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**Organisational Justice and Emotion
among Social Workers: An
exploration of the lived experience of
child and family social workers**

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The University of Edinburgh
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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is of my own compositions, based on my own work, with acknowledgements of other sources, and has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Sandra Jane Kelk Engstrom

Date.....

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my family and friends whom have loved and supported me no matter how far apart we are.

An extra dedication to Jack, Joan, Howard, Erma, Jackie and Ed who all led the way and set the standards high.

To Seamus and MaryJane whose smiles and giggles are a cure for all that ails.

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Abstract

There is still much to learn about what it means to be a child and family social worker. Child and family social workers have a job that often entails making difficult decisions regarding vulnerable children and families in collaboration with other professionals, under stressful conditions in an increasing cost-restrictive climate and with diminishing resources. The lived experience of these social workers has been rarely researched and is poorly understood.

Using primarily a deductive qualitative approach, seventeen Scottish social workers were interviewed by employing the framework of 'organisational justice'. The organisational justice framework is mostly used quantitatively and was converted to a qualitative interview schedule in order to gain further insight as to the experience of the social workers.

The advantages of using the organisational justice framework in a qualitative way is that it allows for a deeper analysis of people's experience within their agency. With regards to the social work profession, analysis of the field data allowed for insight into the organisational elements that are primary influences on a social worker's working life. Utilising a secondary, more inductive approach, emotions experienced by the respondents also emerged.

The results suggest that social workers experience a range of emotions that have been under-explored. The results also offer a deeper understanding of where these emotions stem from because not only are they due to personal experiences, they are also the product of working in a profession that is regarded with ambivalence by the public, unlike other 'people' professions that are generally the subject of admiration such as nursing.

The research has shown that an organisational justice framework can be used to access qualitative perspectives as well as quantitative ones. Above all, this research concludes that there are aspects of the lived experience of child and family social work practitioners that have hitherto been under-examined and need to be fully understood in order to ensure best practice. Areas of impact for education, practice and policy are discussed at the end.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction and Overview

1.1 - Introduction

Child protection social work has received much attention from policy makers and academics. There is a vast amount of literature considering social work with children from a variety of angles. Literature can be found looking at how to work with families, how to assess neglect, parenting and abuse and related topics (Dale, 2004; Munro, 2012; Choate & Engstrom, 2014). Research is also available that discusses how to support social workers with better supervision, investigating what social workers do on field visits and how to encourage resilience (Ferguson, 2014; Adamson, Beddoe & Davys, 2012; Collins, 2015). There is also a considerable amount of literature that provides a critique and evaluation of the direction and overall purpose of child protection (Parton, 2011; Munro et al., 2015; Rogowski, 2010; Ferguson, 2014). As will be seen, the profession is in some difficulty today. Child and family social work practitioners who work within child protection continue to voice low morale, high levels of stress, difficulty finding time to see families and to practise the way they have been taught, and the profession as a whole has poor relationships with the media (BASW, 2012; Cooper, 2015).

On a practice level, social work is a profession guided by the belief in the individual achieving a level of safety, comfort and support they deserve in order to have healthy relationships and contribute as a positive member of their communities (IFSW, 2015). Social workers aim to improve the workings

of society and the environment of relationships when individuals find themselves in difficulty (Adams, Dominelli & Payne, 2009). There is a desire to improve human cooperation and social relationships in order to address the needs of the community, family and individual (Adams et al., 2009). More specifically, the majority of social workers who come in contact with children and their families, will put the needs of the child first in order to improve those relationships. Child and family social workers engage with and support families that are having difficulty in one or more areas of their family lives or are in a vulnerable position, in order to support them and work through the challenges they may face. These may be due to poverty, mental health concerns, violent relationships or any combination of these components. These practitioners play a key role in intervention and facilitating an appropriate end result for all. Specifically, those that work within the child protection remit, usually local authority child and family social workers, often have to make decisions as to whether a child remains or not with the family, what additional services or professionals are involved and supporting that family through processes that can be complex and distressing (Augsberger et al., 20120; Ferguson, 2014).

The role of the child and family social worker is then often the frontline and lead professional in the support and protection of children who have been harmed or at risk of being harmed. This is alongside other professional services such as police and emergency medical services that work together in order to ensure the child's safety. The social work profession therefore,

when it comes to child and family social workers, could be classified as an emergency service that holds a necessary and vital role to the wider community. That being said, the profession continues to fight for a place of recognition with regards to the role it plays within society. Historically, social work, but especially child protection social work, has been a subject of public and political controversy (Ferguson, 2005, Rogowski, 2010). Recent developments such as the College of Social Work (officially launched in January 2012 to represent and support the social work profession in England) closing down in 2015 due to lack of government funding, as well as Prime Minister David Cameron and other government officials believing social workers should be jailed for failing to protect children, have left the profession questioning whether it is valued (Wintour, 2015; McNicoll & Schraer, 2015). For child and family social workers with a child protection remit, who are already having to make challenging decisions and work within high stress environments, these developments can adversely influence the work they do on a day to day basis and have been much written about (Ferguson, 2005; Waterhouse & McGhee, 2009; BASW, 2012; Parton, 2011; Clapton, Cree & Smith, 2012).

In order to further investigate the possible reasons for the expressed low morale, this thesis therefore seeks to provide deeper insight as to how child and family social workers who work within child protection do their job from the perspectives of the social work practitioners themselves. Existing literature primarily focuses on survey data and is missing a more complete

report as to how social workers perceive their work environment and their practice. This thesis first reviews the existing relevant literature, such as the development of child and family social work and child protection, then pays attention to organisational influences such as the rise of managerialism. The thesis then reviews literature on the concept of 'organisational justice', a theoretical perspective and framework that is used to ascertain employees' perspectives of fairness and treatment within the workplace, and discusses its relevance in accessing the day to day experiences of social workers. The thesis then presents findings from a qualitative study, which uses the organisational justice framework, and is aimed at informing our understanding of how social workers perceive and experience their day to day professional lives. Integrated within a second analysis chapter is a return to literature on emotions as a secondary research question developed through the course of the initial analysis. The insight gained from this study is then developed through discussion of the findings in the light of current literature to allow new comprehension regarding the day to day experience of child and family social workers.

This first chapter provides an overview of child and family social work today and introduces the framework of organisational justice. The literature on social work morale and perceptions of social workers, though less prevalent, is also included. It should be borne in mind that because child protection is generally the statutory responsibility of local authorities in the UK, the

discussion will focus on local authority child protection practice and child and family social workers.

A Note on Terminology

Throughout this dissertation, the term 'child and family social workers' is used to describe social workers that are employed by a local authority and work with children and families. This role often involves the role of performing child protection procedures and is described in more detail in section 3.6.2.

The term 'child protection' is used to describe a system of services, policies and procedures that are designed to keep children and young people safe from harm. Within this dissertation, 'child protection social work' or 'child protection social worker' may be used as a reference to the specific role of social work within the wider child protection system.

1.1.1 - Context

It is important here to ensure that the context of this research is clarified as throughout Chapters 1 and 2 there will be literature involved from England as well as Scotland, where the research took place. The purpose of this is due, not only to the availability of the literature sourced, but also to the history of the countries being interwoven for many years and as a result, this has left a complex web of constitutional arrangements and legal frameworks that

impact on each other and share policy around social welfare and social work (Payne & Shardlow, 2002).

Many of the wider social and economic issues found in England also exist in Scotland and the nature of social work and the services that are provided will show some level of continuity (Payne & Shardlow, 2002). Although Scotland has some responsibilities that are fully within its control as a result of the devolution settlement in 1997, key areas, such as employment, have not been devolved and, because of this, have a powerful impact on social work services and the social work profession. The inclusion of literature and statistics from both countries was also important because of England's influence on welfare, ideology and legislation across the four countries of the UK (Payne & Shardlow, 2002) and because of a shared professional ethos across the UK, in spite of there being different legislation on important areas such as mental health, child protection and probation. The relationship between Scotland and England is complex and the role of social workers and the services they provide will be bound up in that relationship in a myriad of ways (Payne & Shardlow, 2002).

1.2 - Overview of the Problem and How it will be Addressed

In 2012, the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) reported that out of 1100 social workers across the UK who took part in an online survey, 80% found it difficult to practise effectively, 77% were concerned about caseloads that are unmanageable and too large and 53% had a fear that lack of support

could have tragic results for service users or clients. This report also stated that 46% of social workers were afraid to speak about, due to a fear of repercussions, implying challenges are being faced at many levels within the workplace. Administrative overload, unmanageable caseloads, eroding morale due to bullying and the impact of budgetary cutbacks were all reported and commented on by the responding social workers:

It makes me so sad that this job seems only to be possible if you sacrifice your own health and wellbeing (Respondent, BASW, 2012)

Separately, in other survey, although some managers felt appreciated (40%), many stated they were stressed due to lack of recognition, strained professional relationships emerging as a result of bureaucracy and poor media representation of social work (Morar Consulting, 2012). The BASW Report echoes the latter by reporting that social workers believe the poor portrayal of social work in the media adversely impacts their ability to work in partnership with services users and professionals. The complex and regularly conflicting nature of child protection practice (Hood, 2012), the demands of collaboration with other professionals eg. law, education and health, that have differing priorities, (Munro, 2011; Holt & Lawler, 2005; Munro, 2015) and other external pressures, such as media and budgetary influences, contribute to making the work stressful and complex (Glisson & Durrick, 2002). These components, as will be discussed further in Chapter 2, all have the potential to be manifested in role conflict, burnout, lack of job satisfaction, and unhealthy coping mechanisms (Thompson et al., 1994; Nissly, Mor Barak & Levin, 2005; Tham, 2007). The challenges presented in these

writings continue to be felt today and are particularly relevant to this thesis in order to further an understanding of the day to day experience of child and family social work.

More recent research, a 2015 report conducted by Liquid Personnel and Eileen Munro, surveyed 1571 social work practitioners in England (Munro et al., 2015). This report focuses on the impact of funding cuts, morale, management and support, pressure and training. Here too, social workers express negativity, a difficulty in doing their jobs properly and an overarching theme that management does not understand the realities of the frontline practitioners. As the report states:

However skilled the social workers, it is difficult to do good work in a non-supportive environment and work conditions have undoubtedly got tougher (Munro et al., 2015, p. 2)

Thus, increasingly, the conditions under which social work is practised and the day to day practice context is coming to the fore as a matter of concern. Studies have begun to look at these conditions from an organisational and systemic point of view. In these works, the importance of organisational culture in social work organisations, is being recognised as a vital component to enhancing best practice and outcomes for children, families and adults (Meyerson, 1991; Zlotnik et al., 2009; Glisson et al., 2006; Glisson et al., 2002; Gibbs, 2009; Agbenyiga, 2009; Munro, 2011; Laming, 2009). Glisson (2002) found that separately, organisational climate and culture affect service quality and outcomes, independently of the training and experience of the particular worker. Graham and Shier (2010) believe that there is a gap in the

literature as to the level of impact that environmental and systemic organisational factors has on the subjective well-being of social workers. The starting point of this research is the aspiration to bridge this gap by investigating the day to day working lives of child and family social workers.

It is through a combination of having experience as a child and family social worker, my own inquisitive personality and reading the literature that an interest grew in wanting to have a further understanding of the day to day experience of practitioners. As a result, as will be seen throughout this dissertation, this research focuses on child protection social work today from the perspectives of child and family social work practitioners. The literature, referred to above, has revealed a multitude of factors that are involved in the day to day experience of child and family social workers, such as relationships within the workplace, demands of paperwork, representation of social work from the media, and low morale (Munro et al., 2015; BASW, 2012; Samuel, 2012; Munro, 2011; Ofsted, 2010). These reports provide necessary information from survey results and yet are still missing the social worker voice and a wider analysis of their experience within the workplace and with those factors previously mentioned (Ferguson, 2005).

Social work often finds itself in the public eye due to media attention (discussed further in Section 1.5), and the subsequent debates often assume that child protection social work is being done by rational beings working for rational employers in rational environments. After all, rationality within the

workplace, as Ashforth and Humphrey (1995) discuss, developed as 'an administrative paradigm partly as a defence against the perceived dysfunctions and pejorative connotations of emotion' (p101). However, the reality is very different. As someone who has worked as a child and family social worker, I have firsthand experience as to how the environment and the employees are not always working with a rational mindset; heightened emotions are often present and there are many different factors in the employment environment that impact decision making and the ability to do the job well. This thesis developed therefore, with an aim of wanting to investigate the organisational aspects involved in impacting the work of a child and family social worker and how we can better understand the day to day experience of child and family social workers. By organisational aspects, I mean the systemic, structural, unmanaged aspects that surround the actual practice of doing social work, elaborated in Chapter Two. Through a process of thought and continuous reflective work, these questions became the starting point that led to the discovery and interest in exploring 'organisational justice' and the term's usefulness in understanding the organisational context of child and family social work. Organisational justice, as will be seen in Chapter 2, is a lens that focusses on the perception of fairness in an organisation, and provides a tool to further explain certain organisational behaviours (Greenberg, 1990; Simpson & Kaminski, 2007). This framework seemed to be an important tool that could be used as a way into employee perceptions of child and family social work and their day to day experience.

The organisational justice framework was hoped to become the key component to explore a deeper understanding of child and family social work. By uncovering some of the deeper and hidden stories these child and family social workers carry with them, there is the possibility of addressing the gap that Graham & Shier (2010) spoke of, as well as entering a discussion about the deeper internal and external assumptions surrounding child protection social work that may impact their day to day practice. Social work seems to have not (or perhaps resists) been examined from a business model or point of view, understandably, because people's concerns and distresses are not marketable commodities. However, this is not to say that there are no lessons to be learned from how to deliver a social work service from other bodies of literature that are concerned with business practices and policies. The remainder of this section will discuss the conditions of current child protection social work in the United Kingdom before moving on to Chapter Two, the literature review, that will continue to make the argument of the relevance of applying the organisational justice framework when researching the child and family social worker experience.

1.3 – Statistical Information and Staffing Levels

As indicated, various surveys have been done that describe vacancy rates and how social workers feel around the UK. These surveys are primarily conducted within local authorities as they are the primary employer of child and family social workers (Statistics Scotland, 2010). These surveys are

relevant as they help to provide insight as to the current conditions social workers operate in.

Statistics Scotland (2010) provides data relating to staffing levels and details about the staff in filled posts for Social Work services. As of 2010, there were 40,739 whole time equivalent (WTE) social services staff employed by Scottish local authorities, roughly 7.9 staff per 1,000 population. This is a fall of 2.3% compared to the previous year. Within that number, there were 5,201 WTE qualified social workers, which is also a fall of 0.6% compared to 2009. However, although the amount of social workers employed has decreased, there has also been a decrease in vacant social work posts as in October 2010, 4.8% of all social worker posts were vacant as compared with 6.8% in October 2009. Within that 4.8% vacancy rate, only 47% were known to be in the process of being filled at the time of the census.

The level of staffing reported is variable around the country. Each council will have different needs for the amount of social workers that they require depending on their geographic location and demographic population. The extent to which services are contracted out or delivered in partnership with other agencies will also determine the amount of social workers employed by a local authority. As of 2010, the number of staff per 1000 was highest in the island councils (31.5 in Shetland Islands) and lowest in Dumfries and Galloway (4.8).

Since 2006, some of the major Scottish areas have seen a decrease in the amount of WTE social workers working for the local authorities. Glasgow saw a decrease from 848 to 772, Edinburgh from 517 – 509, Stirling from 83 to 79, and Fife from 296 to 284, whereas during the same period, some of the smaller areas have seen an increase, Shetland Islands when from 19 to 24, Moray from 70 to 107, Dundee from 127 to 189 and Clackmannanshire jumped from 29 to 42 WTE.

The 2010 report, recognises that amongst the various councils within Scotland, there will be some discrepancy as to how they are organised and this therefore impacts on the results in the publication. Other points about the reporting that are important to take note of are the way local authorities now operate, and that the recording of vacancy information is not managed centrally, meaning that not all local authorities may have provided information. As well, local authorities were unable to provide information on starters and leavers in local authority social work services, this then limits our knowledge as to the turnover rate and possible reasons for the flows within the staffing situation. There is also limited knowledge as to how social work practitioners feel about their practice and the context of the working environment, thus undermining our ability to fully understand the reasons behind the statistics in the Statistics Scotland report.

The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) has also released statistics about the current social work situation. The numbers referred to are from

2013 as at the time of this writing the 2014 results were not yet released. In order to place the report in a wider context, there is acknowledgement of the challenges the social service sector faced in 2013, such as wider economic and financial constraints adversely impacting local authority budgets and a move towards integration of social and health care services. With that in mind, according to the SSSC (2013) the social services workforce fell slightly to 189,670 from 192,360 in 2012. This shrinking workforce is stated within the report as a trend over the last few years. This decrease in the workforce was felt across the board in all areas of social services, with significant drops in the areas of 'Adult Day Care', 'Care Homes for Adults' and 'Day Care of Children'. However, there was an increase of staff shown in 'Children's Fieldwork Services' 'Generic Fieldwork Services' and 'School Care Accommodation'. From 2010 to 2013, there had been an increase in registered social workers in Scotland, with 'Fieldwork Services for Children' employing the most social workers. Alongside this upturn, the Social Work Scotland (2015) report states there is evidence of high turnover within the field. So although there has been an increase in social workers that work with children in the public sector, there are perhaps elements of the day to day experience that leads to social workers not staying in their position for very long. As noted, reports such as those by the Scottish Social Services Council and Social Work Scotland are limited to surface level information and do not go into detail or much speculation as to what may lead to high turnover. Therefore, it is all the more important to gain a deeper insight as to what may be causing such lack of job satisfaction and disaffection.

Elsewhere amongst the UK, reports with the same lack of rich detail exist, for instance, the *Respect and Protect* (2009) report, conducted by the Local Government Association (LGA), found that across England and Wales, one in ten social work posts were unfilled and:

There are some doubts as to whether children's social work is currently as strong or as well supported a profession as vulnerable children need it to be (LGA, 2009, p7)

The report also tells us that although the vacancy rate went down from 11.8% to 9.5% between 2005 and 2009, it is still high compared to other professions such as teachers who have a vacancy rate of 0.6%. It is also important to note that the report states although the turnover rate has gone down, the retirement rate has gone up, therefore the actual number of staff within the profession would not be changing all that drastically.

The following year, the LGA conducted a workforce survey that included all local authority employees. This 2010 survey repeated the trends identified in an earlier report, and found that overall, recruitment and retention difficulties had fallen over the years, although many local authorities reported still experiencing difficulties retaining child and family social workers (LGA, 2011). High numbers such as seventy eight percent of all councils with recruitment problems and eighty-five percent of all councils with retention problems relating to child and family social workers, suggest a UK wide crisis amongst child and family social workers that warrants concern and exploration.

Statistics are an important component in clarifying the staffing situation in Scotland and other areas of the UK. They allow us to understand an important aspect of the context of social work. What they demonstrate however, is only a small insight as to the overall circumstances of the practice and context of child protection social work in Scotland. In order to gain a fuller understanding of the process of 'doing' child protection social work, a more holistic and encompassing assessment needs to be considered. In the field of social work, we are taught to 'start where the client is' and think about things from their perspective. Social workers are starting to recognise the importance of their own perspective on their work and voicing these views (Ofsted, 2010). The importance of incorporating the views of social workers who are currently in practice cannot be underestimated as these views could help further inform research by describing a more accurate account of the experience of being a social worker. This relative lack of attention paid to the social work voice will be discussed further in Chapter 2, however a few reports have begun to emerge which incorporate the social work voice. A review of these follows.

1.4 – Surveys of Social Workers – Morale and Other Issues

Many of the reports reviewed here and in Chapter 2, have included social worker morale as part of their investigation and assessment (BASW, 2012; Ofsted, 2010; Munro, Coxon & Cellini, 2015; Munro, 2011; Laming, 2009). This implies a degree of interest in and understanding that, the attitudes and

mood of social workers are important factors that contribute to how they practice.

Ofsted, the regulatory agency for social services in England has been a source of information on the views held by social workers. The first annual survey of social work practitioners across local authorities was conducted in 2010. The produced report, *Safeguarding and Looked After Children: National Results for Children's Social Work Practitioners Survey* captured 4,141 social work practitioners' views on their current work environment. Overall, the views that were presented were not surprising in that they echoed other accounts of dissatisfaction and were relatively positive towards training and levels of line management support. However, many child and family social workers felt that they did not have enough time to work as effectively with children and families as they wanted and that induction programmes did not effectively prepare them for their current role. There were problems relating to communication within the local authority, such as feeling undervalued and not being listened to when making a suggestion for change. Only 41% agreed that their local authority praised examples of good performance with a minority (38%) stating their local authority was open to new ideas on improving methods of working. So although the majority of practitioners had positive things to say, there was clearly room for improvement:

Communication on all levels is non-existent, this makes poor working relations. There is a lack of respect and care for us as human beings, we feel powerless. We have no say in basic decisions such as what is on our desk, how and where we want to sit (Respondent, Ofsted, 2010, p.18)

Therefore the Ofsted (2010) report gives insight as to how there may be some frustration and low morale experienced by social workers within the workplace. A year before, the Laming (2009) report added to the knowledge that morale amongst social workers in children services was low with many of them, according to the report, feeling the size of the task in protecting children from harm was insurmountable. Laming and others have pointed to the increased risk of harm to children, and also to the social workers, when they continue to experience high levels of stress and difficulty in undertaking the work required (Laming, 2009; Munro, 2011; Mor Barak, 2006, Tham, 2009). A shortage of experienced qualified social workers within the local authority workforce was also not helping outcomes for children (Laming, 2009; LGA, 2009). Laming went on to argue that we should demand the best practice and that low morale and esteem within the profession, still too evident, ought to be addressed. Additionally, there were training and workforce issues to be resolved to ensure the safeguarding of children and young people. Aside from morale, there is also concern that reflective social work practice is being forgotten due to the overemphasis on process, targets and a loss of confidence in social workers. This bureaucratic influence on social work practice has been echoed by many researchers lately and is an area that has had increased attention (Laming, 2009; LGA, 2009; Munro, 2011; Mor Barak, 2006)

On a positive note, social work managers appear to be better qualified than before, training has been increased and so have salaries and some additional benefits. However, most social workers state that the job is still becoming less attractive. In the Local Government Associations Respect and Protect report on recruitment and retention, 61% felt that social work is increasingly a less attractive sector to work in, 87% felt that the demands are greater than ever, 23% said they did not have time to give full attention to their cases and 46% cited bureaucracy as what they disliked the most about their jobs (LGA, 2009). This suggests that local authority children's social work departments have become a problematic context for good social work practice (LGA, 2009). At the very least, the LGA report allows us to see how there is room for a better understanding of the day to day lives and contexts of social work practitioners.

A consistent theme in all the reports and surveys is that social workers reported that they do not have enough time to devote to direct practice, there is frustration about some of the tools and support they are given (or not given), new social workers not feeling prepared, a lack of a strong national voice, having to manage systems that are not driven by quality, and a feel that their profession is undervalued and poorly understood (SWTF, 2009). In response, the Social Work Task Force report emerged with a call for a creation of an organisation to provide more leadership for the profession. The College of Social Work (TCSW) was created with the mandate to uphold

professional standards, promote the profession to the general public, media and policy makers and work towards being the national voice of the profession in England (The College of Social Work, 2010). Although some think this was a step in the desired direction, TCSW has recently lost its primary funding source from the government (McNicoll & Schraer, 2015). The brief and troubled life of TCSW cannot be detailed here however its difficulties and fate, it is suggested, are indicators of all the uncertainties that exist within the profession. With the troubles and demise of TCSW, a plan failed to materialise that would ensure a nationally effective voice for the profession.

The Social Work Task Force (SWTF) report also brought to light specific examples of how social workers feel on a daily basis. Reports of access to supervision being cancelled due to staff shortages, lack of qualified experienced social workers, burn out, problems in access to information and inconsistent career progression were just some of the issues presented (SWTF, 2009). Echoing what was discussed in section 1.2, the SWTF (2009) concludes that there was a need for a 'culture shift' in organisations to support continuing professional development, performance appraisals and evidence-based practice. This need for a shift and change was to be the driving force of the SWTF work plan at the time, as they endeavoured to put together a detailed programme of reform and continued to have conversations with frontline workers, educational institutions, regulators and

other professionals in order to increase the understanding of what social work needs to be successful (SWTF, 2009).

As can be seen from the above reports, low morale, frustration and other difficulties are regularly and increasingly voiced by social workers and there seems to be small beginnings of a need to understand how social work is performed on a day to day basis. However, there is still room to dig deeper into this understanding and gain further insight as to how social workers practice. It is also important to distinguish between the different roles a social worker can take because many of these reports do not necessarily separate the different fields of social work, and instead report on a general level. Child and family social workers, constrained by bureaucratic processes, reporting limited time spent with service users and having difficulty forming meaningful relationships with children and families or other professionals (Ferguson, 2014), may have a different experience than say criminal justice social workers or social workers that work in hospitals.

None of this information can be seen in a vacuum. High status criticisms, such as the Laming Report (2009) and Munro Review (2011), are disseminated to various forms of media. These avenues of information, on top of any personal experience, influence the public, and these perceptions in turn hold a strong place as to how social workers view and conduct themselves and the spread of public negativity can contribute to poor morale. As will be seen throughout this research, especially in Chapter 5, how social

workers view themselves and their practice is a significant component in understanding their lived experience.

1.5 – Public Perceptions of Social Work

As well as being influenced by any overt and covert cultural messages they receive from within their organisation and profession as to their worth, social workers are influenced by the messages they receive from outside their organisation as social work is an innately public profession (Munro, 2011). This is because not only do they engage with the public's lives in a variety of ways, but also in turn the public engages with social work from time to time and as such this process influences how the profession is viewed. Public views of social workers and attitudes towards social work are shaped by a range of influences. The main ones are television news and current affairs programmes, personal contact or experience, newspapers, and word of mouth (Davidson & King, 2005; Laming, 2009, Munro, 2011). It needs to be said that it is child and family social workers involved in child protection processes that generally are the subject of highly negative media portrayals and headlines:

It is important to note that the findings suggest it is not only 'the social work profession' that is hurt by negative media portrayals of social work, but also the morale of individual members of staff (LGA, 2009, p 22)

The media is recognised as having a long term and significant impact on the profession of social work as well as social workers themselves. Negativity surrounding many reports as a result of high profile child deaths acts as a

deterrent for potential social workers as well as a disheartening reminder for those in the field as to the consequences of the high-risk decisions they are sometimes required to make (Munro, 2011b; Laming 2009; SWTF, 2009; Butler & Drakeford, 2005). These high profile tragedies, service failures and enquiries have given child protection a very high political and public profile. This has led to a lack of acceptance of risk in the public eye and a frequent scapegoating of social work services when things go wrong (Scottish Executive, 2009; SWTF, 2009).

Thus this negative public image of social work, and especially child and family social workers who perform within the remit of child protection social work, has consequences for recruitment and morale (SWTF, 2009; Ferguson, 2014). A counter to such evaluation is contained in a 2005 paper by Davidson and King. It was reported that people tended to be influenced by a range of considerations relating both to the varying roles that social workers are required to fulfil and to the context within which they operate. Adjectives commonly used to describe the profession were 'helpful', 'vital', 'interfering', and 'overworked'. Attitudes towards the profession as a whole have been found to be fairly complex and multi-dimensional. Thus while majorities in a 2004 survey commissioned by the Scottish Executive said they would be likely to approach the profession for help, it was clear from the focus groups that social work is seen as a 'last resort' and not something to be considered lightly. There was clearly some stigma associated with using social work services, particularly for problems such as difficulties bringing up

children or drug and alcohol problems. Social work with older people was less stigmatised (Davidson & King, 2005).

In a 2010 Scottish study involving children who had experience with the child protection system, many of the responses indicate strong dissatisfaction with the investigation process and procedures. The children involved were most fearful of being separated from their parent or carer and thought that the social workers were lying to them or were not really listening to their opinions (Woolfson et al, 2010). There is also a strong tendency for parents involved in the child protection process to be highly critical of the outcomes and had high levels of frustration. Parents also felt that social workers would have a 'worst case scenario' perspective and that they were treated unfairly (Dale, 2004). Most worryingly there was a perception of child protection practices and procedures as being inhumane, patronising, and punitive (Dale, 2004; Woolfson et al., 2010). The growing literature from the client's perspective, especially those involved in child protection processes (Woolfson et al., 2010), can contribute to a sense of unease and may feed into the overall sense of being undervalued.

What can be seen from the above literature is that members of the public, colleagues from other professions and service users can experience frustration and confusion due to having unclear and inconsistent expectations of social workers (Dale, 2004; Davidson & King, 2005, SWTF, 2009). Under these circumstances, child and family social work may struggle to be

confident and efficient and maintain positive morale. Child and family social workers are often the first line of support for the protection of children, therefore the impact of not being confident or efficient could potentially result in unnecessary harm being done to a child or a family. This is part of where the discrepancy lies between reality and perception. Reports have stated the general public should have confidence in the work of social work services; understand how and when services may be able to help them; be clear about how to access services; have a realistic expectation of what services may be able to do to help them; and value help and support from social work services (SWTF, 2009; Scottish Executive, 2009). However, with the associated stigma, decline in feeling valued and dropping morale, that has been discussed here and will be discussed further in Chapters 4 and 5, and living to these standards can prove to be difficult.

1.6 - Conclusion

How social workers perceive themselves and how they are perceived by others provides necessary insight into the current situation and day to day experience of child and family social workers in the UK. The foregoing negativity described, involving low morale and perceptions of social work, provides some explanation as to the burnout and demoralised beliefs voiced by some of the practitioners, and could be influencing the turnover rates described by Statistics Scotland (2010) and the Scottish Social Services Council (2013).

As child and family social work is primarily delivered in a local authority context, it is necessary to gain further understanding as to how that particular environment functions and how social workers experience working in a local authority (Statistics Scotland, 2010). Using the work of Glisson (2002) and Karesek (1979), taking into consideration the organisation and culture of the local authorities to try to ascertain the full picture and areas that influence current child protection practice will also further awareness of the particular day to day experiences of most child and family social workers. Thus, this thesis seeks to 'nest' the discussion of child and family social workers daily practice within the context of a local authority and also with reference to the public and political contexts referred to earlier.

So as indicated, the main aim of this thesis is to gain a deeper understanding of the day to day practice lives of child and family social workers. This will come through understanding two key elements of that experience; how social work practitioners feel about their practice and the environment they are in. A working research question was thus formulated along the lines of exploring social workers' perceptions of their working lives. The aims embodied in this led to the discovery of the organisational justice literature which offers a tool that can be used to ascertain perceptions of fairness and provide necessary insight in the work environment and social workers experiences of that environment. The literature review provided in Chapter Two will highlight further the process of choosing the organisational justice tool as a method of

gaining insight into the day to day experience of child and family social workers.

The following chapter will highlight how child and family social work has grown and developed in the United Kingdom as well provide a more detailed overview of the organisational justice framework. The gaps in the literature will be identified as well as the overall questions this research hopes to address. Moving on, Chapter Three will provide the research methodology, design and methods in order to address the research questions set out at the end of Chapter Two. A description of the data collection and methods of analysis will be described in further detail. Study findings are found in Chapter Four and Chapter Five by addressing the research questions utilising the organisational justice framework and methods of analysis described in Chapter Two. Chapter Six and Seven then provide a further discussion of the results in the context of wider literature and the implications of this research for social work and provides concluding remarks with a summary of the thesis.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 - Introduction

This chapter describes the growth and development of child and family social work in the United Kingdom and demonstrates that there is a gap in the understanding of the lived experience of child and family social work professionals. After a description of how the literature was found, the first sections will outline the historical and current context, illustrating the external and internal influences on the profession such as the legal responsibilities for social workers and the rise of managerialism. The second and final section outlines the organisational justice framework, and how it could be used to evaluate the experiences of child and family social workers involved in child protection procedures.

2.2 - The Search

In order to conduct this literature review, a variety of search methods and terms were used to establish what is known concerning child and family social workers in the United Kingdom and the current workforce trends and attitudes. To begin with, an internet search to find significant social work reports; such as the Munro Report (2011) and the Laming Report (2009), was conducted. As the aim is explore the day to day 'lived experience', the context of that experience and how social workers feel about their practice and this context, this allowed for the development of a knowledge base about the current state of social work in the United Kingdom. Searching on the British Association of Social Work website, as well as the Scottish

Government website was also important to find statistical information and public reports. Concurrently with the literature that was found as a result of the above, a search was also required to focus on the organisational aspects of the day to day experience of social workers.

As discussed in Chapter 1, social workers were voicing unhappiness, low morale and poor relationships with other professionals, the media, the public and colleagues. Underlying and interwoven within these issues are concepts centred on how practitioners are treated and their relationships within the workplace. These concepts then began to shape the literature search as constants that needed to be included in the literature when looking at how social workers may experience their working environments.

At the onset of searching for literature that could help address the initial aim of the research, keeping the above concepts in mind, the first focus was searching for literature on organisational culture. This was as a result of knowledge about the importance of organisational culture, as touched on in Section 1.2, and was thought to be a good starting point at assessing the organisational context of child protection social work and the impact this may have on practice and social workers. This search led to an overwhelming number of results and provided much information in order to gain an understanding of how the culture of the workplace may impact social workers.

Organisational *culture* is centred on the idea that every business has a culture and that this culture affects everything within that business (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Schein, 1985). There is also importance placed on the subcultures of an organisation when analysing the organisational culture of a business. Although this literature was important in gaining insight into the concepts that may emerge as a result of using this theoretical lens, it did not adequately address the concepts of treatment, relationships and fairness that were a driving force for this particular component of the literature search. Within this search however, articles would emerge that also discussed or focused on organisational climate. Organisational *climate* is thought to differ from culture as it is influenced by organisational culture and is thought of as a way people perceive their work environment (Hunt & Ivergard, 2007; Glisson, 2007; Glisson & Green, 2006; Glisson et al., 2008). The literature on organisational climate, because it involves a more social context and focus on the individual worker, was much more closely aligned with the aims and concepts that this thesis set out to investigate. However, upon closer inspection and reading, there was still a lack of attention paid to those concepts of fairness, treatment and relationships that were found to be the underlying the issues discussed in Chapter 1. As a result of continually searching and reflecting on the organisational culture and organisational climate literature, keeping the underlying concepts in mind, literature focusing on organisational *justice* began to emerge. Upon closer examination, it was found that the organisational justice literature aligned with the aims and concepts discussed in Chapter 1. The organisational justice literature, as will

be discussed in Section 2.4, has a central focus on fairness in relation to decisions, rewards, procedures and relationships. As such, the organisational justice literature provided the necessary foundation for addressing the aim of understanding the day to day experience of child and family social workers.

This literature review remained part of the research process, it is therefore a dynamic piece of work that has been led by reflexive thought and influenced by the emerging data and evolving research questions (Branley, 2012). The organisational justice framework was first utilised to gain insight into social workers' perceptions of fairness and relationships within the workplace, however, as a result of sensitivity to the accounts the respondents were giving, awareness grew of the emotional component of the experiences. As such, what came through the data was the unarticulated dimension of the feelings involved in the experience of being a child and family social worker in Scotland. What became evident was that there was emerging data that needed to be explored. This consisted of emotions, feelings, perceptions and this really stood out as a strong element of the data that needed to be addressed and thought about in the context of the research question.

As will be seen in the course of data analysis and description of the methodology used for this thesis, a further research question therefore developed leading to this further enquiry regarding the emotions involved in being a child and family social worker. It became necessary to conduct a

secondary literature review on emotions in order to provide a foundation for this second research question and subsequently conduct a secondary analysis of the interviews. The format of this thesis then follows the evolving process of this research and as such, the discussion of the literature found in this secondary review on emotions will be found in Chapter Five. This is to reflect the overall flow and reflexive nature the research took towards answering the research questions described in further detail in Chapter Three.

The University of Edinburgh library catalogue was used in order to find books on the subjects of emotion, shame, perceptions, organisational justice and organisational culture.

For the acquisition of journal articles, the e-journal Searcher engine found on the University of Edinburgh Library webpage was used. Search terms used for the literature review included 'social work' and 'organi*ational justice', 'organi*ational culture', 'organi*ational climate', 'fairness', 'managerialism', 'burnout', 'leaving', 'stress', 'professional identity', 'organi*ational support', and 'retention'.

For the subsequent search of emotions, 'social work' was used in combination with 'emotion*', 'emotional labo*r', 'emotional intelligence' and 'shame', they were also searched on their own as when used in combination, few results were found.

Articles that were not included were either not able to be linked to the social work profession or were not relevant in any other manner of ways. Articles written in English were selected as the researcher's language is English.

