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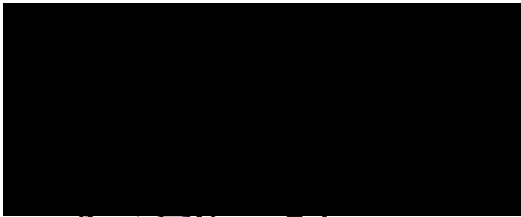
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Course climate, student
stress and practitioner
burnout

I declare that this thesis entitled, *Course Climate, Student Stress and Practitioner Burnout*, is my own work and has not been submitted previously, in whole or part, in respect of any other academic award.



Patrick Wayne Foley

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ABSTRACT

The central issue of this thesis is the problem of stress in social work education, and its contribution to subsequent burnout in social work practitioners. To investigate this problem, the study was structured according to five inter-related key research questions, as outlined in Chapter One. The first research question asks to what extent what Tobin and Carson (1994) have referred to as “insidious pervasive stresses” emanate from the following sources: (i) professional identity formation process (social work idealised image and role value conflict); (ii) the reasons students chose social work; (iii) students’ performance expectations; and (iv) stresses from the course that are part of the professional education process. The second research question examines the extent to which the kind and level of course related stress experienced by social work students explains the variation in their physical and psychological health. The third research question aims to determine if there is a difference in the level of physical and psychological health of Australian social work students and Australian social work practitioners. The fourth research question examines whether the physical and psychological health of social work practitioners is negatively correlated with the magnitude of burnout experienced. The fifth research question considers the extent to which social work practitioners’ age, job satisfaction, years of experience and average working hours, in addition to burnout, explain the variation in their physical and psychological health.

In addition to these five key research questions, a series of clarifying, supporting or elaborating questions are developed in the literature review (Chapter Two). Where appropriate, they have been converted into substantive operational hypotheses in Chapter Three, which details the study's methodology.

Chapter Four (Student Results) presents the results of the questionnaires administered in relation to aspects of their social work course. Chapter Five (Practitioners and Students: Comparative Results and Predictive Analysis) compares the physical and psychological health of social work students with the health of social work practitioners, and provides a predictive analysis of the variations of the health of the two groups. Chapter Six discusses the results of the study, in terms of some of the significant implications of its findings, particularly in relation to social work course design and areas that warrant further investigation.

Overall, the study concludes that a significant proportion of social work students are psychologically distressed by their course experience, particularly in terms of course design, role value conflict and the degree of idealisation of the social work role. A very strong association with burnout was found among social work practitioners when they experienced a similar level of psychological distress as that experienced by students. Finally, suggestions are made for ways in which social work course managers may constructively deal with these issues.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

My awareness of the problem of stress in social work education began first as a social work student and developed as a social work educator. This chapter explores the nature of the problem and attempts to clarify the unique elements of social work education that may be the causes of stress for social work students. It examines two possible causes of stress for social work students. The first of these emanates from the structure of the course and interaction between lecturers, students and clients. The second possible source of stress is the professional socialisation process; in particular, the idealised professional image of a social worker. The chapter suggests that this image is contained in the professional literature and is part of the process of social work education.

1.1 AWARENESS OF THE PROBLEM

The year I spent as a student in a School of Social Work is still the most painful and humiliating experience I have ever had ... It was mainly created because of the tension between appearance and reality... The students were anxious because they felt very vulnerable ... Academic criteria were not very suitable, for the course demanded little intellectually ... Students were expelled for less definable reasons. Usually, they were considered to have a wrong type of personality for social work, with some oblique references about 'authority problems' ... Since most of us had pretty serious objections to how we were being treated personally and how clients were handled, we feared we would be found out.... There was no crime or perfidy that we did not think the staff capable of. Endless examples of tyranny, arbitrariness and bad faith were brought up and circulated with glee. Husbands of married students complained that they had to listen night and day to these stories and started to suspect their

wife's sanity ... we were behaving like powerless people ... we were reacting ... with the helplessness of those who were totally unprepared and almost incredulous about what was happening to them. Our explanation mechanism had broken down, we could no longer endure finding rational reasons. Our experiences made no sense and we felt out of control.... As the year progressed, an increasing number opted out even from anger and withdrew into an apathy or numbness or total nihilism. (Saute Repo 1975:428-445)

When I initially read this article I was on my first placement as a social work student. I hid the article whilst I was reading it in case my supervisor found it, and discovered how I felt. This paranoia was not only mine; it extended to my two fellow students on placement. Each in their turn furtively read the paragraphs interspersed with looks over their shoulders. Most importantly, perhaps, they read the whole article even though there was a great deal of reading to do as part of placement.

I remember the last thing I wanted to do at that time was to read an article on social work that a fellow social work student found interesting. Yet we all felt that we understood better what was occurring to us after reading it. The feelings expressed by the author seemed similar to mine. This gave me confidence that our feelings were not just merely a reflection of a few fellow students and the idiosyncratic nature of one social work course. Perhaps I was part of a process that was common to most social work courses and most social work students.

Years later, I had the opportunity to look at social work courses from a different perspective - that of a social work lecturer. When I looked at myself and my fellow lecturers, we were all rather ordinary people trying to teach social work

within the constraints of the course's resources and our own abilities. Occasionally I felt that a student may have clashed with a fellow lecturer on values and as a result may have been treated a bit harshly, but there were certainly no signs of perfidy. Yet there was certainly a stress felt by social work students learning to become social workers.

The experience Saute Repo (1975) described also seemed to happen much more in social work departments than in the non-social work departments I have taught in. In social work departments there were discussions about how well students were going psychologically; how well they were coping with the course. Some students were labelled *prima donnas*, some were stressed out, some were naive, some were over-idealistic and some were described (as I had been as a student) as a bit intense. These discussions were not malicious but generally were aimed at making sure a student was ready for practice. They were frequently part of discussions about what would be the best placement for the student. I can easily imagine that similar discussions occur in teaching and nursing courses. The social work course content was not only intellectual but also contained an extra dimension that covered values, skills and interpersonal relations.

I conducted skills tutorials in social work courses in which students role-played a range of situations. Often the situations became psychologically real to the students and you knew as a lecturer that there was but a thin veneer between the role the student was playing and the person themselves. Sometimes there were tears. Sometimes there was just the silence of a student who had strayed too far into personal material in front of fellow students and a lecturer. Of course, I did

the normal debriefing and referred students who had uncovered problems to student counsellors. Like my colleagues, I tried to be supportive and understanding, but occasionally there was a student we were worried about.

We worried about what such a student would do on placement and in practice. This worry was sometimes justified when placements broke down, causing great distress to the student. These students were often bright enough, and they had usually done well academically; some were even gifted theoretically, but interpersonally they were 'strange'. Their strangeness manifested itself in a number of ways: sometimes they were just a bit intense, or anxious, or fragile or, most worryingly, directive and dogmatic. Interestingly, the harshest critics of the students were not the lecturers, but fellow students. There was an unspoken understanding of what was acceptable behaviour both in the course and, especially, on placement. This understanding was never formally defined but was still communicated. In other non-social work courses, when teaching other students similar skills, this phenomenon did not seem to occur. What I did know was that this psychological assessment of students was linked to students going on placement and interacting with clients, and to the students' image of what a social worker was and what values a social worker is expected to hold.

1.2 THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

When lecturers in the social work department talked about the psychological health of the students, what we were discussing was whether students had the persona and the attitudes that would enable them to function well

long been recognised as a basic requirement for social workers and members of other helping professions (McBroom 1979).

Questions that concerned us were whether a student was too dogmatic to allow client self-determination, too emotional to achieve an effective level of detached concern with his or her clients, or too disturbed to be able to work effectively with distressed clients or in emotionally charged community settings. What we were trying to determine was whether the students had those personal qualities that would allow them to function effectively in a social work role. Gartner (1976:152), in a text entitled *The Preparation of Human Service Professionals*, has asserted:

The students are to be purged of feelings, attitudes, biases and prejudices inappropriate to the social work profession ... The supervisor performs casework functions vis-a-vis the trainee ... enabling them to develop skills.

Most of the lecturers I have worked with would have seen Gartner's assertion as extreme and dated. Nevertheless, it reflects a theme in social work education, viz that one of the duties of the social work educator is to shape and certify the social work character of the student.

Loseke and Cahill (1986) asked a group of students to describe the characteristics of veteran social workers whom they admired. These students described such idealised social workers as emotionally controlled, hard working, nice people who had an incredible respect for the people who came to see them. Clearfield (1977), with a sample of 315 practising social workers, found that the vast majority of respondents' attitudes towards the behaviour and personal characteristics of their colleagues was extremely positive. More than 70% of respondents saw their colleagues as intelligent, responsible, reliable, alert and competent. They also saw their colleagues as pleasant, patient and optimistic; but

there was some doubt as to whether their colleagues were independent, strong, stimulating, creative or happy. According to Clearfield (1977:27), “there also appeared to be some sort of ambivalence about whether or not social work attracts more of its share of individuals with some mental health problems.” Nevertheless, Clearfield concluded that the majority of respondents had a positive professional self-image, with 79% having a positive attitude towards their children choosing social work as a profession.

Loseke and Cahill (1986:253) suggest that one of the functions of social work education may be the development of a particular type of character that reflects social work’s professional self-image, though “social work education was neither sufficient nor necessary to produce the type of personal character that social workers are expected to possess.” They concluded that social work students’ quest for a professional identity may be more difficult than for those who undertake careers in the more established professions.

Haas and Shaffir (1977, 1982a, 1982b) have argued that student doctors, by adopting commonly recognised symbols of their chosen profession, can wrap themselves in a cloak of competence and convince relatively receptive audiences of their authority. Loseke and Cahill (1986) suggest that social work students are not provided with such commonly recognised symbols of their calling, and do not always perform their occupational role in front of receptive audiences.

According to Haas and Shaffir (1977, 1982a, 1982b), professional socialisation is a type of activity in which the management of impressions is

basic. For neophytes to realise the occupational identity to which they aspire, they must become good, self-confident actors who can master increasingly difficult performance situations. Loseke and Cahill (1986) suggest the social work students' role may be even more difficult since social work's academic training tends to convince them that the identity of the social worker is more than just a confident management of impressions, but is something inherent in the personality of the student.

This added difficulty in the professional identity formation process is not unique to social work students, and a parallel can be found with contemporary seminarians. Kleinman (1984) has suggested that as a result of an increasing proportion of the lay public no longer considering ministers to be the only experts on matters of faith and morality, contemporary seminarians cannot use the traditional means of displaying specialised knowledge or skills to realise their chosen vocational identity. She argues that seminarians must now demonstrate that they are the right kind of people. The same argument could be applied to social workers.

Loseke and Cahill (1986) argue that the failure of social work to claim a recognised area of occupational expertise has made the professional identity formation process more difficult. They suggest the problems that social work students encounter in their attempts to assert their identity as social workers reflect social work's difficulty in gaining public recognition as a profession.

professionalisation amongst social workers has been criticised as self-serving, this is in fact very important to professional self image. He feels that a goal of social work education should be to help students develop positive attitudes towards their profession and its practice. Unfortunately, social workers, especially students, may be the most destructive critics of their own profession. Schwartz, in Clearfield (1977:29), illustrated the potential effect of destructive criticism in the following quotation :

... and a graduating social work student said to me, in the last semester: this school has taught me to be a good caseworker; and has also taught me to be ashamed of it.

Could it be that the professional identity formation process, which Loseke and Cahill (1986:246) stated could seldom be pursued without “trauma and perils”, is more difficult for social work students than it is for other professions? Bailey (1985:98) postulated that for social work students, “even early in professional training the seeds of stagnation are sown as the mismatch between reality and expectation becomes a major source of stress for the trainee professional.”

1.3 IMPORTANCE OF THE PROBLEM

As early as 1902 Herbert Spencer identified that excessive self-sacrifice may be one of the causes of professional stress in what have come to be known as the caring professions :

He who carries self-regard far enough to keep himself in good health and high spirits, in the first place, thereby becomes an immediate source of happiness to those around, and, in the second place, maintains the ability to increase their happiness by altruistic actions. But one whose bodily vigour and mental health

are undermined by self-sacrifice carried too far, in the first place becomes to those around a cause of depression, and, in the second place, renders himself incapable, or less capable, of actively furthering their welfare. (Spencer 1902:223)

The issue of stress in the caring professions has a long history and is one that continues to attract the attention of researchers. Much of the early research focussed on nurses and teachers. In contrast to the nursing literature, there have been comparatively fewer studies of stress in social workers. Stress amongst social work students is an area even less explored, especially at the empirical level.

In a classic social work text, that was widely used in Australian social work courses in the 1980's, Germain and Glitterman (1980) stated that :

Embedded in physical and social environments and their political and economic structures, individuals and primary groups continually experience environmental challenges, opportunities, and obstacles to adaptive functioning. Some of these upset the goodness-of-fit and lead to undesirable or even unmanageable stress.

It seems unwise to assume that such a process could not occur in a social work course.

In an early study of graduate social work students and stress, Mayer and Rosenblat (1974) found that students had set very high standards of performance for themselves. These high standards of performance or need for a high academic achievement level might be expected to generate high levels of stress amongst students. However, no study to date has examined whether or not this occurs. In another early study, Patchner (1983:32) commented that students found the educational experience stressful and concluded that "the findings demonstrated

that persons in graduate social work education experience stress that was manifested in all aspects in their lives.”

Nevertheless, this conclusion is not always supported in the literature. Munson (1984) found that students reported low levels of stress, with 50% of the students not reporting any form of stress. He found that students reported much lower levels of stress associated with field placement than with classroom activity. A difficulty with this study is that although Munson used questions that tapped physical and psychological stress, there is no reporting of the validity of these instruments. Munson’s decision about the stress levels of the students is not supported by any comparisons to other populations, possible stress factors or objective measures of physical or psychological distress.

Munson (1984) did, however, pose a number of interesting research questions. Puzzled by the reported low levels of stress, he wondered if graduate social work education was not very demanding. He even conjectured whether the temporary nature of graduate education acts as a buffer against stress, or if students merely denied their stress. Comparing the low level of stress in social work students to that of medical students, he suggested that this was because social work students were subjected to less rigorous academic standards than medical students.

A more recent study of student stress was conducted by Koeske and Koeske (1991), using a sample of 136 adult graduate students in a Masters of Social Work programme. They used a modified form of the Maslach Professional

Burnout Inventory to measure student stress and an abridged version of the Derogatis Symptoms Checklist-90 (Derogatis 1977) to measure students' psychological health. Koeske and Koeske (1991) did not give any indication of whether the stress of social work students was high, medium or low when compared to other student or practitioner groups. They concluded that student stress and burnout measures could be used to evaluate the implemented programmes to improve the quality of student experiences. In a detailed analysis, Koeske and Koeske (1991) found a non-significant trend for spouse support to buffer student burnout, but no significant buffering was found for physical and psychological symptoms. Patchner (1983), Munson (1984) and Koeske and Koeske (1991) were all American studies using Master of Social Work students, where the mean age of students was higher than that of Australian social work students (Pilcher 1982). It is unclear to what extent age is an important predictor variable of student stress.

In the study by Koeske and Koeske (1991), the majority (94%) of social work students were over 25 years old. Munson (1984) had conjectured that age could be a factor in the moderation of the impact of stress. The average age of Munson's group was 32 years. In Koeske and Koeske (1991) the median age was 32 years. Pilcher's (1982) findings indicate that the majority of Australian social work students who begin social work courses are under 24 years and that the median age for social work students in Australia is much lower than that reported in the American studies.

In a more recent British study, where the age of respondents was not given, Tobin and Carson (1994) commented that although the issue of stress in the caring professions is one that continues to attract special attention, research on social work students remains almost absent from the literature. Tobin and Carson aimed to expand the existing literature on stress in social work by contrasting a sample of social work students with other student groups, believing it important to compare student social workers with other student groups. They chose psychology students and Postgraduate Certificate in Education students as their comparison groups. By using a standardised measure it was possible to compare the student social workers with other research samples. They hypothesised that professional student groups would have higher stress scores than undergraduate students. The three groups of students surveyed were: social work students (n=50) who were studying for a Diploma of Social Work, psychology students (n=69) who were involved in a university degree course, and Post Graduate in Education students (n=33) who were studying in a professional teacher training institute.

In their study, Tobin and Carson (1994) used a 28 item questionnaire developed by Goldberg (Goldberg and Williams 1988), which was designed to measure psychological distress. The General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) was designed to be a self-administered screening test, aimed at detecting psychiatric disorders in respondents in community settings. A person identified by the questionnaire as impaired is one who Goldberg suggests should be considered for assessment by a psychiatrist. This is called a 'case'. A case means a person has more than a 50% chance of neurotic impairment requiring psychiatric

assessment according to Goldberg (1972). The GHQ focuses on psychological components of ill health. According to the GHQ manual, the threshold score for caseness reflects the concept of a clinical disturbance just significant enough to warrant psychiatric assessment. Goldberg (1978) emphasised that those scoring above this threshold do not necessarily require ongoing psychological intervention.

Tobin and Carson (1994) found in their undergraduate psychology group that 42% of the sample were cases. They found that the social work students in their sample had a 64% case rate and that 34% of the social work students scored 11 or more on the GHQ-28, showing exceptional levels of psychological distress. Three student social workers (6%) ticked one of the two suicide ideation items on the GHQ. The findings indicates that a large proportion of the social work students were psychologically distressed.

In her study of psychology students, Cushway (1992:172) asked trainees the question, "To what extent do you consider you have been under stress as a result of clinical psychology training?" When trainees were divided into four groups according to their self-reported extent of stress, Cushway found that the groups were significantly different in terms of GHQ scores. Stress levels were much higher for students in their second and third year of training than for those in their first year. Cushway (1992) also used an overall psychology course stress survey to measure course stress. She found that the overall psychology course stress survey correlated with the GHQ total score ($r(287) = .41, p < .001$) and with caseness ($r(287) = .39, p < .001$). The largest factor on the course stress survey

was related to course structure and organisation. The other two factors on the course stress scale were workload and supervision. Cushway (1992), who used only the total stress course survey score in her analysis, concluded that given the constraints of training courses to provide an acceptable standard of training for all students, they are relatively inflexible to individual student needs, and this may create stress.

Cushway (1992) was surprised to discover that clinical psychology trainees had a case rate of 59% (n=287). The 59% case rate of clinical psychology trainees is higher than that shown by comparable data using the GHQ for male and female civil servants, with 34% and 36% respectively (Jenkins 1985). Szulecka, Krystyna, Springett and De Paul (1986) found a case rate of 8% (n=1279) for beginning first year undergraduate students. Using the GHQ, Kind and Gudex (1994) found that within a community-based sample, 59% of respondents scored zero on the GHQ, while 13% scored in the range that would deem them to warrant psychiatric intervention. Therefore 13% of a general community population would be classed as cases according to the GHQ. Comparing these two British studies, it seems that first year undergraduate university students may have a lower level of caseness than that found in the general community and a markedly lower rate than that of social work students.

Gibson, McGrath and Reid (1989) conducted a questionnaire survey of 176 practising social workers using the GHQ, and 37% of their sample were identified as cases. This indicates that social work students may have higher

caseness than that social work practitioners and that the trainee period for social work is stressful and maybe even more stressful than professional practice.

These findings are contrary to those of Munson (1984), who reported that social work students experienced relatively low levels of stress when compared to other students. In relation to medical students, Firth (1986) found that 30% were at the case level, rising to 50% for junior medical house officers (Firth-Cozens 1987). When the 64% level of caseness of social work students as reported by Tobin and Carson (1994) is compared to that of medical students', reported at 30% by Firth-Cozens (1987), it could be concluded that social work students are more stressed than medical students.

Though not specifically investigated in their study, Tobin and Carson (1994:253) argued that students could not possibly be expected to achieve the maximum benefit from their professional training if, during the course of training, they are exposed to "insidious, pervasive stresses". They do not detail what these insidious, pervasive stresses may be. They conclude with the proposition that "the legacy of professional training ... may be ... the genesis of burnout" (Tobin and Carson 1994:253). Such an assertion, if only partly true, has profound implications for how social workers are trained.

From their findings, Tobin and Carson (1994) concluded that student social workers appeared to be under considerable stress even before they took up the responsibilities of practice. They felt that these findings needed to be confirmed by other researchers. A crucial area not examined by either Koeske

and Koeske (1991) or Tobin and Carson (1994) is the impact of course structure and social work role value expectations on social work students' physical and psychological health.

1.4 AIM OF THE STUDY

The present study aims to help fill this gap by examining the impact of course stress on the physical and psychological health of social work students. It extends Cushway's (1992) examination of the impact of course stress on psychology students. Like Cushway's examination of psychology students, this study will also use a total course stress survey but, in addition, will also use an idealised role value conflict score to provide a further understanding of the impact of professional socialisation process on social work students. To provide a comparison for understanding the findings on the level of student physical and psychological distress, as well as to explore whether this distress may predispose students to burnout when they enter practice, a sample of social work practitioners will also be used.

Utilising these two complementary research instruments and samples, the present study will examine the claim that social work training tends to create an idealised role value expectation which, in conjunction with social work course climate, predisposes social work students to burnout. In terms of this aim, five interrelated research questions are posed. The first is to what extent 'insidious pervasive stresses' (Tobin and Carson 1994:253) emanate from the following sources: (i) professional identity formation process (social work idealised image

performance expectations; and (iv) stresses from the course that are part of the professional education process as outlined by Cushway (1992). The second question concerns the extent, if any, that these sources and the level of course-related stress experienced by students explain the variation in social work students' physical and psychological health. The third question seeks to determine whether there is a difference in the level of physical and psychological health of Australian social work students and practitioners. The fourth question aims to determine whether there is an association between physical and psychological health in social work practitioners and burnout. The fifth question explores the extent to which social work practitioners' age, job satisfaction, burnout, years of experience and average hours worked explain the variation in their physical and psychological health.

1.5 AN OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS

To explore and begin to answer these questions, this Introductory Chapter is followed by a Literature Review indicating the theoretical frameworks and models that have informed the present study. This is followed by a description of the Methodology employed to empirically examine the questions (Chapter 3). Chapters 4 and 5 provide the results and analysis of the surveys of social work students and practitioners. The significance and the implications of the findings for social work students, educators and practitioners are discussed at length in Chapter 6. The conclusion, Chapter 7, offers a number of recommendations for consideration by social work course managers.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents the theoretical frameworks and models that have shaped the exploration of the five general research questions outlined in Chapter 1. The first part of the Literature Review concentrates on the structural aspects of social work course stress and its relationship to student health. The second part focuses on the professional socialisation process and how this process may impact on student health. The person-environment fit model (see 2.4 and 2.9) is used in both parts to examine implied causal connections contained in the research questions. The latter part of the Literature Review also draws upon the research on burnout that has been conducted on social work practitioners and related professionals.

The first research question focused on the stresses that emanate from a social work course, and Sections 2.1 to 2.4 of this Literature Review explore the nature of social work course stress. This is done by defining what is meant by course climate, and its relationship to the concept of stress. This relationship is examined within the theoretical framework of the person-environment fit model. This person-environment fit model is consistent with the interactional model of stress, burnout and health, which is explored in Sections 2.5 to 2.10 of the Literature Review. The person-environment fit model allows for the examination of the second, third, fourth and fifth research questions, which explore the

relationship between social work student stress and physical and psychological health of social work students and other professional groups.

The second part of the Literature Review examines the relationship between professional socialisation and stress, particularly as it relates to burnout. This discussion enables the examination of conflict between the values of the idealised image of a social work role as perceived by students and the students' own values. Also explored is the impact this conflict may have in engendering social work student stress.

2.1 SOCIAL WORK COURSE CLIMATE

'Organisational climate' has become a widely used concept in organisational research. Forehand and Gilmer (1964) used the term to describe organisational characteristics that influence the behaviour of people in an organisation. Payne (1979) saw climate as the consensus of individuals' descriptions of an organisation. Climate has been assessed in contexts as far ranging as university dorms (Nielson, Moos and Lee 1978) to business and government organisations (Solomon 1986), and can be applied to students' perceptions of a social work course.

Rousseau (1988) has described four types of climate: psychological, aggregate, collective and organisational. Psychological climate is essentially unaggregated individual perceptions of environments, that is, one individual's perception of a social setting like a social work course. Aggregate climate is individuals' perceptions averaged at some formal hierarchical level, such as all

students' perception of a social work course. Collective climates emerge from agreements between individuals for whom situations have common stimulus values (Joyce and Slocum 1984). These are identified by taking individual perceptions of different aspects of a social setting, such as a social work course, and combining these into clusters reflecting similar climate scores.

The fourth use of climate is organisational. Glick (1985) argues that organisational climate is a real organisational attribute: an objective thing to be encountered and experienced. From this perspective, individuals reporting on a climate are not subjects or respondents, but informants. Social work students will be treated as informants in this research, and all four definitions of climate will be identified and used to explore the impact of course structure and social work role expectations on social work students' physical and psychological health.

Behind an examination of social work course climate is an understanding of the importance of organisational health. Beer (1980:41) has defined organisational health as "the capacity of an organisation to engage in ongoing self examination aimed at identifying incongruities between social systems, components and developing plans for needed change."

This definition implies that healthy organisations will not necessarily remain healthy. Beer suggests that, to remain healthy, organisations must undergo a systematic process of reflection on their internal functioning as well as on their relationship with the task environment. For social work courses, a healthy organisation could be one that meets the aims of its task environment, that is, of

producing social work students who have a strong commitment to the professional service ethic.

Mott (1972) has suggested that there are three main characteristics which distinguish a healthy organisation from an unhealthy one. These characteristics could be applied to a social work course as a way of judging its degree of health. The three characteristics that Mott identified are adaptiveness, flexibility and productivity. By adaptiveness, Mott means both the organisation's ability to change and its ability to resist becoming rigid in its functioning or ritualistic in its operating procedures. The second characteristic, flexibility, is concerned with adjusting to internal and external organisational emergencies. The third characteristic, productivity, is concerned with the amount of product or service provided by an organisation.

These three organisational characteristics of adaptiveness, flexibility and productivity can be applied to a social work course as part of a larger tertiary organisation. A social work course can, from this perspective, be seen as healthy to the extent that it shows these characteristics. It is one aspect of the third of these characteristics, productivity, that is, the production of a professional who can maintain a long term commitment to the service ethic, on which this study concentrates. The service ethic, as one aspect of productivity, has been chosen since it will be argued that it is a possible end of a dimension of commitment to the profession where the negative end is burnout (see Section 2.9).

In this study's use of course climate health, the characteristic of productivity is viewed from the perspective of only one of the organisation's clients and major stakeholders: the student. This emphasis is appropriate given that a social work course is a part of a tertiary teaching organisation. Its task environment, that is, that part of the organisation's environment that is related to its goal attainment efforts, is centred upon the education of students to work within a social work role.

According to Quick and Quick (1984), an organisation should aim at having the people, structure, technology and the task of the organisation work in harmony. A misfit between two or more of these dimensions, for example between people and structure, will cause internal health problems for the organisation. This can be seen to apply equally to a social work course, where there may be a clash between the people (lecturers) who are concerned at modelling a social work's service ethic and the structure of an organisation run on bureaucratic and routinised lines that does not allow for customised student problem resolution. The second aspect of organisational health is the organisation's adjustment to the demands of the task environment. For a social work courses this is, first, the training of social work students to become effective practitioners and, second, meeting competing demands from the university administration, faculty boards, students and the professional association. All these are important stakeholders in the task environment of a social work course but the professional association is the most powerful.

The professional association of social work in Australia is the Australian Association of Social Work (AASW). All social work courses in Australia have to cover content and provide students placements if they are to be, and remain, accredited by AASW. Failure to gain or obtain accreditation by AASW has a serious effect on the desirability of a course to students and a lowering of the standing of the course with the professional community and employers.

Healthy organisations, according to Quick and Quick (1984:82), are:

... not only better equipped to survive and grow; they are also in a better position to contribute to individual health and well being. The inconsistencies and flaws in an organisation's health will lead to the various direct costs and indirect costs.

Healthy social work courses are not only better equipped to survive and grow; they are also in a better position to contribute to a social work student's health and well-being. Any inconsistencies and flaws in the health of a social work course will lead to various direct and indirect costs. The most direct cost is poor student performance, or loss of students altogether, whether by absence from classes or withdrawal from the course. There is also the indirect cost of a student's decreased potential to maintain a professional commitment to the service ethic. As will be argued later in this chapter (see Section 2.9), this loss of commitment to the service ethic also manifests itself as burnout, or more specifically as a predisposition towards burnout as practitioners, in graduating social work students.

If an organisation does not maintain a relative healthy state, it risks its long term effectiveness and survival. For a social work course, in relation to students being important stakeholders in its task environment, this manifests itself in students' opinions of the course. These opinions may influence other important stakeholders, such as welfare organisations recruiting graduates, the social work profession deciding on the accreditation of a program or potential students deliberating whether to enter a particular social work program. Therefore it is important that criteria for the health of a social work course are developed, as this present study aims to do, and as is reflected in the five interrelated research questions.

The healthy organisational approach described by Quick and Quick (1984) places the responsibility for healthy organisations at the management level. Quick and Quick (1984:162) go as far as to assert that “management has a responsibility for individual and organisational health.” Quick and Quick used Hackman’s (1976) earlier model, which was derived in part from the work of Herzberg (1968), in their discussion of organisational-level methods of preventative stress management. They used task redesign as a method to enhance employee motivation by altering specific task dimensions to achieve a better fit between individual needs and the structure of the job. Hackman’s work has developed and is now commonly referred to as the job characteristics model (Baron and Greenberg 1995). If Quick and Quick’s assertion is to be translated into a social work education context, then it implies that social work educators have a responsibility to design courses that promote student health. Insight into

how this might be done is offered by the job characteristics model (Hackman and Oldham 1980).

2.2 SOCIAL WORK COURSE CLIMATE AND THE JOB CHARACTERISTICS MODEL

The job characteristics model assumes that jobs can be designed so as to help people get enjoyment out of their jobs and to care about the work they do. For a social work student, their job from this perspective can be defined as the activities associated with undertaking a social work education program. The job characteristics model offers insights for social work course managers on how the job of being a social work student can be designed to help students feel that they are doing meaningful and valuable work. These insights equally apply to social work practitioners.

Hackman and Oldham (1980) in the job characteristics model have argued that enriching certain elements of jobs alters people's psychological states in a manner that enhances their work effectiveness. The job characteristics model identifies five core job dimensions that help create three critical psychological states which, in turn, lead to a number of beneficial personal and work outcomes.

The five critical job dimensions identified by Hackman and Oldham are: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback. Skill variety is the degree that a job requires a number of different activities performed by a person, using several of the person's skills and talents. Task identity is the degree to which the job requires an individual to complete a whole piece of work from

the beginning to the end. Task significance is the extent of the impact the job is believed to have on others. According to the job characteristics model, these first three critical job dimensions of skill variety, task identity and task significance jointly contribute to a task being experienced as meaningful to an individual. According to this model, a task is considered meaningful to the extent it is experienced as being highly important, valued and worthwhile to the individual.

The last two of the five critical job dimensions identified by Hackman and Oldham are autonomy and feedback. Autonomy is the extent to which employees have the freedom and discretion to plan, schedule and carry out their jobs as they desire. According to the job characteristics model, jobs that provide a great deal of autonomy are said to initiate a psychological state that makes individuals feel personally responsible and accountable for their work. This is because the model postulates that when individuals feel free to decide what to do and how to do it they feel more responsible for both negative and positive results.

The fifth critical dimension of the jobs characteristics model, feedback, refers to the degree to which the job allows individuals to have information about the effectiveness of their performance. According to the job characteristics model, effective feedback is said to provide individuals with knowledge about the results of their work. According to the model, when a job is designed to provide individuals with information about the effects of their actions, they are able to develop a better understanding about how well they performed and how they may improve their overall performance.

The job characteristics model stipulates that these five core job dimensions create critical psychological states. The three critical psychological states, as previously mentioned, are :

1. experience meaningfulness of the work,
2. experience responsibility for outcomes of the work,
3. knowledge of the actual results of the work activities.

The model further specifies that these three critical psychological states affect various personal and work outcomes. These outcomes are:

1. an individual's feelings of motivation,
2. the quality of work performed,
3. satisfaction with work,
4. absenteeism and turnover.

According to the job characteristics model, the higher the experienced meaningfulness of work, responsibility for the work performed, and knowledge of the actual results of the work activities, the more positive the personal and work benefits will be. The model suggests that when individuals perform jobs which incorporate high levels of the five core job dimensions, people should feel highly motivated, perform high quality work, be highly satisfied with their jobs, be rarely absent and be less likely to resign. These are the opposite behaviour to what has been reported in the literature for burnout (see Section 2.9).

The application of the job characteristics model to social work practice and education can, on the surface, be readily made. The difficulty is not with social work practice but with how issues of skill variety, task identity, task

significance, autonomy and feedback are addressed in relation to social work students. Most tertiary academic programs are organised along subject lines that can make the attainment of task identity and task significance problematic.

In addition, the standardisation of assessment of many academic courses can make it difficult for students to achieve any clear sense of autonomy in their learning and therefore experience any personal responsibility and accountability for their work. Also, the structure of academic courses can often provide little detailed feedback to students on the results of their work so that students may not have any detailed knowledge of the results of their work activities until the end of a semester. This is particularly true in courses where passing the subject is dependent on successfully completing the final examination in that subject. Certain academic subjects can also provide relatively little skill variety, especially in subjects that may be aiming to develop new skills in students where the course content has a high degree of repetition to encourage mastery of the new skill.

These issues confront many other academic courses besides social work courses, but social work courses have an additional element: the practicum. All social work courses have field placements where social work students are assigned to an experienced social worker. The usual intention of these field placements is to encourage an integration of social work theory and practice. These social work field placements for students may also provide an environment where these critical job dimensions are not provided. The discussion of burnout (see Section 2.9) highlights that for some social workers these job characteristics may not be present in their work. It seems reasonable to suggest that if these

critical job dimensions are not present for experienced social work practitioners, then they may be even less likely to be present for social work students on placement.

According to Pilcher (1982), students who enter social work cite high growth needs amongst their reasons for their choice of social work. Many social work writers also see having a high need for personal growth as an important element of being a successful social worker (Mendelson 1980). The job characteristics model, according to Hackman and Oldham (1980), is especially effective in describing the behaviour of individuals who are high in growth need strength. According to the model, people who do not have a high need for personal growth and development, and are not interested in improving themselves on the job, are not expected to experience the psychological reactions to the core job dimensions nor, consequently, to enjoy the beneficial personal and work outcomes predicted by the model.

For social workers it is commonly assumed they have high growth needs strength, and some writers see this as an essential characteristic of a successful counsellor and change agent (Egan 1986). The job characteristics model seems highly applicable to both social work students and practitioners and a useful theoretical framework for the following discussion of stress in social work courses and practice.

2.3 SOCIAL COURSE CLIMATE AND STRESS

The first systematic work on stress was undertaken by Selye (1974) and was based on physiological responses which were engineered by physiological challenges. He did not attempt to discriminate between physiological and psychological stressors. As a term, *stress* is often used loosely and has not always been given a consistent meaning.

Occupational stress is used here to refer to an internal state which is a response to a demanding, unsatisfying and generally unrewarding occupational environment. It is, however, a response which has experiential, psychosocial dimensions as well as a physiological dimension. Methods used to determine the level of occupational stress, and the nature of interventions to reduce it, vary in the degree of attention they give or are able to give to one or other of these dimensions. Leiv (1979:26) has given a useful definition of occupational stress as perceived from these dimensions: "Occupational stress arises where discrepancies exist between occupational demands and opportunities on the one hand and the worker's capacities, needs and expectations on the other."

There is now widespread agreement that stress is not only an objective physiological response, but is also a subjective experience which includes feeling of tension and distress. Otto (1982:2-3) provides a useful definition with her statement that stress is :

... a state of unpleasant emotional tension engendered in individuals when they feel unable to satisfy their needs within their situation of action ... stress arises when discrepancies exist between ... demands and opportunities on the one hand and ... capacities, needs and expectations on the other.

This definition ties into the person-environment fit model (French, Rodgers and Cob 1974). Person-environment fit entails a degree of congruence or fit between an individual's needs, capabilities and aspirations, and the demands of the environment. Lack of fit can negatively affect a person's physical and mental health. During the course of a life-time, people experience various degrees of fit with their environment. While lack of fit with the environment may not result in any immediate negative consequences to the individual's health, over a period of time it may well result in physical and psychological distress (Otto 1986). Whether a person achieves harmony with his environment depends very much on the resources, demands and opportunities available in the environment, and the individual's needs, capabilities and aspirations. Aspects of the person-environment model are often used, though not always explicitly, in social work text books and practice. This is illustrated by Germain and Gitterman (1980:198) who use a person-environment perspective without explicitly stating that they are using one :

In order to help in the stress that arises from organisations, social networks, or physical settings, the social worker's attention and actions must be directed to the behavioural interface between individuals, families, groups, on one hand, and social networks, organisations, communities, and physical environments, on the other. The social worker's professional functions is to help people use their adaptive and coping capacities to obtain available and accessible environment resources. When such resources are missing, inaccessible, withheld, or denied,

the professional function is to influence those structures and processes to be more responsive to client needs. The social work roles of mediator, advocate and organiser are used to carry out those functions.

When looking at the degree of person-environment fit, then, it is appropriate to look at individual needs and what the environment has to offer. This entails discovering those areas where discrepancies exist between individuals and their environment. There are several dimensions to a person-environment fit that are particularly relevant here. These include the physical, psycho-social, behavioural and economic dimensions, all of which play a part in determining the level of congruence people will have with their environment. An occupational situation is experienced as stressful when there is a 'lack of fit' between people and their environment (French, Rogers and Cobb 1974; Van Harrison 1978).

2.4 PERSON-ENVIRONMENT FIT MODEL AND STRESS

French, Rodgers and Cob (1974) at the University of Michigan have elaborated a general model of theoretical relationships between occupational stress and health. Their theory is based on descriptions of motivational processes by Lewin (1951) and Murray (1959). They postulate two types of fit between the individual and the environment. The first type is the extent to which the individual's skills and abilities meet the demands and requirements of his occupation. The second type is the extent to which the occupational environment provides physical, psycho-social, behavioural and economic 'supplies' to meet the individual's needs. They suggest that when misfits of either type threaten the

individual's well-being, various health strains may manifest themselves in the form of neurotic or psychosomatic symptoms.

In this present study, two pre-existing scales will be used to examine this assertion in relation to social work students and practitioners. The first, the GHQ, has been developed by Goldberg (1972) to measure the rate of neurotic symptoms in general populations. The second questionnaire consists of a symptom checklist devised by Otto (1979), and has been used in relation to a number of Australian occupations, particularly teaching.

The basic distinction made from the person-environment fit perspective is the differentiation of the individual from his or her environment. A second basic distinction is made between objects and events as they exist independently of an individual's perception of them and objects and events as perceived by the individual concerned. The objective environment, according to the theory, refers to the environment as it exists independently of the person's perception of it.

The present discussion focuses primarily on the psycho-social environment of a social work course as the objective environment of major interest. The objective environment is causally related to the person's subjective environment (Van Harrison 1978). The objective occupational environment refers to the environment as it exists independently of an individual's appraisal, and includes all occupational aspects irrespective of whether or not they have cognitive relevance for any specific individual. Establishing this objective reality

is problematic and can be subject to competing attempts at reality legitimisation.

Therefore there can be seen to be three approaches to this legitimisation process:

- I. Normative, based on professional expertise: on what management says.
- II. Comparative, based on comparison with other environments and what the consultants and other organisations say.
- III. Cohortive, based on the independently-acquired subjective appraisals of an experiencing cohort that are then analysed to produce a consensual image of the environment.

The subjective environment represents an individual's perceptions of their objective environment. The 'objective person' refers to a person 'as they really are'. This includes an individual's needs and various abilities and other attributes which are more or less enduring. The 'subjective person' refers to the individual's perception of this objective self, effectively an individual's self-concept or self-identity. Thus, the subjective person includes the individual's perceptions of their needs, values, abilities and other attributes. As with the objective and subjective environments, the present discussion is chiefly concerned with those parts of the objective and subjective person that deal with his needs, values, abilities and other characteristics relevant to the work arena - the social work course for social work students and the social work job environment for practitioners.

Otto (1986) offers a useful definition of occupational stress that can assist our understanding of student stress within a social work course and practitioner stress within a social work job environment. According to Otto (1986:2), stress is "a state of unpleasant emotional tension engendered in individuals when they feel

unable to satisfy their needs within their situation of action". An occupational situation is experienced as stressful when there is a 'lack of fit' between people and their environment (French, Rogers and Cobb 1974; Van Harrison 1978).

Therefore the person-environment fit perspective has found wide acceptance among researchers into occupational stress and is consistent with social work values (Germain and Gitterman 1980). Much of its usefulness is attributed to the emphasis it affords the interaction between the characteristics of the individuals concerned and their working environments. It can be seen that from a person-environment fit model perspective, stress arises from the reaction of a person in a situation which is not conducive to meeting his or her needs, fails to match his or her expectations or represents demands which overtax his or her resources.

It follows from the person-environment fit model, that in a given social work course, students may differ in the degree of stress they experience. Lack of fieldwork placement choices, for instance, may not generate stress in those not interested in choosing their fieldwork placement; similarly, specific academic assignment tasks may give satisfaction to one individual with the necessary skills and experience but create anxiety and stress in someone not equally prepared.

Individuals will define a situation as stressful depending on the characteristic way they anticipate, interpret and evaluate events. These evaluations will determine the needs, values and capacities that they will be willing to bring into a situation, and the resources they see themselves as having

at their disposal. It needs to be emphasised, however, that even subjective experiences occur within a structural context. Value orientations are learned, and needs are shaped, by society as well as by a person's position in society in terms of class, sex and historical era - as are the possibilities for need-fulfilment and the chances for discrepancies between situational demands and available resources. Therefore, stress differences amongst social work students may be determined by demographic characteristics as well as by the reasons and influences that shape a student's choice of social work.

The person-environment fit model suggests that satisfaction with an environment and lack of stress is based on the degree of congruence or fit between an individual's needs, capabilities and aspirations and the demands of the environment. As previously stated an individual during his or her lifetime will experience different degrees of fit with their environment. This may not result in any immediate negative consequences to the individual's health, though prolonged lack of fit may result in physical and psychological distress (Otto 1986). As Van Harrison (1978:178) has noted:

A job is stressful to the extent that it does not provide supplies to meet the individual's motives and to the extent that the abilities of the individual fall below demands of the job which are prerequisite to receiving supplies. In both cases, the individual's needs and values will not be met by supplies in the job environment.

The person-environment fit model is particularly useful in defining occupational stress as it relates to students in a social work course, since it provides a way of assessing the match between students' needs and values and the

course characteristics, and any resulting physical and psychological distress. It is also useful for social work practitioners as it allows an examination of fit between practitioners' need and values and the social work job environment in which they work.

