



*A Robust Collective Professional Identity:
The Role of Social Work Practice
Frameworks*

by

Sue Wilkins

BSW (Hons), MAASW

School of Social Sciences

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the

Master of Social Work (Research)

University of Tasmania

May 2022

Declaration of Originality

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

This thesis may be made available for loan and limited copying and communication in accordance with the Copyright Act 1968.

The research associated with this thesis abides by the international and Australian codes on human and animal experimentation, the guidelines by the Australian Government's Office of the Gene Technology Regulator and the rulings of the Safety, Ethics and Institutional Biosafety Committees of the University. Ethics Approval No: H0012105

Signature:

Date: 3rd October 2021

Acknowledgments

I have run a marathon without putting on a pair of Nikes; instead, I ran this marathon with my head, heart and hands. My mind has worked persistently to conceptualise and develop my thoughts, while my hands have typed constantly to translate these into words, and throughout this process, my heart has maintained its passion for the profession I belong to. It was this passion that drove this research to better understand what can support social workers to communicate who they are collectively, so the profession they represent and what it stands for is easily recognised and valued.

My marathon was not a solo event. To reach the end required the support and wisdom of so many people. This is my chance to acknowledge and thank those who have looked on, encouraging or mentoring me, as I ran the course of my candidature. At the starting line was Professor Sandy Taylor and Dr Sonya Stanford. Dr Margaret Hughes then joined Sonya when Sandy retired, followed by Dr Justin Canty, who took the baton from Marg when her career took a new direction. Sonya, however, has been there from the beginning to the end. Without question, my academic and research skills have become stronger, which I attribute to the depth of academic and research rigour I learned from each of you during the various stages of my candidature. Sonya, thank you for recognising how I needed to undertake my candidature, when I needed to pause then pick the work up again. I appreciate your personal support when the terrain was tough and how you provided options for ‘getting through’ with care and consideration.

Thank you to Simone, my external social work supervisor, whose professional and personal acumen kept me steady when the complexity of my job presented numerous challenges. The skill with which you approached my professional supervision ensured I was able to maintain my personal and professional wellbeing so I could attend to the demands of my candidature.

To Stephen, Carl, Dominic and Snowflake (our pet ragdoll cat), thank you. The little things are what I appreciate most: planning and cooking meals, dropping into my study for a chat about anything and everything, hot chocolates, açai bowls, your humour and thoughtful words of support. Your patience and unrelenting support of my

post-graduate studies made all this possible. To Snowflake, thank you for knowing when to be near and when to be aloof.

My parents, John and Marnie, deserve special mention. Thank you for never ‘boxing me in’; I always felt the freedom to pursue my diverse interests. To my social work and professional colleagues, friends and extended family: I would have preferred to name each and every one of you, giving tailored thanks for the unique ways in which you have supported me. Instead, I will do this in person when we next have dinners, catch-ups or conversations. Just know that I have felt you on the sidelines cheering me on and I have appreciated your continued interest and support throughout my candidature. I have a strong spiritual connection with nature, so I would also like to bow my head in thanks to nature for the strength and calm I found when I spent time in her presence.

Lastly, thank you to Chloe, Chrissy, Jan, Karen, Mia, Molly, Toni and Wendy for taking the time to participate in this research. I valued the way in which you spoke about your social work practice frameworks with such honesty, offering me rich insights into your experiences. This project would not have been possible without your willingness to participate and share as you did. I remain sincerely grateful for the decision you took to become involved in this research undertaking.

This research was supported by an Australian Government Research Training Program (RTP) Scholarship.

Table of Contents

Declaration of Originality	i
Acknowledgments	ii
List of Figures	vi
List of Tables.....	vi
Abstract	vii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1 Key Terms.....	3
1.2 Background.....	6
1.3 Research Question, Aims and Scope	7
1.4 Thesis Structure and Content	8
Chapter 2: Literature Review	10
2.1 Neoliberalism and Social Work	11
2.2 Robust Professional Identities.....	13
2.3 Examining Professional Robustness	14
2.4 Distinguishing Social Work Practice Frameworks	18
2.5 Conclusion	20
Chapter 3: Assemblage Theory.....	21
3.1 Assemblage Theory.....	21
3.2 Assemblage Theory and Social Work Practice Frameworks.....	26
3.3 Territorialising and De-territorialising Social Work Practice Frameworks	29
3.4 Conclusion	32
Chapter 4: Researching Social Work Practice Frameworks	33
4.1 Theoretical Framework	33
4.2 Qualitative Research Design	34
4.3 Trustworthiness and Authenticity	35
4.4 Research Method.....	36
4.5 Qualitative Method: In-depth Interviews and Focus Group Discussion	39
4.6 Thematic Analysis.....	42
4.7 Ethical Considerations	47
4.8 Conclusion	49
Chapter 5: Research Findings.....	50
5.1 Beginnings, Commitment and Purpose.....	50
5.2 Components and Assemblage	55
5.3 Confidence, Articulation and Attitude	60
5.4 Conclusion	65

Chapter 6: Discussion	66
6.1 Professional Implications of ‘Dialling Up’ Social Work Practice Frameworks	66
6.2 Professional Implications of ‘Dialling Down’ Social Work Practice Frameworks	70
6.3 Communicating a Robust Collective Professional Identity	74
6.4 ‘Dialling In’ Social Work Practice Frameworks	75
6.5 Conclusion	76
Chapter 7: Conclusion	77
7.1 Implications for Practice, Policy and Research	77
7.2 Research Limitations	82
7.3 Concluding Statement	83
References	85
Appendices	95
Appendix A ‘Framework’ Terminology Search	95
Appendix B Social Work Practice Framework Examples	96
Appendix C Participant Information Sheet	98
Appendix D Consent Form	104
Appendix E Email to President, AASW (Queensland)	106
Appendix F Email to Social Work Colleagues	108
Appendix G Email to Social Work Practitioners	110
Appendix H Interview Schedule – Individual Interviews	112
Appendix I Interview Schedule – Focus Group Discussion	114

List of Figures

Figure 7.1 An Emerging Social Work Practice Framework Model	78
---	----

List of Tables

Table 4.1 Participant Profiles	38
Table 4.2 Coding (Phase 1)	43
Table 4.3 Codes (Phase 2)	43
Table 4.4 Coding (Phase 2)	44
Table 4.5 Coding Template (Phase 2)	44
Table 4.6 Themes (Phase 3)	45
Table 4.7 Themes (Phase 4)	46
Table 4.8 Themes and Subthemes (Phase 5)	47

Abstract

A collective and robust professional identity helps distinguish social work from other helping professions. It also promotes a sense of belonging and professional purpose for practitioners. A collective sense of professional identity strengthens the influence of social work to achieve its aims; however, social workers practise in a neoliberal milieu. In this political climate, social work's influence and professional standing is being eroded and neoliberal processes, such as de-professionalisation and declassification, have increasingly obscured social work identities. In this thesis, I argue that a clearly identifiable, robust collective identity is essential if social work is to achieve a professional sense of purpose in the current political climate.

In this qualitative study, I examined social work practice frameworks through an Assemblage Theory lens to understand their capacity to communicate social work's collective identity. Existing research has primarily examined practice frameworks relating to social work methods, skills and fields of practice, as well as textbooks and grey literature review frameworks for specific practice settings. However, there remains a need to scrutinise how social work practice frameworks can be used to represent the profession and strengthen recognition of the nature of social work.

The background to the research examined codifying processes in the policies of the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW), the journal *Australian Social Work*, and Australian social work academic texts focusing specifically on social work practice terminology and descriptors. A review of this body of literature found vague terminology and inconsistent descriptors in the AASW policies, as well as a complete absence of journal articles discussing social work practice frameworks. In contrast, academic texts yielded more detailed information concerning social work practice frameworks, though information was also inconsistent when these texts addressed practice components and their assemblage.

For this study, I interviewed eight social workers about their knowledge of and commitment to developing their social work practice frameworks, as well as their choice and assemblage of the components of those frameworks. Interview analysis indicated that codifying processes promoted an idiosyncratic approach to social work practice framework development. However, viewed through the lens of Assemblage

Theory, an idiosyncratic approach weakens the capacity social work practice frameworks have for communicating social work's collective identity. Further, a vague approach seemed to reduce participants' confidence in their social work practice framework and its subsequent articulation to others, further weakening the framework's capacity for communicating participants' collective social work identity.

My findings have informed the development of a social work practice framework model that has the potential to communicate a more robust collective identity while retaining the capacity to communicate practitioners' individual professional identities and their idiosyncratic practices. If social work is to increase its professional robustness in a neoliberal political climate, then a social work practice framework that facilitates the effective communication of social workers' individual identities, as well as the collective identity of the profession, is essential.

Chapter 1: Introduction

From its inception, social work has struggled with professional identity. Its development has been marked with sharp divisions and polarisations among different schools of thought regarding its core mission and professional identity (Moon 2017, p. 1327). The breadth and diversity of professional focus along with internal tensions over professionalisation have challenged social work's pursuit of a unifying professional identity (Moon 2017). Contextual influences have further compounded this challenge, with surrounding political and philosophical milieus influencing social work's development and standing in Australia from its beginning (Wallace & Pease 2011). Although social work gained greater professional recognition during the growth of the welfare state in the 1940's (Swain 2017), the emergence of neoliberalist thought, and policy have gradually diminished this standing (Harrison & Healy 2016).

Neoliberalist tenets have influenced economic and academic thought, then government policy, to achieve greater prominence following the global financial collapse in 2008 (Donavan, Rose & Connolly 2017). The impact of Neoliberalist policies on social work's professional identity has been pervasive (Harrison & Healy 2016) with social work's claim to specific skills and knowledge actively dismantled (Wallace & Pease 2011) and its professional distinctiveness eroded (Moorhead 2017). For social work to achieve its aims, social workers need robust individual and collective professional identities (Clare 2006; Kole & de Ruyter 2009; Moorhead 2019). However, the political climate and economic practices of neoliberalism have increasingly eroded social work's professional identity and the profession's capacity towards achieving its aims (Harrison & Healy 2016; Wallace & Pease 2011).

Research has extensively examined the erosion of social work's professional identity (Harrison & Healy 2016; Healy 2004; Moorhead, Bell & Bowles 2016; Moorhead 2017; 2019; Noble & Sullivan 2009; Randall & Kindiak 2008; Wallace & Pease 2011), and many strategies have been advocated to address concerns about this identity. Predominantly, these have targeted the profession, such as through registration (AASW 2018b; Duke & Lonne 2009; Hallahan & Wendt 2020),

unionisation (Healy & Meagher 2004), re-stratification (Randall & Kindiak 2008), clearer articulation of mission (O'Connor 2000), and decolonisation (Green & Bennett 2018). Less often, researchers have identified social workers as strategists for achieving professional robustness (Clare 2006; Moorhead et al. 2019).

Clare (2006) argues that to achieve professional robustness, strategies must target social workers. In agreement with Clare, Moorhead et al. (2019) advocate a stronger focus on students' development and expression of professional identity in social work education. Similarly, Harrison and Healy (2016) refer to the agency of new graduates strengthening their capacity to negotiate their professional identities in the varying contexts in which they work. In concert with these assertions, my study focuses on social workers themselves, rather than on the profession more broadly, when approaching the problem of collective professional robustness. My research examined social work practice frameworks (SWPF) to better understand what affects their capacity to communicate social work's collective professional identity. Social work practice frameworks are integral to social work practice (Chenoweth & McAuliffe 2020). They assemble social work knowledge, skills and values, guiding social work actions and articulating professional social work identities (Chenoweth & McAuliffe 2020; Connolly 2007; Connolly, Harms & Maidment 2018; Healy 2014). To date, no research has examined SWPFs' capacity to communicate social work's collective professional identity, nor has this capacity been examined through the lens of Assemblage Theory. In undertaking this research, I aimed to achieve rich insight into the forces that strengthen and weaken SWPFs' capacity to communicate social work's collective identity.

In this chapter, I begin with a presentation of key terms, so their application in the context of this research is understood. I then overview my personal social work practice framework experiences that led to this research before introducing the research question, along with the aims and the scope of the study. A summary of the structure of the thesis concludes this introductory chapter.

1.1 KEY TERMS

1.1.1 Social Worker

Throughout this thesis, I have used the terms ‘social worker’, ‘social work practitioner’ and ‘practitioner’ interchangeably. All three terms denote the following definition: a ‘social worker’ is someone who has completed a university course accredited by the Australian Association of Social Workers and a tertiary qualification which equip them to work with individuals, families, groups and communities (AASW 2020c). Social workers are employed to work with individuals, families, partnerships, communities and groups, as well as in a variety of contexts, such as in government and non-government organisations, and in the private sector (AASW 2020a). Social workers are also employed as researchers, and in social policy development, administration, management, consultancy, education, training, supervision and evaluation roles (AASW 2020a).

1.1.2 Social Work

The following definition of social work is endorsed by the International Federation of Social Work, the International Association of Schools of Social Work, and the AASW (2020a, p. 5):

Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing.

Adhering to this internationally accepted definition of social work, my thesis discusses social work as practised and governed in Australia; as a profession that is currently self-regulating (AASW 2020c).

1.1.3 The Australian Association of Social Workers

The AASW is a professional body representing social workers in Australia. It is important to note that membership in the AASW is not required for a practitioner to call themselves a social worker. The purposes of the AASW are to promote the profession of social work, advance social justice, uphold standards, and to build the capacity of its members (AASW 2021).

1.1.4 Professional Identity

From a social identity theory perspective, identity is viewed as both relational and contextual (Webb 2017) and is constructed through our interactions with others (Lee 2012). Social identity theory posits that:

individuals categorise themselves as belonging to relevant in-groups, which bring together individuals with common characteristics, and distinguish themselves from other individuals who belong in out-groups; in addition, individuals tend to view their in-groups more favourably than their out-groups. (Bochatay et al. 2019)

Under this theoretical umbrella, sits the concept of professional identity (Dent 2017); a social construct that develops in a cultural and historical context (Murray 2013). Professional identity is a difficult concept to pin down (Murray 2013; Webb 2017; Wiles 2013). Contributing to this difficulty are competing theoretical perspectives (Murray 2013; Webb 2017), as well as the dynamic nature of professional identity formation (Murray 2013; Wiles 2013). For the purposes of this investigation, I synthesise three common definitions of the concept:

- Having the desired traits of a profession (Costello 2004; Moorhead 2019; Murray 2013; Webb 2017; Wenger 1997; Wiles 2013);
- A collective sense that conveys the identity of a profession (Levy, Schlomo & Itzhaky 2014; Murray 2013; Wiles 2013); and
- A process in which an individual comes to have a sense of themselves as a member of a profession (Costello 2004; Levy, Schlomo & Itzhaky 2014; Murray 2013; Webb 2017; Wenger 1997; Wiles 2013).

In alignment with these definitions, I recognise that ‘professional identity’ can refer to both an individual’s professional identity as well as to a *profession*’s collective identity. Therefore, it was necessary to distinguish which aspect of professional identity I was discussing throughout this thesis by referring to social work’s collective professional identity or social workers’ individual professional identities, as appropriate. When I use the term ‘social work professional identities’, I am referring to both social workers’ individual professional identities and to the collective identity of the profession of social work.

1.1.5 Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is a theory of political and economic practices (Spolander et al. 2014). Neoliberal practices are characterised by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade (Harvey, cited in Spolander et al. 2014). Neoliberal policies focus on the role of the state by reducing state influence and responsibilities and promoting greater privatisation and contracting out of social welfare services (Spolander et al. 2014). In Australia, neoliberal policies have led to the proliferation of not-for-profit social welfare agencies funded by and dependent on the state (Strier & Feldman 2018). Evidence suggests that neoliberal policies have eroded social work's professional distinctiveness through declassification and de-professionalisation (Healy & Meagher 2004; Swain 2017).

1.1.6 Practice Frameworks

Practice frameworks are a generic concept that integrate 'empirical research, practice theories, ethical principles and experiential knowledge in a compact and convenient format that helps practitioners to use the knowledge and principles to inform their everyday practice' (Connolly & Healy 2009, p. 32). In the human services, practice frameworks have been developed for particular sectors, agencies or functional groups (Connolly & Healy 2009). Practice frameworks can also relate to skills (Furman 2001; Scott 2005) and methods (Frederico & Whiteside 2016; Whiteside et al. 2016). Examples of the different areas practice frameworks guide include child protection, homelessness, domestic violence, conflict analysis and resolution, mediation, group work, community development, and case management. Therefore, in the context of this study, I consider practice frameworks to be assemblages that guide specific areas of practice, but which do not communicate social work's professional identity.

1.1.7 Social Work Practice Frameworks

In contrast to practice frameworks, social work practice frameworks are made up of heterogeneous components, as well as particular social work components whose purposes are to convey a collective identity. Australian social work academic texts (Chenoweth & McAuliffe 2020; Connolly & Harms 2019; Connolly, Harms & Maidment 2018; Healy 2014; O'Connor et al. 2008), as well as AASW policy (AASW 2013), identify these components variously. A SWPF's components can include

knowledge, skills, context, professional values, ethics, and self. As an assemblage, from the interrelationship of these practice components, capacity emerges that guides social work practice and communicates social workers' individual professional identities, as well as the collective identity of social work (Chenoweth & McAuliffe 2020; Healy 2014). In the literature, frameworks representing the profession of social work are commonly referred to as 'practice frameworks', as are frameworks that guide social work practice in general, but which do not represent the profession (see Section 1.3.7). In this thesis, where the literature refers to 'practice frameworks' representing the social work profession, I have substituted the term 'social work practice frameworks' to distinguish the former kind of assemblage from the latter. In Section 2.4, I give further attention to distinguishing social work practice frameworks from practice frameworks more broadly.

1.2 BACKGROUND

Throughout my career, a social work practice framework has been integral to my professional practice. The components of my framework, along with their interrelationships, have informed complex decisions to ensure my adherence to the standards of my profession. Nonetheless, although integral to my practice, I have struggled to develop a framework that clearly and coherently sets out my individual and collective professional identity. In addition, I have also encountered many colleagues facing their own difficulties developing a SWPF that describes who they are professionally. Understanding the concept of a 'social work practice framework', what it comprises and how to construct one that describes their social work identity were some of the difficulties colleagues discussed.

My own struggles constructing and articulating a coherent framework, along with the struggles others faced, led me to investigate the problem further. I examined the construction and articulation of social work practice frameworks, first through reading, then through conversations with my colleagues. Unfortunately, the guidance on framework development, assembly and articulation in the literature and from colleagues was mixed. The extent to which other practitioners encountered problems constructing and articulating a framework for practice became increasingly evident when I was employed as an Associate Lecturer in Social Work at Central Queensland University. There, the development of a SWPF was pivotal to a student's learning and

ultimate graduation. Students on placement who sought guidance from experienced practitioners found either an absence of discussion, a disregard for SWPFs, or so much variation that their understanding of SWPFs was only further confused.

These encounters further heightened my awareness of the difficulties fellow social workers experienced constructing and articulating their own frameworks for practice. In addition, I became increasingly concerned about the implications these difficulties might have for social work's collective professional identity. I wondered, if practitioners are experiencing trouble assembling and articulating their social work practice frameworks, then how can they represent who they are professionally? I then wondered what implications this would have for social work achieving its professional aims in a neoliberal climate if our social work identities are not visible and distinct, and therefore influential. These concerns led me to this research. I hoped my investigations would illuminate the capacity SWPFs have for communicating a robust collective professional identity coherent with social work's purpose.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION, AIMS AND SCOPE

1.3.1 Research Question

How can Assemblage Theory provide insights into what strengthens and weakens the capacity emerging from social work practice frameworks?

Through this question, I will consider the capacity social work practice frameworks have for communicating social work's collective professional identity.

1.3.2 Research Aims

My research aims to:

1. Gain insight into the components social workers use to assemble social work practice frameworks and how these contribute to a sense of professional identity.
2. Critically analyse codifying processes in AASW policy and social work literature.
3. Utilise Assemblage Theory to critically analyse how participants choose and assemble practice components into a social work practice framework and how these link to individual and collective social work identities.

1.3.3 Research Scope

I limited the scope of my research to Australian social work and to social work practitioners in the north-eastern state of Queensland. While a broader scope including international research and participants from other Australian states would have been beneficial, the time and resources required to achieve this were not available.

1.4 THESIS STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

The thesis begins with a review of the literature. First, I demonstrate how neoliberal policies have eroded social work's professional identity. I discuss research on social workers' experiences of professional identity, which has raised concerns about social work's capacity to achieve its professional aims in a neoliberal milieu. The literature review establishes a need for a clearer articulation of social work's collective identity to counter neoliberal approaches perpetuating social and economic disadvantage (Clare 2006; Moorhead 2019) and shows that social work practice frameworks are recognised as an assemblage for communicating such identities (Healy 2014).

In Chapter 3, I provide an in-depth examination of social work practice frameworks. In so doing, I demonstrate their significance to the profession, particularly for guiding social work practice and communicating social work professional identities. I then examine SWPFs through an Assemblage Theory lens. The chapter presents the tenets of Assemblage Theory before applying these to SWPFs. Here, I demonstrate that SWPFs are an assemblage from which social work professional identities emerge. I then examine codifying processes, as found in AASW policy and the social work literature through an Assemblage Theory lens, illuminating how these processes can strengthen and weaken the capacity SWPFs have for communicating a collective professional identity.

Chapter 4 introduces my research methodology. I discuss the qualitative approach I used to investigate social work practice frameworks and explain the epistemological stance underpinning a qualitative approach before describing my research design. A discussion of ethical considerations follows a detailed presentation of my research method. I then set out the process I undertook to analyse my data,

demonstrating how a thematic analysis facilitated my identification of key themes and subthemes.

I present these themes in Chapter 5, giving insights into participants' social work practice framework experiences. As a prelude to the subsequent discussion chapter, I begin to integrate Assemblage Theory with my results, drawing attention to the new insights gained through this theoretical lens.

In Chapter 6, I discuss my findings. Informed by Assemblage Theory, I examine the link between codifying processes (as found in AASW policy and the social work literature) and participants' social work practice framework experiences. My discussion expands on the professional implications participants described when discussing their SWPF experiences. I draw connections between codifying processes and these professional implications, focusing on how they strengthened and weakened the capacity that emerged from participants' frameworks for practice. I compare my findings to those of previous research and advance new knowledge that focuses on the role codifying processes can have in distinguishing SWPFs and strengthening their capacity to communicate a robust collective social work identity.

Chapter 7 concludes the thesis. I discuss the implications my research has for social work education, supervision and future research. Informed by my findings, I introduce a model that demonstrates how the capacity social work practice frameworks have for communicating social work's collective identity can be strengthened through codifying processes. I then acknowledge the limitations of the research before closing with a summary.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter examines the complex nature of social work through reviewing literature on neoliberalism and the impact policies, indicative of this thought, have had on social work practices and social work's professional identity. To do this, an integrative literature review was undertaken. This approach reviews, critiques, and synthesizes representative literature on a topic in an integrated way such that new frameworks and perspectives on the topic are generated (Torraco 2005, p. 356). I conducted searches on the impact of neoliberalism on social work's professional identity in Australia using the terms 'neoliberalism', 'social work', 'professional identity' in varying combinations. My searches elicited results pertaining to countries other than Australia, which I reviewed to gain a broad understanding of the impact of neoliberalism more globally but did not include in my literature review specifically.

Previous research investigating social work's professional identity and the impact of neoliberalism was located, identifying a gap regarding social work practice frameworks and their role communicating clear professional identities representative of social work. To identify this gap, searches were undertaken using the terms 'practice framework', 'social work practice framework' and 'framework'. These searches located literature and AASW policies pertaining to social work practice frameworks; however, research investigating SWPF was clearly absent. This chapter makes use of this review by focusing on the impact of neoliberalism on social work's professional identity and research investigating this, while the following chapter focusses on the literature and research pertaining to SWPF, examining them through an Assemblage Theory lens.

Social work is a complex profession (AASW 2020c; Adams et al. 2005; Fargion 2008). Systemic Theory and a Critical Theory lens facilitate social workers' analysis of the dominant neoliberal discourses in which they practise (Healy 2014). Informed by their analysis, social workers work with and on behalf of individuals, families, groups and communities to advance the following professional aims:

- To enhance individual and collective wellbeing and social development,
- To resolve personal and interpersonal problems,

- To improve and facilitate engagement with the broader society,
- To address systemic barriers to full recognition and participation, and
- To protect the vulnerable from oppression and abuse (AASW 2020c).

However, the political and economic climate social work currently operates in has affected the profession's capacity to advance these aims. Employed in diverse contexts with diverse roles and clients, social workers persistently navigate neoliberal discourses that paradoxically contribute and respond to social and economic disadvantage (Healy 2014). In this environment, neoliberal practices, such as de-professionalisation and declassification, have increasingly eroded social work's sense of identity (Healy & Meagher 2004; Swain 2017). These practices have reduced social work's distinctiveness, visibility and contextual influence (Moorhead 2019). While a great deal has been written about the impact of neoliberal policies on social work's professional identity (Karger & Lonne 2009; Moorhead 2019; Swain 2017; Wallace & Pease 2011), less has been written about social work practitioners as strategists for change in addressing matters to do with social work's professional identity (Clare 2006). In the past, strategies targeting the impact of neoliberal policies have focussed mostly on what the profession more broadly can do, rather than on what social work practitioners can do themselves (Clare 2006). My research responds to this gap by examining practitioners' social work practice frameworks to understand what affects the capacity those frameworks produce.