The following section is a discussion of the development of social work in the United Kingdom. By gaining a historical understanding of how social work has been perceived and conducted, some of the complexities and influences involved with social work practice today will start to become more evident. Some of the assumptions and beliefs that are held now about child protection social work and how it should be done, stem from long held values and processes. By exploring these developments, an increased awareness of the wider context of child protection social work emerged. The work context of the local authority is as important to consider as is the wider societal context in gaining a deeper understanding of the various influences on the day to day working lives of child and family social workers. Both of these contexts will be discussed further in the following sections.

2.3 - The Growth and Development of Local Authority Social Work: History, Responsibilities and rise of Managerialist Culture

2.3.1 - History

The Protestant Reformation, the Renaissance and the Enlightenment were all influential in the development of social welfare in the United Kingdom (Rogowski, 2010). As the role of the churches declined, so there was

increasing acceptance of the idea that secular bodies such as charitable organisations could and should intervene in family life, although it must be acknowledged that most charities at this time were founded on religious principles. The Charity Organisation Society (COS) was one such agency. It pioneered what it called 'scientific charity'; an individual would have to apply for assistance if they were in need and the COS would inquire into relevant factors involved in one's situation, assess whether they were 'deserving' or 'undeserving' and make a plan to help meet their needs (Cree & Myers, 2008). Rogowski (2010) argues that ideas of charity went hand-in-hand with a capitalist ideology that accepted inequality and power differentials on the basis of social class; not only this, there was a widespread fear at this time of the potential rise of unskilled workers who posed a political threat to the existing social order. Charity could, however, only go so far: Social Darwinism believed that some people were beyond redemption and should be abandoned to the workhouse system (Ferguson & Woodward, 2009).

Much philanthropic energy in the 1800s and 1900s was channelled into the care of needy children. This desire for rescuing children can be seen in the establishment of Dr. Barnardo's and National Children's Homes (now known as Action for Children); it also inspired the establishment of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), which eventually began to push for legislation and a system of warnings to parents (Parton, 1985; Cree & Myers, 2008). The template set by the NSPCC set the scene

for social workers to become more intrusive in family life, even though families were still responsible for their own members and the state should only intervene when necessary (Parton, 1985). What can be shown through this rescue mentality is that child protection social work has always been about highly emotionally-charged decision making and this still runs through contemporary social work.

By the beginning of the 20th century, increasing attention was put on efficiency and the importance of state power (Parton, 1985). The state attempted to develop a more preventative social welfare role, while holding on to a certain level of power and appropriate intervention. Social work's evolution was slow within the early part of the 20th century, however with the emergence and passing of the first and second world wars, an awareness of the importance of the welfare of citizens grew, especially as children were evacuated out of the major cities (Rogowski, 2010; Parton, 1985). Finally, in 1942, the Beveridge Report emerged as the work that established the welfare state as it is understood in the UK. The Report provided a new baseline for tackling societal problems and social policies, and added to the complex situation that social work found itself in, because it now assumed that the state would take responsibility for individual and family needs (Rogowski, 2010; Parton, 1985; Adams, Dominelli & Payne, 2009). In short, from this point, we can mark the beginnings of the rise of statutory social work.

In the course of the development of the welfare state, other important legislation was introduced such as the 1944 Education Act, the 1949 National Health Service Act, the 1949 Housing Act, the 1948 National Assistance Act, and the 1933 Children's Act (Rogowski, 2010; HM Government, 2003). It is important, however, to differentiate between the legislation that was developed in England, and that which was developed in Scotland. In England, the 1968 Seebohm Report helped to establish local authority social services departments, while in Scotland, the 1964 Kilbrandon Report established 'Children's Panels' and subsequently the 1966 White Paper, *Social Work and the Community* (Rogowski, 2010; Brodie, Nottingham & Plunkett, 2008). These reports led to the expansion of social work's remit and the rise of the profession being connected to the local authority. By being connected to the local authorities, social work was directly integrated within local government discourse on the nature and structure of family life (Parton, 2011). This then meant that social work became a more direct extension and reflection of what was deemed appropriate or not appropriate by those elected into power.

Shortly after this time, the 1968 Social Work (Scotland) Act epitomised a desire for change and recognition of the profession. As a result of this legislation, local authorities were now required to intervene if there were suspicions of abuse and neglect (Cree & Myers, 2008). The Association of Directors of Social Work (ADSW) was formed as an independent organisation by the newly appointed directors of local authority social work

departments (Brodie et al., 2008, ADSW, 2009). The 1960s and 1970s proved to be a positive, optimistic time for social work. But this was short-lived, because the 1979 election of Margaret Thatcher heralded a very different climate for social work (Rogowski, 2010; Brodie et al, 2008; Ferguson, 2008). The impact of so-called Thatcherism was a significant economic, political and ideological shift that had a large impact on social work and the way practitioners were able to do their jobs. There was a new questioning of the value of social work, as the ideology of the day blamed the welfare state for the economic crisis that the economy found itself in (Rogowski, 2010).

From 1979 onwards, there was an increase of erosion of the welfare state and as a result, a reduction in public spending, such as the closure of schools and hospitals, and benefit cuts (Rogowski, 2010; Ferguson, 2008). This had major consequences on social services in both the voluntary and statutory sectors all over the UK. Not only did budgetary restraints impact on their delivery of services, but there were increased disputes as to the overall value of the social work profession, and crucially, child welfare work came to be seen as increasingly child protection (Rogowski, 2010). Social workers were becoming more concerned with assessing social and personal needs, but not providing the services to meet those needs (Ferguson & Woodward, 2009). In other words, there was a shift as preventative work was replaced in favour of more short-term intervention work, thereby reducing social worker satisfaction and direct work in helping others.

Today, social work across the UK is still heavily influenced by a Conservative ideology, in spite of social work being a devolved responsibility in Scotland.. Out of the 492,100 people employed in the public sector in Scotland, 41,062 (8.3%) are employed in social work service departments, with 12.6% of those individuals being qualified social workers. (Statistics Scotland, 2011). The UK government continues to make cuts to local authorities as it continues to 'roll back' the involvement of the state (Rogowski, 2010). Although the government often asserts that it wants to continue to reform social work to ensure that positive outcomes for children and vulnerable populations happen, it is unclear how this can happen when expenditure on welfare seems to be decreasing (Rogowski, 2010). However, a review of local authority budgets in Scotland since 2000 reveals that the percentage of revenue on social work services has risen from 17% to 24%, perhaps reflecting an increase in the aging population and, hence, demand for services (Statistics Scotland, 2011). Whilst it would appear that there is contradictory evidence about the state of local authority social work that needs to be addressed, the shift from preventative child care to child protection and from support to monitoring in child protection work has been apparent across the UK (Ferguson & Woodward, 2009; Weinberg, 2009). This means the possibility of less time spent with a family and more hurried decision making and a rise in overall need of those with whom social workers have most contact.

2.3.2 - Legal Responsibilities

From a policy perspective, the acts that were briefly mentioned above are what ensure social work practice runs in accordance with the law and within ethical considerations. Within the Scottish context, The Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, The Children (Scotland) Act 1995 and The Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994 are the pieces of legislation that are most pertinent here. Under Part 1 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 and Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994, state that it is the local authority's duty to enforce and execute the provisions of the Act. There is to be a Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) appointed within each local authority and the Local Authority may cause an inquiry into their functions as how those functions relate to children. The overall objective of the CSWO is to ensure the effective, professional advice to local authorities in the provision of social work services. The post is required to assist local authorities in understanding the complexities of social work service deliver, in particular to issues such as child protection (Scottish Government, 2010).

Part II of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 is the section that describes the regulation and promotion of children's welfare by the Local Authorities. Section 17 states that it is the duty of the local authority to safeguard and promote the child's welfare, this is done by ensuring services are available for children, provide advice and assistance and that any decision made has to involve ascertaining the views of the child, the parents, and any other person who is relevant. A child protection order may be made by the sheriff

under section 57 of the Children (Scotland) 1995 Act if there are reasonable grounds to believe that a child is at risk of or suffering significant harm.

The Children Act 1989, which is used within England and Wales, also has the same section 17 provisions where it is the general duty of every local authority to safeguard and promote the welfare of children by providing a range and level of services in accordance with the children's needs. Section 47 is the primary piece of legislation that pertains to child protection as it states it is the local authority's duty to investigate where a local authority have reason to believe that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm. Local authorities are clearly mandated to provide services to children and families and intervene as necessary. However, how this manifests within a local authority may not be as clear cut as would be hoped. Local authorities are filled with democratically elected bodies that do not necessarily make the best use of their powers and duties in regards to the delivery of social services and the needs of the community. This relationship gets strained and further complicated by the complex governance and funding arrangements between the local authority and other sectors (Scottish Review, 2006). Political and economic shifts have taken place that have shifted views of what child protection social work needs to focus on. Child protection now sits uncomfortably within local authorities bound by statutory responsibilities emanating from central government and without a strong sense of profession (Ritchie & Woodward, 2009). With an increased focus on the importance of working to strictly statutory responsibilities, there could be trouble navigating

the moral and emotional issues that social work comes into contact with as a discrepancy may lie between the values of the social worker and the legalities of the situation. The rise of legal responsibilities for social workers has therefore increased the potential for ethical and emotional dilemmas to arise.

2.3.3 - Scottish Reports

Two reports specific to Scotland, the 2006 *Changing Lives* Report and the 2011 *Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services* (commonly known as the Christie Report), emerged as seeking to evaluate the state of social work and delivery of public services in the context of tightening budgets and high profile cases that had left social workers being criticised.

Changing Lives (2006) was conducted by the Scottish Executive in order to evaluate social work in Scotland as there was an assumption that social work services were not making the best use of the skills social workers possess. The Report presents a detailed account to current social work experiences that have been echoed by the other reports that have since been released such as Munro (2011a) and Laming (2009). This includes accounts of a profession that has been devalued and is under pressure from large workloads. Throughout the report there is also mention of the constraints and negative impact of bureaucracy on front line social workers as well as management teams.

The 2011 report by Dr. Campbell Christie was conducted to evaluate the current state of the delivery of public services in Scotland and a future path for that delivery in the context of tightening budgets and fiscal control. This is again, another report analysing systemic issues and looking at how best to operate social services within a local authority. Stating that any change in organisational boundaries should come from the bottom and based on the reality of delivering services is admirable and flows throughout the entire report. The neo-liberal agenda of efficiency and effectiveness is a strong theme as well as the continued desire for an outcomes-focused service. However, it is unclear how this would manifest within a child protection context.

With regards to social work practitioners, both reports establish a stance that recognises the support social workers need as a result of various societal challenges practitioners face. Challenges such as an increase in demand for public services, budget pressures and a changing demographic are all having an impact on how social work is practiced. *Changing Lives* focuses on four specific recommendations aimed at developing the workforce that focus on developing a new 'organisational approach' (p12), encouraging and supporting accountability and professional autonomy for the social workers, developing a learning culture that promotes individual and organisational development, and the use of effective teams. Christie (2011) meanwhile recognises there are 'unhelpful boundaries' within the current system (p34)

and joins other literature previously mentioned in that staff feel they do not feel fully valued and that their levels of autonomy are diminishing.

Christie believes there needs to be a continued focus on improvement in performance while reducing cost, and yet previously in Section 1.3 social workers are already expressing frustration and concern as to having trouble managing their workload in an environment impacted by budget cuts and quality of work is being sacrificed. Social workers often complain that they do not spend enough time with families and have a more case manager role, and the Christie's report seems to emphasise this trend (BASW, 2012). The Commission Report also believes that it is important for communities to have a stronger level of engagement in the delivery of public services (Christie, 2011). What would be integral to the level of involvement the community holds, would be a greater understanding of the role and experience of social workers. Here is where *Changing Lives* (2006) was able to fill a gap by providing a more specific account of the various roles and skills child and family social workers provide to service users. Importantly, as was mentioned at the end of Section 2.3.2, there is recognition of how it can be difficult for a social worker to practise within a bureaucratic environment due to the complexities and contradictions of the role:

This balance between care and control is perhaps the defining feature of social work and provides a dynamic tension which influences workload, priorities and public perceptions of the role (p 27)

Thus Christie (2011) and *Changing Lives* (2006) stand in a line of reports that seek to improve services and both acknowledge the complex environment in which social workers perform their duties. Both reports agree that a culture shift is needed yet there is still a focus on monitoring and evaluating, regulation and performance based outcomes that, as social workers have reported elsewhere (BASW, 2012; SWTF, 2009; Munro et al., 2015), are contributing to low morale, decreased time with children and families and strained professional relationships. As such, there is still a gap in knowledge as to how social workers, especially those with child protection duties, experience their day to day work environment and practice.

By looking at these reports and trends, it is possible to see that even before the tendency to make decisions with an emphasis on financial and organisational concerns, otherwise known as managerialist priorities, child and family social workers with child protection duties are already under the influence of local authority pressures and external stressors, such as those discussed in the next chapter.

2.3.4 - 21st Century Local Authorities: The Rise of Managerialism

Underlying many of the previously discussed issues is the influence of managerialism within social services. Managerialism tends to emphasise policy or practice decision making based on technical or financial concerns rather than social and moral values (Hamalainen, 2003; Rogowski, 2010). As social work developed and grew over time, especially with an increase in

legal responsibilities and a stronger relationship to policy, it is now being seen as more of a system of organising and managing services. This stemmed from the Griffiths Report and Seebohm Report (in England) which established the development of social service department within the local authority. As a result, the role of the local authority was seen to be that of a regulator, a manager of care by coordinating services, or to limit services within available resources, in some ways undermining professional decision making (Rogowski, 2010; Gilbert & Powell, 2009). This advancement of managerialism, which has changed the distribution of power and offset the balance of equality, goes against social work's innate value base of equal participation and balance of power. The increase of bureaucratic demands on social workers as a result of performance management, often accompanied within managerialism, has a tendency to remove practitioners from the front line as they have to switch their focus to the workplace systems (Parton, 2011). As a consequence, social workers have a growing level of dissatisfaction with the gap between their values and their duties on the job (Rogowski, 2010; Ferguson, 2005).

Qualified social workers who work directly with children and young people, have begun to voice that at times they are not happy working for local authorities (Ofsted, 2010). Researchers and reports are taking notice of this and starting to look at the managerialism and structure of local authorities and what social workers need in order to practice to the best of their abilities (Munro, 2005, 2011; Scottish Review, 2006; Laming, 2009; Care

Inspectorate, 2011). By reviewing the Scottish Social Work Inspection Reports from 2011, it was made clear that Chief Officers in the majority of the local authorities are committed to the protection of vulnerable children in their area and that social workers are completing very good work. There were only two of the thirteen councils reviewed that had a majority amount of 'satisfactory' results, as opposed to 'good' or 'very good'. Altogether, the reports (Ofsted, 2010; Scottish Review, 2006; Care Inspectorate, 2011) describe the staff generally feeling supported and forming good relationships although there is still a challenge in communication and social workers not having as much influence on the running of service as they would like (Ofsted, 2010):

The Management structure regularly hears our complains and gripes but does little to remedy them resulting in disharmony in the workplace and far too much scope of important issues to be missed, which has the potential to have cataclysmic effect on the children that we aim to safeguard (Respondent, Ofsted, 2010, p 21)

So although there are positive reports from social work practitioners, they are able to recognise that certain structures and systems are not as helpful. It is important to remember that a local authority is comprised of and influenced by various systems. Munro (2005), has maintained this belief and is very aware as to organisational impact on the workforce and child protection inquiries. Munro states that using a systems-centred approach allows a look at the influences from the perspectives of the individual, resources and constraints, as well as the organisational context. Pointing out that organisational culture exerts a strong influence on front line staff by the overt and covert messages within an organisation about what is valued or

disparaged. This is a concept in which many social workers would indeed agree with as well as the opinion that agencies, realising that child deaths and the risks inherent within the child protection process cannot be removed, may take steps to protect themselves. Again, these points are all very important when considering the complexities of child protection and the organisation in which it is held, however Munro does not speak to the specific context of the local authority as the prevalent child protection governing agency.

Munro continues this discussion with slightly more specific ways in which the local authority needs to have responsibility for the way that child protection services are provided:

The child protection system has, in the pursuit of imposed managerial targets and regulations, forgotten that its *raison d'être* is the welfare and protection of the child (2011b, p 8)

The 2011 Munro Review of child protection follows Munro's previous work about understanding child protection from a 'systems' theory base. Again, this theory suggests that the current child protection processes are made up of a variety of different systems that are interacting with each other and it is important to look at how the systems interrelate in order to create change. By creating change in one system, this will have a ripple effect into the other systems that are connected. There is a heavy influence of procedures and recording within the current system that needs to be altered in order for more time to be spent with families (Munro, 2011b; Laming, 2009). Munro (2011b) states that there needs to be a reduction in prescription and more autonomy

for professionals in order for social workers to do the job that they were hired to do. Stating as well that council's need to give consideration to who is filling the specific roles in relation to children's services and the need for early prevention. Munro (2011b) also emphasises the need for a Principal Child and Family Social Worker in each council and the role of a Chief Social Worker to be created in Government.

Munro's (2011b) Interim report continues to break down the concerns about the social work profession on a more detailed level. More attention is needed towards the importance of the cognitive and emotional requirements of the work that these social workers perform and this is lacking due to a variety of systemic factors (Munro, 2011b):

It will be argued that previous reforms have concentrated too much on explicit, logical aspects of reasoning and this has contributed to a skewed management framework that undervalues intuitive reasoning and emotions and thus fails to give appropriate support to those aspects (Munro, 2011b, p 35)

Furthermore, the level of professional development available and access to research in order to help practitioners perform are areas that are seen to be impacting the state of the child protection workforce (Munro, 2011, 2010). A dysfunctional workplace makes it difficult for even the most skilled social workers to work at the level they would like and the subtle influences of the design of assessment tools and organisational messages about priorities are also having an impact on current social work practice. Many social workers are discouraged by what seem to be quick fixes, increased paperwork and

the lack of opportunity to exercise professional judgement (Munro, 2011b; Laming, 2009; Ofsted, 2009).

It has been argued that local authorities need to have an ongoing review practice in regard to how child and family social work is delivered and supported and importantly for this research, one that enables social workers to share their feelings and inadequacies. Reports state that this needs to be reinforced by a system of good line management that is creative, empowering, and sensitive to frontline staff (Laming, 2009; Munro, 2011). Munro (2011b) continues to put an emphasis on leadership and management supporting the required change needed to move from a “command-and-control culture encouraging compliance to a learning and adapting culture” (p106). Section 7.11 of the final review contains a list of what an effective local system would look like, again focusing mainly on tasks such as a robust selection process for all staff, arrangements for practitioners to have frequent case consultations, arrangements for supervision and arrangements for observations by management on front-line work. One of the final characteristics state that an effective local authority would have a demonstrable learning culture. In relation to this research, this is an important characteristic as a learning culture could be able to facilitate discussions with practitioners in order to become more aware of their day to day experiences within that particular local authority and make any adjustments as necessary.

At the time of Munro's initial 2010 review, there was reported to be an imbalance between practice and guidance that is having a consequence on social workers' performance and the level of organisational support that they are receiving (Munro, 2010). It is suggested that this imbalance is also contributing to the overall alienation of the social work profession and is resulting in local authorities having trouble recruiting and retaining social work staff. Social workers have to increasingly work within more stringent regulation and frameworks and this is making it difficult to prioritise working with children and families over paperwork and technical procedures. The unpredictable nature of human relationships was seen to be as needing to be regulated by legalities, contracts and service provision (Howe, 1994). Munro (2010) is able to dictate how compliance with regulation and rules is driving social work practice instead of sound judgement, the assessment framework and process is inefficient and that inspection systems such as audits and Serious Case Reviews, are not fostering a supportive or learning environment. So it would seem then, as has been seen from previous reports that the extent to which social work has been reformed over recent years is shifting the role of relationship building that is central to social work, to a more managerial role and this is causing practitioners strain as they struggle with potentially differing priorities than their workplace.

What the discussion in this section recognises is the various influences on social work, not only legislation and managerialism, but also day to day structures and cultures. The latter, culture, has come to the fore in recent

times and has been recognised as a vital component to enhancing best practice and outcomes for children, families, and adults. This awareness is being found in North America as well as in the United Kingdom, with social workers starting to voice their unhappiness about their own place of work (Ofsted, 2010). It has also been found that a lack of appreciation for work can adversely impact an individual's overall perception of their work, and negatively influence subjective well-being, here recognition is a common theme being something that they value from others (Graham & Shier, 2010).

The importance of retention and other factors, such as employee turnover, retention and role conflict, in social work organisations are being recognised as important components to assess when wanting to enhance best practice and outcomes for children, families and adults (Meyerson, 1991; Zlotnik et al., 2009; Glisson et al., 2006; Glisson et al., 2002; Gibbs, 2009; Agbenyiga, 2009; Munro, 2011a; Laming, 2009). As previously mentioned, Graham and Shier (2010) believe there is a gap in the literature as to the level of impact that environmental and systemic organisational factors has on the subjective well-being of social workers. By investigating the day to day experience of social workers and how social workers feel about their workplace environment the results of this research will begin to bridge this gap. Focusing on concepts such as fairness and how individuals are treated will provide further insight as to how the above factors contribute to the social work experience and why they may be voicing concerns such as low morale (see Section 1.4).

The above review of contemporary and historical literature has contextualised how social work developed and is influenced by a variety of social and political factors. Changing political landscapes combined with deep rooted moral and value based underpinnings all have an impact on how social work practitioners with a child protection focus are able to do the work they do (Bisman, 2004). Combining knowledge of those factors with the concepts that were discussed in Section 2.2 of fairness, treatment of social workers and relationships within the workplace, is what led to the organisational justice literature as a foundation for investigating a key dimension of the experience of child and family social workers.

2.4 - Organisational Justice: The Concept

Organisational justice is a concept that is starting to emerge in the discussion around employee turnover, perceptions of fairness and overall quality of life within an organisation (Chou, 2009; Simpson & Kaminski, 2007; Shi, Lin & Wang, 2009). Organisational justice focuses on the role of fairness as a consideration in the workplace, and in particular, the employee's perception of fairness in organisational settings (Simpson & Kaminski, 2007; Greenberg, 1990). It refers to an employee's subjective perception of fairness in the actions and decisions, allocation of resources, as well as rewards and punishments within the organisation (Chen et al. 2008; Jordan & Turner, 2008; Kim et al., 2012). One of the most important benefits of the organisational justice theory and framework is that they may be used to

explain a wide variety of organisational behaviours (Greenberg, 1990), behaviours such as reaction to jobs and participation in an organisation, perception of respect and trust, absenteeism, quality of coworker relationships, job satisfaction, incident reporting and workplace aggression (Chou, 2009; St-Pierre & Holmes, 2010; Jordan & Turner, 2008; Bakhshi et al., 2009).

Organisational justice has its roots in psychological literature and, in particular, equity theory (Nowakowski & Conlon, 2005; Greenberg, 1987). Equity theory is based on Adams's (1965) claims that people compare the ratios of their own perceived work outcomes to their own perceived work inputs. When there is inconsistency between input and output, psychological distress follows and results in adverse behaviours, including intention to leave (Greenberg, 1990; Chou, 2009). Greenberg (1990) believed that as equity theory uses the language of outputs and inputs in quantifiable, business-related terms, it was a natural progression for the theory to be used to study organisational behaviour. Loi, Hang-yue and Foley (2006) also discuss organisational justice having roots in social exchange theory. Social exchange theory is used to look at patterns of mutually contingent exchanges of gratification between two individuals with a belief in reciprocity under a generalised moral norm, in other words, how people go through the motions of exchanging a good or service, believing the act will be reciprocated, in order to maintain a stable social system (Loi et al., 2006). Both of these theories involve investigating the perceptions and acts of individuals, in

certain contexts, with hopes of adding to the discussion around human behaviour.

Organisational justice enables researchers, and organisations, to understand how employees perceive justice and how they react to it (De Cremer et al., 2007). One must understand the environmental context of organisational members in order to appreciate the various behaviours that are displayed (Kim et al., 2012). However, the perception of organisational justice will vary greatly depending on an individual's characteristics and particular life settings, all the more reason to apply organisational theory to a variety of private and public sector organisations. As the perceptions of organisational justice will vary greatly from one organisation to another, it can be argued that the concept then is relevant on an international level as being something that can be experienced by anyone (St-Pierre & Holmes, 2010). This could also mean that the concept of organisational justice will always be evolving as societies and organisations change as political, economical and environmental contexts also change.

Although there could be some variance in context, the organisational justice framework remains the same, and the core element of organisational justice is that people evaluate on four different types of justice, and each of these judgments is associated with different outcomes (Wingrove, 2009). The four different types of justice can be thought of as divided between those that focus on content (distributive), those that focus on process (procedural) and

those that focus on interactions (interpersonal and informational) (Greenberg, 1990; Chou, 2009).

2.4.1 - Distributive Justice

Distributive justice is considered to be the closest component that is related to Adams' (1965) equity theory. The outputs in an organisational set are things such as pay satisfaction, job satisfaction, recognition, honest feedback, workload, benefits, promotions etc...(Loi et al., 2006; Clay-Warner et al., 2005; Chou, 2009; Lambert et al., 2005). An individual's perception of distributive justice can be the result of a comparison between his or her own output/input ratio to that of other employees within the same organisation (Chou, 2009). Individuals can vary in how they perceive they should be rewarded based on individual levels of productivity, how they define fair allocation outcomes, levels of compensation and personal circumstances (Simpson & Kaminski, 2007). Distributive justice is concerned with the fairness of economic exchange relationships between employees and organisations and employees with high perceptions of distributive justice may result in more positive attitudes towards the organisation (Chi & Han, 2008).

2.4.2 - Procedural Justice

Procedural justice refers to fairness in the means by which decisions or outcome distributions are made, including the inclusion of a system for employee complaints (Clay-Warner et al., 2005; Simpson & Kaminski, 2007). St-Pierre and Holmes (2010) propose that there are six criteria, developed by

Leventhal (1980) that a procedure should meet if it is to be perceived as fair within the organisational justice context. The criteria are that it (procedure) is consistent across people and time; bias-suppression, that is, that the parties have no personal self-interest in the allocation process; there is accuracy with regards to the information collected towards the decision making process; there is correctability, in that mechanisms to correct any flaws are in place; there is representativeness, where the opinions of the various parties involved have been taken into account; and ethicality exists, where the decision making process follows fundamental moral and ethical values for both parties. As studies have shown, procedural justice has been found to have a significant positive relationship with organisational commitment as procedural justice centres on individual's perceived justice on day-to-day operations (Loi et al., 2006; Eskew, 1993).

These perceptions are connected to how people are treated with courtesy and respect in regards to decision-making processes and represent what the organisation stands for in its degree of legitimacy (Eskew, 1993; Lambert et al. 2005). Greenberg (1990) goes on to explain that judgments of procedural justice are influenced by the interpersonal treatment people receive from decision makers and the adequacy with which formal decision-making procedures are explained. These two influential judgements however, can also be more closely examined by looking at the interpersonal and informational perceptions of justice.

2.4.3 - Interactional Justice

Together, interpersonal and informational justices are often considered as interactional justice. This is the area of justice that involves the human or social aspect of organisational justice and focuses on the quality of treatment and behaviours between those in charge of allocating resources and the recipients (Chou, 2009; Simpson & Kaminski, 2007). Interactional justice is concerned with how information was communicated and whether the individuals affected by a decision were treated in a courteous and civil manner (Randeree & Malik, 2008). Colquitt (2001) suggested that interactional justice be divided into the two distinctions that are more commonly used now of interpersonal and informational justice.

Interpersonal Justice

Interpersonal justice relates to how employees are treated during the enactment of procedures, with a focus on whether supervisors and management treat each other, and subordinates, with dignity and respect. It also looks as to whether the organisation discourages improper or prejudicial statements (Chou, 2009; Shi, Lin & Wang, 2009; Bakhshi et al., 2009). Simons and Roberson (2003) go into detail with mention of Bies and Moag (1986) identification of four criteria for fair interpersonal treatment. These criteria are the extent to which decision-making authorities are truthful, respectful, and considerate in communicating decisions and the extent to which they justify the rationale for these decisions. Perceived interpersonal

justice has been found to be associated with satisfaction with one's supervisor, organisational commitment and intent to leave (Chou, 2009).

Informational Justice

In regards to the greater interactional justice definition mentioned earlier, informational justice, can therefore refer to the accuracy and quality of explanations about procedures provided to employees within an organisation, the perception of justification and truthfulness of the information provided (Chou, 2009; Shi et al., 2009). It focuses on the explanations as to why procedures were used in a certain way or why outcomes were distributed in a certain fashion (Bakhshi et al., 2009). Both interpersonal and informational justice are related to the interaction between managers and employees and focus more on the statements and behaviours of the person in the role of decision maker rather than the systemic or structural characteristics of procedures and outcomes (St-Pierre & Holmes, 2010; Nowakowski & Conlon, 2005).

The organisational justice framework has the ability to showcase the day to day experience of an employee in any sector. Insight into perceptions of fairness as well as other aspects of organisational life can be had, which is vital when considering any desire to increase awareness of an organisational situation or employee perspectives. The emphasis on fairness and interactions within the workplace are significant when considering using this framework to gain insight as to why social workers have reported the

struggles they are facing, such as low morale, as reviewed in Section 1.4. Already, there have been minor advances in using the organisational justice framework within the field of social work and the scope of these studies will now be reviewed.

2.5 - Organisational Justice and Social Work

At time of writing, only three studies have been found that have sought to employ the lens of organisational justice to understanding the lives of social workers. Kim et al. (2012) concentrated on social workers in Korea and the effect of organisational justice on burnout, Lambert et al. (2005) looked at organisational justice and social service worker attitudes in northwest Ohio, and Wingrove (2009) wrote her Psychology dissertation on the comparison of two theoretical models of procedural justice in the context of child protection proceedings in Nebraska. All three articles stated, albeit from a quantitative methodology, that more research needs to be done in this area and that both social workers and clients will benefit from this research. Although by using quantitative methods, the ability to predict concerns, such as job retention and job satisfaction, is more readily available, there could potentially be a limitation on our ability to get to the deeper meanings and specifics of the lived experience of child and family social workers.

Kim et al. (2012) found that social workers intention to leave their workplace was influenced by perceptions of organisational justice and that there is a need to look at this relationship in different societies. Lambert et al. (2005)

remind us that although social justice is a primary focus of social work, social service workers are not always treated with fairness and in a just manner. As social workers are expected to be fair in their transactions with their clients, it only goes to assume that they would expect the same treatment within their agency. Or in other words:

Social service employees deserve organisational justice, especially in light of the fact that they are called upon to deliver social justice to the clients and public they serve (Lambert et al., 2005, p.425)

The concept of organisational justice is a multi-dimensional one but the framework of the different types of justice could potentially lead to a better understanding of the lived experiences of social work practitioners in Scotland. Distributive, procedural, informational and interpersonal justice have all been found to have strong links to job satisfaction, turnover, intention to leave, organisational commitment and other organisational behaviours (Clay-Warner et al. ,2005; Chin & Han, 2008; Greenberg, 1987; Lambert et al., 2005). Research also supports a trickle-down approach in which the way employees are treated will influence their interaction with customers/clients (Simons & Roberson, 2003; Sin, Win & Lang, 2009). The majority of the research done in this area has used quantitative methods and therefore have a tendency to show that there is a relationship between the concepts, however does not necessarily discuss any potential deeper meaning behind why participants responded with the answers they gave.

As well, organisational theory and literature seem to often discuss the various components of an organisation from either a manager's perspective

or by looking at the wider system first. On the other hand, the majority of organisational justice literature appears to be focused on the employee's perspective of how the workplace is functioning and then places those perspectives within the wider organisation context. It is the latter perspective that offers the possibility of examining child protection social work from the 'ground up'.

As I have argued elsewhere, the organisational justice framework allows for a more detailed discussion about procedures, workplace relationships and communication that shed light on the dichotomy between management and practice of child protection social work (Engstrom, 2014). The qualitative nature of this research allows for the respondents to explore and reflect on the meaning behind the questions and their experiences, thereby also reflecting further on the context and relationship they hold with the workplace (Engstrom, 2014). Relationships and interactions are central to the ethos of social work (Ingram, 2013; Ferguson, 2005), these aspects are what create change, therefore it is important for research not only to examine the relationship child and family social workers have with their clients, as is often done, but also the relationship child and family social workers have with their employers. Therefore, it is important to use qualitative methods to get a better understanding of the lived experiences of child and family social workers who perform child protection duties.

As this research is about the lived experience of child and family social workers, the next section will begin with a discussion as what is meant by 'lived experience' and will draw out the benefits of the organisational justice model to explore this lived experience.

2.6 - Lived Experience, Child Protection and Organisational Justice

The complexities that are involved with social work practice not only in the context of child protection in the UK, but with regards to the profession as a whole, are evident. As previously discussed, studies suggest that social workers experience high reports of stress, burnout, negative views on work and work-based relationships, anxiety, depression, lack of job satisfaction, and engage in unhealthy coping mechanisms (Thompson et al., 1994; Nissly, Mor Barak & Levin, 2005; Tham, 2007). These are 'outside' manifestations of the strain of the role, thereby making the investigation of a deeper understanding of the lived experience pertinent.

Researching the day to day or "lived" experience, associated with phenomenological research, is an attempt to expand our knowledge of the meanings of our lives as we experience them in our everyday world (van Manen, 1990). Phenomenology asks what is it like to have a certain experience, and researching the lived experience involves investigating experiences as we live them and reflecting on the essential themes that emerge (van Manen, 1990). Van Manen (1990) states that the problem with studying the lived experience is that we often assume that that we know all

we need to know about the nature of what we are studying due to 'common sense', suppositions and pre-existing work of scientific studies. Linking this to child and family social work then, we may already have a tendency to believe we know everything we need to know about child and family social workers due to the vast amount of literature and high profile reports that are accessible. Instead of taking for granted what we think we know about child and family social workers, we need to continue searching for material that will assist in the understanding of the fundamental nature of the role (van Manen, 1990).

What we do know is that social workers are the occupational group most often exposed to work strain when compared with other professionals in public human service organisations (Tham & Meagher, 2009). When studying social work turnover rates, it has been found that burnout, job dissatisfaction, organisational commitment, role conflict, professional commitment, stress, social support and physical comfort are all significantly better predictors of practitioner's intention to quit, than actual turnover. The impact of turnover on client care can be devastating because front line workers play an important role in determining the quality of care and practice. This is particularly true when children come to count on the workers with whom they come in regular contact with. The turnover of child welfare workers leads to the disruption of the continuity and quality of care and is a major obstacle to timely investigations, diminishing the ability of agencies to protect children (Mor Barak, Nissly, & Levin, 2001; Chen & Scannapieco,

2009; Weaver et al., 2007; Ellet et al., 2007). From an organisational standpoint, turnover also negatively impacts on the agency's training and replacement costs and decreases the organisational effectiveness (Chen & Scannapieco, 2009).

The experience of role conflict, where individuals experience a conflict between their professional values and those of the organisation, is also a signifier of social workers being more likely to quit (Mor Barak et al., 2001; Travis & Mor Barak, 2010; Tham, 2007). Role conflict can occur when expectations are in conflict and can come from one person, two or more persons or can be inter-role (Tham, 2007). Role ambiguity, when there is uncertainty about the scope of the job and the expectations of others, can also have a negative influence on job satisfaction and intention to leave (Tham, 2007, Thompson et al. 1994). As direct impacts on job stress, role conflict and role ambiguity have been found to had differing effects on neglectful practices of work but Travis and Mor Barak (2010) have found that both role conflict and role ambiguity contributed to the likelihood that social workers would leave the profession.

When it comes to reasons for actually leaving an organisation, social workers who left their jobs were unhappy with management practices, did not feel like there was a mutual investment or commitment between themselves and the organisation, or did not feel included (Mor Barak et al., 2001; Rycraft, 1994; Findler et al., 2007). From both a personal investment in the relationships

with colleagues to a professional and mutual relationship with the agency, an employee will form an opinion as to whether they stay employed with that particular workplace or not (Rycraft, 1994). Employees' behaviours are based to a significant degree on their perception of their standing within the social system and their consonance or dissonance with the group and the organisation. Within the organisational context, the degree to which the desire to belong is accommodated by the organisation can affect organisational outcomes as well, including employee well-being, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment (Findler et al., 2007). Findler et al (2007) also support the connection between social work employee perception of being accepted by the organisation, the degree of satisfaction they feel with their jobs and their level of commitment to the organisation. These notions suggest that reciprocity, and the balance of give and take, affects perceptions of the workplace, something that can also be referred to as social exchange (Smith, 2005).