That such physical and psychological distress may exist in Australian social work students and practitioners is indicated by Smith and Boss (1982:16), who found in a study of 500 new graduates that:

Disillusionment, frustration and feelings of inadequacy are reported by a substantial number just six months after graduation. Even allowing for the usual adjustment to real life after student hood there is enough evidence to give concern for them as individuals as well as professionals. Causes of the frustration and stress lie not only with the ethos they are operating in, type of job, cynical attitudes of colleagues, conditions of work ... but also the lack of realistic preparation by the tertiary institutions for real working life.

Van Harrison (1978) makes several important distinctions and causal connections in his explanation of the theory of person-environment fit. Three of these distinctions are useful in shaping our understanding of the effect of social work course climate on social work student stress, and social work job environment on practitioner stress. The first includes a basic differentiation between the person and the environment; the second distinguishes between the subjective and the objective environments; and the third draws a distinction between the objective and the subjective person.

The objective environment is the environment as it exists independently of the person's perception of it, and includes all objects and events that do not come into contact with any individual, as well as those that do. The subjective environment consists of those objects and events as they are perceived by that person; it represents a psychological construction of the world in which he or she lives. The subjective environment also includes a perception of the various kinds of supplies available to meet his or her needs, and a knowledge of the demands and expectations made upon him or her to perform in certain ways before those supplies are made accessible. Van Harrison's description of subjective environment within an organisational context is consistent with the first three types of climate defined by Rousseau (1988): psychological, aggregate and collective.

Van Harrison's (1978) objective environment and Glick's (1985) organisational environment can, within the context of the social setting of a social work course, be treated as the same construct. Similarly when viewed from a social work practitioners' perspective, the social work job environment can be seen as both the organisational environment and the objective environment. Therefore the person-environment fit perspective and organisational climate perspective are consistent in their treatment of perceptions of organisational reality.

To reiterate, the objective person refers to the individual as he or she 'really is' and consists of those attributes that are relatively enduring and predictable, such as needs, values and abilities. The subjective person is the

individual's perception of the objective self, that is, his or her self-concept, self-identity and professional self-image. It is this subjective social work student's values and their fit with the student's perception of those held by the idealised social worker that will be the focus of this study.

From these distinctions, Van Harrison (1978) has identified two concepts: objective person-environment fit and subjective person-environment fit. Objective person-environment fit deals with the fit between the objective person and the objective environment, and subjective person-environment fit deals with the fit between the subjective person and the subjective environment. These two basic conceptualisations inform how the person-environment perspective will be used in the present study. First, the person is differentiated from the surrounding occupational environment: the social work course climate or the social work job climate. This climate will be treated as both objective and subjective. Second, a basic distinction is made between objects and events and how they exist independently of an individual's cognitive appraisal, and objects and events which are products of an individual's appraisal.

It is the subjective person-environment fit that is of primary interest to this research. As defined, the objective occupational environment refers to the environment as it exists independently of an individual's appraisal, and includes occupational aspects that do and do not have cognitive relevance to any specific individual. In the context of this study, Van Harrison's objective environment will be treated, drawing on the argument of Glick (1985), as synonymous with the

objective social work course climate or the objective social work job environment. The climate that this part of the research questions examines, therefore, is the aggregate climate.

Two types of person-environment fit have been identified by Van Harrison (1978). The first type is the extent to which the person's skills and abilities match the demands and requirements of a job. The second kind is the extent to which a job environment provides supplies to meet an individual's needs. When misfit of either type occurs, stress will result.

Whether a person achieves harmony with their environment depends very much on the resources, demands and opportunities available in the environment, and the individual's needs, capabilities and aspirations. A good fit occurs when the work environment meets the person's needs. A good degree of person-environment fit, which corresponds according to the person-environment fit model to low stress and high work environmental satisfaction, is not only a useful theoretical concept but can also be measured for social work students and practitioners. To illustrate, the degree of fit can be measured using a person-environment fit questionnaire, with such questions as, 'How important to you is variety in the tasks you do?', or, 'How important to you is not having periods where there is not much to do?'

French et al. (1974) suggests that a degree of person-environment fit can be determined both objectively and subjectively. He sees the objective person-environment fit as referring to the fit between the objective person and the objective environment, that is, a fit independent of the individual's perception of it. Such a measure is highly dubious and, as French (1974) himself points out, such a fit can only be determined when there is some agreed conceptual dimension by which to measure both the person's needs and the environmental demands. Subjective person-environment fit refers to the fit between the subjective person and the subjective environment, that is, the individual's perception of his own environmental fit. Person-environment fit represents the interaction of the person and the environment rather than its outcome.

Some authors use person-environment fit measures to represent occupational stress rather than to predict it. For example, Porter (1961) and Solocum and Strawser (1973) define occupational satisfaction as the extent to which the occupational environment provides opportunities to meet the person's higher order needs. The greater the congruence the more satisfied the person was defined as being. However, Moss (1973) points out that most theories about stress distinguish between person-environment situations and responses to those situations.

This study, in agreement with most studies using person-environment fit measures, follows the view that poor person-environment fit causes strain rather than represents it. This formulation of an imbalance between environmental

demands and response capability needs and values is an ecological one. It is based on the understanding that these are specific demands on a particular individual and that they relate to that individual's particular capability to meet them. Most importantly, and perhaps pointing to both the strength and the weakness of the person-environment fit model, is its emphasis on perceived demands, perceived capabilities and perceived consequences if demands are not met.

However, several authors, for example Atkinson (1964), Feather (1975) and Lazarus (1966) point out that the expectation of inadequate supplies for need value attainment will result in motor arousal given insufficient supplies. To quote W.I. Thomas' (1928:572) famous theorem: 'If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences'. An individual predicts future events on the basis of present circumstances and past experience. The stress on an individual can become tension if it does not provide, or threatens not to provide, the necessary resources to meet the goals that the individual seeks.

Although Campbell et al. (1970) sees the person-environment fit theory as a mechanical process theory it, nevertheless, attempts to conceptualise relationships between forces acting on the individual. These relationships apply to forces resulting from any number of motives such as physical needs, achievement needs, self-actualisation needs or needs for consistency in one's cognitive view of the world. A motivational theory (Barron and Greenberg 1995) typically identifies goals or states which the individual strives to attain. Such goals typically involve the individual's requirements for continued subsistence as well as for being a

member of a group which individuals have learnt to value through socialisation. Similarly, the attainment of goals is generally associated with the maintenance and enhancement of the well-being of the individual. The job characteristics model provides a framework with its five critical job dimensions of skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback to identify the type of needs and values that might be expected among social work students and practitioners.

A distinction can be made between the demands of the work arena and the rewards offered by the work arena. Misfit between the person and the environment may also be described in terms of dimensions representing job demands and individual abilities (French 1971, Lofquist and Davis 1969). These dimensions reflect the requirements of the occupation. A job is stressful to the extent that it does not meet the individual's aspirations and to the extent that an individual's abilities do not meet the demands of the job. Such psychological and physical strains typically result in job dissatisfaction. As the individual experiences various occupation-related strains over a period of time, his efforts to counter them may result in various kinds of cumulative illness (Cox 1982).

Such illness can include psychological health problems and these types of problems can be illustrated by reference to the GHQ questionnaire designed by Goldberg (1978 and 1988). Questions in the GHQ include, 'Have you recently lost sleep over worry?' and 'Have you recently felt you couldn't overcome your difficulties?'. Similarly, poor person-environment fit can give rise to a wide range of somatic symptoms. In this study these somatic symptoms relate to such

questions as, ‘Over the last three months have you had migraines, dizzy spells, problems with indigestion, problems with constipation?’ This gives rise to an empirical hypothesis that a person with low person-environment fit will show higher rates of physical and psychological distress than those who have a high person-environment fit. Person-environment fit is defined as the amount of congruence between a social work student or practitioner needs and the resources offered by their broader course or work environment. In this study, well-being has been operationally defined as rating low scores on the GHQ questionnaire and Otto’s Symptom Checklist questionnaire (see Sections 3.2.7 and 3.2.8).

2.5 PROFESSIONAL SOCIALISATION

Professional socialisation has been defined as the process by which people acquire the attitudes and values as well as the interests, skills and knowledge- in short the culture- of the groups in which they seek to become a member (Merton 1957). Anderson and Western (1976) considered this process to have three phases:

- I. The pre-training phase, where an individual acquires two sets of related values - societal and professional - which may predispose them toward entrance into some particular profession. This phase will be explored in this study’s examination of reasons and influence on students’ choice of social work as a career.
- II. The training phase, corresponding to the formal education phase where knowledge and technical skills are interrelated with attitudes and values towards the development of the professional self. It is the final stage of this phase that this study will explore in relation to social work students.

III. The post-training phase, where the individual leaves the training institution, learns new specialised technical skills and acquires new values in response to employment demands and expectations of the professional body. This phase will be explored with our social work practitioner sample.

Brief et al. (1979) have divided Anderson and Western's (1976) third phase into two parts. The first part can be called the adjustment phase, and the second part the maintenance phase. Brief et al. have argued that the adjustment phase of socialisation occurs particularly in the first year of employment as a new professional and immediately before and after graduation. Professional training courses like social work have a large fieldwork component especially in the final year. In such courses the distinctions between the stages may be much more blurred than Anderson and Western or Brief et al. have suggested. It is argued that issues that relate to the adjustment phase could well be present in the latter part of the final year of a social work course.

Brief et al.(1979:161) state that:

The degree of role stress experienced by an organisational member during the ... adjustment phase of socialisation, is a part of a function of the incongruity between his/her definition of the role and the definition of the role centres in the employing organisation.

According to Brief et al., in the final phase of professional socialisation the major aim is role management, with individuals imposing their own definitions of the roles they occupy and negotiating or modifying the roles to fit both the expectations of role definers and their own need values. In other words, Brief et

al. are arguing for maximisation of person-environment fit. However, in this case the person-environment fit is not with the work arena but the fit or congruence of the person with the professional role.

In a comprehensive review of socialisation literature, McArthur (1975) commented that the majority of studies have focused essentially on two major sequences in the professional socialisation process. These are the anticipatory socialisation phase, which approximates Anderson and Western's phase two, and the reality shock phase, which roughly approximates Anderson and Western's (1976) phase three, but is more closely associated with the adjustment phase of Brief et al. (1979). McArthur sees anticipatory socialisation and reality shock as interrelated stages in the on-going process of professional socialisation. Anticipatory socialisation is seen by McArthur as a clearly defined and structural stage when a profession requires prospective members to acquire certain specialised skills and knowledge and to develop professional role orientations. These role expectations are based on the individual's perceptions of the professional self-image.

McArthur (1975) has indicated that both these two sequences, anticipatory socialisation and the reality shock-adjustment phase, have been researched in relation to a range of professions. These studies confirm that each phase is significant in the professional socialisation process, although their relative significance varies amongst the professions, as does their effect on attitude change. Dornbusch (1955) has suggested that the inclusion of practical

experience in the formal training process has a tendency to lessen the subsequent impact of reality shock; that is, “a formal process of training which is characterised by a shift from idealism to realism” (Smith and Boss 1982:28). The literature supports the view that reality shock or the adjustment phase is the more significant phase (McArthur 1975).

It is in the adjustment phase that the newly trained professional is exposed to bureaucratic pressures and the professional reference group, both of which act as instruments of socialisation. Distinctions between professional reference groups and bureaucratic pressures, and related concepts of professional and bureaucratic socialisation, in the adjustment phase of career socialisation for a highly bureaucratised profession such as social work may be almost impossible for a practitioner to make. Smith (1982) suggests this, arguing that there is no meaningful distinction between professional reference group and bureaucratic career pressures, firstly, since senior social workers' roles are mainly administrative and, secondly, since the actual definitions of what a social worker is and what social workers do, are not clear in practice settings.

2.6 IDEALISED PROFESSIONALISM AND COMMITMENT

The terms 'professional' and 'commitment' have been used in a variety of ways. Professional commitment has been defined for the purposes of this study as the extent to which a person has a strong desire to remain a member of a profession, is willing to exert high levels of effort for the profession, and believes and accepts the values and goals of the profession. It is on this last aspect of

professional commitment that this study is concentrating, viz the degree of congruence between a student's values and those of the idealised social worker as portrayed in the literature.

In this context it will be argued that the values of the idealised social worker as portrayed in the literature are consistent with the service ethic. Social work students who hold a professional self-image congruent with the values and goals promoted by the profession are seen as committed. Later, it will also be argued that these values and goals relate to a service ethic consistent with a client-concerned career orientation indicative of a generative (generalised caring) personality style. Whether all social workers actually have a service ethic is questioned by Boreham, Pemberton and Wilson (1976:9-10) :

... the claims by professionals that they direct their services to the benefit of the general community are institutionalised in codes of ethics and are a significant factor responsible for the status accorded to them. There is little evidence, however, to support the validity of claims that professionals are more concerned with, and sensitive to, community welfare than are members of other occupational groups. This is not a surprising conclusion, though the primacy of the 'service ethic' in the rhetoric of professional ideologies poses the question of the motives associated with retaining exclusive controls over socially significant areas of occupational activity ... social workers have been charged with virtually deliberately disengaging themselves from contact with the indigent, who may require their help, while actively recruiting a more prestigious middle-class clientele.

It is useful at this point to clarify the concept 'professional', as it is central to the understanding of professional socialisation and commitment as these constructs relate to the occupation of social work.

In the social work literature there has been a long debate about the status of the profession (Epstein 1970; McDougall 1970; Hamilton 1974). Toren (1972) has argued that, with the proliferation of professions in modern society, it is more constructive to consider degrees of professionalisation of an occupation on a continuum of professionalism. She suggests that social work is a semi-profession possessing some, but not all, of the characteristics of a profession in varying degrees: for example, social work does not have a systematic, theoretical base, nor does it have a monopoly of control over its members. Its claim to professional status rests strongly on its commitment to values that are consistent with the service ethic.

In Australia, social workers and the title of social work have no legislative protection that exists for other professions like medicine and psychology. The Australian Association of Social Workers is a body social workers may join if they wish. There is no obligation to join and, unlike the professional associations governing the practice of law and medicine, for instance, it has no power to impose formal sanction for professional malpractice, such as deregistration. Smith and Sandford (1980) found that amongst recent Australian social work graduates most had negative attitudes towards their professional association, with

over 80% of nearly 500 new graduates reporting that they were not, nor did they plan to become, members.

Generally, then, professionalisation can be viewed as an end state toward which certain occupations are moving and at which others have arrived. Bollmer and Mills (1966:7-8) suggest:

... that the concept of professionalisation be used to refer to the dynamic process whereby many occupations can be observed to change certain crucial characteristics in the direction of a profession.

If Bollmer and Mill's (1966) position is accepted, then the definition of what a profession is becomes a matter of pin-pointing what these crucial characteristics are. Such models, which are more or less abstract, abound in the literature, but can be seen to be inadequate in a number of ways. First, such models implicitly accept as their starting-point that there are, or at least have been in the past, true professions which exhibit to some degree all the essential elements. There is an assumption that social work is working towards or has attained this ideal. The 'ideal type', as it is sometimes referred to, is abstracted from the known characteristics of the existing occupations (medicine and law) which are taken as the classical cases.

Greenwood (1957), perhaps the most quoted authority in this area, illustrates this process when he argued that social work possessed the main attributes of a profession; although it was less highly developed than the established professions such as medicine and law:

When we hold up social work against the model of the professions presented above, it does not take long to decide whether to classify it within the professional or the nonprofessional occupations. Social work is already a profession; it has too many points of congruence with the model to be classifiable otherwise. Social work is, however, seeking to rise within the professional hierarchy, so that it, too, might enjoy maximum prestige, authority, and monopoly which presently belong to a few top professions. (Greenwood, 1957:54)

An unexplored problem for the professional socialisation process in social work is the predominance of trait approaches in the social work education process. In trait approaches the ideal, the 'what-ought-to-be', is assumed to be a possible or even an essential element of being a professional social worker. In social work literature, this problem is illustrated in Compton and Galaway (1984), where the professional social worker and the ideal helper are assumed to be synonymous, linked by common core attributes such as altruistic service, an extreme representation of the service ethic. Such trait perspectives can give rise to the problem of distinguishing between the levels of prescriptive or descriptive analysis used. While some writers may claim that altruism and emotional concern for clients is characteristic of the occupational role of social work, it is not always clear whether altruistic motivation is also imputed to professional social workers as a core element of their professionalism. While the service ethic may be an important part of the ideology of social work and other occupational groups, it is far from clear that its practitioners are necessarily so motivated in practice. The problem in this approach for the professional socialisation of social work students is expressed in the following question: if the social worker is not motivated by

altruism, as expressed in the service ethic, can he or she then be said to be acting as a professional?

Trait theory easily falls into the error of accepting the professionals' own idealised definition of themselves and using this to define how their occupational roles ought to be carried out in practice. This, it will be argued, has occurred in social work, where authors such as Simpkin (1979) use professionalism as an ideal towards which the social worker is striving and, as such, is more a statement of an idealised professional role than a description of reality. If such is the case, then any discussion about professional socialisation in social work may reflect this confusion as to whether the levels of analysis are prescriptive or descriptive. Is it aiming towards an ideal social worker or is it referring to the existing practice of the social work community? Many writers seem to be unclear about whether they are exploring practice in an ideal professional community or in an already existing community of professionals (Simpkin 1979).

The concept of a professional community, like 'professionalism', may be more evocative of an ideal than descriptive of the actual practice of social workers (Smith and Boss 1982). Therefore, professionalisation as commonly used in social work literature may be an idealised concept of professionalism as a client-concerned career orientation which places emphasis on caring, altruism, and community commitment.

Central to the concept of professional socialisation is the construct of professional culture (Merton 1957; Anderson and Western 1968). Professional

culture has been seen to comprise both cognitive elements, the skills, techniques and knowledge of the profession, and evaluative aspects, the profession's attitudes, values and norms.

From this perspective, the study of professionalisation is simply reduced to an examination of how a new professional learns and internalises the culture of the profession (Anderson and Western 1968). Such a limited approach may ignore the possibility that a professional culture may consist of a number of competing cognitive evaluative profiles. As a consequence, new recruits may find their attitudes and opinions at variance with the dominant values of their profession. This lack of congruence with the idealised professional values may be a source of stress amongst social work students. Boreham and Pemberton (1978:22) suggest:

... the enculturation process may be neither a smooth nor a happy time for the recruit - beliefs and skills acquired in the earlier years may conflict with what he is expected to think or do in later training or practice.

Holmas (1965) has stated that it is the professionalism inherent in occupations such as social work that prevents the development of a client-detached career orientation. Holmas saw it as inconsistent that a client-detached career orientation could coexist with the development of a professional self-image. He felt that the work arena only reinforces the latter. The work arena for this study includes the social work course environment for social work students as well as the social work practice environment for social work practitioners. This assertion by Holmas will be critically examined, both from the perspective of social work education and practice being located within bureaucratic settings as well as from the emerging literature on social work burnout. It will be suggested

that such bureaucratic settings may not only provide an environment where a client-detached orientation is more likely to develop but also be rewarded as a specific coping response that reduces stress both for social work students and practitioners (Macoby 1977).

2.7 PHASES OF PROFESSIONAL SOCIALISATION

Part of the anticipatory phase of professional socialisation includes the mechanisms by which the entrants adopt the particular set of principles which guide them into practice. For professions such as social work, where membership of a professional organisation is not mandatory in order to practise, these principles are usually implicitly assumed or explicitly taught as being an integral part of practice.

Biestek (1973), in relation to casework, emphasised the principles of individualising the processes of care given by the social workers, the controlled emotional involvement of the worker and the right of the clients to determine their own life styles. The fundamental general value underlying all social work is a concern for people, particularly reflected through respect for the individual. However, as has also been stated, the collective values of social work are not specific to it. Nonetheless it is “the interrelationship of the consolidation of values, purpose, principles, knowledge, and methods, which is said to give social work its unique character” (Smith and Sanford 1980:6).

Despite social work education's almost obsessive concern with values, relatively little conceptual or empirical work has been attempted to clarify the distinction between the ideal and the real values within social work. Most research attempted to clarify the distinctive nature of social work values (Miller 1968; Chamberlain 1975) or the values that are necessary for social work in a democratic society (McCormick 1975, Pilsecker 1978). All these attempts fall within a trait approach to social work values, with an implied ideal social worker. Some research has focused on the acquisition of values by intending social workers and the place of social work educational experience in this (Varley 1963).

It is in the anticipatory phase of professional socialisation that most of the empirical work has taken place. Hayes and Varley (1965) studied changes in students' value orientation between beginning and ending the educational process. This was measured by the similarity of graduating social workers' values and those of beginning students and practising social workers. The authors concluded that changes in values did take place during the educational process. However, these were principally sex-linked, with men's values changing more than women's. At the end of graduation there was greater similarity of social work graduates' values when compared with those of practising social workers' values. On the other hand, the data seemed to suggest that social work graduates' values in fact continue to changed considerably after graduation when they undertake work experience.

These results were to some extent substantiated by McLeod and Myer (1967), using different measurement procedures. However, it is clear from both studies that there are differences in interpretation as to the values being studied and the assumption of a core of values which were common and present over a period of time. There is also the assumption, a common error of the trait perspective, that values measured as idealised statements are strong predictors of practice actions. Therefore, there is a need for a study to examine social work students' values as they relate to practice consequences - that is, instrumental values.

The studies of Hayes and Varley (1965), McLeod and Myer (1967) and Neikrug (1978) represent a focus on terminal values. Channon (1974) is concerned with instrumental values; his study of social workers' values and orientations in specific situations to some extent meets this need to concentrate on terminal values. He says that values may not operate as direct identities, and in a variety of combinations they may change over time, much like the operation of attitudes.

The first years of professional development may be the most important for the formation of attitudes and values. Becker et al. (1961), in their classic study of the socialisation of medical students, argued that formal training plays a relatively minor role in the formation of professional perspectives. They argued that the forces that come into play following graduation were more important. They suggested that the student role socialises the novice into being a student as

much as it socialises the novice into being a professional. If physicians become less idealistic and more cynical then they may do so primarily in response to the environmental constraints they confront when they leave their training school and become practising physicians.

The change in attitudes and values that occurs during the early part of a professional career may therefore be less than desirable in relation to the proclaimed values of the profession, especially one such as social work which places a high emphasis on its altruistic orientation and its commitment to a caring orientation and practice. Hall and Schneider (1973), in their extensive study of the career development of priests, found that new priests became less idealistic, more realistic and less enthusiastic about creating change in the church and more aware of the inter-personal and political aspects of their work, including problems with other priests and laity. They also found that self-esteem and job satisfaction tended to decline during the earlier years of the priest's career. Their data suggest that it is the first year of a priest's career that is especially critical to subsequent career development. They argue that the professional self-image grows at a faster rate during this period than in subsequent years. What happens to priests during this time was found by these authors to be associated with levels of commitment to the service ethic and the priesthood.

An initial decline in job satisfaction and self-esteem has also been found in primary school teachers, and there is a tendency for professionals to become more resistant to change and experimentation and more preoccupied with

technique and procedure, often losing sight of the larger purpose and meaning in much of their work (Anderson 1976; Sarason 1975).

Compton and Galaway (1984) have suggested that this trend is a reflection of the professional's adopting a bureaucratic attitude. The nature of attitude change differs according to the professional group. In a comparative research project on professional students, Eron (1958) found that medical students became more cynical about life during their training, but law students did not. Medical and nursing students became less humanitarian, but law students did not. The attitudes formed as a result of becoming professional can even overcome the effects of earlier socialisation. It could be that the difference in attitude change between nurses, doctors and lawyers reflects environmental conditions in which a client-detached orientation is rewarded.

McCulloch et al. (1972) found that positive attitudes were negatively correlated with experience. Thus workers who had been in practice for longest tended to hold the most neutral to negative attitudes. Newly trained graduates and those with two years or less experience held the more positive attitudes. McCulloch found that the more intractable the client's problems the less positive were the attitudes of social workers in terms of liking for, amount of time spent with, and estimation of what could be done to help the client. In other words there was less cognitive concern and effective attachment toward clients with intractable problems. These three elements were taken by McCulloch to represent the effective action tendency and culture components which together form

attitudes. McCulloch's findings suggest that social work practitioners with greater experience will have a more negative attitude towards clients.

In a series of experiments and empirical research projects, Christie and Geis (1970) concluded that an unconcerned, client-detached orientation (which they called Machiavellian) tends to be adopted when rewards or outcomes are not tied to objectively defined performances but can be influenced by the way the situation is handled. These are role relationships in which neither an external authority nor the structure of the situation itself dictated exactly what others were obliged to do or required to refuse. Such situations can be postulated to occur more probably in medicine, nursing and social work than in law, which has more formalised guidelines to follow. It could be argued that social work, more than any of the other professions, has the greatest flexibility and ambiguity in the performance of its tasks. Commonly, social workers work in loosely structured situations in which they have relatively greater freedom to improvise than do many other professions.

As opposed to the more traditional accounts of professional socialisation, the above studies suggest that once young professionals enter into a bureaucratic setting they may be socialised towards a client-detached unconcerned orientation which is inconsistent with the professed client-attached concerned orientation of social work.

It is postulated that the social work literature supports the contention that a committed professional social worker would hold a client-centred career

orientation, which is an expression of a caring personality style within an organisational environment. This caring personality style is in keeping with the putative service ethic of the profession. While there may be a general agreement in the social work literature that the idealised social worker would hold a caring personality style, it is unclear whether in social work practice this personality style does in fact operate.

2.8 BURNOUT, COPING AND PERSON-ENVIRONMENT FIT

These studies on professional socialisation are consistent with Cherniss' (1980) research and have implications for the professional socialisation of social work students: firstly, in their professional commitment to the service ethic and, secondly, in the change from a 'concerned-attached' client orientation to a 'detached unconcerned' client orientation as a mode of palliative coping with occupational stress. If there is movement from a client-concerned attached orientation to a client-detached unconcerned one, it could be part of the attitude change that occurs with the burnout syndrome as a response to stress due to a low level of person-environment fit.

The term burnout has been used in many different ways. Cherniss (1980:6) notes that the common dictionary definition is "to fail, wear out, or become exhausted by making excessive demands on energy, strength or resources". This definition suggests that burnout is the state of emotional exhaustion related to overload and used thus is adequately covered by the concept of occupational stress. However, those who have studied and written about burnout have not been content with this dictionary definition. They include in

their definitions certain changes in attitude and behaviour that occur in response to excessive occupational stress.

Burnout is seen as an increasingly serious problem affecting professionals in the human services. The term 'burnout' has been applied in various ways and is difficult to differentiate from other terms such as alienation, indifference, apathy, cynicism, discouragement, mental and physical exhaustion and being over-stressed (Zastrow, 1984).

Freudenberger (1974) believes burnout is characterised by people failing and wearing out. They become exhausted by making excessive demands upon their energy and resources. Burnout can lead to progressive fatigue, tendency to tire easily, disturbed sleep, lack of energy, appetite changes, susceptibility to infection, headaches, gastroenterital conditions, backaches and painful neck conditions. Pines Kafry and Aronson (1981) speak of physical exhaustion as evidenced by chronic fatigue, nausea, accident proneness and sleep problems; they see emotional exhaustion as manifested by a lower self-concept, a dehumanising attitude towards clients and increasing rigidity. Basically the individual becomes too somatically involved with his own bodily functions. There is general consensus that symptoms of burnout include attitudinal, physical and emotional components. In general, burnout can be conceptualised as a function of stresses engendered by individual, work-related and societal factors. Burnout is a process that happens over a period of time; it is not an event that occurs suddenly.

Maslach (1976) defined burnout as the loss of concern for the people with whom one is working in response to occupational stress. According to Maslach, many things can happen when occupational stress becomes excessive. Burnout refers to one particular kind of response: the tendency to treat clients in a detached, mechanical fashion.

Maslach (1976) has proposed that professionals who experience stress in their relationships with clients employ detachment mechanisms. These include the use of derogatory labels for clients and impersonal and superficial communication with them, going by the book or following a set of formulae in working with clients, thinking of clients in terms of clinical labels and diagnostic categories, and sarcastic humour. She argues that these detachment mechanisms, in protecting the professional from guilt, frustration and anger, are psychological defence or coping mechanisms.

The concept of coping owes much to Lazarus' (1966) *Psychological Stress and the Coping Process*. He considers it as a form of problem-solving in which the stakes are a person's well-being when that person is not entirely certain what to do. According to Lazarus (1966), coping can involve two processes:

- I. Direct action, which refers to actual behaviour aimed at changing the person's relationship with his environment, and takes several forms - anticipation, aggression and escape.
- II. Palliation which is a matter of modifying the distress caused by the experience of stress and reducing its physiological effect.

This may be achieved in several ways. Lazarus (1976) distinguishes between symptom-directed modes and intra-psychic modes. Symptom-directed modes include the use of alcohol, tranquillisers, sedatives, training and muscle relaxation and other body-sensitive needs. Intra-psychic palliation in terms of these mechanisms includes self-talk and cognitive reappraisal.

Therefore, a social work student's or practitioner's coping modes, considered here as consisting in both active problem-solving and palliation, can be seen to reflect the availability of resources which may or may not give rise to the necessary adaptive strengths to actively maintain the service ethic.

Burnout as an attitudinal change can be seen as a particular mode of defence to occupational stress, and reflects an inability to maintain the synthesis of caring or generativity. According to Lazarus and Launier (1978), a situation characterised by high ambiguity, conflict and helplessness will favour the use of withdrawal and intra-psychic defence. It is argued that such conditions may occur in social work courses and bureaucratically-organised human service programs. As a consequence, these social work courses and programs may not create an environment which encourages the formation and maintenance of a service ethic, but due to the lack of institutionalised values specifically related to this, these environments may indeed encourage burnout. It will be argued in the remainder of this chapter that a social worker who manifests burnout symptoms is less able to engage in effective social work practice and one with a strong service ethic is

more likely, provided they have appropriate skills and organisational support, to engage in effective social work practice.

Pines and Kafry (1978) have identified both internal and external sources of stress among practitioners. Internal factors include the individual characteristics a person brings to his job. These include such things as motivations, needs, values, self esteem, personal expressiveness and control and personal style. These internal characteristics determine how the individual handles external sources of emotional stress. External factors include such things as the emotional intensity of involvement with other people, lack of positive feedback from managers and poor peer contact in the job setting. Therefore, when examining stress it is necessary to examine organisational factors in the environment as well as individual factors. Some of these organisational factors have been discussed previously in the discussion of the job characteristics model (see Section 2.2).

Pines, Kafry and Aronson (1981) suggest that people who enter human service careers have traits that make them vulnerable to stresses inherent in their profession. They postulate that some practitioners' reasons for entering human service professions may include seeking to overcome feelings of worthlessness. There appears to be general agreement that burnout-prone individuals are empathic, sensitive, humane, dedicated and 'people oriented'.

Cherniss (1980) has focussed on changes in motivation and has defined burnout as the psychological withdrawal from work in response to excessive

stress. Burnout has been used by him to refer to situations in which what was formerly a calling becomes merely a job. In other words, for Cherniss the term connotes a loss of enthusiasm, excitement and a sense of mission in one's work - a loss of the service ethic. Kager (1981) has used the term as synonymous with self-alienation. Burnout, then, can be seen to represent a separation or withdrawal from the original meaning or purpose of a professional's work, in other words a loss of professional commitment to the service ethic.

Taken together, these previous definitions and interpretation of burnout suggest burnout can be conceptualised as a transactional process. More specifically, drawing these themes together from the literature, the burnout phenomenon may therefore be conceptualised as a process consisting of three stages:

- I. The first stage involves an imbalance between a person's resources and the demands placed upon him, indicating that there is a misfit between the person and his environment.
- II. The second stage is the immediate short term emotional response to this imbalance, characterised by feelings of anxiety, tension, fatigue and exhaustion.
- III. The third stage consists of a number of changes in attitude and behaviour resulting in a tendency to treat clients in a detached, unconcerned and mechanical fashion and a cynical preoccupation with the gratification of one's own needs. This represents a loss of professional commitment to the service ethic.

Burnout as used here refers to a transactional process consisting of a high level of occupational stress issuing in physical and psychological symptoms with

subsequent psychological accommodation. Specifically, burnout can now be defined as a process of loss of commitment to the service ethic. The social worker disengages from an unrewarding situation in response to occupational stress and strain, loses the ability to maintain a cognitively concerned and affectively attached orientation towards clients, and increasingly adopts a client-detached unconcerned orientation that is indicative of lack of commitment to the service ethic.

2.9 BURNOUT, VALUES OF THE IDEALISED SOCIAL WORKER AND THE SERVICE ETHIC

If this stress-coping-adaptation view of the burnout process is valid, one would predict a positive relationship between the amount of stress experienced by a social work student in a social work course with a bureaucratic climate, and the degree of attitude change from a client-attached concerned orientation to a client detached unconcerned one. Though such a relationship has not been explicitly explored within the professional socialisation literature there is a strong suggestion that such a process takes place in the burnout and coping literature.

Burnout as a coping mode can be seen more as a matter of intra-psychic palliation. Pearlin's (1978) discussion of coping makes a distinction between three factors - social resources, psychological resources and specific coping responses. Resources refer not to what people do, but to what is available to them in the development of their coping strategies. A social work student can be seen as being exposed to a series of environmental resources that either encourage or

discourage the development of a cognitively concerned and affectively attached client orientation.

Certain kinds of climates will tend to promote reliance on certain coping modes (Lazarus and Launier 1978). These can be characterised into four broad processes:

- I. Climates characterised by high ambiguity or uncertainty will tend to favour decrease in direct action and increase in information seeking. If this information seeking fails to reduce ambiguity, intra-psycho mode may come to be emphasised. For instance, the individual may simply try to avoid thinking about the situation and its potentially harmful consequences.
- II. A severe degree of stress will usually lead to more desperate and primitive modes of coping, such as the panic, rage and confused thinking which have been reported in relation to attitude changes associated with burnout.
- III. A climate characterised by high conflict will tend to immobilise direct action and lead instead to intra-psycho defence measures.
- IV. Helplessness also immobilises direct action; if the individual perceives no way of dealing with a situation directly then intra-psycho mechanisms modes of defence again will dominate his approach/reaction.

Burnout as an attitudinal change can be seen as a particular mode of defence against occupational stress and reflects an inability to maintain a professional commitment to the service ethic. According to Lazarus and Launier (1978), a climate characterised by high ambiguity, conflict, and helplessness will favour the use of withdrawal and intra-psycho defence. The use of withdrawal

and intra-psychic defence is consistent with the development of a Machiavellian orientation as defined by Christie and Geis (1970).

Social work as an occupation is involved in what traditionally may have been seen as the role of family and friends. By becoming a paid occupation it has, of necessity, carried an exchange mentality into this area. This is due to its being created by a culture that has 'institutionalised' caring and, by institutionalising it, privatised and depoliticised it. A consequence of this has been the delegitimising of caring and sacrifice as part of the identity formation process in post-capitalist societies (Lasch 1979).

Green (1982) has argued that most Human Service Organisations are organised along bureaucratic lines. Weber (1947) held that what is central to bureaucracy is specialisation and the standardisation of tasks and the rational allocation or assignment of these tasks in accordance with an overall plan. Collective tasks may thus be broken down into component tasks which are means to a collective end. Two assumptions underlie such a concept. The first is that there is something approaching a clear, consistent, complete and generally agreed-upon definition of the ultimate end towards which the organisation is working, and the second is that the end is achievable through standardised means. While there is general agreement that social work education courses are organised along bureaucratic lines there is little agreement on the ultimate end of the training process or on the exact nature of professional social work, or whether the desired ends can be met through standardised means.

Maslach (1976) has suggested the petty bureaucrat as the prototype of someone who is suffering burnout. This person does not have to get involved with clients or take responsibility for unpopular or painful decisions, because he or she just applies a formula rather than developing a personalised solution to a given case. The petty bureaucrat is cognitively detached and affectively unconcerned about his or her clients. This burnout attitude can be seen as a reflection of successful bureaucratic socialisation. Specifically, burnout can now be defined as a process by which a previously committed social worker disengages from his or her work in response to occupational stress and strain. In other words, a social worker has lost commitment to the values of the profession manifested in the service ethic.

Thirty-five years ago Blau (1960) discussed social workers' attitude towards clients in a public agency. His conclusion, using a psychodynamic perspective, supports the concept of burnout as a coping mechanism and offers some insight into the problem of maintaining the service ethic in social work:

These findings suggest that peer group support served to absorb some of the impact of reality shock. The unintegrated worker, without such social support, experienced the full force of reality shock, which constrained him to shield his ego by developing a hardened attitude towards clients. Ego support from integrative relations with peers made a worker less vulnerable, enabling him to cope with disagreeable experiences without feeling threatened and thus reducing his need for protecting his ego by becoming indifferent towards clients. (Blau 1960:351)

Erikson (1964) has discussed the importance of the generalised generativity of institutions and suggested that when institutions actively contribute to the strength of the young, they in turn receive energy and devotion from the young. In other words, when institutions extend a generalised caring function to employees, as well as to clients, it is more likely that workers within the organisation will also hold such a value orientation. According to Erikson (1964:155-156), there is a

... mutual activation and replenishment between the virtues emerging in each individual life-cycle and the strengths of human institutions. In whatever way we may learn to demonstrate this, virtue in the individual and the spirit of institutions have evolved together, are one and the same strength ... without them (the virtues and strengths of youth) institutions wilt; for without the spirit of institutions pervading the patterns of care, love, institution and training, no virtue could emerge from the sequence of generations.

The burnout literature assumes that social workers have a cognitively attached and affectively concerned orientation towards clients, especially at the early stage of the adjustment phase. The literature also suggests that the bureaucratic organisation of welfare settings does not reward this orientation but, on the contrary, engenders a progressive movement towards a cognitively detached, affectively unconcerned orientation towards clients. Such an orientation, it has been argued, is not compatible with a professional commitment to the service ethic. Another way to conceptualise the service ethic is to see it as a generalised generative orientation:

Generativity is primarily the interest in establishing and guiding the next generation.... The principal thing is to realise that this is a stage of growth of the healthy personality and that where such enrichment fails ... an obsessive need for the pseudo-intimacy takes place, often with a pervading sense of stagnation and interpersonal impoverishment. Individuals who do not develop generativity often begin to indulge themselves as if they were their own one and only child (Erikson 1980:103).

Our age is perhaps an age characterised by a failure to maintain generativity, an age where people have regressed to being their one and only child, seeking pseudo-intimacy in an environment which Sennet (1977) has called 'a destructive Gemeinschaft', where a peculiar kind of exchange mentality has entered into intimate relationships where the social personality is a highly valued commodity. Lasch (1979) has called this 'Cultural Narcissism'.

Certain occupations within industrialised society can be seen to have a generative function. Of these, one which lays a ready claim is social work, at least at the level of its professed value base. At this level, while an occupation at an espoused level may well take a generative orientation, its practitioners, especially young adults, may not in fact hold a generative value orientation. In practice, due to the lack of institutionalised values at a cultural level, meaningfully corresponding to the main crisis in their ego development, they may regress from or fail to attain a generative position. Phrased differently, this can be seen as the difficulty in industrialised society of incorporating a caring orientation as part of the adult identity formation process.

It could also be argued from a critical theory perspective, that the attitude change associated with burnout could be seen as the consequence of palliative coping due to the objectification of the social worker's means of production. These means of production are for a social worker his or her skills of human interaction, especially those collections of verbal and non-verbal actions commonly appraised as displaying genuineness, sincerity and empathy, such actions becoming part of the collection of market commodities social workers are trained, socialised and employed to produce.

As has been argued, the attitude change associated with burnout could also be seen as the objectification of the social worker's means of production; his skills in human interaction, especially those of genuineness, sincerity and empathy, become a market commodity. The transformation of his skills and attributes of human relating and sacrifice into a means of production results in the distancing of a social worker from his client. This in turn results in the reification of the client's relationship into an inanimate commodity. It is this reification which alienates the worker from the authentic expression of his skills and himself.

According to Mills (1953) there are three conditions under which a personality market can function effectively:

- I. The employee is part of a large bureaucratic system.
- II. His role within the bureaucratic organisation is to be in touch with clients and represent the firm in his own personal appearance and behaviour.

III. Most of the customers have to be anonymous because the personal relation to the client is only a mask, trained behaviour without emotional involvement.

Conditions which Mills (1953) suggested, occurred mainly with sales personnel, might also occur in the helping professions within welfare organisations. It could be that the majority of Australian social workers who work within large public bureaucratic settings may also experience the characteristics of a personality market. Within such a market, if experienced by social workers, it might be difficult for a practitioner to maintain a caring value orientation.

This caring value orientation can be measured at the instrumental level. The Type A behaviour scale (Greenhouse 1987), for example, explores McCulloch's dimension of the amount of time spent with clients as a generalised attitude. "It is characterised by a hard driving competitiveness, a sense of extreme impatience and time-urgency, a fast-paced life style, a preference for performing many activities simultaneously, and a constant striving for achievement and perfection" (Greenhouse 1987:194).

Glass (1977) has conceptualised Type A behaviour as a characteristic style of responding to environmental stressors that are threatening to a person's sense of control. According to Burke and Desza (1982), Type A behaviour is produced by certain beliefs and fears that some individuals hold about themselves and the world: beliefs and attitudes that are not commonly seen as part of the caring orientation ideal that professional socialisation aims for. They argue that

Type A individuals tend to base their sense of worth on their attainment of material success; that Type A individuals, like people who score high on the Machiavellian scale, have no universal moral principals to guide behaviour, and that they have a generalised anger towards the world. Type A behaviour, again like the detached orientation, is often rewarded in bureaucratic settings. Type A individuals tend to be involved in their jobs and in structured contexts can be more productive than non-Type A individuals (Burke and Weir 1980). However, Type A individuals are more likely to feel alienated from others and feel dissatisfied with interpersonal relationships (Burke and Deszca 1982)

The Machiavellian scale developed by Christie and Geis (1970) can be seen to operate as attitudes that are not commonly seen as part of the caring orientation ideal that professional socialisation aims for. Specifically what the Machiavellian scale measures is cognitive detachment and unconcern for clients. It also indicates an increased likelihood of engaging in manipulative actions given certain specific situations. These situations are ones that have high face-to-face contact, a high degree of latitude for improvisation and where the interaction might arouse irrelevant affect. Such situations are very common in social work practice.

The Machiavellian scale as a measure, therefore, takes an instrumental approach to the study of social workers' values by concentrating on attitudes that are associated with actions within given contexts which may result in minimising client self-determination.

A number of points from the preceding discussion can now be drawn together. A high score on Christie's Machiavellian scale can be seen as an indicator of compatibility with bureaucratic socialisation. The attitude change associated with burnout can be seen as both palliative coping and adoption of bureaucratic socialisation. There are two major career socialising influences on the social work student during the early adjustment phase that may give rise to role conflict. On the one hand the idealised social worker is portrayed in the literature as the main carrier of professional socialisation; and on the other hand social work course climate is expressed as the main carrier of bureaucratic/organisational socialisation.

