The human rights and social justice mandate of social work: Environmental health and well-being for the Yarloop Community

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THE HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE MANDATE OF SOCIAL WORK: ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING FOR THE YARLOOP COMMUNITY.

Steven Denton

This thesis is presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Bachelor of Social Work (Honours)

Faculty of Regional Professional Studies
Edith Cowan University

2007
DEDICATION

For, and inspired by, Joan, Jeni and Angus

..........my past present and future.
USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.
ABSTRACT

Social work has a dual concern, focusing on individuals and on their environments; however the discourse of the profession tends to be limited to the social, interpersonal or familial environment. Given the prospect of the current 'ecological crisis' having significant impacts upon human well-being, this research sought to expand this conceptualisation of 'environment' to include the physical environment. This study aimed to explore whether citizens experiences of environmental problems could be understood as social justice and human rights issues.

Using an unobtrusive form of qualitative research with various written and audio visual accounts from citizens from the community surrounding Yarloop the research explored and describes the impact of an identified environmental problem in a specific instance. A qualitative content analysis was conducted using Young's (1990) three primary categories of a non-distributive paradigm of social justice and Ife's (2006a) seven fold typology as an analysis framework. In undertaking the analysis a social work research praxis was developed which also incorporated Crotty's (1998) conceptual typology and emphasised the reflexivity of the researcher with regard to the subjects and objects of the study. This approach discerned between the 'action' and 'reflection' components of the inquiry and supported the notion of social research as practice.

The findings of the study support the proposition that the degradation of the physical environment involves encroachments upon citizens' experiences of social justice and human rights. These experiences occurred as 'loss' across various dimensions of citizens lives. These encroachments manifested in forms other than the dominant notions of social justice and human rights. 'Distributive' forms of social justice and 'civil and political' human rights were not appealed to by citizens, and were thus inadequate to conceptualise environmental problems.
DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

(i) incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education.

(ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or

(iii) contain any defamatory material.

I also grant permission for the Library at Edith Cowan University to make duplicate copies of my thesis as required.

Signature:  

Date:  

November 2002
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This is the cherished space where I can acknowledge those who have made this project possible for me. Paradoxically, a single page must suffice to acknowledge those who have contributed significantly to allow the production of the many pages to follow.

Firstly, I would like to thank the 2006 social work student cohort for walking this journey of the last four years with me. The negotiation, rejection and integration of ideas collegially have sometimes been a challenge, but always an asset. I would particularly like to acknowledge Glen, Jackie and Brett for their friendship and support, furnished without hesitation often at crucial times.

In close tandem to my colleagues, I would like to thank past and present social work lecturers and tutors. I have been fortunate enough to have taken something unique from all of you and am, without doubt, a richer person for it. A sincere thank-you to each one of you for this. A special thanks to Dr Dyann Ross whose support and guidance assisted keeping me on track though these final years. Further, your engaging accounts of working with the Yarloop and Alcoa community provided inspiration to dig a little deeper with the social work endeavour.

Thank-you to Professor Jim Ife for providing supervision at the beginning of this process. I would also like to thank-you for your contribution to the discourse of social work by legitimating issues of ecological sustainability. This was a source of authority and much inspiration for me.

As always, the most till last. I owe a debt of gratitude to my supervisor, Lynelle Watts. Without your support and informed guidance I am not sure I would be writing these words now. I thankyou for your faith in me and my ideas, and the grace in which you have participated in, and encouraged, my process.

To my parents, Tony and Naomi, thankyou for just always being there and supporting whatever decision I have taken. It is only in the last few years that I have been able to truly comprehend that you have providing me with all the important things in life including a nourishing sense of 'space and place'.