2.1 NEOLIBERALISM AND SOCIAL WORK

Neoliberalism proposes that human well-being is advanced by "liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills, within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade" (Harvey 2010, p. 2). Neoliberal policies seek to reduce the influences and responsibilities of the state via a free-market economy that lowers taxes and increases privatisation (Spolander et al. 2014). Neoliberal principles criticise the welfare state, viewing it as "inefficient, overly bureaucratized, wasteful, costly, and undermining the competitiveness and enterprise necessary to advanced economies" (Gray et al. 2015, p. 378). Adoption of neoliberal ideology by governments in Australia and internationally has led to the privatisation and contracting out of social welfare

services, as well as to the proliferation of not-for-profit agencies funded by and dependent on the state (Strier & Feldman 2018).

Neoliberal principles rely on the assumption that social services become more accessible, efficient and cost-effective and less bureaucratised when they are subject to market forces (Gray et al. 2015). This premise has been widely questioned. Scrutiny of government spending under neoliberalism has shown that costs are actually comparable to earlier eras (Fenna & Tapper 2012). In addition, the operationalisation of spending, characterised by corporate management and privatisation of social services, has led to stronger state intervention and control, rather than to a more ‘hands off’ approach (Garrett 2009). Instead of dismantling the welfare state, neoliberal policies have reconceptualised and privatised it, allowing government to exercise greater control over welfare and delivery of its services (Strier & Feldman 2018). This has been achieved through the application of New Public Management principles which commodify and quantify professional practices (Spolander et al. 2014). New Public Management practices, as a manifestation of neoliberal ideology, increase both direct and indirect control in order to enhance productivity, increase profit and/or reduce costs (Spolander et al. 2014). These practices emphasise efficiency and accountability while at the same time de-emphasising values such as equality, equity and participation (Spolander et al. 2014).

In a neoliberal political environment, social work as a profession has become less visible, and its distinctiveness increasingly obscured, affecting how practitioners perceive, develop and realise their professional identity (Swain 2017). Instead of enabling and supporting systemic approaches confronting social barriers, New Public Management practices have routinised and proceduralised social work tasks, shifting attention away from issues of need and onto other agendas, such as risk management (Clare 2006; Harrison & Healy 2016). Further, these processes have actively dismantled social work's claim to specialist skills and knowledge (Wallace & Pease 2011), smoothing over the complexities of social problems and the professional capacities required to respond to them.

2.2 ROBUST PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES

To achieve their profession's aims, social workers must take an empowered stance that influences context and challenges discourses, both at individual and systemic levels (Clare 2006; Healy 2014). Integral to such a stance are robust professional identities that position social work as a profession to be listened to, respected and called upon for what it brings to problem situations (Clare 2006; Moorhead 2019). Such identities reduce ambiguity and promote a sense of stability, belonging and value, while also communicating a collective identity of social work (Levy, Schlomo & Itzhaky 2014; Murray 2013; Ranz, Grodofsky & Abu 2017; Wiles 2013). A strong sense of professional identity is important as it "affects not only how practitioners identify themselves, it also affects how other professions, service users and the public recognise and work with social work practitioners" (Soon-Chean Park 2018, p. 71).

Nevertheless, efforts to strategise for collective robustness have been challenged by discordant views on professional identity (Flexner 2001; Fotheringham 2018; Furlong 2000). Some practitioners argue that social work should adopt a more marginal status, rather than aspiring to the power and prestige of other established professions (Healy & Meagher 2004; Swain 2017). Although discord exists, the need for clearly recognisable social work identities to counter dominant organisational trends towards managerialism, proceduralism and routinised practice remains consistent (Healy 2014; Ife 2000). The importance of establishing clearly recognisable social work identities is evidenced by the AASW's (2020b, p. 9) continuing

professional development requirements, which state: “maintaining and developing the professional identity of social work, be it one’s own or a colleague’s, is an important part of a social worker’s professional development”.

2.3 EXAMINING PROFESSIONAL ROBUSTNESS

Research examining the pursuit of professional robustness has identified the difficulties practitioners and social work students have experienced attaining a clear professional identity. For example, Clare (2006) investigated social work students’ (N=17) and qualified practitioners’ (N=20) articulation of their professional identities and developed a model presenting four conceptually interdependent dimensions of professional robustness. This qualitative research, conducted in Western Australia, employed dialogical engagement within a constructionist framework (Clare 2006). She found that, in the first dimension, participants’ ‘place’ within a wider professional community was less evident, and that it was rare for them to have a hopeful vision of the broader purpose and place of social work. In addition, she found that some participants rejected the term ‘professional’, instead characterising their practice in terms of personal, political or spiritual beliefs. Other participants had assumed an organisational or occupational persona rather than a professional one.

These allegiances were similar to those expressed by newly qualified practitioners in later research by Harrison and Healy (2016). This research employed six focus group discussions across three sites in Queensland (Brisbane, Townsville and Cairns). Their participants (N=32) had a diverse range of qualifications, but about a third (11) were social workers. In this research, some participants professed an allegiance to a particular value set, role, or sector rather than an occupation, while others rejected their professional identity completely. Harrison and Healy’s (2016, p. 89) findings suggested that the professional identity development of newly qualified practitioners was: “value driven, shaped by perceptions of client groups, and contextualised by organisational agendas and personal interests”. Their key recommendations focussed on the agency of new graduates in negotiating their professional identities in varying contexts, and on the need for educators to keep professional values centre-stage in their endeavours to assist new graduates to forge a professional identity. Lastly, their findings attested to the enduring importance of

client-centredness in social work practice and its centrality to professional identity development.

The second dimension of Clare's model is the ability to maintain an empowered stance when it comes to practice—a capacity which is reliant on a thorough understanding of professional power and its limitations, and a willingness to own one's professional authority. Clare found that participants made minimal reference to the collective potency they felt as members of a profession. Concomitant with Clare's findings, Harrison and Healy's (2016) study found that, of the 32 participants interviewed, only one (a psychologist) responded in a way that suggested they identified with a professional group. In addition, Harrison and Healy found that identifying with a particular profession was not a primary concern for most participants, with many indicating they had no direct investment in a professional title or in being part of a professional group.

The achievement of marginality, Clare's third dimension, requires a clear personal practice philosophy and a sense of place within a larger, robust professional collective that has capacity to counter dominant organisational trends. Rather than experiencing empowered marginality as enabling assertive and potent practice within their organisational environments, several participants spoke of professional disjunction and disaffected marginalisation (Clare 2006). Participants also described a lack of clear and positive external reference points to achieve or sustain a position of empowered marginality. In addition:

many participants were unable to articulate a sense of any meaningful professional collectively and reported a lack of clarity about what it meant to them to be a social worker beyond their own practice setting. (Clare 2006, p. 41)

Although some practitioners were able to identify themselves as professionals, none was able to articulate a clear sense of membership within a robust profession.

Mirroring Clare's findings, Harrison and Healy (2016) stated that most of the participants in their study did not state or clearly imply a strong professional identity, and that instead this was evidenced in less direct ways through 'values talk'. Contrasting with Harrison and Healy's (2016) research, Moorhead (2019) found participants were more likely to embrace and wanted to express their professional identity. Moorhead's (2019) phenomenological research, where 17 newly qualified

practitioners were engaged in three in-depth semi structured interviews, suggested that participants' social work identity emerged as they transitioned into qualified practice, evolving and changing over time. This mirrored other research examining the professional identity of social workers. Healy, Harrison and Forster (2015) found strong and positive responses to the professional identity scale items in their study. Newly qualified workers (N=59), residing in Queensland, participated in a quantitative and qualitative pilot study, examining job satisfaction, retention and professional identity. Employed in the not-for-profit community services sector, these newly qualified workers had diverse qualifications, with 11 identifying as social workers. The findings suggested that the nature of professional identity reflected an alignment with a value set perceived to be held by social work and community services professionals (Healy, Harrison & Forster 2015) and this alignment strengthened their sense of professional identity.

As with Moorhead's research (2019), other research examining newly qualified social workers' experiences of professional identity formation participants described how jobs lacked opportunities to nurture such development (Moorhead, Bell & Bowles 2016). In this research, newly graduated social work students (N=17) from Charles Sturt University (NSW) participated in three in-depth semi-structured interviews which explored their lived experiences of social work identity during the first 12 months post qualification (Moorhead, Bell & Bowles 2016). In an earlier study by Noble and Sullivan (2009), participants described how their professional distinctiveness was becoming hard to articulate and to differentiate from other allied professionals. Participants (N=18) included students, supervisors and educators from universities in Western Australia (N=1) and NSW (N=3). Focus group discussions (three groups, two combining students and supervisors and one group for educators) explored social work's professional identity. There was unanimous agreement among Noble and Sullivan's (2009, p. 99) participants that "social workers in practice (as well as students on placement) needed to be able to define their role and at the same time defend and preserve social work practice as 'distinctive' and 'valuable' in the welfare sector".

More recent research (Levin, Roziner & Savaya 2022) examining the association between social workers' professional identity and the quality of their work,

found autonomous social workers who were committed to their profession, managed to generate stronger working alliances with their service-users, and were subsequently better at what they did. Their cross-sectional study gathered data from 570 social workers (from Israel) using an online questionnaire. Levin, Roziner & Savaya's research (2022) recognised the importance of professional identity for service-users and the quality of relationship and practice they experienced. While other research (Sansfacon & Crete 2016), the relationship participants had with colleagues, as well as a sense of coherence between personal, disciplinary and organisational identities was found to be essential to professional development. This longitudinal qualitative case study explored the experience of six social workers (from the University of Montreal, Canada), mapping the development of their professional identities through 3 semi-structured interviews over the course of nearly three years. These interviews commenced in the last year of their undergraduate training, with the final interview happening about 18 months into their employment. Sansfacon & Crete (2016) concluded that support and recognition from colleagues helped consolidate knowledge, skills and values in a new practice context, which in turn strengthened the participants professional identities. They found this support and recognition enabled participants to 'test' their evolving identity in new contexts, helping them to redefine themselves in a coherent manner using the expectations (norms and values) of those contexts.

Previous research has identified the challenges practitioners face in establishing a clear identity and feeling part of a meaningful professional collective. Recommendations addressing these challenges have included clear articulation of social work's professional identity (Clare 2006), integrating professional identity formation in curricula, policy and supervision (Moorhead, Bell & Bowles 2016; Moorhead 2019), becoming more proactive about what social work stands for (Moorhead 2019; Noble & Sullivan 2009), strengthening the coherency between personal, disciplinary and organisational identities as well as the importance of collegial mentoring relationships (Sansfacon & Crete 2016) and promoting social workers' professional autonomy (Levin, Roziner & Savaya 2022) However, an opportunity remains to examine the role social work practice frameworks have in nurturing and communicating professional identities that clearly represent social work.

2.4 DISTINGUISHING SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE FRAMEWORKS

In the context of this study, it was necessary to distinguish SWPFs to avoid any confusion arising from the interchangeability of terminology currently applied to generic practice frameworks and frameworks representing the profession of social work specifically.

A ‘practice framework’ is a framework that guides practitioners in a specific field of practice, or in their application of a practice skill or method (Connolly & Healy 2017). Numerous practice frameworks have been developed to guide specific areas of social work practice. Frameworks for understanding the liaison process in social work education (Slocombe 1991) and creating standardised practices for teaching and learning (Cleak et al. 2015) are two examples. Practice frameworks focussing on foster care (Lawrence 1993) and kinship care (Connolly et al. 2017) are others that guide practitioners in specific fields. Additional examples include practice frameworks for rural and remote social work (O’Sullivan et al. 1997), mental illness (Harvey, Ernest & Whiteside 2000; Wyder & Bland 2014), refugees (Nelson, Price & Zubrzycki 2014; Whelan et al. 2002), homelessness (Chamberlain & MacKenzie 2006), Indigenous Australians (Whiteside et al. 2006; Whiteside, Tsey & Cadet-James 2011), and for child protection (Connolly 2007; Healy, Connolly & Humphreys 2018). Practice frameworks can also focus on practice skills (Furman 2001; Scott 2005) and practice methods (Frederico & Whiteside 2016; Whiteside et al. 2016).

I will now give an overview of four practice frameworks (representing fields of practice, methods and skills) that are common to fields across social work. The overview will help to distinguish what characterises a practice framework. The Collaborative Practice Framework for Child Protection and Specialist Domestic and Family Violence Services (Healey, Connolly & Humphreys 2018) is an example of a practice framework that guides social workers in the field of child protection (in the context of domestic and family violence). Healey, Connolly and Humphreys’ (2018) framework identifies three knowledge domains as critical to the development of good collaborative practice: integrated service focus, democratising practices, and partnership supportive collaboration. It provides an evidence-informed foundation for facilitating stronger and more enduring partnerships to support the safety of women

and children and the accountability of perpetrators of violence and abuse (Healey, Connolly & Humphreys 2018).

The Recovery Framework (Wyder & Bland 2014) is another example, in this instance dealing with mental illness. In contrast with the Collaborative Practice Framework, the Recovery Framework addresses the five dimensions of recovery rather than practice knowledge per se. These dimensions are: the importance of maintaining hope; overcoming secondary trauma; the journey from carer to family; self-determination; and the relational basis for recovery (Wyder & Bland 2014). The framework offers an alternative way of understanding a family's response to mental illness and suggests new possibilities for social work practice with families (Wyder & Bland 2014).

Other practice frameworks guide the application of certain social work practice skills. For example, Furman (2001) developed a practice framework for analysing conflict by drawing on two theoretical frameworks: Levy's (1973) value classification system, and Linzer's (1992) ideology paradigm. The framework arms social workers with an analytical framework for clarifying conflicts by viewing them from the perspective of differing and competing values. Although based in theory, Furman's framework intends to strengthen practical skills in conflict resolution. Like Furman, Scott (2005) also advanced a skills-based practice framework for assessing the sources of conflict. Scott identified the inherent sources of conflict arising from inter-organisational collaboration in human services. Scott then developed a framework for analysis and action which assesses the sources of conflict from five levels of analysis: inter-organisational; intra-organisational; inter-professional; inter-personal; and intra-personal. These examples demonstrate how the components of a practice framework guide social workers in specific fields of practice or in their application of social work methods or skills.

In contrast with more generic practice frameworks, social work practice frameworks are drawn on to guide social work practice and communicate social work professional identities that represent social workers and social work (Chenoweth & McAuliffe 2020). I distinguish SWPFs from generic practice frameworks on the basis of their inclusion of practice components that are specific to social work, such as the AASW Code of Ethics and Practice Standards, for example, as well as theories that

are imperative to social work practice, including Systemic Theory and Critical Theory. In addition to these components, is the ‘use of self’, a central focus of social work practice (Chenoweth & McAuliffe, 2020) which is not included in generic practice frameworks. These practice components and their interrelationships facilitate the communication of social workers’ professional identities.

2.5 CONCLUSION

The application of neoliberal principles in contexts that employ social workers has contributed to the erosion of social work’s robustness (Swain 2017), with many social workers no longer enjoying dedicated positions that distinguish them professionally (Moorhead 2019). Although many strategies have targeted the profession more broadly in pursuit of collective robustness, few have focused on social workers themselves (Clare 2006). In this research, I have identified practitioners’ articulation of their social work practice frameworks as an important way of communicating professional robustness and challenging dominant neoliberal discourses. Examining SWPFs through an Assemblage Theory lens will throw light on what fortifies the capacity these frameworks have for communicating social work’s collective robustness.

Chapter 3: Assemblage Theory

Assemblage Theory is a comparatively recent approach to theorising social phenomena and for understanding social complexity (DeLanda 2016). When questioning how social work practice frameworks could support a robust collective professional identity, I considered what might be revealed from analysing these frameworks as assemblages. In this chapter, I refer to Assemblage Theory (Deleuze & Guattari 1988) to understand how its tenets relate to SWPFs. I demonstrate the utility of Assemblage Theory to my research by examining codifying processes, as evinced in AASW policy and social work literature, and their influence on the capacity that emerges from SWPFs. My review indicates the value of a deeper examination of SWPFs as a specific type of assemblage. The chapter therefore considers how Assemblage Theory draws attention to the components of SWPFs, leading to new questions about their capacity to contribute to a robust collective identity.

3.1 ASSEMBLAGE THEORY

An assemblage can be described as a collection of heterogeneous parts or components, organised and held together through temporary relations (McLeod 2017). Assemblage Theory, as conceptualised by Deleuze, a French philosopher, and Guattari, a psychoanalyst (1988), focuses on the interrelationship of these heterogeneous components, along with the capacity that emerges from their interrelationships, recognising that an assemblage's capacity can be increased or reduced by the processes of territorialisation and de-territorialisation (DeLanda 2016). Underpinned by social ontology, Assemblage Theory was developed to counter Hegelian Totalitarianism, which views properties, as a whole, cannot be taken apart; instead, the parts of a property become fused into a seamless totality (DeLanda 2011). The key tenets of Assemblage Theory, however, oppose this position and are now discussed, before demonstrating the value of applying them to social work practice frameworks.

3.1.1 Emergent Capacity

Emergent capacity refers to the capacity that arises when the components of an assemblage interrelate, which is greater than the sum of those components (Deleuze & Guattari 1988). A town is an example of such an assemblage, comprised of heterogenous components, including residents, infrastructure, local laws, and events. The infrastructure of a town provides a place for people to live and interact. Local laws govern how the town will operate, and events promote interaction between its residents. Capacity emerges when these heterogenous components interact; that is, with the creation of an experience of community. When experienced in isolation, these components do not build community, but when they interact, a sense of community emerges. A conversation between two people is another example of an assemblage. When two people (components) are in conversation (assemblage), capacity arises (relationship) that is not merely the adding together of the capacities of the components. The emergent property, the relationship, relies on the interaction between these two people; without this interaction, capacity would not emerge.

3.1.2 Assemblage Parameters: ‘Dialled up’ to ‘Dialled down’

DeLanda (2011) describes assemblages as sitting along a continuum. At one end of the continuum, assemblages can be highly territorialised and at the other end they can be highly de-territorialised, or they can be anywhere in between. DeLanda (2016) describes how assemblages can have parameters or settings, and how the material and expressive components of an assemblage can influence these parameters or settings. Material components include objects—such as buildings, clothing, symbols—while expressive components are words, language, and literature. Material and expressive components are discussed further in Section 3.1.3.

High parameters (territorialised) result in inflexible, rigid assemblages that are highly conformative with distinguishable identities. Assemblages with low parameters (de-territorialised) have diluted, poorly recognisable identities. DeLanda (2011) describes territorialisation of assemblages as being ‘dialled up’ (more territorialised and more rigid) or ‘dialled down’ (less territorialised and more diffuse). DeLanda’s (2016) concept of a continuum suggests that moderate parameters are possible. Moderate settings are neither highly conformative nor obscure; instead, such settings

allow for greater flexibility while retaining clarity regarding what an assemblage represents.

A cult is an example of a highly territorialised assemblage. Cults minimise personal differences by strengthening conformity among their members. Cults are distinguished by their expressive components, such as literature, shared beliefs, and rituals. Members will hold the same beliefs, use similar language, and perform the same rituals. Material components contribute to a cult's territorialisation, such as members wearing the same clothes, reading the same books, and attending the same place of worship. In this way, the homogenisation created by these territorialising components increase an assemblage's recognisability.

In contrast, assemblages that are de-territorialised are difficult to distinguish. The boundaries of a de-territorialised assemblage can overlap, blend or be indistinct, making it unclear what the assemblage denotes. A conversation on the street is an example of a de-territorialised assemblage: its boundaries are indistinct, and the material and expressive roles of the components (the two people) are de-territorialised. The material components, such as their clothes, do not clearly establish what the assemblage represents. In addition, those conversing can be of different ages, genders or races. The conversation, or the expressive components, adds to the de-territorialisation. The topics can vary, the conversation can be without structure, and beliefs expressed in the conversation can differ, as can the language used. These de-territorialising processes lead to an assemblage that is vague and indistinct.

3.1.3 Assemblage Components

Assemblages are comprised of components that exhibit certain characteristics. These characteristics include differences in scale and organisation, as well as relationships of preclusion and exteriority. Components can also assume varying roles, such as, material and expressive. Decomposability and irreducibility are other characteristics components display. Descriptions of these characteristics follow.

Scale and Organisation

An assemblage can be either large and complex or small and simple in its scale and organisation of components (DeLanda 2016). A town, as discussed above, is a large scale, organisationally complex assemblage. It has multiple components with

their own internal structures, such as schools, shops, homes, and hospitals. When examining these components, additional assemblages come into view; a school has additional assemblages, such as the teaching profession, student community and curriculum. A town's 'assemblages within assemblages' show its complexity. Assemblages can also be small and simple, such as a brief conversation between two people, with no additional internal structures or sub-assemblages.

Relationships of Preclusion, Decomposability and Exteriority

Assemblage Theory describes the interactions between components as variable; one component may affect another component, which in turn affects that component back, while surrounding components remain unaffected but are activated when required (DeLanda 2011). Although interactions are variable, all components have the capacity to interrelate at any given time, meaning there are no relationships of preclusion between an assemblage's components (DeLanda 2016). Consider people (components) attending a party (assemblage). Several attendees will interact with one another, while others may stand aside listening to music. Those standing aside are unaffected by the attendees interacting with one another, but opportunity remains for them to enter the surrounding interactions. There are no interactions of preclusion; everyone is free to interact with everyone else but will not necessarily do so.

Decomposability and exteriority are additional qualities exhibited by an assemblage's components. Decomposability describes how components retain their individual properties while generating capacity (DeLanda 2016). For example, when the residents of a town interact, their individual properties remain the same, but from these interactions, social, economic or cultural capacity emerges to promote an experience of community. To make up an assemblage, components must display relationships of exteriority, which means any heterogeneous component can be detached from one assemblage and attached to another with their original identity being retained (DeLanda 2016). Thus, someone participating in a sporting event (assemblage) who then attends a market (assemblage) will retain their identity even though they have become a component of another assemblage.

Irreducibility

Along with decomposability and exteriority, assemblages must display irreducibility (DeLanda 2016). To illustrate the difference between irreducibility and

reducibility, DeLanda (2016) compares a collection with a molecule. A collection is a group of discrete objects and is reducible to the parts that compose it. A collection's component objects do not interact to produce capacity greater than the sum of their parts. Seashells, say, can be grouped to form a collection, which can be reduced back to the individual shells, and do not interact to produce new capacity. The heterogeneous elements of an assemblage, however, do interact, and it is the emergent capacity that arises from these interactions that distinguishes an assemblage.

A molecule is comprised of atoms. When atoms interact, they form molecules; something more than the sum of their parts. In this sense, water is an assemblage of hydrogen and oxygen atoms (DeLanda 2016). The hydrogen and oxygen atoms have retained their properties and water has emerged from their interaction. Reduced to its component atoms, a water molecule ceases to exist. Thus, water is irreducible; it cannot be reduced to its component parts and remain an assemblage.

Rhizomic Growth

Deleuze and Guattari (1988, cited in Holmes & Gastaldo 2004, p. 261) use the rhizome as a metaphor to explain key aspects of an assemblage: “a rhizome challenges the sense of a unique direction because it emerges and grows in simultaneous, multiple ways”. Like a rhizome, assemblages also emerge and grow in simultaneous and multiple ways (Holmes & Gastaldo 2004). For example, a couple (components) discussing a sushi recipe can reflect on their previous holidays in Japan. As they reflect on these holidays, their conversation then turns to the effect COVID has had on their travel plans. The couple's conversation (assemblage) has grown and emerged in multiple ways. The conversation can continue to grow as new topics are considered—for example, their plans after dinner, whether they feel cold or hot, or if they are tired or feel unwell. Similar to a rhizome, their conversation has grown in multiple ways instead of having a set direction.

Variable Roles

An assemblage's components play various roles, which DeLanda (2016) categorises as either expressive or material or a mixture of the two. DeLanda describes material components as the physical aspects of an assemblage, whereas expressive components are represented through language or words. Expressive components help distinguish and identify an assemblage. Returning to the town example, residents,

buildings, food, tools, and machines are components fulfilling a material role, whereas language and behaviour (rituals and other forms of mixed or non-verbal communication) assume an expressive role (Bacevic 2019). A community's solidarity is expressed linguistically through beliefs, vows, and promises, or behaviourally through helping or sacrificing for the community. In this example, the material components are the physical aspects of a town and the expressive components establish what identifies the town.