Christie and Geis (1968) in a review of the literature concluded that persons who have a higher involvement in a complex of formalised role relationships with others are more likely to endorse manipulative tactics as measured by their Machiavellian scale. Also they noted that respondents in agreement with Machiavellian or manipulative statements seem to have greater success in meeting the demands of American society, including getting ahead in college.

Like all the helping professions social work is also affected by a broader cultural drift into what Lasch (1979) has called narcissism, where there is an erosion of durable relationships, meaningful standards, and consensual values.

There is a similarity between Lasch's perceptions on the behaviour of the narcissist within an organisation and the preceding discussion of the rewards

offered for the cognitive detachment and unconcern of the Machiavellian orientation within a bureaucratised social work course. Lasch (1979) believes

... the narcissist has many traits that make for success in bureaucratic institutions, which put a premium on a manipulation of interpersonal relations, discourage the formation of deep personal attachments, and at the same time provide the narcissist with the approval he needs in order to validate his self esteem. Although he may resort to therapies that promise to give meaning to life and to overcome his sense of emptiness, in his professional career the narcissist often enjoys considerable success. The management of personal impressions comes naturally to him and his mastery of its intricacies serves him well in political and service organisations where performance now counts for less than 'visibility', 'momentum', or a winning record. As the organisation man gives way to the bureaucratic gamesman ... the narcissist comes into his own. (Lasch 1979:43-44)

At least in a bureaucratic setting there does not seem to be any operational distinction between the narcissist value orientation and a Machiavellian one. Lasch's description of the development of the narcissistic personality in many ways also parallels the rise of a Machiavellian personality. It may be that these two concepts are actually describing the same phenomenon but attribute a different aetiology, which in practice may not give rise to any noticeable difference in inter-personal style, especially within a bureaucratic setting. The interpersonal style of individuals with a Type A behaviour pattern and a Machiavellian personality style also seem to share the similar characteristic of treating people as objects.

Burnout at the individual level, with its associated cold detachment and self-absorption, can encourage on the part of individual social workers a disillusionment with generative values. The social worker in turn becomes part of the process which breaks down the belief in generative values within the institutions. Assuming that a social worker has acquired generativity, his regression from generativity into self-absorption both encourages and reflects the contemporary inadequacies of organisational processes that allow an individual to incorporate caring as part of his/her adult identity formation process within modern organisational settings. As Jacoby (1980:62) comments, "... affluent young professionals expose most sharply the advanced tendencies of capitalism".

Erikson (1964) sees the opposite end of generativity as self-absorption. The interpersonal style of individuals with a Type A behaviour pattern and a Machiavellian personality style also seem to share the similar characteristic of self-absorption. Erikson (1980:103-104) comments that the reasons for such self-absorption are "an excessive self-love based on a too strenuously self-made personality; and finally in the lack of some faith, some 'belief in the species'".

Antonovsky (1987:1993) has developed a similar concept to that of generativity: coherence. Antonovsky defines the concept of coherence as the extent to which an individual has a pervasive, enduring though dynamic feeling of confidence that life is comprehensible, manageable and meaningful. It is this sense of control over our destiny, according to Antonovsky, that is associated with health.

Richard (1987) has argued that the realisation of a sense of coherence can occur as a result of professional personal control (egocentric) or because persons are immersed in a decentralised community system (sociocentric). She argues that the positivist empiricist model of science has provided an unintentional elaboration of the egocentric metaphor in professional education. She argues that the role of values in an expanded vision of human science can provide a basis for implementation of a sociocentric metaphor in professional training and identity confirmation. Richard's sociocentric orientation seems to be a precursor to the development of the service ethic.

It has been argued that the idealised social worker as portrayed in the literature would hold a generative (caring) personality style, and that this personality style is in keeping with the espoused service ethic of the profession. It also has been argued that there is general agreement in the literature that the ideal social worker would hold a low Machiavellian, low Type A, high coherence and high generative value orientation, as this would be consistent with the development and maintenance of a strong service ethic. However, there is disagreement about whether, in practice, from the perspective of their physical and psychological health, this value orientation is the one best held by social workers and social work students who have to function within bureaucratic settings.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

As indicated previously, the present study aims to explore five interrelated research questions. The first is to what extent “insidious pervasive stresses” (Tobin and Carson 1994:253) emanate from the following sources: (i) professional identity formation process (social work idealised image and role value conflict); (ii) the reasons students chose social work; (iii) students’ performance expectations; and (iv) stresses from the course that are part of the professional education process. The second question concerns the extent, if any, that these sources and the level of course-related stress experienced by students explain the variation in social work students’ physical and psychological health. The third question seeks to determine whether there is a difference in the level of physical and psychological health of Australian social work students and practitioners. The fourth question aims to determine whether there is an association between physical and psychological health in social work practitioners and burnout. The fifth question explores the extent to which social work practitioners’ age, job satisfaction, burnout, years of experience and average hours worked explain the variation in their physical and psychological health.

This chapter first provides the rationale for the methodology that was chosen to explore these five research questions and the hypotheses that were derived from them. It then explores why the existing scales were used and describes how new scale items were constructed. The chapter concludes with the

operational hypotheses developed, the statistical techniques that will be used to analyse them, and an indication of how they will be reported in the results section.

3.1 CHOICE OF RESEARCH DESIGN

The main purpose of the study was to determine what variables predict the variation in social work student and practitioner health. The design of this study was a 'between subjects' approach. It looks at the variation between subjects at a single point of time. There are two populations used in this study: social work students and social work practitioners. It is a non-experimental design: there is no manipulation and it would not be possible or ethical to engage in manipulation of the predictor (independent) variables. The research design which is predominantly an indirect one, includes both 'ex post facto' research and descriptive research.

It is 'ex post facto' in that even though no manipulation or intervention has occurred the intent of this research is to explore the relationship between variables, especially which predictor variables explain the variation in social work student and practitioner health. Kerlinger (1965:379) defines ex post facto research as

systematic empirical inquiry in which the scientist does not have direct control of independent variables because their manifestations have already occurred or because they are inherently not amenable to manipulation. Inference about relations between variable are made, without direct intervention, from concomitant variation of independent and dependent variables.

This is also a retrospective study in that it looks at an effect, social work student and practitioner health, and looks back to identify the cause. Such a retrospective study cannot establish causation, as temporal sequence or covariation does not indicate causation, and it is therefore correlational research. In addition, social work student and practitioner health are likely to be multiply-determined and interact with the predictor variables, making it important not to oversimplify the correlational relationships or to imply direction. The major advantage of an 'ex post facto' research design is that it allows a wider focus on the variation in social work student and practitioner health than is possible with other designs. In a true experiment, for example, the researcher manipulates a variable (or several variables), hoping that the variable chosen causes the variation in the criterion (dependent) variable (Kerlinger 1965; Sekaran 1992). The variable chosen may not cause the variation and an experimental research design is more justified when possible causal relationships between variables have been identified by previous ex post facto research. The results of this research can be used as the basis for further studies employing more powerful true experimental or quasi-experimental designs. In applied research, such as this, it is also useful to identify what factors are not related to variation in social work student and practitioner health.

The research design is also descriptive in that it observes and documents phenomena. The phenomena for social work students that this study describes are predominantly the reasons and influences that have shaped their choice of social work as a career, what aspects of a social work course are important to social

work students, and what are students' level of satisfaction with these course aspects. Therefore four subquestions will also be pursued by this study:

- I. What are the course aspects that social work students see as being important in a social work course?
- II. Do the aspects that social work students see as important show a consistent set of needs and values?
- III. Do the aspects that social work students see as being present in a social work course show a consistent set of characteristics?
- IV. What percentage of students experience stress in a social work course? Is this stress associated with a higher level of physical and psychological distress?

In addition, differences between social work students' values and those perceived to be held by the idealised social worker are described. For social work practitioners, this study also describes what aspects of their jobs are important to them and what is their level of satisfaction with these job aspects. Comparisons between social work student and practitioner levels of health are also made. For social work students two additional subquestions are also explored :

- I. Do social work students who hold an image of the professional self that is highly idealised (strong service ethic) experience more psychological and physical distress than those students who do not?
- II. Do social work students who hold an image of the idealised social worker that is not congruent with their image of themselves experience more psychological and physical distress than students who have more congruent images?

3.2 EXISTING QUESTIONNAIRES' VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

This study may be considered an indirect survey design. In the development and use of relevant indexes and scales for measuring variables for this study there was the option of choosing from among existing instruments or constructing new measures. Questionnaires cannot be assessed solely in terms of their availability, frequency of use, or validity or reliability in other situations. Rather, the assessment must also reflect the nature of the concepts under investigation and the ability of the questionnaire to make an adequate concept-indicator link. These concept indicator links for the survey instruments used in this study were initially explored in the literature review. These links will be revisited and elaborated in the remainder of this section.

Scales from a number of pre-existing questionnaires were used in the study. Two scales were used in both the student and practitioner sample. These two scales were Goldberg's (1972) General Health Questionnaire; and Otto's (1979, 1982) Symptom Checklist. For the social work sample three additional scales were used: Christie's (1970) Machiavellian Scale; Type A Scale (Girdano and Everly 1979) and Pilcher's (1982) Survey of Social Workers. For social work practitioners the Maslach Burnout Scale (Maslach 1981) was also used. In addition to ensuring there was a clear concept-indicator link the 12 criteria outlined by Corcoran (1988) also shaped questionnaire selection:

- I. The questionnaires provided the data needed to answer the research questions.
- II. The questionnaires address the same types of variables that are to be studied.

- III. The level of measurement was appropriate for the intended statistical analyses.
- IV. The format of the items was appropriate to the level of inquiry.
- V. The questionnaire had known reliability and the circumstances in which reliability was established were known.
- VI. The questionnaires had known validity.
- VII. There had been other applications of the instrument.
- VIII. The language of the questionnaire was appropriate for the intended sample.
- IX. The instructions were clear and easy to follow.
- X. The items meet standards for item construction.
- XI. The flow in each of the questionnaires was logical and easy to follow.
- XII. The questionnaires were the appropriate length for the intended respondents, and other circumstances related to the design.

A number of other scales were incorporated in the questionnaire, but it was considered that because of the already complex nature of the argument they would not be included in this study. Due to the size of the questionnaire, time was a consideration, especially for the social work student questionnaire. In a pilot study, the time taken was approximately 35 minutes; however, some respondents commented that it took them about 50 minutes. Correlational and reliability analysis was used (see Section 3.4.1) as an indicator that the scales used were consistent with the theoretical relationships explored in the literature review. This analysis for the full student social work sample is repeated in Chapter 4. The findings from the pilot questionnaire were similar to those reported in Chapters 4 and 5 though no regression analysis was conducted due to the small sample size (n=10). The rationale for the selection of the scales using Corcoran's (1988)

twelve criteria will now be considered in some detail. The questionnaires for social work students and practitioners are contained in Appendices 1 and 2 respectively.

3.2.1 PILCHER'S (1982) SURVEY OF SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS

Pilcher's (1982) Survey of Social Work Students consists mainly of demographic information, the people who influenced individuals' choice of social work, and the reasons why students chose social work - for example, the view that social work is an interesting profession; that social work can help one become a better person/parent, marriage partner; that social work makes a contribution to individuals and society. The advantages in the use of Pilcher's questionnaire is that it allows comparisons to be made with her larger national sample of social work students. Pilcher's questionnaire is contained in Appendix 1.

3.2.2 SOCIAL WORK STUDENT AND PRACTITIONER COURSE AND WORK CLIMATE SCALES

There are a number of existing employee and student attitude surveys that might have been used or modified to explore the level of social work student satisfaction. It was decided to develop a unique survey for this study. The main reason for this is that the aim of the study was to examine social work course structures and processes as well as the practice environment of social workers. These environments are relatively atypical due to the client interaction aspects of social work, which occurs for practitioners in their work environment and for students on their placements.

The social work course structure has similarities to teaching and nursing courses in that it has a placement and clinical psychology emphasis on interpersonal skills. Except for courses like these, the social work course is different from the standard Arts, Business or Science academic course. Its difference stems from the social work course's emphasis not only on the mastery of intellectual and behaviour skills but also on attitudinal change or development both within the course and also on placement.

Focus groups were used to develop items for both the student and the practitioner survey. The size of the focus groups was 10 for the student sample and 11 for the practitioner. A critical incident method (Herzberg 1968; Lewis 1987)) was used to gather data on which to base questions. The critical incident method involves having individuals think about incidents (on the job events) actually seen or experienced that reflect examples of especially good or bad practices within the work environment (Lewis 1987). Through a process of collecting and distilling many such incidents it is possible to identify a number of themes that are associated with a good or bad work environment for social work students and practitioners. The focus groups' subjects were asked two questions that were slightly modified for the practitioner and for the student focus groups. For the practitioner group the two questions were:

1. When did you feel particularly good about your job? Describe this situation. What was it about this situation that made you feel good?
2. When did you feel particularly bad about your job? Describe this situation. What was it about this situation that made you feel bad?

For the student group the two questions were modified to focus on the social work course and placement. The two questions were:

1. When did you feel particularly good about your social work course or your placement experience? Describe this situation. What was it about this situation that made you feel good?
2. When did you feel particularly bad about your social work course or your placement experience? Describe this situation. What was it about this situation that made you feel bad?

Examples of environment aspects that were identified as common for both the social work students and practitioners in the focus groups were:

To have clients or groups [on placement] which are not really interested and involved, not to have clients resent seeing you due to the involuntary nature of their contract, for example, probation, and not to encounter personal or social problems with clients which are the same as one's own problems.

Environment aspects such as these were identified and refined for the final questionnaires for the social work students and practitioners. There was a total of 50 course environment aspects generated for the social work course and 65 job environment aspects generated for the social work practitioners. Each course or job aspect had two questions associated with it. The first question asked respondents how important this environment aspect was to them in a perfect social work course for the students and a perfect social work position for the practitioners. The second question asked respondents how true this environment aspect is for their present social work course or position. This questionnaire design was chosen as it is consistent with the person-environment fit model. It is

consistent in that it does not assume that the presence or absence of an environment aspect will necessarily cause strain for an individual but will only cause strain if that environment aspect is seen as important by the individual.

The course and job environment aspects of the idealised social work course and position were rated on a 0 - 6 importance scale. The scale ranged from 'not very important' for 0 to 'very important' for 6. Social work student and practitioner respondents were asked to think about what to them represented a 'perfect social work course' if they were students and a 'perfect social work position' if they were practitioners. To illustrate, a score of 0 indicated that a particular need-value item was felt to be 'not important at all', a score of 3 stood for a moderate degree of importance, and 6 meant that the environment aspect was 'extremely important'. Respondents were also asked to rate the same environment aspects from the perspective of how true it is of their present social work course or position. The course and position environment aspects of the how true of present social work course and position were rated on a 0 - 6 how true scale. The scale ranged from not true at all for zero to 100% true for 6 with the mid-point 3 being moderately true. These scales were placed next to each other so that it was clear to respondents that the questionnaire was seeking to identify not only what environment aspects were important to respondents but also which aspects were true of their present course or position and where there were gaps.

These scales will be used in this study to measure social work student and practitioner stress in response to perceived need-value attainment. For social work students the social work course is analysed from the perspective of an idealised

course and compared to the actual social work course. The analysis of student and practitioner satisfaction and dissatisfaction follows a convention used in marketing research to measure the satisfaction levels of customers (Aaker 1988). For each course environment aspect a dissatisfaction score was calculated by dividing the perfect course ranking by the current course ranking and subtracting the remainder from 1 for each respondent and calculating a mean response for the student sample. If the answer was greater than or equal to one then there was no course dissatisfaction on this question item. If the answer was one or less but not less than zero then this answer was converted into a percentage equal to or less than 100% but not less than 0%. If any answer was greater than one then this was recoded to 0%. The possible range of course dissatisfaction was therefore from 0% to 100%. The same protocol was also used for social work practitioners. This could be represented in the following formula:

$$Dissatisfaction = 1 - \frac{\text{Actual rating}}{\text{Perfect rating}}$$

Social work course and job stress was calculated by developing a social work course and position satisfaction score. For students, the higher the course satisfaction score the lower the level of course dissatisfaction and, according to the person-environment fit model, the lower the level of course stress. This score was calculated, following the person-environment fit model, by dividing the perfect social work course score by the current social work course score for all items for all social work students. A total social work course satisfaction score was determined by first ensuring that no social work course aspect question had a satisfaction score of greater than a hundred percent. This was achieved by

recoding all social work student satisfaction scores that were greater than a 100% to 100%. This ensured that the range for satisfaction scores was from 0% to 100%. Therefore the total social work course satisfaction index is a reversal of the social work course dissatisfaction. This could be represented in the following formula:

$$\text{Satisfaction} = \frac{\text{Actual rating}}{\text{Perfect rating}}$$

3.2.3 TYPE A BEHAVIOUR SCALE

In a recent review of models of personality and disease, Smith and Anderson (1986:1167) argued that “traditional approaches to Type A behaviour and reactivity seem to lack acknowledgment of dynamic, reciprocal relationships between Type A behaviour and relevant situations”. Traditional approaches assume that Type A behaviour, characterised by exaggerated competitiveness, intense ambition, easily evoked hostility, and a strong sense of time urgency, is a style of responding to situations that involves challenges, demands and threats to a person's control. The Type A behaviour pattern that is elicited in these situations is then assumed to lead to a physiological reaction (increased sympathetic nervous system activity) that has a structural effect on the body which predisposes an individual to disease (eg., atherosclerosis and clinical coronary heart disease).

Smith and Anderson (1986) referred to this model as the mechanistic interactional model. The emphasis is on a person's reactions to eliciting stimuli and on the physiological effects of Type A reactions. Variations of the model are found in the suggestion by Glass and Goldberg (1977) that overt Type A

behaviour represents a person's attempt to assert and maintain control over stressful aspects of situations, and in the contributions of Mathews (1982) and Mathews and Siegel (1983), who suggested that the aggressive striving, typical of Type A individuals, is likely to occur in situations that provide opportunities for achievement, but lack explicit standards for achievement.

Smith and Anderson (1986) also considered two other models that link Type A behaviour to disease. They called the first the biological interactional model and described it as one that assumes that Type A behaviour may reflect constitutional factors, especially sympathetic nervous system response to external stressors. Some Type A behaviours are therefore seen as a result rather than a cause of physiological reactions. Smith and Anderson called the second model the biopsychosocial interactional model. This model is consistent with the view that individuals create and seek situations that fit their personalities rather than simply responding to situational demands (Smith and Rhodewalt 1986). This is the model that Smith and Anderson found most appealing; in the case of Type A individuals, it implies that the Type A pattern “represents an ongoing process of challenge and demand-engendering behaviour” (1986:1168).

The Type A Scale developed by Girdano and Everly (1979) concentrates more on the time urgency aspects with its associated challenge and demand-engendering behaviour of the Type A individual. One aspect this study is trying to identify is the set of values and attitudes that are reflected in this imposition of self-imposed time restraints and demands.

3.2.4 CHRISTIE'S MACHIAVELLIAN SCALE

Machiavellianism, as revealed by the content of the scale items designed to measure this variable, refers to an amoral, manipulative attitude toward other individuals, combined with a cynical view of people's motives and of their character. A few Machiavellian statements should convey the flavour of the scale. To illustrate:

1. Never tell anyone the real reason you did something unless it is useful to do so.
2. One should take action only when sure that it is morally right.
3. Generally speaking, men won't work hard unless they are forced to do so.
4. Most people who get ahead in the world lead clean, moral lives.

The second and fourth statements are 'reversed' in the sense that a Machiavellian person is likely to disagree with them. All of the following scales were constructed so as to minimise response set.

Machiavellianism may be viewed from two somewhat different perspectives. Either one can stress the emotional detachment that the Machiavellian exhibits in dealing with others, or one can stress his lack of commitment to conventional moral norms (Christie 1968). These two ways of thinking about Machiavellianism are not necessarily in conflict. In fact, they complement each other by drawing attention to different facets of the concept. In this study, greater emphasis will be placed on the emotional detachment that the Machiavellian exhibits in dealing with others.

Four different scales are represented in the literature to measure the level of Machiavellianism. The first two were constructed by Christie and Geis (1970:10): the Mach IV and Mach V. The first one, and the one used in this study, is a Likert-type scale with 10 positively and 10 negatively worded items; and the second one is a forced-choice scale of 20 triads. There are also some modifications employed of the Likert-type of scale (Kraut and Price 1976). The third kind of scale employed is the 'Kiddie Mach,' which is a Likert-type scale too, and was developed by Nachamie (Christie and Geis 1970:326) for use with children. The fourth and last scale to be mentioned here is a dyadic forced-choice scale, which was constructed on the basis of the Mach V forced-choice scale.

The coefficients for internal consistency and stability for the four scales are not very consistent and often not even reported by the authors. Christie and Geis (1970:16) indicated a split-half reliability of 0.79 for their own Mach IV scale. The Arab version (Starr 1975) yields smaller coefficients; they range from 0.47 for women to 0.77 for men. Compared with these results, a Dutch edition of the Mach IV (Vleeming 1976) has a good split-half reliability coefficient of 0.65 for both sexes.

Sometimes the female samples show lower reliability coefficients than the male samples, but this is different for the Kraut and Price (1976) study. They report for a modified, viz shortened, version of the Mach IV reliability coefficients of (Alpha) 0.59 for men and (Alpha) 0.71 for women. Nevertheless, Kraut and Price (1976) mention reliability coefficients for a shortened Mach V

scale of only (Alpha) 0.34 for men and (Alpha) 0.19 for women, for which reason “the Mach V scale was omitted from further analysis” (Kraut and Price 1976:784).

The Mark IV scale is the version used in this study. It is a Likert-type scale with 10 positively and 10 negatively worded items. Its reliability seems to be sensitive to the gender of the respondent and, since the majority of respondents to this study are likely to be female, this aspect of the scale will need to be considered in its analysis.

3.2.5 ADDITIONAL SCALE ITEMS DEVELOPED - GENERATIVITY AND COHERENCE

In Section 2.9, *Burnout, Values of the Idealised Social Worker and the Service Ethic*, of the literature review it was argued that Antonovsky’s (1987) concept of coherence was similar to Erikson’s (1980) concept of generativity. For the constructs of generativity and coherence a set of questions were developed from the work of Erikson (1980) and Antonovsky (1987). According to Erikson

Generativity is primarily the interest in establishing and guiding the next generation.... The principal thing is to realise that this is a stage of growth of the healthy personality and that where such enrichment fails ... an obsessive need for the pseudo-intimacy takes place, often with a pervading sense of stagnation and interpersonal impoverishment. Individuals who do not develop generativity often begin to indulge themselves as if they were their own one and only child. (Erikson, 1980:103)

To identify this construct seven questions were developed using phases that Erikson had used to describe attitudes that he associated with the generative construct. The first two of the seven questions are in the positive direction and the

remaining five are reversed. The seven questions deal with the following attitudes:

1. Believes the happiest people care about the future of society.
2. Believes we all need some faith in humanity if we are to work towards a more caring world.
3. Believes that people's activities are decided by what society demands.
4. Believes it is hardly fair to bring children into the world the way things look for the future.
5. Wishes they had a simple life in which bodily needs were the most important things and decisions didn't have to be made.
6. Finds it difficult to imagine enthusiasm concerning work.
7. Feels that attempting to know yourself is a waste of time.

It has been argued (see Section 2.9) that Antonovsky's (1987) concept of coherence taps one dimension of the service ethic and slightly different dimension is tapped by Erikson's concept of coherence. The concept of coherence is defined by Antonovsky as the extent to which an individual has a pervasive, enduring though dynamic feeling of confidence that life is comprehensible, manageable and meaningful. The three questions establish whether people:

1. Find their personal existence very purposeful and meaningful.
2. Feel that for all its ups and downs life has an overall predicableness and meaningfulness.
3. Feel they have philosophical or religious beliefs that give their life an underlying sense of direction.

Since both of these scales were developed for this study there is no reliability or validity data. Before any analysis of these scales is conducted internal reliability and predicative validity analysis will be undertaken.

3.2.6 MASLACH’S BURNOUT SCALE

As can be seen from Table 3.1, the Maslach Burnout Inventory is a highly reliable scale. Maslach and Jackson (1981) reported good reliability coefficients. The scale is made up of six subscales that consist of three pairs. The pairs measure frequency and intensity in the three areas of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and personal accomplishment. The correlation matrix in Table 3.1 below illustrates the relationships between the six factors of the Maslach Burnout Inventory.

TABLE 3.1: CRONBACH ALPHA COEFFICIENTS FOR THE MBI

Factor	Coefficient reported by Maslach & Jackson (1981)
Frequency:	
Emotional Exhaustion	0.90
Depersonalisation	0.79
Personal accomplishment	0.71
Intensity:	
Emotional exhaustion	0.87
Depersonalisation	0.76
Personal accomplishment	0.73

3.2.7 OTTO'S SYMPTOM CHECKLIST

Though Otto's (1979) Symptom Checklist apparently has good face validity and apparently good reliability, little data were available on it. For Otto’s Symptom Checklist scores, respondents would indicate, for example, whether in the past three months or so they had headaches ‘never or rarely’, ‘sometimes or a little’, ‘a fair bit’ or ‘a lot’. Otto suggested a binary coding system which meant that if a respondent circled 'a fair bit' or 'a lot' they would score 1 for each of

twenty items, otherwise they would score a 0 for that item. To enhance consistency with the GHQ, the binary coding system was modified to a four point Likert-type coding system. Within this Likert-type coding framework a 0 to 3 was attached to 'never' or 'rarely', 'sometimes' or 'a little', 'a fair bit' or 'a lot'. This score was totalled then averaged to give a mean symptom checklist score.

3.2.8 GOLDBERG'S GENERAL HEALTH QUESTIONNAIRE

This indicator is used to determine psychological health. It is a self-administered screening test designed for detecting those people with a diagnosable psychiatric disorder and is concerned with two major phenomena - the inability to carry out one's normal healthy functions, and the appearance of new phenomena of a distressing nature (Stafford et al. 1980).

The General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) devised by Goldberg (1972) has been widely used to detect non-psychotic psychiatric disturbances in a variety of settings. In both its full form and in its shorter versions, the GHQ has been used in community surveys (Duncan-Jones 1978; Tarnpolsky et al. 1979; Benjamin et al. 1982; Banks 1983), general practice (Goldberg 1972; Fontanesi et al. 1985; Shamasundar et al. 1986; Bordman 1987), hospital outpatients studies (Ballinger 1977; Byrne and Rubinow 1984; Vazquez-Barquero et al. 1985; Lobo et al. 1986), hospital in-patient studies (De Paulo et al. 1980; Bridges and Goldberg 1986) and in studies of the helping professions (Cushway 1992; Koeske and Koeske 1991; Tobin and Carson 1994).

A number of studies have also examined the factor structure of the GHQ, as reviewed by Vieweg and Hedlund (1983). The questionnaire has been translated into no less than 36 languages (Goldberg and Williams 1988).

The original development of the measure (Goldberg 1972) resulted in a 60-item version with the items that were the best predictors of caseness, 30, 20 and 12, being selected for use where respondents' time is at a premium. In the present study, the 12-item version (GHQ-12) was used. The validity of the GHQ has been demonstrated (Goldberg 1972) and, significantly for the present study, its validity has been confirmed for an Australian population (Tenant and Andrews 1977). It has a test/retest reliability of .52 and a split half reliability of .83 (Goldberg 1972).

A person identified by the questionnaire as impaired is one who would be considered for treatment if seen by a psychiatrist. The General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) was originally designed to be a self-administered screening test, aimed at detecting psychiatric disorders, a case, in respondents in community settings. A case means a person has more than a 50% chance of neurotic impairment requiring psychiatric intervention, and is highly likely to be regarded as a case on psychiatric assessment according to Goldberg (1972). The GHQ focuses on psychological components of ill health. According to the GHQ manual, the threshold score for caseness reflects the concept of a just-significant clinical disturbance (Goldberg 1978).

Goldberg (1978) emphasised that those scoring above this threshold do not necessarily require psychological intervention. Goldberg (1978) suggests using a binary scoring method to denote the presence or absence of symptoms for detecting clinical cases.

Using the binary system, the Likert-type scale of 0-3 is recoded with the scores of 0 and 1 recoded as 0, and the scores 2 and 3 recoded as 1. For the 12 item GHQ a score of three or more indicates caseness (Firth-Cozens 1987). Caseness has been calculated for both the social work practitioner and the social work student sample. As a binary variable, mean scores can be interpreted as the proportion of respondents who are potential psychiatric cases. In the Likert-type format a respondent's average GHQ score can be used as an indicator of psychological distress.

Otto's Symptom Checklist can be seen as an indicator of stress-related physical distress. Goldberg's General Health Questionnaire can be seen as an indicator of stress-related psychological distress. Both measures, conceptually and practically, are clearly related and should correlate highly.

3.3 OPERATIONAL HYPOTHESIS

As outlined in Chapter 1, the present study examines the impact of course stress on the physical and psychological health of social work students. It extends Cushway's (1992) examination of the impact of course stress on psychology students. Like Cushway's examination of psychology students, this study also uses

a total course stress survey but, in addition, the present study also uses an idealised role value conflict score to provide a further understanding of the impact of course stress on social work students. To provide a comparison on which to understand the findings on the level of student physical and psychological distress, as well as to explore whether this distress may predispose students to burnout when they enter practice, a sample of social work practitioners is also used.

Utilising these two complementary research instruments and samples, the present study examines the claim that social work training tends to create an idealised role value expectation which, in conjunction with social work course climate, predisposes social work students to burnout. In terms of this aim, the first research question aims to establish the extent to which ‘insidious pervasive stresses’ emanate from the following sources: (i) professional identity formation process (social work idealised image and role value conflict); (ii) the reasons students chose social work; (iii) students’ performance expectations; and (iv) stresses from the course that are part of the professional education process as outlined by Cushway (1992). Research question 1 is first addressed by the following alternate hypotheses:

H1_A: The respondents will perceive their current social work course aspects as being lower than the perfect social work course aspects.

H2_A: Students’ social work course satisfaction will vary depending on their age, sex, community size, religious preference, type of school attended and political preference .

H3_A: Students' social work course satisfaction will vary depending on who influenced their choice of doing social work, why they initially chose to do social work and why they continue to do social work.

H4_A: The respondents will perceive the idealised social worker as being lower on Machiavellianism, and Type A behaviour, and higher on Coherence and Generativity than themselves as a person.

The potential sources of student stress that were identified in the first research question were: (i) professional identity formation process (social work idealised image and role value conflict); (ii) the reasons students chose social work; (iii) students' performance expectations; and (iv) stresses from the course that are part of the professional education process. The second research question concerns the extent, if any, that the sources identified in research question 1 and the level of course-related stress experienced by students explain the variation in social work students' physical and psychological health.. These two research questions can be expressed as the following hypothesis:

The five independent variables of age, degree of idealisation of the social work role, student value difference with the idealised social worker, academic achievement and social work course satisfaction, will significantly explain the variation in student social worker physical and psychological health.

This second question can therefore be addressed by the following alternate hypothesis:

H10_A: The five independent variables will significantly explain the variance in student physical and psychological health.

The third research question seeks to determine whether there is a difference in the level of physical and psychological health of Australian social work students and practitioners. This question is addressed by the following four alternate hypotheses:

- H5_A: Social Work practitioners will perceive their current social work job aspects as being lower than the perfect social work job aspects.*
- H6_A: The mean scores of social work students on Otto's Symptom Checklist will be higher than that of practitioners.*
- H7_A: The mean GHQ scores of social work students will be higher than those of practitioners.*
- H8_A: The mean case rate of social work students will be higher than that for practitioners.*

The fourth research question aims to determine whether there is an association between physical and psychological health in social work practitioners and burnout. It can be best expressed as two inter-related alternate hypothesis:

- H9_{Ai}: There will be a positive correlation between the burnout factors of frequency and magnitude of emotional exhaustion, frequency and magnitude of depersonalisation and Otto's Symptom Checklist, GHQ scores and Caseness.*
- H9_{Aii}: There will be a negative correlation between the burnout factors of frequency and magnitude of personal accomplishment and Otto's Symptom Checklist, GHQ scores and Caseness.*

The fifth research question explores the extent to which social work practitioners' age, job satisfaction, burnout, years of experience and average hours worked explain the variation in their physical and psychological health. The alternate hypothesis is:

H11_A: The five independent variables will significantly explain the variance in social work practitioner physical and psychological health.

3.4 STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES USED

A range of statistical techniques were used to examine the above hypotheses. The major techniques used in this study were *t* tests, analysis of variation between groups (ANOVA), correlations, factor analysis and multiple regression. As a means of ensuring that the scales used in the study are reliable, Cronbach alphas were also calculated when appropriate. These techniques were performed using SPSS Version 6.1 and are discussed in the sections below.

3.4.1 RELIABILITY ANALYSIS OF SCALES

In research projects where not only tried and tested psychological inventories are used, but also several measures are self-developed, the developed measures need to be tested for their ability to produce consistent results. During this analysis, the reliability of several psychological inventories including Goldberg's General Health Questionnaire, Otto's Symptom Checklist, Maslach's Burnout Inventory and Christie's Machiavellian will be verified. In addition, there are also several self-developed measures, including those derived from the ideal social work course coherence, generativity and idealised social work role conflict constructs. The appropriate analysis for this testing of consistency is reliability analysis (Kervin 1992). There are three well-known types of reliability analysis: test-retest, alternative forms and internal consistency reliability (Malhotra 1993).

Because of situational restraints, the only option available was to conduct an internal consistency reliability test (known as a split-half reliability test). Sekaran (1992) suggests that “in almost all cases, Cronbach’s alpha can be considered a perfectly adequate index of the inter-item consistency reliability” (1992:174).

This test gives the mean value of all the possible ways of splitting scale items and correlating them, giving an overall split-half coefficient, known as Cronbach’s alpha (Malhotra 1993). The closer Cronbach’s alpha is to 1.0, the more reliable the scale. The literature suggests that the lower cut-off point for a sufficient coefficient lies somewhere between 0.60 (Malhotra 1993) and 0.70 (Kervin 1992).

3.4.2 ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE BETWEEN GROUPS

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) is a procedure used to test whether there is a significant difference in the means of a quantitative criterion variable for each group of a categorical predictor variable (Kervin 1992). It is often used to test the difference of one measure on two or more different populations, but can also be used on categorical variables to test for significant differences between two or more groups, as is the case in this study (Malhotra 1993). When there are only two groups the *t* test is generally used. The *t* test takes into account means and standard deviations of the two groups in the variable and examines if the numerical difference is significantly different from 0 as postulated in the null hypothesis (Sekaran 1992). With repeated measures and nonhomogeneous

variances, the Tukey honesty significance difference (HSD) is used (Malhotra 1993).

3.4.3 FACTOR ANALYSIS

Factor analysis is a procedure that allows a reduction of data into constructs or factors. The determination of the number of factors desired has been controlled initially by the eigenvalues of the factors produced. The eigenvalue is the statistic that represents the variance explained by the factor. Factors with an eigenvalue of less than 1.0 are ignored as they explain no more than a variable itself (Malhotra 1993).

Generally speaking, there should be 4 - 5 times more observations than there are variables to confidently interpret the results of a factor analysis (Malhotra 1993). In the case of the present study, there is not a large-enough sample to legitimately conduct factor analysis, and hence it has been conducted cautiously and is used in an exploratory manner.

To optimise the factor fit and enhance interpretability, the mathematical axis of the factors can be moved in two ways, orthogonally and obliquely. The most common type of rotation is varimax rotation, an orthogonal rotation procedure that keeps the axes at 90 degree angles while rotating them (Malhotra 1993). Varimax rotation procedure is the one used in this analysis.

3.4.4 MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Regression procedures are used in research to measure the change in a criterion variable given a unit change in predictor variable. Hence, what the researcher is looking for is the predictive value of the predictor variable to predict the criterion variable. The type of multivariate analysis is prediction model building (Kervin 1992), as what is desired for the data is an explanation of the amount of variance of one variable that is explained by one or more of the others.

While there are several multiple regression techniques available, the most suitable method for this analysis is the standard regression procedure. A standard multiple regression procedure accounts for only the unique contribution of a predictor variable to a criterion variable without considering the shared contribution the predictor variable has with other predictor variables (Kervin 1992). This method will not give optimal R^2 values (that is, the amount of variance explained) and will assist in controlling for multicollinearity ie. the amount of excessive relationship between predictor variables (Malhotra 1993).

The standard regression procedure enters the predictor variables together (Malhotra 1993). Kervin (1992) suggests that the multiple R^2 statistics are more valuable in procedures where there are many predictor variables, as this statistic accounts for the number of variables in the equation. Ideally, there should be at least twenty times the number of cases for each variable in the regression equation; however, if cautious interpretation of the results is carried out, the ratio

can be as low as five cases per variable in the equation (Tabachnik and Fidell 1989).

This study has for the most part managed to adhere to at least five cases per predictor variable. Wittink (1988:103) is a little less conservative about the matter and draws multicollinearity into the picture:

We usually desire the number of observations to be substantially greater than the number of predictor variables. Some researchers suggest that the number of observations should be 3 or 4 times as large as the number of predictor variables. However it is difficult to justify a particular rule of thumb for this question. For example as the multicollinearity in the sample data increases more information is required to obtain the desired amount of precision for the individual coefficients.

To avoid the effects of multicollinearity, according to Malhotra (1993), it is worth producing a correlation matrix of all variables, entering the equation to ensure they are not correlated highly; if so, it is worth running the analysis with just one of the variables that correlate highly.

In the following regression analyses, there will be tables of correlation matrices to show the possible multicollinearity between the variables included with the presentation of the regression analysis. Regression analysis can be undertaken on the samples used in this study as they are of sufficient size for the number of predictor variables used.

While the standard regression method is the best for initial analysis, the most suitable method for model building is the stepwise regression procedure

(Kervin 1992). In an exploratory study such as this, stepwise multiple regression can be used to highlight variables that are worthy of further confirmatory research. The advantage of a stepwise multiple regression procedure is that it accounts for only the unique contribution of a predictor variable to a criterion variable without considering the shared contribution the predictor variable has with other predictor variables (Kervin 1992).

The stepwise regression procedure selects the predictor variables one at a time, starting with the variable that explains most of the variance in the criterion variable, and then moving on through the list of the predictor variables until the variables entering the equation no longer meet the criteria for entry into the equation (Malhotra 1993). To determine the degree to which each of the predictor variables explains the variation in the criterion variable a stepwise regression will be conducted after predictor variables that have not proved significant in the standard regression analysis have been removed. In this way, it will provide an easily-understood method by which to interpret the relative strength of the contribution of variables to the explained variation in student and practitioner health.

CHAPTER 4

STUDENT RESULTS

This chapter discusses the results from the student survey. The chapter consists of six sections. The first section addresses the demographics of the respondents, and the influences and reasons that shaped students' career choice of social work. The results will be presented with reference to Pilcher's (1982) work, noting similarities and differences between the current sample and Pilcher's findings. The second section considers which aspects of the social work course were seen as very important and moderately to very important. The third section looks at social work course satisfaction, by identifying what seem to be the major constructs that determine students' satisfaction. The fourth section examines if there is any association between student demographics and course stress. The fifth section examines the level of students' psychological and physical health in light of the GHQ and Otto's Symptom Checklist results. The sixth section looks at student values and explores the constructs of Machiavellianism, Generativity, Coherence and Type A behaviour. Specifically, the final section explores the relationship between the four constructs to establish if there is a consistent image of the idealised social worker and to what extent the constructs describe a common image.

In terms of the major research questions explored in the thesis, this Chapter concentrates on research questions one and two. The first relates to the extent to which social work stresses emanate from the professional identity

expectations and stresses from the course that are part of the professional education process as outlined by Cushway (1992). The second concerns the association, if any, between the level of course-related stress experienced by students and their physical and psychological health.

4.1 THE STUDENT SAMPLE

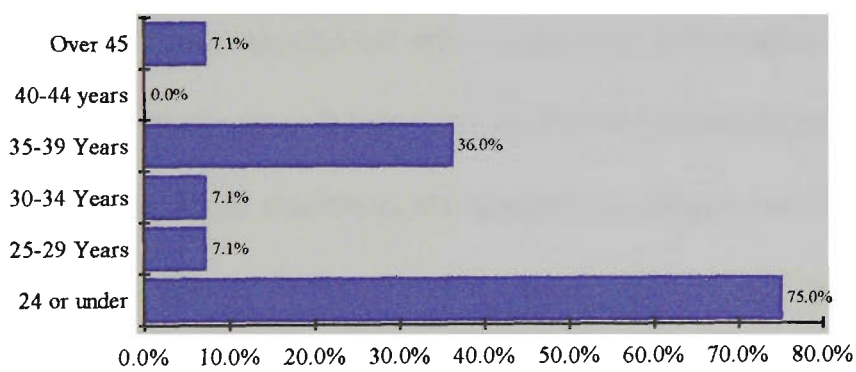
A total of 84 useable responses were received from social work students in their final six months of social work education, from a total of 96 surveys administered to students in class time in two social work courses. These surveys were completed in class, sealed in an envelope, and placed in the box provided. Students were given the option of filling in the survey or undertaking an alternative activity. The response rate represents 87.5% of the surveys administered, or 71% of the total enrolled final year student population of the two courses. The total number of students enrolled was 117.

A condition of conducting the survey was that the findings of the research were to remain confidential and that no identifying details of the courses were to be published. One course was located in a metropolitan area and the other in a regional area. The course structure for both courses was the two-plus-two model. This model meant that students did not enter the course directly but had to complete at least two years of tertiary study before they were eligible for entry.

4.1.1 DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF STUDENT RESPONDENTS

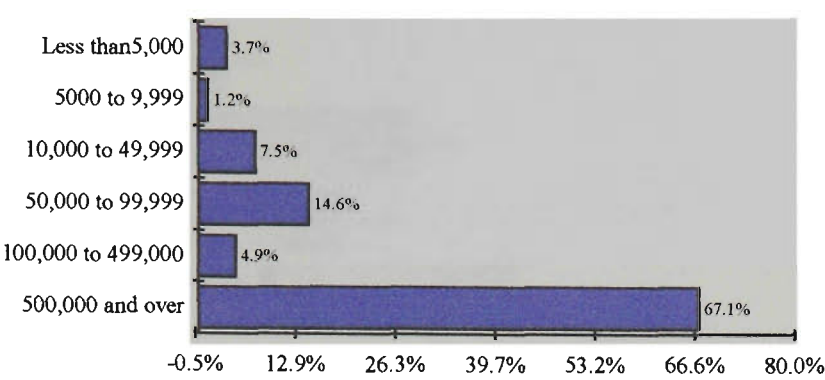
Most of the respondents were female (77%). Pilcher (1982) also found that 75% of her 1979 sample were female. The age distribution of the respondents is presented in Figure 4.1. Three quarters of the respondents were 24 or under, with a fairly even distribution of ages up to the age of 50. Therefore the majority of the respondents (82%) were under 30 years of age and can be classified as young adults. This sample is slightly younger than that reported by Pilcher (1982). She noted that there was a trend towards younger students over the period of her study and that age varied widely between social work courses.