To my cherished loved one Jeni, I will never adequately be able to acknowledge your support throughout this process, but will be forever grateful to you. Above all, thank you for teaching me that 'it is better to be kind than to be right.'
### ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Term</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian Association of Social Workers</td>
<td>AASW</td>
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<tr>
<td>Department of Environmental Protection</td>
<td>DEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnographic Content Analysis</td>
<td>ECA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment and Public Affairs Committee (2001 - 2005), Western</td>
<td>EPAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Legislative Council</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights</td>
<td>ICESCR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change</td>
<td>IPCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Nations Environmental Programme</td>
<td>UNEP</td>
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<tr>
<td>United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights</td>
<td>UNUDHR</td>
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</tbody>
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PART ONE: THE CONTEXT
CHAPTER 1- Introduction

My husband's family have lived in the Yarloop area for fifty years. His Parents subdivided their own land for their children, so they too could live in what we think is a beautiful area with, what was, a first class quality of life. Would have never considered leaving. Ever! (EPAC, 2001f)

I am the fifth generation of my family to live in the Waroona shire and the surrounding districts. My forefathers settled here in the 1840s. I was born in Yarloop and have lived and worked there all my life. (EPAC, 2001a)

Background

I came to this research after a few undergraduate years of exposure to a variety of concepts, models and theories from the amalgam of traditions which make up the social work knowledge base including philosophy, psychology, politics, sociology and anthropology (Chenoweth & McAuliffe, 2005, pp. 108-110). In the course of traversing the range of academic units I grappled with various traditions and elements of the profession. This extended over to many conversations and negotiations with colleagues about the nature of the social world and the social work. The combination of academic, collegial and practical influence helped my emerging understanding of the dominant discourse of the profession and its defining features.

During this period I engaged with various manifestations of critical theory. As a male in a predominately female cohort I attempted to comprehend my own location within patriarchal power relationships. Later, Marxism and 'whiteness' studies extended my range of understanding of critical theory. I became comfortable with the tendency to critique circumstances where there were significant power differentials. In time, however, I began to struggle with the certainty
and immediacy that myself and my colleagues readily attached causal relationships to particular groups. At times this involved attaching labels such as institutional racism, sexism, exploitation or oppression to dominant groups. Sometimes, I was a member of this dominant group as a essentially white, ostensibly middle class, educated, able bodied male.

Simultaneously I was introduced to a variety of concepts relating to the social work profession. These included the notion of ‘person in environment’, ecology, social justice, human rights, psychosocial theory, postmodernism and systems theory. I was compelled by the language of systems, ecology and environment, which all seemed compatible with my personal ecological ethics. I wondered if this might in some way be related to social work. I was also fortunate to be introduced to the ideas of praxis and later reflexivity. I found these interesting notions because they were not immediately comprehensible, and I pressed at these ideas until I established a comfortable understanding of them.

Towards the end of my second fieldwork placement my concerns about critical theory became galvanized by a series of experiences. The first related to the ongoing frequent appeals to causal dimensions of oppression as a grab-all explanation for social problems with little discussion to substantiate claims. Examples of this included excessive male representation within the judiciary or institutional racism. The second related to witnessing the excessive interpersonal critique of the powerless by a person holding privilege across various dimensions whilst subscribing to values of social justice. This seemed to be a characteristic of conflating an interpersonal approach to ethnic others’ with a legitimate technique (critique) within critical theory for targeting the powerful. The third related to a respected academic’s lecture on whiteness held in the Metropolitan area. A somewhat aggressive response by the academic to a naive, but nonetheless innocent, question seemingly indicated a failure to recognise their own privilege within this context. The way that critical theory is used within this research has been shaped by these experiences.
During my undergraduate years I had also been introduced to the notion of social work's 'received ideas'\(^1\) (Rojek, Peacock, & Collins, 1988), but had little opportunity to explore its operation. Upon reflection (a process emphasized within my newly understood notions of reflexivity and praxis), it seemed an appropriate way of understanding the combative use of ideas that I was witnessing. This research carries much of my struggle to understand the social world, but importantly, also to incorporate and recognise the limits of concepts and practices which underpin a systematic and authentic qualitative social inquiry.