Focusing on social exchange theory, how an individual feels about a relationship, is based on the balance between their efforts in the relationship and the anticipated or actual rewards, within an organisation, Travis and Mor Barak (2010) also believe there is a positive correlation between social work practitioner's perception of those rewards and intention to stay in the job. Smith (2005) continues to broaden the knowledge base on retention in social work by bringing together the concepts of organisational support and social exchange theory. Both of these concepts can be utilised to explain

employees perceived feelings of value towards in their workplace. Smith's (2005) study highlighted the importance of extrinsic rewards within an organisation in collaboration with supportive supervision and a possible work life balance. She has added to the debate about the complexities of staff retention and the various aspects that are at play. While her results state that extrinsic rewards within the workplace as well as organisational-level characteristics affect the likelihood of child and family social worker retention, there is still room to explore the specifics of what these look like.

What has mattered the most in the majority of the literature relating to social workers, is the feeling of not being valued enough, of not feeling well cared for, or that management did not show enough interest in the health and well-being of the staff. This does not mean that high workloads, time pressure and difficulty of tasks can continue to go unrecognised and neglected: high levels of stress undermine workers' health and well-being and negatively influence workplace climate and the quality of the work done.

However, workers perceptions of organisational fairness, to what extent personnel are rewarded for a job well done, feel taken care of and where management is interested in their health and well-being, and the arrangements to facilitate work-life balance have all been found to be the major influences as to how committed to an agency social workers are (Tham & Meagher, 2009; Smith, 2005; Ellet et al., 2007; Tham, 2007; Mor Barak et al., 2006). These findings of social workers not being valued by the

organisation they work for are interesting, and taken together with a lack of knowledge of the day to day feelings experienced by child protection social workers, suggest something of a significant gap in our understanding of the combination of a professional practice in crisis and ill at ease with itself and our lack of knowledge of the individual views and experiences, this will be further discussed in the remaining sections of this chapter.

2.7 - Conclusion

This chapter has considered different literature on the development of social work in the United Kingdom together with a review of the organisational justice literature. The overview given above provides a foundation for understanding how child and family social workers experience their workplace and interactions with other professionals.

What can be seen from the collected literature is social workers expressing dissatisfaction with their work environment and how they are perceived through the media, other professionals and service users. Various reports have been conducted in the hope of addressing the issues that social workers are voicing. These reports are high profile and seemingly add to the pressure for something to be done in order to ensure best outcomes for service users and support social workers.

A managerialist standpoint has been underlying the criticisms contained in the majority of the reports and this is also impacting adversely on the lived

experience of social workers. Social work stems from a moral and value based history and practitioners are having difficulty balancing the bureaucratic demands of the workplace with the values they hold and have been trained in. This discrepancy seems to be having an impact on the relationships social workers have with their management teams and overall morale within the organisation. These themes have been found throughout the development of the profession and are relevant towards this thesis and its aim to understand the lived experience of child and family social workers. The underlying significance of fairness and how social workers are treated within the workplace provided justification for choosing the organisational justice framework when investigating the lived experience of social workers.

However, as noted, there is a gap within the literature in the sense that the organisational justice framework has had limited experience being conducted within the social work profession, especially from a qualitative standpoint. The literature provided above has shown the potential benefits for utilising this framework to gain insight into the lived experience of social workers and a greater understanding of the sources of the low morale expressed, and is therefore worthy of investigation within this thesis. The primary research question then became focused on how to assess the ways that using an organisational justice lens could provide us with an insight as to social workers' lived experience. This overall question can be further split into two specific questions regarding the methodology involved with the

organisational justice framework and the potential conceptual contribution to knowledge. More specifically, the research questions at this time were:

- 1) Methodologically, how does the organisational justice framework provide insight into the day to day experience of child and family social workers?
- 2) What does this tells us about the way child and family social workers experience their working life?

The following chapter, Chapter Three, will describe the research design and methodology that were conducted in order to address the above research questions. As has been mentioned in section 2.1 and as will be seen in the course of Chapter Three and subsequent data analysis (Chapter Four), a further research question developed leading to a return to literature. This literature focused on the emotions that surfaced throughout the interview data and were significant enough to warrant a subsequent analysis and increased level of attention (as will be seen in Chapter Five).

Chapter 3: Research Design, Methodology and Methods

3.1 Introduction

This chapter's purpose is to explain the methodology, research design and methods selected to address the research questions in study. This methods chapter reflects the designing and implementation of this particular project as a fluid and evolved process alongside the field work. As the interviews were conducted, the research developed and took a turn towards the acknowledgement that the underlying theme of emotion needed to be identified and explored. Further on in Chapter Five will be a further discussion and insight as to the analysis and process of identifying the emotions the social workers expressed.

The first few sections of this chapter lay out the methodological standpoint, epistemology, ethical considerations and rigour of the study. This is also where I discuss the importance of being aware of my own background as a social worker and how this has influenced the research process and development. Next the context, access and sampling are described and rationalised, after which the methods themselves are set out including a reflection on the process of transforming a quantitative scale into a qualitative interview.

The field work began with making contact in September 2012 with the first interview taking place in March 2013 and the final interview was completed in August 2013. Data management is described followed by a detailed

description of the process of analysis. The analysis section is divided to include the process of analysing the interview data from an organisational justice perspective, followed by the process of analysing the data with regards to the emotional content that emerged.

3.2 - Epistemology and Ontological Position

The research questions have stemmed from an overall understanding and belief as to how knowledge and social situations are experienced. As already stated, although previous research that is emerging in this field uses a larger amount of quantitative data (Glisson, 2007; Mor Barak, 2001), due to personal interests of how social workers feel, this research will instead take a qualitative approach. A qualitative research strategy often coincides with inductivist, constructionist, and interpretivist epistemological and ontological positions. An epistemological position, which deals with the nature of knowledge, described as interpretivist means that the stress is on the understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants. An ontological position described as constructionist implies that social properties are outcomes of the interactions between individuals and that meaning is not discovered, but constructed (Bryman, 2008; Crotty, 1998). This research has also been developed with a significant belief and adoption of a phenomenological point of view. Here, research is a way to question the way we experience the world and the aim is to have a deeper understanding of the nature of everyday experiences (van Manen, 1990). Although this thesis is not a complete display of phenomenological research, the elements of attempting to uncover

and describe the meaning of lived experiences, minimal focus on factual events and a larger concern with the nature of the experience and an interest in meeting the social workers where they are naturally situated and engaged in their worlds, are integrated within the desire to bridge the gaps in knowledge about how social workers are experiencing their day to day working lives, that have been found in the literature (van Manen, 1990).

I have also become aware that my ontological and epistemological assumptions fall in line with those of social constructionism and interpretivist. This is due to my view that our perceptions, daily lives and routines are heavily influenced by our values and experiences. There are a variety of complex factors and systems at play within each of our lives; societal, familial and organisational just to name a few (Adams et al., 2009). Within the child protection context, there are many people and systems involved and it is important to gain insight as to the experiences of each. Decisions made in child protection are not made in isolation and the relationships that social workers have with their co-workers, employers and clients will have an influence on their perceptions of their workplace and their emotional experiences.

3.3 - Research Questions

In order to achieve the proposed aims and objectives of the research study, specific research questions need to be asked. Research questions in qualitative research are stated with varying degree of explicitness and the question can be embedded within a general statement of the orientation of

the research (Bryman, 2008). As could be seen in the final section of the previous chapter, a gap was identified regarding the use of the organisational justice framework, which had limited exposure within the social work profession. Social workers and high profile reports had expressed low morale within the profession and concerns with treatment of social workers due to the media and strained relationships with other professionals. Therefore, the organisational justice framework, as described in Chapter 2, was found to be the most appropriate and best tested tool to address the aims of the research, that of exploring the lived experience of child and family social workers. The hypothesis for this research study would then be that the organisational justice lens is a helpful way of understanding the child and family social worker lived experience.

This reflection on the combined social work and organisational justice literature, then led to the formulation of the overarching primary research question:

- 1) In what ways can using an organisational justice lens tell us about child and family social workers' day to day experience?

A sub-question to this, as related to the adaptation of the organisational justice framework from quantitative to qualitative, that is integrated within this question is:

- 1a) Methodologically, how does the organisational justice framework provide insight into the day to day experience of child and family social workers?

By adapting the organisational justice framework into a qualitative interview schedule, as will be discussed in section 3.8, this framework provided social work practitioners with an opportunity to discuss a variety of organisational aspects that were significant to their day to day experience.

As qualitative researchers tend to view social life in terms of processes, there is interest and concern as to how events and patterns unfold over time (Bryman, 2008). As explained earlier, I am interested in the individual perspectives of how social workers experience their day to day life in the workplace. While conducting the interviews using an interview schedule centred on the organisational justice framework, a deeper level of this experience began to emerge within the responses of the practitioners. This deeper level included revealing some of the emotions that are present within the role, something that should be taken into consideration as social work research is likely to include an awareness of emotional content (McLaughlin, 2007). As a result, a subsequent research question emerged as the additional dimension of identifiable emotions became evident.

2) What are some of the emotions felt throughout the lived experience of a child and family social worker?

Gaining insight into the some of the emotional lived experience of a child and family social worker will provide further information to their overall lived experience. The concepts identified earlier, those focusing on fairness, how people are treated, and the relationships within the workplace are experiences that are intricately connected with different emotions. By

focusing on emotions, there could then be more awareness and understanding of the significance of those experiences are for social work practitioners. Further foundation for the importance of investigating the emotional component of the lived experience of a child and family social worker will be discussed in Chapter Five where there is a return to the literature before the findings of the emotional component of the lived experience from the interviews are discussed.

3.4 - Reflexivity

A vital component to this particular research is the reflexive account of what I experienced as a researcher, especially as this research did not progress in a linear manner. Mason (2002) discusses how reflexivity means thinking critically about what you are doing and why, challenging your own assumptions and recognising the extent of your thoughts on the shape of the research. This is especially pertinent when researching individuals that are in a role I can identify with as a previous child and family social worker. It is difficult to remain completely detached when I could identify with some of their situations and expressed emotions. The emotional component that has emerged within the research is not only an important arena for the participants, but is also something that I needed to be conscious of in terms of my own emotions throughout. Emotional issues can arise at different parts in the research process, and when researching emotions I became acutely aware and sensitive to my own emotions (Hallowell et al., 2005). These reflections will be dispersed in various sections of the thesis.

Reflexivity applies as much to the process of the research as it does the designing of the research, which was the case here (Blaikie, 2010). Within this chapter alone, the reader will notice the integration of reflexive thought throughout to support the enhancement and transparency of the research experience. If the acknowledgement and recognition of the importance of the emotions involved for social workers is going to be enhanced, then the researchers involved also need to take on the board the importance of their own emotions. It would be disingenuous to suggest otherwise.

3.4.1 - Myself as a Researcher

McLaughlin (2007) states that a researcher is making a statement about human nature, society and the relationship between the two when deciding upon a topic to research and what methodology to use. This defines the development of my own research topic and where I place myself in the process. It is important to reflect on what the researcher brings with them when conducting fieldwork and how this may influence the process. With regards to my familiarity with the research literature, my own child and family social worker experience, and personal understanding of the issues, these all shaped how I conducted myself and understood my role. The research literature shapes the research field, and vice versa. The research on organisational justice, as previously mentioned in the literature review, was primarily quantitative; however this still allowed me to gain some general insight as to what may be covered in the responses. This was also the result of combining the organisational justice literature and current social work

literature and hypothesising how a social worker may respond to the interview questions.

My own experience as a child and family social worker, and social work practitioner in other settings, led to an empathic understanding of what the respondents may be going through on a day to day basis. This understanding, as well as discussions and reflections with my supervisors, led to the awareness of the underlying emotions that social workers experience and were emerging throughout the interview process. This experience of being a social worker also meant that I have had training in interviewing individuals, however in a more clinical, or frontline, social work setting. As a result of this background, although I was comfortable in the interview setting, I had to ensure that I remained a research interviewer and not a social worker with a client. This was a difficult balance at times due to my own values of wanting to help others in difficult situations and to evaluate their own situation, yet not being able to. Social work research wants to not only support practice but to transform it and the experience of being a social work practitioner has inspired this desire for transformation (McLaughlin, 2007).

This is why my own personal understanding of the issues at hand also played a role in shaping how I conducted myself and the research process. One of the main reasons I became a social worker is because I have a strong value in helping others and sense of what I deem fair or not. After all,

social work has an ethical imperative to social justice (McLaughlin, 2007). These values provide a distinct perspective on how I think social workers should be treated and valued. My personal experience of working as a child and family social worker who had child protection responsibilities led to this topic being important to me as I had experience in a local authority that closely aligned with many of the experiences that the respondents discussed and I wanted to find out more about why this was. On the other hand, I have also had experience working within a large organisation that was positive, valued the employees and the work we did, and whose ethos involved recognition, respect and caring for all those involved. By working for that particular organisation, I am able to see how important those qualities are and that it is possible to have that support and ethos.

The development of becoming an academic researcher was also integral and integrated throughout the entire research process. Identifying as an academic researcher came quite late in the research process and this recognition assisted in the final preparations for pulling the thesis together. Having such a strong practice and teaching background, those are the roles that I identified with more so than that of a researcher. The bedrock of research techniques was well provided through the required academic courses, however there was a still a journey towards finding comfort in the processes and language necessary in order to conduct oneself as a researcher. This journey is still in progress, as I am able to identify as an

academic researcher the comfort level will increase and the balance between the roles I hold will be in a closer equilibrium.

3.4.2 – Insider and Outsider Research

What the majority of the previous section discusses is a dilemma that researchers may face, that of being either an insider. An insider researcher is someone that choose to study a group that they also identify with, may be intimately connected to or to some degree already share experiences and language with the respondents (Unluer, 2012; Kanuha, 2000, Breen, 2007; Hodkinson, 2005).

There are advantages and disadvantages to being an insider researcher, some of which I experienced throughout this research process. Bonner and Tolhurst (2002) have listed a number of advantages of being an insider researcher. These include not being seen as a stranger and on some level already a member of the group, knowledge of the culture and language or jargon, and it is generally easier to gain acceptance and co-operation as an insider. Others also claim that as an insider, there is a deeper empathetic understanding of the people they study and are more at ease interacting naturally with the members of the group (Kusow, 2003; Breen, 2007). Insider researchers may also be better placed to make a judgment, by combining their academic background and experience of the subject in question, as to what elements may be worth exploring (Hodkinson, 2005).

Of course there are downsides to being an insider researcher as well, matters of losing objectivity and unconsciously making wrong assumptions as a result of being too familiar or close to the subject matter may arise (Unluer, 2012; Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002; van Heugten, 2004). The researcher may also have difficulty balancing the insider role and the researcher role, also known as role duality (Unluer, 2012; Brannick & Coghlan, 2007; Kanuha, 2000). Kanuha (2000) also described difficulty focussing on the responses and the interview process as a result of the distraction of her own self-reflection on similar experiences that unexpectedly occurred simultaneously.

Throughout this particular research there were aspects of it that were definitely assisted by the insider knowledge I have of child and family social work practice due to my work experience and interaction with social work academics and students. I understood concepts and situations, I could relate to some of the experiences, both positive and negative, and I could identify with the emotions they expressed which in turn assisted in the analysis of the interviews. The respondents may have also felt they were talking to someone that understood their situation as I recall after one interview a respondent stating the experience was akin to a therapy session. Similar to Kanuha (2000), my insider experience is what drove me to my particular research topic as I wanted to understand the phenomena and experience that I went through on a deeper level. That being said, as was discussed briefly in the previous section, the role duality and struggle to balance myself as social

worker and the researcher was something I experienced throughout the research process. This may have been a contributing factor to the emotional exhaustion I felt after some of the interviews and also meant that I may not have clarified terms or situations as well as someone that was further removed from the group may have. However, while I recognise that there are strong elements of the insider researcher role I experienced and were influential within this research, had I worked in the same local authority as those that were chosen for this research, or had used an ethnographic methodology, I believe I was also an outsider throughout this research by the very nature of my role and identity now being closely aligned with a researcher and academic.

As a result of identifying as both an insider and outsider researcher throughout this project, I find it difficult to subscribe to the idea that a researcher can be either one or the other and believe the research process cannot be strictly led by someone totally 'inside' or 'outside' (Woodward, 2008). A researcher's identity is likely to be fluid and evolving as the research process also evolves. This fluctuation may also lead to multiple identities and multiple possibilities of which to identify with at any given time throughout the research (Hodkinson, 2005). Dwyer and Buckle (2009) believe it is restrictive to emphasise an either/or stance on whether one is in or out and Kusow (2003) believes that the distinction is more situational and depends on the social, political and cultural values of any given context the researcher may find themselves in. A more holistic view of looking at the researcher role may

be following a combination of Dwyer and Buckle (2009) believing the researcher role is about commitment to accurately and adequately representing the respondents experiences and Hodkinson's (2005) stance as a matter of proximity and that particular elements of identity will be at the foreground depending on the particular context the researcher finds themselves in.

The role of a social work academic while having the background of a practicing social worker will always bring elements of insider and outsider researcher to any future research project. That is why, for me, it is more about ensuring the commitment to representing the respondents I come in contact with and being mindful and reflective of how my multiple roles may impact and be integrated within the research process.

Such are the aspects that I brought to the research process and they have all had a significant role to play in the background for the research, the entire research development and the formation of the research questions which will now be discussed. These aspects were also influential in how I conducted the interviews and my comfort level with the process.

3.5 - Methodology

3.5.1 - Methodological Standpoint

As I am concerned with the perceptions and thoughts of individuals, and believe in the process of phenomenological inquiry, a qualitative research

strategy was used. An interest is held in the descriptions and explanations as to why things are the way they are and a desire to incorporate the interpretation of the child protection context from the perspective of those involved. Questioning the world of the child and family social worker in this way allows for those not in the role to gain insight into the essential nature of what it is to be a child and family social worker (van Manen, 1990). The details of day to day life are also important because of the significance for the practitioners as well as the children that they are aiming to protect. A qualitative research strategy usually emphasises words and experiences rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data (Bryman, 2008; Creswell, 2003). This combined process of a qualitative research strategy with an inclusion of phenomenological inquiry also allows a more reflective component for the researcher to emerge and have a priority, which is an essential aspect to the PhD dissertation (van Manen, 1990).

As mentioned earlier, previous research that is emerging in this field uses a large amount of quantitative data (Glisson, 2007; Mor Barak, 2001). This is due to the use of scales and surveys that have been developed and inspired by the organisational field. However, as my own background stems from the practice side of social work, I am more interested in the thick descriptions, social processes and flexible nature of qualitative and phenomenological research (Blaikie, 2003; van Manen, 1990). Quantitative research is certainly not without its merit however as it is highly structured in nature (Blaikie, 2003, Bryman, 2008). It is important to remain in control of the research and to

have a routine and structure to the components of it, however, there are many things in life that cannot be controlled and there could be variables that were not accounted for that will impact the research. The experiences the participants have that would lead them to answer a particular way is also an important component to the research process, especially when considering an investigation into the day to day experience of a participant as a central theme of the research project. Qualitative research allows for some flexibility and openness to the process of the research and maintains a focus on uncovering the meanings behind behaviours and beliefs. Qualitative research also coincides well with the social work field as both require skills in communication and relationship building (Barusch et al., 2011). The research questions therefore, that focus on the perspectives and experiences of child and family social workers, were thought to be best addressed by the use of the qualitative research strategy.

3.5.2 - Validity and Reliability

Due to the qualitative nature of this study, the criteria for assessing the quality of the research need to be altered from the traditional quantitative standpoint of purely assessing reliability, replication, and validity (Bryman, 2008). As described in Bryman (2008), Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose that qualitative data instead be assessed by credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and authenticity. It is thought that a combination of the criteria is best to ensure the rigour and quality of research.

- o External Reliability: Is based on the degree to which the study can be replicated. Another researcher needs to adopt a similar social

role in order for this research to be externally reliable. This will ensure that what the researcher sees and hears will be similar to what has been found in this research (Bryman, 2008; Blaikie, 2010). This then applies to the procedures being explained explicitly within this section in order to replicate if needed (Flick, 2002).

- o Internal Validity: The degree to which there is a match between researchers' observations and the theory that develops. As the research is being conducted by a social worker, with social workers, there is a strong congruence between the concepts and observations discussed and experienced. There is a risk however, that were this research to be replicated, the social workers involved could have very different answers and experiences, this is especially pertinent from a differing cultural perspective (Bryman, 2008; Blaikie, 2010; Mason, 2002).
- o Trustworthiness: Is made up of four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. This ensures that the research is conducted according to good practice, findings are submitted to the social world, thick description is provided, complete records are kept and personal values or theoretical inclinations are kept at bay (Bryman, 2008). This research has abided by all of these areas by not only having adequate supervision throughout, but also by the innate organisation of the research project from start to finish.

- o Authenticity: Authenticity is linked to the wider political and social impact of the research. Authenticity speaks to whether the research represents differing viewpoints adequately, helping members arrive at a better understanding and perspective of their own social setting, and if the research has provided a desire to change or engage in action (Seale, 2004). Although it is difficult to speak to action taken as a result of this research, respondents reflected on the process of the interview as thought provoking.

3.5.3 - Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues can arise at various stages in social research and cannot be ignored as they relate directly to the validity of the research (Bryman, 2008). It is crucial to be aware of the ethical possibilities and therefore make informed decisions about the implications of the choices that are made throughout the research (Bryman, 2008; Mason, 2002). The primary ethical considerations within this proposed research study are centred on confidentiality, informed consent and any harm or deception to the participants involved.

All records and identities of participants and local authorities were kept confidential, only privy to me and my supervisors. The use of pseudonyms will ensure that during the writing up of the thesis, all identifying factors were kept to a minimum, as there will always be the possibility of identification (Bryman, 2008; Hallowell et al., 2005). Informed consent means that prospective participants are aware of the research process and able to make

an informed decision as to whether they wish to participate or not (Mason, 2002). It is difficult to present the participants with every piece of information that might be necessary for them to be aware of; however, detailed and extensive consent forms will be constructed for the participants to sign (see appendix 1). These forms contained information about the purpose of the research, the time frame, the option to withdraw from the study, the method of dissemination and transcription, and who has access to the information (Bryman, 2008). Maintaining confidentiality and anonymity is of the utmost importance however the participants were also made aware that factors outside of the researcher's control, such as the uniqueness of a situation, could make guarantees of anonymity misleading. It is impossible to predict at the outset all of the ethical dilemmas that could be faced (Hallowell et al., 2005). It is not anticipated that this research caused any distress to the participants. However, if distress did occur once I had left, the social workers were encouraged to talk directly to their line manager or seek external professional support. Behaving responsibly and with integrity no matter what was thrown at me was also an ethical consideration that I had to take note of (Hallowell et al., 2005). As the research developed and progressed with the inclusion of the emotional content, I began to be more aware of my own emotions after the interviews, which I made note of in my field journal. Specifically after the day that I conducted four interviews back to back, I could tell how my emotions were affecting the final interview and how emotionally and mentally exhausted I felt at the end of the day. This was also due to one particular interview that day being incredibly negative; it took a

few days to be able to work through my own emotions before feeling properly prepared to analyse the emotions of the participants.

Throughout the process, no payment was used to entice the participants. During the interview, the social workers were assured that the process was meant to be as transparent as possible and they had a certain amount of time at the end of the interview to add or change anything they have stated so as to eliminate the possibility of their words being represented as something other than intended.

Finally, the research was approved by the 'Research Ethics Policy and Procedures' of the School of Social and Political Studies, University of Edinburgh. Due to the above ethical considerations, the lack of young people or other vulnerable individuals involved, the unlikelihood of any significant risk to the participants or the researcher and no concerns with confidentiality or conflict of interest, the research project was identified by self-audit as a level 2 study.

3.6 - Research Location

3.6.1 - Physical Context

The research took place in Scotland using two local authority settings. The initial thought behind having two local authorities was not for a concrete comparison to be made but more to allow for a breadth of social work experiences to be explored. This was also to allow for a greater pool of social

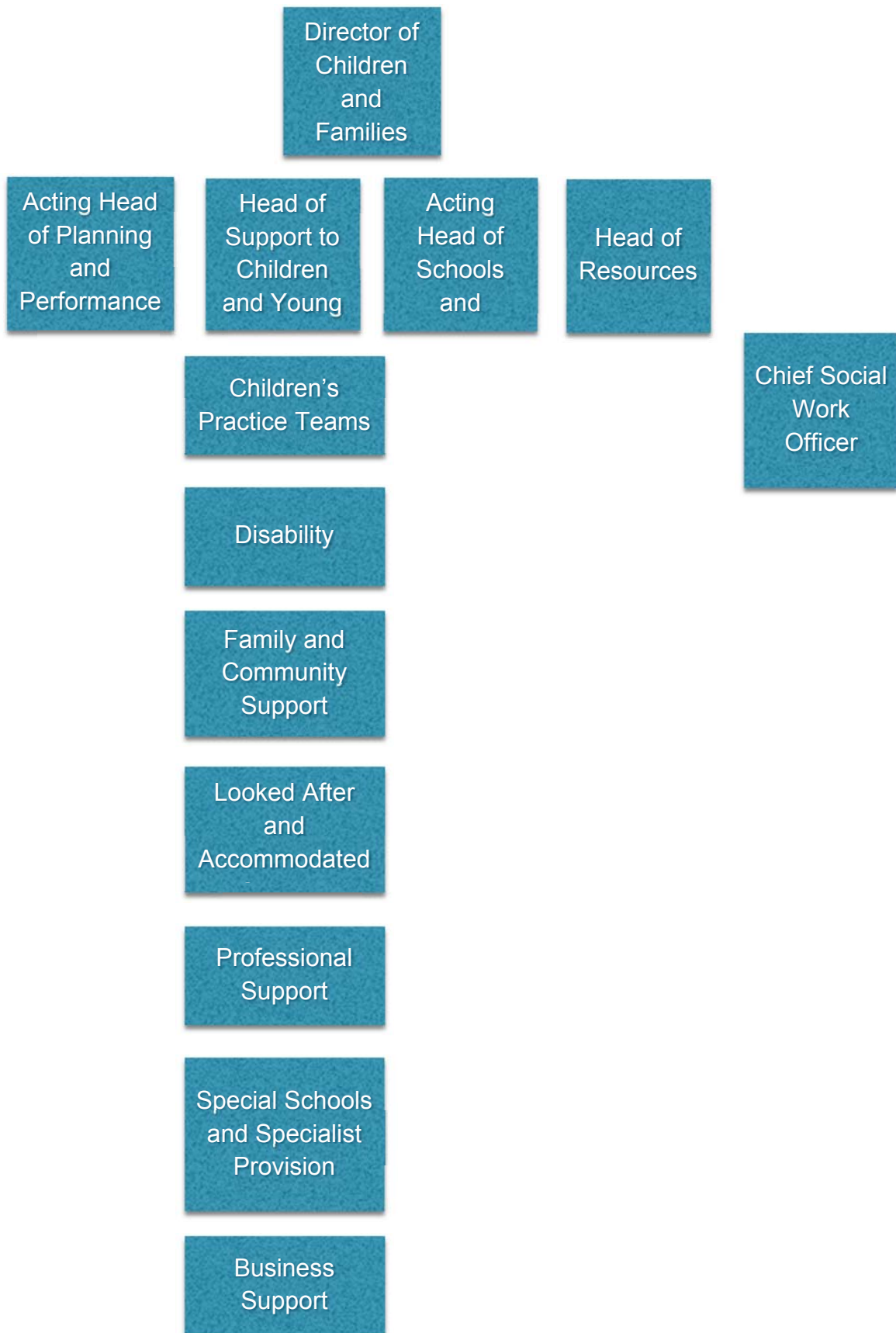
workers to be drawn from as it was unclear as to whether I would receive adequate interest from only one local authority.

The local authorities are legally required to safeguard and promote the child's welfare, therefore being the only employers for statutory child and family social workers (Scottish Executive, 1995). As of 2010, there were 40, 739 whole time equivalent (WTE) social services staff employed by Scottish local authorities, roughly 7.9 staff per 1, 000 population (Statistics Scotland, 2010). The local authorities were chosen because of access and availability.

Local Authority A (figure on following page)

This local authority is situated in a large city within Scotland. The social work practice teams are required to cover: children referred for assessment/intervention regarding child protection concerns, children on the child protection register, children looked after at home or accommodated away from home, kinship care and any other assessment reports that are required. At the time of conducting the interviews, there were approximately 509 full time social workers employed (Scottish Statistics, 2010). Social work finds itself within the Children and Families Department, which also has responsibility for the mainstream services including education and community services, as well as the team responsible for planning and performance within the Children and Families department. The team that is primarily responsible for child protection enquiries is one of seven sub-teams that support children and young people.

Figure 1: Children and Families Department Local Authority A



Local Authority B (figure on following page)

This local authority is situated outside a major city centre and is responsible for smaller communities in rural Scotland. As in local authority A, the social work teams are required to work with children and families who are at risk or in need of intervention. There were approximately 79 full time social workers (Scottish Statistics, 2010) at the time the interviews took place. The team that focuses on child protection is in a larger department that has all services involved with children's well-being.

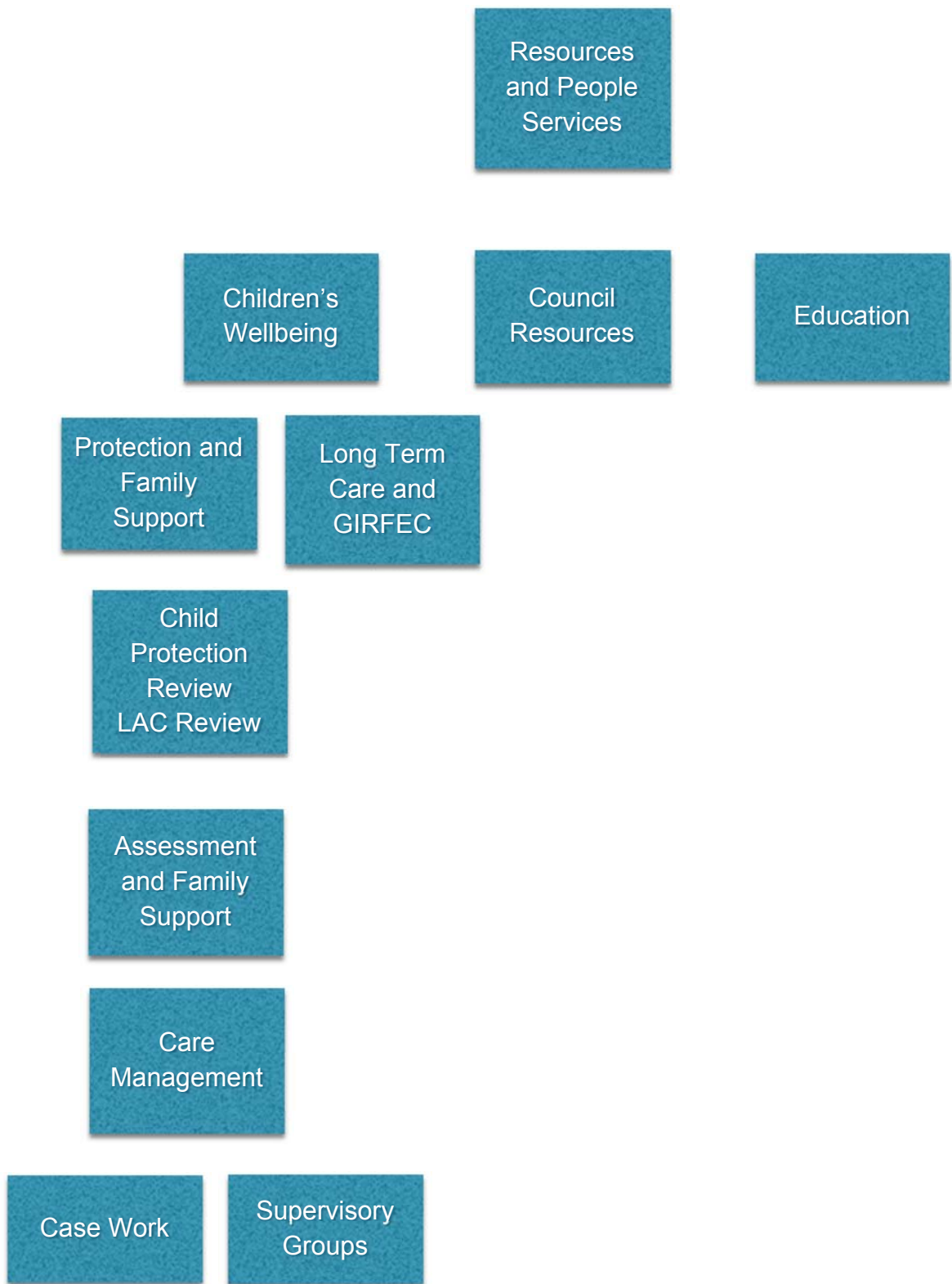


Figure 2: Children and Families Department Local Authority B

It is important not to claim the results as generalisable to every local authority situation as the current political climate and organisational structure may always have an influence on how social work is viewed. Remaining as transparent as possible throughout the process and describing the results as only a part of the greater profession of social work is therefore vital.

3.6.2 - The Role of the Child and Family Social Worker

The role of a child and family social worker within these two particular local authorities will not differ too substantially from other local authorities. The local authorities for this particular piece of research have the job demands and detail available on the council websites. The main purpose for the job of a social worker is to provide and promote a high standard of practice within the team, keeping in mind the statutory responsibilities and obligations, policies and procedures, and providing effective service to vulnerable children, young people and their families.

Some of the more specific tasks that a child and family social worker will have to fulfil involve working directly with children, young people, families and carers in accordance with social work values and regulations; managing a caseload, including undertaking assessments and planning; ensuring all recording is kept up to date; liaise effectively with other agencies and colleagues; undertake relevant training; keep abreast of any changes in policies and procedures; represent the local authority in a professional and

collaborative way; to investigate and provide reports about allegations, complaints or concerns which may be raised about particular children, young people and families; and to undertake a range of other administrative tasks.

The child and family social workers should have knowledge and understanding of child care practice, child development, and assessing managing risks. There should be an understanding of the relevant legislation and initiatives that are specific to children and families as well as professional knowledge of the needs of vulnerable children. The social workers must have an approved qualification in Social Work and be registered with the Scottish Social Services Council with additional experience working with children and multi-agency working as desirable

3.6.3 - Access

Gaining initial access to the local authorities required utilising contacts through the University of Edinburgh and colleagues that work in the councils already. This was especially relevant with Local Authority A as an email address was provided for a Head of Service who was already familiar with the process of research involving the local authority. In regards to Local Authority B, a blind email was sent to the administration after searching through that particular authority's website. Discussions with the heads of services of each local authority lead to information being disseminated to the wider staff team about the call for respondents. An information sheet with an abstract of the proposed research was provided for this circulation, as well as a copy of the interview schedule. This was to ensure transparency

throughout the research process, to provide clear information about the research and provide opportunity for clarification. Contact information was also provided in order for respondents to show interest and ask me any questions.

Whilst negotiations were primarily undertaken with the head of service of each local authority, once respondents came forward, it remained between me and the social worker to arrange a day and time to meet. This communication was done primarily through email with follow up telephone calls as necessary. Dates and times of the interviews were negotiated with the main concern being to fit into the social workers schedule as I had more flexibility, this also meant that I was the one to travel to the social work offices so there would be less disruption in the social workers schedule.

3.6.4 - Units of Analysis and Sampling

There is an aspect of a multi-level approach to the research as the actual research location will be at the mezzo level of local authorities, although the individual experiences that are of interest will be involved at a micro-level of analysis.

Non-probability convenience sampling was used for this project due to the nature of needing a specialised group, social workers, and not a representative sample of the general population. This means the sample of respondents is a group of social workers that were available and accessible at the time (Bryman, 2008). As mentioned above, contacts were made at

various local authorities in Scotland and from here, snowball sampling was utilised as the contacts then forwarded on the call for participants to all of their staff members in the child and family teams. Unfortunately, snowball sampling is unrepresentative of the population, in this case social workers, as it only brings forward those that are close colleagues with other respondents. Social workers that may not currently have any concerns with their workplace, or who have no interest in research are not part of the sample, yet this would be an important group of people to talk to. The implication for this on my research is that the sample is not as diverse as it potentially could be, as well as not being able to tap into the breadth of experience that could be beneficial when discussing perceptions and experiences. Increasing the diversity was not seen as a focus at this time due to my priority in attaining respondents and being conscious of the time scales I was working within. Were this research to be replicated and developed further, a more diverse and greater number of social workers would be sought after. The more experiences and emotions we are able to be made aware of, the more able we are to truly understand the lived experience of a child and family social worker in Scotland.