FIGURE 4.1: AGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS



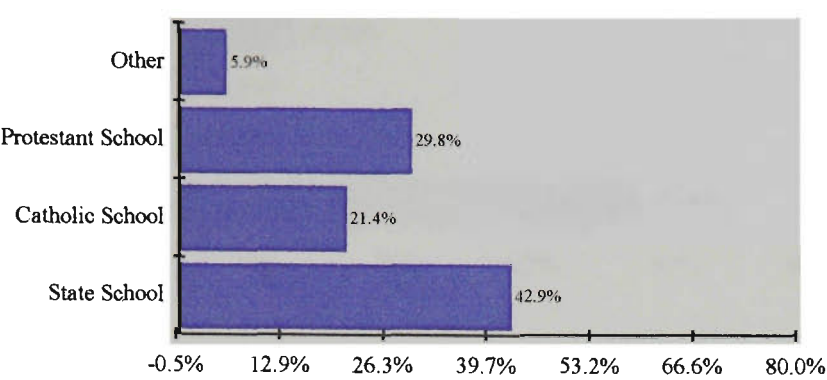
The third demographic question asked what sized community the respondents came from. Most of the respondents came from larger cities, as can be seen in Figure 4.2. The pattern of students entering social work from different community sizes is similar to that reported in Pilcher (1982). The majority of students came from large communities of 500,000 or over (67.1%), followed by those who came from communities in the range of 10,000 to 499,999 (27%).

FIGURE 4.2: SIZE OF COMMUNITY DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS



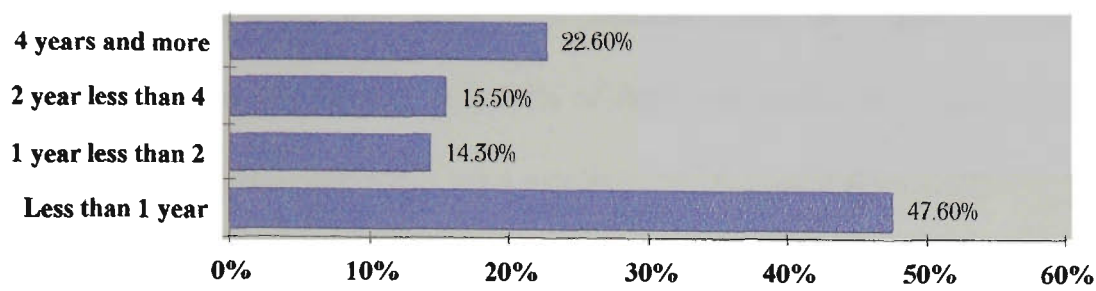
The fourth demographic question asked respondents where they received the greater part of their secondary education. Figure 4.3 indicates the distribution of respondents by the type of education they received, that is, State, Catholic, Protestant and so on. The most common category chosen by respondents was State schools. Of those respondents who came from independent schools, the respondents were evenly divided between Catholic and Protestant schools. When these two categories were combined, the majority of respondents (51.2%) came from independent schools. A small number of students (5.9%) went to other independent schools, either Greek Orthodox or Jewish. Compared to Pilcher’s (1982) sample, there were more students from independent schools and less from State schools.

FIGURE 4.3: SECONDARY SCHOOL DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS



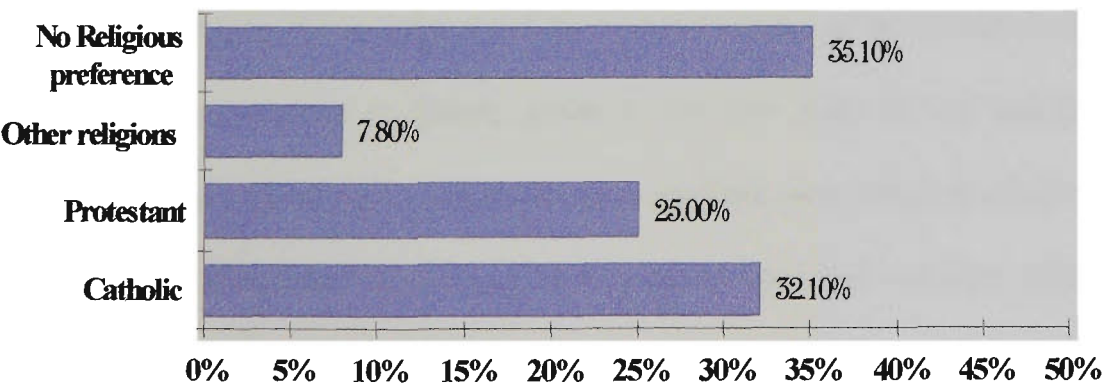
The respondents were asked about the amount of time they had taken off between leaving secondary school and beginning their social work course. Entry into social work for the two courses was a two plus two model, which means that most students have a minimum of two years of undergraduate study before entry into a social work course. In the two plus two model a number of students had completed their undergraduate degree before they entered the social work course; this percentage varied between the two courses used in the study but in each case constituted a minority. The largest proportion of students (47.6%) had less than a one-year gap between finishing their secondary education and starting their undergraduate courses and then entering social work courses. In practice, the majority of students started their undergraduate studies immediately after finishing their secondary education, since there are rarely mid-semester intakes into undergraduate courses, and transferred from these courses into social work. This is similar to the 50% of university students who entered social work on a continuous study basis reported by Pilcher (1982). Figure 4.4 illustrates this distribution.

FIGURE 4.4: TIME BEFORE BEGINNING SOCIAL WORK STUDY



Respondents were asked their religious affiliation or preference, with the two major denominations of Catholic and Protestant being provided as options. The ‘Other’ category was provided with a comment area to specify whether they had any religious preference and if so what type. A ‘no religious affiliation or preference’ option was provided. As indicated in Figure 4.5, the majority of respondents (57.1%) specified religious preference as either Catholic or Protestant. The ‘Other’ category (7.8%) consisted mainly of respondents who had Greek Orthodox, Judaic and Muslim religions. 35.1% of respondents had no religious affiliation. This was much higher than the 16% reported by Pilcher for the most recent of her samples.

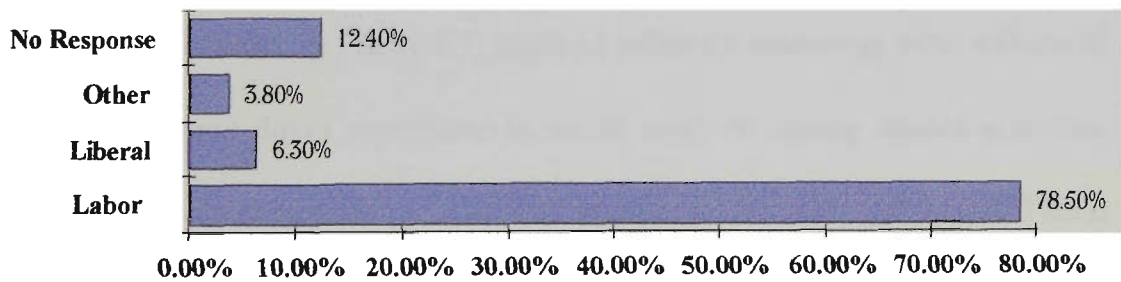
FIGURE 4.5: SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS’ RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE



Pilcher (1982) noted that while 80% of students entering social work had a religious preference, less than 40% affirmed that they had a practising membership. In this sample, only 65% of final year social work students stated they had a religious preference but a majority (54.8%) said they were practising.

Respondents were asked which political party they favour in elections. The majority of respondents (78.5%) favoured the Labor Party, with 6.3% favouring the Liberal Party and 3.8% favouring the minor parties. The remaining respondents declined to state their political preference. This is represented in Figure 4.6. There is much higher political preference in this sample than that reported by Pilcher (1982). She reported 49% of her 1979 sample had a Labor preference compared to this sample's 78.5%.

FIGURE 4.6: SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS' POLITICAL PREFERENCE



Therefore, the average social work student revealed by the survey so far could be characterised as female, under twenty-four years of age and Labor voting. Typical social work students about to graduate were raised in a large city, went to an independent school and, if they have stated their religion, probably consider themselves practising members of that religion.

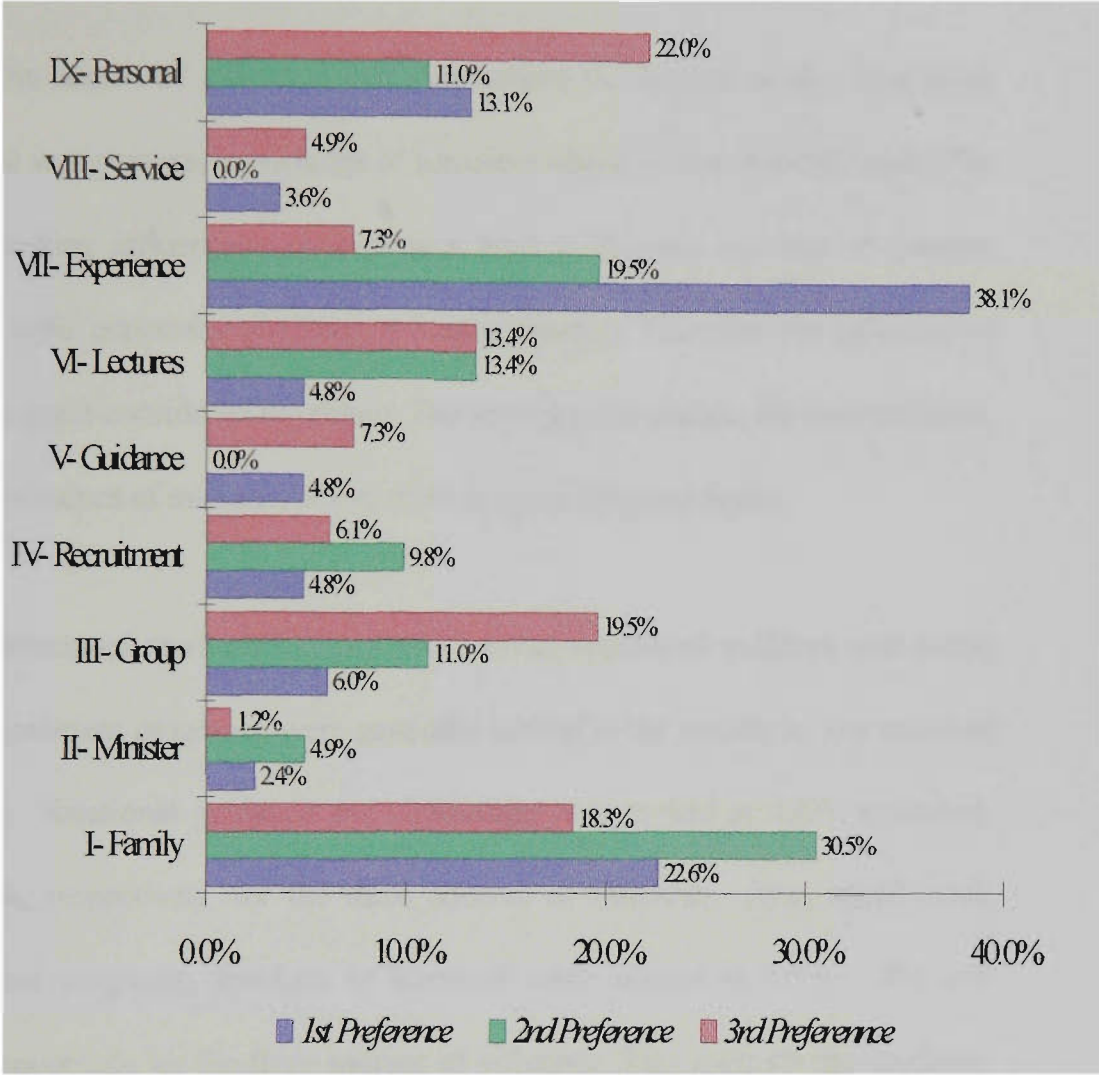
4.1.2 CHOICE OF SOCIAL WORK - INFLUENCES

Students were asked which major sources of influence had contributed to their decision to choose social work as a career. Students were given nine sources to choose from, and were asked to rank the three most influential in their choice of social work as a career. The nine suggested sources of influence were:

- I. Parents, husband, wife, personal experience or family situation?
- II. Minister, priest, rabbi or other religious figure?
- III. Membership of a group through tertiary education or in the community?
- IV. Social work recruitment program, speaker or literature?
- V. Vocational guidance or counselling?
- VI. Tertiary education courses, lecturers or tutors?
- VII. Direct experience in social work or closely related activities?
- VIII. Service received from social worker or social agency?
- IX. Personal knowledge of someone who is active in social work?

As illustrated in Figure 4.7, areas of influence chosen as most influential by students were direct experience in social work or closely related activities. This source was nominated by 38.1% of students as the most influential. This is an interesting result given that the majority of students entered social work directly from school. The second ranking choice for the most influential source, at 22.6%, was parents, husband, wife, personal experience or family situation. The least popular ranking was influence of minister, priest, rabbi or other religious figure. When this result is contrasted with the high response on religious affiliation and degree of active practice amongst respondents, this source of influence is lower than might have been anticipated.

FIGURE 4.7 *MAIN INFLUENCES ON SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS' CHOICE OF SOCIAL WORK*



The source of influence that was ranked the highest as the second most influential, at 30.5%, was the influence of parents, husband, wife, personal experience or family situation. The second ranking source of second preference influence was direct experience in social work or closely related activities at 19.5%. Therefore it can be seen that the ranking of the first and second most influential sources are reversed. This suggests that these are the dual influences

that shape most students' choice of social work as a career. The least favoured source of influence was the same as the first, that is, influence of religious figures.

The source of influence that was ranked the highest as the third most influential was personal knowledge of someone who is active in social work. The second ranking influence expressed as a third preference was that of parents, husband, wife, personal experience or family situation. Therefore the influence of parents is again considered important. The least popular choice, for the third time, was the influence of minister, priest, rabbi or other religious figure.

Structured recruitment activities, such as vocational guidance and social work recruitment programs, were generally ranked in the middle to low range of influence. Vocational guidance and counselling was ranked at 4.8%, unranked, and 7.3%, respectively, for the three sources of influence. Also, social work recruitment programs, speakers or literature were ranked at 4.8%, 9.8% and 6.1%, respectively for the three sources of influence. This suggests that students' entry into social work courses is via unstructured channels of influence, that is, by individuals who work in roles that are perceived to be related to social work. Interestingly this does not seem to include individuals working in religious roles.

4.1.3 CHOICE AND CONTINUATION OF SOCIAL WORK - REASONS

Respondents were asked to choose between eight statements that came closest to expressing the major reasons they chose social work as a career. They were asked to state their three most important reasons for entering before they

entered social work and the three most important reasons operating now. The eight reasons were:

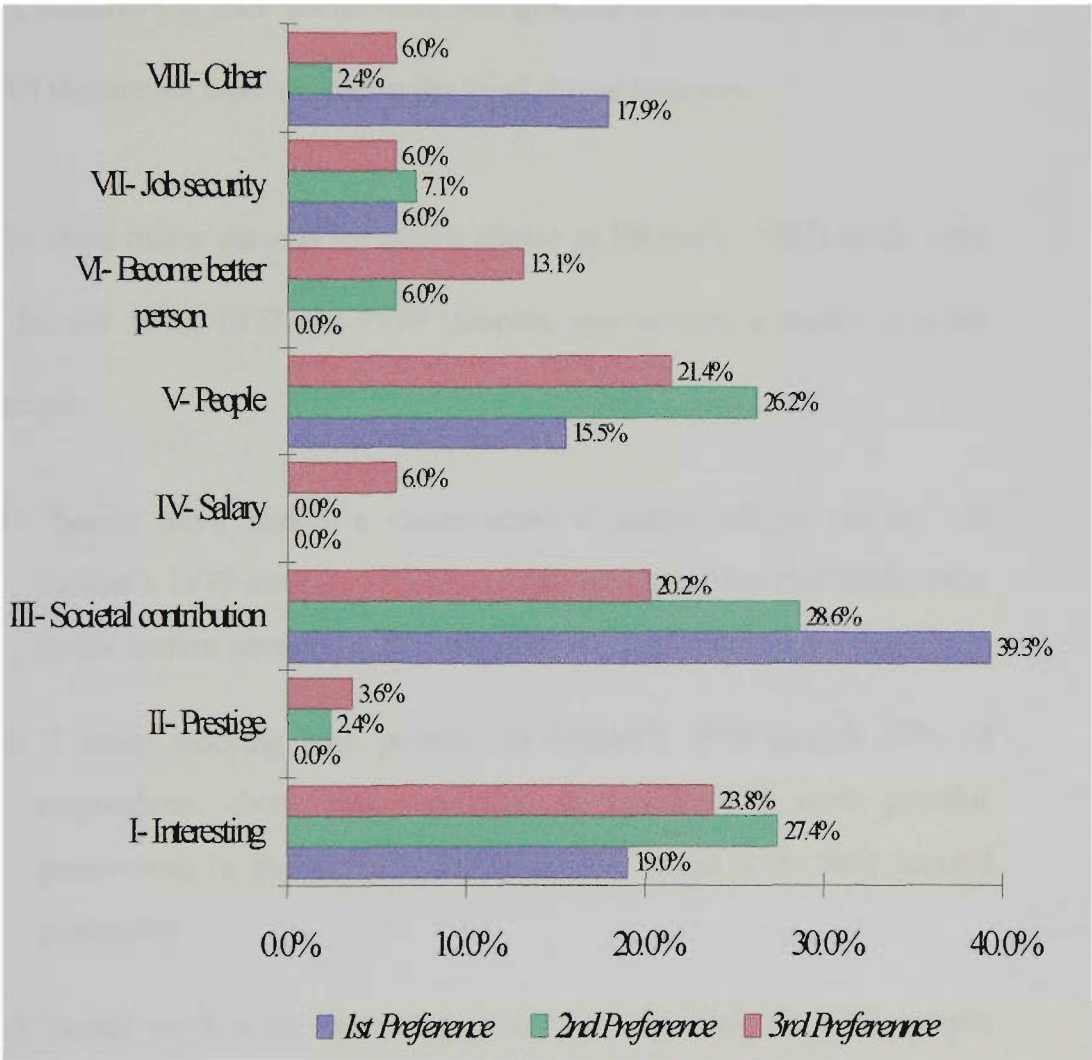
- I. Social work is an interesting profession.
- II. Social work will give me social status and prestige.
- III. Social work makes a contribution to individuals in society.
- IV. Social work offers good salaries and working conditions.
- V. I enjoy working with people.
- VI. Social work can help me become a better person, parent and marriage partner.
- VII. Social work provides many job opportunities and good job security.
- VIII. Other (please specify).

The analysis of reasons for entry into social work will be discussed in two sections. The first section looks at the first part of the question, i.e. the reasons respondents felt shaped their decision to enter social work. These reasons will be discussed by exploring the ranking of the reasons by respondents within each of the first, second and third order of importance categories. This process will be repeated for the second part of the question, i.e. the reasons they now have to continue in social work as a profession.

As can be seen in Figure 4.8, the reason that was ranked first was statement III, that 'social work makes a contribution to individuals in society', at 39.3%. The second most popular reason was statement I, that 'social work is seen as an interesting profession', at 19%. The least popular reason was statement VII, that 'social work provides many job opportunities and good job security'. Statements II, IV, and VI were unranked. These were, respectively, that 'social

work will give me social status and prestige’, that ‘social work offers good salaries and working conditions’, and that ‘social work can help me become a better person, parent and marriage partner’.

FIGURE 4.8 ***SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS’ REASONS FOR CHOOSING SOCIAL WORK - AT THE BEGINNING OF THE COURSE***



In the second preference category, the statement that ‘social work makes a contribution to individuals in society’ is again ranked the highest at 28.6%, followed by statement I, that ‘social work is an interesting profession’, at 27.4%.

The least popular reason was statement II, that ‘social work will give me social status and prestige’. Statement IV was not ranked in this category.

In the third preference category of importance the statement that ‘social work is an interesting profession’ was first, at 23.8%. Statement V, ‘enjoying working with people’, was ranked second, at 21.4%. The least popular statement was, again, statement II, that ‘social work will give me social status and prestige’, at 3.6%. All statements were ranked in the third choice category.

The three major reasons for career choice in Pilcher’s (1982) study were the same for her 1976, 1977 and 1979 samples, representing a match with the current sample:

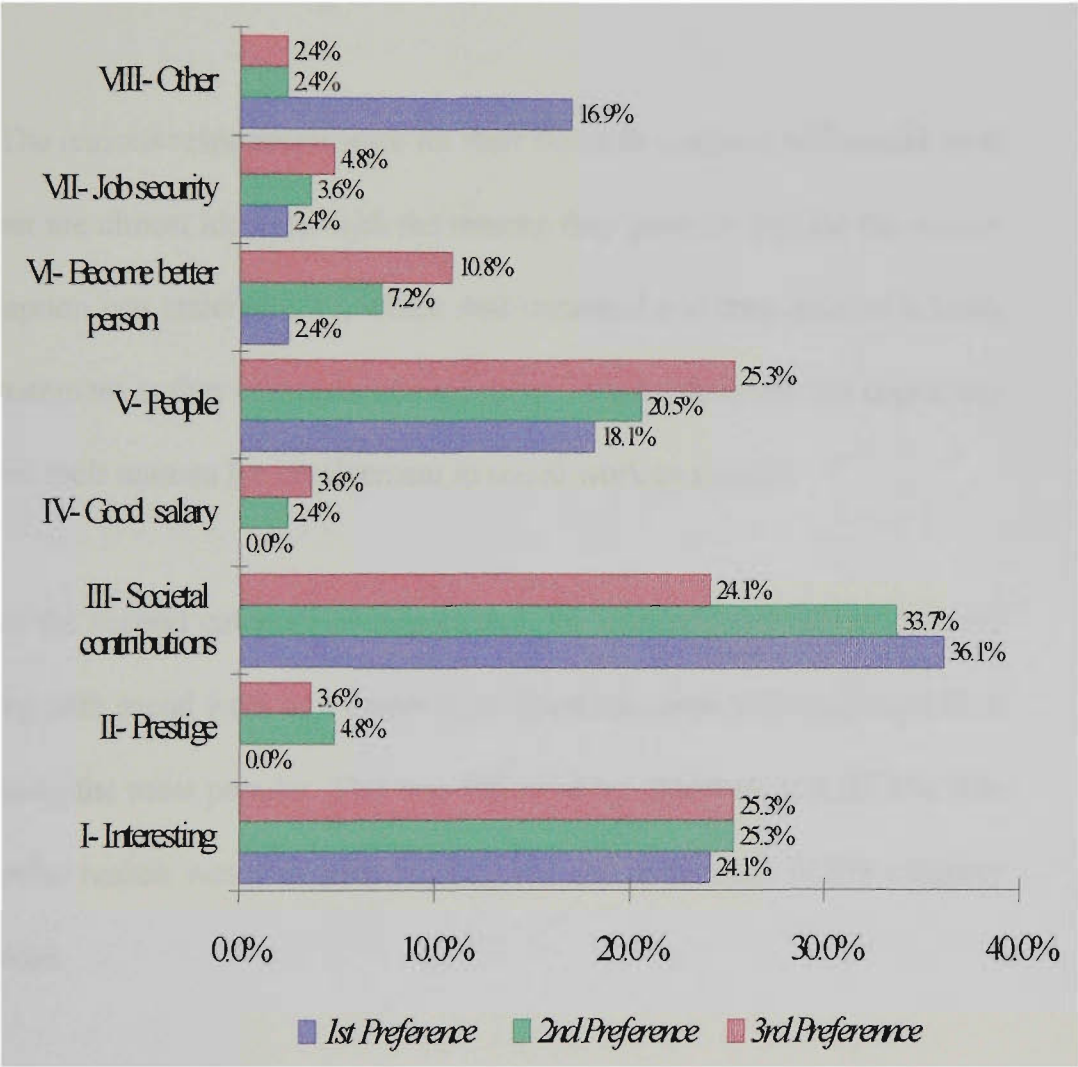
- (1) ‘Social work makes a contribution to individuals in society’. In Pilcher’s 1979 sample, 37% chose this option as their first preference. In the current sample 39.3% chose it.
- (2) ‘I enjoy working with people’. In Pilcher’s 1979 sample 30% of respondents chose this statement as the second most popular preference. In the current sample 26.2% chose it as their second preference.
- (3) ‘Social work is an interesting profession’. In Pilcher’s 1982 sample 18% of respondents chose this statement as their third most popular preference, and in the current sample 23.8% chose it as their third preference.

An analysis of student’s first, second and third preferences shows that these three categories are the most influential in determining student’s choice of social work.

Pilcher (1982:124) noted that:

These three categories account for 80 per cent of the reasons social work was chosen as a career in the three years surveyed. Monetary reasons and status were given very little emphasis. These findings replicate the major reasons American students gave for choosing social work as a career as well.

FIGURE 4.9 SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS’ REASONS FOR CONTINUING SOCIAL WORK - AT THE END OF THE COURSE



Respondents were asked to indicate the reasons for their current wish to continue with social work as a career, that is, on completion of their course. The most popular reasons in the first category of importance were statement III, at 36.1% and statement I, at 24.1%. This is the same order as the ranking given for

the reasons respondents chose to enter social work. The least popular statements that were ranked were statement VI and statement VII, which were (predictably) that 'social work can help me become a better person, parent and marriage partner' and that 'social work provides many job opportunities and good job security'. The statements that were not ranked were statement II and statement IV, that 'social work will give me social status and prestige', and that 'social work offers good salaries and working conditions'.

The reasons respondents gave for their desire to continue with social work as a career are almost identical with the reasons they gave for starting the course. The exception was statement VI, which was unranked and then became a lowly ranked statement as they completed their course. This suggests that the course has not altered their reasons for involvement in social work as a career.

In the second category of importance, the reasons respondents gave for continuing with social work as a career were again the same, with statement III at 33.7% being the most popular. This was followed by statement I, at 25.3%. The least popular reason was statement IV, at 2.4%. All statements in this category were ranked.

In the third category, statements I and V were ranked equally as the most important reasons, at 25.3%. The least popular reason was statement II, that social work will give me social status and prestige.

Examination of individual respondents' preferences shows there were differences in the importance placed on the reasons for entering social work and students' current desire to continue in it. However, the results at the group level reflect similarity and strong uniformity of opinion amongst respondents.

Students were then asked which of the two statements best expressed the function of social work that was most important to them, when they entered the course and now as they were about to finish the course. The two statements were, firstly, 'social work helps to document and effect change in the inequalities of society' and, secondly, 'social work helps to restore the social functioning of people'. The first statement expresses a societal change orientation while the second emphasises an individual focus of change.

There was little variation in students' choices as to which of these two statements they found was the most important when they entered the course, and now when they were about to finish the course. 54.8% chose statement II as best expressing the function of social work most important to them on completion of the course and 56% chose this as most important to them as they entered the course. The statement that social work helps to document and effect change in the inequalities of society was chosen by 32.1% as the function most important to them now, whilst 23.8% saw it as the reason most important to them when they chose to enter social work. Although there was an increase in the percentage of students, from 23.8% to 32.1%, who felt the function of social work was to effect

social change, the majority of students clearly felt that its function was to restore the social functioning of people.

Therefore the typical social work student can be said to have chosen social work because social work makes a contribution to individuals in society and it is seen as an interesting profession. These remain the reasons why students wish to continue in social work after their course is completed. The typical student is not primarily motivated by social work offering good salaries and working conditions or providing social status and prestige. They see the function of social work as restoring the social functioning of people, and they feel that through this they can make a contribution to individuals and to society in general.

4.2 SOCIAL WORK COURSE - PERFECT AND REAL

In the following section the 50 course aspects are examined. The course aspects of the idealised social work course were rated on a 0 - 6 importance scale. The scale ranged from not very important for zero to very important for 6. The social work course is analysed from the perspective of an idealised course and compared to the actual social work course.

4.2.1 COURSE ASPECTS WITH MEANS 5 OR MORE - 'IMPORTANT'

The most important aspect of the idealised course for social work students was learning and learning to do new things, with 56.3% of students seeing it as extremely important, a mean of 5.4 and a standard deviation of 0.88. The

standard deviation for this question was the second lowest of all the questions and reveals a very high level of uniformity amongst the students.

The next most important aspect of the course was to be informed when others make decisions affecting their future, with 50% of students seeing it as extremely important, a mean of 5.26 and a standard deviation of 0.96. The standard deviation indicates a high uniformity of response on this question. These were the only two questions that the majority of students saw as extremely important. Over 85% of students ranked these questions as very important or extremely important.

The question with the next highest mean, of 5.17, and with almost 85% of students seeing it as either very important or extremely important, was the ability to find time to rest and relax while doing their social work course. With a standard deviation of 1.01, this had a very good uniformity of response amongst students. However, 1.3% of the students did not see this as important at all.

Almost 85% of students felt that being able to get help and advice in case of course problems was important or extremely important. This question had a mean of 5.13 and with a standard deviation of .9 had a very high uniformity of response.

47.5% of students saw having equipment, resources, stationery and books to do their course as extremely important. 70% saw it as very important or extremely important. This question had a mean of 5.1 and, with a standard

deviation of 1, showed a high uniformity of response. None of the students ranked it as being not important at all or only slightly important. The mean for the real course was lower for all the above questions. These findings are represented in Table 4.1 below.

TABLE 4.1 COURSE ASPECTS WITH MEANS 5 OR MORE - ‘VERY IMPORTANT’

	The Perfect Social Work Course	Importance MEAN Perfect Course	How True MEAN Present Course	SD	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total 5+6
6.	Learning to do and learn new things.	5.40	3.81	0.88	0	0	2.5	2.5	3.8	35.0	56.3	91.3%
16.	To be informed when others make decisions that effect my future.	5.26	2.94	0.96	0	0	2.5	5.0	6.3	36.3	50.0	86.3%
9.	Being able to get help and advice in case of course problems.	5.13	2.95	0.90	0	0	2.6	0	19.2	38.5	39.7	78.0%
15.	To have equipment, resources, stationery and books to do my course.	5.10	3.00	1.00	0	0	0	7.5	22.5	22.5	47.5	70.0%

4.2.2 COURSE ASPECTS WITH MEANS 4 OR MORE - ‘MODERATELY TO VERY IMPORTANT’ - MAJORITY IMPORTANCE

Table 4.2 outlines the questions that students ranked as very important in their perception of the perfect social work course. 22.8% of students ranked the question of supervisors and lecturers treating them with respect and consideration as extremely important and 49.4% saw it as very important. This question had a mean of 4.86 and, with a standard deviation of 0.9, showed a very high uniformity

of response. It is interesting to note that only 2.5% of students saw it as only slightly important.

75% of students ranked as very important or extremely important the need to be informed about what was expected of them as students. This question had a mean of 4.86 and, with a standard deviation of 1.11, had a good uniformity of response. However, only 6.3 % of students felt this was only slightly important.

Almost 65% of students thought it was very important or extremely important for the course to make full use of their potential. 26.6% saw this as only moderately important, and 2.5% saw it as only slightly important. This question had a mean of 4.79 and a standard deviation of .98, indicating a high uniformity of response. The most common response to this question ranked it as very important.

The question with the next highest mean, at 4.75, concerned the need to be treated with respect and consideration by those in positions of power. With a standard deviation of 1.04, this question showed a very good uniformity of response.

With a standard deviation of 1.18 and a mean of 4.61, over 70% of the students felt that getting explanations of how to do their job was a very important or extremely important course aspect. However the standard deviation suggests that this response was not as uniform as for the previous questions. Indeed, almost

19% ranked this aspect of the course as slightly important or slightly to moderately important.

This question has a very similar pattern of response to an earlier question where students ranked how important it was to them to be informed about what is expected of them as students.

The next question, with a standard deviation of 1.06, had a very good uniformity of response. Almost 55% of students felt that variety in the tasks they do was very important or extremely important.

The remaining questions with means above 4 focused predominantly on questions that related to students' placement experiences. The majority of questions had standard deviations above 1.2 with the range of standard deviations going as high as 1.79. Therefore the uniformity of the answers to these questions ranged from fair to poor to low uniformity.

57% of students felt that it was very important or extremely important that they not be expected to act contrary to their social work values and philosophy on placement. Over 50% also thought that it was very important or extremely important to have enough desks, telephones and interview rooms on their placement. These questions had means of 4.53 and 4.51 respectively.

54.4% of students thought it was very important that they enjoy the company of their fellow students, with 5.1% seeing it as extremely important.

This question had a mean of 4.51 but a surprisingly low standard deviation of 0.8. This was the lowest standard deviation. As one would expect, none of the students saw this aspect of the course as being not important at all or only slightly important.

The next two questions, with means of 4.49 and 4.33, showed similar patterns of response. These questions concerned, respectively, gaining the respect of others and receiving from lecturers and supervisors appreciation for one's work.

As would be expected, the majority of students thought it was important or very important to know if this course would get them a job. However, it was surprising that 27.5% of students saw this as only slightly to moderately important, slightly important or not important at all.

The next question, with a mean of 4.23, explored how important it was for students on placements not to receive contradictory instructions or expectations. Almost 53% of students saw this as very important or extremely important.

TABLE 4.2 **COURSE ASPECTS WITH MEANS 4 OR MORE - 'MODERATELY TO VERY IMPORTANT' - MAJORITY IMPORTANCE**

	The Perfect Social Work Course	Importance MEAN Perfect Course	How True MEAN Present Course	SD	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total 5+6
13.	To be informed about what is expected of me as a student.	4.86	3.20	1.11	0	0	6.3	6.3	12.5	45.0	30.0	75.0
38.	That my supervisors and lecturers treat me with respect and consideration.	4.86	3.61	0.90	0	0	2.5	3.8	21.5	49.4	22.8	72.2
25.	For the course to make full use of my potential.	4.79	3.25	0.98	0	0	2.5	6.3	26.6	39.2	25.3	64.5
18.	For persons in positions of power to treat me with respect and consideration.	4.75	3.23	1.04	0	0	0	16.3	20.0	36.3	27.5	63.3
12.	To be consulted and have my ideas noticed.	4.73	2.46	1.02	0	0	0	13.8	27.5	31.3	27.5	58.8
39.	To be able to exert an influence on the course's decisions that affect me.	4.67	2.27	0.96	0	0	0	13.9	25.3	40.5	20.3	60.8
14.	To get explanations of how to do my job.	4.61	2.86	1.18	0	0	6.3	12.5	20.0	36.3	25.0	61.3
2.	Variety in the tasks I do.	4.55	2.99	1.06	0	0	2.4	15.5	27.4	34.5	20.2	54.7
37.	Not to be expected on placement to act contrary to my social work values and philosophy.	4.53	3.28	1.22	0	2.5	3.8	11.4	25.3	34.2	22.8	57
44.	For the physical conditions of my placements to have enough desks, telephones, interview room, etc.	4.51	3.14	1.20	0	1.3	1.3	20.3	26.6	24.1	26.6	50.7
23.	To enjoy the company of my fellow students.	4.51	3.34	0.80	0	0	0	13.9	26.6	54.4	5.1	59.5
10.	Having chances of receiving respect in other people's eyes.	4.49	3.00	1.14	0	0	3.8	19.2	21.8	34.6	20.5	55.1
22.	To have my work appreciated by lecturers and supervisors. *	4.33	3.47	1.26	2.5	0	2.5	17.5	30.0	30.0	17.5	47.5
5.	Knowing that doing this course will get me a job.	4.31	2.33	1.57	2.5	5.0	2.5	20.0	17.5	23.8	28.8	52.6
8.	On placements not to receive contradictory instructions or expectations.	4.23	2.88	1.23	0	2.6	7.7	16.7	20.5	42.3	10.3	52.6

* This question has a minority importance but fits into this section bases of mean score.

4.2.3 COURSE ASPECTS WITH MEANS 4 OR MORE - ‘MODERATELY TO VERY IMPORTANT’ - MINORITY IMPORTANCE

The remaining five questions with a mean above 4 were, unlike the previous 13 questions, not seen by the majority of students as being very important or extremely important to them. The only question that this did not apply to was question 22. These questions are in decreasing magnitude of means: to be able to influence the course and its contents; to be able to meet socially with fellow students; not having to do a lot of work in a limited time; for the course to allow time for essential daily chores that must be done at home; and to be able to control how I do my work. The perfect social work course aspects all had means that were higher than the current course.

TABLE 4.3 COURSE ASPECTS WITH MEANS 4 OR MORE - ‘MODERATELY TO VERY IMPORTANT’ - MINORITY IMPORTANCE

	The Perfect Social Work Course	Importance MEAN Perfect Course	How True MEAN Present Course	SD	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total 5+6
24.	To be able to influence the course and its content.	4.22	1.98	1.15	0	2.5	5.1	13.9	38.0	27.8	12.7	40.5
19.	To be able to meet socially with fellow students.	4.19	3.08	1.24	0	3.8	2.5	23.8	26.3	28.8	15.0	43.8
3.	Not having to do a lot of work in a limited time.	4.10	1.76	1.52	0	7.1	13.1	9.5	21.4	31.0	17.9	48.9
47.	For my course to allow time to do most of the important daily chores that I need to do at home.	4.09	3.39	1.79	3.8	8.9	7.6	10.1	24.1	15.2	30.4	45.6
34.	To be able to control how I want to do my work.	4.09	2.68	1.16	0	5.1	2.5	16.5	38.0	30.4	7.6	38

4.3 SOCIAL WORK COURSE CLIMATE CHARACTERISTICS

This section considers social work course climate characteristics. It will do this by first looking at the factors that constitute the perfect social work course. Question items for the students' perfect course and the students' current course will be compared. Differences between the perfect and the current course will be explored.

After exploring the initial factor analysis it was decided to do a forced factor analysis using the principal components method to identify six factors which seemed to be clearly interpretable constructs (Kerlinger 1965; Kervin 1992).

In addition to the factor analysis of the perfect social work course scores, a descriptive analysis was also conducted on a perfect course score. For each of the six factors discussed, the corresponding scores on the current course were also calculated. The perfect and current courses were compared and a student dissatisfaction score was calculated for each factor and course aspect question.

For each course environment aspect a dissatisfaction score was calculated by dividing the perfect course ranking by the current course ranking and subtracting the remainder from one for each respondent and calculating a mean response for the student sample. If the answer was greater than or equal to one then there was no course dissatisfaction on this question item. If the answer was less than one then this was converted into a percentage. The possible range of

course dissatisfaction was from 0% to 100%. For each factor the mean course dissatisfaction score was calculated. Table 4.4 gives the eigenvalue, the percent of variation explained by that factor as well as the perfect social work course mean, the current course mean and the percent dissatisfaction for each of the six factors. The six factors accounted for 50.5% of the student variation on the six factors and therefore provided a useful data reduction technique.

TABLE 4.4 COMPARISONS OF FACTORS FOR THE PERFECT COURSE AND THE CURRENT COURSE:

Factors	Eigenvalue	Percent of Variation	Perfect Course Mean	Current Course Mean	Percent Dissatisfaction
Factor 1: Self-Actualising course environment	7.05	14.1	4.37	2.71	30.98
Factor 2: Positive client interaction	5.73	11.5	3.21	2.71	17.47
Factor 3: Non-pressured course environment	3.96	7.9	3.25	2.80	17.32
Factor 4: Empowering course environment	3.26	6.5	4.65	3.31	26.38
Factor 5: Rewarding course structure	2.70	5.4	3.99	2.58	29.09
Factor 6: Positive student interaction	2.55	5.1	3.98	3.21	17.22

4.3.1 FACTOR 1: SELF-ACTUALISING COURSE ENVIRONMENT

The first factor had an eigenvalue of 7.05 and accounted for 14.1% of the variation of students’ perception of the perfect social work course. It consisted of nine variables that pertained to whether the course environment was self-actualising. The aspect of the course that students expressed the greatest dissatisfaction with (41.23%) was the ability to influence the course content. This

was followed by students being consulted and having their ideas noticed, with 38.28% of students feeling dissatisfied. The inability to get help and advice in case of course problems was also a cause of dissatisfaction (35.03%). With a dissatisfaction score of 32.66%, almost a third of the students felt they were unable to organise and do their work as they would like to. The aspect of the course that the students showed the least dissatisfaction with, at 24.87%, was not to be expected to act contrary to their social work values and philosophy on placement. The mean level dissatisfaction for students on this factor was 30.98%.

For the first factor a Cronbach alpha was calculated to examine the reliability of the factor as a scale. When all the questions in the factor were entered the alpha was a good .78. This suggests that this factor could be used as a scale and that the question items can be meaningfully added to produce a higher order construct. This higher order construct has been named ‘Self-Actualising course environment’ and seems to be a reliable aspect of social work students’ perceptions of a perfect social work course. Table 4.5 gives the factor weighting for each factor item as well as the perfect social work course mean, the current course mean and the percent dissatisfaction for each factor item. Factor items that are part of the scale are in green.

TABLE 4.5 FACTOR 1 : SELF-ACTUALISING COURSE ENVIRONMENT

	FACTOR 1: Self-Actualising Course Environment	Factor Weighting	Perfect course mean	Real course mean	Percent Dissatis- faction
25.	For the course to make full use of my potential. *	.67	4.79	3.25	26.05
34.	To be able to control how I want to do my work. *	.64	4.09	2.68	27.98
12.	To be consulted and have my ideas noticed. *	.63	4.73	2.46	38.28
37.	Not to be expected on placement to act contrary to my social work values and philosophy. *	.62	4.53	3.28	24.87
24.	To be able to influence the course and its content. *	.62	4.22	1.98	41.23
10.	Having chances of receiving respect in other people's eyes. *	.58	4.49	3.00	26.09
8.	On placements not to receive contradictory instructions or expectations. *	.54	4.23	2.88	26.63
9.	Being able to get help and advice in case of course problems. *	.53	5.13	2.95	35.03
1.	Freedom to organise things and do my work as I want to. *	.52	3.13	1.89	32.66
	Mean		4.37	2.71	30.98

** Scale Items are in green*

4.3.2 FACTOR 2: POSITIVE CLIENT INTERACTION

The second factor had an eigenvalue of 5.73 and accounted for 11.5% of the variation of students’ perceptions of the ideal course. This factor consisted of eleven variables and pertained to whether the ideal social work course provided positive client interaction. This is a difficult factor to interpret because it has negatively loaded items. The aspect of the course that students were most dissatisfied with was not being able to find time to rest and relax while doing the course. 32.16% of students felt dissatisfied with this aspect of the course. The aspect of the course that students were next most dissatisfied with was having too much variety in the tasks they do. 29.91% of students felt dissatisfied with this

aspect of the course. The third aspect of the course that students showed most dissatisfaction with (27.93%) was being able to organise the pace of the work they do. For this factor the mean importance rating for a perfect social work course was the lowest of all the factors at 3.21. This meant that the majority of students felt these aspects of the course were only moderately important to them. The mean dissatisfaction score for this factor was 17.47%.