**The Social Work Profession**

Social work operates at the interface between individuals and their environment (Australian Association of Social Workers, 2002; International Federation of Social Workers, 2004)\(^2\). Indeed, maintaining a 'field of view' not limited to the individual is a defining feature of the profession (Besthorn, 2002, p. 6; Närhi, 2002, p. 256). The scope of 'environment' is a relatively abstract conceptualisation compared to the singular entity of the individual\(^3\). Reference to the 'environment' has been unnecessarily restrictive (Besthorn & Canda, 2002, p. 79) with a tendency to focus on social, interpersonal or familial elements (Bartlett, 2003, p. 7; Besthorn, 2002, p. 6, 2003, p. 1; Coates, 2004, p. 5). Thus, the community, family, residential or economic 'environmental' elements are frequently understood as the extent of appropriate inquiry or conceptualisation for a social worker. This focus has resulted in something of a lack of engagement by social work with the physical or natural domains of the environment, with the notable exception of a small minority of practitioners and theorists\(^4\). Consequently the profession has been absent from the 'environmental' or 'green' discourse

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\(^1\) The notion of 'received ideas' refers to the taken for granted generalised language used within social work that is often plagued with difficulties in defining as it is often vague, imprecise or self-contradictory (Rojek, Peacock, & Collins, 1988, pp. 17-18).

\(^2\) These references will be referred to by their abbreviations after this point.

\(^3\) This is not to regard people as homogenous, significant diversity within populations is accepted. It does however suggest that there is little ambiguity about what entity is being eluded to when the 'individual' is referenced.

and the environmental crisis has not gained currency to any degree within the social work discourse (Coates, 2005, p. 36).

Social work as a profession also has a primary concern with the pursuit of social justice and human rights to secure human well-being (AASW, 2002; IFSW, 2004; Alston and McKinnon cited in Pease, Allan, & Briskman, 2003, p. 1). Various writers, both from within and external to social work, maintain that environmental problems are issues of social justice and human rights (Bartlett, 2003; Besthorn, 2002, 2003, 2004; Besthorn & Canda, 2002; Coates, 2004; Hoff & Polack, 1993, pp. 205-208; Ife, 2001, p. 39; Julian, 2004, p. 127; McKinnon, 2005, p. 226; Taylor, 2004; Warren, 1999). A reasonable deduction then is that the social justice and human rights mandate of social work begs consideration of environmental problems. Such consideration could provide a basis for conceptualisation and intervention in relation to the physical environment to the extent that it has impact on human well-being – a key outcome sought by social work. Making this link requires an exposition of social justice and human rights, and an examination of how the elements of these concepts relate to environmental problems.

**A Small Rural Community and a Refinery**

Environmental problems emerged for a small rural Western Australian community. Yarloop is a small town in the south west of Western Australia at the base of the Darling Ranges. It has a history in the timber, beef and dairy industries, with many of its constituents having Italian migrant heritage. ("Something in the air", 2005). Many of the citizens have been in the area and lived on family owned properties for generations (EPAC, 2001a, 2001e, 2001g). The community surrounding the small town of Yarloop, including the localities of Wagerup and
Cookernup (the 'community'), has been the site of various problems related to an identified environmental issue.

The identified environmental issue substantively involved the 'community'; Alcoa; and the State Government regulator, then referred to as the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Some citizens within the community reported invasive negative health effects, which were attributed to the emissions from Alcoa's bauxite refinery located a short distance away at Wagerup (Sharp et al., 2004; "Something in the air", 2005). The 'environmental' problem extended to include the actions of the regulator and the implementation of a buffer zone by Alcoa which cut the town in two ("In the loop", 2002; Sharp et al., 2004). The buffer zone provided for Area A and Area B based upon the refinery noise levels and was part of the 'Wagerup Land Management Proposal' (Sharp et al., 2004, p. 227). An inquiry commenced in November 2001 after many years of complaints about emissions to Alcoa and the DEP. During the inquiry Dr Harper, an occupational physician, stated that this was a "public health problem" which has "an environmental cause" (EPAC, 2002a, p. 2).

