Work

The literature about social Work as a global profession (International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), 2002) reveals a profession committed to anti-oppressive practice, recognition of diversity and social justice (Dominelli, 2007;

Harris, 2003; Healy, 2001; Payne & Shardlow, 2002). Sakamoto and Pitner (2005) from a Canadian context, argue that this includes the vigilance of potential anti-oppressive experience of service users. In the UK, Stepney (2010) argues that critical practice could also be used for emancipatory change and to manage contradictions of practice, such as intervening structurally and balancing effectiveness with commitments to social justice.

Social work theory also has employed a variety of ontological lenses through which it seeks to understand the nature of social reality, what that reality might look "… like, what units make it up and how these interact with each other" (Blaikie, 1993, pp. 6–7). While ontology is seldom explored in depth, it provides an important framework that shapes professional theoretical perspectives and its association with organisations and training. At a national level, ontology influences the professional function, along with its practice perspective, and is emphasised in both training and practice. Consequently, ontological categorisation supports how social workers practice and articulate their intervention approaches, assists with the theorisation and exploration of policy contexts, as well as identifying dominant social work models and practice.

It is evident from the literature that Anglo-Saxon representations of ontology have differed from indigenous knowledge (see Huang & Xiong, 2012) with the latter emphasising the importance of collectivism i.e. in non-Western societies, while the former promoted more individual approaches. Consequently, le Grange (2016) and Tsui and Yan (2010) argued that debates over the orientation of the profession highlight the dominance of western models, along with its connotations of colonialism

and power. Some of these structural elements of the profession have also been the subject of international and national professional debate, for instance decolonising the social work curriculum in South Africa (Gray, 2005, 2008; Gray & Coates, 2010; Gray & Webb, 2014; Rowe, Baldry, & Earles, 2015). Consequently, understanding the ontological lenses through which social workers interpret their organisational and professional context provides a conceptual understanding of how social workers may interpret their role, view their employing organisation and their professional challenges. Four key western social work perspectives are evident in the literature, these have strongly influenced the international English speaking profession, resulting in Lyons, Hokenstad, Pawar, Huegler and Hall (2012) arguing that the key models have been: Howe's (1987) four paradigms, Garrett's (2013) four perspectives, Payne's (1996) three views and Dominelli's (2002) three approaches. Drawing on an analysis of these four discourses found in the literature resulted in (Ornellas et al., 2016) the development of a hybridised model with four paradigms namely: interpretivist-therapeutic, individual-reformist, neoliberal-managerialist and socialist-collectivist. These are explored below and presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Hybridised Social Work Ontology (adapted from Ornellas et al., 2016)

Interpretivist-therapeutic	**Individual-reformist**
• Relationship based • Individualist, client-centred • Self-fulfilment, development, well-being • Inward-focused • Development of meaning	• Measured improvement, complete change impracticable • Relationship centred • Psychosocial • Anti-oppressive practice

Neoliberal-managerialist	Socialist-collectivist
• Social work as a business • Privatised social work • Preservation • Individual accountability for change/ wellbeing	• Collective solutions to individual problems • Variations of radical, critical and resistant social work • Contest structural sources • Critical consciousness

2.4.1 Interpretivist-Therapeutic Paradigm

As can be seen in Table 1 above, this paradigm was concerned with individual change or functioning and promoted the therapeutic principles of relationship work and emotional intelligence (Jones & Truell, 2012). This perspective perhaps was most influential during the period of stable economics as a result of class compromise, and when for instance “problem families” were considered easier to observe and contain (Spinley, 1953). Later, this perspective incorporated broader humanistic perspectives (see for example Rogers, 1980), however, the paradigm does not consider the person within their socio-economic environment.

2.4.2 Individualist- Reformist Paradigm

Again in Table 1 above, from within this paradigm Ferguson (2011) has argued that the recognition of improvements in living conditions and approaches developed from “anti-oppressive” and “intimate child protection practice”. The emphasis in this approach was on relationship-based social work, particularly practitioners’ work with poor and marginalised families (Ferguson, 2011). Consequently, Ornellas et al.

(2016) argued that social work intervention was focussed on ensuring suitable accommodation for the individual, environmental support, promotion of individual service user needs and service improvement. This framework has proved very influential in recent UK child protection practice development (Garrett, 2003b, 2013).

2.4.3 Neoliberal-Managerialist Paradigm

As shown in Table 1 above, this social work perspective locates the profession within a business context (Ornellas et al., 2016), which results in the discourse of ideas with “excellence” and “quality” being key aspects. Prominent academics such as Garrett (2013) and Harris (2003) argue that this approach has facilitated the blurring of roles and responsibilities between qualified social workers and unqualified social care workers, promoted a private sector business ethos and encouraged greater use of technology, for instance IT systems. Performance management, individual empowerment and managerialist frameworks have supported the notion that individual service users occupy an unequal world, and that consciousness development and personal control should be promoted in interventions (Dow & McDonald, 2003). Thus, Lishman (2007) argues, the individual is assumed to be in control of their own well-being, with the role of professionals being to maintain the existing market economy status quo. This has been referred to as the social work business by Harris (2003), with the approach having been associated with McDonaldisation by Dustin (2007). McDonaldisation involves complex tasks or operations being broken into constituent or discrete parts, so that exact resources are calculated to ensure economic efficiency and service (Dustin, 2007; Hafford-Letchfield, Lambley, Spolander, & Cocker, 2014; Ritzer, 2011). This paradigm most

closely mirrors the structural changes to social work organisations described in much of the contemporary literature.

2.4.4 Socialist-Collectivist Paradigm

Again looking at Table 1 above, Ornellas et al. (2016) noted that this paradigm viewed social and personal opportunities and challenges through the restrictions imposed by living within a capitalist market economy and promotes collectivist responses to resolve personal problems (see Bailey & Liyanage, 2012; Lightburn & Sessions, 2006). Examples of this approach can most frequently be seen in the politics of groups such as the Social Work Action Network (SWAN) in the UK and other more radical perspectives (see for example Ferguson & Lavalette, 2013; Jones, 1983; Lavalette, 2012). Garrett (2013) asserts that this paradigm requires collective intervention approaches that are incompatible with therapeutic paradigms. This paradigm offered a model to structurally redistribute power through collective action along with resistance to neoliberal models of development (Dow & McDonald, 2003). Consequently, Lavalette (2011) argues that involvement in advocacy and collective action is most closely aligned with those practitioners who promote group work or community development. While this more radical perspective does not seek to abolish casework (Weinstein, 2011), it critiques this type of intervention on the basis that it supports ruling class hegemony.

In practice, social work draws upon all four of these paradigms, although the contemporary shifts in organisational management and austerity, appear to have supported and promoted the neoliberal-management paradigm. Along with its

perspective in analysis, intervention and organisational service delivery. It is unclear how many social workers would subscribe to this paradigm, although the approach has been promoted within social work organisations to support efficiency and marketisation, especially during austerity. While the approach promotes efficiency, little is known about its success in delivering efficient and quantifiable services, service equality or even the wider impact on the profession or users of the service.

Despite criticism from a variety of post-modernist, feminist and anti-racist perspectives, Borodkina (2015) argues that the four key approaches have remained largely resilient, with an expansion of the neoliberal-management paradigm through ideological reproduction and the Bologna process of social work education in Eastern Europe and Russia. As a result, Miljenović and Knežević (2015) have criticised this expansion resulting in tension between the profession and local cultures i.e. changed social work practice has resulted in reform despite longstanding roots in indigenous social work, for instance in Croatia.

The social environment influences professional practice (Searle, 1995), with literature highlighting a complex interaction of socio-political, cultural and economic influences, which belies simple explanation (Pawson, 2006). However, Pierson (2011) argued that social work has been poor at understanding historical professional change. This resulted in Harris (2008), questioning the profession's understanding of the influences of location and structure on its practice enactment. Importantly, historical perspectives enable an understanding of previous professional conflicts and debates (see Gray, Dean, Agllias, Howard, & Schubert, 2015), but these are not widely discussed in the literature. Social work professional role evolution and historical professional perspectives regulator training requirements

(see Harris & White, 2009) have struggled to gain prominence in social work training, practice placement pressures and a limited curriculum. Consequently, professional practice has been prioritised to ensure organisational results, particularly through measures of effectiveness (Harris & White, 2001), risk management (Hardy, 2015) and efficiency (Camasso & Jagannathan, 2014; Munro, 2011; Munro & Hubbard, 2011).

According to Cummins (2015), erroneous perceptions can also coincide with a lack of professional critical reflection on its past, resulting in the profession overlooking its negative links to eugenicist perspectives. Consequently, critics such as Featherstone et al. (2014) have drawn attention to the impasse of the profession's commitment to social justice, whilst current policy has promoted a greater interventionist role for social work through initiatives such as “troubled families”. Service users and carers are not alone in this process, Wacquant (2009; 2012) argues that governance, regulation and penalty of the poor has promoted greater intervention in their lives, while simultaneously encouraging self-governing citizens. Other prominent academics argue that increased authoritarian targeting of interventions has resulted in policy and practice aimed at predominantly poor populations, for instance in child protection practice (Bywaters, 2013; Bywaters, Brady, Sparks, & Bos, 2014; Parton, 2014).

Some scholars, such as Gray and Webb (2009 and Mullaly (2006) argued that social work has been ambiguous in embracing underpinning theory, resulting in an embedded practice perspective, with more priority placed on pragmatic approaches and personal attributes, than theoretical understanding. This prioritised perspective has often been supported by politicians, with a notable example being when, at the

peak of the last financial crisis, a UK government minister opined that shortfalls in the profession could be undertaken by retired bankers and insurance brokers (Department of Health, 2002). However, the notion that the profession's work can be undertaken by well-intentioned laypeople in a time of "austerity", fits with historical narratives that practical experience can trump theoretical and critical reflection (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, & Roberts,1978). Thus, a "theoretical" challenge is crucial in appreciating how diverse forces and structures seek to shape the profession, together with those who are so often the focus of the profession's interventions; namely the poor.

Hugman (2009) emphasised that professional debates on the nature of social work in the global north have often been marked by a discourse of identity, along with questions about whether the practice should be undertaken at the macro or micro levels. Consequently, Hugman (2009) argued this has highlighted the contested nature of the profession, with the concept of identity in the global north being considered differently to the global south, due to differences in socio-economic and political contexts. A measure of these contexts has been the translation of state power by social work to communities, families and individuals (Pollack, 2010) through professional processes and regulatory strategies i.e. risk and penalty. Indeed, Garland (1997) has claimed that chains of actors influence how the profession's role and position are defined, who has contributed to this and the role contest process, resulting in the establishment and shaping of professional power. One example of this use of power has been the promotion of "psychologization" models within social work, promoting micro-level interventions with a limited

professional review of the neoliberal state or implications for those receiving services or within the profession (Garrett, 2010).

The literature highlights that social work has experienced significant ideological, political, economic and practice change, including the questioning of its expertise and effectiveness as well as being blamed for high profile child deaths (Rogowski, 2012). These challenges along with amplified bureaucratic risk assessment processes, resource management, service rationing, and authoritarian practice have all reduced relationship based practice interventions (Rogowski, 2011). This has led to Rogowski (2011) calling for social workers to engage in more radical and critical practice. Furthermore, the narrowing of social work skills due to the loss of practice knowledge has resulted in traditional skills recast as competencies, lean working having reduced opportunities for skills exchange, an excessive working pace removing time for critical reflection and standardisation eliminating innovative solutions (Baines, 2006).

The consequences of professional reform and marketisation have resulted in McDonald et al. (2008) highlighting the subdued and daunted position of the profession, giving rise to a widening discord between working practices and social work education. Stanley et al. (2007) identified an increase in the number of younger workers as a consequence of recruitment efforts to address social work shortages and highlight that these younger professionals are more prone to earlier burnout, require increased support and enhanced structures to manage their work and coping strategies. Furthermore, Curran and Hill (2017) indicate that younger workers in Canada, USA and UK demonstrated increased levels of perfectionism. They attribute

these raised levels of perfectionism to macro neoliberal policies, which have supported culture changes in the three countries, making them more individualist, materialistic and socially antagonistic, resulting in a more competitive working environment, with more unrealistic expectations.

Within this reform environment, McDonald et al. (2008) asserted that social work workforce difficulties exist at three levels: structural, managerial and practitioner, and this included supervisory related problems, resulting in a form of defensive practice that uses little underpinning of theory or knowledge. Furthermore, they recommended that revised social work service structures, practice within non-blame environments and improved workforce support, as being key factors to the improvement of workforce conditions (McDonald et al., 2008). Shier and Graham (2010, 2013) go further, arguing that efforts to improve workplace performance and mend poor working environments include problems such as staff turnover, burnout and long-term professional commitment, which have required more than individual behaviour change. They emphasised the importance of socio-political environment change to facilitate more conducive and supportive professional practice environments. However, the current framing of social policy structure and economic policy change (including austerity) would make this challenging.

Within the literature there is evidence that the changed organisational and legal processes in social work (see Carey, 2009b) have resulted in reduced professional discretion, lowered staff access to training and transitory relationships with colleagues and service users. Neoliberalism and managerialist perspectives (see (Harris, 1998; Harris & White, 2013; Penna & O'Brien, 2013) emphasised that

professional managers are best placed to manage human services organisations. Carey (2009c) claimed in a study of 26 English local authority agency care managers, that organisational and legal frameworks were used by managers to maintain order, alongside peer acceptance and support, as mechanisms to acquire management order. He found however that order was seldom achieved, due to ever-changing legal and organisational procedures, limited discretion and access to training and brief superficial relationships with staff and service users. Furthermore, his findings identified that agency or temporary employment resulted in more fragmented social work, increased use of superficial relationships and uncertainties of marketized public sector employment exposure. It is therefore unsurprising that increased numbers of practitioners have sought agency work, often at the expense of permanent contracts, due to the apparent flexibility offered, along with perceived benefits of being able to escape the worst of the organisational structural impact (LGA, 2009).

2. 5 Social Work Professional Practice Challenges

A number of professional challenges can be identified in the literature. One of these challenges has been to understand the boundaries that the profession occupies in the social space of helping organisations. Social work as a profession has most often been located within the context of being a social welfare service. Cammett and MacLean (2011) have understood social welfare as both direct and indirect services, programmes and infrastructure, which supported well-being and security for vulnerable populations through health, education and support i.e. disabled, older people and the poor. Some of these functions are within the purview of social work. However, Otto and Lorenz (1999) emphasised that within a European context, social

work has included “social professions” along with “social pedagogues” with their recognition through membership of the International Federation of Social Work (IFSW). While the extent of social work professionalisation may be disputed, there have been important developments that have helped to shape the profession internationally, which are evident in the literature, including:

- Scholars requirement for a theory to encourage practice and education autonomy, with underlying theory and models that enabled practice in a range of settings, despite questions concerning the extent of this theory (see Atherton & Bolland, 2002; Holscher, 2005)
- The development of casework and group work practice models and the techniques that address social problems with a focus on the individual rather than the environment (see for instance Hare, 2004; Mclaughlin, 2002). Juhila et al. (2004) argued that the development of these approaches enabled greater social control of the working classes. While Hare (2004) stated that later approaches have involved community and policy development, which gained increased importance later in the profession’s history.

Walton (2005) acknowledged the historical origins of the profession as a result of religious or community compassion, but its association with these groups later reduced as a result of the consolidation of state legislation and government power. Clarke (2004), Harris (1998), Walton (2005) and Webb (2001) noted that this resulted in social work being undertaken as a professional activity carried out either directly on behalf of the state, directly or indirectly through charities/ NGOs, while using interventions and methods of social control mandated by the state. Clarke

(2005) reasons that as a result of the profession being legitimised and controlled by the state, it has often reflected the state's priorities and values, and that whilst this has legitimised the profession, it has also constrained its influence and autonomy. This has led to Sewpaul (2001) arguing that this creates a potential for conflict with the state and those in power, particularly as the profession addresses the consequences of macro socio-economic, structural and political policy. Critics such as Drucker (2003, p. 55) have therefore questioned whether the profession can assert its role with the poor and disenfranchised or whether, in a world of neoliberal policy, it "in fact, functions as selective stretcher-bearers of [their] own society, and act predominantly with a Western cultural orientation, indistinguishable from others, currently dancing to the compelling tune of unrestrained free market forces". Consequently, social work has the unenviable task of being an advocate for the poor but also an agent of the state (working with the poor) to implementing state policy with resulting conflict and challenge to its professionalisation, role and values.

Terum and Heggen (2016) contended that professional identification helped understanding of personal commitment to values, attitudes and norms and supported the level to which social workers ascribed or were dedicated to this professional identity. Ashforth and Mael (1989) asserted that the individual's self-social classification has importance and that this may be developed through the socialisation process of professional training and entry to the profession (see for instance Barretti, 2004). This has led to others such as Freidson (2001) arguing that this process of socialisation enabled the development of professional commitment, shared identity and professional role adoption. This is sometimes known as the harmony approach. Others such as Barretti (2004), contend that the reaction

approach characterises identity formation as a result of conflicts and contradictions, with development occurring through interactions between educators and peers. The importance of this socialisation process and identification may help understandings of the identity of social work formation, as well as how professionals manage organisational and professional change. However, critics such as Hugman (2009) argued that social work professionalism debates have been dominated by identity discourse, particularly in global north countries, alongside debates whether the practice should be at the macro or micro level. Hugman (2009) viewed these debates as highlighting the contested nature of the profession, with the concept of professional identity in the global north being different to that of the global south, due to the differences in socio-economic and political context.

This re-occurring theme in the literature, the fragility in the professional status of social work, was highlighted by Kunneman (2005) who argued that the professional status of social workers in many Western European countries has been unstable and insecure, mirroring much of the society in which the profession is embedded. He too viewed the professional role as having to deal with the impact of high levels of post-industrial change and reasoned that social work imbues values of the past and is at odds with a contemporary emphasis on competitiveness, managerialism, efficiency and effectiveness. The profession is thus seen as being out of step and in need of reform from the emphasis on collectivism (Kunneman, 2005). Ball and Regan (2010, Claiborne, Auerbach, Lawrence, and Schudrich (2013), Hafford-Letchfield et al. (2014), Strolin-Goltzman (2010) and Teo, Yeung, and Chang (2012) note that structural change and reduced resources in social welfare organisations have impacted the workforce, including those in training and those practicing.

Consequently, while wider structural analysis of society and its problems are necessary, Duschinsky and Kirk (2013) view UK social work students as unable to explore structural causes of oppression, disenfranchised or unable to consider political solutions to inequality.

In considering how social workers manage their practice environment, Kunneman (2005) contends that social workers occupied with greater levels of managerialism often employ one of three strategies to cope professionally: organisational adaption; by following their own moral compass to best support service users through surreptitious activities or normative personalisation, or organisational norms and values at the level of practical work processes. Stanford (2011) argues that its consequences have been professional awareness of the disparity between its ideals and practice reality, within a neoliberal practice environment. Stanford (2011) therefore claims that while the practice environment may define practice, opportunities also exist to challenge the gaps between the ideas of a risk society, social work tasks and its professional practice context. However, Houston (2012) argues that critical realist approaches which exploit deduction, induction, abduction and reproduction have also been used to oppose neoliberal oppression, along with any associated commodification of social work practice and services. Other examples in the literature include that of Cheung and Ngai (2009) who in a study of 20 Hong Kong social workers suggested that their participants voiced a discourse of hegemony and consent in relation to demands for effectiveness, accountability and social control but in their practice, demonstrated resistance, consent and used professional identity to manage these demands. Participants consequently used strategies such as specialisation, conflict, heightened complication, social defence,

empowerment, restorative justice, structural causation and chance creation to demonstrate ineffectiveness of service configuration and resist instruments of effectiveness, social control and accountability (Cheung & Ngai, 2009). However, Ha Chong (2012) in a study of 12 Taiwanese social workers employed in smaller organisations, reported feeling less protected, with their work easily subjugated by neoliberal policy initiatives due to organisational contracts and working conditions that resulted in high staff turnover.

Managerialist control of social work has been acknowledged within the literature across the UK, Canada and Australia (Baines, 2004; Carey, 2009b; Healy & Meagher, 2004). For example, Carey (2009b), in a small study of six UK state social workers, argued that UK neoliberal reform had resulted in social work being marginalised within the welfare state as a result of greater managerial control, workloads and professional deskilling. Furthermore, Lymbery (2006) also cautioned that while inter-professional collaboration and partnership within organisational practice has been championed, social work needed to be clearer about its values and tasks in relation to other professions.

Social work deals with the most socially and psychologically disadvantaged members of society and has been subject to ongoing assault through public criticism along with the devaluing of services (Healy & Meagher, 2004; Lymbery, 2001; Schubert & Gray, 2015). Consequently, Lorenz (2001) argued that these attacks have resulted in calls for the profession to shift its working standpoint from the perspective of social rights to that of meeting social obligations. This led Bywaters (2009) to further argue that a significant professional challenge has been social

justice and human rights, which could affect the profession's engagement in global socio-economic, environmental and political issues. According to McDonald and Chenoweth (2009) the lack of professional debate on the conflict of social work values and its role as a result of government policy changes, resulting in imposed policy values and ideological rationalities, is a concern. An example of this has been the UK government’s promotion of poverty and social exclusion reduction through the policy of "work" (see Jones, 2001). While others in reviewing the impact of change on youth services (Sharland, 2006), caution that culture and context must be used in the evaluation of risk and learning, beyond existing managerial approaches to processes such as risk management, identity and agency.

Literature highlights that the practice or work environment provides a critical context for the health and well-being of social workers. Acker (2010a) in an anonymous questionnaire study of 591 social workers in the USA reported, in the context of managed care organisations, a strong association to burnout in social workers (Acker, 2010a). She found that conflict experienced within organisations resulted in lower job satisfaction, lowered organisational commitment, emotional exhaustion and higher levels of intention to leave (Acker, 2010b). Her conclusions were that while further empirical study was required, social work training needed to support students to understand the challenging working environment that they would encounter post training as well as promote greater use of therapies i.e. brief counselling to enable social workers to better balance financial demands and caregiving. Acker’s work highlighted the pressure on social workers, the results of which often manifest at an individual level, with marketisation and NPM adding to the pressure. This work highlights the challenges around, as well as the lens through which distress and its

causes are understood i.e. the individual or organisational. The focus on individual solutions, often viewed in the context of resilience, emphasised individual responsibility (Collins, 2008; Guo & Tsui, 2010; Hall & Lamont, 2013; Joseph, 2013; McFadden, Campbell, & Taylor, 2015).

The social work academy has not been immune to these influences and pressures, as Preston and Aslett (2014) argued, this is due to neoliberal administration within the university, training and research. Morley and Macfarlane (2014) contend that competency frameworks have undermined theorised practice and have resulted in the marginalisation of the academy, with a downgrading of critical pedagogy. Consequently, they argue the radical tradition in the UK and internationally has re-emerged because of the negative implications of neoliberal policies on both society and the profession. Ferguson and Smith (2012) claim that while there has been efforts to incorporate more radical and critical ideas in teaching, less attention has been given to its implementation in field placements or in critical policy analysis. This has resulted in Duschinsky Kirk (2013) highlighting the difficulty social work students have in addressing structural factors despite their theoretical orientations. Whereas Gal and Weiss-Gal (2014) and Weiss-Gal and Welbourne (2008) note the challenges of social work training in supporting the advance of policy development with students as having to address changes such as marketisation.

Changes in the South African social welfare environment (see Xaba, 2015), have impacted equally on beneficiaries and NGOs working in-country, with reduced resourcing and increased managerialism resulting in some NGOs voluntarily privatising services. Xaba (2015) contends that the South African government has

also sought to pressurise NGOs to offer student social workers financial support to reduce state expenditure. This has resulted in Holtzhausen (2013) arguing that South African NGOs have not used their corporate identity management sufficiently to insulate, assess and manage their organisational risks in an environment of increased marketisation. Similarly, Carey (2008b) argued that while there were differences in social work privatisation between Canada and the UK, these differences have narrowed, including in the area of professional labour reform. Consequently, organisational change in Canada has reshaped social services (Baines, 2004) and resulted in rising numbers of carers being unwaged working within a system of “compulsion” or “coercion”, along with increasing de-professionalisation through the routinisation of work, promotion of volunteering in care work and the greater use of managers to supervise this work.

Bradt and Bouverne-De Bie (2009) argued the need to understand the aetiology of social distress, as well as consideration of how social work could intervene in relations to these problems. While significant professional change has resulted in Rogowski (2012) noting the profession's expertise and effectiveness has been questioned and blamed for child death scandals. He argued that these factors, combined with the amplified bureaucratic processes of risk assessment, resource management, services rationing, and authoritarian practice have all reduced relationship-based practice opportunities (Rogowski, 2011). As a result, Rogowski (2011) argued for the profession to engage with more radical and critical practice. Therefore, Bradt and Bouverne-De Bie (2009) have called for the profession to be focussed on understanding the aetiology of social problems and adjusting its intervention to recognise the need for these solutions to be more collective.

Rogowski (2012) went on to claim that the profession should reclaim its theorising and practice scope, encourage debate of professionalisation versus technocratic practice, and promote greater professional discretion. Yet, Featherstone et al. (2012) believe that to manage professional challenges, greater democratic control of services with users of services must be promoted. While those from a conservative professional tradition such as Lee (2014) propose that the profession should preserve rather than overturn the logic of current organisational and policy change.

The organisational context of practice is challenging, alongside regulatory systems and frameworks social workers have been subject to the requirements of their employing organisations. Social work agencies have promoted the growth in regulatory and managerial systems to ensure better outcomes for service users, however complications have resulted from poor organisational design, management and systems (Dustin, 2007; Evans, 2010; Munro, 2011). Yet, Payne (2006) argued that social work has remained in a state of nervousness due to its history and origins within religious and political ideas. These have contributed to difficulty in separating professional values and methods from processes of policy formulation and implementation. Ferguson and Lavalette (2004) have also argued that critical social emancipatory practice is a critical form of practice due to social workers and users of services being alienated, along with loss of control (social workers) or powerlessness (service users). They question whether others such as artists, require social work to reinvigorate and reoccupy those critical spaces. Murdach (2011) has further questioned whether social work, by encouraging service user autonomy, has demonstrated its own uncertainty about how to achieve its autonomy. This has led Lymbery (2014) to question whether the result of increased levels of managerial

control with reduced professional autonomy requires social work to redefine its role, despite there being no clear vision of what professional success might look like.