The rate at which respondents made contact fluctuated and it was uncertain at first as to whether or not the original desired number of 20 was going to be met. This uncertainty was due to what was seen as a reluctance on the part of social workers to participate. In discussions held with the respondents throughout the interview process, it was discovered that the social workers at

these locations are often asked to participate in research, it can be deducted therefore that there was an element of participant fatigue on behalf of the social workers. In total, 17 social workers came forward, 13 respondents came from Local Authority A, while the remaining 4 came from Local Authority B. Of the 17 individuals, 3 were Team Leaders, 5 were Senior Practitioners (as defined by their Local Authority) and the remaining 9 were Child and Family Social Workers. The gender difference, although not a focus for this research, was 9 women and 8 men. The age of the respondents was not an important factor for this particular piece of research as I was more concerned with the length of time they had been in their role and what other experience they may have that would contribute to their perceptions and experiences of the work. The length of time in employment ranged from 18 months to 23 years with the average length of time in a current post being 11 years.

Although briefly detailed above, the demographics of the respondents for this research are not explicitly described. This is a result of a decision being made that these were deemed not important for the specific analysis of this particular piece of research. The analytical process was meant to stay close to the original organisational justice framework and then focus on the emotions expressed by the respondents. Had elements of the respondents demographics been used as part of the analysis it would have been difficult to contain all the information and results in the confines of the dissertation

requirements. As such, by leaving out these details, it leaves the door open for future research angles and subsequent analysis of the same data.

The skew in numbers between the two authorities is unfortunate as a more equal number would have provided more respondents and therefore be more representative of child and family social workers experiences of their day to day working life, however due to the difference in size between the two authorities, it is understandable. Out of sheer logistics, even after extensive contact, Local Authority B did not have enough available social workers that were able to be interviewed.

3.7 - Data Collection

3.7.1 - Methods

Researchers have used the organisational justice framework primarily as a quantitative method (Colquitt, 2004; Bakhshi et al., 2009; Jordan & Turner; 2008; Nowakowski & Conlon, 2005; Chen et al., 2008). These studies involved large numbers of respondents accessed through questionnaires and many also include the addition of other quantitative scales, such as the distributive justice index, the job satisfaction scale, the group-value model or the organisational commitment questionnaire (Bakhshi et al., 2009; Clay-Warner et al., 2005; De Cremer et al., 2007). The results have therefore often been obtained using a correlation or regression analysis of the data to provide insight into the relationships between variables and correlations into employee perceptions of the workplace. Greenberg (2009) has suggested

that although organisational justice research has done a good job at identifying the theoretical contributions involved when using the framework, more work needs to be done in terms of practical applications of these contributions. Perhaps then it is time to look at the organisational justice framework from a qualitative perspective in order to gain further insight as to where practical applications of the theoretical framework may be inserted.

The most commonly used qualitative methods include focused and in-depth interviews, and various types of observation (Blaikie, 2003, Bryman, 2008). Within this research, data was collected solely through structured in-depth interviews. These structured in-depth interviews were conducted primarily at the local authority office where the respondent worked, however three interviews were held in a room at the University of Edinburgh. The interviews allowed insight as to the nature of experiences of child and family social workers in the local authority from a variety of angles. The possibility of incorporating an ethnographic component was considered, but due to time restraints of the doctoral programme and uncertainty as to how the organisational justice framework would be transformed into an ethnographic study, maintaining the use of qualitative interviews was decided. However, due to the added dimension of the emotional content of being a social worker, an ethnographic approach would be beneficial for future research into a more focused account of the emotions involved of being a child and family social work practitioner. The process of developing the interview schedule and conducting the interviews will now be described

From Quantitative to Qualitative – Development of the Interview Schedule

Creating the interview schedule required combining two justice measures that have been developed and placing them in the context of local authority social work in Scotland. The primary measure used was developed by Colquitt (2001), created during a review of the key developments in the justice literature and validated in two separate studies. Tallman et al (2009) also utilised the Colquitt (2001) measure, however had a small additional qualitative section that was important to consult for this research.

It was important to use the Colquitt (2001) measurement because he had reviewed and explored the theoretical dimensions of organisational justice and created a measurement that closely follow the original explanations laid out in the literature. This ensured a stronger element of construct validity, which might not always be present in qualitative research. This measurement also involved the conceptualisation of organisational justice into four separate dimensions, which had been the desired distinction for this research project as it increased the diversity and range of experiences potentially had by social workers. Examples of the quantitative questions within the Colquitt (2001) measurement are as follows:

Procedural Justice

Referring to the procedures used to arrive at an (outcome) i.e. pay. To what extent:

- Have you been able to express your views and feelings during those procedures?
- Have those procedures been free of bias?
- Have those procedures upheld ethical and moral standards?

Distributive Justice

Referring to an (outcome) i.e pay. To what extent:

- Does your (outcome) reflect the effort you have put into your work?
- Does your (outcome) reflect what you have contributed to the organisation?
- Is your (outcome) justified, given your performance?

Interpersonal Justice

Referring to an authority figure who enacted a procedure. To what extent:

- Has (he/she) treated you in a polite manner?
- Has (he/she) treated you with respect?
- Has (he/she) refrained from improper remarks or comments?

Informational Justice

Referring to an authority figure who enacts a procedure. To what extent:

- Has (he/she) been candid in (his/her) communications with you?
- Has (he/she) explained the procedures thoroughly with you?
- Has (he/she) communicated details in a timely manner?

In contrast, the Tallman et al. (2009) measure used a three-factor model of distributive, procedural and interactional justice, however, also asked five qualitative questions to add depth to the responses. Questions such as the following were used within their research:

- With respect to recognition and influence, please give an example of how (organisation) has handled this well and poorly
- What do you see as the most important factor(s) for (organisation) to focus on to achieve greater “fairness” in its relationship with (group)?

Due to the very limited literature describing organisational justice qualitatively, these questions were reviewed and modified to fit a current social work context, then integrated into the final interview schedule. Discussions held with supervisors at this stage of the interview schedule development were crucial. Discussions and feedback were needed as it was necessary to ensure the wording was applicable to the context of social

workers and to ensure the overall flow of the interview was appropriate. At times, this not only involved in-depth discussions as to how we thought the social workers may respond to the questions, but also a constant reflexive process as to how I would answer the questions if they were asked of me as a child and family social worker. From these discussions a draft of the interview schedule was created in order to conduct a pilot interview.

The pilot interview was conducted with a child and family social worker in order to test the order of questions and overall flow of the interview. This individual was identified through a colleague and came forward as someone who would eventually be a respondent. After a review and reflection of this process the interview schedule was returned to in order to adjust some of the wording in the questions and order in which the questions were asked.

The final interview schedule was made up of 27 questions, with cues for follow up questions as necessary (see appendix 2). The schedule is divided into six sections 1) Demographics 2) Distributive Justice 3) Procedural Justice 4) Informational Justice 5) Interpersonal Justice and 6) Final Questions. The demographics section was included to enquire about the length of time the social worker has been qualified as well as how long they have been with their particular department. These questions were followed by a general introduction question about how it is to work for the particular local authority that they are in. This was done in order to allow the respondent time to get comfortable in the setting and with the topic of the

interview. The main body of the interview was the discussion around the different justice factors in a way that was more specific to the child and family social work role and child protection responsibilities.

It was during the interview process that as a researcher, conflict began to arise as to how 'off schedule' was deemed appropriate. As previously explained, this related to my background as a social worker and at times I found it difficult balancing the role of a researcher and the role of a social worker. As a trained social worker, there was an interest in wanting to dig deeper with the respondents, and yet as a researcher with this particular project, there was a need to adhere to the interview schedule. If I had gone into this process with questions focused on emotion, I may have allowed even more flexibility within the interview schedule, however, as the original intent was to explore organisational justice and the lived experience, the questions needed to be adhered to. However, there was minor adjustment of some of the research questions to include an emotion focus after the initial interviews identified emotions as an important component to the respondents' answers and experiences.

There was also concern that if the conversation veered too far away from the schedule, it would be difficult to stay true to the original measures and theoretical base, thus lessening the validity and reliability of the interview. It became evident within the body of the interview how there was overlap between the types of justices (i.e. distributive, procedural, interactional) when

discussed qualitatively. As this research is not focused on the relationship between any of the individual justice constructs and a specific outcome, or to each other, this was deemed acceptable as the overall perception is the intended outcome. That being said, if this interview schedule is used again, there would need to be continued work on the wording of some of the questions, such as ensuring proper distinction between 'local authority' and 'department', as this often had to be clarified during the interview.

The final questions of the interview focused on the overall factors that the local authority needs to focus on to achieve greater fairness, and a chance for any other information that the respondent was inclined to share, to emerge. This was important in order to tie everything together, and allow the respondent to reflect on the topic and mention anything that he or she thought could have been discussed further, or had been missed entirely.

Conducting the Interviews

The qualitative interview can get close to the individuals' meanings and interpretations, to their accounts of the interactions in which they have been involved (Blaikie, 2003; Mason, 2002). Interviews were appealing as they are closely related to my past experiences of being a social worker. Qualitative interviews also allow for a more active and reflexive process of data generation (Mason, 2002). As a social worker, there is a requirement to regularly conduct interviews with diverse clientele and due to this training, I have become comfortable interviewing and gathering information from

others. It is also essential that social workers are able to pick up on non-verbal cues and be able to assess a situation just by observing interactions between family members and professionals. The down side to this is the nature and scope of the interviews that are held with clientele is very different than those that are held as a researcher. I had to be cautious while interviewing the social workers with regards to boundaries. I had to separate myself from my training and wanting to work through any potential issues that could be resolved as a social worker, as I needed to maintain a researcher stance.

The interviews were scheduled and each lasted anywhere between 30 and 75 minutes. The length of time varied due to the speed of communication by the respondents and the amount of time they had made available for the interview. Some respondents by nature seemed to be more talkative than others and would provide more in-depth responses.

3.8 - Data Management

3.8.1 - Recording

The participants provided informed consent, and a digital recording device was used to capture each interview and interaction, as well as a note pad for observations, additional notes and immediate reflections. The consent form explained the issues of confidentiality and anonymity to each participant and how the research will be used in the long run (see appendix 1). In addition, a digital research journal was used throughout the process in order to write

down reflections and additional ongoing thoughts. This reflexivity is important in order to gain insight to the influence of biases and perceptions on the research.

3.8.2 - Transcription

The data collected by the interviews were transcribed from the oral language into the written language (Bryman, 2008). Although transcribing comes with its faults of being time-consuming, the process of recording being off-putting to respondents, and the technology failing, the benefits are of more importance. Transcribing allowed a more thorough examination of what people have said and the possibility of analysis being an ongoing activity (Bryman, 2008). However, it is important to remain critical when considering the use of transcription as a method as transcribing is just as much an interpretive process as it is a representational process (Green et al., 1997). As this research has taken on a more emotional and reflexive angle, it has been important to bear in mind whose story is being told; the one that the social workers want told, or the story that I want to be told. These could potentially be two very different stories and transcribing emotion where there may not be, and vice versa, just for a better 'story' is something that I needed to be mindful of throughout the process. My research has become a channel for the voice of the social workers that I interviewed and my act of choice of what is transcribed or not is a vital part of expressing that voice, as will be described in further detail in the analysis section. This process was also an interesting test of my own emotional intelligence as the act of hearing a voice as emotional, or to see silence as meaningful, requires my own

understanding how that emotion is signaled and understood (Green et al., 1997). Labelling the emotions was therefore something I need to be careful with, reflect on and double check. It was important that I was not projecting my own emotions of the experience onto the respondents.

3.9 - Analysis

Mason (2002) distinguishes between three different ways of reading interviews, literally, interpretively and reflexively. As the primary focus was the lived experience of child and family social workers employed in a local authority, the interviews were read and analysed primarily in a literal and interpretive manner. This brought focus to the literal substance of what was said, but also allowed for information gathering on the relationship that is not being said.

As the primary method of data collection was structured in-depth interviews, the most beneficial way of analysing the transcripts was a combination of content analysis and the identification of common themes through a computer programme; NVivo. Qualitative data analysis software is based on grounded theory approaches and will aid in the ease and efficiency of organising and coding the emerging themes (Welsh, 2002). However, this efficiency was not always reliable as the programme would not work consistently. This led to weeks of not being able to access the data and a disruption of work that was unavoidable.

3.9.1 - Analytical Approach

The explanatory stage of analysis is where the more focused analytical approach comes to play. As briefly mentioned earlier, this research is not being conducted within a grounded theory perspective. Grounded theory is essentially the generation of theory from data, it is inductively generated or in other words the codes emerge from the data (Charmaz, 2006; Flick, 2009). However, there were elements of grounded theory, such as memo writing, that were utilised (Flick, 2009). The analytic memo was used to ensure consistent application of codes, keep track of analytical thoughts as they occurred through the research process, they are written, reread and rewritten in order to advance theorising and linking codes together (Fielding & Lee, 1991; Flick, 2009). So although there were aspects of grounded theory within the analytical approach, the research took a primarily deductive and content analysis approach. However, as will be discussed shortly, the emotions began to require more attention as an element of the responses that could not be ignored, an inductive process was needed in order to reflect and identify which emotions were emerging.

Content analysis can be described as a method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the classification process of coding and identifying themes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Hsieh and Shannon (2005) further narrow down the definition of content analysis into three different approaches; conventional, directed and summative. Within this framework, the research is being conducted from two perspectives,

conventional and directed. Directed content analysis is being utilised as the goal of the directed approach to content analysis is to validate or extend an already existing theoretical framework (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The existing theory of organisational justice has already focused the research question, interview schedule, and subsequent analysis. The literature on organisational justice will provide predictions about the relationship between codes and provides a more structured process than a conventional content analysis, or grounded theory approach (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Directed content analysis also involves the acknowledgement that there will be data that cannot be coded with the predetermined codes and will require the researcher to identify these data as either a theme or a new code (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

The risk associated with using directed content analysis is that there is a strong bias associated with having a priori codes. It is imperative that care is taken to not force the data to fit the a priori codes, but create new codes in a conventional manner that could enhance and broaden the potential of the data. This process of coding will be touched on further in the next section. Therefore the additional use of the conventional approach to content analysis is required.

By using the conventional content analysis, the themes flow and emerge from the data, which results in an inductive category development (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The emergent themes are organised through coding and

subcategories, and has allowed information to emerge from the participants despite the preconceived organisational justice categories. This is where the themes surrounding the emotions involved with child and family social work shone through. By frequently reviewing the data from an inductive standpoint, in order to establish if more was being said within the organisational justice framework, it became evident that there were feelings and emotions that needed to be addressed. By using both of these processes, a more complete level of content analysis has occurred.

3.9.2 - Process of Analysis

The process of analysis for this piece of research was an evolving process as time went on. This was a result of the analysis emerging not necessarily through design, but by being sensitive to the interview data and what was developing through the process. The analysis was a dynamic process as I went deeper into the data and realised the social workers were describing more than just their perceptions of organisational justice. As has been noted, this research was conducted with a high level of reflexivity due mostly to this process of analysis taking on a dynamism that was not anticipated. If I were to ask social workers about emotions in a more straightforward manner, they may have trouble responding, as we all have trouble labelling and identifying emotions. There may also be the feeling that as social workers, we are expected to be able to deal with other people's emotions, and if we have trouble with our own, that in return may result in a feeling of shame and needing to mask what is really going on. Using the organisational justice

framework proved to be a way to get at those deeper emotions in a more indirect, and possibly, safer way.

There are many steps involved in classifying and analyzing data and the starting point for qualitative analysis involves classifying the data (Fielding & Lee, 1991). The first step towards classifying involves familiarising oneself with the data. Familiarisation can include data reduction, transcription, reading, and any other effort that may involve gaining some coherent understanding of what the data is saying (Fielding & Lee, 1991). With regards to this project, familiarisation involved transcribing the interviews into NVivo and reading the interviews through as many times as necessary. The transcription was helpful due to the fact that it forces focused attention on the interview itself and provided more space to reflect on what is going on at a more rudimentary level, such as voice inflections, and provided space to recall aspects of the interview not captured by audio.

Researchers will make a choice as to how and what to transcribe and as transcription is inherently selective, researchers must be able to explicitly explain the decision to include/exclude certain parts of the interview (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999; Tilley, 2003). As these interviews were initially conducted for the content that they would provide, the small speech nuances such as 'umms' and 'ahhh's' were not consistently transcribed verbatim. However, once it became evident that the underlying emotions needed to be explored, the audio files were returned to and more careful attention was paid to the

smaller nuances. Mention was made within the transcription of when laughter occurred and any physical gestures that were made. This was due to the significance of what these gestures could mean within the greater speech context. Longer pauses were also made note of, as this could be significant in reflecting on whether the interviewee did not understand the question, was unsure how to answer, or perhaps was uncomfortable in anyway.

Analysis of Organisational Justice

The next step involved in analysing and classifying data is the descriptive stage and involved summarising each interview. This process also allowed insight and understanding of the larger themes within the interview. The interview schedule was designed with the four themes from the organisational justice literature in mind and these were obvious within the flow of the interviews. As a reminder, these themes are; distributive justice, procedural justice, informational justice and interpersonal justice, as discussed in detail in section 2.4. Within each of these themes however, sub-themes began to emerge. These concepts were made note of within a previously created memo on NVivo. This previously created memo had a list of words that had been constructed through the guidance of the organisational justice literature in order to assist with the eventual coding. As qualitative interviews are a fluid process, there were times when aspects of different organisational justice themes would emerge in an area of the interview that was somewhat unexpected. In other words, all of the organisational themes were present throughout the entire interview, not just within the confines of their respective place in the interview schedule.

Table 1: Themes and Sub-themes Present in Organisational Justice Analysis

Theme	Sub-themes
Distributive Justice	Reward, Responsibility, Recognition, Training, Allocation, Effort, Contribution, Comparison, Pay, Status
Procedural Justice	Process, Method, Ownership, Decisions, Clarification, Consistency Contributions, Transparency, Dialogue Control, Authority, Express, Administration, Decision Making, Development of Role, Procedures
Informational Justice	Accurate, Information Truthful, Communication Explanation, Efficiency Feedback, Induction, Transparency
Interpersonal Justice	Respect, Dignity, Polite Inappropriate, Praise, Relationship, Treatment, Sensitivity, Support
Most Important Factor (An open-ended question to ascertain the respondents view on the most important factor to achieve 'fairness' within the workplace.)	Analysed with all of the above codes in mind

Analysis of Emotion

As previously mentioned, social work research interviews are likely to include an emotional content that must also be acknowledged (McLaughlin, 2007). The use of a qualitative interview schedule provided an opportunity for more elaborate responses from the practitioners. As a result, the emotions involved with the accounts they were describing surfaced and were strong enough to warrant attention as an aspect of the lived experience of the practitioners. After the process of analysing the data from an organisational justice perspective, because of the unexpected presence of deep felt emotions, these data was then returned to in order to explore further and identify the emotions that were present or made mention of, within the interviews. It was this unarticulated layer that made the data a more rich and viable resource of information. As the emerging emotional layer of the interviews was discovered midway through the process, a return to the literature was essential, as will be seen in Chapter Five. Returning to the literature throughout the interview process brought insight into the importance of emotions and how they help us to understand the emotional dimension of the lived experience of child and family social workers.

Analysing, and subsequently coding, for emotion is difficult because the emotions are deeply embedded in the moment in which they occur (Retzinger, 1995). Within these interviews, recalling situations may bring up past emotions, and yet there is also another layer of having to share those

emotions with a stranger. Analysing for emotion involves the use of verbal and nonverbal cues. As this was an unexpected layer of analysis that emerged, the nonverbal cues during the interview process were not focused on as strongly as they would have been were the emotions a focus from the beginning. With regards to the emotions of shame and guilt that will be discussed in chapter 5, the analysis involves looking at times when the respondent, or the profession of social work, is the object of disappointment, defeat, judgmental comparison, abandonment, isolation, ridicule, inadequacy and/or discomfort (Retzinger, 1995). Going through the transcripts and looking for evidence of these themes, as well as more overt statements of shame and guilt is what informed the involvement of emotions. This process also allowed for attention to be paid to the tone and pitch, speed and volume of the respondent, which can also be used to imply emotions such as shame, guilt or anger (Retzinger, 1995).

Table 2: Themes and Sub-themes Present in Emotion Analysis

Theme	Sub-themes
Emotion	Shame, guilt, ridicule, comparison, inadequacy, disappointment, abandonment

The Missing Positive Emotions

It is important to notice that the emotions which emerged and were analysed within the interviews were primarily negative. This could be a result of either the nature of the work and social workers having a more difficult time

expressing the pride and joy they experience on the job, or it could be as a result of the organisational justice framework prohibiting positive emotions from being expressed due to the very nature of the framework. Either way, there are positive emotions social workers experience that were not expressed within this particular piece of research.

The organisational justice framework could be argued to be a part of the managerialist ideal as it stems from the business literature and discusses concepts such as procedures, process and outcomes. This managerialist ideal, as was discussed in Chapters One and Two, is incongruent with the social work profession. As a result, perhaps an additional analysis or line of questioning could have been beneficial to discover the positive emotions that are also present within child and family social work practice. Although feminist theory is not a prominent theory within this particular dissertation, in the future it could be used to look at why the organisational justice framework may only be telling one side of the story and missing out on other experiences that may have emerged in the analysis of the framework and subsequently positive emotions.

Feminist researchers have argued that bureaucracy, professionalism, and managerialism are 'masculine' ideals as they are associated with a way of doing and thinking that are associated with masculinity (Meagher & Parton, 2004). Social work, a predominately female occupation, and one associated with relationships and caring, therefore may have difficulty fitting into this

organisational structure. The feminist ethics of care model recognises that 'care work' is often devalued and has a different view of human nature, one that focuses on morality and relationships (Parton, 2003). This model, one that focuses on community and the responsibilities individuals have towards each other, compassion and highlights the power imbalances that exist in certain arrangements, also sees emotions as a vital component to understanding human rationality (Parton, 2003). As can be seen then, taking a more feminist stance would have lead the analysis down a very different path and may have elicited different stories and the addition of positive emotions, one that could be considered in the future.

Coding

Coding the data begins the more detailed analysis process, although analysis is something that is demanded of the researcher at all phases of the research (Thorne, 2000; Fielding & Lee, 1998). Most qualitative analysis relies on an approach called constant comparative analysis; this strategy involves taking a piece of data and comparing it to other similar pieces of data in order to develop links and relationships between the data (Thorne, 2000). This strategy was applied to this research process as more data was collected and coded.

As the majority of the codes within this analysis were a priori, constructed before the analysis was conducted, this assisted in the efficiency of the process (Barbour, 2008). Topic coding is the most common method of coding

and involves the gathering of material by topic. There were times within the coding process that I had trouble deciding whether additional new codes should be included due to trying to stay true to the original organisational justice framework. This is partly why the sub-themes, as previously mentioned, were created, as additional codes needed to be created in vivo and subsequently analysed with reference to the literature. The process of coding is to help organise the data and illustrate the themes and the creation of new codes reflects this process (Fielding & Lee, 1998). The process of adding new codes also assisted with the identification of themes related to emotions that were present, to emerge. This is evidence of the fluidity of the coding process and the importance of staying focused.

As a review, the three types of analysis, literal, interpretive and reflexive, were applied to this project. The literal analysis involved looking exactly at the transcription and focusing on the content and language used within the interview. The interpretive process involved linking the text and the themes of organisational justice and emotions together and how each theme is represented within the text. Finally, the reflexive process is needed in order to focus attention on how the research process has affected my own contribution and continuing development in the research field (Thorne, 2000).

3.10 - Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the research design, methodology and methods that have been applied. It began with a reflexive account of my place in the

research process and how this informed the research questions. Followed by a description of the qualitative methodology, the chapter then went on to explain how the research maintains rigour and ethical standards. The context of the physical cases in terms of access to the location and sampling methods was given, as well as the rationale behind each. Next, the rationale behind choosing interviews and the creation of the interview schedule was described as well as how these interviews were going to be managed. Finally, the two levels of analysis were detailed focusing on how content analysis allowed emotions and subsequent categories to emerge throughout the interviews in addition to the organisational justice framework that the interviews were based on. This section also included a chart of the themes used to code the transcriptions. Chapter Four will include the results and analysis of the interviews following the framework of organisational justice as insight into the lived experience of child and family social workers. Chapter Five will begin with a return to the literature, focusing on emotion, as it was during this initial analysis that the importance of emotions began to materialise. Chapter Five will then also contain the secondary analysis of the interviews, this time focusing on the emotions and the effects they may have on the lived experience of child and family social workers.

Chapter 4 – Organisational Justice

4.1 - Introduction

This chapter begins the thematic analysis of the interview data collected in order to address the first three research questions laid out in the previous chapter. These centre on understanding how social workers feel valued by their employer, the local authority, and in turn how they value themselves, as well as how organisational factors contribute to the lived experience of social workers.

As discussed in the literature review, exploring how social workers perceive their physical workplace as well the way the organisation functions, is important not only because it is related to job satisfaction, turnover, organisational commitment and any role confusion, but also because of the nature of the work involved (Bakhshi et al., 2009). The values that are central to social work practice; empathy, empowerment, justice, human rights etc... are taught well in relation to working with service users, however with regards to the specific social work role and profession, less so. In other words, how is it that social workers are able to stand up for service users more easily than for themselves? And although the concept of organisational justice is one in perpetual evolution and is not without its faults, it is one way that has proved effective in assessing social workers' perceptions of themselves as well as the workplace (St-Pierre & Holmes, 2010). Therefore, the overall aim of this chapter is to contribute to the broader knowledge of how social workers experience the role on a day to day basis.

This chapter has the primary focus of answering the two research questions focusing on how the organisational justice framework can be used to tell us about the child and family social workers' lived experience, as laid out in Chapter Three. Therefore, this chapter is divided into four sections, each section devoted to the results of each category of organisational justice. Within the interview schedule, in order to stay true to the original framework, these sections were distinct. However due to the qualitative nature of the inquiry, there was some overlap of the topics with regards to the responses. That being said, the themes within each of the organisational justice subsections remained the primary categories and as such the results are described in those specific sections. In the first section I have analysed, from a deductive approach, the results of the interview data that focused on distributive justice, involving topics such as perceptions of fairness of pay, how stress is recognised, perceptions of status and amount of training provided. This is followed by topics such as contributions that social workers make, the involvement of decision making and social workers' development of their role, as well as how they perceive procedures are implemented, these are all involved in the analysis of procedural justice. The next section is the results of informational justice. Included topics here are how social workers felt they were inducted into the role, communication within the local authority and the perceived amount of accuracy and transparency within the local authority. Finally, the results involving the perceived amount of praise received, the quality of relationships and overall treatment of individuals will be analysed.

4.2 – Distributive Justice

As previously discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, distributive justice is focused on the outputs, from a worker's perspective, within an organisational setting. Outputs such as pay satisfaction, recognition, and benefits are often assessed when analysing a worker's perception of organisational justice (Clay-Warner et al., 2005; Chou, 2009). The four main themes that were found within the literature in order to be discussed with the respondents' in the distributive justice context were; perceptions of pay, perceptions of training, time off and other rewards that are provided, the respondents view of status, and the extent to which stress is recognised. The respondents then emphasised more specific examples that have assisted in the answering of the research questions described in chapter 3.

4.2.1 – Pay

Asking the respondents about their level of satisfaction with the amount of money they are paid often resulted in a longer conversation than I had expected. The breadth of how one defined their worth, and the worth of their work, was influenced by individual and contextual circumstances and experiences. These circumstances and experiences will in turn be influenced by one's own principals of equity and what is fair (Roberson & Colquitt, 2005). The respondents also seemed to reflect on how the amount one is paid for the job that they do is also a reflection on society's norms, morals and priorities, something that is especially evident within the social work profession situated in a neo-liberal mindset. Local authorities have a set

budget they have to abide by; there is only so much space for change if the larger government does not recognise the importance of the work with appropriate financial support and the respondents were aware of this:

“Ehm, well, starting with pay, that’s quite a complex issue, working for a local authority in the current financial climate, ehm I am certainly not unhappy with my level of pay...I suppose everybody would like to be paid more wouldn’t hey, but no I couldn’t say with my hand on my heart” – Interview 10

Three respondents compared their salary to those within education, saying they perceive that they received less pay for more difficult work. This signifies that in a comparative sense, the absolute pay the social workers receive, to them is also a reflection of their perception of pay as a symbol of worth. This comparison to education comes up in various parts throughout the interview and will be discussed in additional components in the analysis. However, this relates to another respondent who believed that the rate of pay for social workers was a reflection of the profession having a low-status within the wider context:

“I mean my kind of sense about social workers being a low status profession is partly because that’s a wider thing...although it maybe sounds a bit odd, in many ways they could actually just pay us more, that’s unfortunately the modern world’s status’s are quite often deemed to be, be around pay in terms of employment” – Interview 8

Some respondents answered the question about pay making reference to how they were aware other local authorities paid social workers more than the local authority they are in. They described thinking that location had a lot of appeal and that is why people would work there even though they may get paid more somewhere else:

“I think you know if I was doing the same work in other local authorities I'd probably get paid more um which I'd quite like but um you know um I've lived in CITY for many years now and I suppose I have a bit of commitment to remaining here” – Interview 11

Overall, the theme of pay being insufficient for the responsibilities the social workers carry on a day to day basis was found throughout the responses of the social workers in this study. They recognised that it was not necessarily ‘awful’ as one social worker stated, however it was never going to be at the level they think it should be. The team leaders, the more senior social workers, which were interviewed, stated that they were paid an appropriate amount for the job they currently hold. However, they also pointed out that like the front line social workers on their team under their management, they were also felt they were not paid enough when they were in that role. That being said, one social worker seemed to summarise what was underlying most of the respondents when she stated:

“I don't think people realise that, and the consequences, which I'm sure you'll get onto, about lack of reward, is so much, and I think we're in a very highly stressful job, then again most social workers don't do it because of the pay so, we're paid enough, I get by on it” – Interview 2

This response signifies another underlying theme throughout the interviews, that being the extent to which the amount of pay met the expectations of the respondents, as they did not go into the profession expecting to make a lot of money. That does not mean it deserves any less attention however as individuals that perceived their pay as unfair tended to actively search for another job or consider leaving, more so than those who perceived their pay as fair (Chou, 2009). However, as discussed further in this section, the

responding social workers believed other rewards were equally as significant, if not more so, than the amount of pay they received.

4.2.2 – Training and Other Rewards

Access to appropriate training is something that should be on offer for all staff no matter what job they hold. According to the Scottish Social Services Council website (www.sssc.uk.com), newly qualified social work graduates who intend to work full time have to complete 24 days of training within the first 12 months of their registration. They then have to complete a further 10 days for the remainder of their three year registration period. Once a social worker is no longer classified as a newly qualified social worker, within their registration time period of three years, they are required to complete 15 days, or 90 hours, of training with at least 30 hours focusing on working effectively with colleagues and other professionals. This training is a requirement for social workers, therefore, the provision of training and support of completion of the hours from the employer would demonstrate an organisational commitment to professional development. This would be seen as a benefit to workers and a positive demonstration of distributive justice.

Overall, on a general level, and taking into consideration both local authorities involved in the research, all of the respondents said the opportunities for training were there and they felt reasonably well supported in accessing it. It is a recognised component of their work and some respondents stated this has improved significantly over the years. The

differences seemed to emerge when looking at different levels of experience within the local authority and individual managers. As limited training support can be a reflection of distributive injustice (St. Pierre & Holmes, 2010), accessible and available training is important for employees to feel supported and thereby be committed to the role (Loi, Hang-yue & Foley, 2006). Two more experienced social workers stated it was difficult to access more advanced skills training about court skills or Children's Hearing legislation, as opposed to new policy development, which they did not see as being as transferable to professional development. It is not necessarily the local authority's fault; however it is more a symptom of a system that needs to recognise the various skill levels and intricacies involved in the job:

"It was useful, all training's useful in the fact that it meets the SSSC requirements, (laughing) but not all training is actually applicable to your daily life I think that's the problem" – Interview 1

Two respondents raised the fact that it is up to the individual as to how well their training was managed, as well as being the responsibility of their manager. This does not necessarily equal a poorly organised training system, however it does emphasis that training in some sense needs to be tailored to an individual's needs:

"different managers will have different standards in relation and some managers will probably just say yes to everything whereas some managers will say well actually how does that fit with your learning needs and no we've got to many people on that so you know kind of look at balancing it" – Interview 4

However, the underlying theme throughout the majority of the answers as how access to training was perceived, was that although the opportunities

might be there in theory, the access to time was unequal. As a result of higher caseloads and incomplete staff teams, the respondents reported feeling like they could not justify leaving their cases for a day or two in order to take training. They had to prioritise the children on their case load, which although admirable, in the larger picture may not be dealt with as effectively if the social workers are not keeping up to date with appropriate training:

“I suppose in terms of training and events, there is opportunities but I don't get opportunities to take them very much because my workload is so high, that you know, I often have to cancel training, which I think has a knock on effect in terms of stress, because then I become stressed out about whether I have enough...” - Interview 1

“Training's good, I think we're rewarded in terms of training, just nobody's figured out there's a conflict that you have less people to do more work there's no time left for training um but we do have lots of opportunities for training and that's good, time to take it is difficult” – Interview 12

Support for social workers involves supporting their continued professional development and may prevent the development of burnout (Campbell et al., 2013). Although the respondents described some challenges when it comes to training availability and accessibility, there was also discussion about recognition in terms of the amount of time off they are given and an award scheme the local authority has. However, there was some discrepancy within the responses between the successes of these types of recognition. In addition, on an encouraging note, there were some social workers who stated the reward and recognition came from simply doing the job. These other types of recognition will now be explored below.

Time Off and Holidays

Time off for social workers in a local authority on average is about 28 days, depending on how long they have been in their position (www.gov.uk). Social workers are also familiar with the concept of 'time off in lieu' where if you work overtime one day, you can take those hours back at another time. That being said, as is evidenced within the literature review and further within this chapter, social workers often stated that they do not have enough time as it is to complete the necessary tasks involved with the job. Therefore, the likelihood of them taking extra time off, when already pressed for time, was slim:

“In terms of time off, I mean time, time I think time is the hard thing about the job, I think there's never enough hours to do the job as well as you want to do it and therefore for example, I worked on Friday, I don't work Fridays, I don't get paid to come to work on Fridays, therefore working on Friday cost me money because I have to pay for child care for my children and come to work and not get paid, and I won't get that time back” – Interview 15

Other respondents also mentioned they were only meant to carry forward an extra 40 hours a month to the next as a maximum, however, the reality was that they worked significantly more extra hours than that and as a result, lost flexi-time. Despite what managers advised them in terms of making sure they took those hours, the respondents reported that it was still very difficult to do. However, from a more positive perspective, two respondents made mention that the local authority had been very accommodating with special circumstances that ensured they have a more flexible work schedule. One social worker had an agreement with his team manager that he finished early

twice a week in order to pick up his child from school, and another social worker had counselling appointments for her own mental health needs, that her team manager supported her in attending:

“I had depression before I started in the job, um really quite severe depression and my work has been amazing about that, and I actually take um 2 appointments out per week, I go and see, I've got a private therapist that I go and see, my work know about that, um that means on, say a Tuesday and a Thursday, I take the lunch break out, plus maybe an extra half an hour, and they have no quips about that” – Interview 2

Distributive justice is fostered and maintained when the employer allocates outcomes that are appropriate to the job at hand (Colquitt et al., 2012). The amount of time off allocated to an employee, then will have a direct impact on their perception of distributive justice. Although the amount of time off allocated is regulated, it is the ability and flexibility of being able to take that time off the respondents were focussing on. These respondents were saying that time off was important to them, whether there were special circumstances or not, the work they did was taxing enough that they put high value on being able to relax and reenergise away from the office.