Purpose

Social work has historically lacked an explicit focus on the physical or natural environment, notwithstanding reference to the principles and language of 'environment' and 'systems' as the cornerstones of the profession (Andreae, 1996, p. 607; Woods & Robinson, 1996, pp. 555-556). By neglecting these dimensions of 'environment' the profession implicitly partitions off a domain which has a significant relationship with human well being (Coates, 2005, p. 33). This has the effect of limiting the discourse of environmental problems and the discourse of the profession, something that can be ill afforded given the urgency and stake of the environmental and ecological crisis (Flannery, 2007; UNEP,

5 The meaning of 'community' is contested and subject to varying interpretations and uses which are often impacted by ideology and the exercise of power (Ife, 2002, pp. 14-17; Kenny, 1999, pp. 8-9). I use 'community' within this dissertation to mainly designate a 'site' "where something happens, a locality or a neighbourhood" (Kenny, 1999, p. 39). It is used to refer to a collection of citizens or the area which they inhabit.
The dominant 'environmental' and social work discourses have tended to omit or subjugate the conceptualisation of environmental or ecological problems as social justice or human rights issues (Coates, 2005, p. 36). This points to the way "the profession has become co-dependent with modern society on the road to ecological disaster" (Coates, 2005, p. 36), both having succumbed to the dominance of modernity (Besthorn, 2003; Coates, 2003a, pp. 28-29, 2004, p. 2). In addition, the linguistic and interpretive repertoires of social workers become restricted to 'legitimate' social work practice⁶. The purpose of this research is to extend the traditional notion of 'environment' within the social work discourse to include the physical environment. This involves a description of the impacts on citizens' well being that identified environmental issues have had. This is facilitated through an exploration of the way citizens conceptualised such impacts.

Rationale

This research is a qualitative descriptive study which examines the statements of citizens within the context of a rural community that has been impacted by an identified environmental issue. The concepts of social justice and human rights are used as a starting point to arrange the statements. Emerging themes stated in terms of the actual experiences of citizens are developed. These themes are abstracted to establish a degree of generalisation in terms of a 'substantive theory'⁷. The logic of this research is thus inductive as it moves from observations to 'theory-generation' (Alston & Bowles, 2003, p. 10; Punch, 2005, p. 16). The theory being generated relates to the connection between anthropogenic environmental problems and the pursuit of social justice and human rights. The research provides an opportunity to expand what social justice and human rights issues might look like within the context of a real world environmental problem.

⁶ Despite the claims of having a dual concern with the environment and the individual, the bulk of social work literature focuses on the individual (Coates, 2003a, p. 44)
This rationale highlights the importance of tapping into the experiences and meanings of those who are the subject of inquiry. They have their own constructions of problems and solutions which may not be accurately reflected by imposing pre-determined criteria (Bryman, 2004, p. 279). In this respect, the capacity of citizens to exercise agency is maintained, as is consistent with critical theory (Pease, Allan, & Briskman, 2003, p. 2). Greater detail of the methods and underpinning assumptions is explained in part two of the dissertation.

The Research Question

In broad terms the research question is framed around the relationship between social work and ecological issues concerning the physical environment. This research has been conducted out of my desire to consider the logical limits of the social work profession and in reaction to the dire circumstances that face future generations in relation to ecological sustainability. Specifically, the question is seeking to establish how the primary concerns of the social work profession can related to ‘environmental’ problems. The research question asks:

How is social injustice and encroached human rights experienced by rural citizens affected by identified environmental problems?

The proposition that precedes the research question is the degradation of the physical environment constitutes encroachments upon social justice and human rights.

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7 A substantive theory is theory which is applicable to the sphere of a particular empirical situation. The exploration and testing of a 'substantive theory' in other settings leads to the development of a 'formal theory' (Bryman, 2004, pp. 404-405)

8 Agency or 'human agency' is opposed to the idea of 'structure' and emphasises the capacity of individuals to exercise free will in the determination of social arrangements (Van Krieken et al., 2000, pp. 16-17)
Significance