2. 6 Chapter Summary

The social work literature highlights a challenging professional practice and academic environment. More recently, the profession has found itself at the sharp end of organisational, policy, regulatory and professional change. The impact of many of these changes such as austerity, organisational and professional change, increased managerialism and marketisation are not well researched. The profession has historically held a key position in the contemporary welfare state and promotion of social justice, yet changes to health and social care over the past three decades have promoted practice changes, greater organisation accountability, fluid care priorities and re-alignment to ensure the delivery of organisational priorities, all under the guise of cost containment, improved efficiency and effectiveness, and greater service user accountability through marketisation. The implementation of NPM and managerialist policy standardisation of assessment and interventions promoted risk assessment, marketisation, managerialism and enactment of increasingly authoritarian policies.

The impact of these changes included changed practice, marketisation, managerialism and a variety of associated human and organisation effects, yet there is little understanding of how this has impacted the lived experience of social workers. The literature highlights widespread impacts on training, professional role enactment, interventions and the perception of the profession by social workers as well as service users and other stakeholders. The impact of lowered professional

support within changing social welfare organisations, with structural and financial implications for service delivery places pressure on social workers, affecting service accessibility, support available and the professional’s practice, coping and perceptions. The next chapter explores social work practice in Canada, England and South Africa.

Chapter 3: Social Work and Practice: Canada, England and South Africa

3.1 Introduction – Why Canada, England and South Africa?

This chapter outlines the professional practice context of social work in the three studied countries, Canada, England and South Africa in terms of their geography, wealth, demographics, and social welfare conditions; with little previous comparative studies. The three chosen countries have all experienced different trajectories in terms of professional development and implementation of managerialist approaches. Yet, all are commonwealth countries having experienced structural reform and professional change at differing paces, extent, and nature, which are manifest differently in each of the three countries. Authors such as Wallimann (2014) highlighted that while challenges occur at a national level, it is always useful to consider transnational perspectives when seeking to understand the impact of change.

While it might have been possible to include other commonwealth countries such as Australia, New Zealand and Hong Kong in the study, they were excluded for a number of reasons. Australia has no registration body (see Australian Association of Social Workers, 2020), with the title social work being a registered trademark of the Australian Association of Social Work (AASW). So too, the Hong Kong Social Workers Registration Board (the Board) (Social Work Reform Board (SWRB), 2010) was only established on January 16, 1998, and language would have posed significant challenges. The Hong Kong model of professional practice has also been

heavily influenced by its mixture of private and public practice, which was less a feature of the three countries chosen. Within New Zealand, mandatory registration of all social workers will only be completed by February 27, 2021 (Social Workers Registration Board New Zealand, 2020). The inclusion of Canada provided further interest due to its close proximity to the United States of America (USA) practice model, along with Canada, in its early development, being heavily influenced by this professional model. Consequently, due to the reasons outlined earlier, Canada, England and South Africa were chosen for this study. The chapter outlines how the profession has been enacted, providing background to the exploration of the social work voices of participants, their professional experiences and challenges.

3.2 Social Work in Canada

3.2.1 Country Context

Canada is the located north of the United States of America (USA) and is the second largest country in the world with a landmass of 9,976,000 sq. km, spans six time zones and nearly 90% of its population lives within 200 km of its border with the USA (BBC, 2018a). The capital city is Ottawa, with English and French being the official languages (BBC, 2018a). Canada a federal democracy, ceased being a colony of the UK in 1931, although only since 1982 did Canada gain control of its own constitution and introduce a Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which prevented any law being passed that violates this Charter (McCullough, 2019). The country is a constitutional monarchy (Queen Elizabeth remains Head of State), with 13 provinces and territories, each of which have their own governments with unique powers including responsibility for Education and Health (BBC, 2018a). As a result,

institutional arrangements are complex due to multiple jurisdictions, along with challenges that result from language, history and geography.

According to McCullough (2019) the population comprised about 80% of European background, with the remainder from ethnic minorities including indigenous populations. The country's population data (see Commonwealth Network, 2015a) from 2010 highlights a total population of 34,017 million, with a population density of three people per square km, with a proportion of the population under 18 years of age being 20.3%, while those over 60 years of age made up 20.2%. Destatis (2017a) reported life expectancy at birth as being 80 years old for men and 84 for women.

Canada is considered a rich country (United Nations (UN), 2019a), whose Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in US$ in 2014 was $1,785 billion, and GDP per capita being $50,168.50. The Canadian GINI Coefficient was around 33 (McCullough, 2019), which was higher than most of Europe, but lower than the USA and the UK. GDP annual growth (2006-10) was 1.2% with average inflation during the same period being 1.7% (Commonwealth Network, 2015a). Home ownership in Canada is around 66%, with the government estimating that around 150,000 – 300,000 people experience homelessness in a year (McCullough, 2019). Canadians have been considered the most personally-indebted people in the global north, with a debt to income ratio of around 170%, including mortgages (McCullough, 2019).

Expenditure on health (Destatis, 2017a) was 10.4% of GDP, with an infant mortality rate of 4.4 per 1,000 live births. Expenditure on education was 5.3% of GDP, with a

labour participation rate (over 15 years old) of 65.6%, an unemployment rate (15 years and older) of 6.9% and a long-term unemployment rate of 12.4% (Destatis, 2017a). Commonwealth Network (2015a) states that the proportion of people living with HIV/AIDS aged between 15-49 in 2009 was 0.3%, with 100% of the population having access to adequate sanitary facilities and 100% having access to an improved water source in 2008.

Quebec has a population of 7.9 million people and is the second most populated province in Canada, accounts for 25% of Canada's population, and had the biggest growth in population as a result of immigration (Sutherland et al., 2013). The population is mostly French speaking, with 40% of the population bi-lingual in both French and English and The Health and Social Services Act makes provision for services to be available in English (Sutherland et al., 2012). Montreal, which has the largest population, has 28 health and social care institutions that make services available in English, while another 24 provide some services in English, resulting in higher per capita administration costs than all other Canadian provinces (Sutherland et al., 2013).

3.2.2 Social Work: Structure and Organisation

Prior to the 1880s, social work service priority in Canada was for those in poverty, with the dominant approach to social welfare based on moralism, alongside a capitalist work ethic resulting in the legitimising of class difference and the poor being viewed as undeserving (Jennissen & Lundy, 2011; Lundy & van Wormer, 2007). The development of the welfare state (see Henderson, 2003) involved the expansion of liberal institutions such as hospitals and poor houses, although this

development occurred alongside the categorisation of poor and vulnerable people into the deserving and undeserving (O'Connell, 2013). The limited funding available (see for instance Johnstone, Chambon, & Lightman, 2014) resulted in the prominence of women in the voluntary sector. The social religious movement was a key driving force in the development of social welfare (see Lundy and van Wormer, 2007), with a substantial socialist and feminist orientation, which underpinned and taught compassion and social equality.

During the twentieth century developments in Canada were strongly influenced by the prominence of both new ideas about class, poverty, gender, disability and sexuality (see for example Johnstone, 2018) along with the presence of middle to upper class women who were involved in charity work. These ideas, combined with the influence of these middle class women, resulted in the expansion of charity based social services within urban centres, such as services for child care, poverty relief, hospital work and immigration support (Johnstone, 2018),. These developments were followed in turn by the first university based social work training programme, which commenced in 1914 (Johnstone, 2018) and was later by the formation of the Canadian Association of Social Workers in 1926.

These early charity based services were later replaced in 1912 by municipal social service commissions and with the casework of Mary Richmond, despite the enormous strain on welfare organisations (Jennissen & Lundy, 2011) as a result of the great depression in the 1930's. The profession expanded after the second world war, alongside the expansion in social welfare services such as the introduction old age pensions. This expansion continued with the development of the Canadian

welfare state in the 1960s and 1970s (Drover, 2013) based on entitlement to services linked with Canadian citizenship. The introduction of universal prepaid hospital insurance was seen by some (see Watt, 1979) as having facilitated social workers to expand their roles and become therapeutic facilitators.

Prior to The Badgley Report in 1984, Wells (1990) states that sexual abuse was not seen as a serious problem or widespread, but that by the mid-1980s this had changed and sexual abuse received much greater attention. Legislation in the 1980s resulted in significant change including the investigation of sexual abuse, introduced new legislation and resulted in greater involvement of the state in family life (Swift & Callahan, 2002).

Rising immigration in the 1960s and 1970s from Britain, Asia, Africa, South America and the Caribbean (Swift & Callahan, 2002) resulted in shifts in language, racial composition as well as the demand for social welfare services. Organisational change resulted in child protection services being separated from local social services centres, these being developed in provincial departments (for instance Nova Scotia offered a private-public mix), although separation was considered necessary to promote the development of preventative services (Swift & Callahan, 2002). An example of the complexity of service provision between various levels of government can be found in the delivery of child protection services for legally registered First Nation citizens who initially fell under federal jurisdiction, despite child protection being a provincial responsibility (see Swift & Callahan, 2002). This later changed into a tri-partite arrangement with the First Nations Child and Family Service agencies providing the bulk of services (Swift & Callahan, 2002).

Social work in Canada and the USA share a common history, shared journals and professional associations (see for example Lundy, 2004), although Canadian social workers have also incorporated both British and USA influences. Following the development of the Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work (CASW), along with CASW accreditation of Canadian social work schools in the 1970s (Lundy, 2004), divergence from the USA accelerated, with greater professional emphasis being given to structural influences on individual problems. The countries "founding" by British and French colonial settlers, who exploited its natural resources and colonised the indigenous population (see McCauley & Matheson, 2018), also resulted in cultural and language tensions.

Social work employment in Canada is in a mixed economy (Drover, 2013), with practice undertaken with a variety of service user groups, including child protection, older people and disabilities services, school social work, industrial social work and private practice. Weiss-Gal and Welbourne (2008) note that social workers do not have a monopoly of practice, although some tasks including that of child protection roles are restricted to the profession. The designation "social worker" (as with the UK and South Africa, although Nunavut Territory is an exception) is a protected title, only used by those registered with the appropriate provincial regulator, with a binding ethics code set nationally and to which local associations must adhere to (Pullen-Sansfacon et al., 2012; Spolander et al., 2011). Key challenges for the profession are viewed by Drover (2013) as including the financial reductions to the welfare state, increases to an ageing population and the impact of globalisation. A study of final year social work students (Kishor Karki et al., 2018) highlighted that the

challenging employment environment for new graduates resulted from austerity, globalisation and neoliberal economic reform and a declining welfare state.

Canada's social programmes have traditionally been shaped by federal policies (see Ilcan, 2009). Although since the 1980s, there has been increased pressure for privatisation and pressure to reduce commitment to universal services, resulting in increased provincial responsibility for social welfare. Despite these pressures, and in contrast to England (Carey, 2008b), the private sector has only provided a small part of social services provision within Canada. As a result, while the private sector has experienced gradual growth, its influence has been limited, which along with the predominance of large scale and voluntary sector organisations (Carey, 2008b) has not resulted in large scale fragmentation of services; in contrast to England. However, neoliberal policy implementation has resulted in social welfare organisations functioning like businesses (see Chappell, 2014), with a focus on financial security. This organisational shift has seen the abandonment of longer term programmes and an emphasis on fundraising. So too, the accent on accountability has resulted in increased administration at the expense of face-to-face contact. In turn, this led to contradictory pressures of increased professionalisation due to registration requirements, along with deprofessionalisation (see Chappell, 2014) due to increased social work tasks being undertaken by unqualified workers or other professionals. This has accelerated the use of contractual staff and increased downward pressure on wages. Consequently, Stephenson (2000) argued that austerity and the encroachment of other professionals on the roles typically undertaken by social workers have posed substantial challenges for Canadian social

work. Consequently, these pressures have resulted in greater tension between professional and volunteer staff in agencies (Chappell, 2014).

The Canadian social work registration system is based on provincial level licensure (Marcuse, 1965), with a requirement for all practising social workers to be licensed and regulated by the appropriate provincial professional body. In Québec, social work is regulated by the Ordre des travailleurs sociaux et des thérapeutes conjugaux et familiaux du Québec (OTSTCFQ) (Spolander et al., 2011), which translates as the Order of Social Workers and Marriage & Family Therapists of Québec. Within Quebec, most social workers with a bachelor's degree are employed in the regional social services and health system, Centre local de services communautaires or local community service centre's (CLSCs), (see Stephenson, 2000), which provides front-line health and social care. Staffing within the CLSCs are multi-disciplinary, with social workers comprising the smallest occupational group. The emphasis, in the CLSCs is on curative care rather than community development (Stephenson, 2000), with roles traditionally undertaken by social workers also now undertaken by other professionals including psychologists, nurses and criminologists. Some social work roles remain proprietary where they are undertaken in defined legal settings (Stephenson, 2000) such as Youth Offending Act, Young Protection Act, Public Protection and mediation.

Social work training is undertaken through an undergraduate Bachelor of Social Work degree (BSW), which focusses on generalist practice and the qualifying programme includes teaching on human behaviour, social development, social policy, welfare provision and social work interventions (Drover, 2013; Spolander et al., 2011). Drover (2013) states that postgraduate post-qualifying study opportunities

exist at Masters and Doctoral levels, with students choosing to specialise in child and family welfare and mental health amongst others.

In more recent years, policies of assimilation have been seen as critical for understanding the ongoing oppression of indigenous communities, and it is only relatively recently that the social work profession has acknowledged its contribution to the oppression of those communities (Freeman, 2017; Kennedy-Kish (Bell) et al., 2017). Many of the social problems (see Baskin, 2011; Moosa-Mitha, 2014), including social deprivation, substance misuse, violence and erosion of traditional family values have their roots in colonisation of indigenous people. Consequently, training social workers has increasingly been developed to ensure that students are aware of the colonising practices of the Canadian state (Moosa-Mitha, 2014) and the contributory role that social work practice has played. Increasingly, indigenous history and ways of helping (see for example Schmid, 2019) are taught and mainstreamed within the social work curriculum.

Canadian social work has therefore in recent times sought to foreground and include indigenous worldviews in practice. These alongside inclusive perspectives, which have integrated individual and collective perspectives into life, have also resulted in the reconsideration of indigineous views of belonging, including the place of land (Saulis, 2012) and the importance of nature. This indigenisation of Canadian social work, has increasingly provided an alternative to the dominant USA models of cultural competence in practice (Schmid, 2019) and has been viewed as more culturally appropriate for practice in this setting.

3.3 Social Work in England

3.3.1 Country Context

The UK is one of the richest countries in the world, a member of the G7 wealthiest countries and a member of the European Union (EU) (BBC, 2018c). However, the UK is currently in the process of seeking to leave the EU through the procedure commonly known as Brexit. England together with Scotland, Wales and Northern Island make up the UK. The constitutional position of England within the UK is complex, with the country being a constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy. The reigning king or queen is the Head of State and the Head of Government is the Prime Minister, who is the leader of the majority political party in the House of Commons (BBC, 2018c). The national assemblies of Scotland, Wales and Northern Island have assumed some powers that were previously exclusively held by the central Parliament at Westminster, and to which they remain subordinate (BBC, 2018c). England has no regional assembly and the central Parliament retains full legislative and executive control. England does not have a separate capital city, although this is widely accepted to be London (BBC, 2018c). The national assemblies have a range of powers which include health, education, housing, transport, the environment, and agriculture. According to the BBC, (2018c) local government plays a unique role in the UK and while this differs in the four countries, local government has few legislative powers, although they enact regulations and administer taxes within the limits set by central government. In England for instance, they are responsible for community services such as education, social services, and housing. Comprehensive health services for the majority of the UK population are provided by the National Health Service (NHS), while local government is

responsible for the provision of social services in England, the latter being subject to means assessment for the provision of many services. Other welfare support such as poverty relief, unemployment and disability payments remain the responsibility of the central government. Carey (2015) suggests complications in the delivery of social welfare services especially for older people due to differing responsibilities in the various levels of the State, through conflict between services over hospital discharge delays, financing, and the increased use of unqualified staff in social care. Cuts to services for those in poverty i.e. universal credit, have resulted in charity financed food banks.

The overall population of England in 2017 was 54,786,300, which makes up 84.14% of the population of the UK (Country Digest, 2017). Comparable disaggregated demographic information for England alone has proved elusive, consequently for comparative purposes, other demographic data presented here is for the UK, unless otherwise indicated. The landmass for the UK as a whole is 241,930 square kms, with population density being 273 per square km, with an overall GDP of $2,628 billion, which was $39,800 GDP per capita in 2017 (Country Digest, 2017). Life expectancy from birth in 2018 was 78 years (men), 82 years (women) (Destatis, 2018). Destatis (2018) states that infant mortality in 2017 was 4 per 1,000 live births, unemployment was 4.3%, with a long-term unemployment rate of 11.7%. Health expenditure as a percentage of GDP in 2017 was 9.1% (Destatis, 2018). The UK HIV rate is 1.6 per 1,000 (Destatis, 2018), while the population using improved drinking water sources (urban/rural) in 2015 was 99.1/ 99.6% and the percentage of the population with access to improved sanitation facilities (urban/rural) was 99.1/ 99.6.

3.3.2 Social Work Structure and Organisation

The origins of social work lie in early work undertaken by church-based organisations with very limited resources, which resulted in these organisations heavily influencing professional development (see Trattner, 1999). The establishment of the Charity Organisation Society (COS) in England to respond to poverty was an early forerunner of social work and has been widely acknowledged as the first organisation to make use of both "social work" as well as "casework", along with being an important supporter of Poor Law (Pierson, 2011). Given its links to the Church, Pierson (2011) reports it is unsurprising that most early social workers tended to be white, Protestant and middle class, with early social work being viewed as imbibing the feminine characteristic of caring and was thus an acceptable vocation for women. Later, greater awareness and understanding that poverty was not due to an individual character flaw or a lack of mortality, had a detrimental impact on COS, resulting in a questioning of the Poor Law system of welfare and which in turn led to the establishment of Settlement Houses that focussed on neighbourhood interventions and the development of social work training (Pierson, 2011).

The establishment of the welfare state post second world war, consolidated social work in the public sector (see Burnham, 2011). The creation of the welfare state resulted in greater support for citizens and in social work occupying the space in the social compact connecting citizens and the state (Pierson, 2011). Later the Seebohm Report (1968) resulted in all statutory social work being vested in local authorities, this development was viewed as preferable to alternatives that could be provided by market forces. At this time, state delivery of welfare services was viewed as enabling

the improvement of service equity, delivering greater political and financial accountability (see Glennerster, 1992) and facilitated an employed bureaucratic hierarchy along with professional control of social welfare (see Clarke & Langan, 1993).

The role and tasks of social work in England were initially outlined in policy documents of the Barclay Report (National Institute for Social Work, 1982) and later in the GSCC statement of 2008. The most recent advice on social work's role was issued by the College of Social Work before it was abolished as follows:

> 1. *Social workers use a distinctive range of legal and social work knowledge and skills to help people to make changes in their lives and get the outcomes needed;*
> 2. *They are uniquely skilled in accessing a wide range of practical and emotional support and services to meet individuals' needs and aspirations;*
> 3. *They are a collaborative profession, working alongside other professionals but taking the lead in helping children, adults and families improve and gain control of their lives when their safety or ability to participate in their communities is restricted;*
> 4. *They have a lead role in safeguarding people who may be socially excluded, at risk of abuse or neglect, or who become vulnerable for other reasons. They balance support and protection/ safeguarding roles carefully and in keeping with the specific needs and circumstances of the person or family, taking protective action as needed and within the context of legal roles and frameworks;*

5. They are educated and trained to engage with people whose age, mental incapacity or ill-health constrains their ability to protect themselves or others;

6. In adult social care, they endorse and act in accordance with the principles of personalisation, ensuring that care and support are person-centred and as far as possible put the people with whom they work in control of their lives;

7. In children's social care they maintain a focus on the child, ensuring that the child is safe and well, that families are helped to change where necessary, and that required outcomes are achieved (College of Social Work, 2014, p. 3).

However, the (College of Social Work, 2014, p. 3) had expressed concern about the potential impact of this statement during consultation phases and thus championed for the roles and task statement to include a preface that identified the profession's values and principles. This was a result of BASW's concern that if the definition was drawn from current legislation, it would narrowly define the profession and leave it later vulnerable to "commissioning" along the lines of this narrowly defined criteria (British Association of Social Workers, n.d.).

Within a UK context social work's role in relation to social welfare and inequality is well known (see for example Grover & Piggott, 2007), but concern has been raised in the profession because as state policy has become more draconian social work has been encouraged to be complicit. In particular, Jones (2001) argues that

successive governments, including that of New Labour, have promoted work as being the solution to both social exclusion and poverty. Consequently, social work has been under pressure to also encourage people into jobs. This shift in contemporary policy and the involvement of the profession in assertive policies to force people into work has been viewed by some (for example McDonald & Chenoweth, 2009) as being associated with policy values and rationalities which are in conflict with its values, and thus a risk for the profession. Other challenges for the profession included increasing inequality, due to its implications for social justice and human rights, but also as it has engaged the profession in global socio-economic, environmental and political issues (Bywaters, 2009). While Sharland (2006) views the profession as needing to be concerned with the implications of the increasing role of risk, identity and agency in shaping professional practice. In particular, Sharland (2006) highlights the importance of culture and context in youth service delivery, especially in relation to risk and learning, as many young people feel alienated from society and the decisions that affect them.

Furthermore, Harris (1998, 2014) and Jones (2015) highlighted increased marketisation as a significant concern. Critics (see for instance Lymbery, 2014; Lymbery & Postle, 2010; Scourfield, 2010) have highlighted the consequential impact and changes to professional roles on service user needs assessment as well as their involvement in the brokerage of services provided by the market. Simultaneously, professional discretion has shifted from social workers to their managers (Evans & Harris, 2004), with Wastell et al. (2010) claiming that further discretionary erosion has been a result of organisational procedures. While Garrett (2005), Ince and Griffiths (2011) and West and Heath (2011) identify information and

communications technology (ICT) systems as enforcing the shift of decision making away from professional values, resulting in decision making moving away from professional assessment of appropriately gathered information to the gathering of information to determine eligibility for services (Shardlow & Adams, 2005).

Social work along with service users and their families, has been impacted by policy and organisational change. Consequently, Ferguson (2007) views social policy that promotes initiatives such as personalisation as resulting in the promotion and support of policies that encourage individualisation, responsibilisation and the transfer of state risk to the individual. These contemporary policies have neglected poverty and inequality, resulting in Ferguson (2007) identifying increased risks of welfare stigmatisation and the de-professionalisation of social work, while the policies themselves have not been subject to critical review. Marketisation has thus affected service users and carers, as well as the culture of the profession through promoting bureaucratic processes, casualisation, workforce instability and being less responsive to users such as children and their families (Carey, 2008b, 2008a). The participation of service users and carers (SUCP) while promoted as constructive and altruistic to ensure improved service delivery, has been criticised as having a less obvious motive of promoting the interests of others including that of the government, agencies, professionals and the social care market (Carey, 2008b, 2008a). While (Carey, 2009a, 2009b) identify excessive standardisation, practice rules, procedures, and performance targets as having led to partnership difficulties between social workers, young people and their families. Fronek and Crawshaw (2015) indicate that a further problem in a globalised world which has promoted marketised assisted family reproduction and “right to parent” alliances, has been regulation of risky

practices after their establishment, requiring the profession to retain its critical voice and participate fully in ethical, policy and practice debates. Consequently, the importance of the profession's critical voice has been highlighted by Jones (2015) who indicated that only limited policy debate has occurred regarding the aims of these policies or their resulting fragmentation of services, despite marketisation of children services extending this to areas such as child protection.

Training for social work, prior to the degree becoming mandatory in 2001, was through completion of the Diploma in Social Work (DipSW) or a two-year Certificate of Social Service (CSS) (Fish, 2015; Higgins, Popple, & Crichton, 2016). The profession has been powerfully influenced by both employers and the government resulting in the establishment of the social work degree, which maintained an ongoing influence (Orme et al., 2009; Shardlow, Scholar, Munro, & McLaughlin, 2012). Following several reviews including the Taskforce Review in 2008, the review of Child Protection by Eileen Munro in 2010 and the establishment of the Social Work College (Beresford, 2015), a new social work curriculum framework, and Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) replaced the National Occupational Standards originally set by the General Social Care Council (GSCC). Ongoing shifts and challenges (see also Section 1.4) continue to shape the current degree, despite the Social Work College being dis-established (Beresford, 2015) and the regulation of social work in England by the HCPC being replaced in December 2019 by the new regulatory body Social Work England.

The Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) assumed responsibility from the General Social Care Council (GSCC) for the regulation of social work in 2012, with

the renewal of social work registration required every two years for social work practitioners, but remaining optional for social work academics (Beresford, 2015). Additionally, the English social work regulator requires compliance with 15 primary standards (Tompsett, 2012), which include requirements to be able to:

- practise safely and effectively within their scope of practice
- practise within the legal and ethical boundaries of their profession
- maintain fitness to practice
- practise as an autonomous professional, exercising their own professional judgement
- practise in a non-discriminatory manner
- understand the importance of and be able to maintain confidentiality
- communicate effectively
- work appropriately
- maintain records appropriately
- reflect on and review practice
- assure the quality of their practice
- understand the key concepts of the knowledge base relevant to their profession
- draw on appropriate knowledge and skills to inform practice
- understand the need to establish and maintain a safe practice environment.

The registration requirements require social workers to undertake Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to maintain their registration, and there have been revisions to the post-qualifying awards framework, which aimed to promote skills

development through postgraduate qualifications (Health and Care Professions Council, 2017, pp. 6–13). BASW further influences the profession, through its own established code of ethics, although a little over 10% of registered social workers are members of BASW (Tompsett, 2012).