Codifying Processes

The term 'codifying processes' refers to the linguistic components of an assemblage, such as an organisation's policies, a government's constitution or a school's curriculum. These processes assume an expressive role, helping to distinguish an assemblage. Canon Law, for example, is a codifying process that distinguishes the Catholic Church (New Advent 2020). Canon Law promotes uniformity in the church's beliefs and values, as well as in the rituals accompanying religious expression. From an Assemblage Theory perspective, Canon Law defines the Catholic Church to ensure that what it represents is clear and recognisable. Codifying processes can also de-territorialise an assemblage such that what it represents and the capacity emerging from it are obscured (DeLanda 2016). For example, tall ships are material components of the tall ship sailing fraternity (assemblage). In the tall ship sailing fraternity, 'barque' refers to a sailing ship with three or more masts and a particular type of rigging. In poetry, on the other hand, this term refers to any small sailing vessel (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2013). Such interchangeability of terms has obscured what denotes the tall ship sailing fraternity.

3.2 ASSEMBLAGE THEORY AND SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE FRAMEWORKS

Social work practice frameworks are integral to social work practice, yet they appear to be under-theorised in the social work literature. In this section, I demonstrate the potential an Assemblage Theory perspective has for theorising SWPFs. I apply an Assemblage Theory lens to theorise how SWPFs have capacity to communicate social work professional identities. Informed by an Assemblage Theory perspective, I reviewed the literature to deepen my understanding of how SWPFs are codified, both in the literature itself and in AASW policy. My examination led me to new questions

regarding the contribution codifying processes make in establishing a framework that clearly represents social work practice and its collective professional identity.

3.2.1 Emergent Capacity: Social Work Professional Identities

Social work practice frameworks consist of multiple heterogeneous components. These components include social work knowledge, professional values, skills, self, and context (Healy 2014; Chenoweth & McAuliffe 2020). From an Assemblage Theory perspective, when these components interact, capacity emerges to communicate social work's professional identity. Core to this emergence is the interrelationship of social work practice components. When considered in isolation, these components, in and of themselves, do not express social work's professional identity. For example, if social work practitioners speak to one another only of their knowledge without reference to values or skills, an isolated conversation about a theoretical perspective has happened. While the knowledge conveys a social work perspective, its capacity to communicate a social work identity is strengthened when the interrelationship of other components, such as professional values, use of self and influence of context are included. Thus, assembling the components of a social work practice framework to facilitate these interrelationships is transformative. Capacity arises from these interrelationships, emerging into a property that is more than the sum of these components; that is, social work's professional identity.

3.2.2 Decomposability, Exteriority and Irreducibility

In Section 3.1, I discussed decomposability, exteriority and irreducibility. I now apply these concepts to social work practice frameworks. SWPFs are decomposable, meaning their heterogeneous components (knowledge, values, context, self and skills) are not fused together in such a way that their original properties are lost (DeLanda 2016). SWPFs' components also exhibit exteriority; that is, they can be detached from the assemblage and still retain their original properties (DeLanda 2016). For example, a discussion concerning social work knowledge can occur outside or within the context of a SWPF without altering its properties as a component. In addition, SWPFs are irreducible. If the components of a SWPF are dismantled, then the framework or assemblage would no longer exist (DeLanda 2016).

3.2.3 Like a Rhizome with Multiple Entryways and Growth Paths

Social work practice frameworks also exhibit multiple entryways with no relationships of preclusion, meaning all components of a SWPF can interact with one another and in any combination. Additionally, SWPFs have multiple directions for growth. Rather than growth being unidirectional, like a tree, growth and expansion can happen in any direction, like a rhizome (Deleuze & Guattari 1988) for all the components of a SWPF; all components can grow further, and their scale remains limitless. For example, the knowledge component may have a selection of theories, but these can expand as new theories or knowledge emerge. Social work's engagement with decolonisation exemplifies how growth relating to theories happens. Colonialism has been embedded in social work practice historically, and a growing awareness of colonialism has led to the decolonisation of social work practice, as well as to indigenous knowledge not only being included in but becoming core to social work education (Green & Bennett 2018).

3.2.4 Roles, Processes, Scale and Organisation

The components of an assemblage also assume certain roles which can be material, expressive, or both (Deleuze & Guattari 1988). Social work practice frameworks fulfil an expressive role; that is, when the components interact and capacity is generated, the property that emerges expresses social work's professional identity. Codifying processes, as found in the social work literature, have varyingly named the components comprising SWPFs as knowledge, skills, values, context, and self (Chenoweth & McAuliffe 2020; Healy 2014). SWPFs are also characterised by differences in scale and organisation, with components having their own internal structures (Deleuze & Guattari 1988). The component of knowledge, for example, can include multiple theories, such as Systems Theory, Feminist Theory, Narrative Theory, and Cognitive Behavioural Theory. Each of these theories has an array of information to support its premise (theorists, practice approaches, contraindications, etc.), thus increasing the knowledge component's scale and organisational complexity.

3.2.5 'An Assemblage within an Assemblage'

Social work, as a profession, is an assemblage with both material (practitioners, resources, offices) and expressive (AASW policy, practice processes, practice interactions, professional supervision) components and social work practice

frameworks are themselves an expressive component of the profession. As discussed in Section 2.4, practice frameworks guide social work practice, whereas SWPFs guide social work practice and communicate social workers professional identities. When practice frameworks are embedded within a practitioner's SWPF, they are considered to be 'an assemblage within an assemblage' (DeLanda 2016). The Collaborative Practice Framework for Child Protection and Specialist Domestic and Family Violence Services (Healey, Connolly & Humphreys 2018) is an example of a practice framework guiding practitioners in a specific field of social work. When the framework is embedded in a SWPF and the components of these assemblages interact, a social work perspective emerges. Thus, as an assemblage with assemblages within it, SWPFs not only represent who practitioners are professionally, but their embedment of generic practice frameworks can also represent practitioners' specialised areas of practice.

3.3 TERRITORIALISING AND DE-TERRITORIALISING SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE FRAMEWORKS

In this section, I examine AASW policy documents and social work literature through an Assemblage Theory lens. DeLanda (2011) refers to de-territorialisation as 'dialling down' assemblages and territorialisation as 'dialling them up'. 'Dialled up' assemblages are recognisable whereas 'dialled down' assemblages are vague and what they represent is diffuse. Codifying processes, as discussed in Section 3.1.3, facilitate 'dialling up' and 'dialling down' of assemblages (DeLanda 2016). They are the linguistic components of an assemblage, such as terminology and descriptors. These linguistic components, when viewed from an Assemblage Theory perspective, can enhance or obscure an assemblage's distinctiveness, along with the capacity emerging from it.

3.3.1 AASW Policy

When reviewing AASW policy, I found that codifying processes had territorialised or 'dialled up' social work practice frameworks. Codifying processes have named the components representing social work practice and their interrelationships as a '[social work] practice framework'. The process of naming then integrating the assemblage into the profession's lexicon established the importance of SWPFs and, in so doing, 'dialled up' the assemblage. For example, the development

of a SWPF was made a requirement in the Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standard (AASW 1990, p. 3) and AASW Practice Standards, which state that a social worker must “develop and articulate a [social work] practice framework that draws on contemporary theory, knowledge, methods and professional values” upon graduation (AASW 2013, p. 13). Further, the AASW Code of Ethics states that social workers must recognise and acknowledge the religious, spiritual and secular worldviews of colleagues, within a social work practice framework of social justice and human rights (AASW 2020a). By integrating SWPF terminology in key AASW policy, the assemblage has been ‘dialled up’, enhancing its recognisability and significance in the profession.

Codifying processes, as found in AASW policy, have also de-territorialised SWPFs. My review found that codifying processes identifying SWPF components and their assemblage in AASW policy were either vague, inconsistent or not available. For example, the AASW Code of Ethics made cursory mention of SWPFs in its publications for 1981, 2010 and 2020 (AASW 1981; 2010; 2020a), but not in publications in the intervening period, in 1989 and 1999 (AASW 1989; 1999). When cursory mention was made, there was no elaboration describing SWPFs; instead, they were described in broader statements with no specific attention to definition and constitution. Moreover, when further details were provided regarding a frameworks’ components, the details were very generic and were equally applicable to a number of other professions (AASW 2020a).

I found further evidence of codifying processes de-territorialising social work practice frameworks in other AASW policy documents, in which the significance attributed to this assemblage and how it was identified varied considerably. The AASW Practice Standards (AASW 2013) now require the development and maintenance of a SWPF (AASW 2013), though this was not always the case (AASW 2003). Conversely, a framework for practice was a continuing professional development requirement (AASW 2012a) but is no longer (AASW 2015; 2020b). In addition, the term ‘framework’ has been used in varying senses in all Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards (AASW 1990; 2008; 2012b; 2020c). In some circumstances, the term referred to other disciplines’ frameworks or to specific

fields of practice, or there was general reference with no further elaboration on what constituted a framework.

My review found that the most recent Australian Social Workers Education and Accreditation Standards (AASW 2020c) have further diffused social work practice frameworks. No standard required students to develop a framework that represented them professionally. Instead, these standards mandate that students demonstrate “an ability to identify, critique and apply a range of practice frameworks” (AASW 2020c, p. 21). The use of ‘practice framework’ to refer to frameworks for specific fields of practice, practice methods or skills as well as frameworks that represent social work as a profession, further reduces the distinctiveness of these assemblages. From an Assemblage Theory perspective, the AASW’s interchangeable use of terminology ‘dials down’ the territoriality of social work practice frameworks.

3.3.2 *Australian Social Work (Journal)*

The AASW publishes the journal *Australian Social Work*. The journal aims to promote the development of social work practice, policy and education (AASW 2018a). Published as the *Australian Journal of Social Work* from 1947 to 1970, *Australian Social Work* remains the main publication for Australian social work research. A review of articles in the publication under both names found the term ‘framework’ first mentioned in the article ‘A framework for understanding the liaison process’ (Slocombe 1991). The term continued to appear intermittently over the coming years. In total, from 1948 to 2020, 16 articles included the word ‘framework’ in their titles (see Appendix A).

Most noticeable in my search was the application of the term ‘framework’ to specific areas of practice, such as fields (N=12), skills (N=2), or methods (N=2), rather than in reference to a framework for the social work profession (N=0). An absence of publications relating to social work practice frameworks, from an Assemblage Theory perspective, ‘dials down’ this assemblage, diluting the professional significance it is afforded in AASW policy and social work academic texts.

3.3.3 *Social Work Academic Texts*

I reviewed several social work academic texts commonly used in social work courses in Australian universities. In these texts, I found deeper and more detailed

descriptions of social work practice frameworks. SWPFs were discussed, and their purposes described, along with their components and subsequent assemblage. However, there was significant variation. Although these texts provided more specific and thorough information compared to AASW policy and journal articles, authors' varying interpretation of what constituted a framework for social work practice and its subsequent assemblage was further evidence of codifying processes that were de-territorialising (see Appendix B).

When assembling a framework for practice, Chenoweth and McAuliffe (2020, p. 303) state, "there is no right or wrong framework for practice". They argue that, although some SWPF elements are the same, everyone has a different approach. Healy (2014, p. 227) also contends that:

the act of constructing our [social work] practice framework is creative in that we draw on multiple sources, such as institutional context and formal theories, but we also transform these ideas through their application.

Social work texts have promoted heightened heterogeneity with regard to SWPF components and their assemblage, but, from an Assemblage Theory perspective, increased heterogeneity de-territorialises an assemblage, so that what it represents, as well as the capacity emerging from it, is weakened (DeLanda 2016).

3.4 CONCLUSION

My research has located practitioners as strategists whose roles are instrumental in establishing social work's collective identity, and social work practice frameworks as central to communicating such an identity. Assemblage Theory has offered a critical lens for examining the literature concerning SWPFs. In so doing, I have identified the territorialisation and de-territorialisation of SWPFs through codifying processes, as found in AASW policy and the social work literature. Through this examination, further questions have been raised about the role SWPFs have in communicating the profession's collective identity—questions that consider the way codifying processes can affect the distinctiveness of practitioners' assemblages and the capacity that emerges from them.

Chapter 4: **Researching Social Work Practice Frameworks**

Chapter 4 presents the methodology I employed to answer my research question and address the aims of this research. Before discussing my research design, an outline of my social constructivist theoretical framework is provided. The rationale for a qualitative research design is then elucidated, followed by a detailed presentation of my research method including the recruitment process, interviewing technique and processes followed to analyse my data. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the ethical considerations that accompanied my research processes.

4.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

I adopted a social constructionist theoretical framework to conduct my research. In social enquiry, social constructionism holds that “the world we live in and our place in it, is not simply and evidently ‘there’; rather, we actively construct our world and its constitution” (Holstein & Gubrium 2008, p. 3). Constructivism, the epistemological stance underpinning a social constructionist theoretical framework, describes how we build our view of the world through our interactions with it, and that contexts, such as history, ideas, the community and language, constantly shape our view (Moses & Knutsen 2019). Crotty (1998, p. 8) offers a useful explanation:

There is no objective truth waiting for us to discover it. Truth, or meaning, comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities of our world. There is no meaning without a mind. Meaning is not discovered but constructed. In this view, subject and object emerge as partners in the generation of meaning.

A constructivist position provided the most useful theoretical context for me to understand how practitioners assemble their social work practice frameworks. It recognises that all individuals construct their realities, and that just as their constructions are multiple, so are their realities (Lee 2012). In adopting a constructivist position, I was not searching for an objective truth (Denzin & Lincoln 2018) regarding SWPFs; instead, a constructivist approach allowed me to recognise how participants constructed their SWPFs to represent the diverse nature of their practice. Constructivism removed the position that only one approach was possible when

considering SWPFs' components and their assemblage. Examining SWPFs through an Assemblage Theory lens was consistent with my theoretical framework. Underpinned by constructivism, Assemblage Theory facilitated my examination of participants' SWPFs, helping me to understand what components were representative of their frameworks for practice.

Several assumptions went along with adopting a constructivist epistemological position. Social constructivism assumes that values and interests are part of observations; therefore, multiple understandings and meanings are possible (Dean 2012; Hall 2008; Witkin 2012). Whereas an objectivist approach emphasises eliminating or controlling values (Denzin & Lincoln 2018), a social constructivist's perspective seeks to make values known and to explore their influence or function within a given context (Witkin 2012). Thus, from a social constructivist perspective, I assumed my values and beliefs would have an influence. Acknowledging the values and beliefs I held regarding social work practice frameworks, through supervision and reflection, ensured that I remained cognisant of their potential influence on the participants in the study. Such awareness was essential, as from a constructivist point of view it was important for me to remain open to varying views about SWPFs and to differing approaches to their development. In maintaining this openness, my research would provide new insights regarding SWPFs beyond current knowledge and understanding.

4.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

My research sought to understand participants' experiences of their social work practice frameworks, and a qualitative approach provided opportunity to explore such experiences through in-depth conversations. For the qualitative researcher:

reality is 'socially constructed', and so cannot be separated from experience or measured from the outside. Instead, the challenge is to understand reality from the 'inside'—from other people's perspective. (Alston & Bowles 2018, p. 16)

A qualitative approach locates the researcher "in the world of the participant and consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make this world visible" (Denzin & Lincoln 2005, p. 3), and qualitative researchers work to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln 2005). By taking a qualitative approach, my research was guided by the following

perspectives (Padgett 2017, p. 2): insider rather than outsider; person-centred rather than variable-centred; holistic rather than particularistic; contextual rather than de-contextual; and deep rather than broad.

In alignment with a qualitative approach, I chose a combination of individual semi-structured interviews and one focus group discussion. A semi-structured interview involves implementing a number of predetermined questions, asked in a systematic and consistent order, with freedom to digress and probe beyond the answers provided (Berg 2015). As Darlington and Scott (2002, p. 49) note, “these types of interviews enable clarification to occur immediately and for interviewees to be active respondents in the process”. Focus groups are essentially interviews conducted with a number of participants at once (Berg 2015). Focus group discussions usually involve a facilitator who asks open-ended questions, with the degree of structure and direction varying depending on how narrow or broad the topic of enquiry is (Padgett 2017). Such an approach brings the added stimulus of a group environment, prompting members to think and respond to issues they may not have previously considered (Yegidis, Weinbach & Myers 2018), with focus group discussions often producing data seldom found through individual interviewing (Denzin & Lincoln 2018). I chose to combine one focus group discussion with several semi-structured interviews to deepen and enhance the quality of my data. By combining these two approaches, I was able to explore participants’ responses in depth during individual interviews, while giving rise to broader insights about social work practice frameworks from the discussions a group environment generated.

4.3 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND AUTHENTICITY

An established approach to assessing trustworthiness in qualitative research uses the following criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Schwandt, Lincoln & Guba 2007). I maintained credibility through peer debriefing with social work colleagues, as well as supervision to assist my hypothesis development and to test my emerging design (Lincoln & Guba 2007). Transferability requires the gathering of rich descriptive data, allowing others to make judgements and apply all or part of the findings elsewhere (Lincoln & Guba 2007). I achieved transferability by making my findings available to others who might wish to investigate my topic. Throughout my candidature, supervision assured dependability

and confirmability by auditing my research processes from conceptualisation to completion.

Fairness, a criterion for authenticity (Lincoln & Guba 2007), was reached by gaining participants' informed consent and providing them with clear information about the process. Informed consent ensured participants remained fully aware of what the research entailed and that they could continue to make decisions about their involvement throughout the research process. In addition, the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix C) and Consent Form (Appendix D) advised participants that they could view and amend their transcribed interview should they wish. Although participants did not request to view their transcripts, the opportunity was available to ensure the criterion of fairness was adhered to.

4.4 RESEARCH METHOD

4.4.1 Eligibility

To be eligible, participants had to be employed (with a minimum of six months post-graduation experience) so that they could draw on current experiences to inform their responses. Currency of experience ensured the outcomes of the research had temporal relevance and applicability. I sought participants who were eligible for or held membership with the Australian Association of Social Workers. AASW membership is a key determinant of professional recognition as a social worker, although the title 'social worker' is not exclusive to AASW members. I did not discriminate in my selection of participants on the basis of gender. Although I did not specifically target people from diverse cultural backgrounds, social workers of any race or culture were encouraged to participate. Because English is the only language I speak fluently and funding was not available to interpret or translate languages other than English, participants also had to speak English. Participants also needed to be living in Yeppoon or Rockhampton (Central Queensland) to participate in face-to-face interviews or have access to the internet and Skype to participate online.

Sampling

Given the qualitative nature of my research design, I sought to identify a relatively small sample of social workers to generate an in-depth understanding of the research topic. To obtain a sample, I employed two non-probability-sampling

methods: purposive sampling and non-probability sampling (Padgett 2017). Purposive sampling involves using a purposely chosen sample instead of one that is randomly selected (Padgett 2017). I purposely recruited social workers as I sought to investigate their perspectives of social work practice frameworks. To obtain a sample, I contacted the President of the Queensland Association of Social Workers (QASW) branch via email and sought permission to use the Australian Association of Social Workers (Qld) newsletter to convey information about the research project (Appendix E).

The second non-probability sampling method I chose was snowballing (Padgett 2017). In snowballing, participants identify others who might be interested taking part (Yegidis, Weinbach & Myers 2018). I used snowballing to recruit social workers not listed on the AASW (Qld) membership database, as well as those who may not read the AASW (Qld) newsletter. I asked my social work colleagues to help me contact other social workers, then emailed out information about the research project (Appendix F). My colleagues then circulated that information through their own networks (Appendix G).

4.4.2 Participant Recruitment

A total of eight participants were recruited, with seven recruited through the snowball sampling method and one through purposive sampling. I was contacted by one person who was not eligible (they did not meet the criteria for AASW membership) and another person declined to participate because of lack of time. During recruitment, participants expressed interest via email. I responded by sending a Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form, advising that I would be in contact by telephone within a few days, giving them the opportunity to read the forwarded information. A follow-up telephone call enabled potential participants to ask additional questions and clarify information before consenting verbally to the research process. I then obtained written consent prior to the individual interview or focus group discussion.

4.4.3 Participant Profiles

All the participants recruited were female white Australians. The participants' employment contexts since graduation included both state and federal government, non-government organisations and private practice in rural, regional and metropolitan locations. Their fields of practice included paediatrics, mental health, community

health, child protection, child, family and relationship counselling, rehabilitation, generalist counselling, juvenile justice, domestic violence, health, crisis intervention, forensic social work, youth work, and disabilities. The participants' combined experiences represented all methods of social work practice: clinical practice, case management, group work, community development, policy, research, and education. Participants' responsibilities had included delivery of clinical interventions; group work (both therapeutic and educational); case management; coordination of services; management of multi-disciplinary teams; supervision of social work students, social work practitioners and other disciplines; policy development; research; and education delivery at tertiary and TAFE level. All participants had completed a Bachelor of Social Work. One participant held a Graduate Diploma, three a Master of Social Work and one a PhD. Table 4.1, below, outlines participants' qualifications and year of graduation. To preserve their anonymity, each participant has been assigned a pseudonym.

Table 4.1 Participant Profiles

Participant	Qualifications	Graduated
1. Chloe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Diploma Residential Care ▪ BSW 	2004
2. Molly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BSW 	2003
3. Karen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Diploma Welfare Studies ▪ Diploma Drug and Alcohol ▪ BSW ▪ MSW 	2003
4. Toni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BSW ▪ Graduate Diploma in Community Mental Health 	1989
5. Mia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BSW ▪ MA (Research) 	1986
6. Julie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BSW 	1985
7. Chrissy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BSW ▪ MSW ▪ PhD 	1983
8. Jan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BSW 	1979

4.5 QUALITATIVE METHOD: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

Of the eight practitioners recruited, four participated in an individual interview, two participated in the focus group discussion and two participated in both an individual interview and a focus group discussion. A colleague's private practice room was used for two individual interviews, another two interviews were conducted via Skype and I did two at home. Skype enabled me to interview two practitioners who would not have participated otherwise (Lo Iacono, Symonds & Brown 2016; Mirick & Wladkowski 2019). One participant lived in Brisbane, while the other participant's difficulty finding time for an in-person interview would have precluded them. Although Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) technologies, such as Skype, cannot replace in-person interactions, they are still considered a viable alternative for qualitative research (Lo Iacono, Symonds & Brown 2016). Before arranging the interview time, I explored these participants' confidence with Skype. Both participants had a Skype account and expressed confidence in their use of the technology. I made a contingency plan to resume calls via mobile phone should our internet connection be disrupted during the interview (Mirick & Wladkowski 2019). Again, both participants stated they were comfortable with these arrangements.

The focus group discussion was held in a tutorial room at Central Queensland University, Rockhampton. All interviews were conducted on a weekend afternoon, except for the two on Skype, which were in the evening. The location and times of the individual interviews and focus group catered to participants' work schedules and living locations. I prioritised flexibility of interview time and location to minimise inconvenience to the participants. The locations also afforded privacy. I arranged for interviews at my house to occur when members of my family were away. Skype interviews happened in the privacy of my study, and my colleague's private practice rooms afforded similar privacy. The focus group discussion at Central Queensland University happened on a weekend when very few students or staff were present, and the tutorial room ensured the focus group discussion could not be overheard by others.

The Participant Information and Consent Form advised participants that their individual interviews and the focus group discussion would be digitally recorded and offered them an opportunity to discuss any concerns about these arrangements. No

participant raised concerns about their conversation being recorded. The Skype interviews were also digitally recorded. I did not use the sound and recording features available within Skype in order to keep all my recordings on one device I was familiar with when transcribing the data. Recording the interview and focus group discussion digitally negated the need for written notes, ensuring I remained fully attentive to the conversation. Such seamless attentiveness, uninterrupted by the loss of eye contact to take notes, encouraged the participants to elaborate on their responses.

Building rapport over Skype can be challenging (Lo Iacono, Symonds & Brown 2016). However, I had an established relationship with one of the Skype participants, which facilitated further rapport building throughout the interview. With the other participant, rapport building had begun in our emails, where our common interest and enthusiasm for my research topic was discussed. At the commencement of the Skype interview, I continued to experience this participant's enthusiasm and interest, which facilitated quick rapport building.

In addition, prior to the interviews commencing, I checked that the lighting was suitable and that the sound was working. I adjusted the height of my seat to ensure my eye contact was direct, and I reduced the clutter in my study to minimise distractions. These considerations were all important to creating a contextual environment that facilitated rapport building (Lo Iacono, Symonds & Brown 2016). Thus, the barriers Skype can present when interviewing on this platform appeared to have been mitigated. This view was supported by the depth of information these two participants provided when discussing their SWPF experiences.

The in-depth individual interviews (Skype and in-person) ran for approximately an hour and a half and the focus group discussion went for approximately two hours. Before commencing the individual interview or focus group discussion, I provided participants another opportunity for clarification before they consented. At the commencement of each individual interview and the focus group discussion, I mentioned the purpose of the meeting, its approximate length, and the nature of the questions I would be asking. I reminded participants that all information shared remained confidential and that pseudonyms would be used throughout the project and in any resulting publications. Participants were reminded that there were no right or wrong answers, and I encouraged them to elaborate on their responses,

explaining that the depth of their responses would support my understanding of their social work practice framework experiences.