For the second factor a Cronbach alpha was also calculated to examine the reliability of the factor as a scale. When all the questions in the factor were entered, after questions 2 and 6 were reversed, the reliability coefficient was a good .79. This suggests that this factor could be used as a scale and that the question items can be meaningfully added after questions 2 and 6 are reversed, to produce a higher order construct. This higher order construct, which has been named ‘Controlled Positive Client Interaction’, seems to be a reliable aspect of social work students’ perceptions of a perfect social work course.

The factor was named ‘Controlled Positive Client Interaction’ based on the factor loadings, since the strongest positive factor weightings related to clients and strongest negative factor weightings related to overload and lack of control. Table 4.6 gives the factor weighting for each factor item as well as the perfect social work course mean, the current course mean and the percent dissatisfaction for each factor item. Factor items that are part of the scale are in green.

TABLE 4.6 FACTOR 2 : CONTROLLED POSITIVE CLIENT INTERACTION

	FACTOR 2: Controlled Positive Client Interaction	Factor Weighting	Perfect course mean	Real course mean	Percent Dissatis- faction
32.	To have clients and groups who need help that I am able to provide. *	.68	2.33	2.43	10.62
17.	To be able to organise the pace of the work I do. *	.67	2.65	1.72	27.93
35.	Not encounter personal or social problems with clients which are the same as my own problems. *	.60	2.62	2.30	7.1
41.	For clients to appreciate what I am trying to do for them on placement. *	.59	2.81	3.06	7.43
31.	To have clients and groups on placement who are really interested and involved. *	.56	3.09	2.62	13.24
33.	Not to have clients who resent seeing me due to the involuntary nature of their contact eg. probation. *	.48	2.79	2.03	12.66
40.	Not to undertake tasks on placement that I do not want to do. *	.45	2.87	2.77	14.73
36.	To agree with the way welfare services are delivered in my placement agencies. *	.44	2.98	2.93	11.34
50.	To be able to find time to rest and relax while doing this course. *	.32	5.17	3.18	32.16
6.	Learning to do and learn new things. *	-.59	5.40	3.81	25.08
2.	Variety in the tasks I do. *	-.62	4.55	2.99	29.91
	Mean #		3.21	2.71	17.47

** Scale Items are in green # Mean calculated after recoding*

4.3.3 FACTOR 3: NON-PRESSURED COURSE ENVIRONMENT

The third factor, with an eigenvalue of 3.96, explained 7.9% of the variation of students’ perceptions of the perfect social work course. Factor three contained ten variables, pertaining to whether the social work course provided a non-pressured course environment. The course aspect that has the highest student course dissatisfaction, with a score of 29.65%, was whether students were informed about what was expected of them. This was closely followed by 27.12% of students who felt that the physical conditions of their placements, eg. having

enough desks, telephones and interview rooms, were inadequate. The third course aspect that students felt greatest dissatisfaction with, at 18.75%, was whether they had adequate clerical assistance while on placement. The mean level of course dissatisfaction on the factor non-pressured course environment was 20.03%.

A Cronbach alpha was also calculated for the third factor. When all the questions in the factor were entered, the reliability coefficient was a very good .80. This suggests that this factor could be used as a scale and that the question items can be meaningfully added to produce a higher order construct. This higher order construct has been named ‘Non-Pressured Course Environment’, and it seems to be a reliable aspect of social work students’ perceptions of a perfect social work course. Table 4.7 gives the factor weighting for each factor item as well as the perfect social work course mean, the current course mean and the percent dissatisfaction for each factor item. Factor items that are part of the scale are in green.

TABLE 4.7 FACTOR 3: NON-PRESSURED COURSE ENVIRONMENT

	FACTOR 3: Non-Pressured Course Environment	Factor Weighting	Perfect course mean	Real course mean	Percent Dissatis- faction
27.	Not to have to work three hours non-stop without even having time for a cup of coffee. *	.72	2.27	2.18	8.00
42.	Not to encounter negative community attitudes towards social workers. *	.70	2.61	2.44	13.44
44.	For the physical conditions of my placements to have enough desks, telephones, interview room, etc. *	.67	4.51	3.14	27.12
29.	Not to handle a large case load (over 15 continuous cases) on placement. *	.64	3.47	3.17	15.44
43.	For my placement work environment not to be noisy. *	.62	3.18	2.87	17.12
26.	Not to have pressure on you to upgrade your qualifications when you finish this course. *	.55	3.10	2.84	16.41
30.	Not to have continuous administrative and policy changes during your course. *	.54	3.08	2.82	12.24
13.	To be informed what is expected of me as a student. *	.49	4.86	3.20	29.65
7.	On placements to be expected to do things that I have the knowledge or skills to do properly. *	.49	3.05	2.68	14.99
28.	To have adequate clerical assistance on placement. *	.46	3.15	2.65	18.75
	Mean		3.70	3.11	20.03

** Scale Items are in green*

4.3.4 FACTOR 4: EMPOWERING COURSE ENVIRONMENT

The fourth factor consisted of seven variables and accounted for 6.5% of the variation in students’ perceptions of the ideal social work course. It had an eigenvalue of 3.26 and pertained to whether the ideal course provided an empowering course environment. The factor aspect that had the highest student dissatisfaction score (40.54%) was whether students were able to exert an influence on decisions within the course that affected them. The course aspect within this factor with the second highest dissatisfaction level (36.67%) was whether students were informed when others made decisions that affected their

future. The third factor course aspect was having the necessary equipment, resources, stationery and books to undertake their course; it had a dissatisfaction score of 33.25%. These three course aspects showed a relatively high level of course dissatisfaction. The means for two of these aspects were above 5 and for the third it was above 4.5. This showed that, for the majority of students, these aspects of the perfect course was very important as they had a means that ranked above 5 and moderately to very important for the aspects that had means ranked above 4. The course factor aspect that had the lowest dissatisfaction aspect at 13.69% was for the course not to extend outside normal nine-to-five working hours.

Of the four factors discussed so far, this factor had the highest mean perfect course ranking at 4.65, compared to the factor perfect course means of 4.37, 3.21 and 3.25 for factors 1, 2 and 3 respectively. The mean level of course dissatisfaction for this factor was 26.38%.

A Cronbach alpha was also calculated for the fourth factor. When all the questions in the factor were entered the reliability coefficient was a good .73. This suggests that this factor could be used as a scale and that the question items can be meaningfully added to produce a higher order construct. This higher order construct has been named ‘Empowering Course Environment’, and it seems to be a reliable aspect of social work students’ perceptions of a perfect social work course. Table 4.8 gives the factor weighting for each factor item as well as the perfect social work course mean, the current course mean and the percent

dissatisfaction for each factor item. Factor items that are part of the scale are in green.

TABLE 4.8 FACTOR 4: EMPOWERING COURSE ENVIRONMENT

	FACTOR 4: Empowering Course Environment	Factor Weighting	Perfect course mean	Real course mean	Percent Dissatis- faction
18.	For persons in positions of power to treat me with respect and consideration. *	.70	4.75	3.23	26.06
38.	That my supervisors and lecturers treat me with respect and consideration. *	.66	4.86	3.61	21.06
47.	For my course to allow time to do most of the important daily chores that I need to do at home. *	.58	4.09	3.39	17.78
39.	To be able to exert an influence on the courses' decisions that affect me. *	.58	4.67	2.27	40.54
45.	Not to have the course extend outside normal 9-5 working hours. *	.56	3.39	3.48	13.69
15.	To have equipment, resources, stationery and books to do my course. *	.48	5.10	3.00	33.25
16.	To be informed when others make decisions that effect my future. *	.45	5.26	2.94	36.67
	Mean		4.65	3.31	26.38

** Scale Items are in green*

4.3.5 FACTOR 5: REWARDING COURSE STRUCTURE

Factor 5 pertained to how rewarding students found the social work course structure, and consisted of seven variables. It had an eigenvalue of 2.70 and accounted for 5.4% of student variation in their perceptions of the perfect social work course. The aspect that had the highest student dissatisfaction score, of 44.45%, was where students felt they had too much work to do in a limited amount of time. The course aspect with the second highest level of student dissatisfaction, with a score of 38.44%, was where students wanted to be paid an income on placements in line with their skills and responsibilities. This was

closely followed by the third course aspect, where students needed to know that on the completion of the course they would get a job, with a 37.37% student dissatisfaction score. The course aspect that had the lowest dissatisfaction score, 18.19%, was where students did not want to clash with fellow students due to theoretical and value differences. The negative correlation of $-.49$ suggests that students felt that clashing with students on theoretical and value differences was not a negative course aspect and was part of the rewarding course structure. Factor 6 discusses aspects of the course that deal with positive student interaction. This course aspect, where students felt that clashing with students on theoretical and value differences was not a negative course aspect, did not even partially load greater than $.3$ on the factor 6 positive student interaction, while it loaded negative $.49$ on this factor. Interestingly question 3 did not load with question 17, 'To be able to organise the pace of the work I do', in factor 2. The mean level of student dissatisfaction score on this factor was 20.09%.

A Cronbach alpha was also calculated for the fifth factor. When all the questions in the factor were entered the reliability coefficient was an unacceptable $.33$. To optimise the reliability coefficient, questions were progressively deleted from the analysis. The scale was optimised with questions 4, 14 and 22, with a reliability coefficient of $.76$. This suggests that these three questions within the factor could be used as a scale and that the question items can be meaningfully added to produce a higher order construct. This higher order construct has been named 'Rewarding Course Structure', and it seems to be a reliable aspect of social work students' perceptions of a perfect social work course. Table 4.9 gives

the factor weighting for each factor item as well as the perfect social work course mean, the current course mean and the percent dissatisfaction for each factor item. Factor items that are part of the scale are in green.

TABLE 4.9 FACTOR 5: REWARDING COURSE STRUCTURE

	FACTOR 5: Rewarding Course Structure	Factor Weighting	Perfect course mean	Real course mean	Percent Dissatis- faction
4	Having periods where there is not much to do. *	.66	3.29	2.92	18.35
14.	To get explanations of how to do my job. *	.63	4.61	2.86	29.53
3	Not having to do a lot of work in a limited time.	.57	4.10	1.76	44.45
22.	To have my work appreciated by lecturers and supervisors. *	.53	4.33	3.47	17.31
5.	Knowing that doing this course will get me a job.	.49	4.31	2.33	37.37
11.	To be paid an income on placements in line with the skills and responsibilities I have.	.35	3.62	1.90	38.44
20.	Not to clash with fellow students due to value or theoretical differences.	-.49	3.64	2.84	18.19
	Mean[#]		3.99	2.58	29.09

* Scale Items are in green [#] Mean calculated after recoding

4.3.6 FACTOR 6: POSITIVE STUDENT INTERACTION

The sixth factor pertained to positive student interaction. It had a eigenvalue of 2.55 and accounted for 5.1% of the students’ perception of the social work course. The factor aspect that had the highest student dissatisfaction score, of 21.50%, was where students did not feel that they were able to meet socially with fellow students. This was followed closely, with a score of 20.99%, with whether students felt they were not able to enjoy the company of their fellow students. The lowest of the three course aspects, with a course dissatisfaction score of 9.16%, was not to have tension or conflict within skills

groups. This course aspect had a low perfect course mean of 3.23. The overall course dissatisfaction on this factor had a mean of 17.22%. This is the lowest dissatisfaction score for the six factors.

A Cronbach alpha was also calculated for the sixth factor. When all the questions in the factor were entered the reliability coefficient was an unacceptable .25. It was not possible to optimise the reliability coefficient to an acceptable level. This higher order construct has been named ‘Positive Student Interaction’. However, there is no evidence to suggest that it is a reliable aspect of social work students’ perceptions of a perfect social work course.

TABLE 4.10 FACTOR 6: POSITIVE STUDENT INTERACTION

	FACTOR 6: Positive Student Interaction	Factor Weighting	Perfect course mean	Real course mean	Percent Dissatis- faction
23.	To enjoy the company of my fellow students.	.63	4.51	3.34	20.99
19.	To be able to meet socially with fellow students.	.53	4.19	3.08	21.50
21.	Not to have tension or conflict within my skill groups.	.33	3.23	3.20	9.16
	Mean		3.98	3.21	17.22

The following questions were not included in the factor analysis due to the large numbers of respondents who felt they were not applicable to them. However, all questions had an importance rating greater than five.

- Q. 46 To have suitable arrangements for the care of my children.(88.6% N.A.)
- Q. 48 To have enough time to spend with my spouse or partner. (41.6% N.A.)
- Q.49 To have enough time to spend with my children. (82.3% N.A.)

When the perfect course mean, current course mean and the level of dissatisfaction are compared there is no clear relationship between the three variables.

As Table 4.11 illustrates, the factor with the highest perfect course mean, at 4.65, was Factor 4 (Empowering Course Environment) and the factor with the lowest was Factor 2 (Controlled Positive Client Interaction), at 3.21. The course factor that has the highest level of student dissatisfaction was Factor 1 (Self-Actualising Course Environment), at 30.98%. The second highest was Factor 5 (Rewarding Course Structure), with a student dissatisfaction level of 29.09%. Five of the six factors had Cronbach Alphas at a level that suggest they could be used for further research.

TABLE 4.11 *FACTORS, RELIABILITIES, COURSE MEANS AND SATISFACTION AND DISSATISFACTION SCORES*

	FACTORS - PERFECT SOCIAL WORK COURSE	Cronbach Alpha	Perfect course mean	Real course mean	Percent Dissatisfaction
1	Self-Actualising Course Environment	.78	4.37	2.71	30.98
2	Controlled Positive Client Interaction	.79	3.21	2.71	17.47
3	Non-Pressured Course Environment	.80	3.70	3.11	20.03
4.	Empowering Course Environment	.73	4.65	3.31	26.38
5.	Rewarding Course Structure	.76*	3.99	2.58	29.09
6.	Positive Student Interaction	.25	3.98	3.21	17.22

** Only questions 4, 14 and 22 of the factor were included for the Cronbach alpha.*

4.4 COURSE STRESS AND STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

For the social work course a stress score was developed. This stress score is a satisfaction measure of the degree of person-environment fit that social work students feel in relation to their course. What is to be determined in this section is how significant are social work students' initial influences and reasons in their choice of social work to their current satisfaction with their social work course. If there are strong and significant variations in students' course satisfaction based on these reasons then one way to lessen students' course dissatisfaction would be to examine more carefully the reasons and influences that have shaped students' choice of social work.

4.4.1 SOCIAL WORK COURSE STRESS AND SCALE RELIABILITY

Social work course stress was calculated by developing a social work course satisfaction score. The higher the course satisfaction score the lower the level of course stress. This score was calculated, following the person-environment fit model, by dividing the perfect social work course score by the current social work course score for all items for all social work students. A total social work course satisfaction score was determined by first ensuring that no social work course aspect question had a satisfaction score of greater than a hundred percent. This was achieved by recoding all social work student satisfaction scores that were greater than a 100% to 100%. This ensured that the range for satisfaction scores was from 0% to 100%. Therefore the total social

work course satisfaction index is a reversal of the social work course dissatisfaction index that had been provided for the above six factors.

The reasons for using a total course satisfaction index rather than using factor dissatisfaction scores was determined by empirical considerations, as the factor analysis was not robust enough (given the limited sample size) for further analysis in this study.

One of the aims of this study was to determine if there was any difference between the students' perceptions of a perfect social work course and the current social work course. The hypothesis, in the null and alternate forms, can be expressed as follows:

H1₀: There will be no mean differences on students' ranking of how important course aspects are for the perfect social work course and how true students rank their current social work course.

H1_A: The respondents will perceive their current social work course aspects as being lower than the perfect social work course aspects.

A paired sample *t* test was chosen to test this, as the nominal variable social work course is split into two groups. The two groups are course aspects of the perfect social work and the course aspects of the current social work course. This is a paired sample as each student is paired with themselves.

The *t* test showed a significant difference between the mean scores of 3.97 for the current course and 4.84 for the perfect course ($t = -9.64$; $p \leq .000$).

Thus the hypothesis was substantiated. Students ranked the perfect social work course as significantly higher than their current course.

To determine if the items could be meaningfully added to form a scale a Cronbach alpha was conducted. A Cronbach alpha for the 50 item social work course satisfaction score was .83. This suggests that this index of social work student course satisfaction is highly reliable and can be used in further analysis.

4.4.2 ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL WORK COURSE VARIANCE

Analyses of variance tests were conducted first for the demographic variables, then for those which influenced students' choice of social work, the reasons why students initially chose social work and the reasons they continue. The hypothesis expressed in the null and alternate forms was:

H₂₀: Students' social work course satisfaction will be the same regardless of their age, sex, community size, religious preference, type of school attended and political preference .

H_{2A}: Students' social work course satisfaction will vary depending on their age, sex, community size, religious preference, type of school attended and political preference .

Analysis of variance tests were conducted for several categorical demographic variables while holding course satisfaction as the constant criterion variable. The demographic variables used in the analysis included age, sex, community size, religious preference, type of school attended and political preference.

The variable age, due to its being highly skewed, was recoded into a dichotomous variable: those who were aged 24 or less and those who were 25 or more (see above Figure 4.1). The ANOVA ($F(1,77)=10.72$, $p=0.0016$) reported that those who were 25 or more (mean = 110.11, SD = 17.62) reported significantly higher course satisfaction levels than those 24 or under (mean = 91.76, SD = 20.56).

The variables for community size and sex were tested using an ANOVA. Community size was categorised into two groups: those from a community with a population greater than 500,000 people, and those with a population less than 500,000 people. There was no significant difference on the course satisfaction measure between those who came from the larger or smaller populations, and there was also no significant difference between male and female respondents.

The respondents' religion was defined as Catholic, Protestant or other. The ANOVA ($F(1,76)=5.36$, $p=0.007$) showed that Catholics (mean = 105.34, SD = 19.79) reported significantly higher levels of course satisfaction than the other two groups of Protestant (mean = 86.57, SD = 11.19) or 'other' religions (mean = 92.21, SD = 23.41).

The respondents were asked what type of secondary schooling they had received: State, Catholic, Protestant or other. The ANOVA ($F(1,75)=9.25$, $p=0.0002$) found that those respondents who had been to a Catholic school (mean = 110.15, SD = 21.14) were found to be significantly higher on the course satisfaction measure than those who had reported attending a State school (mean

= 91.83, SD = 12.28) or 'other' school (i.e. does not fit into Catholic, Protestant or State school categories) (mean = 68.35, SD = 41.50). Those respondents who had attended a Protestant school (mean = 95.64, SD = 19.71) were found to be significantly higher on the course satisfaction measure than those respondents who had reported attending an 'other' school.

Three different analyses of variance were conducted for the course satisfaction variable across who influenced their choice in doing social work, why they initially chose to do social work and why they continue to do social work. Their first preference was used for the analysis. This research question can be expressed by the following alternative and null hypothesis:

H3₀: Students' social work course satisfaction will be the same regardless of who influenced their choice of doing social work, why they initially chose to do social work and why they continue to do social work

H3_A: Students' social work course satisfaction will vary depending on who influenced their choice of doing social work, why they initially chose to do social work and why they continue to do social work

The sources of influence for students' initial choice of social work were:

- I. Influenced by parents, husband, wife, personal experience or family situation?
- II. Influence of minister, priest, rabbi or other religious figure?
- III. Membership of a group through tertiary education or in the community?
- IV. Social work recruitment program, speaker or literature?
- V. Vocational guidance or counselling?
- VI. Tertiary education courses, lecturers or tutors?
- VII. Direct experience in social work or closely related activities?

- VIII. Service received from social worker or social agency?
- IX. Through personal knowledge of someone who is active in social work?

The seven reasons why student initially chose social work and why they continue social work as a career were:

- I. Social work is an interesting profession.
- II. Social work will give me social status and prestige.
- III. Social work makes a contribution to individuals and society.
- IV. Social work offers good salaries and working conditions.
- V. I enjoy working with people.
- VI. Social work can help me become a better person, parent and marriage partner.
- VII. Social work provides many job opportunities and good job security.
- VIII. Other

The different responses for who influenced their choice and why they chose to do social work were broken up into the above categories, which were then used as the grouping variable in the three ANOVAs conducted. These ANOVAs were conducted on students. Only one of the three ANOVAs was significant at the 0.05 level ($F(4, 76) = 7.62, p=0.000$), which related to the question that asked them why they initially chose social work as a career. When a Tukey's honesty significant difference test was conducted on the one significant ANOVA, significance held.

Table 4.12, presents the means of course satisfaction for the different groupings. It only presents groupings from those questions who had respondents.

The three reasons (see Figure 4.8, Section 4.1.4 above) that had no respondents were:

- 1. *Social work will give me social status and prestige.*
- 2. *Social work offers good salaries and working conditions.*
- 3. *Social work can help me become a better person, parent and marriage partner.*

TABLE 4.12 INITIAL CHOICE OF SOCIAL WORK AND COURSE SATISFACTION

Grouping		Mean	SD
I.	Social work is an interesting profession	92.40	15.79
III.	Social work makes a contribution to individuals and society	83.95	15.07
V.	I enjoy working with people	86.38	25.29
VII.	Social work provides many job opportunities and good job security*	44.17	22.08
VIII.	Other	94.41	20.54

* Significant difference $p=0.000$

Those who chose social work for reason VII, the many job opportunities and good job security it offered, were significantly less satisfied (mean = 44.17) with their course than those who reported choosing social work as a career for any of the other reasons.

4.5 STUDENTS' VALUES AND THE IDEALISED SOCIAL WORKER

The students were asked to imagine what values and beliefs an 'idealised' social worker would hold. It was explained to respondents that idealised did not mean perfect but merely as portrayed in the social work literature they had read or been exposed to. It was also made clear that such values and beliefs may not be the same as they see themselves as having. The respondents were informed that there were no right or wrong answers. The aims of the question were:

1. To find out if respondents agreed overall on what the values and beliefs of the idealised social worker were as portrayed in the literature.
2. To determine what values and beliefs they held as a person.
3. To compare how respondents perceived themselves in relation to their perception of the idealised social worker.

Four constructs were used to test to identify the values and beliefs that pertain to respondents and the idealised social worker. The four constructs were Machiavellianism, Type A behaviour, Coherence and Generativity. The hypothesis expressed in the null and alternate forms was:

H₄₀: There will be no mean differences on the constructs Machiavellianism, Type A behaviour, Coherence and Generativity for the idealised social worker and for respondents' perception of the idealised social worker and the respondents' perceptions of themselves as a person.

H_{4A}: The respondents will perceive the idealised social worker as being lower on Machiavellianism, and Type A behaviour, and higher on Coherence and Generativity than themselves as a person.

The scales followed the format used by Christie and Geis (1970) with a modified seven point Likert-type scale. The scale has a missing midpoint so has a

forced choice characteristic. The scale used 1 as the extreme agree measure, 'Agree - A lot', and 6 as the extreme disagree measure, 'Disagree - A lot'. To test the hypothesis, the questions were recoded so that all items reflect the same direction on the scales and the means for the four scales were combined to reflect an overall scale. The means for the scales Generativity and Coherence were both subtracted from 8 so that the mean scores were all in the same direction. For the four scales a score of 16 or more would indicate that respondents saw themselves as being Machiavellian and showing Type A behaviour, and having low Coherence and Generativity.

A paired sample *t* test was conducted on the means on the combined scales for students' perception both of the idealised social worker and for themselves. The purpose of the *t* test was to determine if there was a significant difference between the means. The *t* test showed significant difference between the mean score of 12.43 for the idealised social worker and 13.48 for the students themselves ($t = - 3.27 (71)$; $p = .002$). The hypothesis was substantiated, and the idealised social worker had a lower mean and the difference was significant. The social work students ranked the idealised social worker and themselves as being low on the Machiavellian and Type A behaviour, and high on Coherence and Generativity. The responses on these four scales are investigated below and the hypothesis is retested separately for each scale.

4.5.1 THE MACHIAVELLIAN CONSTRUCT

Table 4.13 presents the means for the idealised and self-perception of respondents on the Machiavellian construct of the personality questionnaire. The means for all Machiavellian negative questions were calculated by first recoding the questions in the scale so that all questions were in the direction of the scale name. The ten Machiavellian questions that were reversed were 1, 3, 5, 8, 19, 25, 26, 28, 30 and 33. In these questions italicised words or a bracket around existing words have been added to make the positive scale direction clear.

The higher of the overall means (from Table 4.13) relates to the idealised social worker, indicating that the respondents agreed that the idealised social worker was less Machiavellian than they saw themselves. On this scale a higher score represents disagreement with the question. Therefore the higher mean for the idealised social worker as portrayed in the literature suggests that students saw themselves as more Machiavellian than the idealised social worker. The mean score being above 4 for both the idealised social worker (4.81) and for 'you as a person' (4.73) suggests average disagreement with questions on the Machiavellian scale. The means indicate that the social work students saw the idealised social worker as portrayed in the literature as non-Machiavellian and that they also saw themselves as non-Machiavellian but more Machiavellian than the idealised social worker.

Table 4.13: MACHIAVELLIAN CONSTRUCT QUESTIONS

Machiavellian Questions			Mean Idealised	SD Idealised	Mean You	SD You
01.	Holds that, all in all, it is better <i>not</i> to be humble and honest than it is to be important and dishonest.	Mach. (negative)	6.06	1.07	5.74	1.54
02.	Believes that you should never tell anyone the real reason for doing something unless it is useful to do so.	Mach. (positive)	3.81	2.03	4.81	1.89
03.	Feels that most people are <i>not</i> brave.	Mach. (negative)	3.42	1.71	3.42	1.58
05.	Would [not] excuse lying to someone else.	Mach. (negative)	4.38	1.89	4.53	1.79
06.	Believes it is safest to assume that all people have a vicious streak and it will come out when given the chance.	Mach. (positive)	5.64	1.49	5.75	1.35
08.	Feels honesty is <i>not</i> the best policy in all cases.	Mach. (negative)	5.00	1.71	4.68	1.8
09.	Believes the best way to handle people is to tell them what they want to hear.	Mach. (positive)	5.39	1.63	5.72	1.39
11.	Believes that anyone who completely trusts anyone else is asking for trouble.	Mach. (positive)	4.42	2.07	4.71	1.8
13.	Feels that people suffering from incurable diseases should be put painlessly to death.	Mach. (positive)	5.26	1.76	5.06	2.02
15.	Feels the biggest difference between most criminals and other people is that criminals are stupid enough to get caught.	Mach. (positive)	5.57	1.67	5.93	1.31
19.	Feels that most people who get ahead in the world <i>do not</i> lead clean, moral lives.	Mach. (negative)	3.11	1.87	2.01	1.18
22.	Believes, generally speaking, people don't work hard unless they are forced to do so.	Mach. (positive)	4.81	1.77	5.01	1.52
25.	Holds that when you ask someone to do something for you, it is best <i>not</i> to give the real reasons for wanting it rather than giving reasons which carry more weight.	Mach. (negative)	4.9	1.73	5.33	1.37
26.	Believes most people are <i>not</i> basically good and kind.	Mach. (negative)	5.47	1.35	4.50	1.67
27.	Believes it is wise to flatter important people.	Mach. (positive)	4.25	1.72	4.58	1.63
28.	Barnum was wrong when he said there was a fool born every minute.	Mach. (negative)	5.79	1.47	5.57	1.72
30.	Feels it is <i>not</i> possible to be good at all times.	Mach. (negative)	3.93	2.1	2.51	1.85
33.	Believes one should <i>not</i> only take action when one is sure it is morally right.	Mach. (negative)	4.83	1.97	4.65	1.91
34.	Feels it is hard to get ahead without cutting corners here and there.	Mach. (positive)	4.26	1.91	4.14	1.61
35.	Feels that people forget the death of their father more easily than they forget the loss of their property.	Mach. (positive)	5.90	1.42	5.89	1.44
TOTALS *			4.81	0.59	4.73	0.51

A paired sample *t* test was conducted on the means on the Machiavellian scales for students' perception both of the idealised social worker and for themselves. The purpose of the *t* test was to determine if there was a significant difference between the means. The direction of the difference is as predicted. The *t* test, however, showed no significant difference between the mean score of 4.81 for the idealised social worker and 4.73 for the students themselves ($t = .93$ (71); $p = .18$). Thus this part of the hypothesis was not substantiated and though the idealised social worker was rated as less Machiavellian than respondents ranked themselves, the difference was not significant. A higher score represents a lower Machiavellian orientation.

To be able to compare the respondents' score on the Machiavellian scale to norms provided by Christie and Geis (1970) (see Section 6.2.2) it was necessary to recode the questions. This recoding protocol is the described by Christie (1970). For the 10 items worded in the Machiavellian direction, value 1 was assigned for strong disagreement and value 7 for strong agreement. For the remaining 10 items of the scale worded in the non-Machiavellian direction the assignment of values were reversed. Thus the highest and the lowest possible score varied between 20 and 140 with 80 as mid point. To simplify the interpretation and to get a 100 as mid point a constant of 20 was added to the score of each respondent making the range 40 to 160. Scores above 100 are considered Machiavellian and those below 100 are considered non-Machiavellian. As expected from the previous discussion, both the social work students and the idealised social worker as portrayed in the literature scored

below 100. For social work students the mean was 85.4 (SD = 10.26, range = 67 to 117) and for the idealised social worker the mean was 83.6 (SD = 11.66, range = 59 to 109).

4.5.2 TYPE A BEHAVIOUR CONSTRUCT

Table 4.14 illustrates a comparison of the means and the standard deviation for each item of the ‘Type A’ construct in the personality questionnaire.

TABLE 4.14: TYPE A BEHAVIOUR CONSTRUCT QUESTIONS

	Type A Questions		Mean Idealised	SD Idealised	Mean You	SD You
20.	Becomes upset if thinks something is taking too long.	Type A Behaviour (positive)	3.07	1.85	3.61	1.76
16.	Often will race the clock to save time.	Type A Behaviour (positive)	4.29	1.93	3.94	1.97
10.	Is the first to begin something even if all the details are not worked out.	Type A Behaviour (positive)	4.46	1.85	4.54	1.76
07.	Hates to wait in lines.	Type A Behaviour (positive)	4.46	1.92	4.54	1.86
18.	Where possible, tries to do two things at once, like eating and working.	Type A Behaviour (positive)	3.56	1.97	3.89	1.99
04	Feels guilty when they are not actively working on something.	Type A Behaviour (positive)	4.75	1.71	3.65	1.57
	TOTALS		4.09	1.17	4.04	1.14

A mean score of Type A behaviour of above 4 for both the idealised social worker and themselves as persons suggest that they agree that they display Type A behaviour. The means (from Table 4.14 above) indicate that the students reported

that there was a small difference between the way they saw themselves and the way they saw the idealised social worker on the Type A behaviour construct. As predicted, the students saw the idealised social worker as having fewer Type A behaviour characteristics than themselves. However the t test showed no significant difference between the mean score of 4.09 for the idealised social worker and 4.04 for the students themselves ($t = .40$ (71); $p = .35$). Thus this part of the hypothesis was not substantiated and though the idealised social worker was rated as less on the Type A construct than respondents ranked themselves, the difference was not significant. A higher score represents a lower Type A orientation.

4.5.3 COHERENCE CONSTRUCT

Table 4.15 presents the means and standard deviations for the individual items that make up the coherence construct on the personality questionnaire. That the questions had a mean less than 4 indicates that respondents saw themselves and the ideal social worker as coherent. The idealised social worker obtained the lower of the means, indicating that the students saw themselves as less coherent than the idealised social worker. A t test indicated that there was a significant difference between the mean for the idealised social worker (2.68) and the mean (3.22) for the students themselves ($t = - 3.27$ (71); $p = .002$). Therefore the hypothesis was substantiated for the coherence construct. A lower score represents a higher coherence orientation, as a lower score represents agreement with the construct being described.

Table 4.15: COHERENCE CONSTRUCT QUESTIONS

	Coherence Questions		Mean Idealised	SD Idealised	Mean You	SD You
17.	Finds their personal existence very purposeful and meaningful.	Coherence (positive)	3.43	2.03	3.76	2.22
36.	Feel that for all its ups and downs life has an overall predicableness and meaningfulness.	Coherence (positive)	1.88	1.09	2.71	1.59
14.	Feels they have philosophical or religious beliefs that give their life an underlying sense of direction.	Coherence (positive)	2.72	1.91	3.12	1.78
	TOTAL		2.68	1.17	3.22	1.3

4.5.4 GENERATIVITY CONSTRUCT

Table 4.16 illustrates a comparison of the means and the standard deviation for each item of the generativity construct in the personality questionnaire. That the questions generally had a mean less than 4 indicates that students generally saw themselves and the ideal social worker as having a generative orientation. The very low means suggests that most respondents felt that they and the idealised social worker had generative values and attitudes.

As predicted, the students saw the idealised social worker as having more generative values than themselves. The idealised social worker obtained the lower of the means, indicating that the students saw themselves as less generative than the idealised social worker. The *t* test showed a significant difference between the mean score of 2.65 for the idealised social worker and 3.02 for the students

themselves ($t = -4.06$ (71); $p = .00$). Thus this part of the hypothesis was substantiated. A lower score represents a higher generative orientation.

Italicised words have been included in the following questions to help indicate the direction of the construct when it is reversed. These italicised words were not included in the questionnaire given to respondents.

Table 4.16: GENERATIVITY CONSTRUCT QUESTIONS

	Generativity Questions		Mean Idealised	SD Idealised	Mean You	SD You
12.	Believes that people’s activities are <i>not</i> decided by what society demands.	Generative (negative)	5.01	1.71	4.67	1.56
21.	Believes the happiest people care about the future of society.	Generative (positive)	3.13	1.83	4.47	1.78
23.	Feels that attempting to know yourself is <i>not</i> a waste of time.	Generative (negative)	1.76	1.42	1.78	1.35
24.	Believes we all need some faith in humanity if we are to work towards a more caring world.	Generative (positive)	1.79	1.33	2.11	1.39
29.	Wishes they <i>did not</i> have a simple life in which bodily needs were the most important things and decisions didn’t have to be made.	Generative (negative)	2.15	1.49	2.67	1.68
31.	Finds it <i>not</i> difficult to imagine enthusiasm concerning work.	Generative (negative)	2.21	1.67	2.92	1.75
32.	Believes it is <i>hardly</i> fair to bring children into the world the way things look for the future.	Generative (negative)	2.51	1.53	2.5	1.47
	TOTAL		2.65	0.61	3.02	0.64

4.5.5 SOCIAL WORK ROLE VALUE CONFLICT CONSTRUCT

To examine the difference between the idealised social worker as portrayed in the literature and the values and behaviours of respondents as persons, a set of absolute difference scales was constructed for the above four constructs. The absolute difference scales were constructed by subtracting the person score from the idealised score and converting any remainder into a positive score, then creating a mean of these scores for each of the four constructs.

For each of the four constructs a Cronbach alpha was constructed. For the absolute difference scales of Machiavellianism, Type A, Coherence and Generativity the reliability coefficients were .85, .64, .59 and .72 respectively. Therefore the reliability for the four absolute scales was very good at .85 for the absolute Machiavellian difference scale and good at .72 for the absolute generative difference scale. However the reliability coefficients for the remaining two scales, at .64 for the absolute Type A behaviour difference scale and at .59 for the absolute difference coherence scale, are only in the acceptable range.

The four constructs showed strong positive correlations; it therefore seemed reasonable to construct a higher order variable. This variable represented the absolute difference between the idealised social worker and the respondents as persons. Table 4.17 below represents these intercorrelations and their significance levels. Therefore the hypothesis was only moderately supported as a

whole. It was supported for the Machiavellian and the Coherence construct but not for Type A and the Generativity construct.

TABLE 4.17: PEARSON CORRELATION MATRIX FOR THE ABSOLUTE DIFFERENCE VARIABLES (N=84)

	MNABMAC Mean of Absolute Difference Machiavellian	MNABTYP Mean of Absolute Difference Type A	MNABGEN Mean of Absolute Difference Generativity	MNABCOH Mean of Absolute Difference Coherence	MNABPER Mean of Absolute Difference
	1.00				
MNABMAC					
MNABTYP	.39 ^c	1.0			
MNABGEN	.81 ^c	.39 ^a	1.0		
MNABCOH	.43 ^c	.23 ^b	.47 ^c	1.0	
MNABPER	.82 ^c	.65 ^c	.85 ^c	.75 ^c	1.0

a = $p \leq .05$

b = $p \leq .01$

c = $p \leq .001$

A scale based on the four constructs was created and a Cronbach alpha was run on its question items to determine its reliability. The scale had a reliability coefficient of .90. This is an excellent level of reliability for the mean absolute difference scale (MNABPER).

CHAPTER 5

PRACTITIONERS AND STUDENTS: COMPARATIVE RESULTS AND PREDICTIVE ANALYSIS

This chapter is divided into five broad sections. The first section provides a demographic overview of the social work practitioner sample and compares the practitioner and student variables of gender and age. The second section provides an analysis of work environment aspects that are seen as important by social work practitioners, and explores their level of dissatisfaction on each work environment aspect. This section concludes with an analysis of social work practitioners' job satisfaction levels and the extent to which they correlate with demographic variables. In the third section, comparisons are made between practitioner and student scores on the Otto's Symptom Checklist and Goldberg's General Health Quotient as well as the practitioner and student caseness levels. The fourth section provides an analysis of the Maslach Burnout Inventory for social work practitioners and an examination of the correlation between Burnout and its factors and Otto's Symptom Checklist, Goldberg's General Health Quotient and Caseness for the social work practitioner sample. In the fifth section a predictive analysis is provided on both social work student and practitioner levels of health to identify which variables significantly explain within sample variation.

5.1 SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONERS AND STUDENTS - COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The social work practitioner sample was chosen from a list of 112 social workers. The list had been kept on files by the regional social work course examined by the field work coordinator as potential field work educators. A

covering letter and a questionnaire were mailed out to the present occupant of the position identified in the lists. That is, no names of actual social workers were identified or used, given the sensitive nature of some of the questions and to encourage a sense of confidentiality on the part of the respondents. The questionnaire was sent to social work practitioner sample at the same time as the rural student sample. The social work practitioner sample was located in both metropolitan and regional locations.

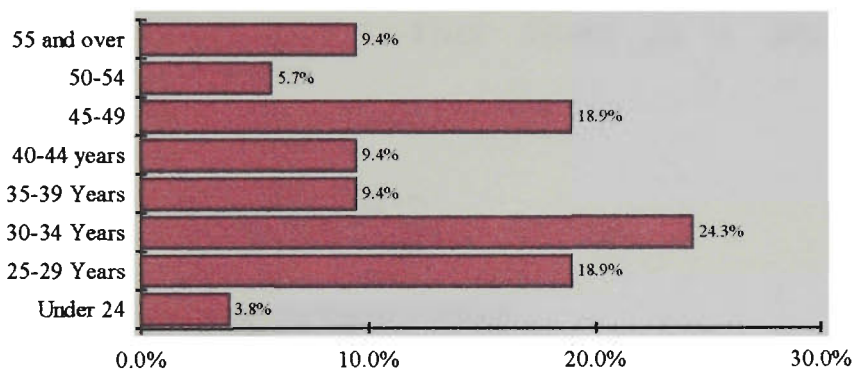
This technique also increased the randomness of the sample, as the person who completed the survey would be a social worker but not necessarily the person named on the field work placement list. This was demonstrated by the 26.4% of respondents (see Figure 5.3) who had less than two effective full time years of social work practice, whereas the normal reason for inclusion on fieldwork placement lists is two years full time experience. In addition, inclusion on the list was not due to a social worker or their agency nominating the social worker as available for student placement. For these reasons the list could be seen as a random selection of social work practitioners. Of the 112 social work practitioners surveyed, a total of 53 useable responses were returned after a follow-up letter was sent. This gave a return rate of 47%.

5.1.1 SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONERS' DEMOGRAPHICS

The majority of the social work practitioner respondents were female (62%). This was less than the number reported for social work students (77%). For social work students the vast majority of respondents were under the age of 24 years (75%), and the age distribution was highly skewed towards younger

ages. The age distribution for social work practitioners, however, had a much more even distribution. The modal age group for practitioners was 30-34 years (24.3%) with the next most popular age groups being 25-29 years and 45-49 years, both at 18.9%. As expected, the social work practitioner sample was both older and less homogeneous in age than the social work student sample. The age distribution of the social work practitioner respondents is presented in Figure 5.1.

FIGURE 5.1: AGE DISTRIBUTION OF SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONERS



The majority of the practitioner sample (66%) worked for 35-40 hours a week, with 16.1% working less than 30 hours a week and 13.2% working more than 45 hours per week. This is illustrated in Figure 5.2.

FIGURE 5.2: HOURS ENGAGED IN AN AVERAGE WEEK AS A SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONER

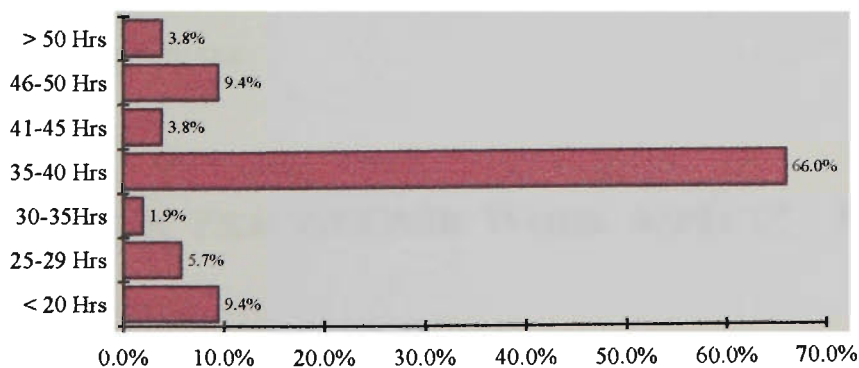
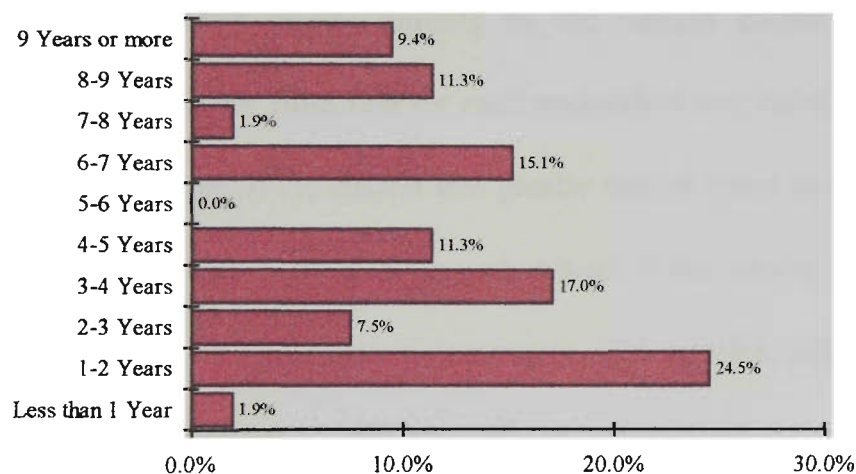


Figure 5.3 illustrates that all respondents had less than nine years of social work practice. The highest percentage of respondents were in their second year of practice (24.5 %). Taking into account the results presented in Figures 5.1 and 5.2, it could be suggested that the respondents were generally those who are reasonably recent graduates (i.e. within the last ten years). A Pearson correlation was conducted and it revealed that there is no significant relationship between age, years of practice and average hours worked in the sample (see Table 5.6).