This research contributes to a progressive discourse of social work which meets contemporary and emergent challenges to human and ecological well being (Coates, 2003a, p. 55). It demonstrates that environmental problems can be understood as social justice and human rights issues. This conceptualisation of environmental problems helps justify the potential for social work to contribute to ecological sustainability by exposing the implications of modernity (Coates, 2005, p. 37). Recent policy statements by the IFSW (2000) urge social workers to recognise the connections between the social and physical environment and acknowledges the development of the profession’s knowledge base in this area. Historically the knowledge and skills of the profession have been developed in reaction to emerging domains of practice such as drug and alcohol addiction, child protection or relationship counselling. Indeed, the profession’s knowledge base has evolved significantly during the later half of the last century (Camilleri, 1999, p. 30). For example the profession has adapted and developed specific knowledge and skills over time in the area of mental health treatment. At one time this client group predominantly came under the purview of the medical and health professions, however social workers have now taken a more central role (Morales & Sheafor, 1998, p. 111). Many of the existing skills and knowledge bases of social work already complement working with environmental issues. However the development of specialised knowledge and skills relevant to ‘environmental’ practice requires research and the nurturing of practice wisdom. This thesis contributes to the knowledge base that informs an ecologically informed account of social work practice.
CHAPTER 2 – The ‘Ecological Crisis’ and the Social Work Profession

The environmental crisis which surrounds us is indissolubly linked to patterns of social exclusion, to such a degree that the environmentalist cause and that in defence of human rights are but two faces of the same coin. One battle cannot be won if the other is lost... [A] holistic vision of environmental problems is necessary which connects them to the current challenges confronting us in terms of human rights across all their civil, political, economic, social and cultural dimensions (O’Byrne, 2003, p. 387).

Ecological Crisis

There is an increasing acknowledgement within diverse professional fields which identifies the need for ‘ecological responsibility’, albeit that the particular profession may not have traditionally expressed a concern towards identified ‘environmental’ problems (McKinnon, 2005, pp. 225-226). Scientists of various persuasions have warned of the potential for large-scale ecological problems and the consequent impact on human well-being (UNEP, 2007). Various environmental threats are identified including: “climate change, stratospheric ozone depletion, trans-border pollution, land degradation, and loss of biodiversity” (Curson & Clark, 2004, p. 240). The focus of much of the scientific work has been on biological, chemical, physical and geological understandings and explanations of the ecological crisis. This has predominately resulted in discussions of technical and industrial ‘fixes’ to problems (Besthorn, 2004). There are opportunities for the social work profession, with its ‘polyocular’ focus on social, political, cultural and psychological domains and its claims to holism, to contribute to ‘ecological responsibility’ (Adams, 2002, p. 263; Chenoweth & McAuliffe, 2005, pp. 108-110).

Concerns about environmental issues, particularly climate change, have experienced a sharp incline in popular, political and scientific interest since I began this research. Awareness of the issue seems to have
achieved ‘critical mass’ which has manifested in various ways including:
the award of the ‘Australian of the Year’ to a global warming activist
(Flannery, 2007); becoming a significant election issue (AAP, 2007);
airing of popular commercial and public television presentations which
highlight environmental issues⁹; the award of the ‘Nobel Peace Prize’ to
Al Gore and the IPCC¹⁰; the release of various mainstream artistic
productions including literature, music and feature movies which
creatively highlight the issue of ecological crisis¹¹; and importantly, the
significant participation in social action such as the national ‘Walk
Against Warming’ campaign (Walk Against Warming, 2006).

The popularising of the ‘environmental cause’ has led to a shift in
beliefs about anthropocentric created ecological crisis. The existence of
the problem has become an almost taken-for-granted ‘truth’,
transcending debate about previous beliefs¹²(Jones, 2007). Vested
interests, particularly large corporations, have had a history of trying to
construct this as a point of disagreement in science (Ezzy, 2004, p. 11;
Flannery, 2007; Oreskes, 2004, p. 1686). A wind of change seems to
have prevailed which suggests that ecological problems are an outcome
of the impact of contemporary industrialised human existence (Berger,
1995, p. 441), with many now accepting the potential impacts on
human and ecological well-being.