The interviews, both in-person and over Skype, as well as the focus group discussion were semi-structured in that prompts guided my questioning so that participants' conversations would remain relevant. A semi-structured approach allowed the participants and I to digress where necessary, so responses could be explored with more depth to enable a better understanding of participants' experiences. The interview schedule for both the individual interview (Appendix H) and focus group discussion (Appendix I) included the following headings with additional prompts that I could refer to as necessary:

- Social Work Practice Framework: What is it?
- Your experience of a Social Work Practice Framework
- Developing and articulating your Social Work Practice Framework
- Social Work Practice Frameworks and Professional Identity

Semi-structured interviews promote a collaborative approach in qualitative research by assuming expertise about a participant's reality lies with the participant and that the researcher's role is to ensure as accurate an understanding as possible of the participant's reality is reached (Dean 2012). I assumed a position of 'not knowing' throughout the interview process. A stance that "honoured participants' knowledge, expertise and understanding of their reality" (Anderson & Goolishian, cited in Dean 2012, p. 84). Such honouring is consistent with a social constructionist perspective, which asserts that "participants actively construct the world of everyday life and its constituent elements" (Witkin 2012, p. 17). A collaborative effort for reaching understanding allowed for more openness and freedom of discussion between the participants and I (Dean 2012).

During the focus group discussion, I remained cognisant of the limitations of such forums, such as the influence of group dynamics on participants' confidence to give their perspectives (Noble & Sullivan 2009). Throughout the focus group discussion, I remained attentive to the dynamic by validating and encouraging participants to expand on their responses, demonstrating my genuine interest in their social work practice framework experiences. This seemed to be successful, as my data

demonstrated that all participants made significant contributions throughout the focus group discussion. In addition, I ensured each participant had ample opportunity to discuss their framework, further reinforcing the value of each participant's contribution. My processes for collecting data also increased the likelihood that participants would answer questions with what they thought to be the preferred social response (Krefting 1991). To mitigate this, we discussed how responses that truly reflect their SWPF experiences would contribute important insights and understanding regarding this assemblage. These insights would then inform how SWPFs can best support social workers in their practice.

4.6 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

The objective of a thematic analysis is to interpret the data so the phenomenon being investigated can be understood (Hall 2008). Thematic analysis is a systematic approach for identifying and organising data, offering rich insight into patterns that can be observed across a data set (Braun & Clarke 2006; 2012). By focusing on the patterns across my data set, I was able to identify themes that offered rich insights into participants' SWPF experiences and shared meanings accompanying these experiences. I adopted Braun and Clarke's (2012) six phases of thematic analysis, with this thesis representing the final phase, 'Producing the Report'. I now outline how I undertook a systematic thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2012) phased approach.

4.6.1 Phase 1: Becoming Familiar with the Data

Before listening to the digitally recorded interviews, I developed an index and assigned each participant a number, for example, Participant 1, Participant 2, and so forth. The index was only accessible by me and allowed for reidentification of participants as necessary. I then familiarised myself with the data by listening to all the digital recordings before transcription began. I chose to transcribe manually to immerse myself in and gain familiarity with the data. By the end of Phase 1, I had transcribed all six interviews and one focus group discussion. I reviewed each verbatim transcript and corrected any errors. During Phase 1, six potential codes were generated: purpose, components, participants' experiences, social work practice framework experiences, de-professionalisation, and professional identity. I created a three-column table for each participant: speaker, transcript, and code (see Table 4.2, below).

Table 4.2 Coding (Phase 1)

Participant 4		
Speaker	Transcript	Code
Researcher	<i>Would you have any others or are they the main ones?</i>	
Participant	<i>Theories, skills and, oh, values—values and principles—you know, the social justice stuff—do no harm—I think they would be in there, almost like underneath the framework—almost like the supporting foundations where everything comes from.</i>	Components

4.6.2 Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes

Generating initial codes involved reviewing the potential codes identified in Phase 1. During Phase 2, I expanded the codes from six to 16 (see Table 4.3, below). For example, data coded as ‘social work practice framework experiences’, were expanded to create seven additional codes: definition, articulation, awareness, development, presence, influences, and assembly. I found the code ‘social work practice framework experiences’ too broad and unsophisticated. I also found some codes were not appropriate; for example, I had coded data describing SWPF definitions under ‘social work practice framework experiences’, so I created a new code, ‘definition’, to represent these data.

Table 4.3 Codes (Phase 2)

Codes
Purpose
Components
Participant experiences
Social work practice framework experiences
De-professionalisation
Professional identity
Definition
Assembly
Articulation
Awareness
Development
Presence
Influences
AASW membership
Educational qualifications
Employment experiences

Colour-coding and numbering the text facilitated my analysis and comparison of the coded data. I reviewed all the transcripts and coded data using the method illustrated in Table 4.4, below.

Table 4.4 Coding (Phase 2)

Participant 1		
Speaker	Transcript	Code
Participant	<i>I suppose it is a guidepost or um the core of what of my social work identity I hadn't thought of it like that really before it is what I keep coming back</i>	Purpose

I generated a template for each code, then copied participants' responses to their own instances of the template. Table 4.5, below, shows the template for data coded as 'purpose' and the subsequent assignment of participant responses. During the analytic phase, I generated 16 templates corresponding to each code. The templates enabled further analysis of the data to ensure there was continuity in my coding.

Table 4.5 Coding Template (Phase 2)

Code: Purpose	
Participant	Response
Participant #1	<i>I suppose it is a guidepost or, um, the core of what of my social work identity [is]. I hadn't thought of it like that really before. It is what I keep coming back to, yeah.</i>
Participant #2	<i>It's a model or a way of that I choose to— how I work with me people.</i>

4.6.3 Phase 3: Searching for Themes

In Phase 3, I reviewed the codes and categorised them into themes. Of the 16 codes identified, three related to the participants' profiles (AASW Membership, Educational Qualifications and Employment Experiences), so I removed these themes from my analysis. Thirteen codes remained. I further analysed these codes and identified eight themes in this phase. When analysing the data relating to social work practice frameworks' components, I identified a number of subthemes: knowledge, skills, ethics and values, context, and self. I then grouped the data coded as social work

practice frameworks' components under the relevant theme. Grouping the data into subthemes facilitated further analysis and comparison of participants' choice of components (see Table 4.6, below).

Table 4.6 Themes (Phase 3)

Themes	Subthemes
1. Social work practice framework purpose	
2. Origins of social work practice frameworks	
3. Social work practice framework components	Knowledge, Skills, Ethics, Values, Context, Self
4. Social work practice framework assemblage	
5. Participants' confidence in their social work practice frameworks	
6. Social work practice framework presence – participants	
7. Social work practice framework presence – colleagues	
8. Colleagues' attitude	

4.6.4 Phase 4: Reviewing Themes

After identifying the main conceptual themes and subthemes, a further review was necessary to ensure these themes formed a coherent pattern (Braun & Clarke 2012). During this review, I identified an additional theme: commitment. I found participants' commitment to their ongoing development of their social work practice framework resonated throughout the already coded data yet was not represented as a theme, though it was worthy of one. In addition, I transferred data themed 'flexibility' to either the 'social work practice framework components' or 'assemblage' themes. I found the data themed fitted better with 'social work practice framework components' or 'assemblage' rather than in its own 'flexibility' theme. Table 4.7, below, presents the reviewed list of themes.

Table 4.7 Themes (Phase 4)

Themes	Subthemes
1. Social work practice framework purpose	
2. Origins of social work practice frameworks	
3. Participants' commitment to their social work practice framework development	
4. Social work practice framework components	Knowledge, Skills, Ethics, Values, Context, Self
5. Social work practice framework assemblage	
6. Participants' confidence in their social work practice frameworks	
7. Social work practice framework presence – participants	
8. Social work practice framework presence – colleagues	
9. Colleagues' attitude	

4.6.5 Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes

In the previous stages, I developed codes and themes to facilitate collation and analysis of data. These themes required further refinement so what they represented was clear and engaging; as Braun and Clarke (2012, p. 68) write, “a good name for a theme is informative, concise and catchy”. The data extracts assigned to each subtheme underwent another review with an additional three layers of themes emerging. These three layers of themes were: social work practice framework beginnings, commitment and purpose; social work practice framework components and assemblage; and confidence, articulation and attitude. The themes listed in Table 4.7, above, became subthemes and were assigned to one of these three new themes, as shown in Table 4.8, below. Each subtheme underwent a further review, with participant quotes used to achieve an informative, concise and catchy title to represent them.

Table 4.8 Themes and Subthemes (Phase 5)

Themes	Subthemes
1. Beginnings, commitment and purpose	1. <i>'Uni ... I wouldn't have heard about practice frameworks otherwise'</i> 2. <i>'It has gotten even more important over the years'</i> 3. <i>'It communicates my professional identity'</i>
2. Components and assemblage	4. <i>'This is how you make a chocolate cake'</i> • Knowledge; Skills; Ethics and Value; Context and Self 5. <i>'It is like the old monkey bars at school; you climb up a ladder and walk across'</i>
3. Confidence, articulation and attitude	6. <i>'No, I would be embarrassed, no'</i> 7. <i>'I do not know how anyone would know my professional framework for practice'</i> 8. <i>'It is not a topic of conversation'</i> 9. <i>'Don't be a show pony'</i>

4.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

4.7.1 Ethics Approval

This research project was assessed as minimal risk, and ethics approval was granted by the UTAS Human Research Ethics Committee (Reference Number H0012105).

4.7.2 Potential Harm

Although assessed as minimal risk, I recognised that participants could feel like they were being evaluated. The Participant Information Sheet pre-empted these concerns, advising that the purpose of my research was to explore participants' social work practice frameworks to improve practices within our profession and not to evaluate them personally (see Appendix C, 'Are there any possible risks from participation in this study?').

4.7.3 *Voluntary Participation*

Participation in any research should be voluntary and free from coercion (Adler & Clark 2014; Cherry 2000; Hall 2008) and all subjects should be competent to understand their choice (Royse 2019). Information communicated in the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form ensured participants were aware their involvement was voluntary, and that they could discontinue participation at any stage, with no explanation necessary. Voluntary participation that was free from coercion was an ethical principal that required careful consideration. Padget (2017) recognises the potential for coercion when a study involves clients, students, or co-workers who are familiar to the researcher. I was aware that I sought to populate my sample through close contacts who may have felt compelled to participate because of our existing relationship. I chose to email participants to mitigate any pressure that might be felt to participate if I were to speak with them in person. The email focussed on my request for assistance forwarding information about the research project to their colleagues. I was aware that my colleagues might be interested in participating, so they were invited to, should the project be of interest to them. Once I had circulated the initial email, I did not follow up with my colleagues to check if they were interested in participating, understanding that their making no reply would indicate they did not want to participate and wishing to avoid any perception of pressure.

4.7.4 *Informed consent*

The Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form ensured that I adhered to the principles of informed consent (Adler & Clark 2014; Cherry 2000; Padget 2017). I circulated the Participant Information Sheet during the initial recruitment phase, then forwarded it again following an expression of interest. During the second stage of recruitment, the Participant Consent Form accompanied the Participant Information Sheet, providing an opportunity for further review. An individual interview or participation in a focus group discussion was then arranged where the Participant Consent Form was discussed and signed.

4.7.5 *Anonymity*

Anonymity means that the research participant cannot be identified by any means or by any person and, when promised, that not even the researcher should be able to associate a response with a particular individual (Royse 2019). The research I

conducted did not allow for anonymity. Anonymity could not be assured because I used a qualitative approach and participants would be involved in individual interviews and/or a focus group discussion where their identity would be revealed. Although I could not ensure anonymity, I could limit recognisability through the use of pseudonyms.

4.7.6 Confidentiality

Confidentiality means that any sensitive or private information is being supplied with the understanding that the participant's identity, although known to the researcher, will be protected (Royse 2019). I was able to maintain confidentiality by removing all identifying markers from transcriptions, for example, age, place of employment, and name. I identified the coded transcripts using a number and kept information re-identifying participants in a locked filing cabinet accessible only to me. I applied pseudonyms for the discussion of findings.

4.7.7 Monitoring of Research Conduct

My research conduct was monitored during regular supervision throughout my candidature. My supervisors oversaw the development of the research project ensuring the recruitment processes were voluntary, consent was informed, confidentiality maintained, and any potential harm minimised.

4.8 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have outlined the approach I took to answering my research question. I have justified a qualitative approach employing semi-structured interviews and one focus group discussion as a way of gaining in-depth understanding of practitioners' social work practice framework experiences. I have explained that a systematic approach for analysing the data has allowed me to identify themes across my dataset. In the next chapter, I present my findings. Collated into themes, these findings offer rich insights into practitioners' shared SWPF experiences. In Chapter 6, I draw on these findings to answer my research question.

Chapter 5: Research Findings

I now present the findings of my research regarding the following question: How can Assemblage Theory provide insights into what strengthens and weakens the capacity emerging from social work practice frameworks? Through this question I sought to understand the capacity SWPFs have for communicating social work's collective professional identity. Analysed through an Assemblage Theory lens, these findings give insights into participants' experiences of their and others' SWPFs. Grouped into three sections, the presentation commences with participants' knowledge of SWPFs, along with the origins of their knowledge. Participants' commitment to having a framework throughout their careers, as well as the purpose participants assigned to their frameworks are presented in Section 5.1. In Section 5.2, I focus on the components participants included in their SWPFs, along with their assemblage of these components. In the final section, I present participants' confidence in their framework and their experiences articulating their frameworks for practice. Section 5.3 concludes by presenting participants' experiences of their social work colleagues' articulation of their practice frameworks and the attitudes some social work colleagues had expressed towards SWPFs in general.

5.1 BEGINNINGS, COMMITMENT AND PURPOSE

5.1.1 *'Uni ... I wouldn't have heard about practice frameworks otherwise'*

When asked about their social work practice frameworks, I found that all the participants understood what I meant and had developed one for themselves. In addition, all participants understood the purpose of a SWPF. Once I had mentioned that I would be exploring practice frameworks that represent the social work profession, no further clarification was necessary. When exploring the origins of participants' SWPF knowledge, Julie, Chloe, Mia, Molly, Chrissy and Toni referred to their undergraduate degrees. Chloe stated that she would not have learnt about SWPFs *"had it not been for [her] undergraduate studies."* Molly also recollected learning about SWPFs at university: *"I cannot remember specifically, but I do feel like I did become aware of it at university."*

It is interesting to note that Molly and Chloe graduated after 1990, when the development of a social work practice framework was one of the minimum requirements for social work course accreditation (AASW 1990), while Chrissy, Julie, Mia and Toni, on the other hand, all graduated in the 1980s. Social work accreditation standards prior to 1990 were not available for review; however, Chrissy, Julie, Mia and Toni all said that their SWPF knowledge originated from their undergraduate studies. Julie described how she remembered her lecturers discussing SWPFs. Chrissy also recalled *“really fantastic tutors and lecturers at university”* who introduced her to SWPFs and encouraged her interest in them. Toni said: *“It was probably in my social work degree.”* Mia referred more specifically to her knowledge of SWPFs developing because of a curriculum requirement:

Yes, I cannot remember at what point of that curriculum ... in the four years ... I know that at the end, in that fourth year, we had to produce a document that somehow illustrated our practice framework.

Their responses indicated how social work practice framework development was embedded in their undergraduate studies, either as an assessment piece, lecture material or tutorial discussions. Lecturers and tutors had integrated the term ‘[social work] practice framework’ into their teaching practices, and participant responses suggest that these codifying processes contributed to their knowledge and understanding of SWPFs, along with the assemblage’s purpose. As a point of contrast, Jan (graduated 1979) and Karen (graduated 2003) said their knowledge of these frameworks originated from their social work colleagues following graduation, not from their education.

5.1.2 ‘It has gotten even more important over the years’

Participants’ responses demonstrated an ongoing commitment to social work practice framework development throughout their careers. Chrissy stated: *“I look at the old framework and I think about what I do now and, um, there is difference but there is still a lot of old stuff there.”* Chrissy’s comments show how her framework had been part of her practice over time, and the changes she observed suggested she has been committed to its development.

Julie considered her framework historically. Although she observed small changes, her reflections demonstrated an ongoing commitment to having a framework as part of her practice:

Yes, it has changed over time, but not greatly, I must say, which is interesting. When you look back over life changes, even it hasn't changed dramatically. I haven't really. I guess that goes back to who I am, really, in what I chose for theories in work, what fits with people I work [with].

Chloe and Mia mentioned a similar sense of commitment. Chloe described how the shape and form of her social work practice framework had changed over time, indicating that, since graduating, she had retained her framework. Mia discussed the history as well as the future of her framework:

I am sure one of the biggest things was when reading back over it [the practice framework] seemed to be such a defined thing. Certainly, now I would not have the audacity to proclaim such [a] rigid and forthright practice framework—very much knowledge of the fluidity of that and the influences upon it and the openness, and in a very valid way it may change and shape into the future.

Their social work practice frameworks had remained central for these participants. Viewed from an Assemblage Theory perspective, their responses suggest that exposure to formal and informal codifying processes during their studies contributed to their knowledge and understanding of SWPFs. These formative influences then appeared to contribute to their ongoing commitment to having a SWPF throughout their careers.

5.1.3 'It communicates my professional identity'

All participants said that their social work practice framework communicated their social work professional identity. Molly stated that hers was good at articulating who she was as a social worker. Karen's response referred explicitly to her individual professional identity:

It gives me that grounding to know what I am doing and why I am doing it, and that is where it stays, so I just go and do what I need to do. So, for me, it gives me my professional identity as an individual.

Karen indicated how her SWPF grounded her professionally, informing her actions and promoting her sense of identity. Mia described her framework as unique, and how it clearly identified her as a social worker and shaped her practice:

I think my practice framework provides me with the defence for what I do, and which, therefore, conveys my professional identity—this is what I do—so it puts some boundaries around— puts some parameters around what I do—that is different to what someone else does.

For Mia, having clear parameters around who she was professionally was important, and her SWPF facilitated such boundary setting. Toni discussed the collaboration necessary during case reviews and how her framework provided a social work perspective in these meetings:

We have case reviews once a week, so there is an expectation that we put in a social work perspective—that is where we review people's progress and stuff—so we put in a social work perspective on how a person is going. So, from that would be our framework.

Julie described how important her SWPF was for holding onto who she is as a social worker in contexts that no longer promote her professional identity:

It is very easy not to identify as [a] social worker in an organisation you work for anymore. I have often not been in social work positions, so ... the thing that holds me to my social work is my framework, because the organisation never does.

Chloe emphasised the role that SWPFs have in communicating a social work identity: “*I think everyone has a practice framework taken as being a social worker.*” It is possible to see that these participants experienced the same property emerging from their SWPFs, that is, the creation and reinforcement of their professional identity as social workers and its development over time with experience. Although participants' SWPFs varied in their components and structure, all participants stated that their social work professional identity emerged from their SWPF. Accordingly, such a framework was important to participants when they needed to communicate their professional identity or when they needed confidence in their identity as a social worker.

Interestingly, most participants referred to their SWPF's as communicating their individual social work identities. Jan and Mia were the only participants that referred more broadly to social work's collective professional identity and the role of SWPF's. Jan discussed the danger of not articulating with firmness issues about social work's professional identity. Jan argued that social workers cannot “*pick and choose*” what components represented social work, stating there needed to be “*some discipline*

as a profession as well as some identity beyond the individual". For Jan, SWPF's were important for articulating social work's professional contributions so they were clearly understood both collectively and individually, and some parameters needed to be set around what components comprised SWPF's to ensure this could be achieved. Mia also viewed SWPF's as potentially promoting the collective professional identity of social work so the profession can be treated equally with other professions. Most participants however focussed on their individual social work identities when discussing the purpose of their social work practice framework.

5.2 COMPONENTS AND ASSEMBLAGE

5.2.1 ‘This is how you make a chocolate cake’

I asked the participants what comprised their social work practice frameworks. Under analysis, themes emerged from their responses, including: knowledge, skills, values, context, self. Jan used the analogy of a chocolate cake recipe to illustrate how the ‘ingredients’ or components of a SWPF can vary:

I guess part of that is if you just have two elements to your practice framework and it's about skills and it's about values is that going to be sufficient as a vehicle to support that emerging professional when they leave the university? Is it going to give them enough to work with? To me it is like the recipe. We never quite get the recipe right because we add a bit more in of these sorts of things, but unless you have a recipe, this is how you make a chocolate cake.

Jan’s metaphor has clear synergies with the concept of an assemblage. In the following sub-sections, I set out the components of the participants’ SWPFs and how they selected them.

Knowledge

When discussing the components of their SWPF, participants referred to the following: theories, facts, research, information, and ‘practice wisdom’. I grouped these components under the theme ‘knowledge’. Participants included these components in varying ways. For example, some (Molly, Jan, Toni and Karen) only referred to theories. Others (Julie, Chloe, Mia and Chrissy) mentioned theories, facts, research, information or practice wisdom, but in varying combinations.

Assemblage theory describes how some assemblages can have additional scaffolding of internal structures (DeLanda 2016). The participants’ responses evidenced such scaffolding when they discussed the theory component of their frameworks. Julie, for example, listed a number of theories when asked what comprised the theoretical component of her SWPF, including: Systems Theory, Communication Theory, Solutions Focused Theory, Family Therapy, and Narrative Theory. Molly, on the other hand, referred to Brief Therapy, Solution Focused Theory, Narrative Theory, and Cognitive Behavioural Theory. Here is what Chrissy had to say on the matter:

So, I have included things like Mindfulness Theory, which I really love, so that is now part of my framework. I have also included Resilience Theory, because that's just fantastic. I really love that, so I have included that. 'Strengths' is not such a part of my framework as it was, but I notice that I still do use it.

These findings demonstrate how variable participants' components were, when themed as knowledge, and this variability continues throughout all of the following themes.

Skills

Although integral to most participants' social work practice frameworks, not all included skills as components. Five participants identified 'skills' when discussing what comprised their SWPF. Similar to 'theories' in the preceding section, Molly, Jan and Julie identified additional internal structures when discussing the skills component of their framework. For example, Molly listed the following skill subsets: "*micro skills, your active listening skills, and group facilitation skills.*" Jan listed several skill subsets that were umbrellaed by the skills component of her framework:

We need to have counselling skills, communication skills, I think they are fundamental and must be consistently there ... some skills particularly in that area of communication, mediation, negotiation.

Julie also identified a number of skill subsets:

Basic social work skills like building rapport and questioning style and reframing, all those sorts of things [are] I think your basic crucial skills that you need ... I also think skills in listening.

Two of the participants mentioned 'skills' as a component of their SWPFs but did not elaborate.

Ethics and Values

When asked what other components comprised their social work practice frameworks, two participants included 'ethics' and one included 'principles'. All but one participant included 'values'. Although values were included more consistently, there was less consistency in what participants described as representing values. For example, some participants referred to 'professional values' while others included both professional and personal values, or referred to values generally, as illustrated by Chrissy's statement: "*values and ethics is actually a really big part of my framework for practice*" and Toni: "*my values*".

Context

Another theme that emerged when participants discussed the components of their social work practice frameworks was context. Two participants recognised the influence of context and thus integrated it as a component of their framework. What constituted context varied from person to person. Take Chloe, for example, who mentioned “*the influence of government politics*”, and also said:

The organisational framework certainly influences. So, you might have a particular framework that you want to work but it might not fit within the organisation I am working for.

Mia, on the other hand, referred to the centrality of the agency or organisational context as a component in her framework:

I think the context from which I am operating is a central part, as well ... Me, and the agency context from which I'm working, because there is a whole heap of requirements with it. Some constraints, some opportunities, but requirements nonetheless. So, I need to factor that into my framework that guides how I intervene in any situation.

Although Chrissy referred generally to context, she did not include it as one of her SWPF components. She did, however, state that it needed to be acknowledged: “*I think that context is important, and I do not think that it has to be part of your framework, but it has to be taken into account.*”

Self

The fifth and last theme I identified was ‘self’, which all but three of the participants mentioned as a component, though they did so in differing ways. For example, Julie said:

My use of self– you have to use what you have got. I know [I] use my age and my experience, not by mentioning it or anything like that, but just through that knowledge. You bring that into your work, and how you approach interviews and things like that, so you have got your knowledge base of where you are working.

Chrissy referred to ‘self’ as core to her practice, stating that the “*core of all of that is who we are and how we then interact with the client.*” Mia described self like this: “*Knowledge of myself intra-personally, knowledge of myself interpersonally, and knowledge of myself within the community I live in.*”

These findings demonstrate how participants' framework components varied. From an Assemblage Theory perspective, such variation can affect the distinctiveness of an assemblage, along with the capacity emerging from it.