3.4 Social Work in the Republic of South Africa

3.4.1 Country Context

South Africa is located at the Southern tip of Africa, is a member of the Global 20 largest economies, as well as the Commonwealth and is one of Africa's biggest and most developed economies (BBC, 2018b). South Africa was colonised by the UK, France and the Netherlands, with its first constitution established in 1909 as the Union of South Africa under a parliamentary system with the British monarch as Head of State (Lyon, 2003). According to Lyon (2003), in 1961 the country became an independent republic, with its development shaped by its colonial past and later by apartheid. Until 1994, it was ruled by a white minority government under a policy of apartheid, which enforced separation between the countries differing race groups (BBC, 2018b). Civil unrest and economic and political isolation followed until a new non-racial constitution was adopted in 1993, with a new constitution drafted and implemented in 1997 containing strong human rights provisions (BBC, 2018b). (Cloete et al., 2002) describes South Africa as a weak federal system with nine provinces each having a legislature, which elects a Premier and an Executive Council, with legislative power in relation to education, health, housing, police and the environment. Social work services are the responsibility of the provinces, although social benefits are paid from a central government department. Mindry

(2008) explains that many NGOs have been partners in the planning and development of state social services, and this has resulted in a dependency on state funding, which has resulted in NGOs losing their traditional critical voice in government policy. Consequently, the use of contracting mechanisms has increased bureaucracy, fixed contract deliverables, and created insecurity due to the dependence on short-term financing (Carson & Kerr (2010). This in turn, has made it easier for the State to force service redesign (Taylor, 2012).

South Africa is a large country with a landmass of 1,213,090 square kms, with the national administrative capital being Pretoria, Cape Town the legislative capital and Bloemfontein the judiciary capital (United Nations, 2019b). Each province has a city in which its provincial legislature is located. The country has 11 official languages including English, with religions comprising Christianity, Islam, and indigenous beliefs (BBC, 2018b). The population in 2017 was 56,717 million, with 50.9% being women and 29% being under the age of 15 years, and those aged over 65 years comprising 7.3% (BBC, 2018b). Given its size and modest population, the population density was 47 per square KM in 2017 (Destatis, 2017b).

Destatis (2017b) states life expectancy in 2016 at birth for men as 59.2 years and for women as 66.4 years, with infant mortality at 29 per 1,000 births and 5.9% of GDP being spent on education. The United Nations (2019b) states that health expenditure in 2014 was 8.8% of GDP, while infant mortality in 2017 was 29 per 1,000 live births (Destatis, 2017b). The unemployment rate was 27.7%, with youth unemployment being 57.4% and a long-term unemployment rate of 66.5% (see (Destatis, 2017b). A

key challenge for South Africa is ensuring sufficient economic activity to increase the current labour participation rate from 54.7% (Destatis, 2017b).

Among the service delivery challenges, the country suffers from high HIV rates (Destatis, 2017b) with 19.1% of people between the ages of 15-49 being HIV positive in 2013 (Commonwealth Network, 2015b). Access to the whole population to improved drinking water sources (urban/rural %) in 2015 was 99.6/81.4 and the percentage of the population using improved sanitation facilities (urban/rural) was 69.6/60.5 (Commonwealth Network, 2015b).

Post- apartheid, the African National Congress (ANC) government sought to promote macro-economic stability and moved towards a marketised service delivery model that supported the privatisation of services (Commonwealth Network, 2015b). This resulted in services being managed as businesses with a focus on financial efficiency rather than free delivery of affordable services to all members of society (Abramovitz & Zelnick, 2010; Mindry, 2008). Increased tariffs for water, sanitation, electricity and other municipal services are demonstrably one result of this implementation, which also gave rise to various protest actions expressing dissatisfaction with such services and rates (Abramovitz & Zelnick, 2010; Mindry, 2008). Thus, market principles were introduced into public service provision. Although NGOs have not necessarily agreed with state policy, their financially dependent status as a consequence of the partnership has made it difficult for them to object to government policy. (Bond, 2015) postulate, however, that "examples of purposeful acts of resistance by social workers in post-apartheid South Africa have been rare" and that social workers would rather submit to passive resistance.

The South African constitution post-apartheid provides many rights, but the government has struggled to deliver all of these, particularly as poverty, corruption, inequality, and violence pose a threat to liberal democracy (Cloete et al., 2002). The country has significant social problems that are a direct concern for social work, including 56.7% of the population being impoverished, with more than half of children living in poverty (Lehohla & Shabalala, 2014). Alongside the high rates of poverty, South Africa's distribution of income (GINI) was one of the highest in the world at 63.9 in 2009, which deteriorated from the period under apartheid (59.3) (see World Bank, 2013). Corruption and violence are also problematic and strongly linked to poverty with those on the lowest incomes more likely to experience violence (Transparency International, 2017).

3.4.2 Social Work Structure and Organisation

Social work in South Africa is committed to global international professional values and ethics, its development is associated with religious and middle-class volunteer work, although its primary origins were to resolve the "poor white" problem by successive apartheid regimes (Department of Social Development, 2005). As a result, many authors (for instance Lombard, 2005; Van Eeden, Ryke, & De Necker, 2000) believe that the profession was utilised during apartheid as a tool to maintain and promote social oppression, and to maintain the marginalisation in parts of society. The dominant professional approach was based on "liberal individualism", with many underlying similarities to the philosophy of the US and UK welfare systems (Clarke, 2005). Consequently, Mamphiswana and Noyoo (2000) view that this resulted in state support for whites, the black population having to rely on

families and communities for support, while the social work profession had to manage within this statutory framework.

The introduction of democracy and a new constitution in 1994 reversed the previous prioritisation of social welfare for whites while ending inefficiency and duplication of the delivery of racialised services via a single department for social development and the creation of nine provincial departments (Brown & Neku, 2005). Brown and Neku (2005) believe this resulted in improved structures for the delivery of services, welfare grants and social development, as well as facilitating local government responsibility for meeting the populations' immediate physical needs. Consequently, for Lombard, Grobbelaar, and Pruis (2003) the changed delivery models for welfare were viewed as a mechanism to facilitate the development of human, social and economic resources, which were considered a national priority. The new post-apartheid welfare policy emphasised interventions that needed to be "empowering" and "strengths-based", with the aim of promoting self-reliance, independence of individuals, groups and communities (Department of Social Development, 2005). However, while Bak (2004) viewed the rationale of the new developmental approach as promoting efficient resource usage, Bak criticised it for not promoting citizen independence due to an on-going power in-balance between service users and social workers. Despite this criticism, it is clear that the changes ensured social grants provided income to deprived individuals (Triegaardt, 2002), although critics (Triegaardt, 2002) cautioned that both of these developments had underlying neoliberal policy motives.

South African social work is well defined under a number of different statutes and the constitution further enshrines a right for citizens unable to support themselves and their dependents, along with access to appropriate social assistance (Republic of South Africa, 1996). Furthermore, social work within South Africa has historically been the joint responsibility of government and civil society (NGOs), with the government providing support for NGOs, through the subsidising of social workers' posts (South African Schools Act (SASA), 1996). Consequently, this resulted in conflicts over perceived political agendas, resulting in mistrust and political battles which worsened relationships between welfare agencies and the state, especially after international donor funding reduced and the government demanded that NGOs provide greater levels of service without increased state funding (Department of Social Development, 2004). Thus, social workers were required to have to "make do", rather than implement the national development policy in its entirety (Triegaardt, 2002). Furthermore, within this new dispensation, casework was viewed by the State as being aligned to older models of social work, while group and community interventions were viewed as more closely aligned to the new development models, resulting in reductions to funding for statutory casework and remedial work (Department of Social Development, 2005). This has resulted in demands that the profession of social work, while being unable to divorce itself from the state, must increasingly engage with the challenges of poverty (Chikadzi & Pretorius, 2011). Recent developments in social work practice cannot therefore be understood without an understanding of the complex racialised socio-political and economic context of the country (see Spolander et al., 2020) and the challenges of seeking to address the legacies of apartheid. In recent years, these efforts have been spearheaded by student demands for equal HE access to be addressed through the Fees Must Fall

movement, alongside demands for decolonisation of the curriculum and related practice (Spolander et al., 2020). Furthermore, many, for instance Bak (2004), Brown and Neku (2005), Gray (2000) and Schenck (2005) believe this, together with high levels of violence, social inequality and resulting trauma along with its personal and social consequences has resulted in social workers calling for greater emphasis on individual and family work, leading to government accusations of resistance to change, despite the professions public commitment to social development. This is viewed as having resulted in crisis of professional confidence and identity (Bak, 2004; Brown & Neku, 2005; Gray, 2000; Schenck, 2005).

The renewed focus on social development has been seen by some (see for example Midgley, 1996) as an attempt to integrate social and economic policies, and also linked to the implementation of the African National Congress (ANC) government's Growth, Economic and Redistribution (GEAR) policy. The introduction of GEAR resulted, for some critics (see Sewpaul, 2001), in two competing paradigms being combined in South Africa, namely neoliberalism and social development. This has led to the social work role changing substantially (Lombard, 2008) to meet the new requirements of the changed socio-political and professional context, with social work being defined as that which "… promotes social change, problem-solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being" (Department of Social Development, 2005, p. 23). This has reinforced many proponents of the new social development model such as Midgley and Conley (2010) to demand that social workers must focus on developmental initiatives and interventions.

All social work training must meet the SA National Qualifications Framework (NQF) requirements of the South African Qualifications Authority Act, which sets minimum standards for all South African degrees and that teaching must be undertaken by appropriately registered social workers (Republic of South Africa, 1995). Qualifying programmes must adhere to the minimum four year full-time standard (South African Qualifications Authority Act, 1995) as well as the requirements set by the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP). The qualifying degree provides both theoretical and practice related training with a minimum number of hours of supervised practice in registered agencies (Spolander et al., 2011). More radical alternatives have been recently promoted rather than using registered agencies as a way to challenge traditional placements, however these comprise a minority of placements (Ferguson & Smith, 2012). The establishment of the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) had national legally binding ethical codes and education and training standards set out in the Social Services Professions Act (Republic of South Africa, 1978). All student social workers must register with the SACSSP. (Social Services Professions Act (110/1978) (RSA, 1978, 1978) explain that all social workers must obtain a requisite number of CPD points annually to maintain their professional status, which can be achieved through a range of post-qualifying degrees that include masters and doctoral studies.

3.5 Chapter Summary

Exploring social work across three countries with their different geographical, historical, economic and socio-economic dynamics enables a review of organisational and professional change across the three practice contexts, two of

which exemplify the so-called "global north" (Canada and England) and South Africa the "global south". Canada and South Africa are former colonies of the United Kingdom, as well as members of the Commonwealth, while Canada and England have the most developed “welfare states”, while South Africa has a less comprehensive “welfare state” (Wood & Gough, 2006). This despite South Africa having the worst levels of inequality (Bond, 2015). Experts such as (Bond, 2015) claim there are significant challenges in undertaking comparative social welfare policy analysis, despite a range of methodologies utilised in previous attempts i.e. theoretical work (Deacon, 2007; Esping-Andersen, 1990; Yeates, 2008) and policy evaluation (Deacon, 2007; Esping-Andersen, 1990; Yeates, 2008). Consequently, the comparative challenges in social welfare policy analysis (Bradshaw et al., 2007) include limitations to welfare scope, the explanatory power of theoretical studies, and risks with ensuring empirical or epidemiological comparisons through comparable data sets. Within this study, no such comparative policy analysis has been undertaken, as it was viewed beyond the scope of this study. That being said, social welfare policy and models of service delivery have emerged to provide a range of services with the role of non-state actors in the provision of social welfare being under-researched despite the rise of their importance (Cammett & MacLean, 2011) and what research has been undertaken, was concentrated in advanced industrialised societies (Cammett & MacLean, 2011). This highlights the importance of this work.

This is especially so when changes to organisations and welfare systems are considered in the current climate of austerity and retreat of the state welfare at an international level. New public management or neoliberal policy enactment is contested, experienced and articulated differently in diverse milieus with its effects

being uneven, due to these contexts and differing levels of influence ((Lynch, 2006; Manow & van Kersbergen, 2009). This has resulted in Hil (2001) suggesting globalisation has exacerbated longstanding professional and social welfare challenges of conceptualisation, theorisation, and practice, and thus created challenges in the form of increased commercialisation, the redrawing of professional boundaries, greater corporatisation of state services and outsourcing, and reconfigured social, economic and political relations. Consequently, this has had significant implications for the profession, including how social work identifies its key professional concerns and intervention approaches (Furlong, 2000; Ife, 2000, 2001). The contextualising of the three countries highlights how these concerns have ongoing resonance today in each of their respective contexts.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology used in this study to explore the lived experiences of social workers concerning organisational and professional change. These experiences were collected through a series of guided conversations with social workers in Canada, England and South Africa. Initially, in this chapter, there is an outline of the research design, which details key components of the study, before an exploration of the methodology, the process of data collection and analysis, and a description of the profile of the study sample.

4.2 Research Design

Social welfare policy and welfare organisational change have been used to reduce costs (Furlong, 2000; Ife, 2000, 2001), implement new forms of public management with increased managerial control (Ball, 2006; Stark, 2018), promote greater standardisation of practice and alter the nature of service delivery (Kettl, 2000). These changes, along with wider economic austerity (Kettl, 2000), have influenced and shaped the social work profession (Basu et al., 2017; Canova, 2015; Solimano, 2016). Despite the significant impact of these changes, this area has remained an under researched area (Croisdale-Appleby, 2014; Munro, 2011; Neary, 2014; Social Work Reform Board, 2010; Social Work Task Force, 2009). The majority of this limited research has concentrated on the impact of organisational change in advanced industrial countries (for example Lynch, 2006; Manow & van Kersbergen,

2009). More specifically, little is known about the impact of these changes on either the workplace or the workforce (Delbridge & Keenoy, 2010) resulting in Graham and Shier (2010) identifying the critical need for further research to understand the impact of these changes.

Data collection in this study comprised several stages, each of which is discussed below. These stages included:

1. Planning for research
2. Data collection through guided conversations
3. Data analysis

4.2.1 Stage 1: Planning for Research

I recognised the complexity of seeking to understand social workers experience of change within organisations and therefore ensured a robust systematic research design was used. Using an effective research design, methodology and analysis was important to support research validity, reliability, and accuracy (Bazeley, 2013; de Vos, Strydom, Fouché, & Delport, 2013; Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Kumar, 2005; Silverman, 2011). The nature of the research objective suggested that both quantitative and qualitative designs were possible methodologies. For example, one quantitative approach would have been to develop and implement a questionnaire for use in each of the three countries. However, as social work is dependent on local context and enactment, my view as a researcher was that qualitative methodology provided a greater opportunity to explore the rich texture and nuances of practice

across the three countries, which was unlikely from a quantitative approach dependent on questionnaires.

A methodological approach informed by renowned qualitative methodology authors such as Bazeley (2013), de Vos et al. (2013) and Walliman (2006) supported the development of a methodology to elicit deeper understanding of social workers' lived experience of organisational and professional change. Key to this approach was recognising the dynamic social interrelationships involved in the delivery of social work services (Johnson & Christensen, 2008), making it important to understand subjective phenomena and thus the textured nature of practice. Exploring the insider perspective by using the voices of the professionals themselves, provided a useful perspective on the experience of social workers, making a qualitative research design a critical approach (de Vos, Strydom, Fouché, & Delport, 2011). Furthermore, George and Bennett (2005) favour the use of a case study approach in supporting high levels of conceptual validity, which along with contextual information ensures high levels of validity even with a small number of cases.

Initially, participant observation, journaling and focus groups were all considered as data collection techniques; however they were excluded on the basis that practice observation may mirror the very aspects of organisational and professional change that participants were experiencing as well as complicating the undertaking of the research. For instance, replicating managerial oversight may magnify challenges of multi-country ethical approval and language, as well as increasing difficulties in negotiating organisational access and reducing the openness and transparency of

participants. Alternative approaches such as Gubrium and Holstein's (2012) direct observation of practice, would be better suited to a research objective related to the nature of practice. However, if the focus of the study was to explore practice decision making, the use of focus groups and structured questionnaires may have been useful (Gubrium & Holstein, 2012).

After reviewing a range of possible research approaches, I finally adopted a three country case study approach (Yin, 2009) as this provided an opportunity to develop an understanding of the uniqueness of each country. Case study design has been defined as "an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2009, p. 18). The use of guided conversations and observations of real-life occurrences outside of the researcher's control are typically utilised in case study methodology (Yin, 2009, p. 18). These methods provided me with both detail and depth of data to enable exploration of the relationships between real-life phenomena. The "case" could thus be an individual, or extend beyond a single individual to a group or organisation (Yin, 2009).

A multiple case study design according to (Yin, 2009) should start with a rich theoretical framework that specifies when phenomena might occur or are likely to occur. This requires a generalised theoretical framework across cases, which can be modified if cases do not show what was predicted (Yin, 2009). As the latter was the case, what was being explored, the purpose of this exploration and how the

exploration would be deemed successful should be stated (Yin, 2009). Thus, the generalised theoretical framework ensured that the context was provided by the respective country location and the geographical location of the social work practitioners and academics sample establishing the country case. The perceptions and experiences of participants, informed by their professional backgrounds and practice experience, in turn provided the units of analysis.

The study proposition (see (Yin, 2009) was that significant policy and organisational change, as a result of marketisation and managerialism, were impacting on the lived experience of social workers. The use of a comparative three country case study design (see Bryman, 2016) facilitated the development of three studies (Canada, England and South Africa), with each country studied using an identical method, thus supporting an understanding and facilitating a comparison of experiences within and between countries (Hantrais, 2009). As there were no logical sub-units to be identified, a holistic case study design was utilised with consideration given to the potential risk that a comparative research design was likely to be resource intensive (Yin, 2009).

4.2.2 Stage 2: Guided Conversation Data Collection – Population, Sampling and Recruitment

England, Canada and South Africa were purposefully selected case sites and considered helpful in understanding the research objective. Two of the countries were former colonies of the UK, all were members of the Commonwealth and

comprised countries from both the global north and south, with differing economic and social welfare histories and trajectories. Furthermore, these countries represented different stages of social and economic development. Moreover, they all exemplified countries that have undertaken organisational and professional change as a result of new public management and neoliberal social welfare reform and as a consequence, increased managerialism, marketisation and governance. They have, however, all experienced differing speeds of transition and liberalisation, deregulation, privatisation, use of markets in public service delivery, globalisation and reductions in direct taxation as well as governance and managerialism, making them ideal sites to explore and compare organisational and professional impact (Yin, 2009).

Prior to the guided conversations, a pilot interview was undertaken with the key recruiting academic in each of the three countries, to finalise the semi-structured interview guide. Semi-structured interviews enabled me to ask a series of generally planned questions, with an opportunity for clarifications (see Bryman, 2016). These pilot study academics were employed at the three recruiting universities and were known to me through previous research activities. Furthermore, they did not participate later in the study but were asked during the pilot interviews to review the proposed questions, comment and provide feedback on their relevance, how understandable and appropriate they were to their country and practice contexts. Other than minor refinements to question language, pilot participants felt that the questions were appropriate and suitable for their country contexts. This ensured no substantial sensitivities or country differences in the proposed questions and enabled the finalisation of the semi-structured interview guide.

Participants were drawn from the Province of Quebec in Canada, Western Cape in South Africa and the West Midlands in England. They represented a variety of practice milieus of urban, city and more rural areas in each of the countries, although rurality was contextually different, as a result of the size of the countries sizes i.e. rural in England still enabled relatively easy access to large metropolitan cities compared to Canada and South Africa. Each of the agencies where social workers were employed undertook statutory work despite organisational funding differences between them i.e. being state or NGOs (commonly known as non-profit organisations [NPOs] in a South African context) under contract for the State.

All social work participants gave their personal time freely and while the questions did not demand information that may be harmful for their careers, I recognised that professional discussions always have the potential for a dialogue that might express views in conflict with the expressed wishes of their immediate employers. Consequently, all participants were offered the option for guided conversations to be held in a confidential location, away from their offices of employment. While interview discussions did explore issues of individual practice as well as employer routines and practices, I judged that the confidentiality allowed more candid exchanges with participants. This ensured that confidentiality and anonymity were critical considerations, as failure to establish trust would result in insufficient confidence and disclosure by participants (Creswell, 2009). The use of this exploratory approach enabled the development of trust and the collection of “thick” descriptive interview accounts (Babbie & Mouton, 2007; Henning, 2004), to ensure greater insight and comprehension of the research topic (Bazeley, 2013; de Vos et al., 2013; Ross, 2012; Silverman, 2011; Yin, 2009).

All guided conversations were conducted between May and September 2011, audio recorded, with participant consent, with transcription undertaken by the myself as soon as possible after the interview (de Vos et al., 2013). Guided conversations lasted on average around an hour and thirty minutes, the longest interview extended to one hour and 45 minutes, the shortest 45 minutes.

I used a pragmatic approach in undertaking a three-country case study design and approached one university (HEI) based academic in each of the three countries that offered social work training to support my recruitment of subjects. These national academics were known to me through previous research collaboration, and each had a wide range of on-going practice links in their respective countries through their involvement in practice education and social work teaching. The recruiting academics were thus enlisted by me as they were considered to have the necessary professional networks and their involvement would encourage participation due to their professional credibility. A participant's pack (invitation to participate letter [see Appendix 1], details of the study [see Appendix 2], consent form [see Appendix 3], framework and interview question guide [see Appendix 4]) was provided to each of the three recruiting academics, along with the participant inclusion criteria and they were asked to identify suitable prospective candidates who met the selection criteria for involvement.

The selection criteria for participants were:

- Participants should be qualified and registered social workers (according to the registration requirements of their respective countries)
- Work currently as a social worker in an organisation undertaking statutory work
- Have the ability to communicate in English, such that they could explore complex practice debates
- Be willing to participate in the research and consent to involvement

Statutory work in the context of this study was a term understood according to the English social work definition, which included work undertaken by social workers within national statutory guidance or that requires legal interventions (College of Social Work, 2016).

Prospective practice participants were approached by the respective recruitment academic located at one of three universities namely the University of Montreal, Canada; Coventry University, England and Stellenbosch University, South Africa. Each of these academics identified potential participants who represented the characteristics of the population of interest (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Each academic lead was asked to:

1. Recruit up to ten practitioners who met the criteria for selection
2. Provide a prepared participant pack as part of the recruitment process

3. Obtain initial verbal participant consent, arrange the guided conversations and confidential location for interview suitable to participants
4. Provide a schedule of names, dates and locations of guided conversations within a nominated week

For the recruitment of two academic participants per country, the same recruiting academics were asked to identify and recruit suitable social work qualified academics who were currently involved in the training of social work students at a recognised HEI. The criteria for selection were that the academics were employed at an HEI, able to communicate and participate in English, while not managers, ideally would have had previous management experience in practice, and were willing to participate in the research and consented to involvement. Social work academics interviewed were all qualified social workers, currently employed in an appropriate national HEI teaching social work education in their respective country.

In the design of the study, I considered whether social work managers should have been included, however academics were viewed as having a broader overview of professional development and practice orientation, and as a consequence, their perspective would be invaluable to the study. It should also be noted that within an English context, not all managers that supervise and manage social work are social work qualified. Consequently, the process of recruitment, was similar for academics and practitioners, and guided conversations were undertaken within the same 7-day window as the practitioners.

The recruitment components of the study involved the selection and interview of two groups of social workers in each of the three countries, one group being practitioners and the other academics. Prospective candidates were sent an email participant pack by the recruiting academic and asked if they would participate in the study. Once they confirmed their willingness to partake to the recruiting academic in each of the three countries and fully consented to participate, guided conversations times were offered by the recruiting academic at a mutually convenient confidential venue within a 7-day window. I was given the participants country specific interview schedule at the start of the 7-day guided interview window. This allowed me to schedule my visit for interviews in Canada and South Africa during my visits to both countries. I personally conducted all guided conversations in person, in an appropriate confidential location as agreed by the participant (for example at the participants workplace, Higher Education Institution (HEI) or alternative office). Times and locations were acceptable to both the participant and researcher, thus ensuring uninterrupted guided conversations based on trust and rapport (Gubrium & Holstein, 2012). Apart from four guided conversations, all guided conversations were undertaken in the participant's office at their request. All interview data was anonymised and coded to maintain confidentiality.

Again, all prospective participants received a participant pack, which contained the following information and documentation:

- Invitation Letter to Participate (see Appendix 1)
- Information Leaflet (see Appendix 2)
- Consent Form (see Appendix 3)

- Framework and Questions to Guide Interviews (see Appendix 4)

A further hard copy of this pack was provided to all participants immediately prior to the face-to-face interviews. All participants, none of which were known to me, agreed to be interviewed and provided written consent at the time of interview.

The data collection method used was thus face-to-face semi-structured guided conversations personally undertaken in Canada, England and South Africa, to obtain an in-depth understanding (Gubrium & Holstein, 2012) from all practitioner and academic participants. As detailed earlier, guided conversations were undertaken in their case study groups and completed within a 7-day period for logistical reasons such as travel arrangements. These guided conversations enabled the exploration of participants perceptions and facilitated viewpoints that might otherwise be filtered due to workplace and career concerns, as well as enabling me to address any concerns that the participants may have. Details of individual participants are provided below in Section 4.4 “Profile of participants”.

As sample size within a qualitative study may be controversial (Bryman, 2016), especially given the sparsity of conclusive and unequivocal guidance on sample size within the literature, I used non-probability sampling (Bryman, 2016) and the following three factors as guiding principles (Bryman, 2016):

- The need to plan travel arrangements, ease of access to subjects and limited funding all limited the ability to predict in advance how many cases would be required (Bryman, 2016)
- Theoretical underpinning of the study influences sample size along with variation in minimum sample requirements has resulted in (Bryman, 2016) arguing that a critical factor in sample size was what PhD researchers, supervisors and education institutions consider defensible. Consequently, study sample sizes have varied been between five and 350 (Bryman, 2016)
- The sample comprised qualified social workers, guided conversations were undertaken with the expectation that there would be variability in participant experience and practice perspectives (see Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Although the relatively narrow focus on social workers experience of change at an organisational and professional level suggested that there may be some uniformity in perceptions of social workers (Bryman, 2016; Guest et al., 2006).