FIGURE 5.3: EQUIVALENT FULL-TIME YEARS AS A SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONER



The majority of the social work sample (62%) worked in government organisations both State and Commonwealth with the remaining (48%) in Non-Government organisations.

5.2 SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONER WORK ASPECTS - PERFECT AND REAL

In this section the 65 work aspects are examined for social work practitioners. This parallels the section (see 4.2) for social work students. Social

work practitioners were asked to rate each of these work aspects on two scales. The work aspects of the idealised social work job were rated on a 0 - 6 importance scale. The scale ranged from 'not very important' for zero to 'very important' for 6. The social work job is analysed from the perspective of an idealised position and compared to the actual social work position of the respondent. For their actual position social work practitioners were asked to rank the work aspect on a 1 - 6 how true scale with 0 representing 'not true at all' and 6 representing 'totally true'.

For each work environment aspect a dissatisfaction score was calculated by dividing the perfect course ranking by the current course ranking and subtracting the remainder from one for each respondent and calculating a mean response for the sample. If the answer was greater than or equal to one then there was no course dissatisfaction on this question item. If the answer was less than one then this was converted into a percentage. The possible range of course dissatisfaction was from 0% to 100%.

In this section an analysis of work environment aspects that are seen as important by social work practitioners is provided and their level of dissatisfaction on each work environment aspect is explored. This section concludes with an analysis of social work practitioners' job satisfaction levels and to what extent they correlate with demographic variables.

5.2.1 WORK ASPECTS WITH MEANS 5 OR MORE - ‘VERY IMPORTANT’

Of the 65 questions about their work environment asked of social work practitioners, 16 questions had a mean ranking of ‘very important’ with a score of 5 or more. Of these 16 questions, 7 (44%) had a dissatisfaction score of 30% or more. The most important aspect of the perfect social work position for social work practitioners, with a mean of 5.7 and a standard deviation of 0.46, was to feel pleased with their work performance. The standard deviation for this question was the lowest of all the questions and reveals a very high level of uniformity amongst the practitioners about the importance of this work aspect. It had the third highest level of dissatisfaction amongst practitioners (33%).

The next most important aspect of a social work position, with a mean of 5.53 and a standard deviation of 0.50, was to have adequate support and referral services in the community to meet client needs. The standard deviation indicates a high uniformity of response on the importance of this question. For social work practitioners this aspect of their work environment had the highest level of dissatisfaction (48%).

The question with the next highest mean, of 5.45, was to have a sense of satisfaction in their work. With a standard deviation of 1.01, this had a very good uniformity of response amongst practitioners but was not as homogeneous as the previous two questions. It also has the third highest level of satisfaction (33%).

The question with the second highest level of dissatisfaction (42%), with a mean of 5.34 and a standard deviation of .096, was to have adequate time for friends outside of their job. Of the remaining questions that had mean work environment importance ratings of five or more, three had a dissatisfaction score of greater than 30%. In order of dissatisfaction, these questions were:

1. To have equipment, resources and stationary to do my work well. (32%)
2. For the job to make full use of my potential. (31%)
3. To work in an environment where people joke and have a sense of humour. (30%)

Both the means and the standard deviation for the present social work position were lower for all the above questions than for the perfect position. These findings are represented in Table 5.1 below. Three questions, not reported in Table 5.1 had both high mean importance ratings and dissatisfaction scores but relatively low response rates. The response rates were low because the questions depended on the respondent having children or a partner or spouse. For the respondents who did answer question 51 (32%), to have suitable arrangements for the care of their children, it had the highest important mean perfect position (5.71) of any question and had a dissatisfaction score of 41%.

TABLE 5.1: WORK ASPECTS WITH MEANS 5 OR MORE - ‘VERY IMPORTANT TO EXTREMELY IMPORTANT’

	PERFECT SOCIAL WORK POSITION	IMPORTANCE MEAN PERFECT POSITION	SD	HOW TRUE MEAN PRESENT POSITION	SD	PERCENTAGE RESPONDENTS DISSATISFIED
11	To feel pleased with my work performance.	5.70	0.46	3.81	1.48	33%
63	To have adequate support and referral services in the community to meet client needs.	5.53	0.5	2.87	1.66	48%
14	To have a sense of satisfaction in my work.	5.45	1.01	3.66	1.45	33%
18	To be supported by colleagues in my agency.	5.42	0.77	4.08	1.73	25%
57	To work in an environment where people joke and have a sense of humour.	5.38	0.77	3.77	1.59	30%
19	To have adequate time for friends outside of my job.	5.34	0.96	3.08	1.75	42%
25	To feel supported by my supervisor.	5.26	1.00	4.36	1.69	17%
42	That my supervisors treat me with respect and consideration.	5.23	1.05	4.53	1.51	13%
26	To have work colleagues available when I need to consult or ventilate.	5.15	1.08	3.68	1.48	29%
44	Having my job meet my professional expectations.	5.15	1.17	3.94	1.26	23%
41	To feel satisfied that the Agency’s structure allows me to achieve the quality of work that I professionally expect.	5.13	1.32	3.74	1.53	27%
29	For the job to make full use of my potential.	5.09	1.16	3.49	1.56	31%
58	To be able to do my job without the threat of emotional and/or physical violence.	5.09	1.39	3.68	1.78	28%
15	To have equipment, resources and stationery to do my work well.	5.08	1.16	3.47	1.76	32%
9	Being expected to do things which I have the experience and knowledge to do.	5.04	1.40	3.98	1.54	21%
13	To be consulted and have my ideas noticed.	5.04	1.14	3.91	1.57	22%

The two remaining questions also had high importance rating and dissatisfaction scores. These are outlined in Table 5.2 below.

TABLE 5.2: WORK ASPECTS WITH MEANS 4 OR MORE - ‘VERY IMPORTANT TO EXTREMELY IMPORTANT’ LOW RESPONSE RATES

	PERFECT SOCIAL WORK POSITION	IMPORTANCE MEAN PERFECT POSITION	SD	HOW TRUE MEAN PRESENT POSITION	SD	PERCENTAGE RESPONDENTS DISSATISFIED
51	To have suitable arrangements for the care of my children. (68% N.A.).	5.71	0.47	3.35	2.00	41%
55	To have enough time to spend with my children. (23% N.A.)	5.33	1.01	3.54	1.86	34%
54	To have enough time to spend with my spouse or partner. (55% N.A.)	5.12	1.08	3.15	1.68	38%

5.2.2 WORK ASPECTS WITH MEANS 4.5 OR MORE - ‘MODERATELY TO VERY IMPORTANT’

Table 5.3 below presents the work environment aspects that practitioners ranked as important in their ranking of the perfect social work position. Of the 65 questions asked about their work environment, 19 questions had a mean of 4.5 but less than 5; 10 (53%) had a dissatisfaction level 30% or higher. The social work job aspect that had the highest level of dissatisfaction (69%) for all questions was ‘not to handle large caseloads’. This was followed at 47% with ‘having support and opportunities to upgrade qualifications’. The third question with a dissatisfaction level greater than 40% was ‘to be able to organise the timing of the work I do’ (41%). There were seven remaining questions that had dissatisfaction levels greater than 30%. These questions were, in descending order of dissatisfaction :

- I. To be informed what is expected of me as a Social Worker. (38%)
- II. To have the opportunity to develop and use new skills. (36%)
- III. To be able to influence management, the agency and its policy. (35%)
- IV. To see my social work studies as relevant to this job. (33%)

- V. To be able to exert an influence on the agency's decisions that affect me. (32%)
- VI. To have supportive and competent clerical assistance. (32%)
- VII. Not to have tension or conflict within my work group. (32%)

Both the means and the standard deviation for the present social work position was lower for all the questions than for the perfect position.

TABLE 5.3: WORK ASPECTS WITH MEANS 4.5 TO 5 - 'MODERATELY TO VERY IMPORTANT'

	PERFECT SOCIAL WORK POSITION	Mean Perfect Position	SD	Mean Present Position	SD	Percentage Respondents dissatisfied
7	To have the opportunity to develop and use new skills.	4.96	1.16	3.19	1.54	36%
24	To be easily able to obtain assistance from my supervisor.	4.94	1.25	3.96	1.68	20%
43	To be able to exert an influence on the agency's decisions that affect me.	4.92	1.27	3.36	1.47	32%
27	To have my expectations of the job match the agency's expectations of me.	4.89	1.4	3.64	1.61	26%
40	Not to be expected by agency to act contrary to my social work values and philosophy.	4.89	1.44	3.85	1.89	21%
64	To be able to take time in lieu and sick leave when you need them.	4.89	1.17	3.96	1.57	19%
49	For the workplace to have enough desks, telephones, interview rooms etc.	4.87	1.3	4.3	1.61	12%
20	To have support and opportunities to upgrade my qualifications.	4.85	1.25	2.57	1.34	47%
17	To be able to organise the timing of the work I do.	4.79	1.35	2.84	1.65	41%
4	To be informed what is expected of me as a Social Worker.	4.77	1.93	2.98	1.51	38%
39	To agree with the way welfare services are delivered in my agency.	4.77	1.2	3.51	1.35	26%
60	For people to say hello to each other in the morning or at the start of a new shift.	4.75	1.64	4.19	1.92	12%
28	To be able to influence management, the agency and its policy.	4.68	1.33	3.06	1.7	35%
2	Variety in the tasks I do.	4.64	1.21	4.17	1.34	10%
65	For this job to provide experience, knowledge and skills that will enhance my career.	4.64	1.76	3.75	1.64	19%
33	Not to handle a large case overload	4.62	1.47	1.42	1.62	69%
32	To have supportive and competent clerical assistance.	4.55	1.53	3.08	1.82	32%
23	Not to have tension or conflict within my work group.	4.53	1.72	3.09	1.51	32%
46	To see my social work studies as relevant to this job.	4.51	1.38	3.02	1.13	33%

5.2.3 WORK ASPECTS WITH MEANS 4 TO 4.5 - 'MODERATELY TO VERY IMPORTANT'

Of the 65 questions asked of social work practitioners, 50 questions had a mean importance score of 4 or higher. Of the remaining 12 questions (excluding the three questions with a not applicable option), 6 questions (50%) had a dissatisfaction level greater than 30%. With a dissatisfaction level of 58%, 'not to have continuous administrative and policy changes' was the environmental aspect of the perfect social work position that had the second highest level of dissatisfaction amongst the practitioners of all the questions asked. The only other question with a dissatisfaction level of 40% or greater was not to have work extend outside of the normal 9-5 working hours. There were four remaining questions that had means greater than 4 and dissatisfaction levels greater than 30%. These questions were, in descending order of dissatisfaction :

1. Knowing that I can keep my job for as long as I like. (33%)
2. Not to have clients who resent seeing me due to the involuntary nature of their contact. (32%)
3. Not clash with fellow workers due to value or theoretical differences. (31%)
4. To be paid a salary in line with the skills and responsibilities I have. (30%)

TABLE 5.4: WORK ASPECTS WITH MEANS 4 TO 4.5 - ‘MODERATELY TO VERY IMPORTANT’

	PERFECT SOCIAL WORK POSITION	IMPORTANCE MEAN PERFECT POSITION	SD	HOW TRUE MEAN PRESENT POSITION	SD	PERCENTAGE RESPONDENTS DISSATISFIED
34	Not to have continuous administrative and policy changes.	4.45	1.65	1.86	1.48	58%
36	To have clients or groups who need help that I am able to provide.	4.43	1.9	3.6	1.53	19%
6	To be able to control how I want to do my work.	4.42	1.38	3.32	0.98	25%
12	To be paid a salary in line with the skills and responsibilities I have.	4.42	1.71	3.11	1.49	30%
59	To have people at work I consider to be friends.	4.38	1.44	4.13	1.47	6%
5	Knowing that I can keep my job for as long as I like.	4.36	1.97	2.91	2.26	33%
21	Not clash with fellow workers due to values or theoretical differences.	4.3	1.84	2.96	1.33	31%
1	Freedom to organise things and do my work as I want to.	4.26	1.46	3.55	1.29	17%
48	For my work environment not to be noisy, messy or generally run down.	4.26	1.84	3.77	1.62	12%
53	For my job to allow time to do most of the important daily chores that I need to do at home.	4.25	1.31	3.28	1.47	23%
37	Not to have clients who resent seeing me due to the involuntary nature of their contact.	4.08	1.82	2.76	1.6	32%
50	Not to have work extend outside the usual 9-5 working hours.	4.06	1.89	2.43	1.78	40%

Of the remaining questions, which did not have a mean importance ranking of 4 or more, six questions have a dissatisfaction level of 30% or more. One of these questions, ‘to have promotional opportunities in the job’, had the third highest level of dissatisfaction (54%) of any of the work environment aspects asked of practitioners, even though this aspect was only ranked as moderately important by practitioners. The work environment aspect that still had

a dissatisfaction level greater than 30% but had the lowest importance ranking was ‘to be supported by agency colleagues in the agency’.

TABLE 5.5: REMAINING WORK ASPECTS WITH DISSATISFACTION 30% OR GREATER.

	PERFECT SOCIAL WORK POSITION	IMPORTANCE MEAN PERFECT POSITION	SD	HOW TRUE MEAN PRESENT POSITION	SD	PERCENTAGE RESPONDENTS DISSATISFIED
16	To have promotional opportunities in my job	3.6	1.77	1.64	1.61	54%
35	To be able to have an uninterrupted lunchtime away from work when I feel like it.	3.62	1.98	2.06	1.7	43%
56	Not to have meetings I have to attend at night.	3.74	1.74	2.3	1.8	39%
3	To be consulted and have my ideas noticed.	3.36	1.82	2.17	1.66	35%
8	To be supported by colleagues in my agency.	2.87	1.91	1.89	2.05	34%
45	Not to encounter negative community attitudes towards social workers.	3.7	1.96	2.49	1.28	33%

5.2.4 RELIABILITY OF SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONER STRESS SCORE

Social work practitioner stress was calculated by developing a social work job satisfaction score. The higher the job satisfaction score the lower the level of job stress. This score was calculated by dividing the sample’s perfect social work position score by the current social work position score for all items, except the three low response items. A total social work job satisfaction score was determined by first ensuring that no social work course aspect question had a satisfaction score of greater than a hundred percent. This was achieved by recoding all social work job satisfaction scores that were greater than 100% to 100%. This ensured that the range for satisfaction scores was from 0% to 100%. Therefore the total social work course satisfaction index is a reversal of the social

work job dissatisfaction index that had been provided for the above tables. This procedure is consistent with that used with the student sample.

One of the aims of this study was to determine if there was any difference between the practitioners' perceptions of a perfect social work position and their current social work position. The hypothesis expressed in the null and alternate forms was:

H₅₀: There will be no mean differences on social work practitioners' ranking of 'how important' work environment aspects are for the perfect social work position and 'how true' practitioners rank their current social work position.

H_{5A}: Social Work practitioners will perceive their current social work job aspects as being lower than the perfect social work job aspects.

A paired sample *t* test was chosen to test this as the nominal variable social work practitioner job aspects is split into two groups. The two groups are the perfect social work position's job aspects and the present social work position's job aspects. This is a paired sample as each practitioner is paired with themselves.

The *t* test showed a significant difference between the mean scores of 3.36 for the present social work practitioner position and 4.55 for the perfect social work practitioner position ($t = -10.65$; $p \leq .000$). Thus the hypothesis was substantiated. Social Work practitioners ranked the perfect social work position as significantly higher than their present social work position.

To determine if the items could be meaningfully added to form a scale a Cronbach alpha was conducted. A Cronbach alpha for the 62 item social work job satisfaction score, excluding the three low response items, was an excellent

.93. This suggests that this index of social work practitioner job satisfaction is a highly reliable construct and can be used in further analysis.

Table 5.6 indicates that there is no significant correlations between MNSWAT, (mean social work job satisfaction) and the demographic variables age, average hours worked as a paid social worker and effective years of practice as a paid social worker. The correlation between ‘effective years practice as a paid social worker’ and ‘mean social work job satisfaction’ is positive and would be significant if a one tailed significance test had been used ($r(53) = .26$; $p = .06$). However, as this study is exploratory, only two tailed tests have been used. Figure 5.3 (Section 5.1.1) indicates that 62.2% of the sample had less than five years effective social work practise experience. A t test ($t(51) = -3.3$; $p = .002$) between social workers with less than five years of practice experience showed that they had a significantly lower job satisfaction level ($M = 72\%$) than those with five years or more experience ($M = 81\%$).

TABLE 5.6: CORRELATION JOB SATISFACTION AND SOCIAL WORKER DEMOGRAPHICS (N=53)

	AVWEEK Average hours a week worked as a paid social worker	AGE	YRSPRAC effective years practice as a paid social worker	MNSWAT Mean Social Work Job Satisfaction
AVWEEK	1.00			
AGE	.23	1.00		
YRSPRAC	-.01	-.00	1.00	
MNSWAT	.12	-.10	.26	1.00
a = $p < .05$ b = $p < .01$ c = $p < .001$				

5.3 SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONERS’ AND STUDENTS’ HEALTH VARIABLES

In this section comparisons are made between practitioner and student scores on the Otto’s Symptom Checklist and Goldberg’s General Health Quotient as well as the practitioner and student caseness levels.

5.3.1 PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONERS’ AND SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS’ HEALTH SYMPTOM SCORES

Table 5.7 offers a comparison of results obtained from Otto’s Symptom Checklist scores of the students and social work practitioner samples. The four physical symptoms that were ranked the highest by social work practitioners were:

- 1. Tires easily or feeling rundown.
- 2. Feeling nervous or tense or anxious.
- 3. General aches and pains.
- 4. Easily annoyed/irritable.

For social work students the four highest ranked physical symptoms were:

- 1. Feeling nervous or tense or anxious.
- 2. Easily annoyed/irritable.
- 3. Restless/ unable to settle
- 4. Tires easily or feeling rundown.

Of the thirty-five questions in the Otto Symptom Checklist three of the four most highly ranked symptoms were the same for the social work practitioner and student samples. For two of these three questions (33 and 8) the student sample was higher than that of the practitioner sample and only slightly lower on the third question (q. 21). The social work practitioner sample ranked general aches and pains as much higher than did the student sample. When the means for each

question for both groups were compared the practitioner group had 20 means that were lower than the student group.

Using a four point scale of the Otto's Symptom Checklist a t test for independent samples was conducted to explore the following hypothesis expressed in the null and alternate forms was:

H₆₀: There will be no mean difference between the scores of social work students and practitioners on Otto's Symptom Checklist.

H_{6A}: The mean scores of social work students on Otto's Symptom Checklist will be higher than that of practitioners.

The mean score for students and practitioners on Otto's Symptom Checklist was .61 and .62 respectively, with a mean difference of .0130, with the practitioners having a higher mean. Levene's test for equality of variance was conducted ($F = 3.33$, $p = .071$). Since the probability of F is greater than .05 the H_0 cannot be rejected and a t test based on the pooled variance estimate was used. The t value was -.19, and with 126 degrees of freedom this gives a probability of .85. Therefore the null hypothesis of equal means is not rejected. There is no significant difference in the score of social work students and practitioners on Otto's Symptom Checklist.

TABLE 5.7: COMPARISON OF PRACTITIONERS AND STUDENTS ON OTTO'S SYMPTOM CHECKLIST

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS		PRACTITIONERS			STUDENTS			P/S
		Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	%
1.	Headaches.	1.00	0.57	7	1.00	0.95	6	100
2.	Nausea or vomiting.	0.10	0.30	33	0.29	0.53	31	34
3.	Indigestion.	0.75	1.02	16	0.30	0.69	30	250
4.	Diarrhoea.	0.43	0.92	29	0.51	0.72	17	84
5.	Constipation.	0.08	0.34	35	0.48	0.75	20	17
6.	Stomach aches.	0.78	0.99	13	0.48	0.64	19	163
7.	Trouble breathing eg. short of breath.	0.57	0.73	22	0.38	0.65	26	150
8.	Easily annoyed/irritable.	1.12	0.89	4	1.42	0.77	2	79
9.	Perspiring a lot.	0.29	0.67	31	0.40	0.67	25	73
10.	Trouble remembering things.	0.86	0.92	11	0.65	0.66	13	132
11.	Doing things you wouldn't normally do.	0.20	0.40	32	0.47	0.62	23	43
12.	Feeling strange, not quite yourself	0.53	0.76	24	0.73	0.81	10	73
13.	Pass urine frequently.	0.69	1.12	17	0.66	0.85	12	105
14.	Numbness or tingling in certain parts of the body.	0.78	1.12	14	0.21	0.57	33	371
15.	Visual difficulties.	0.57	0.73	23	0.34	0.70	28	168
16.	General aches and pains.	1.24	0.93	3	0.61	0.71	15	203
17.	Restless/ unable to settle.	1.02	1.07	6	1.32	0.79	3	77
18.	Dizzy spells.	0.10	0.30	34	0.31	0.66	29	32
19.	Feelings of boredom.	0.65	0.89	18	1.08	0.91	5	60
20.	Mood swings for no apparent reason	0.65	0.98	19	0.72	0.78	11	90
21.	Tires easily or feeling rundown.	1.30	1.01	1	1.28	0.99	4	102
22.	Sexual problems, reduced interest.	0.51	0.90	25	0.48	0.84	22	106
23.	Unusual heartbeats eg. palpitations.	0.47	0.73	26	0.11	0.35	35	427
24.	Sore throats, colds; sinus problems.	1.12	0.93	5	0.73	0.74	9	153
25.	Migraines.	0.29	0.54	30	0.19	0.56	34	153
26.	Become tearful easily.	0.65	1.07	20	0.75	0.96	8	87
27.	Need more than the usual amount of sleep.	0.84	0.86	12	0.93	0.93	7	90
28.	Unable to get to sleep.	0.75	1.00	15	0.48	0.60	18	156
29.	Restless sleep or keep waking up.	0.88	0.99	9	0.47	0.70	24	187
30.	Skin troubles.	0.61	0.94	21	0.53	0.66	16	115
31.	Loss of appetite.	0.47	0.83	27	0.28	0.51	32	168
32.	Pains in heart or tightening or heaviness of chest.	0.45	0.81	28	0.35	0.62	27	129
33.	Feeling nervous or tense or anxious.	1.25	1.02	2	1.47	0.88	1	85
34.	Pains in back or spine.	0.98	0.95	8	0.48	0.79	21	204
35.	Trouble with periods.	0.88	1.14	10	0.65	0.95	14	135

5.3.2 SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONERS’ AND SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS’ GHQ AND CASENESS SCORES

Table 5.8 compares social work students’ and practitioners’ scores on the GHQ. It is interesting to compare the aspects of the GHQ that were ranked as the four highest. For the social work practitioners’ sample the four highest aspects were:

- 1. Felt constantly under strain.
- 2. Been able to enjoy your normal day to day activities. *
- 3. Been able to concentrate on whatever you are doing. *
- 4. Felt that you were playing a useful part in things. *

For social work students the four highest aspects were.

- 1. Felt constantly under strain.
- 2. Been able to concentrate on whatever you are doing. *
- 3. Been able to enjoy your normal day to day activities. *
- 4. Been feeling unhappy and depressed.

The stated questions (*) were initially coded in the positive direction and have been recoded so that a higher score reflects a greater level of psychological disturbance. It is noteworthy that the first three questions that were ranked the highest were the same. The first question was ranked the same for both the social work practitioner and student samples; both practitioners and students felt that they were constantly under strain. The second and the third questions are reversed for the two samples. Both samples felt that they were having difficulty being able to concentrate on what they were doing and enjoying their day to day activities. Students were more likely than practitioners to state that they were feeling unhappy and depressed. The fourth ranked question for practitioners was that they did not feel that they were playing a useful part in things, with a mean of 1.22. This question of the GHQ was ranked fifth by social work students and the student sample had a higher mean (1.34) than that of the practitioner.

This suggests that while some practitioners do not feel they were playing a useful part in things, more students felt this way. For the above five questions the student sample means were higher than those of the practitioner sample.

TABLE 5.8: *SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONERS’ AND SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS’ GHQ SCORES*

GHQ QUESTIONS		PRACTITIONERS			STUDENTS			P/S
		Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	%
1.	Been able to concentrate on whatever you are doing. *	1.27	0.63	3	1.55	0.81	2	82
2.	Lost very much sleep over worry.	0.90	0.70	11	1.28	0.80	7	70
3.	Felt that you were playing a useful part in things. *	1.22	0.76	4	1.34	0.73	5	91
4	Felt capable of making decisions about things.	1.18	0.59	5	1.14	0.73	10	104
5.	Felt constantly under strain.	1.51	0.95	1	1.82	0.85	1	83
6.	Felt you couldn’t overcome your difficulties.	1.02	0.76	9	1.20	0.98	9	85
7.	Been able to enjoy your normal day to day activities. *	1.47	0.64	2	1.53	0.71	3	96
8.	Been able to face up to your problems. *	1.04	0.40	8	1.22	0.65	8	85
9.	Been feeling unhappy and depressed.	1.14	0.85	7	1.42	0.92	4	80
10.	Been losing confidence in yourself.	0.92	0.91	10	1.11	0.96	11	83
11.	Been thinking of yourself as a worthless person.	0.49	0.83	12	0.77	0.96	12	64
12	Been feeling reasonably happy all things considered. *	1.18	0.62	6	1.30	0.79	6	91
Mean.		1.10	0.41		1.31	0.59		85

* Coded in a negative direction

The student sample had a higher GHQ mean score than the practitioner sample, the difference being in the direction anticipated. To test if this difference was significant a *t*-test for independent samples was conducted. The hypothesis expressed in the null and alternate forms was:

H7₀: There will be no difference between the mean GHQ scores of social work students and practitioners.

H7_A: The mean GHQ scores of social work students will be higher than those of practitioners.

The students' mean was higher than that of the social work practitioner so that the direction of the hypothesis was confirmed. A Levene's test for equality of sample variances was conducted ($F = 5.8$, $p = .017$). Since the probability of F is less than .05, the H_0 is rejected and a t based on the separate variance estimate was used. The t value was 2.37 and with 123 degrees of freedom, giving a probability of .02. Therefore the null hypothesis of equal means is rejected. There is a significant difference in the mean GHQ scores of social work practitioners (1.10) and students (1.31).

The General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) was originally designed to be a self-administered screening test, aimed at detecting psychiatric disorders in respondents in community settings. These are called 'cases'. A case means a person has more than a 50% chance of neurotic impairment requiring psychiatric intervention, and is highly likely to be regarded as case on psychiatric assessment according to Goldberg (1972). According to the GHQ manual, the threshold score for caseness reflects the concept of a just-significant clinical disturbance. Goldberg (1978) emphasised that those scoring above this threshold do not necessarily require psychological intervention. The GHQ focuses on psychological components of ill health, as can be seen in Table 5.9. Goldberg (1978) suggested using a binary scoring method to denote the presence or absence of symptoms for detecting clinical cases.

Using the binary system, the Likert-type scale of 0-3 was recoded with the score of 0 and 1 recoded as 0 and the scores 2 and 3 recoded as 1. For the 12 item GHQ a score of three or more indicates caseness (Firth-Cozens 1987). Caseness has been calculated for both the social work practitioner and the social work student sample. As a binary variable, mean scores can be interpreted as the proportion of respondents who have a 50% chance of neurotic impairment requiring psychiatric intervention.

TABLE 5.9: CASE RATES OF SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS AND PRACTITIONERS

	CASENESS	NON-CASENESS
Student Sample	56.8	43.2
Practitioner Sample	62.7	37.3

The practitioner sample had a higher level of caseness than the student sample. To test if this difference was significant, a *t*-test for independent samples was conducted to explore following hypothesis expressed in the null and alternate forms:

H8₀: There will be no difference between the mean caseness scores of social work students and practitioners.

H8_A: The mean case scores of social work students will be higher than those of practitioners.

The direction of the hypothesis was not supported. A Levene’s test for equality of sample variances was conducted (*F* = 1.83, *p* = .178). Since the probability of *F* is greater than .05, the *H*₀ is not rejected and a *t* based on the pooled variance

estimate was used. The t value was $-.67$ and with 123 degrees of freedom, giving a probability of $.51$. Therefore the null hypothesis of equal means is not rejected. There is no significant difference in the caseness of social work students and practitioners.

While there was no significant difference for social work students and practitioners on Otto's Symptom Checklist or on the Caseness measure, there was, however, a significant difference on the GHQ scores, with social work students being significantly higher than practitioners. As can be seen in Table 5.8, students had a higher mean score for all the GHQ items than practitioners and showed a greater level of psychological distress.

5.3.3 ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS' AND PRACTITIONERS' HEALTH DISTRESS SCORES

As part of the model involves the analysis of the contribution of certain variables to practitioners' and students' health, the fact that two health variables have been used leads to complications during the multiple regression analysis. To construct one health variable out of the two used, Pearson's correlation analysis was run between the means of the two health scales, Otto's Symptom Checklist and the General Health Quotient, and the mean of a new construct, *the overall health quotient*. The overall health quotient was constructed by calculating the overall mean of the two other health scales. This analysis was conducted to see if the new Overall Health Quotient developed could be used as a substitute for the two other health scales, allowing a regression model with one criterion variable for both the student and the practitioner samples to be created.

As can be seen from Table 5.10, the correlations between the old health variables and the newly created one are excellent, suggesting that this variable was an acceptable substitute during further analysis of the student sample. To further validate the argument that this new variable was a valid substitute, a reliability analysis was conducted.

TABLE 5.10: CORRELATION MATRIX OF HEALTH VARIABLES FOR STUDENT SOCIAL WORKERS (N=84)

	GHQ	Otto's Symptom Checklist
GHQ	1	
Symptom checklist	0.70 ^c	1
Overall health distress quotient	0.91 ^c	0.93 ^c

a= p ≤ .05

b= p ≤ .01

c= p ≤ .001

Table 5.11 illustrates the Cronbach alpha coefficients for the new variable and the two old ones when considered by themselves for the student sample.

TABLE 5.11: COMPARISON OF CRONBACH ALPHAS FOR HEALTH VARIABLES FOR SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS (N=84)

Scale	Cronbach alphas
GHQ	0.91
Symptom Checklist	0.91
Overall Health Quotient	0.94

The results presented in Tables 5.10 and 5.11 illustrate that there was no compromise made when using the Overall Health Quotient in place of the GHQ and Otto’s Symptom Checklist variables in terms of its ability to measure an underlying health construct or its reliability as a scale. It was concluded that the new variable was sufficiently reliable for use in further analysis of the student sample.

To keep consistency in the model being developed, the same health distress variable developed for the students was developed for the social work practitioners and the same procedure used with the students was followed. The results in Table 5.12 are very similar to those obtained from the student data set (see Table 5.10); the social worker data set also produced high correlations between the old health distress variables and the newly created one. These results suggest that this variable would be an acceptable substitute during further analysis of both the student and practitioner samples.

TABLE 5.12: CORRELATION MATRIX FOR HEALTH DISTRESS VARIABLES FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONERS (N= 53)

	GHQ	Otto's Symptom Checklist
GHQ	1	
Symptom Checklist	0.71 ^c	1
Overall Health Distress Quotient	0.92 ^c	0.93 ^c

a = p ≤ .05 b = p ≤ .01 c = p ≤ .001

To further validate the argument that this new variable was a valid substitute, a reliability analysis was conducted. Table 5.13 below illustrates the Cronbach alpha coefficients for the new variable and the two old variables when considered by themselves for the student and practitioner samples and for the combined sample.

TABLE 5.13: COMPARISON OF CRONBACH ALPHAS FOR HEALTH VARIABLES - SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS AND PRACTITIONERS (N = 135)

SCALE	S. W. Students' Cronbach alphas	S. W. Practitioners' Cronbach alphas	Total Sample Cronbach alphas
GHQ	.91	.80	.89
Symptom Checklist	.91	.91	.91
Overall Health Distress Quotient	.94	.93	.94

Table 5.13 suggests that the reliability of the General Health Quotient, Otto's Symptom Checklist and Health Distress Quotient in this study are excellent. The GHQ is lower for the practitioner group, but for the combined group is consistent with the reliability coefficient reported by Sriram et al. (1989).

The alpha for the physical symptoms was an excellent 0.91 for the combined sample. The Health Distress Quotient has excellent reliabilities of .94, .93 and .94 for the student, practitioner and combined samples respectively.

The results presented in Tables 5.10, 5.11, 5.12 and 5.13 illustrate that there was no compromise made when using the Health Distress Quotient in place of the GHQ and Otto's Symptom Checklist variables in terms of its reliability. The correlations strongly suggest it is a higher order construct and is sufficiently valid for use in further analysis.

5.4 PRACTITIONER BURNOUT ANALYSIS

In this section an analysis of the Maslach Burnout Inventory is conducted for social work practitioners, and the correlation between burnout and its factors and Otto's Symptom Checklist, Goldberg's General Health Quotient and Caseness for the social work practitioner sample is examined.

5.4.1 COMPARATIVE RELIABILITY ANALYSIS OF BURNOUT FACTORS

Cronbach alpha coefficients were calculated for the constructs being used in the analysis. Initially, the Cronbach alpha coefficients found in this study for the Maslach Burnout Inventory were compared with the coefficients reported by Maslach and Jackson (1981). Table 5.14 illustrates the comparison of those coefficients.

TABLE 5.14: COMPARISON OF CRONBACH ALPHA COEFFICIENTS FOR THE MBI

Factor	Coefficient reported by Maslach & Jackson (1981)	Coefficient reported from this study
Frequency:		
Emotional Exhaustion	0.90	0.91
Depersonalisation	0.79	0.86
Personal accomplishment	0.71	0.78
Intensity:		
Emotional exhaustion	0.87	0.92
Depersonalisation	0.76	0.89
Personal accomplishment	0.73	0.55

From Table 5.14 it can be seen that, overall, the Maslach Burnout Inventory has proven quite reliable for further analysis with the exception of the intensity of personal accomplishment. The correlation matrix in Table 5.15 illustrates the relationships between the six factors of the Maslach Burnout Inventory.

TABLE 5.15: CORRELATION MATRIX OF BURNOUT FACTORS (N=53)

Burnout Factors	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Frequency of emotional exhaustion	1.00					
2 Frequency of depersonalisation	.73 ^c	1.00				
3 Frequency of Personal accomplishment	-.25	-.55 ^c	1.00			
4 Intensity of emotional exhaustion	.93	.68 ^c	-.34 ^a	1.00		
5 Intensity of depersonalisation	.68 ^c	.97 ^c	-.59 ^c	0.65 ^c	1.00	
6 Intensity of Personal Accomplishment	.28 ^a	.10	.26	.35 ^a	.12	1.00

a = p < .05 b = p < .01 c = p < .001

As can be seen from Table 5.15, there is a significant correlation reported for each of the factors of the Maslach Burnout Inventory. Maslach and Jackson (1981) report slightly lower coefficients than this; it is worth noting that they also had relatively poor relationships for the personal accomplishment factors.

5.4.2 SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONER’S LEVEL OF BURNOUT AND HEALTH RELATIONSHIP

Maslach and Jackson (1981) arranged their results of the inventory into a range of experienced burnout. This is broken into three categories for each of the factors: low, moderate and high experienced burnout. Using Maslach and Jackson’s (1981) criteria, frequencies have been reported in Table 5.16 of those experiencing high, medium and low burnout.

TABLE 5.16: FREQUENCIES FOR LOW, MEDIUM AND HIGH LEVELS OF BURNOUT FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONERS

Burnout Factors		Low	Medium	High
1.	Frequency of emotional exhaustion	45.3%	20.8%	34.0%
2.	Frequency of depersonalisation	41.5%	49.1%	9.4%
3.	Frequency of personal accomplishment	18.9%	34.0%	47.2%
4.	Magnitude of emotional exhaustion	47.2%	47.2%	5.7%
5.	Magnitude of depersonalisation	45.3%	34.0%	20.8%
6.	Magnitude of personal accomplishment	7.5%	39.6%	52.8%

Table 5.17 shows a comparison between the means found in this study for each of the six factors of the scale and the means and standard deviations of the six factors reported by Maslach and Jackson (1981).

TABLE 5.17: *BURNOUT FACTORS COMPARISONS OF MEANS MASLACH AND CURRENT STUDY*

Burnout Factors		Mean from this study	Mean from Maslach & Jackson (1981)	SD from Maslach & Jackson (1981)
1.	Frequency of emotional exhaustion	18.18	24.08	11.88
2.	Frequency of depersonalisation	6.85	9.40	6.90
3.	Frequency of personal accomplishment	34.4	36.01	6.93
4.	Magnitude of emotional exhaustion	25.74	31.68	13.84
5.	Magnitude of depersonalisation	9.65	12.04	4.41
6.	Magnitude of personal accomplishment	35.68	37.16	5.00

As Table 5.17 illustrates, all of the means for the six factors found in this study fall within one standard deviation of the means reported by Maslach and Jackson (1981).

Once the preliminary analysis described above had been conducted, it was possible to explore the fourth research question. The fourth question aimed to determine whether there is an association between physical and psychological health in social work practitioners and burnout. This can be stated as the following hypotheses:

1. There will be a positive correlation between the burnout factors of frequency and magnitude of emotional exhaustion, frequency and magnitude of depersonalisation and Otto’s Symptom Checklist and GHQ scores and caseness.

2. There will be a negative correlation between the burnout factors of frequency and magnitude of personal accomplishment Otto's Symptom Checklist and GHQ scores and Caseness.

These hypotheses can be stated in the null and alternate forms as follows:

- H9₀: The will be no relationship between the six factors of the burnout construct and social work practitioner physical and psychological health.*
- H9_{Ai}: There will be a positive correlation between the burnout factors of frequency and magnitude of emotional exhaustion, frequency and magnitude of depersonalisation and Otto's Symptom Checklist, GHQ scores and Caseness.*
- H9_{Aii}: There will be a negative correlation between the burnout factors of frequency and magnitude of personal accomplishment, Otto's Symptom Checklist, GHQ scores and Caseness.*

To address these two hypotheses, Pearson correlations were used to test the relationship between the health distress variables and the burnout factors of the social work practitioners. Table 5.18 presents the correlational relationships between Otto's Symptom Checklist, GHQ, Caseness and the Overall Health Distress and the burnout factors for the social worker practitioner sample.

TABLE 5.18: CORRELATION OF OVERALL BURNOUT SCORE AND FACTORS WITH SYMPTOMS, GHQ, CASENESS AND OVERALL HEALTH DISTRESS

	Burnout Factors	Otto's Symptom Checklist	GHQ Mean Score	GHQ Caseness	Overall Health Distress
1	Frequency of emotional exhaustion	.73 ^c	.83 ^c	.20	.84 ^c
2	Frequency of depersonalisation	.62 ^c	.38 ^a	.07	.38 ^b
3	Frequency of personal accomplishment	-.31 ^a	-.21	.03	-.21
4	Magnitude of emotional exhaustion	.76 ^c	.86 ^c	.19	.81 ^c
5	Magnitude of depersonalisation	.60 ^c	.36 ^b	.11	.36 ^b
6	Magnitude of personal accomplishment	.30 ^a	.28	.08	.27

a = p < .05 b = p < .01 c = p < .001

The results indicate that there is a strong and significant relationship between the burnout factors and the health distress indicators. The emotional exhaustion factor both in its frequency and magnitude forms showed the strongest relationship. Koeske and Koeske (1989a) have argued that the emotional exhaustion subscale of the Maslach Professional Burnout Inventory (Maslach and Jackson 1982) measures the essence of burnout, while the remaining subscales of personal accomplishment and depersonalisation are two separate but related constructs. The correlation pattern is consistent with the stress-strain-outcome model outlined by Koeske and Koeske (1989a). With this model the emotional exhaustion factor is conceptualised as being equivalent to strain. This factor will be used as a predictor variable in the following regression analysis of social work overall health distress as well as practitioner age, years of practice, average hours worked per week and mean social work practice satisfaction.

Following the work of Koeske and Koeske, the mean scores of the emotional exhaustion frequency and magnitude scores were averaged to construct a more refined burnout variable. To test the reliability of this new scale a Cronbach alpha was calculated for all items on both scales . This analysis produced an excellent alpha of .95 which indicates that this scale can be used in further analysis.

5.5 HEALTH :- PREDICTIVE ANALYSIS

In this section a predictive analysis is conducted on both the social work student and practitioner samples to identify what predictor variables significantly explain within the sample variation on the criterion health variable. The predictive analysis is first conducted using a standard multiple regression analysis. Once this is complete, variables that significantly contribute to the variation in the health variable are entered into a stepwise regression to determine their unique contribution to the explained variation in the criterion health variable for both the social work practitioner and student samples.

5.5.1 HEALTH :- SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS' PREDICTIVE RESULTS

With the completion of the previous analysis the second research question can now be addressed. The second question concerned the extent, if any, that the possible sources of stress identified in the first research question and the level of course-related stress experienced by social work students explained the variation in their physical and psychological health. The potential sources of student stress

that were identified in the first research question were: (i) professional identity formation process (social work idealised image and role value conflict); (ii) the reasons students chose social work; (iii) students' performance expectations; and (iv) stresses from the course that are part of the professional education process. Previous analysis revealed that there was little evidence to suggest that the reasons and influences on a student choice of social work had a significant relationship to the level of social work student physical and psychological health. These two research questions, based on the previous analysis, can be refined to the following hypothesis:

The five independent variables of age, degree of idealisation of the social work role, student value difference with the idealised social worker, academic achievement and social work course satisfaction, will significantly explain the variation in student social worker physical and psychological health.

This hypothesis can be stated in the null and alternate forms as follows :

H10₀: *The five independent variables will not significantly explain the variance in student physical and psychological health*

H10_A: *The five independent variables will significantly explain the variance in student physical and psychological health.*

To test this hypothesis multiple regression analysis was done. The new health variable was used as the criterion variable. The predictor variables were: age, mean of idealised social worker, mean absolute value difference with the idealised social worker, mean social work course satisfaction level and grade

average. A correlation matrix of the variables used in the regression analysis is produced in Table 5.19.