5.2.2 *'It is like the old monkey bars at school'*

When I asked participants how they assembled the components of their social work practice framework, most chose a metaphor: a set of monkey bars, a star, a pie, a house, a tree, a toolbox:

When I am going to visualise a practice framework, I will visualise a structure that you climb, those climbing structures that you see. And all the points that influence my practice, and so values, use of self, all the different theoretical perspectives that I have learnt over the years. My travels, my nursing, my practice, all the different clients that I have worked with. And they would come together as an overarching sort of structure. It is like the old monkey bars at school; you climb up a ladder and you walk across. (Toni)

Yes, very simple—like a star. The centre of that being your values, yourself that you are bringing into that. Then your theory and your knowledge— the knowledge that wherever you are working is important, like your procedural knowledge, your acts and legislation from wherever you are, theoretical knowledge, and your research knowledge, and practice wisdom, and your skills—it is just a way of trying to remember it. (Julie)

I draw up a pie, and so there are pieces of pie. One of those pieces is values and ethics, but at the core of all that, right in the middle of the pie, so at the core of the framework for practice, that is who they are, and that then emanates out into probably all the parts of the pie, but specifically values and ethics, but all the other parts, too. (Chrissy)

We got on the whiteboard, drew this house, and started from the bottom up, and then we used it for my practice framework. (Karen)

I use metaphor often as the tools. So, I have been through the stage of the tree, roots, core trunk, and fertiliser. You know you can just keep going with the metaphor—different climatic conditions, and the pruning. (Mia)

It is the toolbox thing. That word is used a lot, [in the sense] of what tools are you going to take? (Chloe)

Other participants used a model or a diagram:

As far as representation, I don't think I could imagine having something that is fixed. I think it would be something that, if I was to come up with a model, like a visual representation of my framework, even words under theories under skills under values under self. (Molly)

I think it is about joining the dots around a whole set of professional values within the context of our work that has this fit or this fit. (Jan)

Participants valued taking variable approaches for assembling the components of their SWPF, describing how this enabled them to develop a framework representing not only their practice but also the diversity within the profession:

I think that we just have to be clear that social workers are a very broad brush; that it is global, that it is community, that it is local, that it is micro, macro, and there really is a huge area that it covers. Frameworks will be very different, and I think that is fine. (Chrissy)

Karen made a similar comment when discussing her SWPF. She discussed how social workers embrace diverse practices and varying approaches to how their practice assembly captures these practices. Jan, too, said “*one size does not fit all.*” Molly mentioned how having varying ways to assemble her SWPF meant she did not feel “*boxed in*”. Molly commented how such variation captured the ongoing development and changing nature of SWPFs over time. Chloe discussed the richness that varied approaches bring, offering different ways to view social work practice. Variable approaches provided Chrissy with different ideas that encouraged her development:

I guess I just love different ways in which I see people can do it ... People have done all sorts of wonderful things. My analogy of building a house is one way—personally, I use a pie. Others do all sorts of wonderful things. In my office, I have some wonderful examples of frameworks for practice. Some students, for their final piece of assessment, they are just terrific, good visual, you know, diagrams and different ways of doing it. One person—who is just an excellent student—she has got different contexts around the page; I mean it is just terrific. So, I have seen lots of different frameworks. They are all quite different. I think you can have fun with it.

Variable approaches for assembling frameworks for practice were important to all participants; however, from an Assemblage Theory perspective, such variation also obscures an assemblage, making it more difficult to discern what it represents.

5.3 CONFIDENCE, ARTICULATION AND ATTITUDE

5.3.1 ‘No, I would be embarrassed’

When I was exploring participants’ confidence in their social work practice frameworks, varying levels of confidence were apparent. For example, Mia described having a strong sense of confidence in her SWPF, explaining that she used her SWPF to inform her clinical work and decision-making, which generated a sense of professional confidence. Interestingly, her confidence did not translate into articulating her framework to others:

No, I would be embarrassed. No, I do not think, if I was talking to other colleagues from my profession or other professions, I would ... I do not think I could take that articulation and offer it to someone working in a very different paradigm.

Like Mia, Chrissy also expressed confidence in her SWPF. For Chrissy, her confidence helped her to articulate her SWPF in most professional settings:

The exception to that would probably be with police, and that is not in general, that is just in specific instances. I have had a few battles at SCAN [Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect] meetings, and yes, occasionally with doctors and often with police.

Molly, Julie and Chloe spoke of their feelings of diminished confidence when articulating their SWPFs to others. For Molly, the thought of discussing her SWPF prompted considerable negative self-talk which criticised her understanding of her practice components and what they represented. Instead of expressing confidence in her SWPF, Molly described a sense of uncertainty:

Did I use knowledge or theory? See, I want to change or check that I am right before I say it. What happens if I get that wrong? Will everyone else go, ‘Oh my God, you don’t even know what a theory is! You don’t even know the difference between methods and skills’?

Julie lamented the difficulty she experienced articulating her SWPF, providing further evidence of the challenges this can present: “[I] never feel I am not quite okay enough with the things I am talking about in case anyone asked more in depth.” When I asked if she would articulate her practice framework if working in a multidisciplinary team, Julie responded:

Yes, if I was to work in a situation like that, I would work on it to make sure I could articulate it to those other professions. I would need some work to do that, however.

Chloe described how a lack of time and preparedness affected her confidence. Her immediate response, when asked to articulate her SWPF was, “*it is hard isn’t it?*” She then said: “*If I have time, quite good; if I do not have time, it is a bit different.*” Julie and Chloe’s responses revealed the lack of preparedness they felt about articulating their SWPFs. Chloe emphasised her uncertainty:

I would probably use the whiteboard method to draw, and I have done this before with the teams I have worked with. I might say, when I am thinking about the way I practice, I am thinking about these components and would put them down, and I would be able to do that freely, I think.

In adopting a social constructionist perspective, participant responses revealed how they chose to construct their SWPF to represent their social work professional identities. However, what they had constructed did not evoke confidence nor a sense of professional robustness. It appears the construction of their social work professional identities was thwarted by the lack of clarity concerning SWPF.

5.3.2 ‘I do not know how anyone would know my professional framework for practice’

Although all of the participants said they had a framework for practice from which their professional identity emerged, few discussed their framework with others. Molly, for example, said her discussions with colleagues were never about social work practice frameworks:

If I am working somewhere where I can do good quality supervision, but it has never been around practice frameworks. Such a shame—could have been—I would throw in a little bit of theory—what is that about, what do you use to do that—but I would honestly say I have never used the term I feel really bad, sorry.

For Toni, a lack of confidence about social work’s unique contribution inhibited these discussions. Toni questioned what social workers brought to team discussions which kept her from using her SWPF to contribute: “*From a social work perspective ... what do we bring to the team?*” Mia highlighted how uncertainty as to

what constitutes a SWPF heightened her vulnerability, and thus inhibited her articulation of her own framework:

If we were a physiotherapist or a teacher or whatever in terms of defending what they do, it seems to me there is a lot more knowns. Whereas, for us, there are so many unknowns, so our vulnerability is a lot more heightened. I am going to be a lot more cautious in having conversations where my vulnerability is heightened than I would if I was very sure of the facts ... Collegial conversations require quite an element of exposure to be talking about that or laying it out for people.

Chrissy, too, felt reluctant: “*I would say that my professional framework is there all the time, but I do not know how anyone would know my professional framework for practice.*” In Section 5.1, participants’ responses indicated how integral their SWPFs were to their practice and participants were referring to their SWPF to construct their social work identities, their lack of confidence in what they had assembled affected their willingness to articulate their framework to others.

5.3.3 ‘It is not a topic of conversation’

Most of the participants told me that their social work colleagues had not discussed their social work practice frameworks with them either, meaning that there was little opportunity to seek guidance, to compare their frameworks, or to engage in critical discussions about their frameworks. Molly described how students were also hesitant to discuss their frameworks for practice: “*I do not hear the new graduates talking about their practice frameworks ever, yet I know they are learning it.*” Molly’s comments indicated that new graduates, with the most recent exposure to SWPF development, were not discussing these assemblages in their employment contexts. It is possible that the reluctance new graduates exhibited with regard to articulating their SWPFs was a result of their nascent confidence in what they had assembled. Other participants, however, also described a similar silence when discussing their social work colleagues:

I would have to say it was not a big topic of conversation. I do not think I have ever had someone explain to me what their framework is, except when you apply for a job and they tell you ‘eclectic’. (Molly)

Mm, I guess I find it really alarming that a lot of social workers aren’t able to articulate a framework for practice. (Chrissy)

No one talks like that. Not where I work ... You may hear 'I think I am going to try this approach today, or I am going to try this approach', but they are not using the term 'practice framework', so I think you are not hearing the term, but I think people are using it. (Chloe)

I have not experienced it as a general topic of conversation when I have worked in teams of social workers. (Mia)

I do not, to be honest. ... I don't know how to answer. ... [The] only people I have heard talk about their practice frameworks has been lecturers at university. [It] seems to come so easily and so quickly, so I don't think I have heard other social workers articulate that succinctly. (Julie)

I suppose I have heard it in a couple of interviews that I have had at the [name] hospital with one of their social work educators up there, but as far as working with social workers in the field? No. (Karen)

Chrissy brought up social work students on practicum:

Actually, I have had students go out on placement, and one of the things I ask them to do is go around to everyone who is willing, who is agreeable, and ask them what their framework for practice is. So, they can just see the differences between different professions and their frameworks, and many times they will come back and say, 'Look, half of them didn't even have one,' so that is very concerning.

Jan's comments, below, suggest that an absence of discussion weakened what the assemblage represented, with practitioners rarely referring to their SWPF:

I would work with many mature-age social workers, and I would tend to say they do not use that terminology. They might use other terminology that, in a sense, is saying the same when they talk about their approach, or their values, or this is how they think about this, in a sense, if you actually pull that together, it means a practice framework, but they do not use the term 'practice framework'.

Mia also observed her colleagues stumbling when it came to articulating their SWPF:

What I have noticed is that people probably stumble—I think we all stumble along because there are no easy recognisable guideposts, or the best guides we can probably find.

Mia's reflections suggest that if clearer information on SWPFs were available then such "stumbling" might end. In Section 3.3, I discussed how SWPFs are integral to practice; however, the participants in this study, expressed reluctance to articulate

their frameworks to others. Participants' observations of their colleagues indicated a similar reluctance regarding articulating their framework for practice. A broad reluctance, then, thwarted opportunities for participants to communicate their social work professional identities via their SWPFs.

5.3.4 'Don't be a show pony'

My investigations found the attitude of participants' social work colleagues affected their willingness to discuss their social work practice frameworks. 'Attitude' here refers to a positive or negative regard shown towards SWPFs. Molly and Julie spoke of their social work colleagues' negative attitudes. Molly discussed how some colleagues considered SWPFs to be incongruent with the profession:

'Do not wrap a framework around me. That is why I do social work, so I do not have to hang my hat on this and this and this and it is not neat and tidy'. We don't want to sound particularly impressive because that goes against [the] profession' ... Like I said, coming across people who don't see value see it all as a bit 'show pony', you know, get on and do your job. Stop talking about it, go do it.

Chloe also described an attitude that sought to avoid any use of the term 'social work practice framework'. The following statements suggest that such terminology was not welcomed in her work place:

Let's be real about that word, we heard that word all the way through university, but no-one talks like that, not where I work. No-one says, 'What practice framework might you use?'

Julie also identified laziness or lack of motivation associated with career stage as another attitude affecting discussion of SWPFs:

I think people tend to become a bit lazy and blasé and probably are not conscious anymore about a practice framework or are not interested in speaking about it and are just there to do the job and retire.

Although significant professionally (see Section 3.3), SWPFs did not appear worthy of such colleagues' time. A lack of interest in SWPFs, as well as their association with professional eliteness, also influenced some participants' willingness to articulate their SWPF to others.

5.4 CONCLUSION

To understand participants' social work practice framework experiences, I have referred to aspects of Assemblage Theory to generate new insights and to theorise about this assemblage. In so doing, I have shown how codifying processes have contributed to these experiences. In Chapter 6, I compare my findings with previous research. My discussion integrates Assemblage Theory to draw connections between codifying processes and the capacity participants' frameworks had for communicating their collective professional identity. These connections underpin the advancement of knowledge regarding the role that codifying processes can play in strengthening the capacity that emerges from SWPFs.

Chapter 6: Discussion

Social work practice frameworks are considered instrumental for communicating a robust collective professional identity, and such robustness is essential if social work is to advance its aims in a neoliberal environment (Clare 2006; Healy 2014). Through an Assemblage Theory lens, I have sought to understand what affects the capacity SWPFs have for communicating the profession's collective identity. In this chapter, I refer to the findings presented above to draw connections between codifying processes, as found in AASW policy and the social work literature, and participants' SWPF experiences. By drawing these connections, I illuminate the role codifying processes have had in strengthening and weakening the capacity that emerges from the participants' SWPFs.

6.1 PROFESSIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF 'DIALLING UP' SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE FRAMEWORKS

Viewed from an Assemblage Theory perspective, terminology and descriptors are codifying processes that 'dial up' or territorialise assemblages so that what they represent and the capacity that emerges from them is clear (DeLanda 2016). In this section, I draw on Assemblage Theory to highlight the connections I found between codifying processes that 'dialled up' SWPFs and the professional implications participants experienced. By drawing these connections, I will illustrate how the professional implications participants experienced affected the capacity their frameworks had for communicating their collective identity.

6.1.1 *Recognising the Term 'Social Work Practice Framework'*

All of the participants recognised the term 'social work practice framework'. In addition, all understood that the term 'social work practice framework' was used to represent the assembly of various practice components and their interrelationships. Their responses mirrored the literature, in which the various components representing social work practice and their interrelationships are termed '[social work] practice frameworks' (AASW 1990; 2012b; 2013; 2020c; Chenoweth & McAuliffe 2020; Connolly, Harms & Maidment 2018; Healy 2014; O'Connor et al. 2008). From an Assemblage Theory perspective, the terminology used to describe SWPFs is a

codifying process that has helped distinguish this assemblage and establish its recognisability (DeLanda 2016).

The participants' responses illustrated the role that codifying processes have played in integrating the term 'social work practice framework' into their professional lexicons. All but two of the participants said that their knowledge of SWPFs came from their qualifying studies, while the others had first encountered the term at work. From 1990, codifying processes have been part of the Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards (AASW 1990), and, for participants graduating after 1990, these codifying processes most likely contributed to their knowledge formation during their studies. Unfortunately, earlier standards were not available for review; but participants indicated that the term 'social work practice framework' had become established as referring to the components of social work practice and their interrelationships. It is likely that formal and informal codifying processes, such as lectures, assessments, collegial discussions, professional development, and the social work literature, had contributed to their knowledge and use of the term.

Understanding the formative influences of participants' knowledge regarding SWPFs suggests the influence that codifying processes have had distinguishing the term 'social work practice framework'. Previous research has not investigated the contributions that codifying processes have made to integrating the term 'social work practice framework' into the profession's lexicon. Processes that integrate terminology into a profession's lexicon help to enhance an assemblage's recognisability, along with the capacity that emerges from it (DeLanda 2016). From an Assemblage Theory perspective, codifying processes have contributed to participants' shared knowledge and understanding of the term 'social work practice framework'. Integrating framework terminology into the participants' lexicon clarified and strengthened what the assemblage represents, along with the capacity that emerges from it.

6.1.2 Promoting Practice Framework Development and Commitment

In addition to the participants recognising and understanding the term 'social work practice framework', they all stated that they had developed a framework for practice. Their responses indicated that their framework development was influenced by their exposure to codifying processes, such as assessment pieces, lectures or collegial discussions during their qualifying studies (AASW 1990) or work. The

commitment participants evinced indicated how significant their frameworks were to their practice. This is congruent with AASW policy and the literature: AASW policy includes SWPF development in its education and accreditation standards, practice standards and continuing professional education requirements (AASW 1990; 2012a; 2012b; 2013); and many academic publications cite the development of a SWPF as integral to practice (see, for example: Chenoweth & McAuliffe 2020; Connolly & Harms 2019; Healy 2014; O'Connor et al. 2008).

Codifying processes have done the work of embedding SWPF development as an important professional requirement in these texts. Through an Assemblage Theory lens, codifying processes facilitating such embedment have 'dialled up' SWPFs. For the participants, this 'dialling up' appeared to establish a view that SWPFs remained important throughout their careers. Understanding participants' commitment from an Assemblage Theory perspective has given new insight into the role of codifying processes. Through an Assemblage Theory lens, codifying processes facilitating practitioners' ongoing commitment to their SWPF development has helped fortify this assemblage, ensuring that what it represents, along with the capacity emerging from it, remains recognisable and integral to practice (DeLanda 2016).

6.1.3 *Communicating Individual Social Work Identities*

All participants felt that their social work practice framework communicated their individual social work identities. Although participants' framework components and their subsequent assemblage varied, each participant described how their individual social work identity emerged from the interrelationship of their practice components. Statements such as "*it gives me my professional identity*" and "*my practice framework provides me with the defence for what I do, which therefore conveys my professional identity*" indicate how central their framework is for communicating their individual professional identities. These responses echo the literature, where codifying processes describe how one of the purposes of a SWPF is to communicate social workers' professional identity (Chenoweth & McAuliffe 2020; Connolly & Harms 2019; Connolly, Harms & Maidment 2018; Healy 2014; O'Connor et al. 2008). They revealed how participants sought to have a sense of themselves within their profession (Levy, Schlomo & Itzhaky 2014; Murray 2013; Webb 2017) and to have the desired traits of their profession (Costello 2004; Moorhead 2019;

Murray 2013; Webb 2017). For Mia and Jan, SWPF's were also viewed as important towards their collective sense of belonging to a profession (Levy, Schlomo & Itzhaky 2014; Murray 2013; Wiles 2013). These findings enhance our understanding of the link between codifying processes and establishing an assemblage that communicates social work's professional identity. Participants' responses revealed the influence codifying processes 'dialling up' social work practice frameworks have had on their own development of one. More importantly, the development of a SWPF established an assemblage to which participants consistently refer to communicate their professional identities. From an Assemblage Theory perspective, when participants consistently refer to their SWPF to communicate their identities, the assemblages' emergent capacity is also enhanced. This is because consistency in the purpose and application of SWPFs helps to distinguish the capacity emerging from them (DeLanda 2016).

6.1.4 Effect on Practitioners' Attitudes towards Social Work Practice Frameworks

Interestingly, some participants indicated how 'dialling up' had affected social work colleagues' attitudes towards social work practice frameworks. Some participants mentioned colleagues expressing a negative attitude towards SWPFs or discarding the relevance of SWPFs completely. Prior research has found some practitioners arguing that social work ought to accept a more marginal status rather than aspiring to the power and prestige of more established professions (Clare 2006; Healy & Meagher 2004), or completely reject or express ambivalence towards its professionalisation (Harrison & Healy 2016; Swain 2017). In this study, some practitioners' social work colleagues expressed similar sentiments out of disquiet about elitism. This becomes significant where SWPFs are interpreted as an expression of professionalisation as elitism.

These participants' experiences have shed light on the effect that codifying processes have had on some practitioners' attitudes towards social work practice frameworks. In these circumstances, codifying processes 'dialling up' SWPFs present a challenge to the function they have in communicating social work's professional identities. While such rejection does not affect the capacity SWPFs have for

communicating social work professional identities, it does mean that those who encounter social workers will come away with varying impressions of the profession.

6.2 PROFESSIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF ‘DIALLING DOWN’ SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE FRAMEWORKS

Whereas ‘dialling up’ territorialises an assemblage, fortifying what it represents along with the capacity emerging from it, ‘dialling down’ dilutes its recognisability, as well as its emergent capacity (DeLanda 2016). Here, I will continue to draw connections between the role codifying processes have had in ‘dialling down’ social work practice frameworks and the professional implications the participants described. These implications were viewed as affecting the capacity participants’ frameworks had for communicating their collective social work identity.

6.2.1 *Communicating Idiosyncratic Practices*

When participants described the components of their social work practice frameworks, significant heterogeneity was evident. For example, participants identified self, knowledge, skills, contexts, values and ethics as their frameworks’ components; though I did find variation in their inclusion. In addition, the internal structures of these components varied considerably. I found that participants’ assemblages echoed the literature, where social work academic texts promoted heterogeneity with regard to the components and assemblage of a framework (Chenoweth & McAuliffe 2020; Healy 2014).

Heterogeneity is important and necessary; it represents the diversity of social work practice. However, Assemblage Theory states that heterogeneity dilutes an assemblage’s emergent capacity (Deleuze & Guattari 1988). For example, most, but not all, participants identified ‘self’ as a component. Similarly, most, but not all, included ‘skills’, and a few included ‘context’. Nearly all included ‘knowledge’, ‘values’ and ‘ethics’. Nevertheless, their absence from some participants’ social work practice frameworks, along with differing component combinations, demonstrated a marked variation between participants’ frameworks upon comparison.

Codifying processes promoting heightened heterogeneity led participants to take a highly idiosyncratic approach to assembling their practice components into a framework. Participants described varying ways to assemble the components, such as

using metaphors, diagrams, or models. Their methods aligned with the literature, which encourages creativity and individualistic approaches to social work practice framework assemblage (Chenoweth & McAuliffe 2020; Connolly & Harms 2019; Healy 2014; O'Connor et al. 2008). In Section 3.3.1, I highlighted how the omission of information from AASW policy documents can be seen as promoting a flexible approach to the development of a SWPF. The AASW does this by lacking formulated policies on SWPF assemblage, consistent with, and perhaps to support, flexibility.

In these circumstances, my research has shown how codifying processes promoting a flexible, idiosyncratic approach 'dial down' an assemblage, weakening the capacity emerging from it (DeLanda 2016). Instead of an assemblage representing the profession collectively, participants' social work practice frameworks communicated their individual social work identities. A focus on individualised, idiosyncratic approaches to the development of social work practice, as evidenced in my research, thus weakens the capacity participants' SWPFs have for communicating a robust collective professional identity for social work.

6.2.2 Promoting Social Work Practice Framework Engagement

In this research, codifying processes promoting an idiosyncratic approach were found to promote participants' engagement with developing a framework for practice. Participants described a 'feeling of freedom' when taking an idiosyncratic approach towards their SWPF development. They valued being able to choose components they felt suited their framework and how these components were then assembled. Most participants indicated that flexibility allowed the diversity in the profession as well as of their practice to reveal itself. It stopped one participant from feeling 'boxed in' professionally. As Jan said, "*one size does not fit all*". Participants referred to the variety of contexts, fields and methods of practice and flexibility ensuring that they were able to capture what represented their individual practices.

Participants' engagement in their SWPF development is important because it appears to facilitate a commitment for continuing this development throughout their careers. An idiosyncratic approach appeared to sustain their engagement and their interest in this development, as well as to promote feelings that their assemblages represented their individual professional identities. In Section 6.2.1, my findings suggest that an idiosyncratic approach to SWPF development had 'dialled down' the

capacity participants' SWPFs had for communicating their collective professional identity. Paradoxically, 'dialling down' has also 'dialled up' SWPFs. Although participants' frameworks communicated their individual professional identities, 'dialling down' also fostered their engagement with their SWPF development.

Participants' engagement towards their SWPF development appeared to promote an ongoing commitment with this endeavour, thus ensuring the assemblage remained integral to their practice. From an Assemblage Theory perspective, when there is homogeneity in the purpose and application of an assemblage, the capacity that emerges from it is enhanced (DeLanda 2016). I could not find any research investigating practitioners' engagement with their social work practice framework development. My findings have contributed new understanding of the role that codifying processes can play in promoting practitioners' engagement with developing a framework for practice. My findings suggest that codifying processes must accommodate participants' individual practices if engagement is to be ongoing.

6.2.3 Effect on Participants' and Colleagues' Confidence and Articulation

Of particular concern was the level of confidence participants described when discussing their frameworks for practice. Several participants lacked confidence in their social work practice frameworks. Although participants described the importance of their frameworks for communicating their professional social work identities, codifying processes that have 'dialled down' these frameworks appeared to affect participants' confidence in what they had assembled. Additionally, even though participants stated that their professional identities emerged from the interrelationships of their SWPF components, many did not feel empowered to articulate their professional identities to others. For example, Molly described engaging in negative self-talk, critical of her SWPF and anticipating others' criticism. She reflected on how her self-talk eroded her confidence and on feeling equipped to communicate her framework to others. Mia also questioned her ability to articulate her framework confidently. Although Mia felt confident utilising it to inform her clinical work and decision-making, her confidence did not translate into articulating her framework to others.

Differing social work practice framework components and their subsequent assemblage meant participants questioned the 'correctness' of their assemblages; they

then questioned how colleagues would view their frameworks, meaning that they did not communicate them. This is concerning, as Sansfacon & Crete (2016) research recognised how important collegial mentoring was for strong professional identity formation. These findings mirrored research by Clare (2006). Clare found that the participants in her study felt disempowered to enter broader professional exchanges about practice approaches or did not enter them at all. Similarly, participants in research by Moorhead, Bell and Bowles (2016) stated that they lacked opportunities to nurture their professional identities through collegial discussions. Noble and Sullivan (2009) also found participants lacked or received little proactive strengthening of their identity through their discussions with others. Noble and Sullivan attributed the dearth of discussion to the economic landscape participants operated in. In contrast to Noble and Sullivan's research, the limited critical reflection I found among my participants appeared to be a result of diminished confidence in their SWPFs.