Within the semi-structured guided conversations, I sought to establish a harmonising verbal interchange with a verbal explanation of the purpose of the research, followed by a few contextual questions to build trust and enable self-disclosure, as well as confirming my own professional credentials to support reciprocity (Bryman, 2016; Guest et al., 2006) during guided conversations. I considered that the establishment of a trusting cooperative environment was key and judged this through non-verbal cues i.e. facial expression, eye contact and body language (see Gubrium & Holstein, 2012). All guided conversations were conducted in English, although it was not always the first language of all participants (see Creswell, 2009). All participants

agreed to be interviewed in English at the time of their recruitment, no language problems were identified during the guided conversations. All participants contributed to the guided conversations, with none terminating the guided conversation early. Two potential participants withdrew from the study before they were scheduled to be interviewed on the basis of their English medium concerns.

In seeking a deep understanding of the real-life perceptions of social workers (see Gubrium & Holstein, 2012), the study sought to understand their lived experience of organisational and professional change. The use of semi-structured guided conversations provided detailed perspectives that might have elicited conflicting emotional responses, rendering the use of group guided conversations as potentially difficult (Gubrium & Holstein, 2012). In contrast, the use of individual guided conversations supported greater depth and flexibility in understanding and dialogue, along with the opportunity to uncover unobserved feelings and events (Gubrium & Holstein, 2012). This resulted in a partnership of equality, friendliness and purpose between the interviewer and participant (see for instance de Vos et al., 2013; Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Silverman, 2011). My own professional background and understanding of the phenomena (see Lofland, Lofland, Snow, & Anderson, 2006) meant that participants did not having to instruct me on the topics being discussed. Participants could therefore explore the guided questions (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) see Appendix 4 “Framework and Questions to Guide Interviews”. Using good practice principles (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), the Framework and Questions were provided in advance to all participants, to aid discussion, ensure participation consent and enable any subsequent clarification questions (Creswell,

2014). All guided conversations were recorded to aid recall, later transcription and analysis.

4.2.3 Stage 3: Data Analysis

The processing of case study data analysis is challenging due to the analytical process being underdeveloped, laborious and complicated by the paucity of definitive approaches to analysing qualitative data (Yin, 2009). I thus followed the advice and utilised the framework proposed by Yin (2009) to analyse case study conversations through the theoretical propositions that led to the case study. This framework process recognised that the original objective and research design were based on the proposition that there had been an impact on the lived experience of social workers due to marketisation and managerialism which in turn, led to the research aims and literature review. The use of the proposition in this way (Yin, 2009) helped me to focus my attention on key data related to this proposition.

Once I had completed the data collection phase, I concentrated on reading, transcribing, analysing and interpreting the conversation data (Yin, 2009). The use of verbatim transcripts facilitated a process of reading and re-reading the transcripts, thus ensuring recording accuracy and the process reflected the deliberate, structured approach to the systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of the data.

Following the transcription of the guided conversations, I initially used first cycle codes in NVivo to identify patterns (Saldana, 2013) but became concerned about my ability to retrieve and understand the data once it was recorded in the software. I thus abandoned this early coding as I identified that the pattern of codes corresponded to the interview question structure. I then reverted to manual coding, as it enabled me to have more intimate knowledge and handling of the data (Saldana, 2013).

Following the work of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2019), data codes were used as a method of retrieval and categorisation of similar data. When I moved to manual coding, I identified condensed chunks of conversation and allocated summarising code. These codes enabled me to identify reoccurring themes and to reflect on the meaning of the data. The use of attribute coding (Miles et al., 2019) was based on my initial deductive conceptual framework coding (developed prior to fieldwork), with further sub-coding used to enrich the primary codes. This was considered appropriate, as it can be used in almost all qualitative studies, especially those with multiple participants and case studies with second cycle coding of the narratives identifying pattern codes (Miles et al., 2019).

The analysis and processing of the data facilitated identification of commonalities, differences and relevant patterns (Bazeley, 2013; de Vos et al., 2013) and selective interview highlights are presented alongside the thematic summary in Chapter five “Presentation of social work voices”. These selective and representative interview

extracts highlight key and relevant perspectives that were either common or different between and within the countries (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Researcher reflexivity (Marshall & Rossman, 1999) supported the robustness of the study and its results, through the recognition that these depended on the contribution of personal insights and perspectives throughout the research process. I was therefore guided by (Creswell, 2013) in developing a reflexivity report (see Appendix 5), which highlighted elements of my own experience which might subjectively bias the study. To further support the integrity of the research results, detailed desciption of study research methodology (see for example Shurink, Fouché, & de Vos, 2011) has been used, with research limitations highlighted in Chapter six "Discussion".

4.3 Ethical Framework

The overall ethical approach in the study was informed by Bryman (2016). Recognising the apparent differences in country and social welfare system wealth, I felt it was important that the study sought to recognise these disparities and consequently the RESPECT Project guidelines (Professional and Ethical Codes for Technology-related Socio-Economic Research) (see Dench, Iphofen, & Huws, 2004) provided an underpinning to the work undertaken. I used the RESPECT Project guidelines as they were developed for the conduct of socio-economic research in Europe and founded on three core principles, namely; compliance with the law, safeguarding scientific standards and avoidance of personal and social harm (Dench et al., 2004). These standards provided the ethical framework in which I conducted

the study, and thus provided assurance of robust ethical practice and decision making to participants and stakeholders (Dench et al., 2004). Furthermore, as a dual registered social worker I needed to adhere to the ethical code of the UK Health and Care Professions Council (UKHCP) and the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACCSP).

Research ethics approval was obtained from Keele University, UK for the overall project (May 12, 2011 see Appendix 5), with additional Canadian ethical approval obtained from the University of Montreal, Canada. Additional ethical approval was not required in South Africa. No sensitive populations were engaged i.e. minors in the study and all data was held in accordance with the UK Data Protection Act (1988) and these also met the later implemented GDPR regulations. Participant data was not transferred out of the UK or across international borders. No participant personal details were provided to me without that participant's consent for their information to be passed to me for the purpose of interviewing them. All participants participated voluntarily and were aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any point. No coercion was used, or financial inducements offered. All interview transcripts were coded to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. Travel funding to undertake guided conversations in Canada and South Africa was provided by Coventry University.

Only anonymised data along with electronic versions of consent forms were held on a secure Coventry University network and password protected. Original hard copies

of the consent are kept in a locked cabinet and will be destroyed following the completion of this thesis.

4.4 Profile of Participants

The data collection phase resulted in guided conversations undertaken with three social work practitioner participants in Canada, five in England and four in South Africa. Further guided conversations were undertaken with two social work academics in each of the three countries to obtain non-practice and training perspectives on the changes to the structure and delivery of social work services. One of the Canadian academics also worked a 50/50 academic/ practice split post and therefore could provide useful insights from both perspectives. Two potential participants one from each Canada and South Africa, who had initially expressed an interest, self-withdrew before the interview, on the grounds of their concern about their use of English as the study language medium. Their withdrawal was communicated directly to the respective national academic recruitment lead prior to the arranged guided conversations and I had no personal details about them. Details of the participants are presented in Tables 2 and 3 below.

Table 2 below, provides a detailed summary of the 18 study participants from the three countries (n=18) providing details of their gender, undergraduate qualification, and employment orientation.

The participants (n=18) were grouped as follows:

- Canada (n=5), comprised practitioners (n=3) and academic staff (n=2)
- England (n=7), comprised practitioners (n=5) and academic staff (n=2)
- South Africa (n=6), comprised practitioners (n=4) and academic staff (n=2)

Table 2

Details of Participants

Participant	**Gender**	**Basic Professional Undergraduate Qualification**	**Employment Orientation**
England (ENG)			
A	F	Diploma	Practice
B	M	Degree in Canada	Academic
C	F	Certificate	Practice
D	F	Diploma	Practice
E	F	Diploma	Academic
F	F	Degree	Practice
G	M	Diploma	Practice
Canada (CAN)			
A	F	Diploma	Academic
B	F	Degree	Practice
C	F	Degree	Practice
D	F	Degree	Practice
E	M	Degree	Practice & Academic
South Africa (RSA)			
A	F	Degree	Practice

B	F	Degree	Practice
C	M	Degree	Academic
D	F	Degree	Academic
E	F	Degree	Practice
F	F	Degree	Practice

As can be seen in Table 2 above, degree qualification accounted for 12 participants, the majority (10) (Canadian and South African participants) having completed a four-year qualifying degree. Interestingly, one English participant had undertaken their social work four-year qualifying degree in Canada, while another participant completed a three-year UK degree. All the employed academic participants completed a post qualifying Master's degree, with many having completed their doctorates.

In reviewing the social work training undertaken, all participants were registered social workers in their respective countries, with their training having met the respective regulatory requirements of their national professional bodies (see Table 2 above). This is not surprising as almost the entire interview cohort trained in the country in which they practiced. Noticeable, was that the Canadian sample had a higher proportion of Master's degree qualifications. England had the shortest undergraduate qualification namely three years, as opposed to the minimum training requirement of four years in Canada and South Africa (Babbie, 2014; Beckett & Ryan, 2010). One English candidate had completed a Certificate in Social Services (CSS).

Again, looking at Table 2 and practice participant qualifications, of those working in Canada (n=5), four had completed a qualifying degree, while the one participant with a diploma had qualified in the UK. Those with undergraduate degrees had completed a four-year academic programme, with four participants having undertaken additional study of at least a Master's degree since qualification. Only one participant was a full-time academic, although the other academic participant was employed 50% of their time in academia. Only one interviewee was male.

The seven participants from England comprised the largest country cohort of the participants in the study and of these, the majority (4) had completed qualifying three-year diplomas, a further two had completed a degree, and one had undertaken a qualifying two-year certificate. Furthermore, two participants had completed a post qualifying Master's degree and one degree participants had obtained this in Canada. Two participants were male (see Table 2 above).

The second largest cohort of interviewees comprised the six participants from South Africa, all had undertaken a four-year qualifying social work degree and two had also completed a doctoral degree. Along with other participant samples, men comprised the minority with only one being male.
To understand the extent to which social work participants were established professionally in the study, a proxy measure of the number of years' post undergraduate qualification was used. There was considerable variation in the number of years post undergraduate social work qualification and the spread of experience by country sample is presented in Table 3 below in terms of number of years following qualification.

Table 3

Number of Years Following Qualification

No of years following qualification	Canada	England	South Africa	Total
0 - 5	1	1	0	2
6 - 15	3	3	2	8
16 +	1	3	4	8
Total participants	*5*	*7*	*6*	*18*

4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter detailed the research methodology used to explore social workers lived experience of organisational and professional change through the use of semi-structured guided conversations in Canada, England and South Africa. Using a case study design with 18 participants drawn from social work practice and academia in rural and urban areas, I explored how changes in participants' workplaces were experienced. Detailed explanation highlighted the methodology utilised including the selection of participants, the process of data collection along with the analysis of data collected. A summary of participants was presented. The next chapter explores

the outcome of the data analysis, which is presented thematically to highlight the similarities and differences in experience between and within countries.

Chapter 5: Presentation of Social Work Voices

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents participants' voices of lived social work experience and amplifies their perceptions and experience of how organisational and professional change has impacted on the profession in the three countries.

In undertaking the analysis and presentation of social work voices, I recognised that qualitative analysis began with the purpose of the study and its methodology (see De Vos et al., 2011), making the research aims crucial, as they provided the underpinning for the analysis and arguments presented in this work. These insights and a deeper understanding of the impact of practice structures and systems are explored from the perspective of qualified social workers, using research that remained true to the values and principles of social work (Rubin & Babbie, 2009). Chapter four detailed the process of the research methodology and data analysis through which a series of themes emerged. As suggested by Yin (2009) in studies with multiple case studies, reporting of results can be undertaken via cross-case analysis rather than through individual cases.

In earlier drafts of this thesis, the analysis and presentation of social work voices made use of country-based tables to present analysis by country and illustrate themes. However, this approach to the analysis and presentation was dropped as it may have shifted my focus to a comparison between countries, rather than

identifying the themes that emerged from the social work voices. Consequently, I presented the themes based on the voices of participants as the prime organisational strategy, demonstrating the commonalities and differences in the individual countries. Participant voices have been presented in a series of themes to support understanding, reduce duplication and manage word length, but recognised that themes are often multi-layered and intertwined (see Carey, 2012). Consequently, social work voices were summarised and selectively presented via limited direct quotes, providing illustrative examples of major dominant themes or where specific themes emerged. These quotations provide vivid descriptions of stronger or contextualised narratives, along with outliers and these themes, along with presented quotations, and serve as examples that will be discussed in the next chapter in conjunction with contemporary literature.

The coded data which emerged from the 18 guided conversations undertaken are reported below. These are presented in three themes namely:

1. Professional identity and development
2. Social work practice
3. Work with service users and other professionals

5.2 Professional Identity and Development

Participants discussed their "work" experience prior to commencing training as social workers. Most less experienced social workers, not unexpectedly, indicated that they

had undertaken lower levels of work experience prior to commencing qualifying training than their more experienced colleagues. No specific trend was observed in participants having substantially different work experience from each other or expressing different pre-training motivation prior to commencing their qualifying training. Having said this, "helping people" was a key common motivation to join the profession, as was the desire to address social injustice or to improve their existing care work. The latter comments were specifically attributed to English participants who had worked in social care immediately before starting their training. For example:

> *Before I went to do the training, I felt that I had quite a lot of awareness within my role, within my job. I suppose, particularly in the area of kind of emotional intelligence…What I didn't have at that stage with the background reading, which, a structured course in terms of the degree it gives you, it gives you that roadmap, if you like, for your learning.* [F-ENG][1]

This desire to make a difference appeared to be common across all three countries, perhaps mediated to some degree by the comparatively different levels of resourcing and the structure of service delivery in each of the three countries.

[1] Each participant is identified by an alphabetical letter followed by their country. For instance: CAN for Canada, ENG for England and RSA for South Africa.

In discussing pre-qualifying training, many participants were vague, even when pressed, about whether their training was undertaken on a full-time or part-time basis. At first glance a somewhat surprising finding, however the reasons for this uncertainty may relate to the differing hours that constitute full-time study, the division between practice and academic hours, and how academic weeks maybe structured in each of the three countries. Conventionally, almost all participants would have attended full-time programmes, although one English participant identified their Certificate in Social Services (CSS) qualification as being full-time, when this is usually understood as work based and part-time. The full-time nature of this training was best exemplified as:

> *It was full day. You would start class at 08:00, normal finish time at 15:00/16:00. Obviously, some days are half day for theory the other half day is practical. It's only in 4th year that's a bit different you basically worked the full day and the last six months you would go to class.* [E-RSA]

In contrast, one English participant highlighted their experience as:

> *It was full-time, but I was doing part-time because it clashed with my religion. It was done through the OU. They called it like a Saturday seminar, which was compulsory, which I couldn't do because I'm a Sabbath keeper. So, they changed the year the next year to another day in the week so I had to drop that and do it part time. [A-ENG]*

All participants identified that their qualifying social work training had included both theoretical and practice elements, which was common to all three countries. The extent and balance between social work theory and practice input was determined by the professional regulatory requirements in each of countries in which the participants had qualified. Qualifying social work programmes theoretical academic input was identified by participants as including; social work methods, human development, the nature of problems experienced by individuals, groups and communities, and social work interventions. While participants from all three countries identified social work intervention techniques as having been taught, participants were unable to quantify the extent of this. For instance, how much of the course this involved. English participants were noticeably less clear about the models of social work intervention. Although social work theory was articulated by some participants as a more substantial component in Canada and South Africa as compared to England, for example:

> *...the courses in social work that I've had were mostly orientated towards a method of intervention. It's closer to problem resolution, closer to group work, you'd see the faces of the work you wouldn't necessarily have theoretical understanding of it, supplement psychodynamics and see what happens in the group and reflexes of the dynamics of the group.* [E-CAN]

Participants broadly outlined their qualifying courses, the structure of which varied, although all contained both theory and practice. Many participants, particularly those who had been qualified the longest, were less specific about the detail of their qualifying programme and were unable to provide much detail about what they had studied. One English participant outlined their experience of pre-qualifying training, yet found it challenging to provide any level of detail on this training:

> *That involved a first year of mainly foundation modules you know looking at society and how it works and a batch of methods. In year one I had to choose to do three methods, so I did the course on 1-1 with mainly interviewing skills not really about approaches more about skills. I had a module on group work, which was also about skills and I also had a more community kind of approach.* [B-ENG]

Many participants highlighted the qualifying practice elements of training:

> *First year practice centred on building relationships so we would have an older person in the community who we visit once a week and we just sit and chat and have a cup of tea. Second year practice involved group work at a primary school. Third year practice was a mix of all three approaches* (kids group work and community work)*. Four-year practice experience at* [anonymised] *and research. Split between theory and practice, with research in the 4th year.* [E-RSA]

An outlier here was South African participants who identified social work intervention methodologies as being a key component of training:

> *Theory and practical…We have the normal training from case work, group work, community work and I had Psychology and Sociology.* [A-RSA]

Many experienced social workers questioned the appropriateness and robustness of current social work training and qualifications. This was exemplified by the comments of one participant about the theory and practice components of training:

> *Now, the students, they don't really know how to do the work, but they also don't get supervision to do the work.* [A-RSA]

Similar views were expressed by participant E-ENG:

> *I do wonder whether the qualification is robust enough, I mean it has always been the argument that it should be a 4-year qualification, so it's not that it has been dealt with in social work here but given the time and place and days that they have I'm not sure it's knowledge based enough.* [E-ENG]

This led many to express concern about the longer-term future for the profession. Many participants expressed trepidation regarding the next generation of social workers and for students. Although one academic participant stated that newly qualified social workers needed to be inspired by existing professional colleagues:

> *…able to give examples of people they walked a road with.* [D-RSA]

Participants highlighted that demand for places at university far outstrips the places available within South Africa and that universities could not deal with more training places, even if there were sufficient levels of funding. Participants stated the inner desire and commitment to be a professional social worker was not the result of policies or agency committees but was from “a calling” that demanded goodwill.

Most social workers expressed the view that they were committed to their profession, despite obvious resource shortfalls. This was summarised as follows:

> *There hasn’t been the support and the resources invested in social workers to maintain the quality and the experience, which I often think is a waste. I certainly think from the profession we have been watered down and the current culture is that we are not important we are not valued.* [C-ENG]
>
> Or:

I love social work alright; I think it's so important; I think that it's helpful for people that we are a voice for some people who don't have voices. [D-CA]

Academic participants in particular, expressed concern that it was not possible to continue to train increasing numbers of social workers and maintain professional quality. Consequently, they stressed the importance of mechanisms to retrain experienced professionals, as it was difficult to replace experienced practitioners and their skills were needed to support recently qualified colleagues. A minority of participants expressed the view that there was a need for a broader focus on the profession's development i.e. confidence, identity and macro intervention skills and not only on frontline practice:

I think we don't do enough outside of the work. There's an outside work to do, like to sell the profession, to show what to, I don't know…To promote it, that's it, that's the word. To promote the profession, we don't do enough of that. And some of the social worker's say, well it's because we don't have time to do that and we're taking so much into the day-to-day work and profession that we don't have the energy to do it…but sometimes, historically I think, they did those thing and now we don't do it anymore…but even though we point out some structural issues, I don't think it's- we just pointing them out. Doing nothing about it. [C-CAN]

Professional identity was raised by participants, with less experienced social workers tending to voice views that appeared to align them as organisational employees and to undertake tasks to ensure that they did not conflict with their employer.

5.3 Social Work Practice

The experience of working within organisational structures engaged participants in lively discussion around a range of topics including administrative demands, professional discretion, funding, managerial systems and practice, and access to services. Some participants described the emotional and professional challenge of dealing with service users and the institutions' pain, while having to work harder to stand still. Participants summarised this differently in each of the contexts:

> *When you have a population of 40% of people who will commit suicide on your territory, how come in your services you don't see statistics of these people? How come they don't come knocking at your door? You're responsible for the fact that they're not knocking at the door.* [E-CAN]

In England this was summarised as:

> *…where people are seen that they have a need, we meet that need, and we get out. I'm scared that it's going to come to that, that we can't provide a service because we don't have enough money.* [G-ENG]
>
> Or:

> *They come to the office, if they can get in, they go to the department of social development for they have a quota of people getting in per day* [D-RSA]

In exploring social work roles, participants often described their professional tasks as dealing with a range of problems including those causing personal and social distress. Frequently, this resulted in an uneasy professional discussion by participants on their sense of being able to challenge organisational demands. This sense of unease often related to attempts to balance service users' needs and demands made by their employer i.e. referral, intervention and on-going support. Participants expressed a concern about the pressure to meet performance targets, time taken for service users to be seen, or in significant numbers to satisfy grant or funders' targets. Consequently, developing meaningful relationships with service users or providing services proved difficult. This professional dilemma was highlighted by one participant:

> *For instance, in NGO's people are so overburdened by their community development projects because they get their funding. To get their funding they need to do specific programmes, so they rather spend a lot of money on AIDS but* [rather than] *to spend time on a mother with a difficult child…I don't think we are able to focus on our core business as we intended to focus on.* [D-RSA]

Concern about the personal and professional impact of questioning the organisation was highlighted by a significant but limited number of social workers, mainly from South Africa and Canada:

> *...the moment you start questions you are questioning the system, the bureaucracy…You are questioning what is politically correct. [D-RSA]*

A strongly expressed view was that questioning their employers may be detrimental to their careers or that critique of the profession or social policy may result in regulatory questions about their fitness to practice. Some felt trapped within the profession with limited transferable skills and so needed to endure these pressures. Despite these concerns, most highlighted their commitment to provide services, despite their professional reservations.

Professional accountability, across all three countries, was most frequently raised in the context of participants' interactions with managers, particularly in relation to managerial roles, as resource gatekeepers, and their levels of management support. This was exemplified by participant A-CAN:

> *…for me she's more like managing the money that we spend for families.* [A-CAN]

A further key concern was social worker professional discretion, in particular the exercise and use of control and the resulting anxiety that this causes professionals and new managers:

> *The senior managers, who are the new managerial managers, are scared about people being out of control...* [A-CAN]

Some participants expressed the view that managers were concerned about losing control, a significant number of participants queried whether their managers had sufficient skills and knowledge of practice. Concern was also expressed about the implications of social work errors, given the lack of professional discretion and due to many decisions being made by managers.

Participants highlighted that they often needed to consult regarding professional decisions that involved the commitment of either their time or organisational resources. They viewed this lack of professional decision making as having implications for their professional standing, their professional perspectives and the confidence of service users in their practice. One participant expressed that a supportive practice and work environment included being recognised as a profession to make decisions about the use of their own time, finances or other resources. In seeking to utilise their professional discretion, some participants talked about "*stealing time*" from the organisation in order to work with service users, while acknowledging the implications of this practice for the type of work and the quality of

this work. “Stealing time” was talked about in relation to playing the “*performance game*” by keeping cases for longer than necessary, so that time, on paper, could be allocated to an easier case, however this time was then spent on more difficult cases.

English participants were particularly concerned about their inability to make decisions without managerial approval. A limited number discussed only being able to make “recommendations” rather than decisions and considered their decision making was hampered by their inability to commit resources, either financial or time:

> *I think I have some autonomy as long as it doesn’t cost too much money.* [C-ENG]

South African participants indicated that they still had some discretion, although it was reducing:

> *So, in terms of professional discretion I think it’s less since when I started with my social work career, that’s my point of view.* [D-RSA]

Furthermore, South African participants generally thought that they had more scope for the exercise of discretion but debated whether this was being eroded and linked

to a reduction in opportunities for professional critical thinking. They acknowledged the value of professional supervision in allowing them to practice:

> *Individual supervision from my point of view basically would be where the supervisor says bring six of your files that you would like to discuss with me…she would say maybe think of that so it's not that you have to do this and this, it's more a discussion…* [E-RSA]

A minority of South African participants viewed the separation of professional supervision for therapeutic work from that of line management as potentially confusing for newly qualified social workers, but overall viewed the separation as working well.

South African participants further highlighted that even when supportive professional grassroots mechanisms and services were developed in support of social workers i.e. use of community volunteers to monitor children due to limited resources, this was not without ethical and professional challenges:

> *…with the more professionalisation of social workers, the gap between volunteers became bigger. The volunteers moved to a more management level and not really a resource for helping us with our services because of the ethical code the social workers can't share their work with volunteers because it's unethical. So apart from financial constraints and the whole financial*

> *impact of policies, etc. you also have this ethical thing. Human rights, human justice that has become so difficult to manage and to get volunteers on-board to work. It's very hard to do that and I don't know whether a social worker can put it in particular words and to see the context of justice because social development is also a rights based approached so you can't get the volunteer on-board on all the services.* [D-RSA]

Management of organisational waiting lists were viewed as a short-term solution to manage rising demand and insufficient resources by Canadian participants. These waiting lists had implications for organisational performance management and negatively influenced decisions about resource and performance. It was within this context that considerable concern was raised about how performance management was used as a disciplinary and evaluation tool by managers and how their implementation had failed to take account of service user need. Participants viewed performance management systems as potentially damaging for individual and team skills, practitioner relationships and their professionalism:

> *I did not agree with a certain task and I had no choice and I verbally mentioned it to my supervisor...and the result of that was that they actually reported me to the Council of Social Work, where I had to give a whole report for them to decide whether there must be disciplinary steps against me or not…* [E-RSA]

I think if you are experienced you can play the paperwork a little bit, but it's difficult [D-ENG]

South African participants highlighted that their social work legislative and practice context restricted the role of non-qualified social work staff in supporting social workers, which had important implications for volunteer management of NGOs, including confidentiality. They stated that NGOs were often managed by community members who lacked the necessary management skills, but this had implications for resources including advocacy, especially in light of significant service demand and the need for increased staffing and also ethical issues. For instance, the implications of not having sufficient resources to accommodate children taken into care was highlighted as:

Luckily, we've got quite a few, not safe houses, people that are willing to take a child for a weekend or whatever, so we've got resources like that one can take a child to. That works nice for smaller children but it's always a problem for your bigger child. [F-RSA]

Resource dilemmas were a recurring theme throughout the interviews, with one South African participant describing how her NGO, which provided statutory child protection work under contract for the State, undertook cake sales on weekends to raise funds to support children who were wards of the State. This reinforced

participants statements of them struggling to meet professional responsibilities and organisational expectations.