TABLE 5.19: PEARSON CORRELATION MATRIX FOR THE STUDENT REGRESSION VARIABLES (N=69)

	MNIHEATH Mean of health distress	AGE Dichotomous Age 24 or less Vs. 25 or More	MNABPER Mean absolute difference idealised social worker	MRKSV109 Grade average	MNIDEAL Mean of idealised social worker	MNASWAT Mean of social work course satisfaction
MNIHEATH	1.00					
AGE	.20	1.00				
MNABPER	.28 ^b	.02	1.00			
MRKSV109	.44 ^c	.12	-.07	1.00		
MNIDEAL	.08	-.15	-.16	-.03	1.00	
MNASWAT	-.47 ^c	.35 ^b	-.06	-.24 ^a	.21 ^a	1.00
a = p < .05 b = p < .01 c = p < .001						

As can be seen from Table 5.19, correlations between predictor variables show mostly non-significant relationships among the predictor variables, indicating that multicollinearity is not an issue of concern in this analysis (Wittink 1988).

TABLE 5.20: RESULTS OF THE MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS REGRESSING THE FIVE PREDICTOR VARIABLES AGAINST MEAN STUDENT HEALTH DISTRESS (N=69)

Predictor	Beta	T
MNIDEAL : Mean of idealised social worker	.23	2.40 ^a
MRKSV109: Grade average	.37	3.87 ^c
MNASWAT : Mean of social work course satisfaction	-.40	-3.89 ^c
AGE: Dichotomous Age 24 or less Vs. 25 or More	.04	0.44
MNABPER : Mean of absolute difference idealised social worker	.31	3.34 ^b

Multiple $R = .68$
Adjusted $R^2 = .42$ ^d
 $F = 10.88$
 $DF = 5,63$
a= $p < .05$ b= $p < .01$ c= $p < .001$ d= $p < .0001$

Table 5.20 illustrates that four of the five variables put into the equation are significant predictors of the overall health distress quotient, with a strong adjusted R^2 value of 0.42. This means that 42% of the variation in student physical and psychological health can be explained by the four predictor variables. The only variable that did not add significantly to the explained variation was age. The variables that added to the explained variation in order of significance were :

- 1. Social Work Course Satisfaction - MNASWAT
- 2. Academic grade average- MRKSV109
- 3. Dissonance with idealised Social Worker - MNABPER
- 4. Idealised Social Work Role - MNIDEAL

The four significant variables were then entered into a stepwise regression model to explore their unique contribution to the explained variance. As can be

seen in Table 5.21, the unique contribution of each of the four variables to the explained variation in the student health distress variable were 21%, 11%, 7% and 4% respectively. This gives a total of 43% of the variation explained and 57% unexplained.

TABLE 5.21: STEPWISE REGRESSION ANALYSIS AGAINST STUDENT HEALTH DISTRESS (N=69)

Step	Predictor Variable	Adjusted R-square	Beta
1.	MNASWAT : Mean of social work course satisfaction	.21	-.47 ^d
2.	MRKSV109: Grade average	.32	.35 ^c
3.	MNABPER : Mean of absolute difference with idealised social worker	.39	.28 ^b
4.	MNIDEAL : Mean of idealised social worker	.43	.23 ^a

Multiple $R = .68$

Adjusted $R^2 = .43^d$

$F = 13.73$

DF = 4,64

a= $p \leq .05$

b= $p \leq .01$

c= $p \leq .001$

d= $p \leq .0001$

5.5.2 PREDICTIVE ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONERS’ RESULTS

The completion of the previous analysis also makes it possible to explore the fifth question. This question sought to determine the extent to which social work practitioners’ age, job satisfaction, burnout, years of experience and average hours worked explained the variation in their physical and psychological health.

This research question can be stated as an hypothesis:

The five independent variables of age, job satisfaction, burnout, years of experience and hours worked will significantly explain the variance in social work practitioner physical and psychological health.

This hypothesis can be stated in the null and alternate forms as follows :

H11₀: The five independent variables will not significantly explain the variance in social work practitioner physical and psychological health

H11_A: The five independent variables will significantly explain the variance in social work practitioner physical and psychological health.

To test this hypothesis a multiple regression analysis was used. A multiple regression analysis was conducted with overall health distress as the criterion variable, and social work job satisfaction, average hours a week worked as a paid social worker, age and burnout (modified emotional exhaustion scale) as predictor variables.

TABLE 5.22: PEARSON CORRELATION MATRIX FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONERS’ REGRESSION VARIABLES (N=51)

	AVWEEK Average hours a week worked as a paid social worker	AGE	MEANBURN Mean Burnout score on defined factors	YRSPRAC effective years practice as a paid social worker	MNSWAT Mean Social Work Job Satisfaction	MNIHEATH Mean of Health Distress
AVWEEK	1.00					
AGE	.23	1.00				
MEANBURN	-.22	-.16	1.00			
YRSPRAC	-.01	-.00	.34 ^a	1.00		
MNSWAT	.12	-.10	-.26	-.26	1.00	
MNIHEATH	.03	-.19	.86 ^c	.33 ^a	-.44 ^b	1.00
a = p < .05 b = p ≤ .01 c = p < .001						

As can be seen in Table 5.22, correlations between predictor variables show mostly non-significant relationships among the predictor variables, indicating like the previous regression that multicollinearity is not an issue of concern in this analysis. The only very strong relationship was between the predictive variable burnout and the criterion variable, health distress ($r(51) = .86$ $p < .000$). As can be seen from the above matrix, two of the four variables to be entered into the regression analysis are negatively associated with the practitioners' health distress variable. These two variables are social work job satisfaction and age. Table 5.23 presents the results of the standard regression analysis.

TABLE 5.23 *MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS FIVE PREDICTOR VARIABLES AGAINST MEAN PRACTITIONER HEALTH DISTRESS (N=51)*

Predictor	Beta	T
AVWEEK : Average hours a week worked as a paid social worker	.10	1.49
AGE	-.12	-1.87
MEANBURN : Mean burnout score on defined factors	.76	10.70 ^d
MNSWAT : Mean of social work job satisfaction	-.32	-5.08 ^d
YRSPRAC : Effective years practice as a paid social worker	.06	0.80

$$\text{Multiple } R = .92$$

$$\text{Adjusted } R^2 = .82$$

$$F = 47.97^d$$

$$DF = 5,45$$

$$a = p < .05 \qquad b = p < .01 \qquad c = p < .001 \qquad d = p < .0001$$

Table 5.23 illustrates that only two variables put into the equation are significant predictors of the overall health distress of practitioners. Nevertheless, the equation had an extremely strong adjusted R^2 value of 0.82. This means that

82% of the variation in practitioner physical and psychological health can be explained by the five predictor variables. However, three of the predictor variables - age, years of social work practice and average hours worked per week - did not significantly contribute to the explanation the variation in social work practitioner health distress.

To explore to what extent each of the remaining two significant variables, burnout and social work job satisfaction, explained unique variation in the health distress these remaining criterion variables were entered into a stepwise regression analysis. The results are contained in Table 5.24:

TABLE 5.24: STEPWISE REGRESSION ANALYSIS AGAINST SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONER HEALTH DISTRESS (N = 51)

Step	Predictor Variable	Adjusted R-square	Beta
1.	MEANBURN : Mean burnout score on defined factors	.73	.86 ^d
2.	MNSWAT : Mean of social work job satisfaction	.82	-.31 ^c

Multiple R = .91

Adjusted R² = .82

F = 114.01

DF = 2,48

a = p < .05 b = p < .01 c = p < .001 d = p < .0001

The two variables added a unique contribution to the explained variation of practitioner health distress of 73% and 9% respectively. The total explained variation was 82%, with the two significant predictor variables leaving 18% unexplained.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

This study had four stages. The first stage, addressing the first two research questions, examined social work students' physical and psychological health. The second stage addressed the third research question, which considered whether there was a difference in the level of physical and psychological health of Australian social work students and practitioners. The third stage addressed the fourth research question, which examined whether the physical and psychological health of social work practitioners is negatively correlated with the magnitude of burnout experience. The fourth stage of the study, which addressed the fifth research question, aimed to determine the extent to which social work practitioners' age, job satisfaction, burnout, years of experience and average hours worked explain the variation in their physical and psychological health. This chapter reviews the four phases of the study, noting both the limitations and the implications of the results obtained, considers areas of further research and suggests recommendations arising from the study for social work course design.

6.1 SOCIAL WORK COURSE COMPONENTS

The first stage of the study explored the relationship between course-based and individual-based factors, and social work students' physical and psychological distress. Three course-based factors were explored in the study: social work course satisfaction, professional identity gap and the idealisation of

the professional role. The individual factors were age, academic results (an indicator of social work students' performance expectations) and reasons and influences for entering social work. The following discussion of the first stage of the study will cover all of these areas, but will initially focus on social work course satisfaction. This section will cover the first two research questions and their related subquestions (see Section 2.9).

6.1.1 SOCIAL WORK COURSE COMPONENTS

The factor analysis revealed a number of constructs that made intuitive as well as theoretical sense, in that the factors were consistent with the job characteristics model. The six factors were:

1. Self-Actualising Course Environment
2. Controlled Positive Client Interaction
3. Non-Pressured Course Environment
4. Empowering Course Environment
5. Rewarding Course Structure
6. Positive Student Interaction.

The first four factors had good reliability coefficients and there was no need to optimise the factors by deleting questions. The reliabilities for the first four factors were, respectively, .78, .79, .80 and .73. The fifth factor was optimised at .76 and the sixth factor did not produce an acceptable level of reliability. The six factors could be seen to fall into three broad areas. The first area related to course environment, the second area related to interpersonal interaction, and the third area related to rewards.

Three factors related to the first broad area of course environment: self actualising course environment (factor one), non-pressured course environment (factor three) and empowering course environment (factor four). Empowering course environment had the highest perfect course mean at 4.65, indicating that students saw this factor as the most important component in the perfect social work course. Question 16 in this factor, to be informed when others make decisions that affect the student's future, at 5.25 had the second highest importance rating for any of the 50 questions on the perfect course scale.

Factor one, self-actualising course environment, had the second highest perfect course mean (4.37) and also had the highest mean percent dissatisfaction amongst students, at 31%, compared to 26% for empowering course environment. These findings suggest that, whereas an empowering course environment is most important to students, a self-actualising course environment is where the greatest source of dissatisfaction is found.

The results indicate that the two social work courses did reasonably well in creating an empowering environment (factor 4) for students, with a current course mean of 3.31. On factor 4, students both had the highest personal expectations with perfect course mean (4.65) and also the highest level of being true for their actual courses with a real course mean (3.31). This suggests that the social work courses have a number of mechanisms in place that assist students in feeling empowered within the course, though the dissatisfaction level of 26% also implies that these mechanisms could be improved.

Factor 1, which examines if the social work course climate is a self-actualising one, showed the highest level of student dissatisfaction (31%). It also had the equal second lowest rating of 'how true' (2.71). The majority of students felt that it was only 'moderately true' that their present social work course was self-actualising. This suggests that it is in the area of the course being self-actualising that social work courses are not meeting students' needs and values. Interestingly, these expectations are not as high as in factor 4 (Empowering Course Environment). It is important to note that only one of the course aspect questions in factor 1, question 9, 'being able to get help and advice in case of course problems', had a perfect course mean above 5. This question picks up the 'flavour' of this factor, which suggests that more individualised interventions would be necessary to achieve a self-actualising course environment than would be necessary to achieve an empowering course environment. It seems that students want to be consulted and have their ideas noted, as well as having the course make full use of their potential. This suggests that social work courses need to take a highly individualised approach to student needs and learning if they are to improve student satisfaction in this area.

This raises the important question of the resources available to courses. It is possible that it is resource availability that separates the student satisfaction levels on these two factors of whether the course environment is empowering and self-actualising. As stated previously, student empowerment can be achieved by the implementation of the appropriate consultative mechanisms and processes within the course structure. Individual students' self-actualisation needs, however,

are much more difficult to address because they vary at least in their intensity and timing if not in their nature. Therefore, it is much more difficult to construct efficient structures and processes within a social work course that will not use substantial periods of staff time to meet individualised student needs. One such structure which might be effective is a student mentoring process. An examination of the course aspects which constitute factor 1 also reveals that for some students the self-actualising aspect of the course was not very important to them (see Tables 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3). Therefore, processes like student mentoring would need to be optional for students. For those students who do not have high self-actualising needs within the social work course, making such a process compulsory may become a potential source of stress and dissatisfaction.

The third factor that falls into the broad area of course environment is non-pressured course environment. Many of the course aspects of this environment did not have a perfect course mean as high as the previous two factors. One of the course aspects that had both a high perfect course mean of 4.51 and a high factor loading of .67 was for the physical conditions of students' placements to be adequate, i.e. to have enough desks, telephones and interview rooms to enable them to engage in their placement activities. Four other placement questions that were part of this factor were for the placement environment not to be noisy (q. 43), to have adequate clerical assistance on placement (q. 28), not to handle a large case load (q. 29) and on placements only to be expected to do things which students had the knowledge or skills to do

properly (q. 7). An analysis of the four questions indicates that the placement experience was felt by almost 20% of the students to be a stressful one.

Factor 3's descriptor 'non-pressured' was chosen to indicate that this factor had to do with the course environment or setting, and that its main focus was on aspects of the course that could cause pressure to students, such as having to handle a large case load. Using Herzberg's motivator-hygiene theory (1968), the four course aspects listed in the preceding paragraph seem to be similar to what Herzberg has defined as hygiene factors, particularly the hygiene area of working conditions and status. The status aspect of factor 3 (Non-Pressured Course Environment) is reflected in question 42, which was not to encounter negative community attitudes towards social workers.

The motivator-hygiene theory as proposed by Herzberg (1968), which was an antecedent to the job characteristics model (Hackman and Oldham 1980), has, according to Lewis (1987:228), "received much criticism and has been debunked in some circles. The major criticism has been its over simplification of sources of job satisfaction". Nevertheless, in this study's exploration of social work course design, its simple structure and theoretical argument do provide a useful insight into how it might be possible for social work course managers to determine the priority of interventions to improve the level of social work student course satisfaction. Modifying Herzberg's hypothesis, it could be stated that factors involved in producing course satisfaction are separate and distinct from factors that lead to course dissatisfaction. So far in this study, course dissatisfaction and course satisfaction have been treated as opposite ends of the continuum. Herzberg

(1968) suggests that the opposite of course dissatisfaction is not 'satisfaction' but 'no dissatisfaction'. He further suggests that there are two dimensions that affect a person at work: motivator factors and hygiene factors. These two dimensions may also affect a student undertaking a social work course.

One interpretation of the above factor (Non-Pressured Course Environment) is that when students report unhappiness or dissatisfaction with their course, they attribute it to their course environment or course context. These course context factors, following Herzberg (1968), can be called hygiene factors, and include such things as salary, personal life, working conditions, job security, company policy and administration, supervision and relations with superiors, peers and subordinates. Herzberg postulated that whenever these factors fall below what the employee feels is an acceptable level, job dissatisfaction results. The interactive nature of this appraisal by the individual of his needs and values, and the adequacy of how they have been met by the organisation, is consistent with the person-environment fit model used in the present study.

Herzberg's model is also consistent with the job characteristics model (Hackman and Oldham 1980). One major difference is that all the factors within the job characteristics model are treated equally. The five critical job dimensions identified by Hackman and Oldham (1980) are skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback. These dimensions are, according to the job characteristics model, of equal importance in any intervention to improve employee effectiveness. The course factors identified in the analysis seem to be consistent with the job characteristics model. However, in determining an

intervention into a social work course to improve the level of student satisfaction, it is important to determine the priority of interventions. The job characteristic model does not provide an easy means of doing this; Herzberg's motivator-hygiene model does.

If a non-pressured course environment can be seen as a hygiene factor, then a self-actualised and empowering course environment could, using the Herzberg model (1968), be seen as a motivator factor. According to Herzberg, motivators are positive and have the power to satisfy an employee's need for self-fulfilment or self-actualisation. They include such factors/motivations as recognition, advancement, responsibility, possibility for growth, achievement and the work itself. Many of these motivators are contained in the two factors that have been called self actualising and empowering.

By using Herzberg's motivator-hygiene theory (1968), an interesting insight can be gained into how social work course managers can develop interventions to enhance social work students' course satisfaction. Herzberg suggests that only motivators lead people to superior performance; while hygiene factors are necessary, once they are present they do not lead to increased performance. If this theory is true, then concentration on the motivator factors of self-actualisation and reward could lead to superior student performance, while concentration on the hygiene factor non-pressured course may lead only to no student dissatisfaction with the course. This application of Herzberg's theory (1968) has a *prime facie* validity.

To illustrate: if student ideas and opinions were being listened to by lecturers 'more' than the students originally expected, it seems reasonable that this would lead to higher student motivation and course involvement. However, if there are 'more' desks, telephones and administrative support when students are on placement, it could be expected that, while this would cause 'no dissatisfaction', it would not necessarily bring a higher level of motivation and involvement with the course. In other words, motivators may not have a defined upper limit of satisfaction, whereas hygiene factors may have an upper limit defined by student expectations. Exceeding student expectations for hygiene factors may not increase student satisfaction levels. If this is true, it has implications for the allocation of resources to improve student course satisfaction and, indirectly, student physical and physiological health.

The remaining three factors were controlled positive client interaction, rewarding course structure and positive student interaction. As the names suggest, two of these factors had to do with interaction and one with course structure. Factor 2, Controlled Positive Client Interaction, could be seen as a hygiene factor, and it had a relatively low perfect course mean when compared to the other motivator factors. There were three questions in factor 2 that were exceptions to this pattern, however: those dealing with learning to do new things (q. 6), variety in the task the student does (q. 2), and for the student to be able to find time to rest and relax while doing the social work course (q. 50). Questions 6 and 2 had a negative factor loadings of -.59 and -.62 respectively. Learning to do new things also had the highest importance ranking (5.4) of any perfect course aspect. Scores

above 5 means that the majority of students see this course aspect as very important or extremely important. The negative loading of question 6 on this factor is interesting. It suggests that students generally see it as important that they learn to do new things but when it comes to client and client groups they want to be able to find time to rest and relax (q. 50) and be able to organise the pace of their work (q. 17). Question 17 and question 32 (which ask students if they had clients and groups who need help which they are unable to provide), were the two course aspects that loaded the strongest on this factor, at .67 and .68 respectively. Factor 2 suggests that when it comes to client interaction, students want to control the pace, to be able to provide the help that clients need, as well as not to encounter personal and social problems which are the same as their clients. Interestingly, when it comes to client interaction, students do not see it as very important that they learn new things (q. 6) or have too much variety (q. 2). This suggests that students prefer a controlled interaction with clients that gives them time to rest and relax, and generally include voluntary clients who have needs they are able to meet.

There was wide variation in the importance that the students placed on the course aspects that constituted the controlled positive client interaction factor. The need for control by students may be due to their need to gain a sense of closure and accomplishment. Generally, tertiary students operate within a relatively short time cycle, where subjects have a clear beginning, middle and end. The students in the survey had all completed their final placement and were engaged in their final semester of academic study. Within university courses

students usually have set tasks and clear completion dates. However, with clients, community groups and placement work projects, the beginning, middle and end is less clear cut, and there may be no defined completion date. Indeed, many interactions with clients, especially with groups, may last a number of years and may not have any clear closure. Therefore the intervention process may begin and end before and after student placement. As such, students may only be involved in a small part of the client interaction process and never see the positive results of intervention.

Of the two interaction factors, the second was positive interaction with students. Factor 6 had only moderately high perfect course mean (3.98) and only three course aspects constitute this factor. Factor 6 revealed it was moderately important for students in the perfect social work course to enjoy the company of fellow students (q. 23), to meet socially with them (q. 19) and not to have tension and conflict with their skill groups (q. 21). The mean for these course aspects are 4.51, 4.19 and 3.23 respectively. Over 20% of the students were dissatisfied with their ability to enjoy the company of fellow students by being able to meet with them socially. Students showed relatively little dissatisfaction (9.16%) with the level of tension in their skill groups. Therefore, courses should aim to develop mechanisms by which students can interact socially. Factor 6 could also be considered a hygiene factor.

The third broad area that the perfect social work course factors identified was whether the social work course was rewarding. Factor 5 identified the degree to which the course was perceived by students to have a rewarding structure.

Using Herzberg's motivator-hygiene theory, this factor could be seen as a motivator as the course aspects tended to reflect recognition of accomplishment within the course structure. It deals with both the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. One of the intrinsic rewards seems to be intellectual stimulation. When the course aspect, 'having periods where there is not much to do' (q. 4), which had a high positive factor loading, is juxtaposed with question 20, which was 'not to clash with fellow students due to value or theoretical differences', this had a strong negative loading on this factor. This juxtaposition suggests that students might possibly want periods of time where they can engage in theoretical and value debates with other students. Another extrinsic reward dealt with the sense of accomplishment that arises when students get explanations of how to do their job (q. 14), 'not to have a lot of work to do in a limited time' (q. 3) and have their 'work appreciated by lecturers and supervisors' (q. 22). This accomplishment cycle could be described as having three steps: explanations, time for successful execution, and appreciation of accomplishment by lecturers and supervisors.

According to the job characteristics model there are five core job dimensions that help create three critical psychological states which, in turn, lead to a number of beneficial personal and work outcomes. The five critical job dimensions are skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback. While there was no direct correspondence between the factors identified in the study and the job dimensions identified by Hackman and Oldham (1980), the factors are nevertheless consistent with the model. To illustrate, task identity is the degree to which a job requires an individual to complete a whole

piece of work from the beginning to the end. The factor rewarding course structure shares some of the characteristics of the Hackman and Oldham (1980) task identity construct.

The six factors, though exploratory, do suggest that the job characteristic model has relevance to social work course design. Herzberg's (1968) motivator-hygiene theory provides a possible means by which to determine the priority of interventions if a significant gap is found between the ideal course aspects and students' perception of their current course. Social work students, in the two courses that the sample used in this study was drawn from, saw their current social work course aspects as being significantly lower than those of the ideal course. This supports the value of using social work students' surveys to identify areas of course dissatisfaction. Therefore, the ideal course factors discussed provide one way to identify areas for intervention within social work courses. Five of the six factors can be used to form scales with good reliabilities and these scales could be used to identify broad course areas that might become the focus for course intervention. Five factors produced scales with good reliabilities that could be used in replication studies. The five scales were:

- I. Self-Actualising Course Environment (*alpha* .78)
- II. Controlled Positive Client Interaction (*alpha* .79)
- III. Non-Pressured Course Environment (*alpha* .80)
- IV. Empowering Course Environment (*alpha* .73)
- V. Rewarding Course Structure (*alpha* .76).

An alternative approach is to use the single question items to identify the greatest gaps in students' perceptions of what the ideal social work course should be and what the present course is. Regardless of the strategy used to identify areas of student course satisfaction and dissatisfaction, any intervention must assess not only the satisfaction gap but also the reasons for the gap. Interventions can be focused at a number of different levels. The most obvious is to treat the perceived gap by students as an indication of inadequate course processes and structures that need to be improved, and any intervention is aimed at improving these processes and structures. A second focus is to assess if these processes are adequate to meet student needs and, if they are, to improve student awareness of what resources these processes and structures can provide to meet their needs and values. A third focus is to identify the needs and values that shape student expectations of an ideal social work course and aim at modifying needs and values that cannot be realistically or adequately met within a social work course. In practice, any intervention with a particular social work course will use a combination of these three foci. With the sample of social work students most of the areas of dissatisfaction identified by the survey, with the possible exception of some of the self-actualisation needs, seem legitimate areas for social work course improvement.

6.2 IMPLICATIONS OF THE SOCIAL WORK STUDENT PREDICTIVE ANALYSIS

This section will explore the implications of the social work student predictive analysis. The predictive analysis only partially confirmed the

hypothesis that the five independent variables of age, degree of idealisation of the social work role, student value difference with the idealised social worker, academic achievement and social work course satisfaction, would significantly explain the variation in student social worker physical and psychological health. While the amount of explained variation was large, with 42% of student physical and psychological distress being explained by the five independent variables, not all of these variables significantly explained the variation. Age was not seen as a significant predictor variable of student health distress. The most powerful predictor variable was the mean social work course satisfaction, grade average, followed by mean difference with the idealised social worker and the degree of the idealised social worker. The mean social work satisfaction explained 21% of the variation of social work student health distress.

6.2.1 COURSE SATISFACTION: STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS AND REASONS FOR COURSE CHOICE AND CONTINUANCE

The social work student predictive analysis was conducted after an initial investigation of the social work sample was performed. The initial investigation of the student sample aimed to identify if the demographics were similar to that described in Pilcher's (1982) study. The social work student sample was predominantly female (77%), as was Pilcher's. However, in the current study the majority of students (82%) were under 30 years of age. This was younger than the age reported by Pilcher, though she noted that there was a trend towards younger students comprising the social work student population. The students also came from the similar profile of community sizes to that reported by Pilcher. However,

the sample had more students from independent schools and less from state schools than in Pilcher's study. Most were undergraduate students, reflecting that this study's social work sample was composed of younger students who had entered university study with no break from secondary study.

An ANOVA was conducted to examine if any of these demographic variables were related to variation in social work course satisfaction. The demographic variables analysed were: age, sex, community size, religious preference, type of school attended and political preference. Only three variables revealed significant variation in student social work course satisfaction: age, religious preference and type of school attended.

The variable age was categorised into two groups, with those who were twenty five and over reporting significantly higher levels of course satisfaction than those twenty four years old or under. This suggests that these older students, who possibly have entered social work after a period of work experience, alternate life experience and or other study, found a better match between their needs and values and what the social work course was able to provide. One possible explanation for this is that the older group was less likely to idealise the course or may have had to overcome more obstacles to do the course and as such may have been more committed to it. Another possible explanation is that it could simply be a function of maturity that comes with age. Mature students may have a more accurate expectation about the extent to which any course can meet individual self actualisation needs.

Students' religious affiliation as well as their attendance at denominational secondary schools was a strong indicator of their satisfaction with the social work course. Students who showed their religious affiliations as Catholic and who had attended a Catholic secondary school had the highest mean satisfaction scores. Interestingly, the group of students who had attended a Catholic secondary school did not show a difference to those students who had attended a Protestant secondary school, but showed a significant difference from the group of students who had attended State and other schools (Greek Orthodox, Muslim).

There are a number of possible explanations for these differences. However, the result indicates that there may be something about Catholic, and to a slighter lesser extent Protestant, secondary schooling that predisposes students towards having a higher satisfaction level than those who attended State or other schools. Possible reasons could range from students having a higher commitment to the service ethic at one extreme, to students being more compliant and accepting of course structures and processes at the other.

An ANOVA was also conducted to determine who was the primary influence on student's choice of doing social work, and the primary reason why they chose social work and continued to do the course. Of the nine sources of influence and seven reasons why students initially chose social work and continued to do social work, there was only a single category on one of the ANOVAs that showed a significant result. This category was whether the student believed social work could provide them with many good job opportunities and

job security when they entered the course. Social work students who gave this as their primary reason for choosing social work as a career had a very low social work course satisfaction level.

There are a number of reasons why this could be so. Perhaps the most likely explanation is that as these students near the completion of their social work courses they realise that social work may not offer the job security and job opportunities that they were seeking. This is an interesting student perception given that labour market forecasts have consistently shown social work to be a profession with a high labour demand, which suggests that as an occupation it is able to provide good career security if not job security. There is a difference between career security and job security, which these students may have confused. While students may have been aware of programs ending, or of having their funding cut, and social workers losing their jobs, they may not have been aware that these social workers usually quickly attain alternate employment in the social work field. If this student perception is that job security means ‘one position in one organisation’, then this perception may need to be addressed as part of the social work educational program. A greater emphasis may need to be placed within social work education on career security and the high employability of social work graduates.

The analysis of the social work student sample in the present study shows that it was in many ways similar to that of Pilcher’s. The analysis revealed that those students who entered social work after some break in their study, or who had a Catholic or Protestant secondary school education, or who did not expect

social work to provide good job opportunities or security, were the most satisfied with the course. Interestingly, there was no difference in satisfaction levels due to gender differences, and this may indicate that gender may not be as important a discriminating variable amongst social work students as it is amongst other student groups. This could be because of the higher uniformity of values often observed in social work student populations. Therefore, the 2nd and 3rd hypotheses, which dealt with the demographics and influences for entering social work and reasons for choosing and continuing to do social work, provide only minor insight into the variation of social work student course satisfaction scores.

6.2.2 SOCIAL WORK STUDENT VALUES AND THE IDEALISED SOCIAL WORKER

It was discussed in the Literature Review (Chapter 2) that the idealised social workers portrayed in the literature would be perceived as having values relatively low on the Machiavellian and Type A behaviour and relatively high on Coherence and Generativity constructs. This was seen as being consistent with the service ethic.

The scale for which there was the best comparative data was the Machiavellian scale. Both the social work students' perception of themselves and the students' perception of the idealised social worker had very low Machiavellian scores. The score for the idealised social work practitioner was 88 and the score for social work students was 92. Given that a score of 100 was defined by Christie (1970) as the break between non-Machiavellianism and Machiavellianism, both the social work students and the idealised social worker

can be seen to hold a non-Machiavellian value orientation. Given the low scores of both the social work students and their idealised social worker it was surprising that there was still a significant difference in the mean scores in the Machiavellian scale. Students saw the idealised social worker as portrayed in the literature as less Machiavellian than themselves. In the Machiavellian scale the mean scores for both the social work student perception of themselves and the idealised social worker were greater than four. This rating would suggest that students saw both themselves and the idealised social worker as clearly non-Machiavellian.

For the Type A scale, the mean scores for both the idealised social worker and for the social work students themselves were both below four. This suggests that social work students saw themselves and the idealised social work as exhibiting Type A behaviours. Although the mean for social work students was slightly lower than the mean for the idealised social worker there was no significant difference.

The Coherence construct aimed to measure the extent to which the individual has a pervasive, enduring though dynamic, feeling of confidence that life is comprehensible, manageable and meaningful. Social work students saw themselves as significantly less coherent than the idealised social worker portrayed in the literature.

Both social work students' perception of themselves and the idealised social worker did, however, indicate strong coherent scores, with the idealised

social worker having a significantly lower mean (which indicates higher agreement). There were three question in the coherence scale. On one of the questions the difference between the students' perception of themselves as a person and the idealised social worker was quite extreme. This question asked students if they found their personal existence very purposeful and meaningful. The social work students saw the idealised social worker as portrayed in the literature as having much more purposeful and meaningful existence than they had themselves.

6.3 IMPLICATIONS OF THE SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONERS' PREDICTIVE ANALYSIS

Before the social work student predictive analysis was conducted a comparison of social work student and practitioner health distress was undertaken. Comparisons are made between practitioner and student scores on the Otto's Symptom Checklist and Goldberg's General Health Quotient as well as the practitioner and student caseness levels. There was no significant difference between the student and the practitioner samples on Otto's Symptom Checklist or on caseness levels; however, there was a significant difference on Goldberg's General Health Quotient levels. Students had significantly higher levels than did practitioners. The level of caseness for both students and practitioners, at 56.8% and 62.7%, were very high when compared to community samples, but were similar to the case rate found in other studies of social work students and practitioners. There was a very strong and significant relationship between the modified burnout measure and practitioner health distress ($r = .86$, $p = .000$).

The predictive analysis found that 82% of the variation in practitioner health distress can be explained by their current level of burnout and their mean social work job satisfaction. Variables such as hours worked in an average week, age and years of practice did not significantly add to the explanation of the variation of social work practitioner health distress.

6.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

If Herzberg's motivator-hygiene theory (1968) is seen as valid model to explore student course satisfaction, then it has implications for the design and interpretation of student course satisfaction surveys. The preceding discussion suggested that it was plausible to allocate the factors discovered in the analysis of students' perfect course scores into two dimensions that are consistent with Herzberg's motivator-hygiene theory (1968). If this were done with a large sample of students it would be possible to test Herzberg's theory. This could be done by developing alternate coding protocols. The first protocol would code all variables as they have been in the study, that is, current course performance divided by desired course performance converted to a percentage, and if greater than a hundred percent converted to one hundred percent. This is a standard procedure used in customer survey research. An alternate protocol would be not to code down satisfaction scores above a hundred percent.

If Herzberg's theory (1968) is valid, then it could be hypothesised that predictor variables that are motivators would explain more variation in outcome criterion variables, if the alternate framework was used rather than the standard

framework. Conversely, it could be hypothesised that hygiene predictor variables would explain the same level of variation in outcome criterion variables regardless of the coding protocol used. If these hypotheses were confirmed it would mean that code practices used with employee surveys would need to be substantially revised.

6.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

A four stage research design as used in this study would ideally be conducted as a longitudinal study. This would involve a repeated measure of the students' stress and physical and psychological health before, or at entry into the course, at the end of each year of the course, and subsequently yearly or two yearly whilst they were practitioners.

The initial design of the study was a longitudinal one, as this is clearly the better design. However, in practice, it was only possible to sample the students whilst they were course members. It was not practical to sample them when they became alumni of the university. This was due to one institution (as distinct from the social work department), which was initially not willing (and later only willing on payment of a substantial institutional fee) to grant permission to use their student tracking information. The other institution granted permission to use their tracking information, but it was found to be only moderately accurate, as it relied on persons still being at their last known address, or individuals at their old addresses knowing their new one or contacting relatives to locate a student's new address. Given the impracticality of maintaining a viable sample size, the present

design was used. An impressionistic finding was that social work students who undertook social work courses in non-capital city locations tended to relocate at the end of their course. The impression gained was that social work graduates are a highly mobile group.

Another limitation of the study was the sample size ($n=84$) for social work students and ($n=53$) for practitioners. Nevertheless, these sample sizes are comparable to those used by Tobin and Carson (1994). The social work student samples constituted at least 80% of all final year social work students enrolled in each of the two courses and therefore could be seen as highly representative of those courses. The social work practitioner sample of 53 practitioners was, however, a very small proportion of the total number of practising social workers. For this reason the social work practitioner sample group essentially was treated as a comparison to the student social work sample group. Therefore any generalisations made from the practitioner sample to the wider population of social work practitioners need to be made with a great deal of caution.

In terms of methodological difficulties, the study relied on respondents' perceptions of their subjective stress and health. This approach is consistent with the person-environment fit model of stress. This model is based on the premise that an external stressor is evaluated by the person, and can result in stress which may manifest itself in physical or psychological ill-health. This model of stress, which emphasises the interactive role of the individual with his environment, leads to difficulties in measurement that have not been overcome by researchers. It must be acknowledged that self-reports of physical and psychological health

can be unreliable. The questions about the validity of the conceptualisation of stress used in the study are recognised. These interactions between variables identified by this study need to be replicated in a validation study before they can be treated as any more than tentative results.

Another possible methodological difficulty with the study could be unidentified personality characteristics of social work students and social worker practitioners that make them more sensitive to indicators of physical and psychological ill-health. This increased sensitivity may cause them to choose lower cut off scores on the GHQ and the Symptom Checklist compared with other respondents. The use of lower cut off scores could result in an inflation of social work students' and social workers' scores on these measures when compared to other groups. This is one possible explanation of the higher scores that are found in 'psychologically sophisticated' groups such as social workers and psychology students. Another possible explanation is that these groups are more willing to admit psychological and physical distress because they do not attach the same degree of social desirability to denying these symptoms as do other groups.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study arose from the author's growing awareness of the problem of stress in social work education. This awareness began first as a social work student and developed as a social work educator. In exploring the nature of the problem and attempting to clarify the unique elements of social work education that may be a cause of stress for social work students, Chapter 1 identified two possible sources of stress: those that emanate from the structure of the course and interaction with lecturers, students and clients, and those connected with the professional socialisation process, in particular the idealised image of a social worker. The chapter suggested that this image is contained in the professional literature and is part of social work education.

Five interrelated research questions were discussed in Chapter 1 and elaborated in Chapter 2. The first was to what extent 'insidious pervasive stresses' emanate from the professional identity formation process (social work idealised image and role value conflict), the reasons students chose social work, students' performance expectations, and stresses from the course that are part of the professional education process as outlined by Cushway (1992). The second question concerned the extent that the level of course-related stress experienced by students and the factors identified in question 1 explains the variation in social work students' physical and psychological health. The third question explored whether there was a difference in the level of physical and psychological health of

Australian social work students and practitioners. The fourth question focussed on the association between physical and psychological health in social work practitioners and burnout. The fifth question explored the extent to which social work practitioners' age, job satisfaction, burnout, years of experience and average hours worked explained the variation in their physical and psychological health.

The first research question focused on the stresses that emanate from a social work course and the first section of the literature review explored the nature of social work course stress. It did this by first defining what is meant by course climate and its relationship to the concept of stress. This relationship was examined within the theoretical framework of the Person-Environment Fit model, which also allowed for the examination of the second, third, fourth and fifth research questions, which explored the relationship between social work student stress and physical and psychological health of social work students and other professional groups. The second part of the literature review examined the relationship between professional socialisation and stress, particularly as it relates to burnout. This discussion enabled the examination of the possible role the idealised image of social work role might take in the engendering of stress in social work students.

7.1 STUDENT SELECTION

The study revealed that, for the present sample at least, while student demographics were related to social work course satisfaction, the reasons and influences on students' choice of social work, with one exception, were not.

Those students who were 25 years or older; or who had attended a Catholic or Protestant Secondary school; or saw their religious affiliation as Catholic, had a higher level of course satisfaction. The least satisfied were those who chose social work for the job opportunities and good job security. Therefore, if the aim of a social work course manager was merely to enhance social work student course satisfaction, then the selection process could concentrate on those applicants who fulfil the following criteria: are older, are Catholic or have attended a Catholic or Protestant High School, and are not primarily motivated by the desire for job opportunities and job security. Another interpretation of this finding is that students who are most satisfied with the social work course are those who have more conservative values and are more likely to perceive the course as an end in itself. Alternative explanations are also possible, but the findings do highlight the inherent dangers in developing selection criteria for social work courses which, on the grounds of matching students to the course, may have unanticipated consequences.

7.2 STUDENT SURVEYS FOR COURSE MONITORING

A better intervention to enhance student social work course satisfaction may be the use of a student satisfaction survey such as the one used in this study. This study identified six dimensions that seem to identify major areas of social work student course satisfaction, for this sample at least: Self-Actualising Course Environment, Controlled Positive Client Interaction, Non-Pressured Course Environment, Empowering Course Environment, Rewarding Course Structure and Positive Student Interaction.

This study suggests that it is possible to establish formal target-setting, monitoring, evaluation and feedback systems within social work courses. Such systems would provide social work course managers with information about whether social work course design and structure are meeting key student performance objectives, so as to ensure a predetermined level of social work student course satisfaction. An effective measurement system should have three characteristics: it needs to be flexible enough to allow social work course managers to respond as necessary to unexpected events; it needs to provide accurate information so as to indicate the current performance of the social work course in terms of social work students' objectives; and it needs to supply information in a timely manner so that decisions are not based on outdated information.

There would appear to be four advantages to the use of a student course satisfaction survey instrument. The first is that it allows for the establishment of standards or targets against which social work course performance can be evaluated. The targets that a social work course manager chooses to evaluate the performance of a course could be driven by all or only some of the student course performance objectives. For example, social work course cost efficiency issues may be more important to address than certain student responsiveness issues. The second advantage of social work student surveys is that they can indicate whether a target has been reached. However they will not measure all aspects of a social work course, such as research and administration activities. The third advantage is that social work student surveys can allow a comparison of actual performance

against an established target. In the discussion of the social work student survey results in Chapter 6 a distinction was made between motivation and hygiene factors. It was suggested that while there may be value in exceeding social work student course performance expectations on motivator type factors there seems to be little value in exceeding hygiene type factors. The fourth advantage of social work student surveys is that they can initiate corrective action when it is decided that targets are not being achieved.

The social work student survey developed for this study had five dimensions with good levels of reliability. These or similar scales may be useful for social work courses as part of their formal target-setting, monitoring, evaluation and feedback systems. Using scales such as the ones developed by this study is particularly important if social work course managers accept Quick and Quick's (1984) assertion that management has a responsibility for individual and organisational health.

The second question concerned the extent, if any, that the level of course-related stress experienced by students and the factors identified in question 1 explain the variation in social work students' physical and psychological health. As discussed in section 6.2, the predictive analysis was only partially confirmed and though the amount of explained variation was large, with 42% of student physical and psychological distress being explained by the five independent variables, not all of these variables significantly explained the variation. Age was not seen as a significant predictor variable of student health distress. The most powerful predictor variables were the mean social work course satisfaction, grade

average, followed by mean difference with the idealised social worker and the degree of idealisation of the social worker role. The mean social work satisfaction explained 21% of the variation of social work student health distress, reinforcing the importance of social work course managers actively managing the level of social work course stress, as this is significantly associated with the level of health distress.

Social work students' stated grade average contributed to the amount of student health distress explained. Interestingly, the results indicate that students with the highest level of academic achievement orientation (grade average) also had both significantly higher course dissatisfaction and significantly higher health distress. One possibility is that these individuals may be more driven and that more-driven individuals are less satisfied by social work courses.

The assumption here is that students undertaking a social work course are very similar to post-graduate students and that, given a reasonable level of intelligence to gain admission, the level of academic achievement may be determined by the importance a student places on it. Therefore the cost of academic achievement for a social work student within a social work course might be increased demand on a student within an environment that may already be demanding. The consequence of such an increased demand may be higher levels of physical and psychological distress. A somewhat different explanation using the coping literature (Lazarus and Lavnier 1978) is that, as a tactic to reduce social work course stress, students may decrease the demands they place on themselves to achieve academically. If either explanation has some validity, this

reinforces the importance of social work course managers monitoring the stress levels of social work courses.

7.3 PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY AND STUDENT OUTCOMES

As discussed in Chapter 1, Loseke and Cahill (1986) concluded that the social work student's quest for a professional identity may be more difficult than for those who undertake careers in the more established professions. The social work role value conflict variable, mean of the absolute difference with the idealised social worker (MNABPER), and the degree of idealised social work values both significantly contributed to the explained variation in social work student health distress. Haas and Shaffir (1977, 1982a, 1982b) have argued that student doctors, by adopting commonly-recognised symbols of their chosen profession, can wrap themselves in a cloak of competence and convince relatively receptive audiences of their authority. They argued that professional socialisation is a type of activity in which the management of impressions is basic. For neophytes to realise the occupational identity to which they aspire, they must become good, self-confident actors who can master increasingly difficult performance situations. Loseke and Cahill (1986) suggest the social work student's role may be even more difficult since the academic training in their field tends to convince them that the identity of the social worker is not just a confident management of impressions but is something inherent in the personality of the student.