Clare's (2006) research also described a universal lack of a sense of belonging within a clearly identified, empowered professional collective. In concert with Clare's findings, the participants in my study described a silence when their colleagues articulated and explored their social work practice frameworks. Consequently, participants had not been experiencing any meaningful collectiveness. Although 'dialling down' had promoted participants' engagement in SWPF development, it had not nurtured confidence in what they had assembled, which then appeared to affect their willingness to articulate their frameworks.

These findings have contributed new understanding of the role of codifying processes. They have drawn connections between codifying processes that promote an idiosyncratic approach to social work practice framework development and the effect this approach has had on participants' confidence and subsequent articulation of their frameworks for practice. This represents a different way of understanding how experiences of a meaningful professional collectiveness can be affected. It suggests that if participants had confidence in their frameworks, they would be more likely to articulate them to other practitioners, helping to foster a sense of professional belonging.

6.3 COMMUNICATING A ROBUST COLLECTIVE PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

The AASW Code of Ethics reminds social work practitioners that “in all contexts, social workers maintain a dual focus on both assisting human functioning and identifying the systems that create inequality and injustice” (AASW 2020c, p. 6). Social workers’ practice is permeated by the professional values of respect for persons, social justice, and professional integrity (AASW 2020a). They endeavour to confront disadvantage by working at the interface between people and their social, cultural and physical environments (AASW 2020a). Through their professional ‘use of self’, and informed by pertinent knowledge and skills, social workers place the relationship between the practitioner and the people/community they work with at the forefront of their practice (AASW 2020a). Most importantly, social work practice frameworks assemble and facilitate the interrelationships of these components and, in so doing, increase the acumen of social work practice.

Social work’s systemic view ensures that the complexity of people’s lives is not simplified. However, the tenets of neoliberalism have increasingly eroded social work’s professional standing (Hyslop 2016; Swain 2017). Because of this, social work’s capacity to confront the systems perpetuating inequality and injustice has been thwarted (Healy 2014). To combat the influence of neoliberalism, both on the profession of social work and on the people, practitioners work with, a robust collective professional identity is essential (Clare 2006; Healy 2014; Moorhead, Bell & Bowles 2016). For a collectively recognisable identity to be achieved, social work must position itself to demonstrate the ability and professional substance to effect change. A robust collective as well as individual identity provides an important point of resistance to the reductionist and individualising tendencies inherent in neoliberalism. Social work practice frameworks are central to the construction of these professional identities (Healy 2014). These frameworks delineate social work’s approach to welfare situations (Chenoweth & McAuliffe 2020), and the capacity emerging from the interrelationship of framework components helps to distinguish the profession’s unique contributions. More significantly, robust professional identities are important, as they strengthen the working alliances between service-users and social workers (Levin, Roziner & Savaya 2022). However, my research found that codifying processes have reduced this capacity.

Codifying processes promoting an idiosyncratic approach appeared to undermine participants' confidence in their social work practice frameworks as well as their confidence articulating their frameworks to others. Participants also observed a similar hesitancy among their colleagues. In addition, codifying processes seemed to generate an unwelcome connection in some practitioners' minds between SWPFs and elitism—this in a profession where anti-hierarchical and anti-elitist stances are common. Although codifying processes have established social work practice frameworks as integral to practice, these same processes have also obscured what components comprise a SWPF. By promoting an idiosyncratic approach when developing a framework for practice, codifying processes were found to have had an effect on the capacity participants' assemblages had for communicating social work's collective professional identity. If social work is to advance its professional aims in a neoliberal milieu, strengthening the capacity that emerges from social work practice frameworks remains important. From an Assemblage Theory perspective, strengthening this capacity is possible, and I will next highlight how moderating codifying processes can help to distinguish SWPFs.

6.4 'DIALLING IN' SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE FRAMEWORKS

Unlike for teachers, nurses, doctors, and dentists, no distinctive context identifies social work professionally. Instead, social work practitioners enter a broad range of social contexts, bringing their professional identities with them. Social work practice frameworks are thus pivotal to establishing their professional distinctiveness in these contexts. According to Assemblage Theory, codifying processes have the potential to strengthen the capacity SWPFs have for communicating the profession's distinctiveness. Codifying processes that clarify the components of social work practice and their subsequent assemblage can strengthen their emergent capacity; a capacity that represents both practitioners' individual social work identities and the profession collectively.

Assemblage Theory suggests that codifying process parameters can be adjusted to not only 'dial up' and 'dial down' but also to 'dial them in' (DeLanda 2011). In Section 3.1.2, I discussed how the parameters of assemblage can be 'dialled up' so that what it represents becomes clearer and more specific. However, 'dialling up' comes with the risk of an assemblage becoming fixed or rigid. While 'dialling down' allows

for greater flexibility, it, too, can go too far, so that what an assemblage represents becomes diluted and unclear. ‘Dialling in’ suggests that there can be moderation between hard and soft boundaries set by dialling up or down. Moderation gives scope for the existence of a dynamic and flexible space where diversity and coherence can be balanced. Perhaps, through this process of dialling in, the capacity social work practice frameworks have for communicating practitioners’ individual social work identities and the profession’s collective identity can be fortified.

‘Dialled in’ social work practice frameworks would also provide consistency regarding the heterogeneous components that constitute social work practice. However, within these heterogeneous components there is scope for diversity. A ‘dialled in’ SWPF does not ‘box in’ practitioners. Instead, it provides a stable structure that clearly identifies the components of social work practice. It gives consistency, with practitioners’ SWPFs sharing heterogeneous components, within which there is diversity to represent their idiosyncratic approaches.

6.5 CONCLUSION

Examining social work practice frameworks through an Assemblage Theory lens has contributed new knowledge about the effect codifying processes can have on the capacity that emerges from this assemblage. Through this lens, codifying processes fortifying the capacity that participants’ SWPFs had for communicating their collective professional identity were illuminated, as were processes that diminished this capacity. My research has highlighted how capitalising on the amenability of codifying processes can ‘dial in’ SWPFs, augmenting their capacity to communicate social workers’ individual and collective professional identities. In Chapter 7, I demonstrate how such ‘dialling in’ can be achieved.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Social work today finds itself in a neoliberal context which has challenged its ability to advance its professional aims. Through my review of the literature, I was able to establish that a robust collective professional identity is needed if social work is to counter the social and economic disadvantage a neoliberal political environment perpetuates. The research findings reflected how important it was for participants to have the desired traits of their profession (Costello 2004; Moorhead 2019; Murray 2013; Webb 2017) and a sense of who they were professionally (Levy, Schlomo & Itzhaky 2014; Murray 2013; Webb 2017). I found that social work practice frameworks are the assemblage the profession and the participants in this study used to communicate such an identity (Chenoweth & McAuliffe 2020). Examining SWPFs through an Assemblage Theory lens has helped me understand how the capacity SWPFs have for communicating a robust professional identity can be affected by codifying processes. By drawing connections between codifying processes and participants' experiences I was able to elucidate how these processes had increased and reduced the capacity emerging from their frameworks. In this chapter, I draw on the tenets of Assemblage Theory and my findings to propose a SWPF model that utilises codifying processes to moderate the settings of this assemblage so that what it represents is neither diffuse nor inflexible. By moderating the settings of SWPFs, their capacity to accommodate practitioners' idiosyncratic practices as well as to communicate their collective professional identity is enhanced. After introducing the model, I will discuss its implications for research, policy and practice. I then consider the limitations of this research before offering concluding remarks.

7.1 IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE, POLICY AND RESEARCH

My findings are both heartening and concerning. They are heartening in that a social work practice framework exists that has become integrated into the professions and participants' lexicon and practice. In addition, my findings suggested homogeneity existed regarding the assemblage participants described when communicating their professional identities. However, I found that an idiosyncratic approach to SWPF development erodes the capacity practitioners' frameworks had for communicating a

robust collective identity for social work. If social work is to have influence and effect change in a neoliberal environment, robust individual and collective professional identities are essential. Codifying processes, however, as evidenced in AASW policy and the social work literature, have reduced this capacity.

In Chapter 6, I identified the need to ‘dial in’ social work practice frameworks, to strengthen what the assemblage represents and address the current diffuseness of SWPF components and assemblage. ‘Dialling in’ SWPFs will bring homogeneity to the heterogeneous components of social work practice. The following model (Figure 7.1) represents a ‘dialled in’ SWPF, one that accommodates the diversity of social work practice without ‘boxing practitioners in’ while simultaneously strengthening the assemblage’s capacity to communicate a robust collective professional identity.

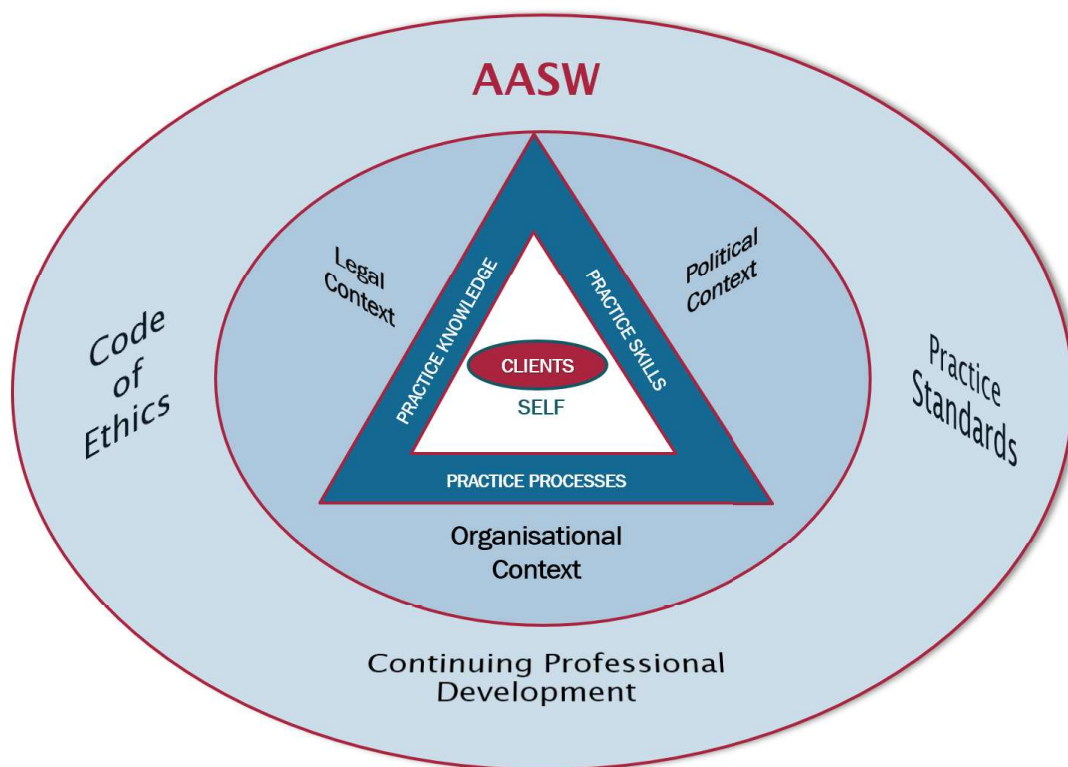


Figure 7.1 An Emerging Social Work Practice Framework Model

Social work practice framework models and diagrams are not new. What is unique about this model, though, is the deliberate inclusion and positioning of components that distinguish social work professionally. The model is a visual representation of the professional components that envelope all social work practice. Their inclusion accentuates how this model’s purpose is to communicate social work’s

collective professional identity as well as practitioners' individual social work identities. Currently, SWPF development embraces idiosyncrasy. My research suggests that this, on its own, weakens the capacity the assemblage has for communicating practitioners' collective identity as social work professionals.

In developing my Emerging Social Work Practice Framework Model, I drew on codifying processes to moderate SWPFs' current diffuseness while also retaining their capacity to communicate practitioners' individual social work identities. I incorporated participants' responses regarding the components they identified as representing their social work practice frameworks. Although varied, their significance in each participant's framework demonstrated the importance of including these components as representative of their individualised practices and social work identity.

In alignment with Assemblage Theory, I employed codifying processes to expand on some components to augment their capacity to communicate social work's collective identity. I have also included additional components deemed central to social work practice. Integral to this model are key AASW components: the AASW Code of Ethics, Practice Standards and Continuing Professional Development. The model has umbrellaed all other components under these key components. Umbrellaing all other components under the key AASW policy and standards documents ensures that all aspects of practice have a social work perspective (Harrison & Healy 2016). It also ensures that AASW policy and standards inform the interrelationships of these practice components. Moreover, the inclusion of AASW components helps to distinguish this assemblage and what it represents: the collective professional identity of social work. This research has focused on Australian social work documents; however, there is scope to capture the global nature of social work, through the incorporation of the International Federation of Social Work definition within this model. I have included clients as a component as they are considered central to social work practice (Harrison & Healy 2016). The model reflects this by deliberately positioning clients at the frameworks' centre. The component 'clients' represents the diversity of social work practice methods. It can refer to individuals, couples, families, groups or community (AASW 2020a). As sub-components, age, developmental stage, gender expression, sexuality, abilities, culture, ethnicity, and relationship status are all considerations. The centrality of 'clients' ensures that every aspect of a practitioners'

social work practice framework is informed by the unique needs and presentation of their clients.

Additionally, the model emphasises the interaction between a practitioner's self and the selves of their clients. It recognises the centrality of the authentic 'use of self' in social work practice and the significance of the client–practitioner relationship. However, the 'use of self' is enveloped by key AASW components (AASW Code of Ethics and AASW Practice Standards), ensuring a practitioner's 'use of self' remains professional and appropriate at all times. Within the practice component are the skills and knowledge relevant to social work practice and methods, as well as processes for specific presenting issues, such as suicidal ideation, grief and loss, depression, child protection, domestic and family violence, etc. However, to communicate a robust collective professional identity, there must be agreement on the importance of the knowledge and skills component; for example, about what knowledge is essential to social work practice and is thus to be included under this component, as well as what skills are essential to social work practice and ought to be included in every practitioner's SWPF, such as active listening, assertiveness and conflict resolution (AASW 2013). The AASW, as well as social work educators, are well placed to facilitate such discussion towards reaching agreement.

As a 'dialled in' social work practice framework, the assemblage also demonstrates capacity to communicate approaches that are specific to each social worker and represent their individualised approaches. For example, in the knowledge component, practitioners can include theories pertinent to their practice, such as, Narrative Theory, Cognitive Theory, Feminist Theory, Strength Based, Anti-oppressive, Intersectional and Decolonising Theories, or methods such as group theory, community development, family therapy, etc. Specialised skills applicable to specific contexts or methods, can also be categorised as practice skills, for example, group facilitation and/or mediation skills. In addition, processes can also include those that are relevant to a practitioners' specific areas of practice and expertise. These examples illustrate how the model accommodates practitioners' idiosyncratic approaches to social work. The model places the influence of context on social work practice at the forefront and accommodates the diversity of contexts social workers are employed in. The model allows practitioners to identify the influence specific

legislation, organisational policies and procedures, as well as political decision-making, have on their practice decisions and direction (Healy 2014; Sansfacon & Crete 2016).

From an Assemblage Theory perspective, the development of a model with consistent, heterogeneous components representing the practice of social work could strengthen the capacity that emerges. Such a model could guide practitioners in developing their own social work practice frameworks, providing both consistency and scope to accommodate their idiosyncratic practices. It could retain the current homogeneity in the assemblage practitioners use to communicate their social work identities and, in so doing, could strengthen the capacities that emerge from SWPFs—the capacities that communicate both individual and collective identities representative of social work. Further research is important for determining what opportunities a model with consistent, heterogeneous components promotes.

The model offers a useful structure for professional supervision. Supervisees and supervisors can use the model to reflect on the different components of a supervisee's practice, as well as to develop their professional social work persona (Moorhead, Bell & Bowles 2016; Moorhead et al. 2019). These reflections can bring explicitness to their framework components as well as their interrelationships. The model facilitates discussion of a supervisee and supervisors' idiosyncratic practices, their areas of expertise, as well as where their practices diverge or are similar. Incorporating the model into AASW policy and standards will clarify social work practice framework terminology and components.

Designers of social work degrees can frame their curricula around the model, so that students' understanding of content and its relevance to practice is further consolidated. Potentially, all curriculum requirements can be articulated through this model. Rather than compartmentalising social work practice components, the model can facilitate students' understanding of how the components interrelate and influence their practice decisions. Integrating the model throughout social work degrees provides an opportunity for students to strengthen their articulation of the profession's collective identity in a safe and supportive educational environment. Incorporating the development and communication of a collective professional identity in an educational environment will create a sense of professional belonging from the outset for students

embarking on a social work career (Moorhead et al. 2019). It also provides scope for students to start identifying their individual professional uniqueness and what theories, skills and processes, along with their ‘use of self’, best communicate this.

Lastly, the model provides scope for further research that can examine the essentiality of each component and its composition. Research investigating the model’s relevance to practice, its utility for practitioners, and its applicability to different social work methods, its’ capacity to express social works’ collective professional identity as well as practitioners’ confidence in their SWPF are other areas of examination. Such endeavours will ensure that the capacity that emerges from social work practice frameworks remains strong. My research has identified the value of conducting a larger study with more diverse participants, such as newly graduated social workers and more experienced practitioners. A larger study with more diverse representation will offer greater insight into the utility of a model for practitioners with differing amounts of practice experience. Including a range of genders, cultures and abilities will reveal how diversity might affect the usefulness of the model.

7.2 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

My sample provided depth, breadth and diversity in the participants’ social work experiences, but significant demographics were not represented. All the participants were female with a span of experience from 10 to 35 years. A less homogenous cohort could have offered insights into how gender, culture and length of career might influence social work practice framework experiences. Because of this lack of cohort diversity, the research did not include perspectives of all genders, new/early graduate, nor culturally diverse social workers. However, although a small sample, it did reflect the demographics of the welfare profession in Australia, in which 85 per cent of the workforce is female (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2021). Snowballing presented certain challenges in achieving a more diverse sample, as I chose social work colleagues who had expressed an interest in my research topic. However, these colleagues were all female, culturally homogenous, and already had years of social work experience. Their self-selection and interest in SWPF’s would have also influenced the findings. Future research could consider different sampling methods, such as purposive sampling, to recruit participants of diverse genders, cultures, amounts of experience, as well as those who may be less dedicated to the

notion of SWPF's. These considerations in future research will add further depth to the knowledge base concerning SWPF's.

In addition, I had a close collegial relationship with five of the participants, which may have influenced their responses and thus the trustworthiness of my findings (Krefting 1991). However, historically, these collegial relationships have also been characterised by robust discussions that embraced differences of opinion and perspective. These participants already saw me as someone they could express disagreements with; such expression was valued professionally. During our interviews and/or focus group discussions, I observed this aspect of our relationship continuing.

Although the interview schedule underwent thorough review and critique through supervision, I did not pilot it. The decision not to pilot the interview schedule was influenced by the limited time available, both to me and to the participants. In retrospect, piloting the interview schedule would have provided further opportunity for review and critique. However, upon implementation, the interview schedule did provide the initial focus I was looking for and was amenable to further adaptation during the interview process as needed.

7.3 CONCLUDING STATEMENT

My belief in the professional uniqueness of social work motivated this research. Enveloped by the professional values of respect for persons, social justice, and professional integrity, social workers endeavour to confront disadvantage by working at the interface between people and their social, cultural and physical environments (AASW 2020a, p. 6). We do this through the professional 'use of self'; informed by pertinent knowledge and skills. Social workers place the relationship between ourselves and the people/community we work with, at the forefront of our practice. The AASW Code of Ethics (2020c, p. 6) reminds us that "in all contexts, social workers maintain a dual focus on both assisting human functioning and identifying the system issues that create inequality and injustice". The systemic view that underpins our practice ensures that the complexity of people's lives is not simplified. Underpinned fundamentally by relationships of trust and rapport, genuine respect, and skilful communication, we build assessments and develop interventions to bring change to people's lives. As a practising social worker, I have a deep understanding of my profession. However, I have felt that my understanding has been

surrounded by misunderstanding or, at times, no understanding of social work: from other professions, the community, and even those in my personal life.

I have pondered why a profession that brings such a unique and effective perspective to problem situations does not share the same robustness and recognition as other professions. From my practice experiences, I recognised the responsibility each social worker carries in shaping the robustness of our profession. As in other professions, social workers must be adept at communicating who we are, but the multiple contexts of our employment, along with the differing fields of practice and methods we employ, complicate this. Unlike doctors, teachers, nurses, dentists, or solicitors, social workers do not have a characterising context—instead, we enter others’ contexts, bringing our profession with us. To have professional recognition, and to be sought after and valued within these contexts, we must offer clarity about who we are. However, social work has struggled with the notion of professional clarity.

I have recognised the role that social work practice frameworks have in communicating robust professional identities. In my professional work, I had observed practitioners who either lacked confidence in their framework, did not refer to their social work practice framework, were unsure what constituted a social work practice framework or of how to articulate it, or did not appear to have one at all. My research therefore sought to investigate SWPFs in order to understand what strengthens and/or weakens the capacity social work practice frameworks have for communicating social work’s collective professional identity. Assemblage Theory shed new light on this question. My Emerging Social Work Practice Framework model provides a way forward, addressing the matters raised by participants regarding their framework development, assemblage and articulation. The model offers a practical structure to support and strengthen how social workers present themselves, within, across and beyond professions, so that they can remain professionally distinct, even while practising in a challenging neoliberal environment.

References

- AASW 1981, *Australian Association of Social Workers: code of professional ethics*, AASW, Canberra.
- 1989, *AASW code of ethics*, AASW, Canberra.
- 1990, *Policy and procedures for the review of Australian Social Work Courses*, AASW, Canberra.
- 1999, *AASW code of ethics*, AASW, Canberra.
- 2003, *Practice standards for social workers: achieving outcomes*, AASW, Canberra.
- 2008, *Australian social work education and accreditation standards*, AASW, Canberra.
- 2010, *Code of ethics*, AASW, Canberra.
- 2012a, *Australian Association of Social Workers continuing professional development*, AASW, Melbourne.
- 2012b, *Australian social work education and accreditation standards (ASWEAS) 1.4.*, AASW, Canberra.
- 2013, *Australian Association of Social Workers practice standards*, AASW, Canberra.
- 2015, *Australian Association of Social Workers continuing professional development*, AASW, Melbourne.
- 2018a, 'Aims and scope', *Australian Social Work*, vol. 71, no. 4, inside cover.
- 2018b, *Formal registration campaign*, viewed 3 November 2018, <<https://www.aasw.asn.au/social-policy-advocacy/registration/national-registration-and-accreditation-scheme>>.
- 2020a, *Australian Association of Social Workers code of ethics*, AASW, Melbourne.
- 2020b, *Australian Association of Social Workers continuing professional development*, AASW, Melbourne.

- 2020c, *Australian social workers education and accreditation standards (ASWEAS)*, AASW, Melbourne.
- 2021, *About AASW*, viewed 26 April 2021, <<https://www.aasw.asn.au/about-aasw/about-aasw>>.
- Adams, R, Dominelli, L, Payne, M & Campling, J 2005, *Social work futures: crossing boundaries, transforming practice*, Palgrave MacMillan, New York.
- Adler, E & Clark, R 2014, *An invitation to social research: how it's done*, 5th edn, Cengage Learning, Boston, MA.
- Alston, M & Bowles, W 2018, *Research for social workers: an introduction to methods*, 4th edn, Allen and Unwin, Sydney.
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2021, *Welfare workforce*, viewed 20 September 2021, <<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/welfare-workforce>>.
- Bacevic, J 2019, 'With or without U? Assemblage theory and (de)territorialising the university', *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 78–91.
- Berg, C 2015, 'Classical liberalism in Australian economics', *Econ Journal Watch*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 192–220.
- Bochatay, N, Bajwa, N, Blondon, K, Junod Perron, N, Cullati, S, Nendaz, M 2019, 'Exploring group boundaries and conflicts: a social identity theory perspective', *Medical Education*, vol 53, no. 8, pp. 799-807
- Braun, V & Clarke, V 2006, 'Using thematic analysis in psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, vol. 3, pp. 77–101.
- 2012, 'Thematic analysis', in H Cooper (ed.), *APA Handbook of Research Methods in Psychology*, American Psychological Association, Washington DC, pp. 47–71.
- Chamberlain, C & MacKenzie, D 2006, 'Homeless careers: a framework for intervention', *Australian Social Work*, vol. 59, no. 2, pp. 198–212.
- Chenoweth, L & McAuliffe, D 2020, *The road to social work & human service practice*, 6th edn, Cengage Australia, South Melbourne.
- Cherry, A 2000, *A research primer for the helping professions: methods, statistics and writing*, Wadsworth, London.