The loss of status identified by participants was linked to the loss of discretion, leading some participants to speculate that this was partly a consequence of the decline of universal services, increased agency resource limits, the loss of professional status and discretion due to managerialism. Consequently, some social workers felt that they were exploited, their efforts to achieve employer demands unrecognised, their professional practice and discretion unappreciated, and excessive administrative burdens and the effort required to address these demands contributed to not feeling valued:

> *I don't know. I can't say. I think they are. We have an area social work manager who doesn't manage me but supervises me, I think he does actually. I think he respects me actually and I respect him as well, but he's been sucked in and told by someone else what to do* [D-ENG]

Almost all participants expressed concern about the challenges of organisations/service funding, the size and complexity of caseloads, the roles practitioners were required to undertake, and the complexity and contradictions in their work roles:

I guess for me the low points were always there are not enough resources locally to provide a good enough service locally, so you often have to sort a resource outside of the area with often big costs with big companies. The safety and risks sort of increases because you don't get to see that people that often and they often get forgotten about because they are outside the area [G-ENG]

Participants identified that demand for services had increased due to levels of community deprivation with the consequences being seen in family and individual distress or pathology i.e. drugs, school dropout and crime. Greater population diversity without increased funding was highlighted by two Canadian social workers due to consequent increased resource demand but without similar increases in resource availability i.e. interpreting. This imposed delays to service delivery, as well as the level and scope of intervention available.

Concern about agency funding required some South African participants to provide training sessions to large groups of service users, with food, to achieve agency contractual targets to secure ongoing agency funding. The food was to encourage attendance. Many spoke of their discomfort of managing service user needs and agency demands:

There is quite a significant amount of people that don't fall into any specialist service especially social work department and they don't get a service and that to me is a low point. [C-UK]

Similar views were provided by other participants:

When you look for resources that are sometimes in a certain direction there would be roadblocks all along the way and that's bad… [F-RSA]

English participants identified that even when resources were apparently available, they were only able to provide limited funding or direct support, rather than more meaningful intervention or the development of independence skills. Consequently, this resulted in an ongoing cycle of crisis work:

We are not looking at preventative work, we are looking at crisis work, so I would say the crisis work is a large percentage of the social work side of the practical side of things. There is little preventative work or developmental work… [C-ENG]

Resourcing was often linked to discussions with the accessibility of social work services and support. Many participants indicated that organisational services were restricted, mostly due to financial reasons. This restriction took the form of limitations

to the nature or extent of services provided, service rationalisation or as a result of government policy. Organisational systems and structures, resource availability and service prioritisation were the key challenges spoken about. Participants stated that the limited interventions provided were focussed only at an individual level (micro level) and expressed disquiet about the impact of these on practice and service users:

> *…it's also about financial constraints and responsibilities rather than quality of service and the arguments and discussions usually are who pays for the service and the question is usually is there not a cheaper service? I don't feel there's an understanding…The panel is definitely gatekeeping to holding on to finance, trying to reduce costs at all times…* [C-ENG]

> *...we have more complex families than a few years ago, with immigration, with everything so that's harder, people from immigration take more time for it, because if you don't speak the language you have to pass more time with the* [translator] *and so I guess yes. There is more pressure in the way that we have more case, difficult cases, but we don't have more resources.* [D-CAN]

Similarly, South African participants explained:

Even the rehabilitation centres, a few years ago, you had all these procedures in place, and you would go through the process but in the end, it would just be a waste of time [F-RSA]

While South African participants were outspoken about funding shortfalls and the implications for organisational precarity. English and Canadian participants expressed similar concern about the impact of prioritisation and budget restrictions. One English participant highlighted how particular service user groups used their higher political profile to obtain services, often at the expense of support for other groups such as older people. For example, doubly incontinent older people who were only able to obtain support for personal care twice a week, while learning disability groups received higher levels of support for community visits, day care and support to go on holiday.

However, one English participant was positive about organisational structures increasing levels of support available to them, supporting multi-disciplinary work and opportunities for second opinions from other professional and management panels. They stated that managerial structures provided some with professional security in a complex and demanding work environment:

And I'd say for me, I can cope with the paperwork if I'm emotionally contained. That's just a reflection. [F-ENG]

The majority of participants nevertheless viewed managerial systems i.e. funding panels or systems, as being interrogatory, especially in relation to resource utilisation i.e. funding. Most English participants identified frequent refusals of funding. A minority recognised that presentation to a panel could provide opportunities for reflection and as a check on paperwork in the absence of supervision. While others highlighted the positive use of peer-based supervision, which while often informal, provided a valuable support mechanism for participants.

While most social workers spoke of their challenges in meeting individual needs, a few identified the wider needs of communities, as well as the need to work at mezzo and macro levels of practice.

All participants expressed concerns regarding reductions to the availability of resources, yet viewed organisations as not being overly concerned but expected social workers to manage associated risks. This situation changed when concern was expressed by the public after a major tragedy such as a death, which resulted in professionals being held to account.

Participants highlighted conflict over resource usage or the passing of this increased service demand via referral to other agencies in the hope that they may be able to respond. However, participants indicated that those agencies were often themselves overwhelmed. Resource challenges were most acutely identified by South African

participants, who linked their concerns regarding funding more directly to the users of services, than participants from the other two countries:

> *...say for instance say the school reformatories they tend to get less and less so where do you go with children like that and the same with rehabilitation centres. They get more and more finicky about people they want to have there. So that makes it difficult and in all the areas a problem.* [F-RSA]

Many participants identified agency specialisation, as a consequence of referrals, had resulted in service users with multiple or complex needs falling between service provision of different agencies. Others highlighted that service users needed to achieve ever higher thresholds to obtain services. These reoccurring themes were often raised in the context of delivering services and included the use of different professions or unqualified staff/managers. One South African participant highlighted the challenge of what they referred to as “political correctness”, making it difficult for poor whites to receive social work services, as services were now focussed only on the “poorest of the poor” who tended to be black.

South African participants recognised the precarity of social work organisations and that managers were required to seek funding on an ongoing basis to ensure ongoing service delivery:

> *There are so many managerial things or issues that managers of NGO's should do in disguise to get funding.* [D-RSA]

Funding for South African NGO based social workers was a frequent and significant concern. They described a continual process of business plan development and service reconfiguration to meet government commissioning targets to ensure ongoing funding of the employing organisation. However, this funding was often considered insufficient to meet service user demand and needs but that more recently new models of funding had increased competition between NGOs and even the state sector:

> *I think professional relationships are a competition amongst organisations. I think the competition between organisations becomes more tense because they need to bargain for funding. [D-RSA]*

Five South African participants highlighted the challenge of NGOs having to compete with state statutory services for social workers (both NGOs and statutory agencies undertake statutory work), with remuneration of social workers being higher in the state statutory services.

While these acute financial challenges may be accounted for by the greater and systematised social welfare support available in the global north, greater use was made of trained community volunteers to address service shortfalls in the global south , despite the concerns raised earlier. For instance, to facilitate the immediate

removal of children out of social work office hours, community volunteers can remove a child overnight with office-based administration staff, or social workers, providing immediate place of safety accommodation in their own homes to children until appropriate resources can be accessed:

> *We do have safety parents and sometimes we have social workers that are willing to take them and some admin ladies to take children for a night but it's difficult. I took a girl home one night and I just said never again because you don't sleep you are paranoid.* [E-RSA]

Interestingly, within South Africa the use of unqualified community members who have been given the power to remove children was not viewed as a risk to the profession but as a welcome addition due to the pressure on resources:

> *''Eye on the Chart'' is a project where community members are identified and then trained to sort of spot children in difficult circumstances. They are sort of allowed to remove a child between 5 o'clock in the evening and 8 o'clock the next morning and keep that child safe from a difficult situation.* [C-RSA]

Restricted accessibility of services was raised by many participants as a consequence of tightening eligibility criteria, along with the difficulty people with multiple needs may have in navigating organisational and service access. This was typified as:

Originally, we would service anybody in the local area and the beauty of that was that they could actually walk to the patch...whatever their issue we would actually deal with them…There are often quite a few arguments between the departments in the specialised services as to who will pick up the clients, if they fall between two services. They either have learning disability or have mental health problems or do not get a service at all, if their learning disability is not significant enough but unless it obviously has an impact on their lifestyle, they won't normally get a service. [C-ENG]

Participants highlighted that preventative or development provision was rare, or non-existent, with service interventions most frequently being crisis based:

*We are not looking at preventative work we are looking at crisis work, so I would say the crisis work is a percentage of the social work side of the practical side of things. There is little preventative work or developmental work [*C-ENG]

5.4 Work with service users and other professionals

Participants discussed their work with service users and other professions. Many participants expressed mixed feelings regarding professional recognition as well as feelings or being under valued in their workplaces. They cited difficult organisational

systems, lack of professional discretion, organisational bureaucracy and their struggle to mediate between multiple stakeholders as reasons for dissatisfaction:

> *The profession is constrained by the organisation, it is needing to mediate between the employer/agency/team and the service-user. This might call for subversive work at times. [D-CAN]*

Subversion was actively raised as a coping strategy and used by some social workers directly to manage the professional conflict between social workers and their employing organisations in Canada and hinted at by social workers in South Africa; interestingly this was not raised at all by English social workers. Some Canadian participants highlighted subversion as necessary to address conflicting employer and service users demands:

> *One of the things I was just wondering in terms of the codes of ethics for people who are registered as social workers is those kinds of bits of being subversive and being difficult the sense that you could lose your license to practice because it might be construed as unprofessional conduct.* [A-CAN]

A small number of participants identified high levels of work pressure within teams being a consequence of restrictive and performance driven systems. This resulted in conflict within the team over issues such as caseload referral numbers and how long they were kept on caseloads or waiting lists. Three Canadian participants stated that

they did not share details of their cases within their organisations, which was highlighted in the following comment:

> *To work for the client sometimes you have to work against the system, but you have to find ways of protecting the client from the system so that it doesn't hinder more…* [D-CAN]

Many participants stated that social work systems did not sufficiently recognise the nature or extent of individuals service user's distress, or the complexity of many service user's journey to recovery. Prescriptive organisational requirements for timed assessments or interventions were highlighted as being unhelpful and perverse for service users, and limited social workers' professional interventions. This was described by one English participant as:

> *I think things are becoming a whole lot more prescriptive. I think we see this in people's admission to hospital. There's a whole lot of drive for people being admitted for two weeks and that's it. You know, why are they still there after two weeks? I feel there's no understanding of people's personal needs of their sort of own recovery and for some people that might be quick and for some people it may take a little bit longer.* [F-ENG]

In multi-disciplinary settings, these constraints, along with limited time availability, resulted in restrictive numbers of interventions or problem management through the use of medication:

> *So, a lot of things like I don't really know how to work with this person, so I give them medication.* [F-ENG]

A few participants talked about experiencing a form of cognitive dissonance as a result of being torn in multiple directions. They highlighted the emotional challenges of their work, dealing with the pain and distress of others, as well as the lack of financial and social work resources to address problems. One English participant described feeling "bad" as a social worker and as if they felt they were doing:

> …*the government's dirty work for them*. [E-ENG]

Participants attributed the impact of organisational systems, processes and management as disempowering some service users. They viewed reduced social work autonomy as resulting in service user's negative perceptions of their competence and reducing their professional confidence. Some participants stated that the short-term nature of interventions, along with the limited support, encouraged service users to escalate their needs to obtain services, without consideration of the success or personal implications and costs of this strategy.

In exploring the experience of supervision participants from all three countries, particularly England and Canada viewed their experience of supervision as being instrumental, process driven and overtly managerial. Canadian and English participants expressed the most concern about the lack of professional supervision and when available it often comprised compliance checking, monitoring of performance targets and ensuring that the budget was appropriately managed:

> *…social workers get very little if any professional supervision…supervision geared towards the skills of the jobs. Supervision is about whether you've ticked the boxes in terms of performance, key performance, KPI's…* [A-CAN]

Experienced English participants were often concerned about organisational accountability requirements, which resulted in their professional developmental needs not being met. This was highlighted by one participant who complained of having supervision only twice in a year:

> *I think throughout my career supervision certainly has been very bad...in my memory it has never been consistent, there was an often a big period of time when I had no supervision and certainly there hasn't been the respect. Often cancelled and not seen as a priority…Probably in the last year I had about two supervision sessions.* [C-ENG]

English participants also expressed dissatisfaction in relation to supervision provided by other professions or unqualified staff. Stating that it provided little clarity on responsibility:

> *I have worked and been supervised by unqualified managers and nurses…* [C-ENG]

Six participants expressed concern regarding the quality and training of managers and whether they had appropriate levels of training and experience to provide supervision. Many English participants were concerned about the regularity of their supervision.

Furthermore, many participants expressed unease about the competence of their managers and frequently stated that managers were not accountable in the same way that social workers were.

In contrast, some South African participants talked positively about the separation of line management responsibility (often by non-social workers) for annual leave, travel expenses and professional supervision with a mandated professionally qualified social worker. They claimed that due to many NGO Boards being staffed by community volunteers, this separation was helpful. However, a few social workers expressed ambivalence about this arrangement, claiming although this resulted in

their professional opinions being valued, they were concerned about volunteers' capabilities in managing organisational complexity and the potential for political conflict. For example:

> *Another variable in the NGO is that they have a managing committee consisting out of volunteers that's not professional…People in management positions…that's getting there because of political legislation, affirmative action and redressing omens of the past and not because of competencies.* [D-RSA]

English social workers highlighted that when an assessment and professional judgment had been made and that the situation required immediate action i.e. a child removed, they were unable to act on the decision and needed managerial approval first. Yet, this was not the case in South Africa, although this action may be discussed with the supervisor first. South African participants raised concern that key agencies such as the courts and government employers were uncertain about their own and professional roles and accountability. This uncertainty was described as:

> *The social workers do not know who's responsible for what and the court don't know what they are responsible for, and the Department of Social Work don't know what they are supposed to do. So that's quite a bit of a problem.* [A-RSA]

Participants reported mixed feelings on whether they were professionally valued. Some stated that even when they were told they were valued, they did not always believe that they were, due to their experiences of the contrary. Frequently, they often felt that their employing organisations did not appreciate their professional opinions or qualifications. As stated by one participant:

> *…our qualification has not been respected and not recognised and valued and the new management feel that people with experience or some experience in some cases are as beneficial qualified as a qualified social worker. They feel we don't have a skill based that is needed. The qualities of what we do are not recognised.* [C-ENG]

Some English participants acknowledged that their expertise at times was recognised but not always utilised. Managers demanded immediate cost saving on cases, yet would not consider how higher initial expenditure might result in cost saving in the medium to longer-term:

> *It's been a nightmare. The person that we use to deal with wasn't a practitioner and had no idea of the needs of people moving on or anything at all. There is nothing locally. We've asked and suggested organisations that would help and we understand that they move people or skill them off but let them then be there for six months and then be out. They'll be saving money*

and if they don't get it, we feel that we are not being listened to. So that has been very difficult. [D-ENG]

Participants talked about managers prioritising short-term decisions and opinions, often to the detriment of longer-term professional views. This was expressed as:

> *…I think my expertise are recognised but not utilised…If it takes money and you can invest in an individual and it will cost more, that's not recognised. Management only want to talk about the cost-effective way forward even if the initial outlay would be far cheaper in the long run as an investment…* [C-ENG]

Participants expressed trust and belief in managers at an individual personal level, with some managers considered authentic in a professional respect. Requests made by respected managers for professional judgements resulted in social workers feeling more valued:

> *I think it is valued because I won't ask my supervisor to do something I will tell her I have done it and then she will tell me okay, you could have done it like this or that because I see you have done this and it's not working. So, in a way it's valued, and I think they also take into account your experience…* [E-RSA]

Some participants viewed managerial recognition as transitory and frequently related to requests to rescue either the organisation or a particular manager from a potentially damaging incident. However, this recognition was often short lived, particularly if shortly afterwards they provided a critical professional view that was disapproved. One Canadian participant indicated that this occurred when you offered opinions upwards in the organisation. Others highlighted hearing social workers being “put-down” by managers and considered this criticism of colleagues as a critique of the whole profession.

Participants identified that the profession had a difficult job, compounded by poor support, insufficient resources and a lack of staff care. One English participant reflected on social work practice:

> *We couldn’t take the risks now that we did when I was practising. We used to give people the benefit of the doubt, you make your decision based on assessment and that assessment was about their abilities and the resources that you have to support and now that assessment seems to be about what’s the worst that can happen if we don’t do this.* [E-ENG]

When discussing children’s services assessment documentation, another English participant emphasised:

I go back to what I said before which is frustration…What it has- there's a practical impact on me as well, in that I followed a procedure that says that we should do planning for these young people around parenting…jumped through several hoops in that process in terms of all of the paperwork but I've needed to do…in terms of all of the dialogue…to panel before and to justify your work and to justify to a group of individuals that I don't know who don't know the young people and never met them why this is actually a good plan. So, lots of work, frustrations and anxiety. [F-ENG]

Other experienced English participants claimed that changes to the workforce were part of a strategy to increase the numbers of younger and lower paid staff, rather than to maintain and invest in the existing workforce. Others highlighted that the social work role required good professional judgement, along with skills and expertise, to assist families and that these skills and competences could not be quantified through the application of a formulaic approach to staff management, as used by agencies or competence frameworks.

Nevertheless, many talked about the profession as "a calling", describing small professional successes as the impetus to continue their work. Indeed, social work was not about large scale achievement, rather it was about small steps or changes:

Implications on quality, the standard of work that you would hope to be achieved; the depth and the breadth of the work that you would want to be

*achieved, you've some limited control over that…it's about having an environment that reinforces the work that you've done and you've got limited control over that if you're not doing the work yourself. [*F-ENG]

Burnout levels amongst colleagues was considered a major problem in the profession and participants indicated that employers often made little effort to recognise these signs or support staff. Surprisingly this issue was not discussed in much detail:

…then also you have such a lot of work like writing the reports and stuff like that, that you sometimes feel you mean nothing, you feel burned out. [A-RSA]

Poor media portrayal of social work was raised by many English participants, with perceptions of social work being scapegoated, which then resulted in defensive practice:

But then that is reinforced isn't it, you could argue that's reinforced by the media betrayal of social workers and how they're scapegoated. So you have to, in some respects, you have to be defensive because you don't know what's going to the lack of scrutiny that's going to be a part of something doesn't go the way it should - so get it down, write it and almost get it, I'm not saying I do this but, almost get in first… [F-ENG]

Many of the most experienced participants considered the profession as less valued now than in the past. The reasons given included a lack of funding, organisational service failures, public media scapegoating and managerialism. This was summarised as:

> *…I'm not saying everything, and I was right all the time...I don't know where that is going to go now. I know there were people I felt confident going knowing that they knew where I was coming from, we had a certain mutual respect for one another, and I supposed we felt confident when we ran into a problem that we will get a resolution from it. Now I don't know. I think it probably is but there is part of me that feels that social work is not given value by some work colleagues and I don't know where it's going to go in the future. I really don't. It's quite a difficult question to answer on a personal level yes but I don't know.* [G-ENG]

5.5 Key Findings Summary

Initially, data analysis was undertaken on a country-by-country basis and by practitioner and academic voice. However as indicated above (see section 5.1), this approach was later revised so that data was organised thematically; illustrating the voices within their respective country. Additionally, the presentation of data derived from social workers by employment type i.e. academic vs other practitioner employment category was considered unnecessary as I was seeking to understand the views of social workers irrespective of the employment context. This is

particularly important, as social work academics conventionally have practice experience before commencing their academic careers.

The guided conversations highlighted how participants identified the impact of organisational and professional change on the profession. This impact included changes to professional training, levels of discretion, risk assessment, resourcing and the value placed on their professional opinions. Participants identified stress, burnout in colleagues but not themselves, and a focus on short-term resourcing as being an overwhelming pressure in the profession. They viewed limited-service availability as a result of poor resource availability, managers reduced or delayed care delivery costs, while demanding increased performance. Participants highlighted that preventative services had all but disappeared, with social workers describing feeling compromised by service demands and delivery, or of overwhelming demand. Changing professional structures, managerialism, and the focus on risk and efficiency had all impacted-on resourcing, professional decision making, and lived practice.

Dissatisfaction was a factor linked to these organisational processes, reduced professional discretion, de-professionalisation, bureaucracy and the consequent need to mediate conflict between multiple stakeholders. Consequently, relationship-based practice was threatened, with difficulty in maintaining professional standards. While the commitment to achieving good outcomes for service users was affirmed, a limited number of participants felt this was only possible through covert subversive practice, with obvious risks to their own ethics and having implications for the professional registration and employment.

While commitment to the profession remained resolute, participants highlighted work pressures, poor supervision and managerial focus as particular problems. Prioritisation of services to maximise efficiency along with the prioritisation of organisational risk systems were key difficulties, particularly amongst English participants. Levels of participant personal risk were highlighted along with a perception that this was not prioritised by employers. Experience of outsourcing and marketisation of services was raised particularly in the context of England. However, the outsourcing of statutory work to NGOs in South Africa and the limited funding available for services was seen as concerning due to its impact on service users and as being a potential threat to social work service delivery.

The training of future social workers was also identified as a concern, especially as some felt that standards were not being maintained. Training and retention of existing professionals was seen as important and while many had identified the profession as a type of "calling", the pressures and impact of organisational change may have longer-term workforce implications. Forthcoming Chapter six will discuss the implications of these guided conversations.

Chapter 6: Discussion

This chapter explores and theorises the lived experience of social workers and the key ideas presented in this thesis. This exploration includes the impact of organisational change as a result of NPM, marketisation and managerialism in the professional lives of participants within the contextual environment of practice in three countries. It will also explore how social workers have perceived organisational and professional changes, how these changes have impacted their professional practice i.e. decision making, professional risk and finally how social workers accommodate their professional role and their contradictions with their managers and the profession.

A three-legged case study design was used, involving participants from Canada, England and South Africa and incorporating key findings from the guided conversations. As outlined in Chapter one, the introduction, as well as Chapter two, the literature review, the environment in which social work is practiced has been subject to considerable change, along with consequent organisational and professional change (Carey, 2008a; Solimano, 2016) in all three countries. Within England these changes have been the most significant, with the introduction and acceleration of marketisation, deprofessinalisation, changes to professional training and managerialism. While in England, the impact of these changes were subject to active discussion and debate in the early 2000s, much of this attention has since waned. Thus it is surprising that there has not been greater and more sustained effort to study the impact of these changes on social workers. These professional experiences were the subject of the guided conversation in the three countries, as

viewing the experiences across three countries was considered important for understanding the impact of professional change through exploring the differences and similarities at the level experienced by practitioners.

The results demonstrated a good degree of coherence enabling differing aspects, features or patterns to be considered from the perspective of the three key research themes. Consequently, some sub-themes may be discussed from differing perspectives in the following thematic discussions. Discussions have been organised in this chapter around the three research aims:

Research aim one: How social workers experience and perceive organisational and professional changes within their professional practice.

Research aim two: How management practice impacts on social workers for instance; decision making, focus of their work and perceptions of professional risk and trust.

Research aim three: How social workers accommodate their professional role, responsibility, accountability and contradictions with their managers and their profession.

6.1 How Social Workers Experience and Perceive Organisational and Professional Changes within their Professional Practice

The discussion related to this research aim concerned the process of developing and practicing as a social worker and explored the professional journey of aspiration, training and practicing within the profession.

The decision process to train as a social worker is complex, diverse and continuously shifting often with multiple reasons, see (Carey, 2008a; Solimano, 2016), and this was borne out in the sample who indicated similarity, with a strong commitment to making a difference and change. However, despite its importance in the recruitment and retention of future professionals, there appears to be little published on understanding of the mechanism by which social workers enter the profession, or data on students who do not complete their training.

The development of social work agency through training was raised in the literature (Fenton, 2016; Littlechild, 2008; Musíl et al., 2004; Papadaki & Papadaki, 2008), and it is therefore surprising that there also appears to be little or no published literature on the levels of appropriate experience prior to qualifying training, other than trainee's undertaking of some form of internship prior to training. All study participants had prior experience of training before undertaking their qualifying training. This demonstrated similarities with the work of Newman, Dannenfelser, Clemmons, & Webster (2007) who also found that students enter qualifying training with previous experience and self-evaluate their own skills as being higher than those who entered training directly. Study participants attracted to "caring" work prior to their professional training had either undertaken voluntary work or training in other associated professions. Noticeably, recently qualified participants identified having less work experience prior to commencing their training than their more experienced

contemporaries. There was no specific indication that participants had substantially different work experiences or motivation before entering training. This is unsurprising, as many qualifying UK social work course admission processes prefer applicants with prior caring experience as part of a commitment to widening participation (Dillon, 2007). Also, the criteria for selection of prospective social work trainees has varied over time, with a trend in more recent years for younger applicants, especially in the UK (Dillon, 2007).

While the focus of the study was not on participants' motivation or reasons to join the profession, it was interesting to note that some published literature has explored this motivation. The importance of pre-training experience has been exemplified in work undertaken on student social work motivation by Stevens et al. (2012), who found that students who had no paid employment in social care before training were most likely to enter the profession for altruistic reasons. Furthermore, personal history and work experience also played an important function in supporting students through their training (Furness, 2007). While others such as Christie and Weeks (1998) identified that students were able to locate their influences and experience in relation to their social work qualifying training and benefitted from professional development support, along with theoretical and practical learning.

Mandatory levels of qualifying social work training, practice requirements and theory are set by professional regulators and HEIs at the national level. The levels for this are broadly equivalent between the three countries, after degree level undergraduate qualifying training became the norm in England in 2003 (Dillon, 2007; Moriarty & Manthorpe, 2013). Further work in England (Social Work Reform Board (SWRB),

2010) has recommended revision of the education curriculum, developing support for newly qualified social workers and improving continuing professional development social work. However, these debates, while having introduced the PCFs in England, have also resulted in educational reforms that have weakened the profession (see also Section 1.4). Within this study, none of the participants were graduates of the Frontline programmes in England. It should be noted that Frontline training was unlikely to be similar to forms of training for social work offered in the other two countries studied due to the length and mode of study and importantly, it is not even recognised as equivalent training for social work registration and practice across all countries in the UK.