Reward Scheme

When the respondents were asked about other recognition such as the previously mentioned training and time off that may be provided by the local authority, four social workers also made mention of an award scheme that was present. This scheme however, did not seem to be accepted or appreciated by the social workers, it was felt as tokenistic and almost embarrassing to them. This could be for a variety of reasons, although the

main reason may have been due to how difficult it is to define success within the social work profession. Success within child protection social work is complicated due to the nature of social work and the emphasis on relationships (Conservative Party Commission on Social Workers (CPCSW), 2007). Is success defined by how many cases are closed or is it when a child is safe, or perhaps when a family has been able to work through the difficulties that brought them to social work in the first place? The latter are not easily measured quantitatively in a way that corresponds to a scheme that may be in place and successes are rarely reported (CPCSW, 2007). The responding social workers also reported that extrinsic recognition is not necessarily what they need; they want more support and have a hard time coming to terms with an award that seems at odds with the work that they do:

“I find it quite strange in social work , there are various things the local authority does to recognise good work, or good customer service or whatever they want to call it, and they have these star awards annually, but for some reason social work tend to shun that sort of thing, as in it's not quite for us, and I'm not entirely sure what that's about, but we're almost, you know, I think we see ourselves in our client's world almost at times and we just sort of want to push that distance...there's something odd about it, it would take me a long time to unpick that, but there's something about, you know, we don't want that sort of formal award thing, and it feels incongruous with the work we do possibly” – Interview 10

Instead, the respondents stated they would like more recognition for the hard work that they do and for the experience they bring to the team. There is a sense throughout that social workers had an interest in a more intrinsic recognition. This would come from the challenging work, responsibility they carry and the opportunities to use their skills (Mottaz, 1985):

“...from an employer's perspective, there's no official recognition of somebody who is here more, carries more work, has achieved more maybe for kids or outcomes, none of that is ever measured” – Interview 17

Although the respondents recognised that they did not always feel that they were recognised for the work they did from the council, some of them stated that they got the recognition from the children they work with. It appeared to be difficult to describe for these respondents, nevertheless the emotional reward and recognition from working with kids was a prime motivator for being in the profession:

“I love working with children, and I find that really just fantastic, I can't explain it, I just wouldn't do any other job, I just think kids are amazing and um ya just love it” – Interview 2

“kids have a good way of working out who has a good heart and who doesn't, so that's the sort of rewards and positive strokes that I enjoy getting and do get and that's what sustains you I suppose” – Interview 3

It is difficult to reward a job that comes with such difficult decision making and whose outcomes are not easily defined, especially as distributive justice can relate to the extent that outcomes are consistent with goals in a situation (Colquitt, 2001). This perhaps is why the social workers had a higher sense of intrinsic motivation and reward due to the enjoyment they feel when working with children (Zapata-Phelan et al., 2009). The professional identity and status that comes with being a social worker, although a complex issue as is discussed in the next section, is something the social workers have stated they received some reward in, knowing they were helping children in difficult situations.

4.2.3 – Status

Defining and recognising status is complex and multifaceted. Someone may define their status as a professional based on previous experience or outside influences, depending on if they may have been compared or generalised to others (Greenberg, 1987). Status, and the resulting self-esteem, can also be influenced by how fair an employee has been treated (Judge & Colquitt, 2004).

Within this particular group of social workers, many compared their status to an education or health care professional. There was a general sense that since education is a universal service that is available and accessible to everyone, it is viewed differently and more positively than social work. Many also believed that as a result of this, education has more dominance within the department and wider council. Two respondents in particular made the statement that social workers have a sense of inferiority to education:

“We’re kind of like the poor cousins in the department because education obviously is a universal service that everybody is interested in” – Interview 1

In addition to comparing their status to those within education, there was also the experience and perception of other professionals treating them as having a lower status, particularly the legal system. Specifically, five of the social workers involved made mention of their knowledge, expertise and status being questioned by other professionals when it came to case conferences, court appearances and multi-agency meetings. One respondent seemed

resigned to this however and said that social workers are always going to be 'people that take away the children too early or don't take them quick enough':

“...we're not recognised as specialist, we're not recognised as expert witnesses you know, we're somebody that can be ripped apart as much as possible by defence solicitor and we're not given any status within the legal system as being professionals or experts, or whatever else and that can be quite challenging” – Interview 7

The respondents also seemed to identify a certain low level of status within the local authority on a wider scale than just within the department they are situated. They were able to identify this when it came to benefits that were being taken away, such as car allowances, and when they were spoken to by the upper management team. One of the respondents even believed that *“were something were to go horrendously wrong then I don't think high up the food chain would be taking the responsibility, and I bet you we would be hung out to dry”* although the latter said that might be being unfair. However, that same respondent also mentioned they thought the council wanted social work *“to cost as little as possible and for nothing bad to happen”*. What's interesting is that while quite a few of the respondents felt this way, some linked this behaviour to the lack of voting power of the clientele they interact with:

“I also think there's an element within a local authorities that you know our client group wouldn't be highly valued by the majority of voters and elected members, so I think there's a tension there in that you know, housing will get you votes whereas, you know spending lots of money on supporting problem families may be seen less positively, so I think there's a tension there of overall aims of the local authority, which aims to provide a service to all of (location) and perhaps elements of the fact that we work with poverty and deprivation and generational

deprivation, perhaps makes our client group less of a vote winner and less of a priority” – Interview 10

The question of status within the social work profession and their own social work team produced mixed results. Some respondents said they enjoyed their status within their particular team. However, others were more critical and almost indifferent about their status as a child and family social worker that performs child protection duties. Three of the social workers described the status of social workers that perform child protection as not different than social workers in any other specialty, some saying this is the way it should be, one saying that there should be a higher status for those with child protection responsibilities, believing it is more difficult work, one respondent in particular saying that all social workers are “universally loathed”:

“...child protection is just part of children and families work, and it's just seen as part of what we do, um so I don't think it has the status beyond just being a children and families social worker” – Interview 7

What this seems to describe is that distributive justice, manifested in perceptions of status, can be present at different societal levels. On one level, the perception of status is felt within the profession and the local authority, it is also reflected on at a more macro societal level within the community. As the level of attachment to one's status, particularly within a group, will in turn either strengthen or distance the attachment to the group this dimension of distributive justice has a direct effect on how a social worker perceives they are treated and how willingly they will engage within the workplace (Wingrove, 2009; Simons & Roberson, 2003).

4.2.4 – Recognition of Stress

Distributive justice has to do with recognition of the employee and the work they do. This is primarily through outcomes or benefits employees receive, but can also be found in promotions, recognition, feedback and performance evaluations (Colquitt, 2001; Lambert et al., 2005). However, as was discussed in Chapters One and Two, there is the matter of the nature of child and family social work that leads it to be a high stress job. So when thinking about recognition of the employee and recognising the child and family social workers for the work they do, it is important to think more broadly than how much they are paid, the amount of time off they are allocated or the availability of training. Especially, as if an employee is perceiving that they are not receiving an adequate outcome for the work they do, they run the risk of experiencing psychological distress (Cole et al., 2010), thereby potentially adding to the stress they experience. Therefore, according to the responses from the participating social workers, the recognition and management of this stress falls in line with their overall perception of distributive justice.

The majority of the respondents acknowledged that the stress of the job is recognised but very little is being done about it, or it is difficult to know what to do about it. Some of the social workers made mention of how stress is just part of the job that they signed up to do and people expect it to be there. There was also the concern that everyone knows the job is stressful, but the

social workers did not want to admit when they were stressed due to recognition of stress being part of the job, in other words, as will be discussed further in the next chapter, the social workers did not want to be perceived as not able to handle the job. This also relates to how two social workers made mention that perhaps it takes a certain personality to be able to do the job, and also have the confidence to admit that they are stressed. One respondent in particular had a very confident persona and a belief, or an understanding, that he “can only do what I can do” and “doesn’t have any sense of shame around accessing therapy” for himself as he did not feel supported to deal with the stress within the council:

“Well I think they do recognise the stress and the strain of the work but they don’t do anything about it, so it’s kind of academic... I mean there’s not a huge amount we can do about it, so, it doesn’t actually help particularly, you can vent from time to time, at the neighbourhood meetings but apart from that, acknowledging that there’s a problem when you can’t fix the problem doesn’t stop it from being a problem” – Interview 8

The difficulty in admitting stress seems to have been mentioned not only on a wider scale, but also in terms of approaching a supervisor. Respondents stated that they felt uncomfortable telling a supervisor when stressed as it seemed to be a failure of some sorts and that it could not be ‘moaned’ about constantly without that supervisor judging the ability of the social worker. This was not the case with all the respondents however, as some felt very supported and ‘protected’ by their supervisor when it came to feeling like a particular worker could not take on any more work. One of the supervising social workers interviewed acknowledged that she has an understanding of her workers’ personal and professional lives and how to balance that as a

relevant part of supervision. This is important as facilitating positive stress management can promote a more positive sense of organisational justice as the employee gains more resources to cope with their specific organisational situation (DiFabio & Palazzeschi, 2012). This did not seem to be consistent, as another respondents stated that the message that came down from senior managers was that wherever there's an issue, it is the individual worker that needs to 'sort it out', and it is not a departmental concern which then may not be supported in supervision:

“...um I think there is a fear, and a culture within the department that if you acknowledge that you're struggling or that you're stressed, um that folk will think you're weak, and the response that you get, well other people carry much heavier caseloads than you do, or um you know, you just need to start to deal with it yourself” – Interview 7

On a more positive note, although the participants were expressing a lack of support about the stress of the job from a departmental level, many of them had expressed gratitude about the support they received from other front-line social workers on the team. These peer groups have been found to be crucial for informal support as a result of shared experiences and are often more accessible due to the proximity within the working environment (Ingram, 2013). Sometimes the respondents included their team manager in this group, other times they were not included. This is not surprising as these were seen as the individuals that truly understand what each other is going through and are able to more easily relate to stressful situations and support each other through them:

“Often more so in a tokenistic way done by managers that are above you, I mean, the greatest recognition is by the team that I'm with and probably my own managers, because I have the greatest relationship

with him, or the strongest, the closest, so if you count him as being part of the department and my colleagues as being a part of the department, that's where the recognition lies" – Interview 14

The importance of this is discussed further and in more detail in the section on interpersonal justice. However, as distributive justice is positively correlated to job satisfaction, having a positive sense of distributive justice, facilitated here by recognition of the nature of the child and family social worker role, should therefore decrease the amount of stress by an employee (Bakhshi et al., 2009). Some of the respondents also mentioned the importance of outside support in recognising and dealing with the stress of the job. This was not only through various family members and friends, but also through activities such as yoga, running and accessing therapy. Although, as the respondents were aware these were important aspects of recognising and releasing their stress levels, the respondents seemed to be affected by a perceived lack of 'justice' as the social workers were not confident support was provided by the council:

"...I'm not sure when the last time we were told about this, but there are um services that we can call if we feel pressured at work and stressed um which are independent of the council, um I've never heard about anybody actually using them, um and I'm not sure I could put my hands on the details to do that if I wanted to do it, and I can't remember the last time anyone reminded us of the existence so it might not even exist at the moment" – Interview 6

Another way that the gap in recognition of stress by the upper management was perceived to be manifested was in the physical environment of the office space that the social workers work in. Many of the respondents described working in an open-plan office space, and although this allowed for a space where it was easier to recognise when people need support, there was also

less privacy. Distributive justice refers to the distribution of resources, therefore if the physical resources that would support child and family social workers manage the tasks and stress of the role are not in place, then psychological withdrawal and an increase of stress as a result of the stress not being managed can occur (Campbell et al., 2013). Two of the social workers in particular expressed disappointment with the move towards an open-plan space, with the potential for hot-desking, because it did not recognise the importance of having consistent peer support around them:

“I don't think the council is recognising um the stresses involved, because actually having, having a place where you can call your own, I mean it's basic social work stuff ironically, about having a space, that's to some extent safe, that's where I have all my stuff, I'm centred here, I've got familiar photos and pictures all around me, I know where all my stuff is, rather than feeling transitory all the time” – Interview 2

That place to feel safe and an area of their work that instills a sense of stability was important for the social workers in order to counterbalance the variable schedules they had to maintain while they are out of the office.

Distributive justice is expressed through the outcomes employees receive from their work in a variety of ways. Whether it is through pay, training and other rewards such as time off, the status they hold or whether the stress of the job is recognised, the social workers involved in this research perceived an inadequate level of distributive justice. This distributive injustice has been found to be related to negative levels of employee job satisfaction, organisational commitment and intention to quit (Chou, 2009). As this research is looking at the entire organisational justice framework, distributive justice is not looked at in isolation within this research therefore the

remaining components of procedural justice, informational justice and interpersonal justice will be explored next.

4.3 – Procedural Justice

Generally speaking, as discussed in Chapter Two, perceptions of procedural justice assess the fairness by which decisions are made. More specifically, this area of organisational justice will reflect whether opinions are sought, accuracy in collecting of information towards decision making, the option of challenging a decision, and whether decisions are felt to be ethical (St. Pierre and Holmes, 2010). Within the procedural justice line of questioning, emphasis was on the themes of being involved in decision making procedures, whether their contributions were valued and if they had a say in the development of their current role, as well as the informant's perceptions of the procedures that are in place.

4.3.1 – Involvement in Decision Making Procedures

Being involved in the decision making process, in terms of organisational decisions, not necessarily child protection decisions, seemed like something the responding social workers approached with a level of cynicism. When questioned directly about their involvement, the informants did not have as much to say as when later asked about whether their contributions were valued:

“...I think we were listened to but I don't think our views were taken into account in the final ehM decision making” – Interview 4

What they did say about their involvement, which will be further elaborated on in the next section, was that there appeared to be an attempt at involving the social workers in decision making processes, but this was perceived as superficial. Making decisions in a system that has so many parts, such as a local authority, can be difficult to have an end result that pleases everyone. However, the process of a decision being made can be just as important to the employees as the result of the decision (Lambert et al., 2005).

4.3.2 – Contributions from Social Workers

Procedural justice is concerned with the range of procedures used to reach outcomes that affect employees, therefore how social workers perceive their contributions are incorporated into those procedures will impact their overall view of fairness within the local authority (Lambert et al., 2005). Workplace decisions cannot be made in isolation and perceptions of fairness will also be formulated with regards to the respect shown towards the decision recipient (Eskew, 1993).

It appeared to depend on where the contributions were focused or who the request was coming from, as to how the respondents reacted to whether they were valued or not. When views were expressed or sought after at the direct manager level, or even one level higher, the social workers felt listened to and comfortable expressing themselves. Two social workers also made

mention that this had improved since they had been employed with their council and felt it was making a difference within the team environment:

“...we have a practice panel which runs every three months or whatever, where social workers mix with managers and discuss their own topics, and have fairly good discussion there, and that's um that's good I think that's a positive thing, um and we can give that feedback”
– Interview 7

There were however, more responses that would be classified as cynical when it came to discussing whether the social workers views were valued within the council or not. The majority of the respondents felt that although their views seemed to be sought after, or there may have been a place for them to express their views, such as a forum, they felt these views were later ignored or merely paid 'lip-service'. The respondents seemed to agree that most decisions were made at a certain level above them and they were told the results afterwards. This contributed to the gap social workers felt between themselves and the senior management as the results did not always fit in line with how the social workers worked:

“if we were consulted, we were consulted at such a high level that they didn't ask anybody on the ground, so the end result was that I emailed ... with the concerns that I had about the changes, and to be fair we were on training the following week and he came over and spoke to me and said that he got my email, and that he would look into it, but they went ahead and did all the things they were going to anyway” – Interview 8

What other respondents seemed to express though, was the attitude that they had to 'pick their battles'. There appeared to be a belief that sometimes they had to be careful with what they were expressing and only if it lined up with the beliefs of the organisation would those views be listened to:

“...however I ehm my experience that you can't actually change things within an organisation, unless that's going with the tide of that organisation and ehm that can be very frustrating...” – Interview 5

The cynicism that appears to be expressed here is closely aligned with the recent work of Carey (2014) that claims cynicism among social workers is on the rise as a coping mechanism resulting from stressful and increasingly bureaucratic work environments. Carey also mentions that organisational cynics are commonly viewed negatively and as projecting a sense of apathy by senior managers, if this is the case, the need to examine the relationship social workers have with their employers and the organisation they work for, continues.

4.3.3 – Development of Role

Closely related to the ability to contribute to the wider organisational decisions, the ability to contribute to how one develops their own role and place within that organisation will be important due to an increased sense of autonomy and mastery. Although child and family social workers in Scotland are regulated in many of the tasks that they have to complete, the development of special interests and training can all be made at a personal level.

On a positive note, all of the respondents stated that they felt supported to develop their own role as regards to their personal needs and interests. There was one respondent who stated she had trouble with the confidence to advocate on behalf of herself, but was still able to have some say. The

respondents described being able to contribute on different fora, such as a fostering panel, working groups and committees as well as different training opportunities. One respondent in particular has had the opportunity to develop an entirely different way of organising case conferences as a result of an international training experience. This demonstrates that social workers want to be involved and most take the opportunity when it arises, if it coincides with their development needs and schedules. Perhaps this allows for a feeling of accomplishment or reward in a way that is not traditionally recognised or was not picked up within the concept of distributive justice:

“ Ya I have been quite lucky because I've had various interests that I've been allowed to pursue, um over the years in my job and I've gone on training that I just wanted to do and been involved in developments not like for the team, but also council wide developments, you know departmental wide developments that I just had an interest in... overall, I think they feel that the more fulfilled you are, the more likely you are to stay in the job actually which I guess has proven to be the case, ya” – Interview 15

The respondents described a proactive mindset towards their role. This could be a reflection of how social workers were able to utilise some of their advocacy skills from their involvement with clients and transfer those skills to their individual professional lives. Having a sense of control over their role and a sense of belief in their knowledge and skills could increase confidence and resilience in the social workers (Collins, 2015; Colquitt, 2004). This may also help with a feeling of ownership and autonomy in an otherwise structured role.

4.3.4 – Perception of Routine Organisational Procedures

Within this area of the interview, it was important to specify that the procedures being discussed were not the child protection procedures that should be consistent around the country and are regulated by the SSSC. It was the procedures involved in daily organisational life that were of interest, those that may be involved with whether or not there was a place to go if a staff member had a grievance, whether or not there was consistency with procedures within the local authority, or if decisions and procedures are perceived to be ethical and provided with sufficient dialogue (Colquitt et al., 2012). In many of Colquitt's writings (2001, 2012, 2011), there is an emphasis that an organisation that is 'procedurally just' will instill a sense of legitimacy. This is important for a profession that struggles with status and a feeling of professional illegitimacy.

When it came to whether there was a grievance or an issue that a social worker was concerned about, the respondents stated there is a procedure at their local authority, through Human Resources, that they were aware of. That being said, all of the respondents said they would go to their manager if there was something concerning them and not go through Human Resources. This may be due to an increased sense of comfort and familiarity with the supervisor but also due possibly not wanting to 'rock the boat', similar to what was mentioned earlier about social workers feeling that they

had to pick their battles. This would not be unique to the social workers within the local authority as any other employee might also find it easier to go to their line manager as opposed to a more in depth grievance procedure that might take a considerable amount of time the employee felt they did not have:

“Of course, I mean you have HR, there's a complaints line, there are policies on everything, if you have the time to find them, if you can actually find them on the ORB, and if you have time to read them, ya, knock yourself out haha” – Interview 17

The general opinion around whether procedures were consistent or not, was also met with some level of inconsistency amongst the respondents. Overall, it appeared that the respondents believed organisational procedures were supposed to be consistent, however they were not. Some of this was thought to be due to differing personalities and work styles; some managers implemented procedures slightly differently than others and some due to neighbourhood differences. There was an acknowledgement however, from the respondents that had been employed with their local authority for longer, that this had improved over the years. Some of the respondents made mention to how there seemed to be a difference in threshold when it came to cases between the teams, however, this was also related to a personality and contextual concern, one that could not necessarily be standardised. One social worker summarised what could be thought of as one of the conflicts with the profession right now when they said:

“In terms of say child protection I think procedures are a framework rather than a join the dots this is how you do it, and um I think by in large they are (consistent), um but I don't think social work can be

overly procedural and one of the difficulties at the moment is I think there is a tendency to try and make it overly procedural” – Interview 5

Generally, procedures were met with what seemed to be a level of indifference from the respondents. They were aware that procedures existed, and knew how to access them, however they did not spend a lot of time becoming familiar with those procedures. They stated that there is usually a training session for a new procedure when it is introduced; however the employees were usually alerted by email that the procedure was in place, without a lot of dialogue beforehand. When it came time to discuss if the procedures, or the way procedures were devised, were unethical, no one particularly spoke out about any of the major procedures being unethical or truly detrimental towards their daily practice. However, there was some unhappiness towards the removal of the car allowance from one practitioner as this was seen as the council not recognising the potential adverse impact this would have. In other words, not exhibiting a just procedure as it was perceived as not taking into account the concerns of all those involved (Randeree & Malik, 2008). Two practitioners also did not see how the ‘lone working policy’ fitted within the context of the work they did and were quite passionate about how that was a procedure that was implemented without enough discussion with the social workers:

“...suppose a prime example is we have a lone working policy and we have a lone working system, it has been universally trashed I think by every practitioner here and never used because its crap um everyone knows it's crap, managers know it's crap, but there has been an attempt at the tail wagging the dog, you know this is how we want you to do it, but I don't think people have really taken it up and that's a situation where somebody's bought something thought it would fit, and it doesn't, it's not fit for purpose it's a piece of crap um and nobody's

actually gone to the practitioners and said what do you need? “ –
Interview 12

The ability to voice one’s views and concerns during procedures or to influence the outcome is related to inclusiveness and the feeling of being valued by those in authority. Procedures that are deemed fair and the outcome just are likely to encourage individuals to be more accepting and flexible of variety within organisational practices (Randeree & Malik, 2008).

When it comes to procedural justice, then, this area of the organisational framework could be delved into on a far more detailed level to investigate particular procedures, however within this research, an overall view was all that was necessary to get a feel for whether the respondents felt included in the workplace. This was due to using the organisational justice framework for the first time with this particular population and the time constraints of the research process. As well, this was keeping in mind the focus of the original research question of gaining a sense of how the organisational justice framework overall could be utilised to explore the lived experience of child and family social workers.

4.4 – Informational Justice

Informational justice, as subcategory of what some may call interactional justice (Chou, 2009; Colquitt, 2001), focuses on the quality of communication and information provided to workers. Overall, the responses were not as in

depth and did not elaborate on their answers in relation to informational justice as much as some of the other areas of the organisational justice framework. This could be a reflection on the amount of importance they place on the information they receive from the council or as a result of not having the space in their working day to reflect on the information they received.

The areas the respondents did elaborate on were the communication between themselves and the local authority and the transparency and accuracy of the information provided. There was also discussion about their induction experience, to give an example of how informational justice may be exhibited.

4.4.1 – Communication

A strong understanding of interpersonal communication is the backbone of a social worker's job. Communication is fluid, relational and fulfils our social needs (Adler, Rodman & Sevigny, 2011). From an organisational behaviour standpoint communication involves the transmission of information and the exchange of meaning (Buchanan & Huczynski, 2010). Social workers are trained to have difficult discussions and to be able to communicate effectively. This, in effect, then makes them more attuned to various communication styles and the adverse impact that miscommunication can have. The social workers in this research when discussing communication and information were frustrated with the timing of the communication and the large amount of information in the form of emails.

There was an overall feeling of information being delivered last minute without much exchange around it, especially if it is a request for involvement from social workers. The other issue the social workers brought up in terms of the timing of the information they receive related to the lack of time they have to keep up to date with the information, as expressed by the following social worker:

“...there isn't really time to look at that stuff at all, so it looks good and on paper they can say they've informed us, but I think um I don't think there's space and time in this job to deal with all the communication that you get...” – Interview 6

This is also directly related to the large amount of emails the social workers received. Many of the social workers expressed an overload of emails and difficulty sorting through the relevant information, even if the information did arrive in a timely manner:

“I think one of the difficulties is that there is so much information and quite a lot of it is timely but it's almost the problem is overload, that there's a bombardment of information and I think in order to do the jobs many social workers almost don't engage with a lot of that” – Interview 5

Although the respondents expressed a sense of overload when it came to electronic communication, there were positive responses towards staff meetings held within their team, suggesting a positive perception of informational justice. The fact that team and neighbourhood meetings were mentioned is a reflection that this was an important area for communication and information to be relayed to everyone. Although there was inconsistency between the social workers as to the frequency of the team meetings, some weekly, and others monthly, there was a sense this was a practical way for

two-way communication between the management and the frontline staff. What did seem to come through was that there were a variety of ways information was communicated and though this is not dissimilar to any other workplace, it was not recognising the specific nature of the child and family social work role while ensuring the effectiveness of the method.

4.4.2 – Transparency and Accuracy of Information

Perceiving that information and communication is transparent and accurate should indicate the social workers have a certain level of trust towards the upper management (Chou, 2009). Whilst the respondents believed they received too much information through the form of emails, they stated they believed it was accurate and that no one was trying to deceive them. Two social workers mentioned how they understood there were discussions at the upper management level that would happen that would “get tailored to the ears of social workers at some point”. The tendency however, was for social workers to delete emails without necessarily having a thorough read through of the content:

“On a wider organisation level, I have no idea because to be honest, unless it affects me, I tend not to read them all, I just don't have time, and I think you'll find that with most people who work” – Interview 17

As has been stated a few times within this chapter, time is precious for social workers, they have to prioritise their daily tasks and reading emails thoroughly did not seem to be high on the list.

4.4.3 – Induction

Asking about the respondent's induction was not in the traditional organisational justice framework. It was added as a way to help provide an example of how social workers could demonstrate the delivery of information. The induction of an employee into the workplace is often the first impression of how things work, where to go for information and a look at how procedures and communications are handled. As people may feel unfairly treated when they perceive they have received incomplete or sparsely detailed information (Greenberg, 2009), insight into how induction is held could also provide information as to how much effort an organisation is willing to put into the new employees and ensuring their comfort.

Out of the seventeen social workers interviewed, only one responded saying they had had a positive induction experience. She stated overall it was a really good experience and there were a few people that started at the same time so they did many things together. There were still elements they had to organise themselves however, mostly coordinate meeting with different people, or other agencies to become aware of the resources available to them. Three of the respondents stated they thought part of the reason they did not get a proper induction was because they had also been with that team on their student placement and were expected to immediately start working:

“Hmm no haha I'm not sure I had an induction as such, I don't remember having an induction, I think I just came to work haha genuinely I don't think there was an induction period, because I had worked in the team before as a student, and they knew me, so my

memory of it is that I just came in and started working haha ” –
Interview 15

The remaining respondents reported they either did not have a formal or structured induction or it was facilitated, albeit casually, through their specific team. However, although the overall feeling was not positive, six of the respondents stated they had seen an improvement in this area with newly arriving social workers now:

“I don’t know because I didn't go...and um I was never chased up about it either which surprised me slightly, there is apparently a one day that you're supposed to go to for new workers and I did get couple of emails saying can you come along, and I was busy and I didn't make it, and then nobody mentioned it again” – Interview 8

Not having a formal induction or perceived poor communication, may lead the social workers to feel a low sense of informational justice. LeRoy, Bastounis and Minibas-Poussard (2012) found in their survey that individuals who feel they do not have adequate access to information feel afraid and this leads to aversive behaviours such as taking repeated breaks from work. This link could be an explanation for some of the retainment issues described in the literature review as well as the role of emotions that will be discussed in the next chapter.

4.5 – Interpersonal Justice

Finally, interpersonal justice, the component that relates to how employees are treated and the amount and quality of respect held for each other will now be discussed. Interpersonal justice is cultivated when managers treat employees with dignity and refrain from improper comments (Colquitt et al.,

2012), this can also be fostered between employees. For the social workers in this study, interpersonal justice was discussed throughout the interview as elements of interpersonal justice came up throughout the interview process, even though the questions formatted towards interpersonal justice were in the last quarter of the interview.

This suggests that this was a key aspect for social workers, which makes sense on two levels. One being that as social workers, relationships are central to our line of work so we are more attuned to the significance and place of relationships on a day to day basis. Second, as human beings, we are social creatures and interpersonal justice will be evident in any number of settings, however in this instance the importance of relationships often gets pushed aside in more managerialist settings as is evident by some of the responses by the social workers. A high level of interpersonal justice would suggest a strong sense of trust amongst employees (Colquitt et al., 2012) and as evident throughout this chapter, there does not always seem to be a strong sense of trust amongst the participants towards their employer.

The elements of interpersonal justice that were brought up by the respondents included their perception of praise by the local authority or their specific team, how individuals treated each other and their perception of relationships and their importance, within the organisation.

4.5.1 – Praise

Praise and verbal recognition for a particular achievement can make a difference as to how one perceives they are valued (Scottish Executive, 2005). It seems possible that social workers often go into the job knowing they will not get a lot of praise, due to the stigma associated with the profession. Therefore, they may not expect praise, nor necessarily know what to do with it when it arrives. In the case of these particular social workers, praise seemed to primarily come informally. There was also a perception that upper management did not understand the work the social workers were performing, they were removed from it. When it did come from upper management, the respondents perceived the praise as tokenistic and insincere:

“it’s a tricky one because everyone likes praise, but I think peer praise is more valuable than from a higher level, if NAME, came down to our office and said you’re all doing terribly well, well done, I think we’d feel a bit patronised and not particularly value that part of view, whereas other people that are doing the same thing, and know how hard it is, I think praise from them seems more real” – Interview 8

Two respondents also brought up an interesting cultural aspect to praise that demonstrates a critique of the organisational justice framework, which will be discussed further in Chapter 6. They had the view that overt praise was not something that people in the UK had necessarily been brought up to deliver or expect, and people would find it very awkward to receive:

“certainly not within local authorities, ehm so I think that’s probably an answer to that, it’s not that anybody’s not prepared to do that, it’s just not the way that people have been brought up” – Interview 5

There was an underlying feeling however, that although the social workers didn't always receive praise, or were unsure as to how to define a good piece of work that would result in praise, some of them wanted to be appreciated more for the work they were doing and commitment they had to the job:

"I think there is a recognition saying, 'you've done a good piece of work, can we use that as an example' so that certainly does happen, ehm but I suppose it's quite hard, because we all work these individual cases and how do we come together as a team and look at what we do in terms of in a more meaningful way and what's good work rather than just statistics and number of cases, number of referrals and maybe we could be better at that" – Interview 10

As discussed previously it is difficult to find an appropriate way to extrinsically reward social workers for the work they do, however finding a way to praise the work being done could reflect a degree of politeness and dignity these respondents are stating is missing (Bakhshi et al., 2009). Defining what is good practice or a good result is not easy when dealing with complex behavioural situations, therefore it is also difficult to find an appropriate way to praise social workers.

4.5.2 – Interpersonal Treatment

Social workers have to deal with complexity and uncertainty in the forms of human behaviour not only in the context of their service users, but also with their colleagues. It is more than just stating they have respectful relationships with each other, but it is also how those relationships are manifested on a day to day basis that is important.

The respondents stated that generally speaking, they had positive interpersonal relationships and they treated each other well in their

respective teams. One social worker put it simply by saying that she wouldn't be there if she wasn't treated well by her team. There was also a good amount of reciprocated teasing or 'banter' between the team members and the social workers said they appreciated this level of camaraderie. However, there was also the acknowledgement that due to the nature of the working environment, there would be some instances of negative talk behind people's back:

"...banter absolutely, that's part in parcel of just working in an environment, but I'm quite sure people say lots behind your back, but it never comes to my ears and so I don't feel like I work in a department that bitches and snipes and bullies and intimidates, no I've never had that sense, from that point of view I enjoy working for the council" – Interview 3

Amongst all the positive stories of supportive colleagues, there were instances of bullying and poor treatment by others within the team. Incidents of workplace bullying are nothing new, and will be discussed further in Chapter Five, however it seemed out of place to be occurring in a helping profession such as social work (BASW, 2012; Collins, 2001). The accounts of bullying varied from respondents hearing there was bullying within the department but not experiencing it directly, to one particular respondent who was bullied by her team leader. This was dealt with appropriately by the manager of her team, however she continued to seek counselling, experience low self-esteem and low self-confidence as a result. This particular respondent said that she still loved her job however there was a culture of acceptance about being treated negatively:

"my colleagues treat me very respectfully most of the time, there's an awful culture of bitchiness in this office and I presume in others as

well, which I hate, and I challenge it and I don't think I get appreciated for it, um so that's not great, um social workers are a bunch of children sometimes, honestly we're so immature um my clients treat me like crap and actually I don't feel like that's dealt with very well um I think again it's tolerated too much" – Interview 2

This is echoed by other respondents, who although they were generally well treated by their team members, it was the treatment by the council and other professionals that was either harmful or indifferent at times and this is discussed further in the next section:

"...it never feels sincere um and you know in moments when senior managers come to our team meetings to you know place a hand across the sea to reach out to us and I always end up feeling irate inside rather than comforted and acknowledged " – Interview 3

How people treat others is related to not only their own levels of self-esteem but also how they are able to react to other's communication styles. Working in a high stress environment, as has been discussed throughout, will influence both of these components as well as the influence of other emotions that may be present. As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five, how we treat others is more than just a reflection of interpersonal justice.

4.5.3 – Relationships

Throughout the entire interview process, relationships were discussed. As previously mentioned, this was not limited to the section of the interview focused on interpersonal justice. The significance of relationships, both positive and negative, was interwoven from beginning to end. There were four areas of relationships that social workers discussed; relationships with their manager, their team, the wider council, and other professionals.

Peers

The importance of peer support within the team was seen as the most significant component. The team that social workers were situated in is where they might find support, mentorship and comic relief. Every social worker interviewed highlighted the importance of the support they received from their peers in the office environment:

“Maybe in other professions it’s different... I don’t know....when you’ve got people screaming in your ear on home visits you know people try to keep an nice atmosphere in the office because it would be unbearable” – Interview 1

The support from the team was mentioned in the context of the rewards of having positive relationships, recognition for the work being done, and collaborating and working through difficult cases. In other words, relationships were mentioned in every aspect of the work that social workers have to do. This is similar to the work of Ingram (2013) who found that when it comes to peer support, the importance of having this support physically close to you was also reflected on in the context of being frustrated with the open plan offices that are being implemented in many of the geographical areas the social workers work in:

“we actually gain quite significant peer support from the people that are permanently seated around us who know about your cases, cause they hear about you talking about them and are able to reflect and able to help you, and so I think actually the council doesn’t know what it’s doing in terms of making social workers go to seventy percent occupancy, because actually they’ll all end those peer support relationships which are actually more important than the supervisory relationship and the issue is going to be that you’re not going to have social workers that are supported in the moment, you might have them supported three weeks later, and I think, you know, people will just be

going off sick, and even more than they are now, because you will just feel so alone” – Interview 1

Supervision

The relationship that a social worker has with their manager, or team leader, was mentioned by many of the respondents as being important to their stress levels as well as their workload and overall perception of the role. Some of the respondents mentioned their direct line manager knew elements of their personal life in addition to their professional role and they found this helpful in the amount of support they received. Yet still others mentioned they did not want their supervisor to know what was going on in their personal life:

“I've been extremely fortunate to work for him actually, very fortunate, I wouldn't necessarily talk to him about anything in my personal life, I would find, you know and I think some supervisory relationships are a bit more like that, that you could talk about stuff from outside of work, whereas we don't” – Interview 15

The very aspect of the respondents mentioning their supervisors when asked about management, provides insight as to who they perceive as the most important person in a managerial role they interact with. This is to be expected as the importance of the supervisory relationship has been discussed as a significant component to effective practice and addressing any concerns the practitioners may have (Beddoe, 2010). What this also begins to reflect is that the further up the management chain the discussion would go, as will be seen in the next section, the relationship appeared to be more distant.

The Council

Perceptions started to change when social workers talked about their relationship within the wider council they work for. This is not surprising as it makes sense to have stronger more influential relationships with those working at the same level. The social workers, when asked about their relationship with the council, as individuals or as the social work department, were more negative, and slightly indifferent. Many of the social workers responded saying they think the council doesn't think much about them. (This is where, in hindsight, it would have been beneficial to have a more concrete definition of who 'the council' was; whether it was the elected officials or the upper management). Some respondents reported that they only have contact with the council when 'someone comes around'; that someone being described as a Councillor. Another six respondents described the relationship with the wider council as a more neutral one:

"I think there has been a time in the past where it was probably more positive with social workers, they had more influence, I don't think it's negative, I think it is as I say neutral, there's a recognition that this is the job that's performed and that ehm as long as it's performed well, people get left alone to do it" – Interview 5

These views of the relationship with the wider council coincide closely with what was being said in the previous distributive justice section in relation to the perceived status of social workers within the council and is another way to demonstrate the importance of relationships and interpersonal justice.

Finally, although only mentioned by three social workers, the relationship with other professionals was brought up. These were usually in a negative

context and again were closely aligned with the perceptions of the status of the social workers in comparison to other professions:

“I’ll tell you the people that don’t appreciate us, is the children’s hearing, the children’s hearing is um they treat us really badly, we get a really hard time from them and our opinion is completely lost, they just don’t I mean I don’t know why I bother writing my reports sometimes because they just, they’re so biased by the presence of the lawyer, a weeping mother um or a kid saying I want to go home” – Interview 2

These descriptions and perceptions of interpersonal justice illustrate how important the relational aspect of social work is, not only with service users, but also with all individuals that come in contact with the profession.

4.6 – Conclusion and Reflections

The findings in this chapter have been assessed in relation to the initial framework of organisational justice and its four subsections. This framework was utilised in order to help answer the first proposed research question and gain insight into the lived experience of child and family social workers. The findings were separated between the four subsections and then further still as more detailed analyses were necessary.