- Clare, B 2006, 'Developing a robust professional identity: stories from practice', *Social Work Review*, vol. 18, no. 4, pp. 37–44.
- Cleak, H, Hawkins, L, Laughton, J & Williams, J 2015, 'Creating a standardised teaching and learning framework for social work placements', *Australian Social Work*, vol. 68, no. 1, pp. 49–64.
- Connolly, M & Healy, K 2009, 'Social work practice theories and frameworks', in M Connolly & L Harms (eds), *Social work: contexts and practice*, 2nd edn, Oxford University Press Australia and New Zealand, Melbourne.
- Connolly, M & Healy, K 2017, 'Social work practice theories and frameworks', in M Connolly, L Harms & J Maidment (eds), *Social work: contexts and practice*, 4th edn, Oxford University Press Australia and New Zealand, Melbourne.
- Connolly, M 2007, 'Practice frameworks: conceptual maps to guide interventions in child welfare', *British Journal of Social Work*, vol. 37, pp. 825–837.
- Connolly, M & Harms, L (eds) 2009, *Social work: contexts and practice*, 2nd edn, Oxford Press, South Melbourne.
- Connolly, M & Harms, L 2019, *Social work: from theory to practice*, 3rd edn, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Connolly, M, Harms, L & Maidment, J 2018, *Social work: contexts and practice*, 4th edn, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.
- Connolly, M, Kiraly, M, McCrae, L & Mitchell, G 2017, 'A kinship care practice framework: using a life course approach', *British Journal of Social Work*, vol. 47, no. 1, pp. 87–105.
- Costello, C 2004, 'Changing clothes: gender inequality and professional socialization', *National Women's Studies Association Journal*, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 138–155.
- Crotty, M 1998, *The foundations of social research: meaning and perspective in the research process*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards.
- Darlington, Y & Scott, D 2002, *Qualitative research in practice: stories from the field*, Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest.
- Dean, R 2012, 'Becoming a social constructionist: from Freudian beginnings to narrative ends', in S Witkin, (ed.), *Social construction and social work practice: interpretations and innovations*, Columbia University Press, New York, pp. 72–102

- DeLanda, M 2006, *New philosophy of society: assemblage theory and social complexity*, Continuum, London.
- 2011, *Manuel DeLanda: assemblage theory, society and Deleuze*, video, viewed 20 June 2020, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J-I5e7ixw78>>.
- 2016, *Assemblage theory*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh.
- Deleuze, G & Guattari, F 1988, *A thousand plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia*, The Athlone Press, London.
- Dent, M 2017, 'Perspectives on professional identity: the changing world of the social worker', in Webb, S (ed) 2017, *Professional identity of social work*, Routledge, New York.
- Denzin, N & Lincoln, Y (eds) 2005, *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*, 3rd edn, Sage Publications, London.
- 2018, *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*, 5th edn, Sage, Los Angeles.
- Duke, J & Lonne, B 2009, 'The registration of social workers', in Connolly, M & Harms, L (eds) 2009, *Social work: contexts and practice*, 2nd edn, Oxford Press, South Melbourne, pp. 378–392
- Encyclopaedia Britannica 2013, *Bark, sailing craft*, viewed 30 June 2021, <britannica.com/technology/bark-sailing-craft>.
- Fargion, S 2008, Reflections on social work's identity: international themes in Italian practitioners' representation of social work', *International Social Work*, vol. 51, pp. 206–219.
- Fenna, A & Tapper, A 2012, 'The Australian welfare state and the neoliberalism thesis', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 47, no. 2, pp. 155–172.
- Flexner, A 2001, 'Is social work a profession?', *Research on Social Work Practice*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 152–165.
- Fotheringham, S 2018, 'Social work registration: what's the contention?', *Australian Social Work*, vol. 71, no. 1, pp. 6–17.
- Frederico, F & Whiteside, M 2016, 'Building school, family and community partnerships: developing a theoretical framework', *Australian Social Work*, vol. 69, no. 1, pp. 51–66.
- Furlong, M 2000, 'Being neither Pollyanna nor Henny Penny: responding to McDonald and Jones', *Australian Social Work*, vol. 53, no. 3, pp. 15–16.

- Furman, R 2001, 'Frameworks for resolving value conflicts in social work practice: a case study', *Australian Social Work*, vol. 54, no. 1, pp. 81–90.
- Garrett, P 2009, *Transforming children's services: social work, neoliberalism and the 'modern' world*, McGraw-Hill Education, Maidenhead.
- Gray, M, Dean, M, Agllias, K, Howard, A & Schubert, L 2015, 'Perspectives on neoliberalism for human service professionals', *Social Services Review*, vol. 89, no. 2, pp. 368–392.
- Green, S & Bennett, B 2018, 'Wayanha: a decolonised social work', *Australian Social Work*, vol. 71, no. 3, pp. 261–264.
- Hallahan, L & Wendt, S 2020, 'Social work registration: another opportunity for discussion', *Australian Social Work*, vol. 73, no. 2, pp. 217–226.
- Hall, R 2008, *Applied social research: planning, designing and conducting real-world research*, Palgrave Macmillan, South Yarra.
- Harrison, G & Healy, K 2016, 'Forging an identity as a newly qualified worker in the non-government community services sector', *Australian Social Work*, vol. 69, no. 1, pp. 80–91.
- Harvey, D 2010, *A brief history of neoliberalism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Harvey, D, Ernest, H & Whiteside, M 2000, 'The accommodation and support needs of people with a mental illness: a process and framework for action', *Australian Social Work*, vol. 53, no. 4, pp. 7–14.
- Healey, L, Connolly, M & Humphreys, H 2018, 'A collaborative practice framework for child protection and specialist domestic and family violence services: bridging the research and practice divide', *Australian Social Work*, vol. 71, no. 2, pp. 228–237.
- Healy, K 2004, 'Social workers in the new human services marketplace: trends, challenges and responses', *Australian Social Work*, vol. 57, no. 2, pp. 103–114.
- 2005, *Social work theories in context: creating frameworks for practice*, Palgrave MacMillan, New York.
- 2014, *Social work theories in context: creating frameworks for practice*, 2nd edn, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.

- Healy, K, Harrison, G & Forster, M 2015, 'Job satisfaction and workforce retention of newly qualified social work and community services workers: an Australian pilot study', *Advances in Social Work and Welfare Education*, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 8–24.
- Healy, K & Meagher, G 2004, 'The reprofessionalisation of social work: collaborative approaches for achieving professional recognition', *British Journal of Social Work*, vol. 34, no. 2, pp. 243–260.
- Holmes, D & Gastaldo, D 2004, 'Rhizomatic thought in nursing: an alternative path for the development of the discipline', *Nursing Philosophy*, vol. 5, pp. 258–267.
- Holstein, JA & Gubrium, JB (eds) 2008, *Handbook of constructionist research*, Guilford Press, New York.
- Hyslop, I 2016, 'Neoliberalism and social work identity', *European Journal of Social Work*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 20–31.
- Ife, J 2000, 'A comment on 'Reconstructing and re-conceptualising social work in the emerging milieu'', *Australian Social Work*, vol. 53, no. 3, pp. 13–14.
- Karger, H & Lonne, B 2009, 'Unionization: a necessary strategy to arrest professional decline?', *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health*, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 21–44.
- Kole, J & de Ruyter, D 2009, 'Nothing less than excellence: ideals of professional identity', *Ethics and Social Welfare*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 131–144.
- Krefting, L 1991, 'Rigor in qualitative research: the assessment of trustworthiness', *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, vol. 45, no. 3, pp. 214–222.
- Lawrence, R 1993, 'Recruitment of carers for children in substitute care: a planning framework and research questions for the Australian context', *Australian Social Work*, vol. 46, no. 3, pp. 31–37.
- 2016, *Professional social work in Australia*, The Australian National University, Canberra.
- Lee, G 2012, 'Reconsidering constructivism', *Qualitative Research. Educational Philosophy and Theory*, vol. 4, pp. 403–412.
- Levin, L, Roziner, I & Savaya, R 2022, 'Professional identity, perceived job performance and sense of personal accomplishment among social workers in Israel: the overriding significance of the working alliance', *Health and Social Care in the Community*, vol. 30, pp. 538–547.

- Levy, C 1973, 'The value base of social work', *Journal of Education for Social Work*, winter issue, pp. 34–42.
- Levy, D, Schlomo, S & Itzhaky, H 2014, 'The 'building blocks' of professional identity among social work graduates', *Social Work Education: The International Journal*, vol. 33, no. 6, pp. 744–759.
- Lincoln, Y & Guba, E 2007, 'But is it rigorous? Trustworthiness and authenticity in naturalistic evaluation', *New Directions for Program Evaluation*, no. 114, pp. 15–25.
- Linzer, N 1992, 'The role of values in determining agency policy', *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services*, November, pp. 553–558.
- Lo Iacono, V, Symonds, P & Brown, D 2016, 'Skype as a tool for qualitative research interviews', *Sociological Research Online*, vol. 21, no. 2, pp. 103–117.
- McLeod, K 2017, *Wellbeing machine: how health emerges from the assemblages of everyday life*, North Carolina Academic Press, Durham, NC.
- Mirick, R & Wladkowski, S 2019, 'Skype in qualitative interviews: participant and researcher perspectives', *The Qualitative Report*, vol. 24, no. 12, pp. 3061–3072.
- Moon, J 2017, 'Developing integrative perspectives of social work identity through dialectics', *British Journal of Social Work*, vol. 47, no. 5, pp. 1326–1343.
- Moorhead, B 2017, *The lived experience of professional identity: a year-long study with newly qualified social workers*, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga.
- 2019, 'Transition and adjustments to professional identity as a newly qualified social worker', *Australian Social Work*, vol. 72, no. 2, pp. 206–218.
- Moorhead, B, Bell, K & Bowles, W 2016, 'Exploring the development of professional identity with newly qualified social workers', *Australian Social Work*, vol. 69, no. 4, pp. 456–467.
- Moorhead, B, Bell, K, Jones-Mutton, T, Boetto, H & Bailey, R 2019, 'Preparation for practice: embedding the development of professional identity within social work curriculum', *Social Work Education*, vol. 38, no. 8, pp. 983–995.
- Moses, J & Knutsen, T 2019, *Ways of knowing: competing methodologies in social and political research*, 3rd edn, Macmillan International, London

- Murray, J 2013, 'Becoming an early year professional: developing a new professional identity', *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, vol. 21, no. 4, pp. 527–540.
- Nelson, D, Price, R & Zubrzycki, J 2014, 'Integrating human rights and trauma frameworks in social work with people from refugee backgrounds', *Australian Social Work*, vol. 67, no. 4, pp. 567–581.
- New Advent 2020, *Canon law*, viewed 20 June 2021, <newadvent.org/cathen/09056a.htm>.
- Noble, C & Sullivan, J 2009, 'Is social work still a distinctive profession? Students, supervisors and educators reflect', *Advances in Social Work & Welfare Education*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 89–107.
- O'Connor, I 2000, 'Mission, evidence and outcomes: building a future for social work', *Australian Social Work*, vol. 53, no. 3, pp. 17–18.
- O'Connor, I, Wilson, J, Setterlund, D & Hughes, M 2008, *Social work and human service practice*, 5th edn, Pearson Education Australia, Melbourne.
- O'Sullivan, D, Ross, D & Young, S 1997, 'A framework for the use of competencies in rural social work field practice placements', *Australian Social Work*, vol. 50, no. 1, pp. 31–38.
- Padget, D 2017, *Qualitative methods in social work research*, 3rd edn, Sage Publications, London.
- Randall, G & Kindiak, D 2008, 'Deprofessionalisation or postprofessionalisation? Reflections on the state of social work as a profession', *Social work in Health Care*, vol. 47, no. 4, pp. 341–354.
- Ranz, R, Grodofsky, M & Abu, N 2017, 'A 'Jewish study hall' influenced approach to social work professional identity development: a qualitative study', *Australian Social Work*, vol. 70, no. 3, pp. 302–311.
- Royse, D 2019, *Research methods in social work*, 8th edn, Cognella Academic Publishing, San Diego.
- Sansfacon, A & Crete, J 2016, 'Identity development among social workers, from training to practice: results from a three-year qualitative longitudinal study', *Social Work Education*, vol. 35, no. 7, pp. 767–779

- Schwandt, A, Lincoln, Y & Guba, E 2007, 'Judging interpretations: but is it rigorous? trustworthiness and authenticity in naturalistic evaluation', *New Directions in Evaluation*, no. 114, pp. 11–14.
- Scott, D 2005, 'Inter-organisational collaboration in family-centred practice: a framework for analysis and action', *Australian Social Work*, vol. 58, no. 2, pp. 132–141.
- Slocombe, G 1991, 'A framework for understanding the liaison process', *Australian Social Work*, vol. 44, no. 2, pp. 29–35.
- Soon-Chean Park, L 2018, 'Professional identity and social work', *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work*, vol. 30, no. 1, pp. 71–72.
- Spolander, G, Engelbrecht, L, Martin, L, Strydom, M, Pervova, I, Marjanen, P, Tani, P, Sicora, A & Adaikalam, F 2014, 'The implications of neoliberalism for social work: reflections from a six-country international research collaboration', *International Social Work*, vol. 57, no. 4, pp. 301–312.
- Strier, R & Feldman, G 2018, 'Reengineering social work's political passion: policy practice and neoliberalism', *British Journal of Social Work*, vol. 48, 751–768.
- Swain, S 2017, 'Reflections on the state of the profession: a review of the Norma Parker addresses 1969–2008', *Australian Social Work*, vol. 70 (Supplementary), pp. 17–28.
- Torraco, R 2005, 'Writing Integrative Literature Reviews: Guidelines and Examples', *Human Resource Development Review*, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 356–367.
- Wallace, J & Pease, B 2011, 'Neoliberalism and Australian social work: accommodation or resistance', *Journal of Social Work*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 132–142.
- Webb, S 2017, *Professional identity and social work*, Routledge, New York.
- Wenger, E 1997, 'Practice, learning, meaning, identity', *Training*, vol. 34, no. 2, pp. 38–39.
- Whelan, J, Swallow, M, Peschar, P & Dunne, A 2002, 'From counselling to community work: developing a framework for social work practice with displaced persons', *Australian Social Work*, vol. 55, no. 1, pp. 13–23.
- Whiteside, M, Smith, R, Gazarek, J, Bridge, F & Shields, N 2016, 'A framework for enabling evidence-based practice in allied health', *Australian Social Work*, vol. 69, no. 4, pp. 417–427.

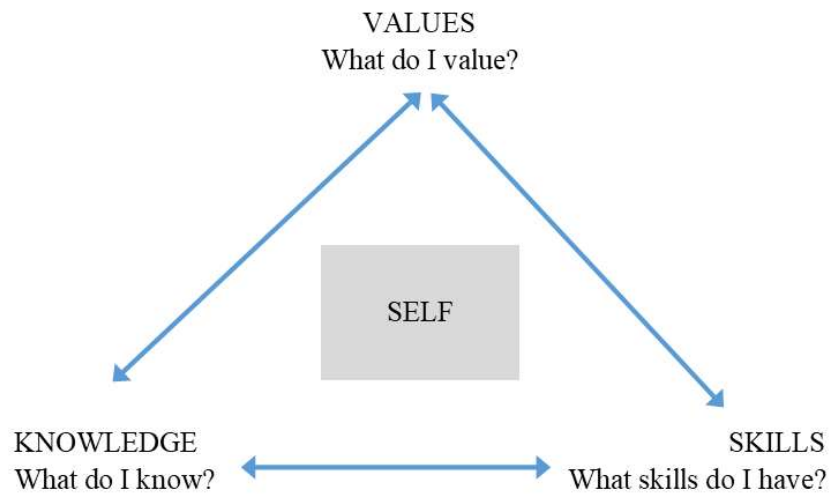
- Whiteside, M, Tsey, K & Cadet-James, Y 2011, 'A theoretical empowerment framework for transdisciplinary team building', *Australian Social Work*, vol. 64, no. 2, pp. 228–232.
- Whiteside, M, Tsey, K, McCalman, J, Cadet-James, Y & Wilson, A 2006, 'Empowerment as a framework for indigenous workforce development and organisational change', *Australian Social Work*, vol. 59, no. 4, pp. 422–434.
- Wiles, F 2013, '“Not easily put into a box”: constructing professional identity', *Social Work Education: The International Journal*, vol. 32, no. 7, pp. 854–866.
- Witkin, S 2012, *Social construction and social work practice: interpretations and innovations*, Columbia University Press, New York.
- Wyder, M & Bland, R 2014, 'The recovery framework as a way of understanding families' responses to mental illness: balancing different needs and recovery journeys', *Australian Social Work*, vol. 67, no. 2, pp. 179–196.
- Yegidis, B, Weinbach, R & Myers, L 2018, *Research methods for social workers*, 8th edn, Pearson Education, New York.

Appendices

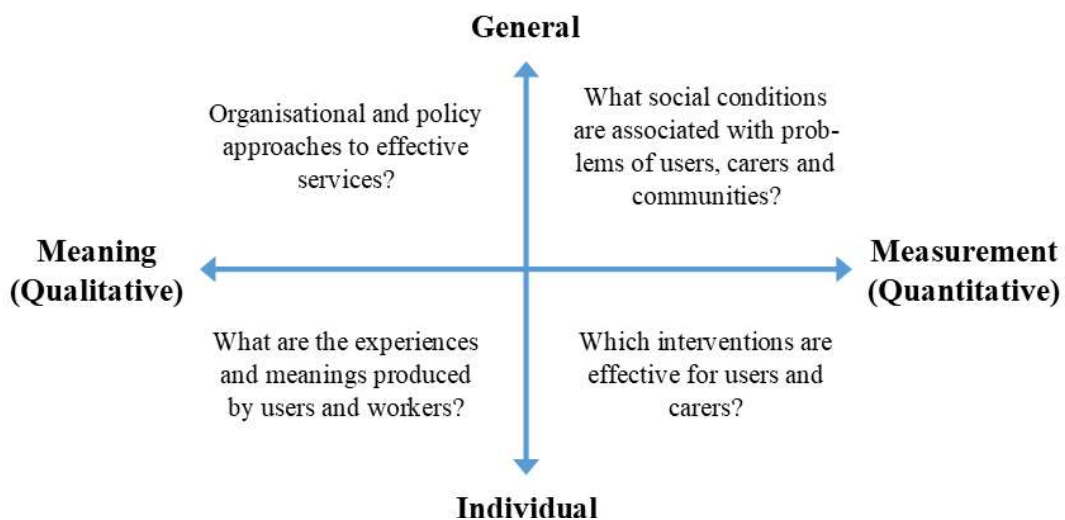
Appendix A ‘Framework’ Terminology Search

Source: <i>Australian Journal of Social Work</i> 1947–1970 & <i>Australian Social Work</i> 1971–2020			
Year	Author	Title	Practice area
1991	Slocombe, G	A <i>framework</i> for understanding the liaison process.	Practice Field Social Work Education
1993	Lawrence, R	Recruitment of carers for children in substitute care: a <i>planning framework</i> and research questions for the Australian context.	Practice Field Foster Care
1997	O’Sullivan, D; Ross, D & Young, S	A <i>framework for the use of competencies</i> in rural social work field practice placements.	Practice Field Rural and Remote Social Work
2000	Harvey, D; Ernest, H & Whiteside, M	The accommodation and support needs of people with a mental illness: a process and <i>framework for action</i> .	Practice Field Mental Illness
2001	Furman, R	Frameworks for resolving value conflicts in social work practice: a case study	Practice Skills Conflict Resolution
2002	Whelan, J; Swallow, M; Peschar, P & Dunne, A	From counselling to community work: developing a <i>framework for social work practice with displaced persons</i> .	Practice Field Refugees
2005	Scott, D	Inter-organisational collaboration in family-centred practice: <i>a framework for analysis and action</i> .	Practice Skills conflict resolution
2006	Chamberlain, C & MacKenzie, D	Homeless careers: <i>a framework for intervention</i> .	Practice Field Homelessness
2006	Whiteside, M; Tsey, K; McCalam, J; Cadet-James, Y & Wilson, A	<i>Empowerment as a framework</i> for indigenous workforce development and organisational change.	Practice Field Indigenous Australians
2011	Whiteside, M; Tsey, K & Cadet-James, Y	A <i>theoretical empowerment framework</i> for transdisciplinary team building	Practice Field Indigenous Australians
2014	Wyder, M & Bland, R	The <i>recovery framework</i> as a way of understanding families’ responses to mental illness: balancing different needs and recovery journeys.	Practice Field Mental Illness
2014	Nelson, D; Price, R & Zubrzycki, J	Integrating Human Rights and <i>Trauma Frameworks</i> in Social Work with People from Refugee Backgrounds	Practice Field Refugees
2015	Cleak, H; Hawkins, L; Laughton, J & Williams, J	Creating a standardised <i>teaching and learning framework</i> for social work placements.	Practice Field School Social Work
2016	Whiteside, M; Smith, R; Gaarek, J; Bridge, F & Shields, N	A <i>framework</i> for enabling evidence-based practice in allied health.	Practice Method Clinical
2016	Frederico, F & Whiteside, M	Building school, family and community partnerships: developing a <i>theoretical framework</i> .	Practice Method Community Development
2018	Healey, L; Connolly, M and Humphreys, H	A <i>Collaborative Practice Framework</i> for Child Protection and Specialist Domestic and Family Violence Services: Bridging the Research and Practice Divide	Practice Field Child Protection

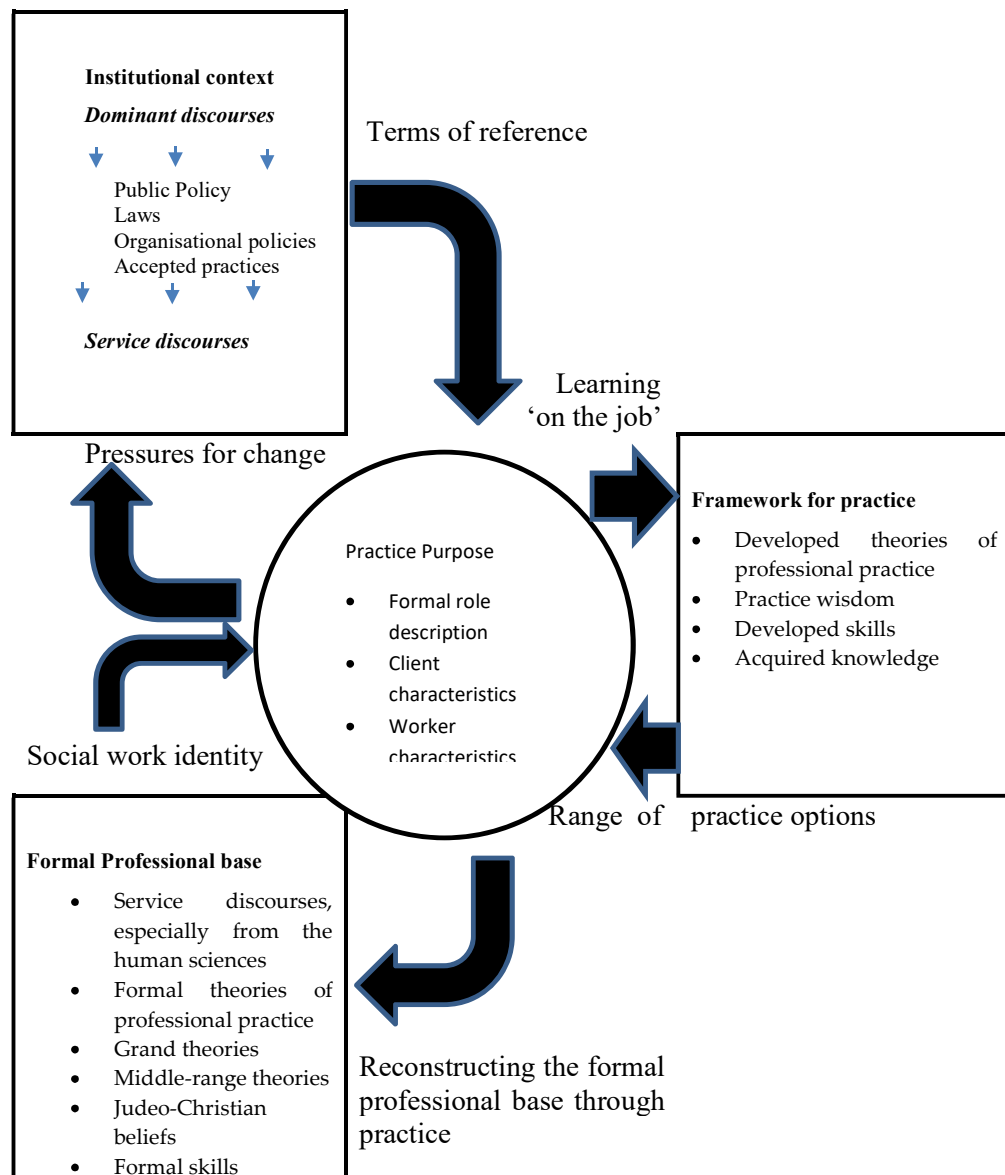
Appendix B Social Work Practice Framework Examples



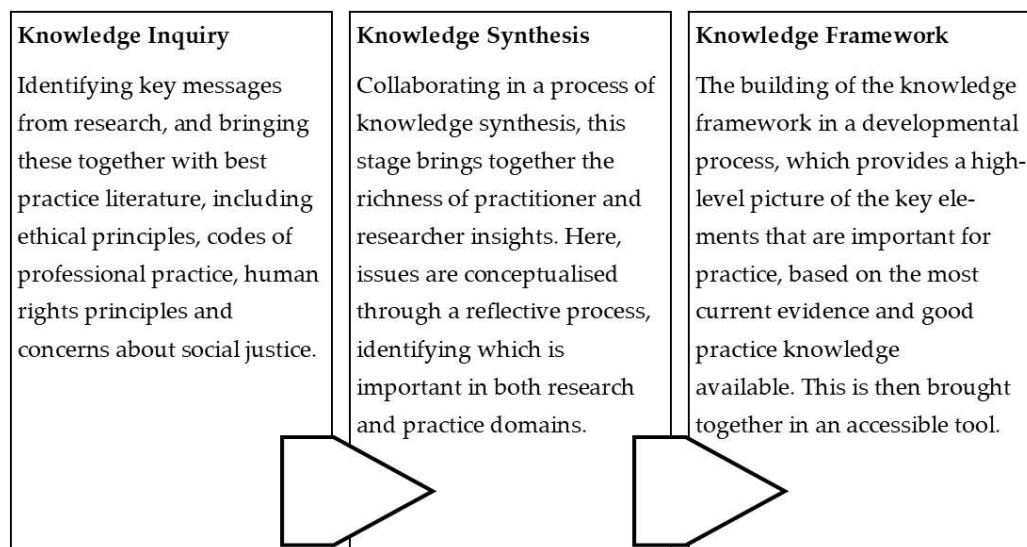
A Practice Framework Schema (Chenoweth & McAuliffe, 2020, p. 295)



Gould's Conceptual Model (cited in Connolly & Harms 2009, p. 33)



A Dynamic Model (Healy 2005, p. 5)



Knowledge-based Practice Framework Method (Connolly & Harms 2019, p. 34)

Appendix C Participant Information Sheet

INVITATION

You are being invited to participate in a research project exploring practice frameworks and their role in social work. This research seeks to examine how practice framework articulation contributes to the construction of a professional social work identity. What facilitates and/or hinders the assembly and articulation of a framework for practice is being explored as well as the implications of this on the construction of a social work identity. This Information Sheet provides details about the research project enabling you to consider whether you would be interested in participating in the study.