Throughout the guided conversations participants reflected this ongoing debate within social work about its function, extent of discretion and opportunities for practitioner creativity to enact the functions of social work. (Social Work Reform Board (SWRB), 2010) articulated this challenge in their work, identifying that practice in the UK had become dominated by bureaucratic-instrumental bias, with an over reliance on procedure and control, which had undermined professional judgement, reduced learning and made it more difficult to protect children. The complexity and politically challenging context of social work in England was explored in Section 1.4., showing a profession under considerable political, organisational and regulatory pressure. Consequently, critical voices (see also Munro, 2011; Munro & Hubbard, 2011; Rogowski, 2011a; White, 2009) have highlighted the importance of agency culture promoting critical reflection, so that social work teams and organisations could engage in complex decision making and ensure safe and effective practice (Munro, 2011). Similarly, others have continued this debate (see Fazzi, 2016)

highlighting the importance of social work education in developing skills that facilitate interpretation of complexity and formulation of creative interventions for difficult social problems. Consequently, critics (see Lymbery, 2011), have questioned whether the English SWRB proposals adequately recognised the importance of local authority budget cuts as one of the key challenges for practice learning in the UK. Although, whether these constraints are only a result of budget cuts, is a matter for further debate and discussion.

This debate regarding professional judgement and development of skills was mirrored during guided conversations with social work academics who highlighted the importance of retaining skilled and experienced social workers to support training as well as professional supervision, which will be discussed in more detail in Section 6.3 below. In a further study of newly qualified South African social workers, de Jager (2013) highlighted the difficulties in implementing theory, knowledge and skills into practice settings, which was compounded by high caseloads, lack of supervision and poorly experienced social work role models. This challenge may link to the struggle by new workplace graduates to address the transition to becoming a professional and manage the dissonance between the promise of being an agent of change and their experience of being a practitioner, challenging the formulation of their political identity and purpose (Marston & McDonald, 2012).

Qualifying training was identified by participants as comprising both theory and practice learning components, and this provided a common training component for all participants in all three countries. The extent and balance between social work theory and practice learning being determined by the regulation in each of the

countries concerned (Spolander et al., 2011). The practice learning component was identified as critical in professional development (Spolander et al., 2011), but despite its importance, surprisingly it was not given much prominence by participants in this study. Others, such as(Doel & Shardlow, 1996; Papadaki & Nygren, 2006), acknowledge that the development of early career professionals has not always been viewed as a key priority for local authorities. However, despite this lack of attention, there has been considerable concern by employers over the years about whether social workers are adequately trained (Manthorpe, Harris, & Hussein, 2011). Other critics, such as Moriarty and Manthorpe (2013), Munro (2011), and Social Work Task Force (2009), have also expressed concern about the extent to which social work qualifying education has equipped social workers to undertake their work, with practical, analytical and report writing skills all highlighted as key shortcomings. The development of professional identity (see Webb, 2016) is key to supporting social work practice and requires opportunity for professional socialisation, development of workplace cultures and professional boundaries. The commencement of professional development occurs in the preparation for front-line practice (Webb, 2016) together with the opportunity to explore and internalise professional practice, values, and institutional practice learning in context, which are explored in more detail later in this chapter.

Consequently, the degree to which social work qualifying training has been viewed by stakeholders is an area of ongoing debate and a topic for potential future research. However, the degree to which contemporary training criticism hinders social workers professionally is unclear, although similar anxieties have been

highlighted about Newly Qualified Social Works (NQSWs) (Moriarty & Manthorpe, 2013).

Despite ongoing debate about social work training, little is known about those students that do not complete their qualifying training. Having said that, the General Social Care Council (GSCC, 2010) reported that around 2-3% of students failed, with a 17% withdrawal rate from degree programmes since its onset in 2003. These figures had increased since the old DipSW, where around 12% of students failed or withdrew (Hussein, Moriarty, & Manthorpe, 2009), although the reasons for this are unclear.

Also, the nature of social work training has been contested (see for instance Harris, 2014; Lishman, 2011), partly as a result of its organisation as well as the professions political nature. Others (see Harris & White, 2009) have highlighted that robust comparative training of the profession is under-researched, with the definition of the profession subject to review and change due to political and policy changes, including through policy directives such as “modernisation”. Comparative research on educational content in the training of social workers between Canada, England and South Africa found broad similarities (Spolander et al., 2011). All participants confirmed their social work training required the completion of both theoretical and practice elements of training in social work methods, often involving individual, group and, in the cases of Canada and South Africa, community work. (Spolander et al., 2011) argued that within England, newly qualified graduates are required to demonstrate their commitment to the profession, its ethics and professional

competencies, but then enter a workplace which is fraught with difficult and changing socio-political and organisational climates. These themes were identified in the first report of the Social Work Taskforce in England and Wales (SWTF, 2009), which recommended the strengthening of social work training in its first three recommendations. Neoliberalism has been an underpinning ideology in changes to professional training and regulation in England (see Rix, 2011) and can be evidenced in proposals and subsequent implementation such as Reclaiming Social Work. Professional reform (see for example Furness, 2015; Higgins, 2016; Taylor & Bogo, 2014) has included the BASW Professional Competence Framework (PCF); the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (AYSE); changes to professional regulation i.e. General Social Care Council, Health Care Professional Council, Social Work England and establishments along with the dissolution of the College of Social Work. Many of these English reforms, which have increased marketisation, managerialism and deprofessionalisation (see Jones, 2014, 2015; Mearns, 2014; Tunstill, 2019) pose a significant risk to the professional occupation of social work. Weaknening of the profession (see also Section 1.4) has occurred through changes in role, professional status, critical voice, professional discretion and organisation from training through to practice (Jones, 2019). Under the guise of a professional crisis, reform has often been undertaken with proposals repeatedly advocated as necessary to strengthen the profession through social work organisation, training and practice reform (see for instance MacAlister et al., 2012; Narey, 2014), but often resulting in further weakening. Reform proposals have posited the “failures” of the profession and have been offered as remedies (see Section 1.4 and Jones, 2019), without recognition that the causes of the failure or that the crisis maybe a direct consequence of increased managerialism, professional reform and marketisation.

However, not all reform has been negative, the BASW PCF has notably sought to alter curriculum design through encouraging a broader model of social work practice (Higgins, 2016), which in turn, has supported the development of professional identity and emphasised professional capability rather than competency. Despite this rather limited positive development, it is clear that the social work profession must redouble efforts to be mindful and critical of hostile discourses (Cribb & Gewirtz, 2015) that arise from outside of the profession and which reflect dominant socio-economic and political interests.

The current qualifying degree requirements in England comprise a number of core subject areas, these include:

- Human growth and development, mental health and disability;
- Assessment planning, intervention and review;
- Communication skills with children, adults and those with communication needs;
- Law; and
- Partnership working and information sharing across agencies and disciplines (Department of Health, 2002, pp. 3–4)

However, evaluation literature on social work qualifying training has been surprisingly limited (Department of Health, 2002, pp. 3–4), resulting in the evaluation of the introduction of the three year training degree in England being hampered

initially by the lack of baseline data (Moriarty & Murray, 2007). Participant training data in this study was not sufficiently robust or detailed to undertake an examination of similarities and differences between countries. However, Gal and Weiss-Gal (2014) found that policy engagement training appeared to be limited across many countries, including the three countries studied.

While social workers in this study identified a range of challenges, no participants raised concerns regarding professional demarcation or threats from other professions. To the contrary, South African social workers welcomed and sought to train community volunteers to undertake part of their role due to resource constraints. They were however, concerned about volunteer's ability to undertake management roles within the current policy led practice environment. In an international study by Weiss-Gal and Welbourne (2008), in no countries they studied did social work have a monopoly of practice or function, although certain tasks including aspects of child protection work were restricted They noted that the traditional role of social workers was being undermined and "deskilled" (Gal & Weiss-Gal, 2014). In their study, they also found "boundary identification" produced challenges in protecting the profession and was an apparent difficulty for social workers (Gal & Weiss-Gal, 2014). Professional support too was linked to the degree of professional autonomy afforded to social workers, with most directors of social work organisations also being practitioners in countries such as South Africa, USA and Hungary (Weiss-Gal & Welbourne, 2008). The greater professional status in South Africa resulted in more autonomy and recognition of social workers' expertise (see Weiss-Gal & Welbourne, 2008), while in other countries, for instance in Spain

where most social work directors were not qualified, organisational requirements were more likely to be prioritised above professional ones. Similarly, English voluntary sector employees often had more professional autonomy that their statutory colleagues (Weiss-Gal & Welbourne, 2008). Furthermore, the fragmentation of social work roles and services had encouraged increased assessment, while limiting regular advice and support from a single social worker (Carey, 2014). Consequently, there were risks of workforce deskilling through a reliance on technologies of care, complex multi-layered bureaucratic systems and a deskilled medical-model centred care model (Carey, 2014). Furthermore, there is an unrealistic expectation that risk assessment tools can eliminate risk (see Littlechild, 2008). Further research is needed to better understand professional decision making processes and how these are influenced in practice. Also, the implementation of personalisation in England had left the role of social work unclear (Lymbery, 2012). The policy of personalisation was enabled through the establishment of care markets (Ferguson, 2007; Lymbery, 2012), requiring the creation of care brokers and direct budget management, all of which have impacted on the tradition of social workers (Leece & Leece, 2011). This was confirmed by English participants who highlighted changes to their role and that they often focused on short-term micro-level interventions, undertaking risk assessments and ensuring care is delivered by others. Consequently, within a financially restricted service, social workers and managers are therefore required to be more concerned with this dilemma (Leece & Leece, 2011), which in a culture of managerialism suppresses the importance of professional values, rewarding management skills rather than professional technical skill (Harris, 2003). Professionals should therefore be enabled to ignore restrictive checklists (see Littlechild, 2008) and consideration be given to the impact of both

organisational and practice power dynamics on practitioners. This led Carey (2014) to suggest that marketisation has intensified the problems that it sought to address, and that neoliberalism has increased the cultural, political and practical fragmentation of the social work.

Others (Sinclair, 1997) viewed social work as being in a state of tension, with a history of religious and political ideas resulting in difficulties separating professional values and methods from processes of policy formulation and implementation. According to Payne (2006c) this had resulted in social work being shaped by the enactment of social policy by social welfare organisations alongside socio-economic, political and philosophical debates, which inform policy. These influences and the spread of political and economic ideology all impacted on the profession and on practice. This debate alongside the importance of relationships to social work practice (Jones, 2014), civil rights, and professional role and values, resulted in him calling for collective organisations to safeguard the profession and protect practice.

These debates underline the challenge for social work as a dynamic profession, which has sought to weave a multiplicity of different strands of professional identity within an ever changing employment environment (Lorenz, 2007). However, Jones (2014) argues that this identity crisis has contributed to the challenge for social work to assert its role and purpose in multidisciplinary teams; especially as its role has been less distinct, with reduced autonomy through professional competencies and organisational change. Participants viewed their role through a lens of helping people but did not express much consideration for the implications of how this help might be best achieved within a structured practice environment. Indeed, Jones

(2014) claimed that social work struggled in asserting its role and purpose within multidisciplinary teams; partly as its role is less distinct, having reduced autonomy in professional competencies and contributions, and due to organisational changes. Whereas, Munro (2011) highlighted the profession as being compromised by procedures and guidance making it difficult to exercise its expertise, together with a lack of consensus on what constitutes social work expertise.

Study participants too had expressed ongoing concerns in undertaking their role, due to organisational and managerial constraints, although investigation of what they considered to be their role was not a focus of this study. Nonetheless, Boehm (2013) within a UK context, identified that both service users and social workers had broad agreement on the role of social work, although service users expected social workers to be more active and engage in more practical roles.

Contemporary social work practice is dominated by statutory work in the UK, although the role of non-state actors in the provision of social welfare has been under researched despite the rise of its importance (Cammett & MacLean, 2011), with most research on social welfare concentrated in advanced industrialised societies (Lynch, 2006; Manow & van Kersbergen, 2009). This has often been to the detriment of professional discretion.

Along with debates about the role of social work, shifts in government policy have resulted in greater marginalisation of those who needed social welfare services, reduced preventative services and greater emphasis on managerial processes and procedures (Dominelli & Hoogvelt, 1996; Harris, 2014; Lombard, 2008; Murray,

1994; Spolander et al., 2014). This resulted in some critics (Aronson & Smith, 2011; Caduri & Weiss-Gal, 2015; Gal & Weiss-Gal, 2014) arguing that most social policy training in qualifying social work education only implants an awareness and understanding of social policy. This mirrored findings from the guided conversation with participants, where they indicated they had little engagement in social policy formulation. Aronson and Smith (2011), Caduri and Weiss-Gal (2015), and Gal and Weiss-Gal (2014) specified that this environment had implications for social work debates about a dynamic profession which has sought to weave a multiplicity of different strands of professional identity. Consequently, critics have argued that many practitioners have not understood how the changes wrought by managerialism, marketisation and NPM have impacted on the fragmentation of professional work (Garrett, 2009) or sought to engage in the debate regarding protecting professional boundaries (Hugman, 2009; Huttlinger, 2011; Virtanen, Laitinen, & Stenvall, 2018; Webb, 2016; Weiss-Gal & Welbourne, 2008) or the importance of professional status (Grover & Piggott, 2007; Krings, Trubey-Hockman, Dentato, & Grossman, 2019; Leece & Leece, 2011; Lymbery, 2006; Reisch, 2016).

The importance of professional engagement at a macro level requires an understanding of the macro policy context, which frames the social work practice context. For instance, the UK social welfare structure has been categorised as a liberal welfare system (Esping-Andersen, 1990), within a capitalist liberal market economy (Hall & Soskice, 2001). NPM within the UK specifically, but also globally, has been prominent public policy, promoted through a reform agenda (Eliassen & Sitter, 2008; Gualmini, 2008). The climate of financial austerity and the consequent

retreat of state welfare provide a macro context to understanding organisational and welfare system changes.

Eminent scholars (see Barberis, 2013; Brennan et al., 2012; Cradock, 2004; Drower, 2002; Gray et al., 2015; Harms Smith, 2017; Schubert & Gray, 2015) have identified NPM and neoliberal policy enactment as having been contested, experienced and articulated differently in diverse milieus, with its effects being uneven due to these differing contexts and levels of influence. This has resulted in Hil (2001) advising that globalisation has exacerbated longstanding professional and social welfare challenges of conceptualisation, theorisation, as well as practice. Thus, creating challenges in the form of increased commercialisation, the redrawing of professional boundaries, greater corporatisation of state services and outsourcing, and reconfigured social, economic and political relations. These themes were articulated throughout the interviews, with participants discussing their experiences, which mirrored these i.e. the changing relationships between service users and social workers. Consequently, there have been significant implications for the profession, including how social work identifies its key professional concerns and intervention approaches (Furlong, 2000; Ife, 2000, 2001). The contextualising of the three countries highlights how these concerns have ongoing resonance today in each of their respective contexts.

6.2 How Management Practice Impacts on Social Workers Decision Making, Focus of their Work and Perceptions of Professional Risk and Trust

The treatise related to this aim has sought to consider the concerns of social workers on how resourcing, reduced professional discretion in decision making and managerial processes such as performance management have impacted on their practice. Debates and decisions regarding resourcing have been linked to marketisation, and supported a greater emphasis on efficiency, effectiveness along with debates on alternative forms of funding social welfare service provision. Consequently, this process of organisational and welfare change over the past three decades has occurred within the context of macro-economic globalisation and neoliberal economic reform. The USA and the UK have been two major proponents of this economic reform, which Lightman (2003) and Mishra (1999) argue has promoted free markets, individualism, a minimal welfare state and corporate interests. Furthermore, Saul (2004) pinpoints the implementation of globalisation as being associated with markets freed of national self-interest and regulation, whose purpose was to embolden trade and encourage increased economic outcomes.

In terms of participant experiences between the three countries, resource restrictions in Canada and England were more often expressed, by participants, in relation to the impact of these restrictions on services. For South African participants, funding shortfalls also included concerns related to the financial stability of agencies and having insufficient resources to undertake their statutory interventions. Participants

highlighted that these restrictions also impacted their ability to act on their professional decisions as this often-required managerial agreement, or in the case of South Africa, professional supervisors. However, the South African participants were also concerned about whether outside agencies understood their responsibilities and accountability in partnership working with statutory social work.

As already mentioned, limited and declining resourcing was a key issue raised by participants in all three countries, while the contexts varied, it was clear that restructured resourcing was impacting on services at several levels, ranging from societal impacts, increased precarity, amplified demand for services, greater management control and funding competition. This often-raised participants' concern and resulted in restricted financial services either through changes at a social policy level, service rationalisation, the direct restriction of services or the result of management techniques such as waiting lists and re-prioritisation of services. Key academics (see Dow & McDonald, 2003; Dustin, 2007; Ritzer, 2011) have identified organisational policy shifts as a result of neoliberal-management paradigms which have also promoted greater use of technology, McDonaldisation and constrained resourcing.

The impact of austerity was identified in all three countries and restricted resourcing and its use were frequently identified by participants as impacting on the accessibility of social work services and support. South African participants were notably concerned about organisational financial solvency and its implications for on-going delivery of services, while Canadian and English participants' financial concern related mostly to the precarity of their own employment. That being said, all

participants expressed concern about the competition for funding between agencies, reductions to resources and how these limited resources were impacting on their ability to undertake their work, as well as on service users. Examples of these work challenges included the failures of the State in providing sufficient resource for wards of the state i.e. use of cake sales in South Africa to support children in care, participants struggling to balance and meet professional responsibilities and organisational expectations and resulting practice ethical dilemmas. In considering resourcing at a macro level, practitioners indicated that they had little opportunity to seek to practice at this level and this highlights a key challenge for the profession at several levels, not least influencing national policy but also seeking involvement in how resources are best spent.

The causes of these changes in the macro environment were the result of a rejection of Keynesian state intervention, which established the welfare state at the end of the second world war and the promotion of Neoliberal ideology (Gray, 1998). The consequent policy shift actively encouraged market and managerial change by successive governments in the UK (Ferguson, Lavalette, & Mooney, 2002). While some (see Lightman, 2003) argued that the globalisation process was neutral, others (for instance George & Wilding, 2002) highlight that there have been social, political, cultural and ideological impacts. Scholars have further noted negative consequences of global market competition for general employment, livelihoods, community and class relationships (Leonard, 1997). This has resulted in critics such as (Leonard, 1997) pointing out that globalisation has therefore promoted and legitimised market based ideology, whose impact on organisations and social work relationships have been explored in this thesis.

A key mechanism in driving organisational and managerial change has been NPM, which in its implementation, demonstrates seven key characteristics of neoliberal policy and characteristics that closely align to reform (Hood, 1995, p. 96):

- The development and use of explicit standards and performance measures
- The development of professional management within the public sector
- A focus on results rather than processes
- Disaggregation of the public sector
- Increased competition in public sector service provision, with competition being provided by the market
- The use and promotion of private sector management techniques
- The use of increased discipline in resource utilisation

However, (Pollitt, 2002, pp. 473–474) has taken this work further and identified other characteristics such as:

- Management focus shifts from input and process to that of outcome and output
- Greater use of measurement, for instance performance management
- Increased use of specialised, flat and autonomous organisational units in preference to large, hierarchical bureaucracies within organisations
- Promotion and use of contract type relationships within services and organisations

- Use of market mechanisms to deliver public services i.e. privatisation, internal markets
- Shift in norms from equity, security, universalism and resilience to individualism and efficiency
- Blurring of the edges between public and private sectors (links to the earlier point regarding the use of markets)

Elements of these characteristics echoed throughout participants’ professional experience. This included the changes to organisations, increased managerialism, changed care manager roles in England, the use of performance management to direct professional behaviour and the prioritisation of results over process. Marketisation has been one such change, which promised improved service quality and service accessibility with its focus on reducing costs and improving efficiency (Pollitt, 2002, pp. 473–474). However, study participants highlighted that it had unintended consequences for service users, society and social work i.e. increased system gaming, increased service demand and rising levels of precarity. This is echoed by Harris (2014), who argued that marketisation had not considered the consequence for the poor, or the social welfare workforce (predominately female) in terms of status or pay. Marketisation proponents (see Flynn, 2002; Yuen & Ho, 2007) promised that markets offered opportunity and choice, increased efficiency, effectiveness and innovation, while improving professional control and reducing bureaucratic and hierarchical management. Marketisation and NPM have driven organisational change (Lynn, 2006; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004), although the speed and extent of this globally has been uneven. This has resulted in Bordogna (2008) viewing institutional and national welfare state reform ratification as being

undertaken alongside reconsideration of the role of the state, and so reshaped social welfare services, including as a direct or indirect employer. Flynn (2002) however, recognised the longer-term danger of fragmented organisations, insecure employment and staff turnover. Yet, O'Donnell et al. (2001) note that the reforms have altered traditional service delivery models and also reduced salaries and service conditions for staff. Experts such as Newman (2014), and Newman, Glendinning, and Hughes (2008), have highlighted the risks of structural and institutional change for increased professional emphasis on service user behavioural change along with the implications for social citizenship. Also, changes to service user behaviour was identified by English participants in their guided conversations. This impact is not restricted to service users only and critics such as Evans et al. (2005) and Houston and Knox (2004) have argued that marketisation has reduced resource availability and directly impacted on the profession. An example has been Approved Social Workers (ASWs) in England (see Evans et al., 2005) who expressed higher levels of dissatisfaction with their role, as a result of organisational and practice chances.

The reframing of service users as customers seeking support within a market framework has been ideologically justified as a strengthening of accountability through facilitation of control, co-creation and personalisation (Ferguson, 2007). However, the role of service users as customers has not been without criticism. For instance, educational research in private schools has highlighted how customers are treated inconsistently within educational market systems (see Macleod, Pirrie, McCluskey, & Cullen, 2012). This research highlighted that service providers' perceptions of these customers was shaped by the way in which these paying

parents responded to their suggestions, along with the level of resources available to these parents (Macleod et al., 2012). Consequently, parents were viewed as either partners, customers or problems, dependent on the complexity of the interrelationship between providers and parents (Macleod et al., 2012). Similar complexity would probably apply in the experience of social welfare service delivery within a marketplace. This might be viewed in the experience of wealthy adoptive parents or in assisted reproduction (Fronek & Crawshaw, 2015).

Marketisation as a strategy offered policy makers and managers solutions to limited resources, complex funding challenges and delivery challenges at a policy level, while operationally promised greater individual involvement and customised service user services. Furthermore, the use of markets has enabled governments to avoid criticism of their own social policy and funding decisions, due to the perception of the neutrality of markets (Fronek & Crawshaw, 2015). The policy thus promised to eradicate the principles of traditional collective provided state services, along with providing greater efficiency and effectiveness. Consequently, (Harris, 2014) argued neoliberal marketisation promised to improve efficiency and effectiveness, while promoting consumerism through individual responsibility for their lives along with managerialism, through the use of private sector management techniques.

Critics argue that the acceptance of these principles and the promotion of individual responsibility and choice, had implications for a profession with longstanding commitments towards social justice values and principles (see Dominelli, 2004; IFSW, 2014; Marsh, 2005). The definition of social justice includes valuing individuals, equity in access to resources, rights, services and opportunities and a

commitment to ensuring satisfactory standards of living to achieve self-fulfilment (see Reisch, 2002). Consequently, the profession's historical and global commitment to social justice, while largely uncontested, has raised debates on how solidarity, collectivist solutions should be balanced against individual rights and enacted. Organisational and professional reform sought to de-professionalise social work and to re-orientate the profession promoting individual causes of social distress, with a corresponding promotion of reduced collective responses to address social justice and inequality challenges. The profession is therefore at the juncture of forces seeking to reshape society along the lines of greater individualism and responsibility and those members unable to cope with the impact of social change, globalisation and austerity. This heightened a complex practice dilemma for practitioners, as identified in the guided conversations.

The limited literature on social work workforce has been infrequently explored. The implementation of marketisation appears to have consolidated and embedded ideas of the primacy of the individual, while simultaneously negatively influencing other important social work principles, values and perspectives e.g. social justice and solidarity. NPM, marketisation and managerialism's strength (Ornellas et al., 2016) have been reinforced through institutions, policy frameworks, national constitutional changes and the implementation of international free trade and investment agreements. These institutions have shaped and promoted policy responses that have made alternative perspectives or policies more difficult to develop and implement. Interestingly in this regard, no study participants used the terminology of neoliberalism, although this was more commonly used in the dialogue with academics from all three countries. Social work has thus been challenged in terms of

how to critically analyse those macro frameworks that influence professional structures, systems and professional practice. Furthermore, there has been little systematic investigation of the impact of these organisational and professional changes on social work, resulting in a questioning of what impact these structural systems changes have on social work and the services it delivers.

Participants, during the guided conversations, talked about being largely focussed at the individual intervention level (micro level) of inclusionary practice, but as highlighted by (Ornellas et al., 2016) at a mezzo or macro level there was evidence that agencies and policies were more exclusionary. This appears to be at odds with UK studies that indicate social workers without previous social welfare experience were more altruistic in their motivation and less concerned with existing organisational culture (Noble, 2004a). The experience of many participants is that organisational services were restricted mostly due to financial reasons. This restriction often involves limitations to the nature or extent of services provided, service rationalisation or is directly due to national policy. Consequently, organisational systems and structures, resource reductions and the use of service prioritisation were the key challenges, resulting in participants expressing disquiet about the impact of these on practice and service users.

The reductions to resources or managing increased service demand were also spoken about by participants in relation to the fragmentation of services, which resulted in conflict between colleagues or the shuffling of referrals to other agencies. Furthermore, Sullivan (2009) noted that social workers may be faced with the

dilemma of undertaking assessments and planning professional outcomes, which might be considered suitable for the welfare system or what they professionally consider to be good outcomes. To manage these dilemmas, Sullivan (2009) identified that workers developed conceptual practice frameworks that provided meaning to their work to achieve certain outcomes. These outcomes resulted in reduced uncertainty or reflection on their decision making, while also promoting a reliance on practice wisdom rather than formal social work knowledge (Sullivan, 2009). While not explicitly probed in this study, this may have been evidenced by participants being unable to clearly articulate which models and social work interventions they were trained in or models of practice in the guided conversations. Kunneman (2005) further argued that by practitioners developing their coping skills in this way, workers were encouraged to adapt to their organisational structures and not to challenge them explicitly. This left some study participants feeling uneasy about the administrative demands placed on them and how the limiting of services left some potential service users without any service at all. Further disquiet was evident concerning the constraints of resources and professionals' time and discretion, all of which resulted in managers and policy makers not understanding service users' journeys to recovery or coping mechanisms. This theme of accommodating their professional role will be returned to in Section 6.3 below. Nevertheless, critics such as McDonald et al. (2008) argued that marketisation had also increased defensive social work practice, non-reliance on social work theory or a robust knowledge base and poor supervisory relationships. These themes were clearly echoed in the guided conversation of many participants.