In the context of the organisational justice framework, child and family social workers are not feeling particularly valued or recognised for the work they do. This then highlights the overall aim of this research, that of the need for more understanding of the experience child and family social workers. The results in this chapter also provided initial insight as to the differences between the perceptions of what social workers do and the reality they experience. The

respondents valued intrinsic rewards more than the extrinsic rewards provided by the local authority and expressed frustration with how they were treated. The social workers felt overlooked and that the nuances of their profession were not recognised within the wider local authority environment

Overall, it can be seen that the respondents placed a high value on the relationships that were formed and necessary within the workplace. This was evidenced by the constant emergence of the topic of relationships throughout the entire framework as opposed to being limited within the interpersonal justice subsection. This focus on relationships and the human component of not only the work social workers had to do with their service users, but also within the organisation, was where it became evident that there was more information being given than the organisational justice framework set out to explore. Through the combination of conducting interviews, taking field notes, and reflecting on my feelings afterwards I began to notice that I came away from the interviews quite troubled and touched by what I was hearing. This led to a subsequent analysis that will be the focus for the remainder of this research.

The first research question set out to understand how the organisational justice lens tell us about social workers perceptions of their day to day experience. Organisational justice encompasses many aspects of day to day working lives of individuals, and this has indeed been reiterated within this particular research. The qualitative dimension of the data has showcased a multifaceted nature of the framework as became apparent as human

perception and emotion played a part in the respondent's answers. Using the organisational justice framework in this manner with this particular population therefore pushed the boundaries of the framework and showed that there are drawbacks to its use. The framework was able to explore the aspects it set out to discover, however it lacked the ability to deal with the emotional component of the workplace, especially for workplaces that function with a high level of emotional labour. This was evident by the emotive and powerful language the respondents expressed when answering the questions:

“we're somebody that can be ripped a part as much as possible” - Interview 7

“...when you've got people screaming in your ear...” - Interview 1

“I always end up feeling irate inside rather than comforted and acknowledged” – Interview 3

Therefore, what is revealed is not only what they said, but also **how** they said it, as answers contained emotional accounts of their day to day experiences. These individuals were passionate and unknowingly gave insight into some of the emotions involved during the daily life of child and family social workers. In Chapter 5 therefore, I have gone onto analyse the emotional content of the interviews in order to gain a further understanding of the final research question that emerged, that of the emotional component of the lived experience of child and family social workers.

I set out wanting to explore the day to day experiences of social workers that perform child protection duties. How they experience fairness, professional relationships and how social workers perceive they are treated were all underlying concepts that emerged from the literature and were able to be

addressed using the organisational justice framework. An interest in the lived experience of child and family social workers also stems from a belief that if social workers do not look out for their own wellbeing then how can they adequately ensure they are looking after the wellbeing of the service users? Ferguson (2005) echoes this belief in a statement 'worker protection and child protection are inherently linked' (p782). This belief was integrated within the reflective nature of the thesis and assisted in the awareness of emotions within the interviews that lead to the following chapter on emotions. What was necessary then, was for Chapter Five to discuss a shift to additional literature on emotions and an investigation and further analysis of the deeper language that was being revealed during the interviews, thus leaving behind the organisational justice framework. Further on, in Chapter 7, I will provide a more in-depth critique of the organisational justice framework and the fit for this particular piece of research.

Chapter 5 – Emotions and the Lived Experience

5.1 - Introduction

As indicated at the end of the previous chapter, this chapter sets out to probe the emergence of emotions that arose on closer examination of the interview data. Although the organisational justice framework was utilised, it was insufficient to capture the emotional content of the responses, therefore what also came through the data was an additional dimension of the experience of being a child and family social worker in Scotland. Perceptions and accounts of day to day life as a social worker and the emotions that are involved in the role began to emerge. As this research has been a dynamic and fluid process, literature was sought out as the interviews were being conducted in order to gain a better understanding of the emotion work that was becoming evident. This chapter explores some of the key literature around emotions, emotion management and emotional labour as these concepts emerged after the initial literature review. Therefore, the overall aim of this chapter is to demonstrate the salience and importance of the emotions that emerged throughout the interviews and subsequent data analysis that occurred following the initial investigation with the organisational justice framework.

What makes the study of organisational justice complex, especially from a qualitative standpoint, is that individuals will vary with how their perceptions of organisational justice are determined (Simpson & Kaminski, 2007). These perceptions will be influenced by personality attributes, gender, life experiences, and perceived group status (Simpson & Kaminski, 2007;

Nowakowski & Conlon, 2005; Shi et al., 2009). Perceptions are also likely to be constructed and amplified by social information processing as people discuss their experiences and fairness judgments regarding those experiences (Simons & Roberson, 2003). Exchange and expression of perceptions, or person-environment transactions, are an integral component to emotions since emotions are typically caused by cognitive evaluation that may be conscious or unconscious (Jenkins, 1998; Oatley, 1996). Therefore, an individual discussing their perceptions of organisational justice may, consciously or unconsciously, seem to be opening up on a deeper emotional level about the lived experience of their work.

A variety of emotions that child and family social workers may experience throughout their practice emerged as a result of utilising the organisational justice framework. Therefore it became essential to further investigate how emotions are situated within child and family social work practice. In order to gain more theoretical insight into emotions and how they may be managed within the workplace, emotional intelligence; how one is able to assess and display emotions, and emotional labour; the labour involved when dealing with other people's emotions, will be discussed in more detail within this chapter. Identifying the emotional content of the respondents' comments in response to the organisational justice related questions became essential as the language used by the responding social workers suggested there was some pain and discomfort involved within their practice experience. As a result, by returning to the literature and through the reflective and analytical

process that occurred simultaneously as the interviews were being conducted, the emotions of shame and guilt were able to be identified within the participants' responses and will also be discussed in more detail.

This chapter is divided into six sections with the first section being a return to the literature in order to gain an understanding of emotions within the workplace. The next three sections will be the analysis of emotions within the interview data with the social workers, specifically, these are laid out as a section on the emotion of shame, the next on guilt, followed by a section on anxiety. There will also be a section on the overall emotional lived experience of being a social worker that has come to light through these interviews. Finally, a look at my own emotions throughout this process will be reflected upon. This is important as not only is it important for researchers to evaluate their own place within the research and how that may affect the results, but also as a trained social worker, I am able to empathise with the responses, and this in turn has emerged as a driving force of the motivation for this research.

5.2 - Literature on Emotions

5.2.1 - Emotions

Emotions are central to human life. They are sudden, can interrupt an activity, and organise our mind to deal with an event. If you are aware of an emotion within yourself, you know that something of importance is happening

to you, either positively or negatively (Jenkins, Oatley & Stein, 1998; Tangney et al., 1996).

The research on emotions stems from the findings of Darwin, James and Freud (Jenkins et al, 1998). In the book *Human Emotions: A Reader* (1998), Jenkins, Oatley and Stein recap and summarise these findings as follows: Darwin showed the connection between emotions and the natural world, James emphasised physiological changes and made the link between emotions and monitoring our bodies, and Freud discovered the importance of discussing emotions in order for them to be understood. All of these findings are important when considering emotions as more recent theories generalise the place of emotion providing a set of clues in reflecting on what is real and our own self-relevance (Hochschild, 1983; Katz, 1999). Emotions call our attention to important events and motivate and direct subsequent behaviour (Tangney et al., 1996).

Hochschild (1983) distinguishes between two different models of emotion, the organismic model and the interactionist model. For the interactional theorists, emotions are more fluid and dynamic, whereas the organismic theorists believe emotion to be fixed (Hochschild, 1983). More relevantly, Hochschild (1983) also discusses the importance of developing a social theory of emotion that allows us to see how institutions control us through surveillance of our feelings. This theory adds the element that people have to actively manage their emotions to make their personalities fit with the work

that they are doing, specifically when working with the public. In other words, there is an aspect of emotional management, or work that needs to occur. Emotion management is also generally referred to as the type of work it takes to cope with different feelings, and the rules that come with those feelings (Hochschild, 1979). Emotion management can be especially prevalent within the workplace as emotions are generally thought to be the absence of rationality and rational thinking is the norm within organisational life (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995). Bringing Hochschild's writings together, it is possible to recognise that social factors will affect how emotions are elicited and expressed, and will guide the labelling process of emotions. In a field such as social work, the social factors involved with managing emotions, while working with families and other professionals are plentiful, and emotion work is going to be present, especially as working and being involved with other people's emotions, as well as managing the practitioners own emotions, is part of the job.

5.2.2 - Emotional Labour, Management and Intelligence

The term 'emotional labour' is used when discussing the labour involved when dealing with other people's feelings, and also when one needs to induce, or suppress feelings in order to maintain an outward appearance for others (Hochschild, 1983; James, 1988). Emotional labour is flexible and does not make a distinction between jobs, as long as it relates to the needs of others, it cannot be timetabled or routinised as easily as physical labour/tasks can be (James, 1988). This is due to emotion rarely being seen

as structured and has an element of unpredictability or irrationality. However, emotional labour is still physically demanding and can be as exhausting as physical labour (James, 1988).

In the workplace, there are implicit and explicit rules about what emotions are acceptable to display (Briner, 1999; Mann, 1999) believes that managing emotions is crucial to successful employee performance. However, in the public domain where a worker is expected to exchange sensitive information, at risk of being treated with disrespect by clients or other professionals, the worker has to become skilled at managing their own emotions, and repress them, also known as surface acting, even though those feelings will not disappear (James, 1988; Hochschild, 1983). As a result, this emotional labour and managing emotion, could be seen as a commodity in 'people work' (James, 1988). However, in an organisation that focuses on profits and losses, the psychological costs of emotional labour are not acknowledged and the subtleties are likely to be overwhelmed by more pressing demands (Hochschild, 1983; James, 1988), which in the long run can lead to emotional exhaustion (Bechtoldt et al, 2007).

Hochschild's (1983) pivotal work on emotional labour and managing emotion through surface and deep acting with employees in the public sector continues to be influential and relevant to current research. Surface acting involves the suppression of negative emotions while displaying positive ones, while deep acting involves matching and engaging with feelings and

emotional expressions, leading to a more authentic behaviour (Bechtoldt et al., 2007). Hochschild (1983) discovered that when elements of managing emotion are taken into the marketplace, disguising fatigue and irritation can occur for brief periods. This is also because within institutions, elements of acting are taken away from an individual and replaced with organisational mechanisms. Management may believe they have done things correctly by establishing guidelines that foster the desired emotion in the workers, when in fact they have placed parameters around feelings (Hochschild, 1983). Company language is most likely aimed at not only diffusing anger, but at minimising fear. Hochschild (1983) asks a valid question however, that when rules about how to feel and express emotion are set by management and when workers have fewer rights than customers/clients do, what happens to the way a person relates to the feelings outside of the workplace? A person who engages in emotional labour for a living may also begin to face challenging questions about their own identity and sense of self. In order to help with this, people need to develop a division between their sense of self and their role, something that can be facilitated through appropriate supervision and development of emotional intelligence (Hochschild, 1983).

Developing emotional intelligence is important in all aspects of life as moods and emotions subtly influence the components and strategies involved in problem solving and increases empathy (Salovey & Meyer, 1990). According to Salovey and Meyer (1990) emotional intelligence has five main features: 1) being aware of one's own emotions 2) being able to manage own

emotions 3) being sensitive to the emotions of others 4) being able to respond to other people emotionally 5) being able to use own emotions to motivate oneself. In fewer words, being able to appraise and express emotions accurately. In regards to the workplace, emotional intelligence has been linked to positive stress management, life opportunities, job retention and leadership skills, as well as healthy relationships in all areas of life (Ingram, 2012).

All of this literature recognises that emotions and feelings will play a part in determining choices made by individuals when acting in their public and private life. It is an individual's public persona that is most often scrutinised and yet unrecognised and unrewarded. The potential for mismanagement and struggling to balance inner emotions and emotions that can be made public is an area of potential stress for workers. This could lead to an emotional numbness and inappropriate responses to important decisions (Hochschild, 1983). For social work specifically, lack of emotional competence could lead to specific performance issues, such as poor recording practice (Morrison, 2007).

5.2.3 - Emotions and Organisational Justice

A few authors have begun to look at the link between organisational justice and various emotions, although they state that more work needs to be done in this area. Cole et al (2010) examined the relationship between organisational justice and whether emotional exhaustion was linked to

withdrawal outcomes. Overall, they were trying to understand how personality and individual's attitudes will impact their justice perceptions. Acknowledging that there is still a lack in understanding of what truly influences these intentions and behaviours. What they did find was their results demonstrated that perceptions of unfairness may take an emotional toll on workers, this is will then impact and disrupt their attitudes towards the organisation and result in emotional exhaustion and stress. A cycle that would be worth further investigation, in the future and in various settings with more of a focus on what the specific triggers are for perceptions of unfairness.

In an earlier investigation at the link between organisational justice and emotions, Weiss, Suckow and Cropanzano (1999) focused on the more discrete emotions such as guilt, anger and pride and influencing outcomes of justice perceptions, specifically distributive and procedural justice. They stated that although emotion is mentioned in the justice literature, there is a need to understand the way justice influences emotions if there is to be a better understanding of the way organisational justice is manifested in organisational life. Certain aspects of organisational justice may contain more emotions than others and many discrete emotions can be experienced simultaneously.

The complexity of the relationship between emotions and organisational life, especially in an emotionally labour intensive workplace such as social work,

is what has emerged from the data and is slowly being recognised and has also been a connection that was found to be worth investigating as part of this research.

5.2.4 - Emotions and Social Work

The social work profession is, by its very nature, involved with and surrounded by emotions. As relationships and interactions with others are central, managing clients' emotions, as well as one's own, are essential components to the role. Ferguson (2005) states there is an 'expressive' dimension to child protection practices that concerns the psycho-social dynamics of the work as they are 'deeply embedded in relationships' (p783). Social workers need to be able to engage with the emotional content of the service user's life and circumstances and also recognise the impact this may have on themselves and their practice (Ingram, 2012; Morrison, 2007). Add to this the pressure of workloads, potentially dangerous practice, public scrutiny and the uncertain nature of the work, it can be seen that workers have to be able to respond to a variety of internal and external emotional issues in order to practice effectively (Waterhouse & McGhee, 2009; Ingram, 2012).

Part of the working life of a social worker is being exposed to human vulnerability and the anxieties, fears and uncertainties that come hand in hand with that, therefore, social workers are also at risk of experiencing and absorbing those emotions (Whittaker, 2011). Not only are social workers

dealing with these anxieties directly from individuals, but they are also prime candidates for the projection of society's anxieties regarding anti-social behaviour or sexual abuse panics (Taylor et al., 2008; Ferguson, 2005; Clapton, Cree & Smith, 2013). It is not a surprise then that previous research has found that social workers have expressed a range of emotions, in addition to anxiety, such as, fear, embarrassment, guilt and vicarious trauma, (Taylor et al., 2008; Goddard & Hunt, 2011; Smith et al., 2003; Waterhouse & McGhee, 2009). However, the extent and source of these emotions still appear to be under explored and it is by discovering the prevalence and root of these emotions that further knowledge of the lived experience of child and family social workers may be gained.

Looking at the Munro (2011) review, there is evidence that a gap is acknowledged i.e. feelings are under explored, and the specifics and extent of the emotions involved are not discussed. Munro (2011) acknowledges that if the work environment does not help support workers, then the potential for burnout increases and radical reform is needed to give weight to the importance of the emotional requirements of the work. The emotional dimension of working with children and families is significant in how social workers reason and act, and this can come at a personal cost, not only to a social worker's own conscience but also in the realisation of how terrible some children's lives are (Munro, 2011; Ferguson, 2005). Social workers can really only feel comfortable in making the decisions and taking the risks needed in child protection work if they know they have a safe place to return

to and process the events and emotions of the day to day work (Martin et al., 2014; SWTF, 2010; Weinberg, 2010). Therefore, looking deeper at the degree and specifics of the emotions involved in the experiences of social workers is needed.

The organisational context that social workers find themselves adds to the complex nature of emotional labour and social work. Organisations carry considerable stresses due to the emotional nature of the work and the institutional anxiety resulting from the political and public exposure (Morrison, 2007). While aspects of organisational life exist to facilitate work, some aspects are also there to help people manage anxiety, and as managerial demands grow, those demands tend to dominate the professional demands (Goddard & Hunt, 2011; Krantz, 2010). As workers develop the need for self-preservation through the conflicting demands involved in emotional labour in an organisation, they may rely on various defences such as denial, rationalisation, or what is often called 'black humour' (Goddard & Hunt, 2011). Morrison (2007) and Krantz (2010) also discuss 'social defences' as impersonal elements that exist in institutions that are utilised by people to support individual defence mechanisms through the process of projection. These defence systems are unconsciously reflected in organisational rituals, processes and systems designed to avoid feelings. Through these systems, it is possible to see how workers' feelings and relational abilities are intertwined with the emotional needs and rules of the organisation (Morrison, 2007); the risk being that a defensive organisation will protect itself, rather

than its workers or the clients should something go wrong (Goddard & Hunt, 2011).

The organisation can be seen as a container for professional anxiety, as it arises from the primary task, such as social work with the responsibility for child protection functions (Cooper, 2010; Taylor et al. 2008). Problematic behaviours that are occurring at the front line level, may in fact be acting out macro-level tensions within and between organisations (Morrison, 2007). Social workers may well be experiencing anxiety from every angle of their work then, as a result of anxiety stemming from the structure, culture and functioning of the organisation, as well as experiencing anxiety that is associated with the awareness of their role within society and the power they hold to separate children from their families, without knowing the longer term consequences of these decisions (Waterhouse & McGhee, 2009; Ferguson, 2005).

Social workers also express fear and distress in relation to their work (Smith et al., 2003). Fear is influenced by the imagination and as such, social workers experiencing fear may be anticipating various future reactions to decisions that they have made. Fear of disapproval by senior management, or fear of a public backlash, and fear being compounded by the anxiety that the complexities of the work may not be fully understood by those making the judgments (Smith et al., 2003). In a follow up study, Smith et al.(2004) also found that social workers fear having too much to do and getting it wrong,

fear of being publicly attacked, and have fears about working with abusive and violent service users. Social workers have to engage with the negative emotions of others and have to be the bearer of bad news to families, and all of these components together lead back to the emotion work that a social worker has to do in order to practice effectively. In addition to the practice-based discussion of emotions, the literature on social work education has also begun to develop an awareness of the importance of emotions.

5.2.5 - Social Work Students and Emotions

Although the link between managing emotions while being a social worker is underdeveloped, there does seem to be slightly more of a focus, albeit still minimal, on student social workers managing emotions and the process of developing emotional resilience. Marlowe et al. (2014) set out to investigate how social work students incorporate their personal and professional selves during their field education experience. It became evident in this research that the students were overwhelmed when they were challenged because of tensions between personal and professional values arose. This is a dilemma these students will be faced with throughout their career and the awareness of these triggers and how to manage them is an important aspect of their development as professionals. The reflective process these students were provided with assisted in minimising blame, shame, guilt and doubt as there was space to create individual strategies for self-care and professional development (Marlowe et al., 2014). It is important to note however, that as a student social worker, there is the possibility of more time devoted to

reflective supervision as it is seen as part of the learning process, whereas a qualified social worker may have less allocated time to reflection. A qualified social worker will have differing priorities than a student social worker and as is evident from the child and family social workers in my research, their highest priorities are to the children and families on their caseload, everything else often comes as an afterthought, including self-maintenance. Therefore the research that has been described here, contributes to the underdeveloped link between emotions and social work. As will be discussed in the next chapter, this will assist in a greater understanding of how best to support social workers to manage and process the emotions they experience.

Another recent study that focused on student social workers and their emotional resilience has also maintained this is an under-explored area of work, and that there are added stressors associated with being a student social worker (Rajan-Rankin, 2014). Here, again there is the discussion about tensions between the personal and professional values, especially around whether it is professional to express emotions. Emotionality was met with unease and fear of being unprofessional and there was the emergence of how it was important to contain emotion, although this could be due to the negative emotions that may be involved. While continuing to express the importance of resilience when it comes to managing these tensions within the emotion discourse, Rajan-Rankin (2014) also mentions that there is a limitation with regards to the wider social, political and cultural contexts in

which emotions are constructed. In other words, how emotions are constructed and perceived within a specific culture will impact how emotions are expressed and accepted. Negative emotions such as shame and guilt, although not discussed in the literature reviewed in this section, are often ill-received and as such make them all the more difficult to express. These wider contexts play a major role in how social workers, or students in Rajan-Rankin's (2014) case, manage the complexity of their emotions and how, or if, these emotions will be expressed. This is why it is important to look at the various sources of some of these emotions and ensure the discussion includes those.

5.2.6 - Reason and Emotion

There is a new debate, and theory, working to explain child protection social work and it involves a closer attention to the 'minutiae' of the lived experience and the business of being a child and family social worker (Ferguson, 2008; Smith, 2011; Bauman, 2000; Bauman, 1994). Here, social work is starting to be recognised as a mobile practice that deals with 'liquid' practices. This involves looking at child protection social work from a perspective that the practice is ambiguous, contingent, and works from a moral standpoint that makes it difficult to have a 'one-size fits all' solution (Smith, 2011; Bauman, 2000). In other words, it is a three-dimensional problem that people are trying to solve within a one-dimensional framework.

Bauman (1994) states that the great divide in modern living is between reason and emotion, that bureaucracy and business were constructed in

order to control and guide by laws, rules and norms, and to eradicate emotion. Bureaucracy can only work properly on the condition that all people involved in the organisation follow the commands and jobs that they are hired to do, they should not be diverted by their personal beliefs and convictions (Bauman, 1994). This goes against the very core of the profession of social work that is guided by moral values, emotions and beliefs. As well, Bauman (1994) states that modern times began with the separation of the household and the business, which also provides a conflict for social work as the home and the business of social work cannot be separated.

In summary, social work is a 'mobile' and 'fluid' practice yet finds itself in an organisation that is built on structure and control (Ferguson, 2008; Smith, 2011). There are then conceptual difficulties that reside within the relationship between child protection social work practice and the local authority organisation. A modern organisation does not promote ethical practice or moral behaviour and if anything, they make the life of a moral person, such as a social worker, difficult and unrewarding (Bauman, 1994). This is strengthened in the 2012 survey by BASW that reported 80% of responding social workers (1100 respondents) found it more difficult to practice effectively and as a result, possibly ethically (BASW, 2012).

Thus there is a growing attention as to how child and family social workers, involved in child protection decision making, are having to evaluate two conflicting processes simultaneously, reason and emotion, and the

consequent strain this might give rise to. As will be seen in the following sections, there have been efforts to address these conflicts, however there remains some gaps in the literature and research that have been identified.

5.2.7 - The Dichotomy between Reason and Emotion

As previously mentioned, there have been a large number of reports that have tried to pinpoint where child protection in the UK is failing. All of these reports have come up with recommendations for policy, practice and have done an excellent job at describing the complex challenges that social workers face on a daily basis (Laming, 2009; Munro, 2011; Scottish Executive, 2006; Social Work Scotland, 2015). That being said, there is still more that needs to be done to ensure the well-being and confidence of the staff who undertake this work (Laming, 2009).

Laming (2009) believes that there is still a need to create a culture of support that enables social workers to share their feelings and inadequacies reinforced by a system of good line management that is creative, empowering, and sensitive to the frontline staff. This gives the impression that this is not present in current local authorities. Although Laming (2009) discusses the need to change the culture of frontline child protection work within his recommendations, this concentrates on more qualifications, various training programmes, codes of practice and 'hard' skills, as opposed to mentioning the actual well-being of the social workers' themselves.

In regards to the more recent report submitted by Munro in 2011, there is recognition of the importance of social workers needing to be employed in a supportive and learning based organisation, however the recommendations speak minimally to the role that local authorities need to take in order to change the system she is so passionate about. Munro's (2011a) recommendations and writings are central to how the larger picture of the social work profession progresses in England, which will hopefully have a ripple effect on the other UK countries. However, there is still a gap in the reports about the specific role that local authorities have as regards organisational influences on child protection. It is possible to notice that within her report, there are many tasks that Munro has suggested local authorities take on, however such a hope overlooks the nature of the environment and the culture of the local authority. It could be difficult for some of these tasks to be implemented without first tackling the underlying behaviours, thought processes and theoretical perspectives that lie within a local authority. Section 4.18 of the review briefly points to this when it states that 'while local authorities are, of course, generally in the best position to determine their own management structures in light of their particular local circumstances, the review questions whether such structures would allow sufficient focus and attention to be paid to the most vulnerable children' (Munro, 2011 p 58). So again, there seems to be a lack of awareness as to the power of local authorities to influence the well-being of their child and family social work staff which in turn negatively impact on their ability to protect children.

The Scottish Executive (2006) was able to recognise that social workers need to feel supported within a learning culture and have effective teams incorporated into the workplace structure. With recommendations such as implications of personalisation to be considered, employers to invest in building and sustaining effective teamwork, and promote leadership at every level, it would seem that social workers in Scotland should be feeling content in their workplace. However, the previous mention of one of the reasons for the reduction in public sector employment in Scotland is the drop in the numbers of those employed by local authority social work services, would suggest otherwise (SSSC, 2011).

Finally, the most recent report relating to Scottish social workers (Social Work Scotland, 2015), also repeats the message that continuous professional development, knowledge of best practice and registration need to be in place to ensure a skilled workforce. The report states that there is evidence that turnover is high in some areas, however there is nothing specific relating to social workers who perform child protection duties. The mention of a strained public image and the importance of promoting public understanding of the role of social workers highlights some important complexities surrounding the profession, although this argument is somewhat vague, by stating there is an inequality in this public image as each sector of social work is represented differently. The Social Work Scotland (2015) report argues that the workforce needs to feel valued, yet there is only

discussion of conducting surveys in order to gain some insight. By missing out on face to face interviews with social workers, the implementation of the report's action steps may result in a missed opportunity to hear a more in-depth account from the workforce, thus, inhibiting any change in evidence-informed frontline practice.

We are now able to see how the practice of child protection is bound up with emotions, feelings and decision making, which is influenced by complex systems and individual traits. It is therefore important to explore in greater depth the emotions and experiences of the role. This exploration will assist in a further comprehension of the dichotomy between the reality of social work and some of the images held by the wider public and even social workers themselves. These components of social work practice will always be present as the practice itself is 'deeply embedded' in relationships (Ferguson, 2005, p783). The primarily negative emotions of shame and guilt that arose within the interviews, as will be seen in section 5.3, have provided insight into some of difficulty in working within a rational or bureaucratic system that may be neglecting the emotional aspects of doing child and family social work (Ferguson, 2005).

5.2.8 - Guilt and Shame

Focusing on the emotions of shame and guilt arose due to their subtle prevalence and yet initially under-estimated importance within the interviews, as will be seen in section 5.3. Empathising with the responding social

workers and reflecting back on personal experience also allowed a deeper understanding of these feelings and a movement towards the literature, as will be discussed here, for further comprehension. Distinguishing between shame and guilt is important due to their close nature and ability to coexist, guilt even at times may give way to shame (Dorahy et al., 2013). They are also difficult to distinguish as they are more internal affective states, lacking external emotional outbursts, and therefore difficult to assess (Tangney, 1996). Many authors have researched the distinction more closely and all with similar results (Dorahy et al., 2013; Teroni & Deronna, 2008; Scheff, 2000; Tangney, 1996). The research suggests that shame is primarily an emotion that stems from public exposure, whereas guilt is viewed as a private experience and related to one's own conscious (Tangney, 1996; Scheff, 2000). However, guilt may also be related to what one did, that is, actions and action failures, and shame is related to who one is and appraisals of self (Scheff, 2000; Dorahy et al., 2013; Teroni & Deronna, 2008). Tangney (1996) found that the fundamental difference between shame and guilt lies in the perception the individual has on their transgression, more so than the act itself. Scheff (2000) has also made this link in finding that in the feeling of guilt, the ego is more intact, whereas when an individual feels shame, there is a weakness and dissolution of self. In other words, the focus of the emotion is what is likely to distinguish guilt from shame (Kaya et al., 2012). These emotions can be classified as 'moral emotions', 'self-evaluative' or 'self-conscious' (Chao et al., 2011; Lewis, 1989; Tangney, 1996). This is due to their role in relation to socially

desirable, or undesirable behaviour, when one's social self, or self-image, is threatened. Self-conscious emotions impinge on social functioning, and warn us that social relationships on which we depend may be under threat (Dorahy et al., 2013; Chao et al., 2011). Shame and guilt are the two emotions that are said to keep people on the moral path (Stuewig et al., 2010). As indicated, both surfaced during the interviews.

Guilt

The potential for both of these emotions to be felt by social workers is strong as both emotions tend to be typically social and relational in nature and are related to a value base, especially as shame has a tendency to occur with respect to values and the social self, and guilt when one only cares about something, or relationships (Teroni & Deronna, 2008; Dorahy et al., 2013). Due to the common perception that guilt focuses on the behaviour, it is easy to see how this would relate to social work actions and procedures. In guilt, a person is more likely to imagine how they may have avoided a certain act, and is often accompanied by feelings of remorse or regret (Katz, 1999; Fee & Tangney, 2000). Guilt is more likely to be related to actions performed however does not affect one's core identity or sense of self (Leskela et al., 2002; Tangney, 1996). Shame on the other hand, is more likely to be internalised into core beliefs about oneself (Walker, 2011). As social work is an emotionally laden and value based profession, social workers may be more self-aware and encouraged to reflect on their identity. Walker (2011) even goes on to say that caring for others may be an unconscious defence

against our own sense of shame. Therefore, the remainder of this section will focus on the emotion of shame as this is an under-developed area in relation to the social work profession.

Shame

As mentioned above, shame has been classified as a self-conscious emotion due to the social self being threatened (Chao et al., 2011). Shame is about identity and associated with the regulation of social relationships and the status quo. As shame is a relational emotion by nature, it is linked to how individuals see themselves, using the real or imagined perspective of others as a vantage point (Dorahy et al., 2013; Retzinger, 1995). To be in a state of shame, you are comparing your actions against some standard, either your own, or someone else's. It is the focus of the self on the self's failure, and that self-evaluation that leads to a state of shame (Lewis, 2003; Tangney et al., 2006). Shame is taking the focus away from the other, and turning it on the self, therefore putting into question one's overall perception of value (Teroni & Deonna, 2008; Tangney, 1991). Shame is considered a more painful emotion which perhaps makes it understandable that shame and anger often go hand in hand (Tangney et al, 2007).

As shame is linked to failures that are associated with one's goals or ideals, shame is also defined as the feeling associated with the realisation of a level of incompetence (Teroni & Deonna, 2008; Kaya et al, 2012). This then makes it clearer that the state of shame is often hidden, repressed and kept

at an unconscious level, possibly even misnamed (Scheff, 2000; Turner, 2007). We end up being ashamed of our shame, and hide it from others (Walker, 2011). Although it may not always be recognised that someone is in a state of shame, the behaviour that can be associated with shame is important to be aware of and address. The experience of shame can reflect in isolation from the community, to behave self-sufficiently, lash out aggressively (ego-protective function), difficulty with open communication, lying, submissive behaviour, passive disengagement, lack of self-confidence, procrastination, reduced capacity for empathy, and an overall sense of feeling physically smaller and inferior to others (Katz, 1999; Chao et al., 2013; Walker, 2011; Teroni & Deronna, 2008; Kaya et al., 2012; Fee & Tangney, 2000; Scheff, 2000; Leeming & Boyle, 2013; Tangney, 1991; Tangney et al., 1996). These are all actions that in the context of the social work profession would have detrimental consequences on not only the social workers, but also the service users. As has been discussed in the earlier literature review, these actions are commonly reflected upon in contemporary evaluations of the state and social work. Walker (2011) makes a more macro-oriented link to shame and social work by pointing out that social work's inability to respond appropriately to the media risks the profession becoming stuck in a shame-shame loop. The media shames social work adding to the shame that social workers potentially internalise.

Linking back to the literature on emotional labour and emotion work, because shame is the opposite of pride, emotion work may be essential if shame is to

be turned into pride (Lindstrom et al., 2011; Rutten, 2006). As seen above, shameful emotions are powerful modulators of behaviour and some researchers believe that by identifying shame in interaction, discoveries in many areas of everyday life would be possible, and there could be a better understanding into the nature of human relationships. Acknowledging shame could help hold relationships and societies together, as unacknowledged shame can tear them apart (Retzinger, 1995; Lindstrom et al., 2011; Scheff, 2000). Given the importance of shame in social relations and personal or interpersonal behaviour, it would seem vital that a greater understanding of how to manage these emotions is needed (Leeming & Boyle, 2013). Allowing individuals, and in this context, social workers, to talk through such feelings can enable workers to develop resilience and continue to work towards best practice (Walker, 2011).

As is evident from the above literature, making a stronger link between emotions and social work was essential in order to gain a better understanding of the day to day experiences of the social workers in this study. It also appears there are some emotions, shame and guilt, that need more attention than others. These emotions are linked to the vulnerabilities that social workers experience as a result of having values and ethics that reflect their sense of identity and sense of self. The emotional discomfort these social workers experienced as well as the difficulty in managing having pride working in a profession that is “universally loathed”, as one respondent explained, sheds light on the contradiction between wanting to do good and

having a deep rooted sense of shame or guilt that may inhibit how this is executed. As has been referred to throughout this thesis, the process of utilising the organisational justice framework allowed for the responding social workers to provide insight into the emotions involved in their working lives. The previous sections within this chapter have allowed for the additional literature to display the importance of identifying and addressing those emotions within the research process and provide further background as to why an additional research question was required. As a review, the additional research question became:

- o What might be the dominant emotions in the lived experience of a 21st century child and family social worker? and what are their origins and influences?

The analysis of the emotions, such as shame and guilt that emerged from the interview data alongside the organisational justice, framework will now be discussed.

5.3 – Shame as it Presented in the Interviews

As could be expected, the respondents in this study rarely explicitly stated they felt shame relating to the work they do although it was inferred within the interview responses. As stated earlier in Chapter Three, the analysis of emotions, and shame in particular, can be difficult as it is deeply embedded within the moment (Retzinger, 1995). What became evident were times when the respondents expressed disappointment, judgmental comparison,

isolation, inadequacy and discomfort. Furthermore, these were communicated in the contexts of the self, with the profession, by others (professionals and the local authority), and by the larger society. These three experiences of shame will now be considered.

5.3.1 - In Self

When respondents were revealing moments of their own experience within the organisational justice framework, they described instances of crying, being challenged in terms of values and ethics, feeling ignored or undervalued, and doubting oneself. Knowing that shame is about identity, a sense of self and can occur in the context of social discomfort (Retzinger, 1995), it became evident that this was an underlying theme the responding social workers were expressing. The phrase “should have” came up quite regularly in the context of feeling like at the end of the day they ‘should have’ done something else just in case something happens and they have all the bases covered:

“We all know deep down that it keeps us awake at night... you're always worried that you've dropped a stitch I think, you know that something, there's a phone call you should have made, there's something you should have done, something you should have passed on... I mean I can think of lots of times where colleagues have just burst into tears at the end of the day” - Interview 15

Although feeling like you ‘should have’ done something could also be linked to a feeling of guilt, these ‘should haves’ are more closely linked to the ethics

and value base that comes with being a social worker. As one social worker aptly described it:

“I think that is extremely upsetting, I think the, I mean it challenges you in terms of your ethics, your values, your beliefs, um you’re faced with conflicts ... it’s a hugely conflicting, and I remember like the first time I accommodated a child, the mother crying, I felt terrible, the guilt about it, is this the right thing? double questioning yourself, constantly reviewing, is this the right thing to be doing, so I think it’s extremely emotionally charged” - Interview 17

The experiences of being a social worker can lead to questions about place in the world, which can be very distressing and lead to a sense of shame if a social worker believes they have entered a thought process of dishonour or humiliation.