In Chapter 2 it was argued that the idealised social worker as portrayed in the literature would hold a generative personality style, and that this personality

style is in keeping with the exposed service ethic of the profession. It also was argued that there is general agreement in the literature that the ideal social worker would hold a low Machiavellian, low Type A, high coherence and high generative value orientation as would be consistent with a strong service ethic. It was argued that there was disagreement about whether, in practice, from the perspective of their physical and psychological health, this value orientation is the one best held by social workers and social work students who have to function within bureaucratic settings. The social work students ranked the idealised social worker and themselves as being low on the Machiavellian and Type A behaviour, and high on Coherence and Generativity. There was a significant difference for the Machiavellian, Coherence and Generativity but not for the Type A behaviour construct. Therefore the character type that students see portrayed in the literature of a social worker is a non-manipulative, caring person who feels ‘that for all its ups and downs life has an overall predicableness and meaningfulness’ and who is willing to ‘wait in lines’.

In Chapter 1 it was stated that excessive self-sacrifice may be one of the causes of professional stress. The findings of this study support Spencer’s assertion that, carried too far, self-sacrifice can undermine physical and mental health, and not only become a “cause of depression” for others, but also render the self-sacrificing person “incapable, or less capable, of actively furthering their welfare.” (Spencer 1902:223) Both the social work role value conflict variable and the degree of idealised social work values contributed significantly to the explained variation in social work student health distress. This is in addition to

that explained by course stress and academic achievement. The role value conflict variable is commonly seen as a source of strain within the stress literature discussed in Chapter 2. The degree of idealisation of social work values can also be seen as a source of strain if the idealisation is tied to individuals' own character rather than a professional role.

As discussed in Chapter 1, Clearfield (1977) suggests that the drive to increase professionalisation amongst social workers has been criticised as self-serving, and he felt that a goal of social work education should be to help students develop positive attitudes towards their profession and its practice. It could be that the emphasis on the personality and character of the student rather than on the specification of professional role attributes may be one reason for a link between idealisation of the social work values and student health distress. If the low score for the idealised social worker (83.6) on the Machiavellian scale is an indicator, the degree of idealisation of the social work role is also associated with students higher expectations of themselves, as there was not a positive correlation between the idealised score and the absolute difference score. If this had been so, then it could have been argued that those students who most idealised the social worker also had the greatest difference; but this was not the case. There was slight negative non-significant correlation ($r(69) = -.16$) between the two variables (see table 5.9), which suggests that those students who have the highest idealisation tend to report a lower difference between themselves and their image of the idealised social worker. It could be that these students are attempting to redefine their character to match the image of the idealised social worker. Not only does

the absolute difference then have a negative consequence on a student's health, so does this idealisation of social work values.

This process of idealisation may be harmful because of the possible emphasis of social work education on the formation of a set of personal values and a character type that may be unattainable. This is not to suggest that the code of ethics promoted by social work education is not appropriate for the performance of a professional role, but that it may be demanding an unrealistic standard to live one's life by. This distinction between the professional and the personal, or the public and the private, may be an area that social work course managers need to address.

This finding supports Loseke and Cahill's (1986) assertion that, though one of the functions of social work education may be the development of a particular type of character that reflects social work's professional self-image, social work education was neither sufficient nor necessary to produce the type of personal character that social workers are expected to possess. This study takes this assertion further and suggests that this character formation process may be the source of the insidious, pervasive stresses that, according to Tobin and Carson (1994), inhibit students from achieving maximum benefit from their professional training.

It would seem to follow that it is time to dispel the dated theme in social work education that one of the duties of the social work educator is to shape and certify the social work character of the student. Since this character formation

process may contribute to social work students' physical and psychological distress, it may also inhibit the successful application of their training once they graduate from the course.

7.4 PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE AND EDUCATION

In terms of the third broad research question, this study indicates that there is a difference in the level of psychological health of Australian social work students and practitioners, with students having a significantly higher mean GHQ score. In terms of physical health, there was no significant difference. The case rate for both social work students and practitioners were 56.8% and 62.7% respectively. These figures would seem questionable if they were not very similar to those of Tobin and Carson (1994) in their undergraduate psychology group, where 42% of the sample were cases. They found that the social work students in their sample had a 64% case rate. Gibson, McGrath and Reid (1989) found that 37% of their sample of practising social workers were identified as cases. Szulecka, Springett and De Paul (1986) found a case rate of 8% for beginning first year undergraduate students. Therefore, there is some evidence that social work education may be a more stressful period than practice, and that this level of stress may give rise to a level of psychological distress that could impair professional practice. Those students who achieve higher academically may have higher levels of psychological distress.

Cherniss (1980) used the term “burnout” to refer to situations in which what was formerly a *calling* becomes merely a *job*, characterised by a loss of

enthusiasm, excitement and sense of mission in one's work. This change could be described as the loss of the service ethic. The fourth broad research question aimed to determine the level of association between physical and psychological health and burnout using the social work practitioner sample. The results indicated that there was generally a strong and significant relationship between the burnout factors and the health distress indicators. The emotional exhaustion factor, both in frequency and magnitude, showed the strongest relationship with the mean GHQ score, with correlations of .86 and .83 respectively.

Koeske and Koeske (1989a) have argued that the emotional exhaustion subscales of the Maslach Professional Burnout Inventory (Maslach and Jackson 1982) measure the core of burnout, while the remaining subscales of personal accomplishment and depersonalisation are two separate but related constructs. The correlation pattern found for social work practitioners was consistent with the stress-strain-outcome model outlined by Koeske and Koeske (1989a). With this model, the emotional exhaustion factor is conceptualised as being equivalent to strain, and the outcome as physiological and physical distress. At a new point in time this outcome could be conceptualised as a stress that produces a strain that is burnout, which then produces an outcome of increased physical and psychological distress. In effect, the stress-strain-outcome model may not be linear as suggested by Koeske and Koeske (1989a), but more cyclic or recursive.

What this recursive model of stress-strain-outcome-stress suggests is that an intervention at any stage will eventually have an impact at all stages. If it is recursive, then it is possible for social work course managers to lower the stress

levels of social work students by social work course monitoring and redesign, as well as by engaging in social work role redefinition. Such interventions might decrease the level of student strain, manifested in physical and psychological distress, and possibly decrease the incidence of burnout when social work students enter practice. Since the social work sample was not followed longitudinally, this relationship is based only on correlational data and, while highly plausible, needs to be treated as speculative.

The final broad research question of the study examined the extent to which social work practitioners' age, job satisfaction, burnout, years of experience and average hours worked explain the variation in their physical and psychological health. The five predictor variables explained 82% of the variation in practitioner physical and psychological health. However, three of the predictor variables - age, years of social work practice and average hours worked per week - did not significantly contribute to the explanation of the variation in social work practitioner health distress. It is important to note that most of this sample worked 35-40 hours per week and had been in practice for five years or less. There was, however, a weak but significant positive correlation between years of practice and health distress and burnout. So there is no evidence to support the claim that social work practitioners adjust to their roles automatically over time. Also, part-time work was not significantly related to a lower incidence of burnout. The two predictors which did account for health distress variation when all variables were entered into a regression analysis were social work job satisfaction and the

burnout variable (emotional exhaustion), which explained 9% and 73% respectively.

Interestingly, the correlation between social work job satisfaction and burnout was not significant, but the correlation between social work job satisfaction and physical and psychological distress was ($r(51) = -.44$ $p < .01$). This suggests that burnout has more to do with emotional exhaustion than lack of job satisfaction, though both may contribute to physical and psychological distress which can then feed back into the level of emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction. This is consistent with the recursive stress model discussed previously, and supports the assertion that an intervention at any stage of the process will eventually impact on all stages. Again, since the social work practitioner sample was not followed longitudinally, these perceived causal relationships are based only on correlational data and need to be treated as speculative.

7.5 A FINAL REFLECTION

Overall, this study suggests that Spencer (1902) might have been right when he asserted that “... one whose bodily vigour and mental health are undermined by self-sacrifice carried too far, in the first place becomes to those around a cause of depression, and, in the second place, renders himself incapable, or less capable, of actively furthering their welfare.” (p. 223) If Spencer was right, what of Saute Repo’s vitriolic attack on her social work course? Was the social work course *that* difficult? The answer is possibly not, but, if the course was like the ones studied here, there was probably a level of student distress that caused psychological and physical impairment. The impairment may carry into practice,

and there is some evidence that time, at least in the first five years of practice, will not, of itself, heal all.

Social work students see themselves as good, non-manipulative, caring people, who feel ‘that for all its ups and downs, life has an overall predicability and meaningfulness’, and who are willing to ‘wait in lines’. Social work lecturers are also most likely good people. Perhaps Tobin and Carson’s (1994) “insidious, pervasive stresses” are generated by good people expecting other good people to be *extremely* good: so good that they engage in excessive self-sacrifice and burnout from the emotional exhaustion of trying to meet their own exceedingly high expectations.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 - SOCIAL WORK STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX 2 - SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONER QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX 1 - SOCIAL WORK STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

PART 1. SECTION A.

PLEASE CIRCLE THE APPROPRIATE REPLY.

1. Code : Birthday :

1	2	3	4

Mother			
Month	Year		
	56		

Father			
Month	Year		
	78		

2. Sex : Female 1 Male 2

3. Age

- | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|
| 1 | 24 years or under | 4 | 30 to 34 years | 6 | 40 to 44 years |
| 2 | 25 to 29 years | 5 | 35 to 39 years | 7 | 45 to 49 years |
| 3 | Over 50 years | | | | |

4. Size of the community in which you have lived most of your life?

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|-------------------------------|
| 1 | Nearest town less than 5,000 population | 4 | 50,000 to 99,999 population |
| 2 | 5,000 to 9,999 population | 5 | 100,000 to 499,999 population |
| 3 | 10,000 to 49,999 population | 6 | 500,000 population and over |

5. The highest level of education obtained by your father : _____

6. The highest level of education obtained by your mother : _____

7. Your father's primary occupation (paid) _____

8. Your mother's primary occupation (paid) _____

9. Education : Where did you receive the greater part of your secondary education?

- | | | | | | |
|---|--------------|---|-----------------|---|-------------------|
| 1 | State School | 2 | Catholic School | 3 | Protestant School |
| | | 4 | Other School | | |

10. Length of time between first leaving school and
start of social work course :

11. Religious affiliation or preference :

1 Catholic 2 Protestant 3 Other

(please specify) _____

12. Are you a practising member of your religion?

1 YES 2 NO 3 NOT APPLICABLE

13. What political party do you usually favour
in elections? _____

14. In your decision on social work as a career, which three
of the following had the most influence on your choice
BEFORE you entered social work? Indicate the 3 most
influential in the boxes below :

1. Influenced by parents, husband, wife, personal
experience or family situation?
2. Influence of Minister, Priest, Rabbi or other
religious figure?
3. Membership of a group through tertiary education
or in the community?
4. Social work recruitment programme, speaker or
literature?
5. Vocational guidance or counselling?
6. Tertiary education courses, lectures or tutors?
7. Direct experience in social work or closely related
activities?
8. Service received from social worker or
social agency?
9. Through personal knowledge of someone who is
active in social work?

☐

1st

☐

2nd

☐

3rd

15. Which three of the following statements in order of importance come closest to expressing the major reasons why you chose social work as a career before you entered this course?

1. Social work is an interesting profession
2. Social work will give me social status and prestige
3. Social work makes a contribution to individuals and society
4. Social work offers good salaries and working conditions
5. I enjoy working with people
6. Social work can help me become a better person, parent and marriage partner
7. Social work provides many job opportunities and good job security
3. Other (please specify)

☐

1st

☐

2nd

☐

3rd

16. At this stage in your course, please list below which of the above reasons now represent why you wish to continue in social work as a career. Put the appropriate number in the box :

☐

1st

☐

2nd

☐

3rd

17. Which one of the following statements best expresses the function of social work that is most important to you now?

1. Social work helps to document and effect change in the inequalities of society
2. Social work helps to restore the social functioning of people
3. Other (please specify) _____

18. Place the number of which one was most important to you when you started this course. :

☐

SECTION C.

1. During your education at University would you say that overall your average marks over all courses were

- | | | | |
|-------------|---------------|--------------------------------|----|
| 1. Pass, D. | 2. Credit, C. | 3. Distinction or Higher, B.A. | |
| 50 - 60 | 60 - 70 | 70 + | 42 |

SECTION 1.

This section of the questionnaire asks you to imagine a perfect social work course and people's reactions to you as a social work student and how important certain aspects of this course are to you. Some will be extremely important. Some will not be important at all.

Replies will be coded 0 to 6.

- 0 = not important at all
- 1 = slightly important
- 2 = slightly to moderately important
- 3 = moderately important
- 4 = moderately to very
- 5 = very important
- 6 = extremely important

You will also be asked about the same aspects in relation to this course. The question here is how true this is of this course and people's reactions to you as a social work student in real life. Some will be (0) not true at all, some will be (3) moderately true and some (6) will be 100% true and a lot will lie in between these.

YOU ARE ASKED TO CIRCLE THE APPROPRIATE NUMBER.

Please think about what would be the perfect social work course for you. Some will be more important to you than others.

Please think about what would be the perfect social work course for you. Some will be more important to you ..
some less.

	Not important at all	Slightly important	Slightly to moderately important	Moderately to very important	Very important	Extremely important			
1. Freedom to organise things and do your work as you want to.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		
2. Variety in the tasks you do.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		
3. Not having to do a lot of work in a limited time.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		
4. Not having periods where there is not much to do.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		
5. Knowing that doing this course will get you a job	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		
6. Learning to do and learn new things	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		

Aspects	Perfect Course	This course
	<div>Code</div> <div>Ignore</div> <div> <div>Not important at all</div> <div>slightly important</div> <div>slightly to moderately</div> <div>moderately important</div> <div>moderately to very</div> <div>Very important</div> <div>Extremely important</div> </div>	<div>Code</div> <div>Ignore</div> <div> <div>Not true at all</div> <div>Moderately true</div> <div>100% true</div> </div>
7. On placements not to be expected to do things which you have not the experience or knowledge to do properly.	<div>0 1 2 3 4 5 6</div>	<div>0 1 2 3 4 5 6</div>
8. On placement not to be expected to do things which are contradictory to other things you are expected to do.	<div>0 1 2 3 4 5 6</div>	<div>0 1 2 3 4 5 6</div>
9. Be able to get help and advice in case of problems on the course.	<div>0 1 2 3 4 5 6</div>	<div>0 1 2 3 4 5 6</div>
10. Having chances of receiving respect in other people's eyes	<div>0 1 2 3 4 5 6</div>	<div>0 1 2 3 4 5 6</div>
11. To be paid an income in line with the skills and responsibilities you have	<div>0 1 2 3 4 5 6</div>	<div>0 1 2 3 4 5 6</div>

Aspects	Perfect Course	This Course
12. To be consulted and have my ideas noticed	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
13. To be informed what is expected of me as a student.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
14. To get explanations of how to do my job.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
15. To have equipment, resources, books, to do my course.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
16. To be informed when making a decision about my future.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
17. Not to have more than one task at a time waiting for me.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
18. That persons in positions of power treat me with respect and consideration.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
19. To be able to meet socially with fellow students.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
20. Not to have communication problems due to value or theoretical differences with fellow students.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
21. Not to have tension or conflict within my skills group.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
22. To have my work appreciated by lecturers and supervisors.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	0 1 2 3 4 5 6

Aspects	Perfect Course	This Course
23. To enjoy the company of my fellow students.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
24. To be able to influence the course and its content.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
25. For the course to make full use of my mental capacities.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
26. Not to have pressure on you to upgrade your qualifications when you finish the course.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
27. Not to have to work three hours non-stop on placements.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
28. To have adequate clerical assistance on placements.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
29. Not to handle a large case load (over 15 continuous cases) on placement.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
30. Not to have administrative and policy changes during your course	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
31. To have clients and groups on placement who are really interested and involved.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
32. Not to have clients or groups who need help you are unable to provide.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
33. Not to have clients who resent seeing you due to the involuntary nature of their	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	0 1 2 3 4 5 6

34. To be able to control how you want to do your work.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
35. Not encounter personal or social problems with clients which are the same as my own problems.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
36. To agree with the way welfare services are delivered in your placement agency.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
37. Not to be expected on placement to act contrary to my social work values and philosophy.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
38. That my supervisors and lecturers treat me with respect and consideration.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
39. To be able to exert an influence on the courses' decisions that affect you.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
40. Not to undertake tasks on placement that you don't want to do.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
41. To have clients appreciate what you are trying to do for them on placement.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
42. Not to encounter negative community attitudes towards social workers.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
43. For your placement work environment not to be noisy.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
44. For the physical conditions of your placement to have enough	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Aspects	Perfect Course	This Course
45. Not to have the course extend outside normal 9-5 working hours.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
46. To have suitable arrangements for the care of your children (tick 7 if N.A.)	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
47. For the course to allow time to do the most important daily chores you need to do at home.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
48. To have enough time to spend with my spouse or partner. (Code 7 if N.A.)	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
49. To have enough time to spend with your children. (Code 7 if N.A.)	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
50. To be able to find time to rest and relax while doing the course.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6	0 1 2 3 4 5 6

SECTION 2.

In this section you are asked about feelings you may have been having over the last couple of weeks. This questionnaire has been given to an Australian community and allows us to compare our data with a representative Australian sample.

PLEASE CIRCLE THE APPROPRIATE REPLY.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE.

Please complete this section by circling the appropriate answer.

Have you recently :
(Within the last 3 Months.)

**Please circle how commonly this
has occurred.**

**How much has this
Bothered You**

	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
1. Been able to concentrate on whatever you are doing?	Better than usual	Same as usual	Less than usual	Much less than usual	Not at all bit	A little bit	A fair bit	A lot
2. Lost much sleep over worry?	Not at all	No more than usual	Rather more than usual	Much more than usual	Not at all	A little bit	A fair bit	A lot
3. Felt that you were playing a useful part in things?	Much more than usual	Same as usual	Less useful than usual	Much less than usual	Not at all	A little bit	A fair bit	A lot
4. Felt capable of making decisions about things?	Much more than usual	Same as usual	Less capable than usual	Much less capable	Not at all	A little bit	A fair bit	A lot
5. Felt constantly under strain?	Not at all	No more than usual	Rather more than usual	Much more than usual	Not at all	A little bit	A fair bit	A lot
6. Felt you couldn't overcome your difficulties?	Not at all	No more than usual	Rather more than usual	Much more than usual	Not at all	A little bit	A fair bit	A lot
7. Been able to enjoy your normal day to day activities?	More so than usual	Same as usual	Less so than usual	Much less than usual	Not at all bit	A little bit	A fair bit	A lot
8. Been able to face up to your problems?	More so than usual	Same as usual	Less able than usual	Much less able than usual	Not at all	A little bit	A fair bit	A lot
9. Been feeling unhappy and depressed?	Not at all	No more than usual	Rather more than usual	Much more than usual	Not at all	A little bit	A fair bit	A lot
10. Been losing confidence in yourself?	Not at all	No more than usual	Rather more than usual	Much more than usual	Not at all	A little bit	A fair bit	A lot
11. Been thinking of yourself as a worthless person?	Not at all	No more than usual	Rather more than usual	Much more than usual	Not at all	A little bit	A fair bit	A lot
12. Been feeling reasonably happy all things considered?	More so than usual	About the same	Less so than usual	Much less happy	Not at all bit	A little bit	A fair bit	A lot

PLEASE CONTINUE TO SECTION 4.

Please complete this section by circling the appropriate answer.

HAVE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING THINGS BEEN HAPPENING TO YOU OVER THE PAST 3 MONTHS OR SO	HOW OFTEN HAS THIS HAPPENED TO YOU				HOW MUCH HAS THIS BOTHERED YOU			
	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
	Never or rarely				Never or rarely			
	1 Sometimes or a little				1 Sometimes or a little			
	2 A fair bit				2 A fair bit			
	3 A Lot				3 A Lot			
1. Headaches	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
2. Nausea or vomiting	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
3. Indigestion	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
4. Diarrhoea	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
5. Constipation	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
6. Stomach aches	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
7. Trouble breathing e.g. short of breath	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
8. Easily annoyed/irritable	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
9. Perspiring a lot e.g. short of breath	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
10. Trouble remembering things	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
11. Doing things wouldn't normally do	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
12. Feeling strange - not quite yourself	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
13. Pass urine frequently	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3

HAVE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING THINGS BEEN HAPPENING TO YOU OVER THE PAST 3 MONTHS OR SO	HOW OFTEN HAS THIS HAPPENED TO YOU				HOW MUCH HAS THIS BOTHERED YOU			
	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
	Never or rarely				Never or rarely			
	Sometimes or a little				Sometimes or a little			
	A fair bit				A fair bit			
	A Lot				A Lot			
14. Numbness or tingling in certain parts of the body	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
15. Visual difficulties	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
16. General aches and pains	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
17. Restless/unable to settle	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
18. Dizzy spells	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
19. Feelings of boredom	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
20. Mood swings for no apparent reason	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
21. Tires easily or feeling rundown	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
22. Sexual problems, reduced interest	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
23. Unusual heartbeats e.g. palpitations	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
24. Sore throats, colds; sinus problems	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
25. Migraines	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
26. Become tearful easily	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
27. Need more than the usual amount of sleep	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3

HAVE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING
THINGS BEEN HAPPENING TO
YOU OVER THE PAST
3 MONTHS OR SO

HOW OFTEN HAS THIS
HAPPENED TO YOU

- 0 Never or rarely
- 1 Sometimes or a little
- 2 A fair bit
- 3 A Lot

HOW MUCH HAS
THIS BOTHERED YOU

- 0 Never or rarely
- 1 Sometimes or a little
- 2 A fair bit
- 3 A Lot

28. Unable to get to sleep	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
29. Restless sleep or keep waking up	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
30. Skin troubles	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
31. Loss of appetite	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
32. Pains in heart or tightening or heaviness of chest	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
33. Feeling nervous or tense or anxious	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
34. Pains in back or spine	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3

For Women:

35. Trouble with periods	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
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PLEASE CONTINUE TO SECTION 5.

SECTION 3.

In this section you are asked to imagine what values and beliefs an idealised social worker would hold. By 'idealised' I do not mean perfect but merely as portrayed by the course and by your superiors. Such beliefs and values may not agree with what you would see yourself having as a practising social worker. In the second part of the questionnaire you are asked to state what you believe to be your beliefs and values if you were a practising social worker now.

PLEASE CIRCLE THE APPROPRIATE REPLY.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE.

An idealized social worker

An idealized social worker	AGREE				DISAGREE				YOU AGREE				DISAGREE					
	A lot	A Fair bit	A little	A little	A little	A Fair bit	A lot	Code Ignore	A lot	A Fair bit	A little	A little	A Fair bit	A lot	Code Ignore			
1. Holds that, all in all, it is better to be humble and honest than it is to be important and dishonest.	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Finds it hard to believe people who feel the work they perform is of value to other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Feels that most people are brave.	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Feels guilty when they are not actively working on something.	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Would not excuse lying to someone else.	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Believes it is safest to assume that all people have a vicious streak and it will come out when given the chance.	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Hates to wait in lines.	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. Feels honesty is the best policy in all cases.	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Believes the best way to handle people is to tell them what they want to hear.	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6

An idealised social worker

You	AGREE			DISAGREE			AGREE			DISAGREE			Code
	A Lot	A Fair	A Little	A Little	A Fair	A Lot	A Lot	A Fair	A Little	A Fair	A Lot	A Little	
Is the first to begin something even if all the details are not worked out.	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Believes that anyone who completely trusts anyone else is asking for trouble.	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Believes that people's activities are decided by what society demands.	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Feels that people suffering from incurable diseases should be put painlessly to death.	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Feels they have philosophical or religious beliefs that gives their life an underlying sense of direction.	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Feels the biggest difference between criminals and other people is that criminals are stupid enough to get caught.	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Often will race the clock to save time.	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Find personal existence very purposeful and meaningful.	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	

idealized social worker

	AGREE				DISAGREE				You AGREE				DISAGREE			
	A lot	A Fair bit	A little	A little	A little	A Fair bit	A lot	Code Ignore	A lot	A Fair bit	A little	A little	A little	A Fair bit	A lot	Code Ignore
Where possible, tries to do two things at once -- like eating and working.	1	2	3	4	4	5	6		1	2	3	4	4	5	6	
Feels that most people who get ahead in the world lead clean moral lives.	1	2	3	4	4	5	6		1	2	3	4	4	5	6	
Becomes upset if thinks something is taking too long.	1	2	3	4	4	5	6		1	2	3	4	4	5	6	
Believes the happiest people care about the future of society.	1	2	3	4	4	5	6		1	2	3	4	4	5	6	
2. Believes, generally speaking, people don't work hard unless they are forced to do so.	1	2	3	4	4	5	6		1	2	3	4	4	5	6	
3. Feels that attempting to know yourself is a waste of time.	1	2	3	4	4	5	6		1	2	3	4	4	5	6	
24. Believes we all need some faith in humanity if we are to work towards a more caring world.	1	2	3	4	4	5	6		1	2	3	4	4	5	6	
25. Holds that when you ask someone to do something									1	2	3	4	4	5	6	

An Idealized Social Worker

	You, AGREE				DISAGREE				You, DISAGREE			
	A lot	A Fair bit	A little	A little	A little	A Fair bit	A lot	A lot	A little	A Fair bit	A lot	A lot
25. Does not not do something unless it can be made competitive.	1	2	3		4	5	6	1	4	5	6	
27. Believes it is wise to flatter important people.	1	2	3		4	5	6	1	4	5	6	
28. Finds that there's a fool born every minute.	1	2	3		4	5	6	1	4	5	6	
29. Wishes they had a simple life in which bodily needs were the most important things and decisions didn't have to be made.	1	2	3		4	5	6	1	4	5	6	
30. Feels it is possible to be good at all times.	1	2	3		4	5	6	1	4	5	6	
31. Finds it difficult to imagine enthusiasm concerning work.	1	2	3		4	5	6	1	4	5	6	
32. Believes it is hardly fair to bring children into the world the way things look for the future.	1	2	3		4	5	6	1	4	5	6	
33. Feels that people's misfortunes result from the mistakes they make.	1	2	3		4	5	6	1	4	5	6	
34. Feels it is hard to get ahead without cutting corners here and there.	1	2	3		4	5	5	1	4	5	6	

	AGREE			DISAGREE			AGREE			DISAGREE		
	A lot	A Fair	A little	A lot	A Fair	A little	A lot	A Fair	A little	A lot	A Fair	A little
35. Feels that people forget more easily the death of their father than the loss of their property.	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
36. Finds that for all its ups and downs life has an overall predictableness and meaningfulness.	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6

APPENDIX 2 - SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONER QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Colleague,

This questionnaire is a state-wide research program that focuses on the stress experienced by Social Workers. The aim of this research is to identify the most common stress producing conditions that social work practitioner's experience in the workplace.

This questionnaire is confidential and should take no more than 30 minutes to complete.

The return of this questionnaire to Pat Foley at the address below will greatly assist the understanding of social work practice conditions in Tasmania.

Increasingly occupational stress has been identified as a major problem experienced by social work practitioners. In order to develop preventative strategies an accurate knowledge of current practice conditions within Tasmania is essential. The results of this research will be publicly released in Tasmania. This research is social action based since it will increase our present understanding of stress conditions and enable preventative planning at the educational, organisational and industrial levels against stress in the workplace.

This study is being conducted in conjunction with a companion study and, hopefully, will form the basis of a longitudinal study that has the aim of monitoring work aspects that impact upon Social Work practitioners at different career stages. In order to allow this, and to preserve your confidentiality we would ask you to develop a personal code and place this on this questionnaire in the box below.

We request you to put, first, your mother's first name initial (Christian name) and the date in the Month in which she was born and, second, your father's first name initial and the date of Month on which he was born, in the spaces provided below.

For example, my mother's name is Daphne her first initial is **D** and the date in the Month she was born on was the **19th.** of March, and my father Patrick's birthday is the **01st.** of October, therefore my code would be **D 19 P 01.**

Could you please now complete your code and record it in the space below:

PERSONAL CODE:	Mother's Initial	Date in Month Born.....
	Father's Initial	Date in Month Born.....

Could you please complete this questionnaire as soon as possible.
Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact us

School of Social Work
Ph. 003-260216 or 003-260253

SECTION 1.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Please tick the appropriate boxes for the following nine questions.

1 Sex-

☐ Male

☐ Female

2 Age at the 1st Jan.

☐ 20 - 24

☐ 25 - 29

☐ 30 - 34

☐ 35 - 39

☐ 40 - 44

☐ 45 - 49

☐ 50 - 54

☐ 55 - +

3 Type of organisation:

a) Government

☐ State

☐ Commonwealth

b) Non-Government

☐ Religious

☐ Secular

4. Location of your agency.

☐ Hobart

☐ Launceston

☐ Devonport

☐ Burnie

☐ Other please specify.....

5 Number of social work employees in your agency.

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5

☐ More... please specify.....

6 How many hours in an **average week** are you engaged in paid employment as a Social worker?

☐ 0-10

☐ 11-15

☐ 16-20

☐ 21-25

☐ 26-30

☐ 31-35

☐ 36-40

☐ 41-45

☐ 46-50

☐ 51 +

7. How many hours in an average **MONTH** are you engaged in non-paid voluntary work in welfare and non-welfare areas.

<input type="checkbox"/> 0-10	<input type="checkbox"/> 11-15
<input type="checkbox"/> 16-20	<input type="checkbox"/> 21-25
<input type="checkbox"/> 26-30	<input type="checkbox"/> 31-35
<input type="checkbox"/> 36-40	<input type="checkbox"/> 41-45
<input type="checkbox"/> 46-50	<input type="checkbox"/> 51 +

- 8 In what year did you graduate from a Social Work programme (please fill in the missing space.)

19.....

9. How many equivalent full time years have you been working as a Social Worker.
(please fill in the missing space.)

Number of years.....

Thank you for completing section 1.

Please proceed to section 2.

This section of the questionnaire asks you to imagine a perfect social work position and how important certain aspects of your work are to you. Some aspects will be extremely important, some will not be important at all. Replies will be coded 0 to 6.

0 = not important at all

1 = slightly important

2 = slightly to moderately important

3 = moderately important

4 = moderately to very

5 = very important

6 = extremely important

You will also be asked about the same aspects in relation to your **PRESENT** Social Work position. The question here is how true this is of your work as a Social Worker in real life. Some aspects for your present position will be, 'Not true at All' (0), some will be, 'Moderately true' (3) and some will be, '100% true' (6).

YOU ARE ASKED TO CIRCLE THE APPROPRIATE NUMBER

Listed Below are a number of Work Aspects. Some may be considered as more IMPORTANT to you than others.

Please think about these Work Aspects and indicate how important each would be to create the PERFECT Social Work position for you.

Look at each Aspect again and indicate how TRUE a description it is of your PRESENT Social Work position.

Not important at all
Slightly important
Slightly to Moderately
Moderately Important
Moderately to Very
Very Important
Extremely important

Not true at All
Moderately true
Totally true

1. Freedom to organise things and do my work as I want to.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6

0 1 2 3 4 5 6

2. Variety in the tasks I do.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6

0 1 2 3 4 5 6

3. Not having a lot of work to do in a limited time.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6

0 1 2 3 4 5 6

4. To be informed what is expected of me as a Social Worker.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6

0 1 2 3 4 5 6

5. Knowing that I can keep my job for as long as I like.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6

0 1 2 3 4 5 6

6. To be able to control how I want to do my work.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6

0 1 2 3 4 5 6

	Not important at all	Slightly important	Slightly to Moderately	Moderately important	Moderately to Very	Very important	Extremely important		Not true at All		Moderately true		Totally true		
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. To have the opportunity to develop and use new skills.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. Not to be required to prepare funding submissions so as to ensure adequate service provision and/or job security.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Being expected to do things which I have the experience and knowledge to do.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. Not being told to do contradictory things by different people.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. To feel pleased with my work performance.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. To be paid a salary in line with the skills and responsibilities I have.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. To be consulted and have my ideas noticed.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6

	Not important at all	Slightly important	Slightly to Moderately	Moderately important	Moderately to Very	Very important	Extremely important		Not true at all		Moderately true		Totally true		
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. To have a sense of satisfaction in my work.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. To have equipment, resources and stationery to do my work well.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. To have promotional opportunities in my job.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. To be able to organise the timing of the work I do.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. To be supported by colleagues in my agency.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. To have adequate time for friends outside of my job.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. To have support and opportunities to upgrade my qualifications	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
21. Not clash with fellow workers due to value or theoretical differences.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
22. Not to have to travel.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6

	Not important at all	Slightly important	Slightly to Moderately	Moderately Important	Moderately to Very	Very Important	Extremely Important	Not true at All	Moderately true	Totally true				
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
23. Not to have tension or conflict within my work group.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
24. To be easily able to obtain assistance from my supervisor.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
25. To feel supported by my supervisor.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
26. To have work colleagues available when I need to consult or ventilate.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
27. To have my expectations of the job match the agency's expectations of me.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
28. To be able to influence management, the agency and its policy.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
29. For the job to make full use of my potential.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
30. Not to have pressure on me to upgrade my work qualifications.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

	Not important at all	Slightly important	Slightly to Moderately	Moderately important	Moderately to Very	Very important	Extremely important		Not true at All		Moderately true		Totally true		
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
31. Not to have to work three hours non-stop without ever having time for a cup of coffee.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
32. To have supportive and competent clerical assistance.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
33. Not to handle a large case overload (over 35 continuous cases).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
34. Not to have continuous administrative and policy changes.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
35. To be able to have an uninterrupted lunchtime away from work, when I feel like it.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
36. To have clients or groups who need help that I am able to provide.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
37. Not to have clients who resent seeing me due to the involuntary nature of their contact e.g. probation.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6

	Not important at all	Slightly important	Slightly to Moderately	Moderately Important	Moderately to Very	Very Important	Extremely important		Not true at All		Moderately true		Totally true		
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
38. Not to encounter personal or social problems of clients which are the same as my own problems.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
39. To agree with the way Social work services are delivered in my agency.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
40. Not to be expected by my Agency to act contrary to my Social Work values and philosophy.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
41. To feel satisfied that the Agency's structure allows me to achieve the quality of work that I professionally expect.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
42. That my supervisors treat me with respect and consideration.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
43. To be able to exert an influence on the agency's decisions that affect me.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
44. Having my job meet my professional expectations.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Not important at all
Slightly important
Slightly to Moderately
Moderately important
Moderately to Very
Very important
Extremely important

Not true at all

Moderately true

Totally true

- | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 45. Not to encounter negative community attitudes towards Social Workers | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 46. To see my welfare studies as relevant to this job. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 47. To feel this job is contributing something worthwhile to Society. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 48. For my work environment not to be noisy, messy, or generally run down. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 49. For the workplace to have enough desks, telephones, interview rooms etc. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 50. Not to have work extend outside the usual 9-5 working hours. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 51. To have suitable arrangements for the care of my children. (tick here..... if N.A.) | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

Not important at all	Slightly important	Slightly to Moderately	Moderately Important	Moderately to Very	Very Important	Extremely Important	Not true at All	Moderately true	Totally true
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- | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 52. Not to have to work and live in a small rural community where I am well known publicly. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 53. For my job to allow time to do most of the important daily chores that I need to do at home. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 54. To have enough time to spend with my spouse or partner. (tick here..... if N.A.) | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 55. To have enough time to spend with my children. (tick here.....if N.A.) | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 56. Not to have meetings I have to attend at night. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 57. To work in an environment where people joke and have a sense of humour. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 58. To be able to do my job without the threat of emotional and/or physical violence. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

	Not important at all	Slightly important	Slightly to Moderately	Moderately important	Moderately to Very	Very important	Extremely important	Not true at All	Moderately true	Totally true				
59. To have people at work I consider to be friends.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
60. For people to say hello to each other in the mornings or at the start of a new shift.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
61. To have a job that does not impinge on my social life.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
62. Not to have to explain and justify my actions to the Management Committee or my employer.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
63. To have adequate support and referral services in the community to meet client needs.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
64. To be able to take time in lieu and sick leave when I need them.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
65. For this job to provide experience, knowledge and skills that will enhance my career.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Work Stress Indicators

This section asks you about stress in your current work position. On the following page there are 22 statements of job-related feelings. Please read each statement carefully and decide if you ever feel this way about your job.

If you have never had this feeling, circle the '0' in both the "HOW OFTEN" and "HOW STRONG" columns. If you have had this feeling, indicate how often you feel it by circling the number (from 1 to 6) that best describes how frequently you feel that way. Then decide how strong the feeling is when you experience it by circling the number (from 1 to 7) that best describes how strongly you feel it.

Recipients refers to the people for whom you provide your service, care, treatment, or instruction. When answering this section please think of these people as recipients of the service you provide even though you may use another term in your work.

		Never	A few times a year or less	Once a month or less	A few times a month	Once a week	A few times a week	Everyday	Never	Very mild, barely noticeable	Moderate	Major, very strong				
1.	I feel emotionally drained from my work.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	I feel used up at the end of the workday.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	I can easily understand how my recipients feel about things.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	I feel I treat some recipients as if they were impersonal objects.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.	Working with people all day is really a strain for me.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.	I deal very effectively with the problems of my recipients.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8.	I feel burned out from my work.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.	I feel I'm positively influencing other people's lives through my work.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10.	I've become more callous toward people since I took this job.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11.	I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12.	I feel very energetic.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Never	A few times a year or less	Once a month or less	A few times a month	Once a week	A few times a week	Everyday	Never	Very mild, barely noticeable	Moderate	Major, very strong				
13. I feel frustrated by my job.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. I feel I'm working too hard on my job.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. I don't really care what happens to some recipients.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Working with people directly puts too much stress on me.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with my recipients.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. I feel exhilarated after working closely with my recipients.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. I feel like I'm at the end of my rope.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. In my work, I deal with emotional problems very calmly.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. I feel recipients blame me for some of their problems.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

This section asks you about stress in your current work position. Some of these statements you may agree with, some you may disagree with. Please indicate by circling the appropriate response.

Please complete this section by circling the appropriate answer.

HAVE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING THINGS BEEN HAPPENING TO YOU OVER THE PAST 3 MONTHS OR SO		HOW OFTEN HAS THIS HAPPENED TO YOU				HOW MUCH HAS THIS BOTHERED YOU			
		0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
		Never or rarely				Never or rarely			
		Sometimes or a little				Sometimes or a little			
		A fair bit				A fair bit			
		A Lot				A Lot			
1.	Headaches	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
2.	Nausea or vomiting	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
3.	Indigestion	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
4.	Diarrhoea	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
5.	Constipation	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
6.	Stomach aches	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
7.	Trouble breathing e.g. short of breath	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
8.	Easily annoyed/irritable	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
9.	Perspiring a lot e.g. short of breath	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
10.	Trouble remembering things	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
11.	Doing things wouldn't normally do	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
12.	Feeling strange - not quite yourself	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
13.	Pass urine frequently	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3

HAVE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING THINGS BEEN HAPPENING TO YOU OVER THE PAST 3 MONTHS OR SO	HOW OFTEN HAS THIS HAPPENED TO YOU				HOW MUCH HAS THIS BOTHERED YOU			
	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
	Never or rarely				Never or rarely			
	Sometimes or a little				Sometimes or a little			
	A fair bit				A fair bit			
	A Lot				A Lot			
14. Numbness or tingling in certain parts of the body	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
15. Visual difficulties	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
16. General aches and pains	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
17. Restless/unable to settle	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
18. Dizzy spells	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
19. Feelings of boredom	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
20. Mood swings for no apparent reason	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
21. Tires easily or feeling rundown	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
22. Sexual problems, reduced interest	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
23. Unusual heartbeats e.g. palpitations	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
24. Sore throats, colds; sinus problems	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
25. Migraines	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
26. Become tearful easily	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
27. Need more than the usual amount of sleep	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3

HAVE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING THINGS BEEN HAPPENING TO YOU OVER THE PAST 3 MONTHS OR SO

HOW OFTEN HAS THIS HAPPENED TO YOU

0 Never or rarely
1 Sometimes or a little
2 A fair bit
3 A Lot

HOW MUCH HAS THIS BOTHERED YOU

0 Never or rarely
1 Sometimes or a little
2 A fair bit
3 A Lot

28. Unable to get to sleep

0123

0123
29. Restless sleep or keep waking up

0123

0123
30. Skin troubles

0123

0123
31. Loss of appetite

0123

0123
32. Pains in heart or tightening or heaviness of chest

0123

0123
33. Feeling nervous or tense or anxious

0123

0123
34. Pains in back or spine

0123

0123

For Women:

35. Trouble with periods

0123

0123

PLEASE CONTINUE

Please complete this section by circling the appropriate answer.

Have you recently : (Within the last 3 Months.)	Please circle how commonly this has occurred.				How much has this Bothered You			
	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
1. Been able to concentrate on whatever you are doing?	Better than usual	Same as usual	Less than usual	Much less than usual	Not at all bit	A little bit	A fair bit	A lot
2. Lost much sleep over worry?	Not at all	No more than usual	Rather more than usual	Much more than usual	Not at all	A little bit	A fair bit	A lot
3. Felt that you were playing a useful part in things?	Much more than usual	Same as usual	Less useful than usual	Much less than usual	Not at all	A little bit	A fair bit	A lot
4. Felt capable of making decisions about things?	Much more than usual	Same as usual	Less capable than usual	Much less capable	Not at all	A little bit	A fair bit	A lot
5. Felt constantly under strain?	Not at all	No more than usual	Rather more than usual	Much more than usual	Not at all	A little bit	A fair bit	A lot
6. Felt you couldn't overcome your difficulties?	Not at all	No more than usual	Rather more than usual	Much more than usual	Not at all	A little bit	A fair bit	A lot
7. Been able to enjoy your normal day to day activities?	More so than usual	Same as usual	Less so than usual	Much less than usual	Not at all bit	A little bit	A fair bit	A lot
8. Been able to face up to your problems?	More so than usual	Same as usual	Less able than usual	Much less able than usual	Not at all	A little bit	A fair bit	A lot
9. Been feeling unhappy and depressed?	Not at all	No more than usual	Rather more than usual	Much more than usual	Not at all	A little bit	A fair bit	A lot
10. Been losing confidence in yourself?	Not at all	No more than usual	Rather more than usual	Much more than usual	Not at all	A little bit	A fair bit	A lot
11. Been thinking of yourself as a worthless person?	Not at all	No more than usual	Rather more than usual	Much more than usual	Not at all	A little bit	A fair bit	A lot
12. Been feeling reasonably happy all things considered?	More so than usual	About the same	Less so than usual	Much less happy	Not at all bit	A little bit	A fair bit	A lot

PLEASE CONTINUE

Thank you for completing

Could you please write down the date you finished this questionnaire.....

We were hoping to gain some qualitative material to enhance this study, if you are willing to be contacted for a follow-up interview could you please leave your name, address and telephone number in the space below. This information will be treated with the highest confidentiality.

Name.....
Address.....
Telephone No.

Please return this questionnaire to Pat Foley at the address listed below.

**Thank you once again for your participation
it is greatly appreciated.**

Return Address:

**Pat Foley
School of Social Work
Tasmanian State Institute of Technology
P.O. Box 1214
Launceston, Tas.
7250**