6.3 How Social Workers Accommodate their Professional Role, Responsibility, Accountability and Contradictions with their Managers and their Profession

Guided conversations also emphasised participants' concerns and challenges with the narrative of accountability. Nonetheless, performance management systems were identified as a concern, particularly in relation to the challenges this posed to practice. Eminent authors, Beck, Giddens, and Lash (1994) and Beddoe (2010) have linked aspects of the culture of checking and performance measurement to the notion of "risk society" and the idea of "political economy of insecurity" (Beck, 2000, p. 2). The consequences of which are viewed by Cousins (2010), Power (2004) and Wastell et al. (2010) as creating a continued and constant pressure for organisational accountability, risk assessment and quality processes, which resulted in increased bureaucracy, audit and performance targets. The increasing managerialist approach further undermined trust in voluntary and professional self-regulation while simultaneously promoting managerial approaches along with increased pressure for external audits and controls (see O'Neill, 2002).

Participants' concern with managerialism was echoed in the literature (Aronson & Smith, 2010; Baines, Charlesworth, Turner, & O'Neill, 2014; Chi-leung & Hoi-kin, 2013; Elzinga, 2010; Ioakimidis, Santos, & Herrero, 2014; Noble, 2004b; Rogowski, 2011c). Consequently, English participants viewed the focus on resources and efficiency as them undertaking the work of the government with whom they professionally disagreed.

Payne (2000) viewed managerialism as assuming that a manager can manage without knowledge of what is being managed. Consequently, Howe (1996) viewed cost efficiency and effectiveness as having changed social workers' and service users' relationships, from interpersonal, economic and supportive to contractual and service-orientated. These contractual and performance driven approaches have required changed practice, albeit without a full understanding of its impact. The use of metrics to evaluate practice and policy implementation (Brodkin, 2015) appeared to have limited English participants ability to use street-level bureaucracy, more so than in the other two countries. This raised the question whether tight managerial control and metrics are more entrenched within English practice or is it the strength of professional social work agency in the non-English professionals that is greater?

Marketisation, NPM and managerialism have changed our views about society, reshaped organisations and remodelled public and third sector organisations, thus refashioning the workplace and transforming our sense of "self" (Brodkin, 2015). Similar findings were outlined in other literature (Shore, 2008). Within the guided conversations, surprisingly some English participants appeared less concerned about increased organisational administration, assessment and reviews. While Carey (2009b) noted change in the workplace resulted in greater bureaucracy, workforce instability and reduced service responsiveness, often leading to more calls for greater marketisation of provision. Consequently, experts such as Hugman (1998) argued that the outsourcing of state services and functions represented both the rise and impact of care service marketisation, which included the outsourcing or privatisation of services, along with the perceived increases in service exclusion and

consumerist social work. It is perhaps surprising that privatisation of services has been largely an English social work phenomenon, with the introduction of markets to manage the delivery of services to both adults and also in children's social work. The growth of privatisation has seen the introduction of terminology such as 'service users' and 'informed choice' in the contracting and marketisation of services through personalisation and care brokerage (see for instance Harms Smith & Ferguson, 2016; Jones, 2019; Parton, 2014).

In the drive for efficiency, one example of the radical organisational change was the introduction of social work call centres in the UK, and specifically Liverpool Direct (see Ferguson, 2007). Although call centres were not discussed in the guided interviews, participants noted a lack of discretion and task deskilling in their workplaces often due to McDonaldisation. Liverpool Direct provided perhaps an example how through managerialism, the establishment of call centres deskilled social workers and diminished their professional work (Ferguson, 2007). Interestingly, Coleman (2006) identified that no staff (managerial or professional) worked in the Liverpool Direct call centre for longer than two years and worryingly that many service users did not have the finances to access technology to use them effectively. However, despite this significant change in social work service delivery, there has been little or no research undertaken on the impact of these call centres (Coleman, 2006) or on the common impact of intake practice of social work telephone assessments. Likewise, as highlighted earlier, there has been little research on the impact of managerialism, NPM or marketisation on the profession.

Professional control and discretion were a concern raised by participants within the guided conversations. Despite this, some from Canada and South Africa in particular, expressed the view that they had retained some professional discretion, were able to maintain elements of street-level bureaucracy (Coleman, 2006) or make professional adaptations (Kunneman, 2005). The challenge of managerialism in social work practice and the exercising of their professional expertise in the face of managerial and financial change within social welfare agencies was an area of debate raised by Munrow and the Social Work Taskforce in England (Kunneman, 2005). Later work by (Munro, 2011), reinforced how production of standardised service responses and processes to promote cost effectiveness, accessibility and management of risk within a market framework have disempowered social workers, emboldened managers and administrators, and changed work relationships. Further negative impacts of resource constraints were raised by other critics (Ball & Olmedo, 2013; Barberis, 2013; Carvalho, 2012; Foucault, 1994), who argued that reduced funding, changed administrative processes and managerialism have had a disciplinary or even self-disciplinary effect on many social workers. Resistance to these restrictions and targets, although not openly discussed, has been discussed in the context of subversive practice in Section 6.3 above.

Control over practice was viewed by many participants as an important challenge and has also been raised by eminent authorities in social work (for instance Ellis, 2014; Evans, 2010; Kühnel, Sonnentag, & Bledow, 2012). Study participants expressed the view that they should decide on what practice should be undertaken, when it should be undertaken and how often under the guise of professional discretion. Lack of practice discretion was raised by the majority of participants,

along with concern that it diminished their status in the eyes of service users. English participants, in particular, identified discretion-imposed reductions as limiting implementation of their professional judgement, their direct services provision as well as support to service users. Furthermore, English participants identified the impact of care markets, while South African participants noted caseload size and lack of organisational resources as limiting their discretion. Agency resource competition furthered market conditions, where social welfare agencies competed for funding, sought ever greater efficiencies and imposed managerial processes. These increased front-line pressures i.e. workloads and stress as identified by some participants. Consequently, limited discretion impacted participants ability to manage service demand as well as risk. This raised the potential paradox of managerial processes including policies, procedures and regulatory oversight designed to encourage greater accountability and quality, which may encourage subversive practice (Power, 2004, 2011).

Mosley and Smith (2018) noted that global human service organisations operate within a turbulent environment with a demand to demonstrate effectiveness, performance and impact. The resulting practice environment is then fraught with dilemmas regarding competition vs collaboration, marketisation vs ethics of care but with little understanding of the potential impact to the organisation, service users, society or even their workforce. Study participants echoed concerns about increased workload pressures, how the demands for performance resulted in a breakdown in trust between themselves, managers and colleagues along with damaging individual and team skills, professional relationships and even their own professionalism. Experts such as Mosley and Smith (2018) highlighted that for many professionals,

meeting performance targets does not necessarily equate to what they perceive as high-quality services and may even result in poorer decision making and reduced job satisfaction. Others such as Mensing (2017) highlight that funding tied to specific outcomes, as mentioned by South African participants, missed the supportive and linking work required by organisations to improve the lives of service users. Within the UK, experts such as Munro (2010) argued that a systems approach should be utilised to improve performance and recognise services such as child protection as complex and adaptive. Munro (2010) goes further to argue that professional judgement and practitioner honesty is required for learning and to improve care safety rather than a culture of managerial control, proceduralised performance driven practice and a blame culture. Similarly, Jessen (2015) also argued that increased managerialism and proceduralised practice challenged social work values. Using qualitative data from Australia, New Zealand and Canada, Baines et al. (2014) identified that both immediate supervisors and organisational purpose were key to social workers' identity and commitment to working in social care, with targets viewed as eroding care quality and social justice. Swedish research (see Tham, 2007; Tham & Meagher, 2008) identified the crucial role that employers play in professional recognition and valuing of staff, in the retention of staff rather than aspects such as pay, workload or job stress. It should also be noted that performance management and discretion have been related to staff satisfaction and retention (Beddoe, 2010; Evans, 2012; Harlow et al., 2012; Vyas & Luk, 2011), which is discussed later in this chapter.

Study participants identified that managerial processes often slowed down demands for resources, either as direct or indirect consequences of the use of panels to agree

funding in England or administrative hurdles with employers. Participants stated that employers did not recognise the challenge or the emotional strain that it placed on them. Participants also spoke about these dilemmas in the context of needing to consult with managers about the use of their professional time or resources and considered these to have negative implications for their professional standing and confidence. Gilbar (1998) identified the importance for workers feeling that their internal and external environments are predicable with a high degree of confidence that things will work out as expected. Participants perceived lack of control therefore may also increase their sense of unease and dissatisfaction. Consequently, personal and situation factors along with the ambience of professional teams and high work demands (see Kühnel et al., 2012) have all been identified as key factors in work engagement. The next section seeks to explore the process through which participants accommodated their role.

As acknowledged earlier, national contexts help shape the nature of the profession (Harris, 2008; Ornellas et al., 2016), while others (see Lorenz, 2012, 2016) highlight the importance of historical, political and socio-economic context for professional practice. From a global north perspective i.e. European or Canadian, social work is often linked to the welfare state, although this was not the case in South Africa, or at least not in the same way that the universal welfare state is commonly understood within the global north. Contextual differences were observed throughout the study and, where appropriate, these have been highlighted in the preceding chapter. One such example being the structure and breadth of social work services offered, including how social work is financed, the physical risk workers may be exposed to

and professional challenges experienced by service users i.e. shortages of suitable placements for accommodated children in South Africa.

Study participants highlighted the impact of managerial control and marketisation in reducing preventative or development work making this practice rare if not non-existent, while interventions were increasingly crisis based. Potential service users with very limited resources were being excluded from support services according to participants, as they did not meet organisational priority or polices. This was perhaps most extreme in the South African context, social workers in the other two countries highlighted similar prioritisation concerns. In the UK context, some service user groups with a higher political profile appeared able to advocate for services often at the expense of other vulnerable groups.

Historically, the role of social work has been to create social solidarity in society (Lorenz, 2008, 2013), by negotiating spaces between private and public life domains and so achieving a balance between citizens, political communities and the demands for personal freedom and identity. (Lorenz, 2008, 2013) commenting on the UK, views a consequence of marketization and individualisation as the profession ceasing to debate this difficult task (Lorenz, 2016). Certainly, in the case of very experienced English participants, they expressed more difficulty in promoting individualism than more recently qualified colleagues. While acknowledging that they did not undertake macro intervention, participants claimed their practice focussed on micro interventions leaving little space for anything else. Leading academics (Lorenz, 2016) identified macro interventions not being undertaken within the profession as including policy analysis, social action, legislative advocacy, and the use of litigation

and dissemination of information. This appears at odds with the studies of Gray and van Rooyen (2000) and Gray, van Rooyen, Rennie, and Gaha (2002) in which social workers identified as most politically active in lobbying were from South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Similarly, Dudziak and Coates (2004) identified Canadian social workers as having participated in lobbying activities, with half taking part in demonstrations against government policy, hearings or inquiries into polices. Other researchers such as Chui and Gray (2004) in surveying Hong Kong social workers, note participation in advocacy, with a fifth being engaged in lobbying. Social workers from the USA and Israel were found to be the least engaged in policy practice despite viewing it as important professionally (Koeske, Lichtenwalter, & Koeske, 2005; Teare & Sheafor, 1995; Weiss-Gal & Welbourne, 2008). In Australia (Koeske et al., 2005; Teare & Sheafor, 1995; Weiss-Gal & Welbourne, 2008), "policy practice" is often considered a peripheral activity for social workers and consequently Mendes (2003b) and Schneider and Netting (1999) claim that social work has struggled with the divide between macro and micro social work training. Indeed, social workers involvement in social change has been reported by Weiss, Gal, and Katan (2006) to lower professional involvement, with lower recognition of macro social change impact.

The changing of roles due to marketisation and managerial approaches has not been identified in The Options for Excellence report, which defined social work in England as:

> *...a problem-solving activity carried out by the worker through relationships with the individual, family and community. Social work is usually needed when*

> *individuals, families or groups are facing a major and often life changing problem or challenge. Social workers help individuals and families to achieve the outcomes they want in the ways they prefer.* (Department for Education and Skills & Department of Health, 2006, p. 49)

This report discuss social work's involvement in dealing with "major" or "life changing" problems (Department for Education and Skills & Department of Health, 2006, p. 49), yet it does not clarify how work in the social care sector should be divided and its role. A further review published as "Social Work at its Best: A Statement of Social Work Roles and Tasks for the 21st Century" (Department for Education and Skills & Department of Health, 2006) positioned the profession's undertaking of work at the severe end of needs and while it acknowledged that preventative work could be undertaken by the profession, it indicated that many roles undertaken by social work could be undertaken by others (General Social Care Council (GSCC), 2008). However, (General Social Care Council (GSCC), 2008) expressed concern about the profession's capacity and duty to be independent of the state, while the BASW Code of Ethics makes no reference to structural shortcomings or distress or comments on the IFSW definition of social work. This dilemma was identified by participants but their lack of discretion and control of their work has limited their ability to deal with this challenge. Carey (2008a) noted how the role of disparagement of universalism is impacting negatively on the deskilling and disenfranchisement or social workers.

Within England, social care emerged during the New Labour government and resulted in (Higham, 2012) arguing that it promoted social work as its professional arm. However (Higham, 2012) were concerned that it had undertones of semi-skilled work, low levels of decision making, less formal education, with implications for reducing intellectual and ethical challenges. This no doubt has implications for the standing of the profession, but also debates over whether the profession sufficiently protects its boundaries. This may also have contributed to the profession lacking a critical and influential voice in key policy arenas, especially when these changes were promoted through the politically neutral ideas of “modernisation”. Thus, whilst many authors such as Ferguson (2008), Garrett (2009) and Lorenz (2005) have stated the impact of marketisation and managerialism on social work, social work has still not adequately theorised and identified its characteristics (Garrett, 2010). This failure of professional leadership and authority has resulted in missed opportunities to review and promote critical debate to support professional diagnosis of the social consequences, costs, implications, dilemmas and policy proposals brought about by neoliberal policies.

More recently, qualified study participants appeared to view the profession from the perspective of the organisation, thus aligning themselves to being organisational employees, needing to follow instructions to avoid conflict with the organisation. This finding appeared to be at odds with previous UK studies, which indicate that social workers without prior social welfare experience were more humanitarian in their motivation and less concerned with existing organisational culture (Stevens et al., 2012).

Workloads and the pressure of caseloads was an area of considerable concern for participants, with no universally accepted or agreed methodologies for their calculation of what might be acceptable or possible within agencies. Key social work academics (see Baines et al., 2014; Curry, McCarragher, & Dellmann-Jenkins, 2005; Garrett, 2012; Gaughan & Garrett, 2011; Hölscher, 2008; McFadden et al., 2015; Mor Barak et al., 2006) identified the pressure of workloads in England and Canada, which in turn raised concern about the effectiveness and quality of interventions and had substantial impacts on satisfaction, risk and retention. Similarly, study participants described the difficulties of being effective with large caseloads, the challenges and risks this posed for them professionally, including that of a sense of failure and helplessness. The use of short-term interventions and limited support was felt to encourage service users to try obtaining more services through escalation of their needs and they were concerned about the implications when needs cannot be met. Furthermore, participants noted that they sometimes "gamed" (Howard, Agllias, Schubert, & Gray, 2018; Lymbery, 2014b) the caseload management system by inflating their caseloads or keeping service users on their caseload, so that the time allocated to this service user in the management system could rather be spent by the social worker on other cases.

Participants across all three countries often considered supervision to be instrumental, process driven and managerial, when available. The monitoring of performance targets and budget management being most predominant in Canada and England. A lack of supervision and a perception of accountability through the ticking of boxes, framed and shaped the work undertaken with service users.

Experienced English participants claimed their professional development needs were not being met and very little supervision provided. Study participants also expressed uncertainty about organisational responsibility. While accepting the need for accountability, the loss of professional discretion, along with the value of their professional opinions was important. For English participants discussing decision making, where managers had interceded in their judgement, questioned who would be held accountable. In contrast, South African social workers doubted whether the courts or government agencies were certain about their roles and accountability. Accountability and supervision were often raised as a binary experience by social workers; being both helpful and/or at other times punitive and unhelpful. Other studies (Frost et al., 2018; Howard et al., 2018; Lymbery, 2014b) identified that workers frequently complained of poor or inaccessible supervision and felt its usefulness was in providing support in the achievement of social justice. While others (see Baines et al., 2014) recognised the role of supervision as a buffer against poor wages and conditions. Many participants valued supervision, but often found it either unavailable or process driven, which detracted from its benefits. In these circumstances, studies such as Baines et al., (2014), Beddoe (2010), Hughes (2010), Manthorpe, Moriarty, Hussein, Stevens and Sharpe (2015) and Noble & Irwin (2009a) have shown supervision was experienced as performance evaluating, often at the expense of professional and practice development.

Supervision emerged from both the literature and interviews with participants having identified this as a key support and development mechanism for social workers. However, Carpenter et al. (2012) argued there had been a shortage of comparative research on supervision between countries, despite the recognition of its importance in social work training and service delivery (O'Donoghue & Tsui, 2011).

(O’Donoghue & Tsui, 2011) evidenced its important links to quality and accountability. In their study of child protection workers, Hunt et al. (2016) argued that without adequate social work supervision and management support children cannot be protected and social and economic costs will accrue due to poor professional physical and mental health, and absenteeism. They argue that by acknowledging the stressful and violent challenges of practice, alongside appropriate training, management support and resourcing (see Hunt et al., 2016), child protection interventions with violent parents would be more successful. In a further online survey of 590 child protection workers’ (402 qualified social workers) experiences of supervision following contact with hostile parents, Hunt, Goddard, Cooper, Littlechild, & Wild (2016) highlighted an extraordinary lack of support and supervision, which negatively impacted on their personal and professional lives and lowered the quality of child protection. Koritsas, Coles, and Boyle (2010) advocate that social work employers should also acknowledge the challenges posed by parental violence and threats through policies and guideline challenges.

One alternative approach to address the challenges of professional accountability was through the separation of management and professional development functions of supervision and accountability, which were identified by South African participants and have also been developed in New Zealand (O’Donoghue & Tsui, 2015). This separation between operational management and supervision has been longstanding in South Africa and Canada, while in England this distinction was not the norm, despite the promotion of supervision as a good professional practice driver (O’Donoghue & Tsui, 2015). The ring fencing of supervision to provide critical space for professional development and reflection has been noted by practitioners (see

Beddoe, 2010) as well as by participants. Manthorpe et al. (2015) identified reducing levels of supervisory support for more experienced workers, variability and limitations in supervisory availability and manager's self-acknowledgement of a lack of time; all have created a more challenging and fluid support environment for practitioners. (Hunt et al., 2016). This occurred despite official acknowledgement of the importance of supervision and the need to improve its quality and frequency (Munro, 2011). Participants had mixed views of the availability, usefulness and nature of supervisory practice within and between countries. This evidence suggests that many social workers are uncomfortable with the unavailability, structure and purpose of supervision.

Furthermore, social workers with limited work experience and who experienced higher levels of role pressure and extensive workloads were viewed to have greater negative views towards service users and experienced the greatest conflict between with these (Blomberg et al., 2015). However, no-one in the sample expressed negative views towards service users.

While committed to their profession, participants also experienced some cognitive dissonance and feelings of being torn in multiple directions. The performance pressure of contractual targets i.e. time taken to complete assessments or processing significant numbers of service users to satisfy grant or funders' performance targets, negatively impacted on the development of the service user relationship, provision of quality services and deliver of the mandate of the agency.

Agency specialisation along with organisational remits appeared to result in service users with multiple or complex needs falling between services or needing to achieve a threshold to achieve services. One social worker in South Africa highlighted the challenge of what they referred to as “political correctness” making it difficult for poor whites to receive services as services were now focussed on the “poorest or the poor” who tended to be black. Participants were often concerned about who could access services and the increasing difficulty of those in need being able to navigate access due to tightening eligibility criteria.

Social work recruitment and retention difficulties in the UK have been viewed as a consequence of organisational change, increased workload pressure, and feelings of being unvalued and dissatisfied (Blomberg et al., 2015). High workloads, limited resources and high levels of occupational stress levels (Forsyth & Polzer-Debruyne, 2007), along with existing staff vacancies (Harlow, 2004; Jill Manthorpe et al., 2010; Simpson, 2009) are indicators of current workplace pressures and the ensuing personal impact. The consequences of increased work pressure, a greater sense of being unvalued and dissatisfaction, was associated with workers intent to leave their employment (Harlow, 2004; Jill Manthorpe et al., 2010; Simpson, 2009). These pressures, along with managerialism have been viewed as part of the problem and within the UK, strategies to address these have included a variety of workforce initiatives (Forsyth & Polzer-Debruyne, 2007). Participants across all three countries viewed their professional challenges as including debates about the impact of macro and mezzo structural and financial changes in organisations, as well as the shaping of social work services and the enactment of the profession. Problems with the

recruitment and retention of social workers has been a perennial problem for social work (Moriarty & Murray, 2007), but despite this there has been little published on those wanting to enter the profession.

While there are no published longitudinal comparative studies on social work retention rates, contemporary literature highlights work demands, organisation of work, as well as the work environment as significant factors when considering retention rates (Asthana, 2008; Lloyd et al., 2002; Vyas & Luk, 2011). Other factors include low pay (Asthana, 2008; Lloyd et al., 2002; Vyas & Luk, 2011), changes to the nature of the work resulting in less direct work with service users (Eborall & Griffiths, 2008), as well as increased paperwork and administration (Challis et al., 2007; Postle, 2001). Reductions in relationship based interventions, along with an increased bureaucratic focus on assessing risk, the rationing of services, a more moral role (Mor Barak et al., 2006; Revans, 2007) and decreased work place support, have all increased stress and reduced job satisfaction (Hombrados-Mendieta & Cosano-Rivas, 2013). Many participants echoed these challenges, noting in particular the challenge of meeting individual demands for assistance, the impact of organisation changes and structures on their professional work. It is within this context that we can view the human impact of NPM and marketization, including the outsourcing or privatisation of services, changes to service accessibility and consumerist social work (Hombrados-Mendieta & Cosano-Rivas, 2013).

Other solutions to resolve recruitment and retention problems have included debates on the need for greater flexibility in English social work agency structure, to improve

the quality of outcomes and services (Department for Education and Skills, 2006; Le Grand, 2007). Social work practices and semi-independent practices away from local authority control (Department for Education and Skills, 2006; Le Grand, 2007) have been proposed as an alternative to support public sector social work practice. An evaluation of five English social work practices (SWPs) as well as private practices, highlighted that SWPs have been considered user friendly, although children and young people did not view them as responsive or accessible (see Stanley et al., 2013). Likewise, the perceptions of staff decision making varied and although staff morale was higher (possibly linked to supervision levels), there were no economic savings and ongoing difficulties persist in achieving consistency and continuity of outcomes for children (Stanley et al., 2013). While these findings highlight the complexity of care delivery, the increased personalised structure and involvement of staff in decision making, along with more supportive structures, have had an observable impact (see Stanley et al., 2013). However, this may indicate the need for professional engagement and decision making, rather than changed organisational structures.

Stress and burnout are strongly associated with a range of work environments, including reduced job satisfaction, morale, reduced peer support (Moriarty et al., 2018), and employment insecurity and reductions (Holmes et al., 2013). Organisation and professional challenges along with difficult workloads create a toxic mix, which may result in depressive symptoms for staff (Holmes et al., 2013). In their study, (Mutkins et al., 2011) found that this challenging environment, when combined with low organisational support, often resulted in higher levels of burnout, although

personal and organisational support buffered against emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment.

A surprising finding was that while participants identified stress and burnout in colleagues, it did not feature as heavily in participants' voices as the literature might suggest. Nevertheless, participants highlighted their concern about the profession and its demands, but felt hamstrung by a lack of transferable skills, potential precarity and feelings that they needed to keep their heads down while remaining committed to the profession. There appeared to be hope that a new government would change working conditions for social workers and the sector. It was apparent from the experience of social workers that changes to the profession and its working environment exacerbated the stresses (Lloyd et al., 2002). Many participants highlighted and were challenged by the emotional trials of their work, dealing with the pain and distress of others and a lack of financial, organisational demands and social work resources. This was at times, through self-medication of alcohol and marijuana.

Another mechanism for coping was highlighted by a significant number of Canadian social workers but only hinted at by South African participants, who raised issues of subversive practice in discussions despite their concern for practice implications and their professional registration. Even where managerial systems dominate organisations, Lloyd et al. (2002) view these systems as having created opportunities for worker resistance. Uncritical use of management practices and a practice environment of limited narrative evidence-based practice, social work may consider subversion as their only professional option, such that they may undertake "isolated acts of banditry" (Jordan, 1990, p. 67). This has led Jordan (1990, p. 67) to

identify that efforts to undertake ethical practice, within inflexible systems which do not recognise discretion, are experienced as draining and challenging. However, Evans and Harris (2004) suggest that the inherent uncertainty of social work means that there is always space for discretion. Although the managerialist practice environment may result in greater routine and structure than previous bureaucratised and professional norms and standards processes it thereby encourages conservative and preventative practice (Ellis, 2014). English social workers in particular identified their struggle with these contradictions. Thus, while there might theoretically be opportunity and potential space to assert discretion, whether social workers believe this is the case or have sufficient professional agency to utilise this, maybe an area for further research.