The shame that social workers expressed also emerged when discussing their workload. Not only in terms of the ‘should have’s’ but also in relation to the culture of working long hours with caseloads that are too high:

“I think the problem is, the department there’s a culture where social workers work long hours, so therefore if I was to turn around and be very rigid, I would be seen as less than my job, whereas actually, I would just be doing what is the basic, you know it’s just kind of the culture where you work long hours, and you don’t put in every bit of overtime” - Interview 2

“I suppose they could try and fit about with your case load if you were feeling particularly stressed but that would just mean that somebody else is having more work” - Interview 8

In these instances, these respondents are implying the sense of shame that would emerge if the social workers were to be more rigid with their professional boundaries and abilities. This is due to the possibility of the self being the focus of disappointment, as may occur if the social worker is not

seen to be 'pulling their weight' alongside other practitioners. The comparison as to how they are then viewed by others can lead to a feeling of alienation and shame (Retzinger, 1995), which links to the interesting aspect that emerged of being ashamed of feeling shame, also known as the "shame-shame loop" (Scheff & Retzinger, 1997). When Bolton (2000) conducted a study with a group of nurses and professional feeling rules, she stated that although it is not an acknowledged part of the training, it is made clear that to show feelings of anger, distaste or sorrow would be unprofessional, and the same can be said within social work. There is then a stigma expressed by the participants about not wanting to admit when they cannot cope, or when they feel stressed. Although many of the respondents acknowledge that the job is a stressful one, admitting they are stressed to their supervisors is something they are hesitant to do:

"I guess the thing to feed back is that frequently, or regularly rather than frequently, in the office, somebody's in tears, a worker's in tears on a regular basis, as a result of the work, and what's the level of support here? That means people are coming back and crying to other colleagues about what they're experiencing and how they're coping, you know you take the sickness you take the other bits, and sickness is high there's no two ways about it...and there is that shame, even though it's recognised, social work is stressful, even though we have a very high stress rate, I still think there's an element of shame about acknowledging that you're stressed, or depressed, or traumatised, or post-traumatic stress or whatever it is, um I think you're seen as weak, and that's still around" - Interview 7

"one of the cases I'm thinking about is a worker who's come back and was surprised there were disciplinary proceedings and all sort of became very messy and complicated and perhaps there wasn't a recognition that she was depressed at the time things were going wrong, so I could, in some ways it's quite hard because I think at times we don't recognise workers' needs quickly enough but I sometimes think, in ourselves, there's almost like a canteen culture

that we must carry on, we seem to cope when we're almost unwilling to admit that we're struggling with things" - Interview 10

If social workers are ashamed of their emotions, then this is an important insight as to the lived experience of a social worker. This is part of where the misunderstandings of expectations from other professions and society comes from. As is evident from the second quote, if social workers are not confident in their ability to fully express themselves and harbour powerful, negative emotions that they have difficulty in articulating or expressing, then this impacts their ability to do the job. Everything is interconnected in the child protection system, but if it is to be a caring practice done well, then its practitioners personal and emotional dilemmas need to be understood.

5.3.2 - With the Profession

Throughout the interview process, respondents seemed to express some shame with the overall profession of social work. Whether this was through a more overarching view of their own practice, or their interaction with other social workers, there was a sense of a defeatist attitude about the work that they have to do and the shame that comes with being a social worker, or the potential for shame:

"You know I think the fact that social workers don't get reports in on time, don't turn up on time quite often, you know, people don't really see us as professionals, I mean we don't see ourselves as professionals really that often" - Interview 1

If social workers are having trouble seeing themselves as professionals this implies a certain amount of doubt about their own professional identity. This

could be an identifier of how social workers are aware that some of what they do could be considered shame-producing behaviour. This is also true as some professionals may find it harder to admit to the feelings of discomfort and disgust they experience (Ferguson, 2005). This struggle with feelings of shame towards the profession could also be linked to how the work that social workers perform does not receive much public recognition and is associated with private matters and socially difficult issues, and as will be discussed in Chapter Six, and is what could be classified as “dirty work” (Bolton, 2005). If this has permeated into the professional identity of social workers, then it is no wonder social workers will express an attitude such as one respondent:

“...because we're just waiting for the next Victoria Climbié essentially because that's what's going to happen is um we can't go in, we can't do a thorough enough job” - Interview 2

In other words, there is a consistent sense of dread that something ‘dishonourable’ will happen, and not only is this felt by the social workers, but is also linked to the next sections regarding to the shame social workers feel in relation to other professions and by the larger community or society.

5.3.3 - *By Other Professions*

In the previous chapter, the respondents were shown to perceive they have a lower status than other professions. Manifested in a feeling of social discomfort or embarrassment (Retzinger, 1995), a key component of how they perceive this lower status is their lived experience in relation to these

other professions, the conversations they have and the behaviours demonstrated in practice.

The majority of respondents, at least once, compared themselves to another profession, or felt that they were compared to other professions and crucially came out the lesser. Retzinger (1995) describes this as covert shame, when there are comparisons between the self and other where the self appears inferior. There was also the sense of shame that the respondents felt was placed on them by other professional bodies, such as the legal system, children's hearings, or the local authority. The participants said they were "constantly second guessed on our work" by other professionals even though they are they are supposed to be the lead professional in child protection proceedings:

"what I hear from some of my colleagues who have been in witness boxes and things like that and being questioned by or cross examined by advocates um, I think in permanency proceedings and things like that um, I think where the impression I get often our professional expertise is put under question in those kind of arenas but I've never experienced it myself and I'm sure I will at some point" - Interview 11

Shame causes increased levels of self-consciousness when the social self is under threat, and in the above example the professional self is also under threat (Chao, Cheng & Chiou, 2011). The respondents also expressed an element of being ignored by others and the tone of voice used was one of abandonment. This could relate to social workers not feeling worthy or valued enough to be recognised. Brown (2012) recognises this lack of connection and belonging that can come from not feeling valued, as a strong

manifestation of shame. This quiet and underlying level of shame adds to the stigma associated with social work in the UK, and is done by distancing from, and disassociating oneself with the profession:

“I think we’re just forgotten...” - Interview 1

“...they just don’t think about the consequences and about the difference in social work...” - Interview 1

“...I think they’d rather we just got on and did it, and they don’t really want to hear very much from us” - Interview 15

“...you just feel so undervalued...” - Interview 2

More commonly though, the respondents felt they were constantly negatively compared negatively to education professionals. Not only is this related to status as discussed in the previous chapter, but this emerged in such a way so not only did they feel less important than teachers but this was discrediting to the work they do. Other professionals discrediting social workers holds the possibility of damaging the reputation of the profession, which can decrease the self-esteem of the profession and may show up as anger between the various professionals. This anger experienced by workers, associated with shame in comparison to others, is a manifestation of an alternative loop that Sheff and Retzinger (1997) term the “shame-anger loop”, one can be angry that one is ashamed, and ashamed that one is angry.

A common refrain was the respondents stating they felt like the “poor second cousins in the department” due to education being a universal service that received more focus, funding and resources:

“I feel that we’re really kind of second, both in policies and procedures and you know, there’s so much more emphasis on education, education a winner, nobody really cares if the social workers were to go on strike, or if we weren’t there, as long as we keep the tide away, the tide of horror away from them I think” - Interview 1

“the other thing about social work is that children and families department is always run by somebody from education, it’s never been run by someone from social work...I suppose that’s partly about the power imbalance that education is considered much more important, which in many ways it is, but they could throw us a bone occasionally, and give us a social worker at the top who at some point in their life had been a field social worker” - Interview 8

If social workers are not recognised for the work they do by other professionals or the local authority, as discussed in the previous chapter with regards to distributive justice, this could be perceived as degrading, especially if there is a comparison involved. This is not to say that education should not get the attention it receives, it is of course, rightfully so, a universal service and it is important that it has adequate funding and personnel for its own mandates. It is about how to also recognise the importance of child and family social work without implying it is not worthy or by feeding into the stigma that can surround the profession.

5.3.4 - By Society

Although not explicitly stated by any of the respondents, there were occasions where some expressed an implied level of shame emanating from the community and the public at large. This would emerge in instances where the respondents said that the population they tend to come in contact with has a stigma associated with them. In other words, if a population is

stigmatised due to its association with the notions of welfare (Asquith, Clark & Waterhouse, 2005), those that choose to work with that population may be stigmatised by association.

Of course, there are also the wider universal or community values that social workers may be seemed to be working against. Values such as keeping the family together, believing that parents know best or staying out of people's business are regularly invoked when child and family social workers intervene. Therefore the social workers may be experiencing shame as they perceive they may be going against these wider values.

Without fully understanding the role of the child and family social worker, there will continue to be a certain amount of stigma, and associated level of shame, that comes with admitting to others that you are a child and family social worker:

“so I feel like it's just really difficult, it's hard to understand I guess how hard it is to make decisions that mean that either way, you're hurting someone I guess, so you know the right decision is to remove the child so there's a benefit to the child but also they're upset, you're ruining the family, you're upsetting, you know, I mean people, we make these decisions because they're right and we stand by them, but I think it's just really hard to fully get what it all means and how hard it is and that we don't do it, for the hell of it, you know, ya I guess it's, it's probably the hardest, when I think about it actually, its maybe a hard job for people to relate to in comparison to other jobs maybe” -
Interview 9

Shame by definition involves the feeling that has arisen from the consciousness of doing something dishonourable or improper, and focusing

on the self's failure (Lewis, 2003; Tangney et al., 2006), with the close association of stigma, humiliation or degrading behaviour. Social workers sometimes have to go against the grain, the grain of community values and the grain of their own personal values and ethics and at times have to make decisions that fall under that category of shameful behaviour. If social workers are immersed in a sense of failure and comparing actions against a standard, the result could be a constant feeling of unworthiness and an unhealthy negative self-evaluation. This heavy emotional payload they experience, as a result of these pressures on top of the complex decisions they conduct, will undoubtedly result in a negative impact on social workers sense of professional, and self, worth.

5.4 – Guilt as it Presented in the Interviews

Guilt is more likely to be related to actions performed, instead of affecting one's core identity or sense of self as shame does (Leskela et al., 2002; Tangney, 1996), therefore the instances that were coded as indicating a sense of guilt were more related to the workload, the interactions with clients as well as a sense of guilt about not being able to cope with the demands of the job.

5.4.1 - Workload

The respondents often voiced guilt when discussing an inability to complete all the work that they wanted to, and needed to get done. They demonstrated

an understanding of the competing tasks and priorities that are required of the job, yet often were disappointed when they were not able to do everything, this was expressed in words as well as with tone of voice. They knew something would have to be sacrificed and this was often their own personal life and schedule:

“I felt that was just expected that it would be done...I was told to do it today, and it's like, ya but today I don't know that another crisis isn't going to come up, and then it will be 2 days late, and then 3 days, and you know, there's that kind of, you've still got to do it, so you think I might as well, I mean I've got until, I get chucked out of this building, most nights, in the last few weeks” - Interview 2

Part of the role of a social worker is responding to crises as they come up, which often means that other work has to be put on hold. Subsequently, the additional work along with the original work still has to be completed by a certain timescale. If time management is a struggle for the social worker then, this increase in workload will influence their perception of how they are performing on the job, potentially leading to feelings of guilt if they are unable to complete all the work.

5.4.2 - Clients

Although the guilt associated with client interactions could also be considered ‘workload’, in this instance it is more related to the specifics involved with child and family work. The instances where you have to have difficult conversations, or are not able to provide the resources that would be most beneficial to the family, as well as the guilt of not being able to see a family. When one respondent answered a question about what would happen if she didn't go into work on a day when she wasn't supposed to, she responded:

“I suppose it’s about responding to her stress, and I think that’s what a lot of the bits of work that you do when you shouldn’t be working are about responding to things, to crises that develop that you know that if you don’t respond, nobody else will and therefore you have to do it because you have to do it at some point and it’s better for you and it’s better all-round if you can do it at that moment, would I beat myself up? I probably would have just worried I might have worried over the weekend about how that placement was, and I think it would have affected my long-term relationship with that carer I suppose I’m pretty sure she would have felt that I hadn’t responded to where she was at, I think that’s what would have been, but it wouldn’t, a child wouldn’t have been kept unsafe, there wouldn’t have been anything so you know, extreme as that, so ya I could have chosen not to I guess, ya no it’s an interesting question isn’t it? Why? Why would you do that?” - Interview 15

The respondent was quite reflective in questioning what is behind the reason she makes some of the decisions she does with her clients. There could be many reasons, however some of it will be out of professional responsibility, and with that could come a feeling of guilt, as guilt can be associated with the feeling of responsibility if something goes wrong. The workload guilt and associated feelings of guilt that may be present when interacting with clients will also increase the guilt associated with one’s mental capacity to deal with everything.

5.4.3 - Guilt from Not Being Able to Cope

There was brief mention by some of the respondents about how there was the internalisation of guilt in regards to their ability to cope with the job and the stigma that accompanies that. Similar to what was previously mentioned in regards to the feeling of being ashamed about feeling shame, there is a guilt, and stigma, that comes with admitting stress, anxiety or asking for help:

“I'm not entirely sure that workers actually feel able to admit to it all the time, I think to actually be able to say 'I find this stressful' needs a certain amount of confidence, because if people say it's stressful, I think they're worried that people will think that means they're not capable, and there is still that stigma about stress, depression all these things, and it shouldn't be” - Interview 16

Supervision is intended to be the space for the provision of critical reflection, support and discussing managing practice issues (SWTF, 2010). It seems here, however, that child and family social workers were having difficulty fully expressing concerns and feelings of stress during these times. Therefore, this was also a display of surface acting which Hochschild (1983) has described. The social workers were involved in emotional dissonance by suppressing the underlying emotions of guilt, shame and anxiety and displaying a stronger, more positive face to their supervisors and colleagues. Consistently engaging in emotional labour, that navigates and seeks to dampen these emotions demands, can take its toll. Burnout and a feeling of helplessness are possibilities, emotions that these respondents are familiar with:

“even though I was incredibly stressed and I was on medication for depression um, I still, and I had not done case notes, one case was 5 months, the other cases were 4 months...I got no support from the team at all...” - Interview 13

This respondent acknowledged the difficulty in being able to cope with her caseload and the lack of support provided by the team. There is more of a feeling of responsibility if something goes wrong that is associated with guilt. The subsequent feelings could be classified as shameful, if there is not adequate reflection and emotion work is left undone. What was also present

throughout, as the feeling that may be present before an action takes place most commonly, was anxiety.

5.5 - Anxiety

Although closely related to feelings of guilt, the feeling of anxiety may appear before a particular action takes place, the worry that something will go wrong or an overall feeling of unease about a situation. For social workers, anxiety could be present in their dealings with their own abilities, other professionals or anxiety about their own safety as well as the children on their caseload (Ferguson, 2005).

5.5.1 - Related to Sense of Self

The anxiety related to the sense of self manifested in a way that reflected the respondents' anxiety about whether they were able to cope with their current situation. Respondents were stating they worried about the stress, worried about not having enough support and worried about their own job security:

“...you need those supports around to help you, even just to talk about it, to work through it, make sure you're making the right decisions, recommendations, and though there are other things in place to obviously protect against, you know abuse in power such as the hearing system or you know child protection case conferences, sharing of information, but I still think, you know, we're in a powerful position, and we need to be aware of that” - Interview 17

Social workers are in a place of power and authority. Exercising the responsibility that comes with that can be anxiety provoking. One respondent also expressed anxiety related to past interactions with a supervisor, which

will be discussed in more detail further on, and she was afraid of how this would impact her future work:

“In the past, there is a helpline, a work kind of helpline....um I phoned in to speak with them because I was worried that if I took it to my senior um then it would follow a grievance and I felt that I was being more at risk of basically being given a load of abuse” - Interview 2

This anxiety, about accessing help, can be related to the previously mentioned guilt associated with having emotions that may not be seen as acceptable in the workplace.

5.5.2 - Related to Interactions with Others and the Local Authority

Anxieties related to the respondents' own performance was closely linked to the anxieties they encountered when dealing with other professionals. The respondents also stated that they have to manage other professionals' fears and anxieties, which is not always beneficial if they are having trouble managing their own:

“a lot of my time is spent managing other professionals and their anxieties and their fears and their difficulties” - Interview 1

There was also some anxiety spoken about the move into the open plan offices that some of the respondents are experiencing. This anxiety centres around not being close to their peers on a consistent basis, as well as the possibility of not being around social workers due to hot desking:

“that worries me I think that cause we're in this big open plan office and whereas before we'd always worked in small offices and so you would get a lot of support from that and you would have, I mean I can think of lots of times where colleagues have just burst into tears at the

end of the day and you could kind of mop that up between you um and that isn't, that isn't the culture of that kind of office space where you're sharing a huge space with lots of people, not all of whom are social workers, we're meant to be hot desking, we're not doing that yet, but that will bring yet another dimension where you're not even sitting behind the people you know each day, and so I suppose that worries me" - Interview 15

As discussed in the previous chapter, peer support and interpersonal justice i.e. relationships within the workplace, is incredibly important to the respondents. There appears to be anxiety about this being eroded due to the changing physical space and the importance of that space on their relationships and ways of coping.

5.5.3 - Related to Clients

With regards to anxiety relating to clients, the respondents stated that they would be worried about whether they had made the right decision regarding a client, worried about the number of clients on their caseload and the ultimate worry of a death of a child on their caseload:

"certainly a lot of the folk I would manage would often go home and worry about cases or be very stressed by what's happened during that day or also in anticipation of what's going to happen the following day, will be worried and be anxious and um but I think there's no doubt that" - Interview 4

"maybe people can't praise the work we're doing in case around the corner there's going to be another child death and their going to look silly having done so" - Interview 6

As discussed earlier in the literature review, there is a significant degree of research that discusses anxiety and social workers, potentially running the risk of undermining good practice (Ruch & Murray, 2011; Waterhouse & McGhee, 2009; Whittaker, 2011; Ferguson, 2014; Walker, 2011; Ferguson,

2005; Curtis et al., 2010; Laming, 2009). What has emerged here is how the relationship between anxiety and shame, as a result of the various components of the profession that contribute to these emotions, and others, is still poorly understood.

5.6 - Other Emotions and Feelings

While analysing the interviews, there were other elements of the lived experience of a child and family social worker that emerged. The primary experience brought up by the participants, as also touched on in the discussion on interpersonal justice (Section 4.5.2), were instances of bullying behaviour occurring within the workplace, either by personal experience or hearing of other instances from colleagues. Bullying within the social work profession has been discussed and reviewed by others and is recognised as having a significant impact on social work practitioners (Winstanley & Hales, 2014; Collins, 2001; Whitaker, 2012; BASW, 2012; van Heugten, 2009). So for instances of bullying to emerge within the discussion with these particular practitioners was not surprising.

One respondent had a very negative experience with a supervisor that eventually involved other social workers, a manager and the human resources department. She described a severe abuse of power and professional misconduct and also a lack of empathy and a significant amount of days taken away from the office. The respondent was open about the

situation and described a caring manager she was able to confide in and she was content with how the situation was dealt with:

“I don't think he fully understood it, but he was open to that, and he did say at one point you know in many ways, it's almost been a very abusive situation you felt very powerless and helpless and you know it's important for you to know that this is over you know, and we were saying but we're concerned that she's going to go to the media or she's going to you know make false allegations, and he was saying but she can't, and these are the reasons why and so, I think he was very good, I think we were well looked after there and I think he, he didn't need to meet with us afterwards but he did, and you know he was very much like you need to move on from this, we do need to move on and put this behind us, but he was also kind of you know I will give you support and how are you feeling, which I think is pretty good management” - Interview 2

However, this respondent has also described a lack of confidence as a result of this experience and she was seeking external assistance in order to address some of the emotions that emerged as a result.

Eight other respondents also described hearing about instances of bullying but had not experienced it personally. As some of the respondents remarked, when groups of people get together in high stress situations, there are bound to be conflicts. If these conflicts cross into the territory of bullying or abusive situations, then there needs to be special attention to not only the victims of the behaviour, but also the perpetrator:

“a lot of people get away with some really awful behaviour, like really bullying and aggressive behaviour” - Interview 1

“No there are instances, nothing's perfect but I wouldn't be able to speak to that, I've not been subjected to anything like that myself, or else I've just been that thick I've not noticed it, ehm but no obviously, you're talking about people, personalities, you cannot possibly have got great relationships with everybody in the world, it doesn't happen

and I think because you've got some people, you've got some people who've been around years and years, you've got other people that are newly qualified, so you've got very different, not necessarily power, but different levels of confidence” - Interview 15

Perhaps these instances of bullying are a result of personality differences, but they could also be a result of mismanagement of not being fully aware of the sheer mix and volume of emotions the social work practitioner may be experiencing. As evidenced within this thesis, the relationship between a social worker and the work that they do is a complex one that is not only impacted by the coordination and involvement of other professionals, assessing and intervening to address the needs of their clients (Hood, 2014), but also by the potential inner struggle of self and how they manage their stress levels. If that self-awareness and capacity to execute self-protection, i.e. be aware when they are stressed, and liable to make poor decisions, is not present, the result could be distressing and/or disastrous for those with whom the practitioner is in contact.

5.7 - Reflections

5.7.1 - As a PhD Student and early researcher

It is difficult to discuss and write about emotions without reflecting on your own emotions and the role they have had in various situations. Reflexivity is an emotional cognitive process that involves trying to understand your positionality and emotions (Holmes et al., 2010; Wilinska, 2014). This is especially true as a PhD student and early researcher and the role of shame, anxiety and guilt inherently play within that process. Holmes et al. (2010) also advise that in order to interpret emotions, we need to engage with the

emotions, so in order to assist in the interpretation of shame, anxiety and guilt, I need to engage with my own experience of those emotions during this experience.

Shame was evident within the process of this research in a variety of ways. While in the role of a PhD student, there are sacrifices made in order to focus on the tasks that need to be completed. Whether it is course work, the mental struggles, writing, or meetings with supervisors, there is always something you think you 'should' be doing. Within the first year of the PhD, I rarely gave myself a full weekend off for fear that I would fall behind somehow, feeling bad on the days that I did not get as much done as I had set out to do. The other side to this equation of course is that you also feel guilty for turning down social invitations and sacrificing a personal life. You are constantly questioning yourself as to whether or not you are doing the right thing, thinking the right thing, or able to complete a PhD at all. This shame and guilt spiral is difficult to get out of without a proper supervision and support network, which thankfully I had and I was able to ease up on myself and enjoy the time that I was not working on my PhD and recognising it as important as the time I was working on my PhD. However, these thinking patterns would re-emerge later on in the process.

While conducting the interviews, shame emerged as I realised after an interview that I should have asked more, or different, follow-up questions. Again, the questioning of whether I am good enough emerged, and if this is

all really worth it. However, I was then able to remind myself of how this is a learning process for everyone. It was imperative to remember that although I am doing a PhD to fill a gap in knowledge, I am also continuing to fill the gaps in myself. I was able to overcome the feelings of shame and switch them to pride as I reflect on how much I have grown, not only as a researcher, but as an individual and as a social worker.

The anxiety and the guilt went hand in hand with the shame that was felt, and are also still present through the process. There is a constant anxiety of 'will this thesis be enough', as an early academic, will I be able to get publications out of it and eventually a job? How much more of my personal life, and possible health, will be sacrificed throughout this process? And of course there is the anxiety that comes with the knowledge that a viva is in the future and will I be able to handle the critique? I have always been someone that has been able to articulate my thoughts more efficiently on paper than I have by oral presentation, however, this is something I know I have to be able to demonstrate as part of the process of being a PhD student and becoming an academic researcher. However, knowing that there are resources and exercises I can do to assist me within this process eases some of those anxieties, as well as reminding myself that it is all part of the process and I am not alone in this.

Part of what makes a PhD so challenging is the isolation that comes along with it, by reaching out and ensuring that I placed the PhD in the wider

context of my life and what I want to achieve ensured that I maintained a balanced outlook.

The other interesting aspect is that by researching shame, anxiety and guilt, these emotions also spurred reflections on other times in my life that I have felt these emotions. This not only reiterated the long lasting effects these experiences and emotions can have, as there were days I felt emotionally exhausted after all this reflection, but also the importance of bringing it out more into the open as talking about these experiences can put things into perspective and move the feelings to a more positive place.

5.7.2 - As a Social Worker

As a trained social worker who has experience with child and family work, I was able to empathise with the respondents and their accounts of shame, anxiety and guilt in a way that I had not been able to recognise earlier on in my career. Listening to their experiences brought up memories of my own that coincided with what they were saying. This added an interesting dimension on the data collection and further analysis of the data. My inner voice said “I know exactly what they mean” at least once during each interview. I was also able to imagine myself answering the questions during the interview and being acutely aware as to the tone of voice and emotions I would experience were the roles reversed. I believe this heightened my awareness of how to code and analyse the emotions that emerged.

I was able to recall days when I was working with clients and wondering about my role and actions. There were conflicts with what I had been trained as a social worker to do, and what I was then doing in that particular case. Intimate conversations that you have with clients you may not even have with your own family cause you to reflect on the role of the social worker, yet also on your own upbringing and family dynamics. There is also the added dynamic that as a trained social worker, there is the pressure to wearing your social work 'hat' even on days that you are not working. Due to the fact that the social work values are so closely aligned with my own values, it is difficult to turn off at the end of the day and not feel responsible for some social ill that may be present in your life out with work.

I was also able to relate to the accounts of the respondents feeling bullied by social work supervisors as I also experienced this. I have been spoken to in a negative and belittling manner that contributed to the constant questioning of my capabilities and intelligence. This was especially difficult as a newly migrated worker that was not from the UK and did not receive adequate training as an agency social worker. I can relate well to being in tears in the office or in the car ride home at the end of the day, as the respondents discussed, and I consider myself a fairly resilient individual, but UK social work practice was an environment that put me to the test on all levels. I perceived a different level of pressure that definitely made it difficult to come forward if I ever felt overburdened or unable to take on a task. I am now able to reflect on the extent of my surface acting. It is incredibly difficult to say no

to a supervisor in a high stress situation, when you know that will impact someone else's case load and cause others to perceive you as incapable.

5.8 - Conclusion

This chapter is a review of the literature and analysis that focusses on the emotional component of being a child and family social work that emerged throughout the interviews. Throughout the interview process, emotions emerged as an essential aspect to spend more time analysing as they allowed a deeper insight as to the lived experience of the responding social workers. The emotions of shame, guilt and anxiety were chosen as they are closely associated with their responses to the more factual questions contained in the organisational justice framework. These emotions were also chosen as they relate to how the respondents feel about themselves and their value base, a strong motivator for those entering the social work profession. In this, the organisational justice lens was pivotal in gaining access to the unhidden stories and lived experience of child and family social workers.

Overall, it can be seen that a variety of emotions are evident in the lives of child and family social workers. This was evident by taking a closer look at their responses and listening to their tone of voice when responding during the interview. **Shame** as the most prevalent emotion brought forth the complex relationship that social workers have with themselves, the profession and the wider communities they are involved with. Feelings of

inadequacy and heightened self-consciousness were found throughout the interviews that needed to be addressed.

The same can be said for the emotions of **guilt** and **anxiety**, it would not have done justice to the respondents' accounts to ignore these feelings. Although evident in the literature review that social workers experience these emotions, addressing them in this context allowed for them to emerge indirectly and discretely. This adds to the knowledge of their prevalence and to the importance of addressing them. These feelings are being described with examples from within and outside the organisation they work for, therefore helping to articulate their prevalence. This development has allowed further insight as to the multitude of influences on social workers from a variety of micro and macro level sources, internal and external.

Anxiety occurs before an action, followed by potential guilt about the action, if an individual does not adequately work through the potential anxiety and guilt, shame could appear as a deeper response to the action and result in a repositioned sense of self in the profession and wider community. The importance of recognising this for a child and family social worker is now becoming evident. The emotional component of the lived experience of a child protection and family social worker is complex and not fully understood. What emerged from the interviews was the significance of the dilemma between professional responsibility and being mindful of one's own emotional health.

The second research question focused on the emotional lived experience of social workers. Through the emergence of these emotions, and others that may be present, the results suggest there are assumptions about the social work profession that need to be addressed. The assumption that social work is being conducted in a rational environment by rational beings can be problematised by this study because my research has exposed the complex external and internal influences and functions that are at play in the daily lives of child and family social workers, but especially those engaged in child protection work. The struggle to resolve these pressures and maintain resilience in the face of criticism and unhelpful negative comparisons from society, other professionals and sometimes their own employer, together will internally generate emotions that lead to a lack of worth and make for a considerable burden. As a result of this secondary analysis, this is an area that requires further insight and investigation. Results from this research suggest that there is a high unspoken level of emotional labour that occurs within the profession.

The next section, Chapter 6, will discuss the results of the research chapters in more detail by linking this research with other literature and research that has been conducted. This will provide further evidence of how the gap between the reality of social work and the perceptions of social work is manifested and can be viewed from a theoretical standpoint. This will also provide space to showcase this thesis's overall contribution to knowledge.

Following on, Chapter 7 will also discuss the implications this research has for social work practice, policy and education.

Chapter 6 - Discussion

6.1 - Introduction

The emotional lives of child and family social workers have emerged during the use of an organisational justice framework. An additional, deeper, understanding of day to day experiences began to emerge. In the two previous findings chapters, a discussion was had about perceptions of being valued, rewarded and recognised, as well as some of the emotions that are present within the work. The results frequently highlighted the complexity of the child and family social worker role and the need to recognise the emotions the social worker experiences. This emotional component of the lived experience of a child and family social worker was shown to be an under-explored dimension.

This chapter develops and expands upon the findings presented in the previous chapters by linking literature on the emotional component of social work and relating this to the overall discussion of organisational justice, emotions, how the profession may be perceived and how this may contribute to the lived experience of being a child and family social worker. As indicated, the link between emotions and social workers is emerging, as was seen with regards to students as well as those already qualified. Other services emerged as a part of this discussion, services that in a variety of ways engage with and seek to help people in need and distress, such as nursing, firefighting and policing are all receiving increased attention when it comes to the emotional impact of the job. The discussion will then flow into

how the social work profession can be deemed a 'dirty work' profession. This is related to the perceptions of social work that emerged within the results and the resulting broadly negative emotions the social workers feel. The shame and associated emotions that social workers experience will then be seen in a different light. The complex web of macro and micro influences on social workers that was briefly touched upon within the results, offers an insight as to just how difficult the balance is between managing the emotions involved in the work of child protection social work and performing to professional and ethical standards.

6.2 – Emotions, Organisational Justice and Social Work

As has been evident throughout this research, the fluid iterative nature of the research process has been a main feature of the process. This is what allowed emotions to emerge and subsequently the return to the literature in order to see what has been developed in this area. What has become confirmed, briefly touched on in the previous chapter, is that the investigation of emotions and the link to the social work profession is underdeveloped. That being said, it is picking up speed with publications, much like this research, recognising that the emotional component of being a social worker is missing and needs attention. By linking the emotion results with the organisational justice results we are able to get a more complete account of the lived experience of child and family social workers.

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) recently set out to answer the question of confidence and competence in children's social workers. The authors of this research, Martin et al. (2014), investigated how trained and prepared the social workers consider themselves to be in regards to child sexual abuse or child sexual exploitation. There were many similarities between the NSPCC (2014) research and the results from this research's organisational justice perspective. Specifically when considering the accounts discussed in section 4.2.2 and the importance of accessible and available training to the feelings of being valued by the social workers. Within the NSPCC (2014) report there was acknowledgement from the social workers that training could be more supported by their employers as well as the concern of distributive injustice as evidenced by social workers working excessive hours with no system for getting the time back. As also discussed in section 4.2.2, the regulation of time off has a direct impact on distributive justice and the overall experience of child and family social workers. There was also the mention that social workers rely more on their peer relationships for emotional support than the supervisor relationship, similar to that found here within the interpersonal justice frame of reference. Therefore, the NSPCC (2014) and the research in this thesis, when looked at within the context of organisational justice and emotions are both demonstrating layers of organisational justice and insight into the lived experience of child and family social workers.

What really stood out within the NSPCC (2014) report was how the respondents were also able to recognise the emotional component of being a social worker that was underlying their work. This is in slight contrast to the research I conducted as it was only after a focused analysis that the emotions were able to emerge as a central aspect of the respondents lived experience. The respondents in the NSPCC (2014) research were able to link the discussion of confidence, and lack of confidence, to many emotional and organisational factors or influences. Confidence appears to be diminished when there is ambiguity and uncertainty, two factors that are extremely prevalent within the child protection practice. Confidence can be enhanced by experience, skill and support, however if the emotions a social worker is experiencing are not addressed throughout a career, those elements will suffer. The NSPCC Report also discussed the specific case situations that can negatively impact the emotions of a social worker. Social workers have a highly developed level of empathy and the social workers quoted in the report would express how uncomfortable it was to witness the pain of children that are, for instance, involved in sexual abuse cases. There is also the added element of the heightened emotions of the involved family that can be overwhelming for the social worker, in other words, the human element of the job can be particularly emotionally demanding. Similarly to responses in section 4.2.4 discussing how the stress of the work was recognised, the social workers in the report stated that they felt too much attention and focus was given to the criminal aspect of the cases instead of the emotional impact on the children, families and practitioners, leaving the

workers, in this case, to emotionally detach and deal with the ramifications of the work on their own (Martin et al., 2014). Had this line of thought been further discussed, there was potential for the NSPCC (2014) social workers to also feel moments of shame, guilt and anxiety as discussed in Chapter 5. This expression could then be broadened out to the entire child protection social work process. In many cases, no matter the issue the family was referred for, the emotional dimensions for the workers is lacking recognition.

Williams (2015) has gone so far as to compare social workers with that of firefighters, developing what she deems the 'firefighter test'. This test is based on asking the question how would practices within an organisation change if social workers were treated like firefighters? There are different expectations for firefighters than there are social workers, even though both anticipate and are expected to take on professional risks. As has also been evidenced in this thesis, both professions expect to feel emotional pain and experience situations that are full of emotional hazards, such as described in Chapter 5, however firefighters get more elaborate training for the demands of the job. Williams (2015) goes on to explain how if social workers were treated like firefighters there would be training on emotional workplace hazards, proper mental health promotion and policies, regular time allocated for emotional risk assessments and more accountability for employers for the wellbeing of the employees. This seems to suggest a balance of organisational justice and understanding of the specifics of the child and family social worker role that is currently lacking as evidenced by the

respondents in this thesis. The 'firefighter test' suggested by Williams (2015) is meant to highlight the gaps in self-care, lack of recognition of the need for emotional safety and the importance of a healthy workplace. This 'firefighter test' has similar components to the organisational justice framework and may in fact be as significant as the framework in assessing the lived experience due to the highlighted similarities between firefighters and social workers, especially as they are also both classified as 'dirty work' professions as will be discussed further on in section 6.3. Williams (2015), as was also the case within this thesis, also refers to the status of the social work profession and how this negatively impacts on the individual practitioner on an emotional level. This thesis then has similar findings to other recent research that highlights various organisational and individual impacts on the social work professional and a need to continue this line of research in order to figure out how best to support and encourage best practice in current and upcoming social workers.

The research findings in this thesis provided insight into the role of perceptions from the wider community on social work practitioners as well as the wider profession. Warner (2015) has recently investigated this relationships by opening up the discussion about the role of emotional politics within social work and child protection practice. She argues that emotions such as anger, disgust and shame play a role in social work not only on a personal and subjective level, but are also generated collectively. Believing that emotions are embedded within the entire child protection

process and included in areas such as policy making, media stories, official documents, social work education and communities, Warner (2015) focuses on how emotions are reflected in the public sphere and can be seen as the driving force behind policy and practice systems. The work that Warner (2015) has provided is an important contribution towards the larger discussion of emotions and social work. This link, similar to that made within this thesis, is able to demonstrate that emotions, and how they are managed, are embedded in institutions as well as rooted within various political and cultural contexts. As her analysis came from a document review of serious case reviews and media reports, the experiences of social workers that are directly involved in the processes she describes are missing. As a result, the responding social workers in my study have been able to add further insight as to how these collective emotions are felt on the frontline of social work practice.

Another example of this new interest in the social worker experience is concerned specifically with emotions and shame. Gibson (2014), in a scoping study focusing on literature that involves social worker's experience of shame, has found that the potential impact of negative emotions on practice can include withdrawing from others, taking sick leave and feeling fearful of service users. This then manifests as a lack of trust and poor communication between social workers and their service users. Which, when looked at with an organisational justice lens would undoubtedly highlight similar results as were found in section 4.5 when discussing interpersonal justice. This reviews

aim was to summarise and disseminate findings in order to identify areas of future research regarding social workers experiences of shame. This thesis then contributes to this discussion as it has also found instances of shame experienced by child and family social workers and also recognises the need for further research in this area. This literature review continues to highlight many of the aspects of shame and emotions discussed within this dissertation in Chapter 5. A total of forty eight studies were considered within the final scoping exercise and Gibson (2014) categorised the experiences by three separate categories: 'overt shame', 'shame indicated' and 'a troubled conscience'. The sub themes under these categories are similar to the subsections that have been provided within this thesis (Chapter 5) in regards to social workers feeling devalued by other professionals and within their own organisation, as well as feeling ashamed of other social workers.

Gibson (2014) identified three studies that provided an indication that social workers were experiencing shame with themes relating to social workers struggling to cope and a fear of making a mistake. These results are closely aligned with the concerns voiced in this thesis (Chapter 5) and reiterate the need to further investigate the connection between shame and social work. Gibson (2014) also echoes results found in this thesis by stating that shame experiences remain largely hidden and there is a link to be further explored as to how the organisation social workers work within plays a role in some of these shame-based experiences. The power structures and relationships within the organisation as well as between professions was identified as

factors that contribute to the expectations that may lead to a sense of social workers feeling under- or devalued. Gibson's recent review of the literature has enforced the lack of attention on shame as an emotion involved within social work practice, especially within child and family social work. Gibson (2014) acknowledges his review was quite general and more focused research on shame within different social work contexts is warranted. Identifying shame experienced by child and family social workers in this thesis therefore provides a platform from which to launch a further understanding of the relationship between shame and social work. In addition to the practice-based discussion of emotions, the literature on social work education has also begun to develop an awareness of the importance of emotions.