Many commentators and activists now argue that the causal debate is
essentially over and have highlighted the pressing urgency of the
ecological crisis (Ezzy, 2004, p. 241; Flannery, 2007; Jones, 2007;
UNEP, 2007). Pollution through the emissions from industries, like the

---

⁹ These include the : SBS series of ‘the Eco-house challenge’ ("Eco house challenge", 2007); ABC series
of ‘Carbon Cops’ ("Carbon cops", 2007); channel Seven Sunrise programme with its ‘Cool the Globe’
focus ("Sunrise", 2007); and the Channel Ten special presentation ‘Cool Aid’ ("Cool aid: The national
carbon test", 2007).

¹⁰ Al Gore and the ‘Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’ were awarded the 2007 Nobel Peace
Prize “for their efforts to build up and disseminate greater knowledge about man-made climate change,
and to lay the foundations for the measures that are needed to counteract such change” (Nobel
Foundation, 2007).

¹¹ These include songs such as ‘The Three R’s’ (Johnson, 2006); books such as ‘A History of Nearly
Everything’ (Bryson, 2005) and ‘Earth From Above’ (Arthus-Bertrand, 2005); exhibitions (Arthus-
Bertrand, 2006); concerts (Live Earth, 2007); and of course Al Gores like titled book and movie ‘An
Inconvenient truth’ (Gore, 2006a, 2006b).

¹² Oreskes’s (2004) review of 928 scientific papers found that none rejected the proposition of
anthropocentric induced climate change.
Alcoa refinery at Wagerup, contribute to the degradation of the atmospheric quality and to climate change as a whole (UNEP, 2007, p. 78). Recently Flannery (appearing on Jones, 2007) cited the findings of IPCC and pointed out that actual empirical observations over the last few years have significantly exceeded previous projections. As such, previous timelines and predictions are now considered an underestimation of the extent and seriousness of the problem.

The idea of a 'tipping point' has previously been discussed by Lovelock13 (appearing on Jones, 2004) to indicate a 'point of no return', or in other words the point in time when no amount of mitigation of causal factors can undo the momentum of the planet's shifting equilibrium. Flannery (appearing on Jones, 2007) maintains that the lack of meaningful decline in 'carbon dioxide equivalent' emissions and the extent of those remaining in the atmosphere from the past 200 years of industrialisation, suggest that we have less than 10 years before the tipping point may be reached, if indeed it has not already commenced. The parts per million of 'carbon dioxide equivalent' will reach a threshold where dangerous climate change becomes inevitable and the system will be in "runaway mode moving from one steady stable state to another" (appearing on Jones, 2007).

This is irreversible and will destabilise human civilisations and significantly impact human wellbeing (Flannery, 2007; Jones, 2007). The conditions which have allowed for all livings things to prosper will shift to a new state which may not be as conducive to life of Earth. As Lovelock states "Most of the people living as dangerous climate change starts will be killed by it" (cited by Flannery, 2007). This stark outlook is a 'call to action' for all society, but should have a particular resonance for social work which aims to secure human well-being (AASW, 2002).

13 Dr James Lovelock is a British scientist and environmentalist who came to prominence during the seventies for the proposition of the 'Gaia Hypothesis'. In essence this theory argued that the Earth was a living entity whose parts were interconnected and interdependent (Flannery, 2005, p. 13; Jones, 2004, 2006).
Social Work

Social work, in both a historical and contemporary sense, has worked to achieve human well-being by conceptualising the individual and their environment as domains to enact change. The interactive interface between individuals and 'social arrangements' is thus the focus area for the profession (O'Connor, Wilson, & Setterlund, 1998, p. 6). Indeed, the historical cornerstone of the profession lies in the conceptualisation of the notion of a 'person in situation' or 'person in environment' (Woods & Robinson, 1996, p. 555). This way of thinking is incorporated into the influential social work paradigms of psychosocial theory and systems/ecological perspectives (Andreae, 1996, p. 607; Woods & Robinson, 1996, pp. 555-556). By having a partial focus on social arrangements, the impact of social interactions on individuals and collectives is acknowledged as well as psychological factors.