Tools and mechanisms to maintain practice commitment, are under researched but in exploring why social workers remain in the profession, a number of authors (Ellis, 2014) identified a typology of social workers, with those who had a clear "career preference" being less likely to leave due to being embedded in the organisation and community. In contrast, those identified as "transients" had already decided to leave their employer before they started working with them, while a final group of "converts" never intended to stay but have. The shifts in UK social workers perceptions particularly of the profession have historically been reported by Ros (2003) in The British Household Panel Survey as having high levels of job satisfaction (59%) and was better than doctors, nurses, and primary and secondary teachers. Post qualification practice experience and time served are considered important features in a profession that has experienced significant change in the past two decades and are significant contributing factors to work stress (Dominelli, 2004;

Fook, Ryan, & Hawkins, 2000; Vyas & Luk, 2011) and social worker retention. The working life of UK social workers has been estimated at around eight years, in comparison to 13 years for social care workers, despite no significant gender differences (Curtis et al., 2009). Compared to other care professions, medical doctors have a working life of 25 years (Curtis et al., 2009) and pharmacists 28 years (Netten & Knight, 1999). The length of time since qualification in this study comprised: less than 10 years, 28% (5); those with 11- 20 years, 33% (6); those with 21-30 years, 28% (5) and those with more than 31 years' experience comprising 11% (2). The voices therefore provide perspectives across the profession and includes those whose longevity in the profession is well beyond the UK average of eight years.

Despite these challenges participants almost unanimously expressed a commitment to the profession, despite the pressure felt in their work, their mixed feelings of professional recognition and perceptions of not being professionally valued in their workplaces.

6.4 Summary

Three key themes were utilised to discuss and explore this study's findings. These three themes were not discrete entities but interacted with each another. For instance, individual perceptions of being a social worker are also directly and indirectly associated with individual experiences of working within their employing organisation. The nature and structures of employment thus have a complex interrelationship with professional development and practice.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The objective of this study was to explore social workers' perceptions of organisational and professional changes to their work in three countries namely Canada, England and South Africa. In doing so, previous chapters explored participants' experiences and perceptions of organisational change in their professional practice, how management practice impacted on decision making and their work and finally how they accommodated their professional role, accountability and contradictions of practice. Findings and the analysis of this work were discussed in preceding chapters.

In conclusion, participants found that as committed professionals, they experienced considerable organisational and professional change, which was affecting their ability to practice in the way that they wished. This finding was unanimous across participants in all three countries. While they demonstrated flexibility and pragmatism in undertaking their professional responsibilities, they found the practice context unhelpful for delivering good social work to service users. Social workers raised concerns regarding managerialism, the impact of marketisation, NPM and commodification. They spoke candidly about the impact that these initiatives were having on them, society and their service users. Resource shortages, austerity, lack of discretion, feelings of not being professionally valued, market reforms, lack of effective supervision and managerialist practices had all impacted on their lived professional experience. Many had become social workers to "help" people but found themselves increasingly burdened by bureaucracy, performance and

governance systems that seemingly were unhelpful in supporting them or service users, while adding further burdens and hurdles in ensuring effective care. All of this being under the guise of improving quality, efficiency and effectiveness. Changed processes to managing risk had resulted in increased bureaucracy but also facilitated mechanisms that protected managers and organisations; doing little to reduce the risks to either social workers or service users. Despite so much emphasis placed by organisations on delivering service improvements, ensuring greater accountability and protecting the public, participants themselves felt exposed, unsupported and stressed. Participants highlighted that these had increased burnout in colleagues and impacted on their ability to mediate and maintain their commitment to the profession through retention and differing coping mechanisms. These coping mechanisms resulted, at times, in undertaking subversive practice, with clear risks to their own professional careers or needing to find personal alternatives to cope with a difficult and oppressive work environment. It is therefore unsurprising that some felt they needed to 'soldier on', with the pressure of workloads restricting their options to seek alternatives. Professional training was criticised for not adequately preparing newly qualified social workers for a new practice environment, while participants were concerned for the future of the profession. However, little consideration appears to have been given to theorising current social work practice environments, with little research on how the structural constraints of this practice environment may be impacting on the profession. Additionally, within England in particular, the profession appears to have been subject to change at organisational and socio-political levels, and in respect of training, factors have resulted in deprofessionalisation and related professional and personal difficulties for social workers. Further debate and leadership is necessary for the profession to stand

back, reflect and consider the path it has travelled and to question whether its service users' and employers' interests are aligned or whether to ensure good practice. Thus, social work professionals need to engage more directly in policy development, protect the professions boundaries and highlight the impact that organisational and professional reform have on the profession, service users and broader society. Following the same path that the profession has already trodden and tinkering with the effects of these changes is unlikely to ensure a vibrant social work profession for the future or a profession that delivers on its mandate for social justice.

7.1 Strengths and Limitations of the Study

Ensuring robust findings was an integral feature of the design and implementation, analysis and write up of this study, thus ensuring reliability, validity and transparency. Despite these efforts, set out below are a variety of factors that might have impacted on the quality of the study or in retrospect may merit further consideration.

Research on marketisation and managerialism's impact on social work has been embryonic and therefore there is little literature that directly applies to this field. Consequently, the researcher utilised peer reviewed literature from a broad range of allied fields, alongside grey literature from social work and social welfare.

This study utilised a sample of social worker and academic participants from three countries namely Canada, England and South Africa. As such, no extrapolations or generalisations can be made to the wider professional body in any of the countries, although the results of the study may encourage and be of interest to other

practitioners, academics and professional bodies. Sample size in this regard was limited by time, resource constraints and access.

The collection, management and analysis of significant amounts of data was initially challenging, despite the use of structured systems to manage coding and data. This was exacerbated by initial efforts to use NVivo, which was later abandoned, after learning to use the system and undertaking the analysis manually. While the use of guided conversation questions supported greater focus on the research aims, for many practitioners the opportunity to talk about their professional work and concerns meant at times they deviated from the questions, with a consequential knock on impact for the volume of data and the complexity of analysis.

English was the key language of the guided conversations and the reviewed literature. This in itself posed challenges at several levels, including restriction to English language publications and for some participants English was not their mother tongue, which raised questions about whether the full complexity and subtlety of their experience was fully captured and the intended meaning. This may have resulted in the discussion of complex social work practice, for instance while we may use common language and explanation, the meaning and usage of terms may differ slightly across countries, contexts and social welfare systems. This is a particular challenge in working across cultures and with international colleagues (Curtis & Netten, 2005). It might have been useful to provide participants with a glossary of professional terms used in the study, as while similar words are used in the three countries, their exact professional meaning may differ slightly in all three countries.

The respective sizes of each of the countries, their geographical spread and limited study resources resulted in interviews only being undertaken with participants who were fluent in the English language medium and who were available and accessible over a 10-day period in each of the countries. Due to the limited sample size, there was some variability between the country sites and their samples. The sample size was reduced and complicated by the late withdrawal of two participants, with no opportunity to replace them. The limited resources and the comparative study being undertaken in three countries also constrained the use of wider interview cohorts.

Understanding and working in completely different cultural, socio-political and economic contexts and welfare regimes was a challenge requiring significant resources, reading, critical reflection and an ability to access social work practitioners and academics. To facilitate this understanding in Canada and South Africa, I included social work academic participants in the interviews and read selective country based grey literature to obtain a country contextual familiarity and understanding.

7.2 Contributions to Existing Theory

This research contributes to existing theory on the practice and management of social work in a number of ways. It also contributes to the understanding of the complexity of lived professional practice in three countries, which in itself breaks new ground, in that there has been little comparative research into social work in these three countries. Furthermore, there has been little empirical impact research on the lived experience of social workers arising from the implementation of NPM, managerialism, marketisation and commodification (Delbridge & Keenoy, 2010;

Featherstone et al., 2012; Graham & Shier, 2010). While previous studies have evaluated the implementation of a particular policy approach i.e. personalisation (Delbridge & Keenoy, 2010; Featherstone et al., 2012; Graham & Shier, 2010), there has been little research seeking to understand the collective impact of much of the current practice reform on the profession. In doing so, it has confirmed the findings from previous individual work on marketisation and the introduction of business processes into social work (Ellis, 2014) and its negative impact on discretion, decision making (Raeymaeckers & Dierckx, 2013), quality of assessment and risk management (Raeymaeckers & Dierckx, 2013) and availability of care resources (Harlow et al., 2012). It was however, surprising that burnout and retention (Curtis et al., 2009; Engelbrecht, 2006; Evans & Huxley, 2009) was not highlighted as prominently as one would expect, but the role of subversive practice (Ross, Hooper, Stenhouse, & Sheaff, 2008) and participants feeling that there were no other choices, did highlight the practices that might have contributed to much of the sample remaining in practice rather than leaving the profession. While work has been undertaken to understand the retention challenges as a result of morale and demographics (Evans & Huxley, 2009; Evans et al., 2005), little work has been undertaken on whether the efforts to derive benefits from NPM are having a human impact on social workers. This study thus contributes to embryonic work seeking to understand how the dilution and restriction of professional practice, which began to be debated in the last 10 years (Adams & Shardlow, 2005; Munro, 2011; Munro & Hubbard, 2011; Shardlow et al., 2012) yet now appears to have less attention today. Human factors in practice transcend the work on street-level bureaucracy (Adams & Shardlow, 2005; Munro, 2011; Munro & Hubbard, 2011; Shardlow et al., 2012) and use of new practice models and new freedoms (Stanley et al., 2012). This study

highlights that the impacts of NPM, marketisation and managerialism are being experienced in these three countries and therefore contributes to an understanding of their impact.

7.3 Practical Implications

This study has important implications for the profession, policy, managers and the social work academy. The main implication is the recognition of current practice environment pressures on social workers. The reforms have had a hidden human impact on social workers and service users, which include professional decision making, restrictions to decision making and practice, resulting in feelings of being devalued, along with consequences for retention and experiencing personal distress. The increased bureaucratisation and standardisation of practice are resulting in unintended human consequences, which are difficult to observe directly and which also highlight wider issues for the profession of how professional identity is formed, maintained and promoted. It promotes debate regarding the need for social work to consider its own professional development, its interaction with the state and employers, and whether greater demarcation of professional boundaries is required. This inevitably generates debates about whether this creates distance from service users and promotes a form of elitism, or whether social work, in a time of neoliberal policy, can rely on the power of others to ensure its own protection and that of service users.

This research helped me to consider a number of potential teaching practices for enabling social workers to work within this changed practice context:

- The first relates to the teaching of more emancipatory theory in lectures to help social workers resist mechanisms that promote their deskilling and disenfranchisement (Carey, 2008). Supporting politically informed and critical understanding of social problems and social policy may embed social justice, human rights and the complexity of social distress in students (Dominelli, 2010; Ife, 2008). This may help students particularly in South Africa, where social work theory is often taught today at the level of micro intervention despite the national drive for more participatory approaches. Social work teaching should embrace and support understanding of economic and management theory to facilitate practitioners to understand structural influences on their practices. Use of case studies in teaching, along with student and practitioner discussion forums should be used to explore complex topics aiding those preparing for practice, those already in practice and academics. Thus, integrating the academy and practice, supporting the theorisation of practice challenges and engaging and sustaining helpful peer support mechanisms
- The second relates to the teaching and discussion of contemporary social policy along with history in social work. Greater awareness of ideology and critical approaches would help social workers to better understand current practice contexts, and the possibility of challenge and change
- Thirdly, teaching should encourage international social work study, collaboration, empathy and solidarity. This poses a challenge, as social work training in all three countries is already pressurised to meet regulatory requirements, allowing little space in existing teaching curriculums. Nonetheless, I believe it is important that social workers are exposed to

trends and challenges of global practice, engage in discussions about international social work ethical codes and frameworks for practice and finally become familiar with international social work organisations and their debates. Certainly, recognition must be given to the resource differentials between the global south and global north, with both sharing experience, challenging and learning from one another. However, Hawkins (2009) argues that knowledge is not sufficient alone, but also social workers need to develop empathy in relation to social justice, human rights and other cultures. Technology has an important role to play here in making these contacts easier i.e. Skype and also more environmentally sustainable while promoting cultural sensitivity, empathy and solidarity

- Greater student involvement with service users facilitates their understanding of their perspectives and experiences. This would be particularly important in South Africa, where regulatory requirements mandate that only registered social workers can teach social work students. This experience combined with deeper understanding of human rights and social justice would support students to challenge prejudice and promote empathy and solidarity. The democratisation of social work knowledge, while not a key part of this research, requires academic colleagues to promote meaningful service user involvement and reflection
- The encouragement of students to become engaged in social policy analysis, development and evaluation (Weiss et al., 2006) would enable them to gain experience in macro practice. This would require educational institutions, academics and practice teachers to fully embrace the international definitions of social work (Weiss et al., 2006). This combined with support to enable

students to undertake activist practice may too enable them to recognise multiple sources of oppression, but also to feel more confident in defending service users' rights and their profession from attack, and support their confidence as critical practitioners

- Creating practice learning opportunities that recognise and challenge human rights and social justice is a particular challenge for many statutory practice agencies, particularly in England. Although all the academics interviewed in this study recognised the importance of human rights and social justice for practice. The creation of shared practice learning spaces would allow educators, students, newly qualified and experienced practitioners to work together to address issues of mutual professional concern, share experience and professional power. This engagement with ethical and emotional professionalism would normalise wider professional engagement and support broader learning on human rights and social injustice
- The modelling of human rights, social values and professional ethics by all those involved in social work education and professional practice would align well with global standards for social work education (International Federation of Social Work (IFSW), 2014a)
- Finally, the creation of professional spaces for discussion, reflection and research to support critical reflection; practice-based research would encourage greater professional development and engagement. This transcends continual professional development but would involve seminar and group work across the profession, in a critical, safe and honest forum, that encourages emotional, personal growth and a place of professional challenge and support.

7.4 Areas for Further Research

This study sought to create space for further and perhaps more focussed research in each of the three countries, as well as collectively in relation to the variety of sub-themes explored here. Further research may thus be helpful in the following areas:

- Impact of managerial change upon professional decision making in terms of how social workers conduct their professional work, as well as how social workers accommodate the complexity and conflicts inherent in their professional role;
- Evaluation of the professional experience of supervision, its impact on professional wellbeing and workforce implications;
- Investigation of alternative professional leadership and management models, that support and encourage the development of an independent and critical profession;
- Service user engagement in South African social work education, especially as this is less well developed compared to England and Canada;
- The impact on social work relationships between professionals and service users of the changes and how they seek to utilise their relationships to provide support and seek help in a marketised and highly managerial care environments;
- The development and evaluation of models/tools for enhancing teaching about human rights, economics and management in social work education;

- How marketisation in social work education influences social work educators in teaching, practice education and modelling social work interventions at macro, mezzo and micro levels.

Given the exploratory nature of the research, it would benefit from a further stage of validation by practitioners and educators in each of the countries. Consequently, my next stage would be to disseminate the research findings and seek feedback from stakeholders (practitioners, service users, educators and managers) in the three countries.

7.5 Reflections on My Professional Development

This research journey was undertaken due to my interest in the impact of neoliberalism on social work and society. As a social worker, leader, manager and a social work academic, I was interested in what was happening within the profession as a result of marketisation, managerialism and commodification and how social work was seeking to address these challenges. The opportunity to develop new knowledge and understanding was key to my research process and seeking to understand practitioners' perspectives. I found the process of doctoral study challenging and exhilarating in equal measure, with the process of research constantly questioning assumptions and research positions. I enjoyed the challenge of needing to focus on the research aims, to link the macro, mezzo and micro and to use appropriate research methodology. The learning I experienced has helped me to consider how it is important for social work to theorise and for researchers to make

professional research more accessible and engaging for practitioners to inform current debates and consider the political and human implications of reform.

I was struck by and reflected on the day-to-day challenges and dilemmas faced by social workers and how structural forces could either support or hinder them to address concerns of social justice. This has helped me to reflect on how important professionalising social work is and has been, and how the profession needs to debate more widely about its role and tasks and who informs these and enacts them and for what purposes. This debate requires greater theorising, the development of professional alliances and an ongoing questioning of what being and acting as a social worker means.

These research findings are informative, and I believe make a significant contribution to the existing knowledge and literature on social work, its management and practice. I have personally grown and learnt much as a researcher, social worker and potential user of services.

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Appendix 1: Invitation to Participate

KEELE UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION

23/03/10

Dear Sir / Madam,

Invitation to Participate in a Research Study

You are being invited to consider taking part in a research study – *How has new public management (NPM) and neoliberalism impacted on social workers in their professional lives?* This study is being undertaken by Gary Spolander as part of a PhD qualification.

Before deciding whether to take part or not, it is important that you consider why this research is being done and what it would involve.

Kindly take time to read the attached information leaflet carefully and you may discuss with the researcher, colleagues or friends and relatives if you wish.
If you consent to participate in the study, I would be grateful if you would confirm this by e-mailing me at: g.c.spolander@ippm.keele.ac.uk

On receipt of your e-mail confirmation, I will arrange a mutually agreeable time for you to be interviewed. This can be in your work setting, at a neutral university setting near to you or via Skype. At this interview; the purpose of the study, the way in which your information will be kept confidential and why you have been invited to participate will be explained to you again. You will be requested to confirm your consent again at the start of the interview.

Do not hesitate to ask me of anything that is unclear or if you would like me to provide you with more information.

With kind regards,

Gary Spolander

Appendix 2: Information Leaflet

INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION

Information Sheet

Study Title:
How has new public management (NPM) and neoliberalism impacted on social workers in their professional lives?

Aims of the Research:

- How social workers experience and view NPM and neoliberalism within their professional practice?
- How management practice impacts on social workers decision making, focus of their work and perceptions of professional risk and trust?
- How social workers accommodate concerns about professional discretion, risk and accountability?

Invitation

You are being invited to consider taking part in the research study into "How has new public management (NPM) and neoliberalism impacted on social workers in their professional lives?"

This project is being undertaken by: Gary Spolander, Principal investigator, Coventry University, Lambert Englebrecht, Co-investigator, Stellenbosch University, and Annie Pullen Sansfacon, Co-investigator at University of Montreal, and is funded by the Applied Research Fellowship at Coventry University. The data collected will also be used as part of Gary Spolander, PhD qualification through the University of Keele.

Before you decide whether or not you wish to take part, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read this information carefully and discuss it with friends and relatives if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is unclear or if you would like more information.

What is neoliberalism?

Neoliberalism can be described as "a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual

entrepreneurial freedom characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices." (Harvey, 2010: 2)

Why have I been chosen?

The study will make use of reviewing published documents and as part of the information gathering process will involve interviews with key professional informants from social work such as you, who are likely to have experienced the effects of changes in different ways. As the study is seeking to understand the changes and the impact of these changes on your own social work practice, your views on these changes as you have witnessed and experienced them over time are important.
Up to five qualified social workers who are still working in practice as well as up to two social workers working in higher education in each of Canada, England and South Africa will be interviewed as part of this study.

Do I have to take part?

You are free to decide whether you wish to take part or not. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign two consent forms, one is for you to keep and the other is for our records. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time and without giving reasons.

What will happen if I take part?

As the study is seeking to understand the changes and the impact of these changes on your social work practice, your views on these changes are important. Your participation in the study would involve an interview of up to one and a half hours at your workplace, at a neutral university setting near to you or via Skype. The questions I propose to ask can be found on the attached sheet 'Framework and Questions to Guide Interviews'. Following that interview, I may request further information about the impact on your practice (mentioned in the discussion or that may be already be public) or seek a further interview or discussion to explore particular issues arising from the initial interviews. On completion of the study a document presenting the results of the study will be sent to you for information and for comment, to help ensure that the findings are valid. All of this will require some time commitment on your part and some personal engagement with the process.

If I take part, what do I have to do?

Participation in the study will involve being interviewed by Gary Spolander for up to one and a half hours and, if you wish, reviewing a document reporting the study for your information and for comment.

If you consent to participate in the study, I would be grateful if you would confirm this by e-mailing me at: g.c.spolander@ippm.keele.ac.uk On receipt of your e-mail confirmation, I will arrange a mutually agreeable time for you to be interviewed. This can be in your work setting, at a neutral university setting near to you or via Skype. At this interview; the purpose of the study, the way in which your information will be kept confidential and why you have been invited to participate will be explained to

you again. You will be requested to confirm your consent again at the start of the interview and I will ask if you would agree to the interview being tape-recorded as part of the study.

Set down briefly and clearly what you will expect of participants

Each interview will comprise of a discussion and a sharing of your views and professional experience regarding social work practice. You will be requested to answer honestly and to share your own professional views. You will not be requested to breach any confidentiality. Questions will be based upon the enclosed sheet 'Framework and Questions to Guide Interviews'.

How will information about me be used?

No personal information about you is being collected, other than your experience. That information will be used in the preparation of written documents, presentations and published papers relating to this project. However it will not be used in any way that allows you or any other individual you mention, to be identified.

Who will have access to information about me?

Each interview will be recorded and the recoding kept in a safe and locked cabinet and only be accessible to the research team. All transcriptions of interviews will be coded to add an additional layer of confidentiality. This coding will only be known by the researcher and all records will remain safely secured for up to five years after the completion of the study.
As a result:

- Data will be stored securely and where the data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet and all electronic records on a password protected computer
- All transcripts will be coded, making them unidentifiable
- Data will be retained by the principal investigator for at least five years
- Longer-term data will be securely disposed

What are the benefits (if any) of taking part?

By taking part in the study you would be making a personal contribution to improving understanding of changes in social work at a global level as well as helping to help shape ideas around delivering better services.

What are the risks (if any) of taking part?

None are envisaged.

What if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you may wish to speak to the researcher(s) who will do their best to answer your questions. You should contact Gary Spolander on g.c.spolander@ippm.keele.ac.uk. Alternatively, if you do not

wish to contact the researcher(s) you may contact Nicola Leighton, Research Governance Officer on 01782 733306 or n.leighton@uso.keele.ac.uk
If you remain unhappy about the research and/or wish to raise a complaint about any aspect of the way that you have been approached or treated during the course of the study please write to Nicola Leighton who is the University's contact for complaints regarding research at the following address:-

Nicola Leighton

Research Governance Officer

Research & Enterprise Services

Dorothy Hodgkin Building

Keele University

ST5 5BG

E-mail: n.leighton@uso.keele.ac.uk

Tel: 01782 733306

Who is funding and organising the research?

Coventry University is funding travel arrangements for data to be collected in Canada and South Africa. No other funding is being provided.

Contact for further information
Should you have any queries you should speak to the researcher who will do his best to answer your questions. You can contact Gary Spolander via e-mail: g.c.spolander@ippm.keele.ac.uk.

Appendix 3: Consent

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: How has new public management (NPM) and neoliberalism impacted on social workers in their professional lives?

Name of Principal Investigator: Gary Spolander

Please tick box

1	I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.	☐
2	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time.	☐
3	I agree to take part in this study.	☐
4	I understand that data collected about me during this study will be anonymised before it is submitted for publication.	☐
5	I agree to the interview being audio taped/video recorded.	☐
6	I agree to allow the data collected to be used for future research projects	☐
7	I agree to be contacted about possible participation in future research projects.	☐

______________________	______________	________________
Name of participant	Date	Signature
______________________	______________	________________
Researcher	Date	Signature

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: How has new public management (NPM) and neoliberalism impacted on social workers in their professional lives?

Name of Principal Investigator: Gary Spolander

Please tick box

1	I agree for any quotes to be used	☐
2	I don't want any quotes to be used	☐
3	I want to see any proposed quotes before making a decision	☐

___________________	___________________	___________________
Name of participant	Date	Signature

___________________	___________________	___________________
Researcher	Date	Signature

Appendix 4: Framework

Framework and Questions to Guide Interviews

Project Title: How has new public management (NPM) and neoliberalism impacted on social workers in their professional lives?

Investigator: Gary Spolander

The proposed questions to guide the interview are listed below. Where possible, you will be encouraged to share examples to help focus your discussion and illustrate your views.

(H) Social Work Professional Role and Context of Work

(I)

1. Could you tell me a little about your social work career to date i.e. how long you have been qualified, how long you have worked in the profession?
2. Could tell me about your social work training?
3. Thinking about your social work career, could you talk a little about the high points and the low points and your perceptions of social work as a profession? How does this impact on your practice?
4. Could you share, perhaps by using examples, the changes that you have experienced in the social work profession since you qualified?
5. Could you describe your role and other social workers within your employment? Do you perceive any conflicts between this role and your employment? Could you share any examples?
6. Could you talk about the kinds of people who may access your organisation and your services and any changes there have been to their eligibility?
7. Could you explain the accountability and supervision for your work and that of social workers generally and the way this has changed since you qualified?

(J) Social Work and Organisations

1. How social work in your organisation is structured and what are the management arrangements?
2. Could you talk about how managerial systems and process impact on your professional discretion and the management of risk?

3. Do you provide direct services to the users of services in your organisation? If not, what are the implications for your practice?
4. Could you talk about any contractual relationships that you have to manage with third party organisations and professions? What are your experiences and how do you feel these impacts on your practice?
5. How would you describe opportunities to use your professional discretion and approaches to risk management in your social work practice?
6. Could you describe the tools and support systems that help or hinder you in your practice?
7. Have any changes in the work setting or social work impacted on your professional relationships or your decision making?

(C) Professional Experience

1. Could you share how your professional expertise and values are valued in your place of work? Could you share any examples to illustrate your views?
2. Do you feel constrained in undertaking your professional role by any aspect of your practice?
3. Could you talk a little about any factor that you feel prevents you from undertaking your professional role?

Appendix 5: Keele Ethics Approval

KEELE
UNIVERSITY

ACADEMIC SERVICES DIRECTORATE
RESEARCH AND ENTERPRISE SERVICES

12 May 2011

Mr Gary Spolander
7 St. Margaret's Drive
Wellington
Telford
Shropshire
TR1 3PH

Dear Gary

Re: 'How has new public management (NPM) and neoliberalism impacted on social workers in their professional lives?'

Thank you for submitting your revised project for review.

I am pleased to inform you that your project has been approved by the Ethics Review Panel.

Amendments to your project after a favourable ethical opinion has been given or if the fieldwork goes beyond the date stated in your application (30 September 2011) you must notify the Ethical Review Panel via Michele Dawson.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact Michele Dawson in writing to m.dawson@uso.keele.ac.uk

Yours sincerely

pp Dr Sue Read
Acting Chair – Ethics Review Panel.

cc RI Manager, Supervisor

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T: +44(0)1782 733371 F: +44(0)1782 733740 E: res@uso.keele.ac.uk
W: www.keele.ac.uk/businessenterprise
Dorothy Hodgkin Building, Room 1.13
Keele University, Staffordshire, ST5 5BG, United Kingdom
T: +44(0)1782 732000 W: www.keele.ac.uk