6.2.1 - Emotions and Organisations

What is interesting is that the previously discussed NSPCC Report (2014) found the factors affecting morale tended to be of the organisational nature as opposed to the nature of the casework the child and family social workers, dealing specifically with sexual abuse cases, attended to. In the research that was conducted for this dissertation, it does not seem to be as clear as a distinction. There are certainly organisational factors that do not help social workers deal with the emotions of the work, such as those discussed in Chapter 4, however there are many more influences at play other than organisational factors. Other influences such as those discussed in Chapter 5 and within this section, range from inner struggles to wider societal

perceptions of the work that child and family social workers do, all have an impact on morale. Part of what makes a clear distinction between the organisational factors and external factors difficult is the type of emotions that social workers experience and their working in an organisational culture that may not be emotionally sensitive. There may be unspoken beliefs about the expression of emotion that are embedded within the organisation. This tension between organisations and emotions is best seen from the perspective of Ashforth and Kreiner (2002) and their discussion on normalising emotions in organisations.

Looking at how emotions are normalised in organisations is very similar to the emotion management literature that was discussed in the previous chapter. However in this case it is the work that an organisation does as opposed to the employee. Ashforth and Kreiner (2002) believe that normalising emotions is a way of organisations regulating unwanted emotions, especially those that are the type to be socially undesirable because of their intensity. Organisations would want to regulate emotions because emotionality is seen as the antithesis of rationality, the value that underlies the majority of organisations. Ashforth and Kreiner (2002) believe there are four ways to normalise emotions: diffusing, reframing, adaptation and ritualism. In other words, an organisation can use these tools to justify and overlook the emotions that an employee may be experiencing. Put in the context of the child and family social worker, this can be damaging to their well-being and ability to be the emotionally resilient worker they need to be. If

the social workers are desensitised (adaptation) or if their emotions are reframed within the workplace in a way that lessen the significance of those emotions, this will only make it more difficult for the social workers to come forward should they feel overwhelmed, thus feeding into the shame-shame loop discussed in Chapter 5. Therefore, rather than the negative emotion, such as shame, being resolved, it is only heightened as the individual worker feels alone in their situation. This is what is meant by the distinction between emotions and social work being more than just organisational factors and the type of work being done. The perception of not only the profession of social work but also the perception of emotions are highly intertwined and influence each other far more than I thought when beginning this particular piece of research. However, there are still missing elements to this discussion that can be included and these will now be addressed.

6.3 - Social Work as 'Dirty Work'

There is a perception of social work from the community, the larger society, and even the social workers themselves that conflicts with the values that one may enter the profession with. There were instances of shame, guilt, anxiety and uncertainty that were woven throughout the interviews. The social workers described feeling belittled from other professions and a conflicting sense of professional identity that comes from wanting to help others but not being able to due to constraints of the organisation. By revisiting the literature it is now becoming apparent that these emotions and perceptions are the symptoms of a much wider issue. Looking at the

literature of 'dirty work' has provided a possible context and link for the situation this research has revealed.

The term 'dirty work' refers to occupations that are likely to be perceived as disgusting, objectionable or degrading. Society tends to delegate dirty work to groups who act as agents on society's behalf and therefore these groups are stigmatised (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Baran et al., 2012). Some dirty-work professions are of relatively low prestige, such as a correctional officer or prison guard, while others are of high prestige such as a firefighter or perhaps a nurse. People who engage in dirty work are aware of the stigma associated with what they do and this will be a component of their professional and personal identity (Baran et al., 2012). Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) also elaborated on the concept by adding that the tasks are physically, socially or morally tainted. Physical taint occurs when an occupation is associated with garbage, death or dangerous conditions; social taint involves regular contact with people or groups that are themselves stigmatised and moral taint occurs when the occupation is regarded as sinful or deceptive. The boundaries between the different dimensions are blurred and many occupations may be tainted by more than one dimension. Of course it is important to recognise the social construction of the term 'dirty' as it is based on standards of cleanliness and purity (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). This social construction goes back generations and can be linked to the influential role of the church during the formation of many of these professions as touched on in the literature review (Chapter 2). Equating

cleanliness with good behaviour and dirtiness with unacceptable behaviour has resulted in moral overtones that are highly infiltrated within our wider discourse (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Ashforth et al., 2007).

Looking at the different dimensions of dirty work, we are able to see how social work, especially child protection social work, can fit within the definition of dirty work. Social work strongly associates with the social taint component as there is contact with groups that are stigmatised. The physical taint component links to social work as at times, especially as evidenced by the responses from the social workers in this research, where the job is dangerous and involves being in physical spaces that one may define as dirty. The act of crossing physical boundaries that regular members of the public would not cross, such as the bedroom or bathroom, or even the smells and dirt surrounding the notion of disorder, can also be met with hostility and resistance. This only reiterates the association physical space can have with dirty work (Ferguson, 2009; Ferguson, 2005). The association with the moral taint dimension comes from the public perceptions of social work as well as from the practitioners' own internal moral compass. Moral concerns were a driving force in terms of the development of the social work profession (Bisman, 2004). As the respondents within this research were able to attest to, and what I have also experienced, the profession is intrusive at times and confrontational. There are potentially difficult conversations that need to be had within social work that may challenge certain societal values. For example, when assessing parenting skills and meeting the children's needs,

social workers have to have conversations involving intimate topics such as physical care, family safety, any substance abuse concerns and the mental and physical health of the parent (Choate & Engstrom, 2014). For the general public and indeed the clients, these potentially intrusive conversations could be deemed 'dirty work'.

An added dimension of dirty work has recently been suggested by Rivera (2014) and this strongly associates with social work. Rivera's (2014) research with US border control employees has allowed her to add to the understanding of emotional labour and dirty work by suggesting that emotional labour is in fact emotionally tainted. Emotional taint is characterised by performances of emotion, whether real or fake that are viewed as inappropriate, excessive or causing the person to subject themselves to 'difficult' feelings (p21). Rivera (2014) goes on to explain that these performances are either organisationally mandated or socially constructed as normal for the profession. As a result the profession may be stigmatised due to the social, physical or moral taint, but also when the professional displays an emotion that the public may deem 'dirty'. The wider public then may be associating with the difficult emotions involved when stating they have trouble understanding the role of a child and family social worker and say they could not do that job.

So it is now possible to see how viewing social work as dirty work could explain some of those deeper emotions discussed in the previous chapter, it

would seem appropriate to make the assumption that this would also cause a negative association in relation to the overall professional identity of social workers. Social identity theory states that people draw upon their occupational identity as part of their overall social identity (Baran et al., 2012). With this in mind, as many social workers enter the profession because their personal values lie so close to the professional values, it would seem that social workers would have a difficult time constructing a positive sense of self or have a sense of feeling valued. However, Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) have found just the opposite. They have found that the stigma associated with this dirtiness actually fosters a strong occupational subgroup culture. This was especially true at least in the workplace. This was demonstrated within my own particular research where many of the social workers displayed an acknowledgement of the 'black humour' that infiltrates the profession. Martin et al. (2004) also describe social workers using humour as a reaction to fear or discomfort, the laughter may be of the 'gallows' kind, when people laugh at things most would not consider funny. Kangashariu and Nikko (2009) discuss laughter being used to release repressed emotion such as tension or stress and that it can occur simultaneously as shame or embarrassment. In this case, laughter could be a sign of the awareness of the 'dirtiness' involved with the work and the social workers are using laughter as a coping mechanism.

We can then speculate then that the values of the social work profession, and the importance placed on relationships, would then act as a protection

mechanism against the stigma that the profession faces. This subgroup culture of social workers in the local authority is what provides the necessary social resources for the individual workers to thrive. This is evident through the responses of the social workers when they stated that their peer group is what assists them the most in dealing with the day to day stresses work.

However, although there may be a strong subgroup culture within a local authority, by using the lens of dirty work we can also now start to gain insight as to how a social worker may subconsciously internalise these various dimensions of 'dirtiness'. This may result in the feelings of shame perceived by not only oneself, but also the wider community that were discussed by the respondents in this research.

6.4 - Dirty Work and Shame

In the previous chapter, shame was defined and described as an emotion that involves the social self being threatened (Chao et al., 2011). Shame is known as an emotion that is a result of the feeling of being shunned and related to what is socially undesired (Teroni & Deonna, 2008). As such, shame can be seen as the fear of disconnection, the fear that something that has been done or failed to do, will make us unworthy and not valued (Brown, 2012). Brown (2012) believes that we are hardwired to connection and belonging and the disconnect we feel when we do not feel valued, loved, or are flawed in some way is where shame emerges. This is where the crossing

over of dirty work and shame emerges as a central point to view the current state of child protection social work.

Dirty work and shame both relate to moral standards that permeate throughout society. Individuals have strong reactions to actions that go against their core values and these reactions may manifest in the perceiving of an action as shameful or dirty. Dirt symbolises what society deems as shameful and is usually associated with something that should be avoided or removed (Dick, 2005). However, if we can associate professions such as social work, police work or border security employees as 'dirty' then we can also see how these are needed professions that cannot be removed, but instead are under intense scrutiny and subject to rules that other professions, deemed 'clean', may not be. There are clear boundaries that surround beliefs operating to produce these rules and transgression of these boundaries can be seen as a threat to moral order (Dick, 2005). Therefore, if an individual is working in a profession that is deemed 'dirty', going against the moral order and operating at the boundaries of society, the risk to their perception of self is that of an underlying feeling of shame.

The pain and discomfort the responding social workers described as infiltrating their practice seems to be emerging enough to consider the culture of child protection social work as a shame-prone culture (Brown, 2012). There are enough social workers struggling with the issue of worthiness and being valued by not only their local authority but within the public's eye, and

this has, it is suggested, taken hold in the culture of social work. This has emerged within this research as well as in the discussion that Walker (2011) has when he states that social work is vulnerable to becoming stuck in a shame-shame loop. As seen in Chapter 5, the respondents felt shame in relation to their sense of self, within the profession and other professionals, as well as shame being a key component to the relationship social work has with the wider public. If we are using the work of Brown (2012) to help shape our understanding of shame and being valued, then there is a deep rooted sense of not being valued that the respondents are experiencing. This is evidenced by how this was expressed throughout the interviews although it was not an explicit part of the interview schedule.

By accessing and analysing the emotional component of the interviews of the responding child and family social workers, a deeper understanding of the lived experience of these social workers has emerged. Exploring those emotions has also led us to a richer understanding of the lived experience of child and family social workers and, it is suggested, set it within a wider domain of dirty work.

6.5 – Conclusion

This chapter placed the results of interviewing seventeen Scottish child and family social workers into a wider context. The key themes that emerged were the under explored aspect of the emotional content of being a social work, the various relationships with the public and professional perceptions

of social work and how these themes impact on the day to day working lives of child and family social workers. What began as an interest in how these social workers feel they are treated and valued by their employer grew into a discussion wider than originally thought. There is broad acknowledgement that the role of a child and family social worker performing child protection duties is complex and stressful. This discussion, on the growing interest in the emotional lives of social workers and the dimension of 'dirty work', provides a further link as to the experiences the respondents were describing and how the lived experiences of child and family social workers can be understood. However, it can now be seen that it is also complex due to overarching societal discourses which are fertile grounds for negativity and the internalisation of the latter, and one's own perception of self and self-worth. The ability of an originally quantitative research method, used primarily in the corporate field, to allow such further insight into social work was unexpected and in a way unprecedented. Utilising the organisational justice framework in this way opens up the possibilities for future research and analysis in a variety of fields. The next chapter will further discuss the implications of this research and potential for future research.

Chapter 7 – Conclusions

7.1 – Introduction

This thesis has undertaken an investigation to the lived experience of child and family social workers in order to explore issues such as low morale that were being reported by social workers and academics. The implications for this research are wide spread and can be thought of in a variety of ways, either taking the organisational justice framework as the main focus, or the emotional component of the lived experience of social workers as the focus. As the main theme throughout the research is the experience of social workers, that is where the attention will be centred. As the social work profession is such a practical, hands on profession it is important to look at the findings from different angles. Especially as encouraging and supporting social workers that are resilient and stress resistance will involve a multi-level approach involving higher education as well as the workforce. Therefore, it is important to look at the implications from an educational standpoint, practice perspective and the way the research can be integrated with policy.

This chapter will begin with a return to the research questions and discuss how the findings have addressed these questions. There follows an outline of how this research has provided an original contribution to knowledge and the implications for the social work profession. Next will be a reflection on the journey of completing this research as well as the limitations. Future research and concluding remarks complete this chapter.

7.2 - Key Findings

As a review, there were three specific research questions in the construction of this thesis. Two of those research questions focused more specifically on the organisational justice framework and one question developed throughout the research process and involved looking at the emotions involved with the day to day experience of a child and family social worker. Below are the three questions followed by a summary as to how the thesis has addressed them:

- o Methodologically, how does the organisational justice framework provide insight into the day to day experience of child and family social workers?
- o What does this tell us about the way child and family social workers experience their working life?
- o What might be the dominant emotions in the lived experience of a 21st century child and family social worker? and what are their origins and influences?

7.2.1 - The Methodological Insight of the Organisational Justice Framework

Methodologically, changing the format of the organisational justice framework to a qualitative tool encouraged social workers to discuss elements of their working lives they would not have had the opportunity to had the tool been used quantitatively. The framework provided awareness as to not only how social work practitioners perceive their pay, recognition, level of

communication or relationships within the workplace, but allowed for a reflection and exploration of aspects of their entire work experience. This research has therefore also provided some insight into a potential flaws to the organisational justice framework that will be discussed in more detail in section 7.3.

7.2.2 - The Organisational Justice Framework and the Lived Experience

The organisational justice framework tells us that the social workers whom I interviewed felt overlooked within their organisations. The social workers also felt undervalued and placed a high level of importance on the relationships within the workplace and how they are treated by other professionals as well as by their clients. There was an element of enjoying the role they have and the work they do with children and families, however an underlying feeling about not feeling as supported as they would like to be, was woven throughout the responses. This is echoed within many of the recent surveys of the workforce, however this research has allowed a further, deeper, glimpse into the various elements where dissatisfaction is manifested.

7.2.3 - Emotions and the Lived Experience

Some of the negative emotions the social workers hold, emerged strongly as a result of enquiring into their lived experience. Emotions of shame, guilt and anxiety were present throughout the interviews. Undoubtedly there are

additional positive emotions that exist within the day to day work experience of a child and family social worker, however these are the three that emerged unbidden and unsought for within this research. As such, what can be deduced is that they are the more prominent emotions these social workers feel on a more regular basis. The collective emotional experience within all aspects of the child and family social work profession, from the political discussions to the institutional contexts, is highlighting how emotions are embedded throughout the entire social work, specifically child protection, process. This discussion also revealed how research on the student social worker experience is also maintaining that emotions and social work is an under explored area of focus. Addressing the emotions involved with the lived experience of social workers also provided room for a discussion regarding the link between social work and dirty work, and how wider cultural and political discourses are negatively impacting the day to day experiences of child and family social workers.

Further insight as to how the research provides an overall contribution to knowledge will now be reviewed.

7.3 – The Contribution to Knowledge

This research has been successful in its use of the organisational justice lens. The findings contribute greater knowledge to our understanding of the day to day experiences of social workers. They also provide insight as to the emotional content of the lived experience of child and family social workers.

The results of these interviews and subsequent analyses suggest contributions to knowledge in three areas:

7.3.1 – Methodological Knowledge

This research has contributed to the organisational justice literature and discussion by highlighting how little attention is paid to emotion when contemplating organisational justice. It is now evident to see how the qualitative use of the organisational justice framework has allowed further insight to employees' perceptions and understanding of their day to day experience. The organisational justice framework, regardless of the profession examined, assumes a sense of rationality from the respondents, whereas there may be far more complex issues and realities influencing perceptions and missed by the organisational justice approach. Whilst there is research linking personality constructs with organisational justice (Shi et al., 2009), the findings in this dissertation suggests there are also emotions evident that will influence perceptions of organisational justice and thus restrict an overall insight into employee perceptions.

Using the organisational justice research method also provided a 'back door' into accessing emotions that individuals may not be readily able to discuss or acknowledge. Therefore, reiterated, it is important to think creatively as to how to access difficult subject matters in a way that is comfortable for the respondents. Not by deceiving the respondents, but by acknowledging there

may be more than one way to render up a much fuller account of the working lives of individuals.

7.3.2 – Conceptual Knowledge

We have learned more about emotions in professional life and the organisational justice framework has assisted in the facilitation of that explanation. With this comes the understanding of how emotions will interact with people's perceptions of organisational justice. Organisational justice is an important tool to utilise, however it is now evident that it may not best be used in isolation. With Karesek (1979) believing that lack of control adversely impacts an employee's ability to meet job demands, we can now also see how negative or unhelpful emotions will also similarly impact perception of control and subsequently constrict the necessary abilities needed for both the workplace and the given activities of the employee.

The emotions that emerged in the interviews were found to be particularly the negative ones of shame, guilt and anxiety. The discussion linking these and social work to 'dirty work' has also contributed depth to our understanding as to some of the other more macro influences and the mix of public and social workers' perceptions of social work. As a result of this research there is now a deeper explanation of how social worker morale is formed.

7.3.3. – Applied Knowledge

The use of the organisational justice framework from a qualitative perspective, and with a profession that is heavily involved in emotional labour, has not only allowed us to understand social work in particular but also professional work more generally. It is now possible to apply the framework and compare the results from this research to other professional fields and to the organisational behaviour literature. Further contributions will be covered in the next section, as more practical applications of this research will be discussed. However, what is now evident is that the discourse surrounding internal and external perceptions, in any field, compared to the reality of the work environment, can now be further examined in a more critical manner.

7.4 - Practical Implications Arising From the Research

7.4.1 – Implications for Training and Education of Social Workers

Education is the entry point for all potential social workers and an essential avenue for bringing more awareness to the specific nature of the role. It is important for students to recognise how various emotions will be involved in doing the job and that they are aware as to the importance of emotional resilience and intelligence. A question worth considering would be whether we should be interviewing students with an eye on how an individual is able to manage their emotions. Even if the interview proves to be a high stress situation for a student, the process might still allow insight as to how prepared they are and how best to foster the emotional growth that will

inevitably occur as a result of participating in the course. Emotions are ever-present throughout social work training and it is becoming evident they need to be acknowledged and highlighted for consideration by students. Therefore it is also worth considering a more formal integration of the emotional lived experience within a degree. There could be the development of a module focused on emotions as well as the addition of a more integrated discussion on the public and private perceptions of the role they are about to take on. This will allow for a greater understanding of the role and the origins, routes and causes of the emotions they experience are centred. Identifying these emotions could result in students being better able to address them and become more emotionally intelligent and thus be better prepared for the difficulties of practice both as students on placement and as newly qualified social workers.

What also needs to be considered when discussing the implications of this research regarding education, is the importance of emotions within research. This research has highlighted the fact that emotions are always present and in order for students to accept their own emotions, researchers and academics must lead by example and also discuss their emotions involved in the research process. This can be thought of within the social work context as well as within any context that involves employee perceptions. The emotional lived experience of any employee is an important consideration for a human resources department or organisational behaviour research. In short, this will allow for a more complete contribution to the wellbeing

agenda. This would also feed back into the organisational justice framework as employees will then feel an increased sense of contribution towards the organisation if they are involved in the discussion as to how to increase a sense of wellbeing within the workplace.

Hopefully, as a result of this research academics in a variety of professions and fields can now see the benefits of qualitative using the organisational justice framework to open up a more in-depth and vital discussion.

7.4.2 – Implications for Practice

As social work is an applied discipline it is essential to evaluate how this research will impact those that are already in the field in addition to those about to enter. This can be thought of from a variety of angles such as looking at how social workers are practicing and how they are supported in their practice. Supervision is just one of those options

The importance of supervision cannot be underestimated however there is more to be done than adding an emotional check in within the designated supervision time. The conversation surrounding emotions needs to be integrated at every level within the agency. This conversation needs to understand that the relationship with work stress is influenced by the work context as well as personal attributes (Collins, 2015). An emotionally attuned organisation ideally would acknowledge the culture of anxiety, shame and stress that exists within the workplace. By normalising these aspects of the

work, the facilitation of healthy expressions of these emotions can occur and the organisational infrastructure can begin reflect this environment. Management teams need to be increasingly aware of how emotions affect their decisions and role as well as those that are on the front line. Team meetings can be structured as a safe place to express emotions in addition to one on one supervision time and team away days and agency specific training can also involve elements of the emotions social workers deals with. A change in mentality from within, to that of ensuring the workplace subscribes not just to a 'learning organisation', but as an emotionally attuned organisation, would be beneficial for frontline workers as well as supervisors and management.

An increase in healthy discussions and processes, that would allow open conversations to be had around emotions and struggles, could be part of an organisational system that also leads to an increased feeling of confidence and empowerment for the child and family social workers (Morrison, 1997). Control, or 'mastery' over events in one's work is associated with resilience and well-being, therefore it is essential that social workers have an increased sense of autonomy and feel confident in the work they are doing (Collins, 2015). This can be integrated in not only the training they receive at school, but also ensuring there is ample time throughout their career to specialise, shadow those that are already well-recognised, and create and maintain a strong sense of self and self-worth. Collins (2015) found that social workers with positive self-beliefs were able to maintain the motivation necessary to

work towards successful outcomes, even though they may be complex and demanding.

More work also needs to be done to create a harmonious relationship with social workers and the wider local authority as well as the wider community. This means an increased level of transparency and focused attention on the relationship with the media should be contemplated. In order for social workers to be able to counterbalance the internal feelings of shame and guilt they may experience, they need to know there is support for them from a variety of sources. Social workers need to develop a voice that accentuates pride, self-belief and self-worth in the manner that other professions involved in so called 'dirty work' have achieved.

7.4.3 – Implications for Policy

The policy implications for this research are not as clear as there cannot be a governmental policy that focusses on identifying and managing the emotions of individuals. However, what can be addressed are the recommendations by social work associations, such as the Scottish Association of Social Workers (SASW), a subsection of the British Association of Social Workers (BASW). These guidelines have an overarching reach on not only practicing social workers, but also student social workers and the social work curriculum. By ensuring the guidelines found in the Codes of Practice have emotions integrated in the appropriate sections, there can be an understanding and

acceptance of the importance of these concerns for not only social workers that are child protection practitioners, but all social workers.

What also needs to be addressed here though is the recent proclamation by Prime Minister David Cameron regarding social workers receiving up to a five year prison sentence for 'failing to protect children' (Wintour, 2015). David Cameron believes that this will ensure professionals will do the jobs they are hired to do. This mentality however could feed into the shame-shame loop discussed earlier and may inhibit social workers and other professionals from doing the work they do. If social workers are afraid they will be held criminally responsible for missing a case, the shame, guilt and anxiety that may go hand in hand with such fear could in fact harm their ability to have the mindset necessary to prevent any failings. As a result, the burnout rate could potentially be higher and the morale could be further lowered.

The mindset exemplified by Cameron's remark can easily feed into the blame culture that already exists and is the opposite of what the profession needs in order to have good social workers. Any policy that is developed needs to focus on supporting social workers, not criminalising them.

7.5 – Reflections

Reflecting on my own emotions and experiences as a child and family social worker with child protection responsibilities throughout this process was integral and eye-opening. Not only did it provide insight into the lived

experience of the responding social workers but also led to growth and insight into my own experiences as a researcher on top of a social worker. Observing the emotions and expressions of the responding social workers and what appeared to be a struggle with how to express them has only furthered my interest in this area. These insights have since been integrated into my daily life as well as my teaching new student social workers and nurses in order to better prepare them for life outside of the classroom. Ensuring that social workers are adequately understood and supported to do the work they do has now become a driving force for future research interests and curriculum development.

My intentions were to interview 20 social workers and this proved to be a challenge due to various constraints so there is the question as to whether an adequate sample has been achieved. However, due to the integration of other literature as well as reflecting on my own experiences and maintaining relationships with front line social workers I continue to hear stories that are threaded with the emotions that have been found within this research. I therefore believe it is safe to say these emotions and concerns are widespread throughout the profession.

The journey of completing a doctoral thesis was not only a process of reflection and contextualising my work as a child and family social worker. As important, it was the training and development of becoming an academic researcher, an identity that is still in the beginning phases. Throughout the

first few years of this process, I identified more strongly as a student, as a facilitator and a practitioner. Only within the last few months has the role of researcher felt like it has a place beside the other roles I play in my life. It has only been recently that I have been able to recognise that I have now contributed knowledge to the wider academic and practitioner social work community. A large part of the student experience is critiquing every detail and questioning yourself as to whether this academic community is a place you want to belong, it is not until you see the final product that a full recognition of the impact it has had on yourself and others emerges. The doctoral student experience is akin to having blinders on to anything outside of your particular research and place within the university. It was only until I came face to face with what to do after the completion of the dissertation that I became to recognise the skills and tools I had acquired over the past four years. This reflection also allowed for a more objective and almost macro-level view of the doctoral process as a training ground for personal and professional development.

7.6 - Limitations and Future Research

There are ways this research could be approached that were not able to be utilised within the particular time span of this dissertation. One way, that would involve examining in more detail the demographics of the respondents, would be a gendered approach. Analysing the results in this way, could lead to a discussion about the lived experience as a male social worker versus a female social worker, a discussion that does not seem to be had on a regular

basis. This could also allow for further insight into whether the emotions expressed are influenced by gender in addition to the influences that were already discussed in Chapter 5. This would fall closely in line with the feminist ethics of care as touched on in section 3.9.2. By analysing the data from a feminist model, an array of additional stories, experiences and emotions could emerge from the data that would also provide rich detail as to the lived experience of child and family social workers.

Yet another way these results could have been guided towards and analysed, and could be in the future with some additional interview questions, would be to further investigate the previous experiences of the respondents. This may also include a discussion around the age of the respondents and what experiences have influenced them to have the perceptions of organisational justice and their workplace or role as a social worker. This could lead to discussions about the importance of reflection on the different identities local authority social workers have, how they prioritise those identities and what impact this has on their practice.

What cannot be ignored either are the other different organisational structures and locations that social workers can be found. Social workers that work with adults, in criminal justice, hospitals and the voluntary sector for example may have different experiences, emotions and perceptions of their workplace that can be explored. It is important to recognise that there will be similarities and differences between the various streams of social work and

these need to be included in the overall discussion about the lived experiences of social workers.

There can also be valid criticisms of the limit of this research due to the sample size not being particularly diverse. Other cultures potentially experience emotions, such as shame and guilt in different ways and there may be a different view as to how they are detected. With that in mind, future research would have to ensure a more diverse sample size. Additionally, this research would continue in different countries and cultures in order to widen the understanding of how the social work profession is viewed in different settings. This would also allow for a knowledge transfer discussion to be had around how best to support social workers. By integrating these aspects from other cultures and settings, recognition will be increased as to how many different ways emotional labour can be understood and supported.

Something else to consider is how by using the organisational justice framework as a tool to further investigate the lives of the social workers, proved to be fruitful in a way that has started an unexpected conversation. For those that are interested in employee perspectives, it is important to contemplate how else to use the tools available to them in order to get a more holistic viewpoint. By using the organisational justice framework qualitatively as well as quantitatively, there will be an increased awareness and deeper understanding of how a workplace operates. In regard to the social workers involved with this research, a more focused ethnographic

approach could have revealed a more diverse range of emotions, including those that would be classified as positive, this in turn would result in a more complete picture of the emotional spectrum social workers experience. This is definitely an area of future research that could be developed and be a source of vital information for the profession.

There is also a discussion to be had surrounding the organisational justice framework and why it was able to allow the unexpected emotional conversations to emerge. Perhaps this is because the innate nature of perceptions about employment and the job people do are always going to include emotion-laden concepts. That being said, the framework in this particular setting primarily facilitated negative emotions to emerge. If we want to know more about the lived experience of child and family social workers, we cannot ignore the positive emotions and elements of the workplace or practice that are also experienced. In the future, at the very least if used again within social work, this framework may need some additional questions or talking points to remind the interviewer to ensure positive aspects of the job are discussed.

The way one perceives something is necessarily bound up with personal experiences or history, personality traits and abilities, as well as current mood affect. All of these limitations and subsequent areas for future research, centre on increasing our knowledge of how social workers make decisions, process their involvement and role within the local authority and

are intricately woven together to influence practice.. All these will underpin any views and thought on the work that we do. This is not normally made as explicit as it ought to be.

7.7 - Concluding Remarks

This thesis was triggered by evidence of low morale and developed into an investigation of the relationship of this to public and social work perceptions of social workers and the nature of the practice and daily lives of child and family social workers. This was done by using the organisational justice framework to facilitate the discussion about the lived experience of child and family social workers in Scotland and allowed insight into some of the emotions that are present.

The first chapters reviewed and described the context of child protection social work in the United Kingdom and more specifically, Scotland. There was an introduction to the importance of looking at various perceptions as well as the employment environment and an overview of the organisational justice literature and framework. Within these first few chapters there was also an introduction to the possibility that emotions may play a more significant role within social work practice than has been covered in the literature. A qualitative perspective was decided as the best way to provide insight into the experiences of social workers and Chapter Three presented the methodology and methods for this study. The findings were next presented in two chapters in relation to the research questions. Chapter Four

providing the findings in relation to using the organisational justice framework to provide insight into the perceptions of social workers on their work environment and day to day experiences. While Chapter 5 was a review of the literature on emotions and presented the findings of the hidden emotional stories that emerged after a secondary analysis of the interviews. The discussion chapter looked at how the relationship between the perceptions of social work and the reality of the profession, and how the concept of 'dirty work' might help understand both public and social workers' views of social work. Contributions to existing knowledge were also discussed in the discussion chapter and this led into the final chapter reviewing possible implications of this research and potential areas of future research.

This doctoral study has been a journey involving professional training in research skills and an intellectual progression towards an autonomous social science researcher. In addition to the understanding gained into the lived experience of child and family social workers in Scotland, the shaping of this thesis has deepened my knowledge of my personal experience as a child and family social worker. This thesis makes a significant contribution to existing theory and literature by utilising the organisational justice framework in a qualitative manner, by providing further insight into the discussion surrounding the concept of the lived experience of social workers and by drawing attention to the significance of emotions in not only social work, and the wider organisational justice literature, but also 'people' professions, such as nursing, that are called to engage with others' emotions but may be

insufficiently attentive to their own feelings, to the detriment of those they seek to help.

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Appendix 1: Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form

Study Title

Perceptions of Organisational Justice by Child and Family Social Workers

Invitation Paragraph

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully

What is the purpose of the study?

This project sets out to review the current state of child protection social work in the United Kingdom (UK) and then looks at the various solutions which have been advanced. It concludes by asking whether the concept of 'organisational justice' may be applied as a new means of understanding and challenging an old problem, that of social worker satisfaction with the job

This is a qualitative, interview based study that began in the autumn of 2011 and is on course to be completed in the autumn of 2014.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been chosen to take part in this study due to your position as a social worker within a Scottish Local Authority. Approximately 20 people will be interviewed in order to gain an understanding of various perceptions of child and family social workers.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason

What will happen if I take part?

If you take part, you will be asked to participate in an interview that will last approximately one hour covering the main concepts within organisational justice.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The benefits of taking part in this research study are that you will have the opportunity to help academics and practitioners gain further understanding of the role of a child and family social worker in Scotland. This will hopefully lead to insightful ways that employers can maximise on what is going well within the workplace, and gain a more detailed look at areas of growth. The outcomes of this study will hopefully lead to better practice for employers as well as social workers, which will then lead to better outcomes for children and families.

Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?

All the information collected about you will be kept confidential, subject to legal limitations. Pseudonyms will be used throughout the analysis and within the final publication; no identifying factors will be used in regards to the local authority that you are employed by. Data generated by the study will be retained in accordance with the University's policy on Academic Integrity. This data will be stored securely in electronic form and will then be destroyed.

What should I do if I want to take part?

If you would like to take part in this study, please sign the following consent form.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of this study will be used towards the completion of my PhD in Social Work at the University of Edinburgh. The results will also be published in journal articles and if you would like to obtain a copy of the published research you can contact the University.

Who is organising and funding the research?

I am conducting this research as a student in the School of Social and Political Science at the University of Edinburgh. There are no major funding bodies associated with this research.

Who has reviewed the study?

This research has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee and supervisory members of the PhD Review Panel.

Contact for further Information:

Sandra Engstrom

07411760090

sjkengstrom@gmail.com

If you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, please contact:

Dr. Gary Clapton

0131 650 3903

Gary.clapton@ed.ac.uk

or

Dr. Wendy Loretto

0131 650 4102

wendy.loretto@ed.ac.uk

Thank you,

Date

CONSENT FORM

Perceptions of Organisational Justice by Child and Family Social Workers

Sandra Engstrom, PhD Candidate, University of Edinburgh
s.j.k.engstrom@sms.ed.ac.uk

Please Initial

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.

I agree to take part in the above study.

I agree that my data gathered in this study may be stored (after it has been anonymised) in a specialist data centre and may be used for future research.

Please Tick

Yes No

I agree to the interview being audio recorded

I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of Researcher

Date

Signature

Appendix 2: Interview Schedule

Dissertation Interview Schedule

Opening (for own prompting): My name is Sandra Engstrom and I am a PhD student in social work at the University of Edinburgh. Thank you very much for taking time out of your busy schedule to talk with me for my doctoral research project. I would like to talk to you today to gain some further understanding about the child protection component of your role in a Scottish local authority. I'm using some insight from an area of research called Organisational Justice. What this means is using a framework, or series of questions, to help gather information about how you perceive the day-to-day going's on of your job. Asking various questions about how you think you are treated, recognised, and how involved you are with decision making. I'm hoping that this information will help us recognise what areas of social work practice need to be worked on, if any, in order to help retain social workers within a local authority/statutory setting. This will then assist with better practice and outcomes for children and families. This interview should take no longer than an hour but we can be flexible with time as needed. As a reminder you do not have to answer any questions you are not comfortable with and are free to leave the interview at any time. This was stated in the consent form that you signed also stating that the results of this project will be kept confidential and anonymous.

Demographics:

- 1) How long have you been a social worker for?
- 2) How long have you worked with this particular department?
- 3) What other social work experience do you have?

Body:

- 1) Overall, what is it like to work at this local authority?
- 2) How much of your work is devoted to Child Protection work?

Rewards and Recognition/Distributive Justice:

- 1) Are you sufficiently rewarded in the child and families work that you do?
 - a. In regards to time, effort and qualifications
 - b. In what way? Title, training, status
- 2) Are you recognised for the child protection responsibilities that you have?
 - a. How?
- 3) Are you recognised for the amount of expertise that you bring?
 - a. How?
- 4) Is there recognition of the stresses and strains of the CP role in the department?
 - a. How? By whom? How is it managed?

- 5) With respect to recognition and influence, please give an example of how the department has handled this well
 - a. What about not handled well?

Procedural Justice:

- 1) Is there someone that you trust enough to able to convey your views and feelings about the role and work?
 - a. To Whom?
- 2) Have you had any influence or input in the development of your role?
 - a. What was this experience like?
 - b. Are you asked for ideas on improvement?
- 3) Is there consistency in the application of procedures relating to people, groups and teams?
- 4) Is there a way to object or challenge a view concerning you?
 - a. Is there allowance for clarification or additional information about decisions or recommendations?
- 5) Do you believe that decisions and procedures within the department are ethical/moral?
 - a. What about within the larger organisation?
- 6) Are contributions from social workers valued?
 - a. Do you feel like it is followed through and that you are listened to?
- 7) Is there dialogue regarding decisions or recommendations?
 - a. Is it timely?

Informational Justice

- 1) Do you believe that you are given accurate information?
- 2) Are procedures explained thoroughly and in a reasonable manner?
 - a. What was your induction like?
- 3) Are details communicated in a timely manner?
- 4) Are communications tailored to individual needs?
 - a. Have communications been addressed to you personally?

Interpersonal Justice:

- 1) Are you treated in a polite manner?

- 2) Are you treated with dignity?
- 3) Are you treated with respect?
- 4) Do people refrain from making improper comments or remarks to each other?
- 5) Do people go out of their way to praise good work?
- 6) Please give examples of how the relationship between social workers and the council is positive/negative?

Final questions:

- 1) How do you balance the difference between Child Protection work and Child and Family work?

- 2) What do you see as the most important factor(s) that the Council needs to focus on to achieve greater 'fairness' and positive relationships between the social workers and themselves?

Closing:

- 1) Is there any other information that you would like to provide me with?
 - a. Do you have any questions for me?

I appreciate that you have a busy job and I thank you again that you took the time to participate in this study. Would it be alright to contact you if I need any further information?