WHO IS THE RESEARCHER?

This study is being conducted by Ms Sue Wilkins. I am a post-graduate student undertaking a Master of Social Work (Research) through the University of Tasmania. My post-graduate supervisors are Professor Sandy Taylor (Head of Social Work, University of Tasmania) and Dr Sonya Stanford (Social Work Honours Coordinator and Lecturer, University of Tasmania). A Masters candidature, via research, requires an in-depth study on a topic of interest. The role of practice frameworks in social work is my chosen topic.

My interest in practice frameworks and their role in professional identity construction emanates from both clinical and educational experiences as a social worker. During valued peer discussions, social workers have shared the challenges faced in assembling and articulating a clear and coherent practice framework. The recurring nature of this topic captured my professional interest leading me to pursue this further as an in-depth research project with particular focus on the relationship between practice framework articulation and the construction of a professional identity.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH?

The purpose of this research is to explore how practice framework articulation contributes to the construction of a professional social work identity. Social workers utilise practice frameworks to facilitate the assembly and articulation of social work knowledge, skills and values within, across and beyond our profession. However, conversations with both new and experienced social workers reveal that many grapple with this undertaking. The research seeks to examine this issue by listening to social workers in the field to gain clearer understanding of their experience of assembling and articulating frameworks for practice. It will explore what facilitates and/or hinders the assembly and articulation of a framework for practice. This exploration will also investigate the implications this has for constructing a clear and purposeful social work

identity. This research will prove beneficial as social work endeavours to consider the variables that influence its placing amongst other professions.

WHY HAVE I BEEN INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY?

You have been invited to participate in this study because of your experiences as a professional social worker. Your experiences will assist in understanding what, if any, issues are being faced by social workers in the field regarding their articulation of practice frameworks and how this contributes to your construction of a professional social work identity.

You can participate in this research:

- If you are eligible for membership with the Australian Association of Social Workers. (Please note: it is not necessary to be a member of the Australia Association of Social Workers)
- If you have practised as a social worker for 6 months or more.
- You are available to participate in one face to face interview (1.5 hours) in your own time and/or you are available to participate in one focus group (2 hours) in your own time.
- You can attend the interview and focus group at a central location in Rockhampton.
- You are currently employed and practising social work.

WHAT DOES PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY INVOLVE?

Participation in this research will involve participating in a discussion via an individual interview with me and/or in a focus group discussion that I will facilitate. This will assist me to gather information about your understanding and experience of practice frameworks.

It will be necessary to read and understand this participant information sheet before signing a consent form. A convenient time will be arranged for a face to face (1.5 hours) and/or focus group discussion (2 hours). These will occur on separate occasions. It is important that these discussions occur in your personal time reinforcing that the discussion is not attached to a specific organisational site of practice but rather in terms of an issue of professional interest. A central venue in Rockhampton will be organised to conduct the face to face interview and/or focus group discussion. The venue chosen will ensure that our discussion is uninterrupted and private. You will be advised of the venue when convenient times for face to face and focus group discussion are arranged.

The discussion will be recorded and later transcribed enabling my analysis of the information as a written document. I intend transcribing all recordings. If you participate in an in-depth individual interview, you will have an opportunity to view and amend a copy of your transcribed interview if you would like to. Written transcriptions of our talk will have any information that could identify you removed. If you participate in a focus

group discussion, then you will be asked to respect the privacy of other participants as well as any references that may be made in relation to clients. This will mean maintaining confidentiality regarding participation and discussion contributions. During the development of the research all data will be kept in a secure location only accessible by me. The transcript of our discussion will be kept on a Word document on my home computer which is password protected. The University of Tasmania then requires that recorded and written materials from research be kept in a secure location at the university for five years. After this period of time they are destroyed.

I will present the results of this research as a Master's thesis and intend developing papers for journal submission and conference presentation. I will not use your name or include any identifying information in any of these forums. It is also necessary for me to participate in regular supervision enabling me to obtain feedback on my Master's development ensuring the project is conducted in an ethical and appropriate manner. Any supervisory discussions held with my supervisors (Professor Sandy Taylor and Dr Sonya Stanford) relating to the data collected are confidential.

It is important that you understand that your involvement in this study is voluntary. While I would be pleased to have you participate, I will respect your decision if you choose not to. You can decide to discontinue participation after agreeing to be involved. This will have no effect on the outcome of the project. No explanation is necessary should you discontinue participation. If you have participated in individual interviews, then you may request that any data I have collected is withdrawn from the research and destroyed. However, data collected during focus group discussion cannot be withdrawn from the research and destroyed.

ARE THERE ANY POSSIBLE BENEFITS FROM PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

The possible benefits from participating in this study relate both to you and the profession of social work. The opportunity to experience devoted and uninterrupted time discussing the research topic of interest, i.e. your practice framework and professional identity, may assist to consolidate your understanding of these concepts and how they are enacted by you. These discussions will also contribute to the broader profession of social work and increased understanding of the role practice frameworks play in professional identity construction. This is particularly important as social work strives to strengthen its standing amongst other professions. Understanding the relationship between practice framework articulation and professional identity construction will also inform future curriculum and professional development of social workers.

ARE THERE ANY POSSIBLE RISKS FROM PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

Being a participant in research can often involve risks even though researchers do not seek to create adverse situations. There are four possible risks that could eventuate for you if you participate in this study:

- Feeling pressure to participate.
- Feeling evaluated professionally.
- Concerns about anonymity and confidentiality.
- Inconvenience.
- The following outlines my attempts to minimise the possibility or effect of these potential risks.
- Feeling pressure to participate – your decision to participate is voluntary. Every attempt will be made to ensure you have all the information needed to understand the nature of this research before giving consent. Even after consent has been given you can withdraw at any time without explanation or reason. I will respect this decision at all times. Your decision to not participate at any time throughout the research process will have no effect on the outcome of my Master's study.
- Feeling evaluated professionally – some practitioners may feel that the research is evaluating them professionally. This is not the intention of the research and every endeavour will be made to ensure your professional knowledge and expertise is valued and respected. The purpose of this research is not to evaluate but to explore these issues in the practice context and improve the practices of our profession. Unveiling difficulties and challenges will assist this endeavour. My hope is the research process created by me will be genuine and supportive enabling practitioners to share honestly about their professional practices.
- Concerns about anonymity and confidentiality – anonymity is not total in this research. It is compromised by my meeting with you in a face-to-face discussion and by you possibly participating in a focus group discussion with other social work practitioners, and by having tapes of our discussion transcribed and discussed in a supervisory context. However, I will implement several measures to ensure the confidentiality of your identity in this research. These are:
 - Transcriptions of our discussion will not record your name or the organisation you work in, should this be mentioned. All identifying markers will be removed from these transcriptions such as your age, where you are employed, etc.
 - You will be identified in the transcription as Participant # (I will insert a number here).
 - It is important that the transcripts are able to be re-identified as this will assist my analysis of our conversation. Re-identifying information will be kept in a locked filing cabinet, accessible only by me. Transcriptions will be kept in a separate location to the re-identifying information, in a locked filing cabinet, only accessible by me. This will ensure that anonymity and confidentiality surrounding your participation is maintained.
 - A copy of your transcription can be forwarded to you before I start analysing it and you can request that any information that you believe identifies you is removed.

- I will publish the results as a Master's thesis, in journals and at conferences. However, I will not include any information that could identify you.
- Inconvenience – while experiencing inconvenience isn't necessarily a 'risk' of participation, I am concerned that the effort and time you take to participate in this research is respected. I will endeavour to negotiate meeting times that are at your convenience and will respect the need to change these times should unanticipated events arise. I will encourage you to advise me of any inconvenience you are experiencing in relation to the research process so that I can attend to these quickly.

I AM AN ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PERSON. HOW WILL YOU RESPECT MY CULTURE?

I am aware that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have had many negative experiences of white peoples' research. I am a Caucasian Australian. I have attempted to design this research in a manner that is inclusive and respectful of diversity. I am interested to hear the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social workers. However, I am aware that there may be specific cultural and spiritual considerations not known to me. If you would like to participate in this study and have particular cultural or spiritual needs, then please make them known to me so I can ensure they are attended to throughout this research.

I AM A PERSON FROM A CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE BACKGROUND. HOW WILL YOU RESPECT MY CULTURE?

This research has been designed in a manner that is inclusive and respectful of diversity. I am interested to hear the experiences of social workers from a culturally diverse background. However, I am aware that there may be specific cultural and spiritual considerations that are not known to me. If you would like to participate in this study and have particular cultural or spiritual needs, then please make them known to me so I can ensure they are attended to throughout this research

WHAT DO I DO IF I WANT TO PARTICIPATE?

If you wish to discuss this research further, or you would like to discuss the possibility of volunteering to participate, then you can contact me either by email or telephone. If you do want to participate then a time can be arranged to discuss the information contained in this sheet before consent is signed. This will also provide the opportunity to inform me of any specific needs to be aware of throughout the research process.

WHO CAN TALK TO IF I HAVE CONCERNS OR QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS RESEARCH?

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this study please feel free to contact me on 0749 232 833 or via email susanw7@postoffice.utas.edu.au. I would be happy to discuss this research further with you.

My post-graduate supervisors are also available to discuss any aspect of this study. Professor Sandy Taylor is contactable on 03 6324 3528 or via email S.D.Taylor@utas.edu.au. Dr Sonya Stanford is contactable on 03 6324 3720 or via email Sonya.Stanford@utas.edu.au.

This study has been approved by the Tasmanian Social Science Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this study you should contact the Executive Officer of the HREC (Tasmania) Network on (03) 6226 7479 or email human.ethics@utas.edu.au. The Executive Officer is the person nominated to receive complaints from research participants. You will need to quote the research project number which is H0012105.

CONTACT DETAILS AND FURTHER INFORMATION

My contact details are:

Telephone: 0749 232 833

Email: susanw7@postoffice.utas.edu.au



Thank you for taking the time to consider this study.

This Participant Information Sheet can be retained by you.

Appendix D Consent Form



CONSENT FORM

Thank-you for considering participation in this research project titled “A Robust Professional Identity: The role of Practice Frameworks”. Please take the time to read the following points before signing your consent to participate. Please seek clarification if your understanding of any of these points remains unclear.

I have read and understood the ‘Participant Information Sheet’ outlining the nature of the research project titled “A Robust Professional Identity: The Role of Practice Frameworks”.

The nature of the study has been explained to me by Ms Sue Wilkins, Postgraduate Student, University of Tasmania.

I understand that this research project is a requirement for the completion of a Masters of Social Work and that the researcher participates in supervision with Professor Sandy Taylor and Dr Sonya Stanford (University of Tasmania). Supervisory discussions relating to the data collected are confidential and for the purposes of ensuring that the research project is conducted in an ethical and appropriate manner.

I understand that the study involves participation in one individual interview (1.5 hours) and/or participation in one focus group (2 hours).

I understand that participation involves minimal risks. Potential risks identified include feeling pressure to participate; feeling evaluated professionally; concerns about anonymity/confidentiality and inconvenience. I understand the steps that have been taken by the researcher, Ms Sue Wilkins, to reduce these risks occurring.

If I participate in an individual interview I understand that my identity will be maintained confidentially by the researcher and that any information I supply to the researcher will be used only for the purposes of this research. I understand that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed if I participate in a focus group discussion.

I agree that research data gathered from me for the study may be published provided that I cannot be identified as a participant.

If I agree to participate in individual interviews I understand that I may withdraw at any time without any effect on the outcome of the researcher’s project, and if I so wish may request that any data I have supplied to date be withdrawn from the research. If I agree to participate in focus group discussion I understand that I may withdraw at any time without any effect on the outcome of the research however any data collected cannot be withdrawn.

I understand that all research data will be securely stored on the University of Tasmania premises for five years. I understand that during the development of the research project all research data will be kept in a secure location accessible only to the person conducting the research i.e. Ms Sue Wilkins. I understand that research data will be re-identifiable and that transcripts will be kept separate to re-identifying information. Both will be stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher.

Any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.



Statement by Researcher

I have explained the project and the implications of participation to this volunteer and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands the implications of participation.

Researcher Name:

Signature:

Date: ____/____/____

Appendix E Email to President, AASW (Queensland)

Ms Judith Oliver

President

AASW (Qld) Branch

Dear Judith

I am writing to you in your role as President of the Australian Association of Social Workers (Qld Branch).

Last year I commenced a Masters in Social Work (Research) at University of Tasmania (Part-time). This study requires an intense exploration of an issue area relevant to social work. I have chosen to undertake research regarding practice framework articulation and its relationship to professional identity. The title of this research is:

A Robust Professional Identity: The Role of Practice Frameworks.

This research will examine the relationship between practice framework articulation and the construction of a professional identity. It will explore what facilitates and/or hinders practice framework articulation and the implications of this on professional identity construction. Individual interviews and one focus group discussion will be drawn on to gather information relating to practitioner experience of practice framework articulation.

Approximately twelve social work practitioners are being sought to participate in this study and this letter is seeking your assistance in this regard. I would like to ensure that information regarding this research is distributed to a large number of practitioners in the field within the Rockhampton and Capricorn Coast region. Distributing this information to a wide audience increases the likelihood of obtaining a range of participants including men and women of different ages, years of practice experience and diversity of cultural background.

In your role as president of AASW (Qld Branch) I am aware that you are able to communicate with AASW members in the Rockhampton and Capricorn Coast region. I am hoping that you would consider distributing information about the research project I am undertaking to AASW members in our region in order to advise them about the study and invite participation. I have attached an Information Sheet providing details about the study

for your perusal. It would be greatly appreciated if you could advise me whether you are able to assist me in the distribution of this research information.

Should you have any queries or concerns relating to this request or the research in general then I am contactable via email susanw7@postoffice.utas.edu.au or telephone (07) Professor Sandy Taylor (S.D.Taylor@utas.edu.au) and Dr Sonya Stanford (Sonya.Stanford@utas.edu.au) are my postgraduate supervisors at University of Tasmania. They are also available to discuss this research project if you have any queries or concerns.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Yours faithfully

Ms Sue Wilkins BSW (Hons) MAASW

Appendix F Email to Social Work Colleagues

Dear Social Work Colleague

I am writing to you seeking your assistance with a research project I am undertaking. Last year I commenced my Master in Social Work (Research) at University of Tasmania (Part-time). This study requires an intense exploration of an issue area relevant to social work. I have chosen to undertake research that examines practice frameworks and their role in social work. The title of this project is:

A Robust Professional Identity: The Role of Practice Frameworks.

This research intends to explore how practice framework articulation contributes to the construction of a professional social work identity. The research will explore what facilitates and/or hinders the assembly and articulation of a framework for practice and the implications this may have on constructing a clear and purposeful social work identity. In – depth individual interviews and one focus group discussion will be drawn on to gather information relating to practitioner experience of practice framework articulation.

Approximately twelve social work practitioners in total are being sought to participate in this study. While the AASW (Qld) branch will circulate information to AASW members in the Rockhampton region, I would also like to give social workers who are not AASW members an opportunity to participate. Your assistance circulating information to social workers within your professional networks is therefore being sought to ensure those who are not AASW members also have the opportunity to participate.

It is anticipated that there will be both AASW members and non-members within your collegial networks and by utilising your networks, information relating to this project may reach as wide a range of practitioners as possible. This would involve forwarding the attached covering letter and Participation Information Sheet to your colleagues in the Rockhampton and/or Capricorn Coast region. A number of my colleagues are being approached with this request and I am aware that there may be similar membership across our networks. This could mean that some social workers may receive this information from a couple of sources – to assist their management of email traffic you may want to title it “Research Opportunity – Sue Wilkins”. They can then choose to delete additional emails with the same subject title.

If you are able to assist with this endeavour, then this will be appreciated immensely. However, I will also understand if you decline this request. The time and consideration taken to view my communication and reach this decision is appreciated.

A Participant Information Sheet has been attached for your perusal. This information sheet provides an overview of the research project. I hope you have the opportunity to review this information sheet to consider if this research project is something you would also like to be involved with.

Should you have any queries or concerns relating to this request or the research in general then I am contactable via email susanw7@postoffice.utas.edu.au or telephone (07)

Professor Sandy Taylor (S.D.Taylor@utas.edu.au) and Dr Sonya Stanford (Sonya.Stanford@utas.edu.au) are my postgraduate supervisors at University of Tasmania. They are also available to discuss this research project if you have any queries or concerns.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Yours faithfully

Ms Sue Wilkins BSW (Hons) MAASW

Appendix G Email to Social Work Practitioners

Dear Social Work Colleague

I am writing to let you know about a research project I am undertaking. Last year I commenced a Master in Social Work (Research) at University of Tasmania (Part-time). This study requires an intense exploration of an issue area relevant to social work. I have chosen to undertake research that examines practice frameworks and their role in social work. The title of this project is:

A Robust Professional Identity: *The Role of Practice Frameworks.*

This research intends to explore how practice framework articulation contributes to the construction of a professional social work identity. The research will explore what facilitates and/or hinders the assembly and articulation of a framework for practice and the implications this may have on constructing a clear and purposeful social work identity. In – depth individual interviews and one focus group discussion will be conducted in order to gather information relating to practitioner experiences of practice framework articulation. Approximately twelve social work practitioners in total are being sought to participate in this study.

Assistance has been sought from both the AASW and my collegial networks to inform social workers about this research project. The AASW have not provided me with any member details instead they have circulated this information on my behalf to members in the Rockhampton and Capricorn Coast region. Similarly, my colleagues have forwarded this information onto you without sharing any of your details. This communication provides you with the opportunity to consider participation in this project. Accompanying this communication is a Participant Information Sheet which outlines the research project further providing details about participation, confidentiality, potential benefits and risks associated with participation. I hope you have the opportunity to review this information sheet to consider if this research is something you would like to be involved in.

Should you have any queries or concerns relating to this request or the research in general then I am contactable via email susanw7@postoffice.utas.edu.au or telephone (07) Professor Sandy Taylor (S.D.Taylor@utas.edu.au) and Dr Sonya Stanford (Sonya.Stanford@utas.edu.au) are my postgraduate supervisors at University of Tasmania. They are also available to discuss this research project if you have any queries or concerns.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Yours faithfully

Ms Sue Wilkins BSW (Hons) MAASW

Appendix H Interview Schedule – Individual Interviews

A Robust Professional Identity: *The Role of Practice Frameworks*

Individual Interview Schedule

Practice Framework: what is it?

- In your own words, could you tell me about practice frameworks in social work?
- What does “practice framework” mean to you?
- What would you say comprises a social work practice framework?
Would you say areas such as these are part of a practice framework, areas to explore further, if necessary, include theory; skills; processes; methods; contexts; professional values, ethics and principles; aspects of self, such as, past experiences, one’s identity e.g. gender, race, beliefs, values; practice wisdom as part of practice framework etc.?
- What role do you feel practice frameworks fulfil in social work?
- Are practice frameworks helpful do you think for social work practitioners? If so, in what ways?

Your experience of a Practice Framework

- Would you say you have a practice framework? Could you tell me about this in your own words [explore].
- Has your practice framework changed over time? [explore]
- Where did you first become aware of practice frameworks? Did this appeal to you/make sense to you at the time? [explore]
- Has your practice framework been a useful thing to have? If so in what ways; if not why not do you think?
- How present is a practice framework in your practice? Does it get revisited or revised? How, when etc.
- What is your experience of other social workers and their practice frameworks?
- Have you found your experience of other social workers practice frameworks useful? If so, how has their practice framework been useful to you? Have you found this experience not to be useful in any way? If so, how?

Developing and articulating your practice framework.

- If asked how well do you think you could explain to someone what your practice framework is about?
- Can you tell me about a time that you were able to articulate your practice framework to someone else? [explore]
- Was this a good experience? If so, why; if not, why?
- Have there been any occasions where you struggled in some way to articulate your practice framework to someone else? [explore]. What made this difficult for you?
- What makes it easier for a social worker to articulate their practice framework do you think?
- What makes it difficult?
- How much does context matter e.g. easier or harder with other social work colleagues? With non-social workers? In organisational settings e.g. case conferences?
- What strategies/tools/ideas have you observed being used by other social workers to assemble then articulate a practice framework?
- In your opinion, how useful were these strategies/tools/ideas? If useful, how were they useful? How were they not useful?
- Can you describe what you think might hinder the development and/or articulation of someone's practice framework?

Practice Frameworks and Professional Identity

- Would you say practice frameworks relate to someone's identity as a social worker? [explore]
- Do you use your practice framework to convey your social work identity to others? If so, can you explain how you use your framework to convey this identity? ['What does it look like when this is working well? When it doesn't work well?']
- How do you feel about your capacity to articulate your PF and thereby convey your identity as a social worker to others?
- Do you utilise other ways to convey your social work identity? If so, what are these ways? How useful, successful have they been?
- What role do you think practice frameworks carry in communicating social works professional identity to others?
- Who are you most likely to convey your practice framework to? Why is this?

Appendix I Interview Schedule – Focus Group Discussion

A Robust Professional Identity: *The Role of Practice Frameworks*

Focus Group Discussion Schedule

Practice Framework: what is it?

- Could we discuss the concept of practice frameworks in social work?
- What would you say comprises a social work practice framework? Would you say areas such as these are part of a practice framework, areas to explore further, if necessary, include theory; skills; processes; methods; contexts; professional values, ethics and principles; aspects of self, such as, past experiences, one's identity e.g. gender, race, beliefs, values; practice wisdom as part of practice framework etc.?
- What role do you feel practice frameworks carry in social work?
- Are practice frameworks helpful do you think for social work practitioners? If so, in what ways? If not, why not?

Your experience of a Practice Framework

- How present are practice frameworks in social work practice? How often do you experience social workers using practice frameworks in their practice?
- Can you describe your experience of social work colleagues use of practice frameworks?
- Have you found your experience of other social workers practice frameworks useful? If so, how has their practice framework been useful to you? Have you found this experience not to be useful in any way? If so, how?

Developing and articulating your practice framework.

- What makes it easier for a social worker to articulate their practice framework do you think?
- What makes it difficult?
- How much does context matter e.g. easier or harder with other social work colleagues? With non-social workers? In organisational settings e.g. case conferences?
- What strategies/tools/ideas have you observed being used by other social workers to assemble then articulate a practice framework?

- In your opinion, how useful were these strategies/tools/ideas? If useful, how were they useful? How were they not useful?
- Can you describe what you think might hinder the development and/or articulation of someone's practice framework?

Practice Frameworks and Professional Identity

- Would you say practice frameworks relate to someone's identity as a social worker? [explore]
- Do you use your practice framework to convey your social work identity to others? If so, can you explain how you use your framework to convey this identity?
- How do you feel about your practice framework's capacity to convey your identity as a social worker to others?
- Do you utilise other ways to convey your social work identity? If so, what are these ways? How useful, successful have they been?
- What role do you think practice frameworks carry in communicating social works professional identity to others?
- Who are you most likely to convey your practice framework to? Why is this?