Within such a context, the environment is often delimited to the immediate living conditions including housing, interpersonal relationships, access to resources and community. Mckinnon (2005) expands this notion by defining the environment to:

"the combination of physical features, geographical sites, social interaction, flora and fauna that contribute to the delicate balance of Earth's atmosphere and ecosystems. The social environment cannot exist if the ecological balance becomes so degraded that life cannot be sustained (pp. 227-228)."

A drive towards ecological sustainability requires change to the way humans impact their environment. This will require political, economic and social changes (Hoff & Polack, 1993, p. 209) and an understanding of the interdependence of such areas with environmental systems (McKinnon, 2005, p. 228).

14 Social arrangements refers to "the many processes and relationships by which individuals and the social structure are produced and reproduced" (O'Connor, Wilson, & Setterlund, 1998, p. 6). This emphasises the socially constructed nature of society.

15 The differences between 'environment' and 'ecology' are understood, however, throughout this dissertation I will refer to these terms interchangeably depending upon context.
Ecological/environmental problems are interconnected with economic activity, which is currently dominated by market based approaches (Isbister, 2001, pp. 216-217; Lockie, 2004, pp. 32-33). Both of these domains have emerged due to the inspiration of modernity (Coates, 2003b), and thus the associated problems are related to human ideas. This very much supports the argument that environmental problems are social problems (Burgmann, 2003, p. 193; Ife, 2006b; O'Byrne, 2003, p. 387) whose resolution will not be found solely in technological changes (Besthorn & Besthorn, 2006).

The assumptions of modernity\(^{16}\) have also shaped the conceptualisation of ‘environment’ within the discourse of the social work profession (Coates, 2003b) and fostered an anthropocentric bias (Coates, 2003a, p. 38, 2003b; McKinnon, 2005, p. 230). By decentring these assumptions social work’s value base and concern with individual/social/environmental interactions provides a significant starting point for the justification of the profession being actively concerned with maintaining a sustainable global ecology (Hoff & Polack, 1993, p. 209; McKinnon, 2005, p. 232).

Almost no research\(^{17}\) has been conducted which discusses social workers’ involvement in environmental issues although many writers point to this area as an emerging and critical area effecting human ‘well being’ (Berger, 1995; Besthorn & Besthorn, 2006; Coates, 2003a; Hoff & Polack, 1993; Ife, 2001; McKinnon, 2005).

Social work is a valued based profession (Congress & McAuliffe, 2006, p. 151; Ife, 1997, pp. 11-12) which is a “publicly authorised entity” (Kessel, 2006, p. 146). In this respect it receives its authority from society and is ultimately accountable to the community (Ife, 1997, p. 11; Kessel, 2006, p. 146). The principles of social justice and human rights are fundamental to the social work endeavour (AASW, 2002;

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\(^{16}\) An extensive discussion of the impact of modernity on social work, with a useful table setting out the characteristics of such, is found in Coates’ (2003a) text ‘Ecology and Social Work’. He argues that social work has become co-dependent with modernity and thus can be understood as a ‘domesticated profession’ (Coates, 2003a, pp. 38-56)
They form the backbone for the framework utilised in this research and will be expanded upon in the following sections of this chapter.

**Social Justice**

Social justice is defined within the AASW Code of Ethics as “fairness in the distribution of social resources, rights, opportunities and duties” (AASW, 2002, p. 29). It states that the four broad objectives of social justice are equity, rights, access and participation. Heywood’s (2000, p. 135) definition of social justice as “a morally justifiable distribution of material or social rewards” is similar and typical of traditional understandings. This approach is consistent with Rawls’s theory of justice which, in reaction to the Bentham’s utilitarianism, asserts that justice should be judged on *fairness* rather than the ‘greatest good for the greatest number’ (Wronka, 1992, p. 118). This conception provides that “all ‘social primary goods,’ such as liberty, opportunity, income and wealth, are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution of any of these goods is to the advantage of the least favoured” (Shestack cited in Wronka, 1992, p. 118).

These conceptualizations focus on the distribution of various phenomena, both material and non-material. Thus non-material phenomena such as power, rights, opportunity and social rewards are seen as capable of distribution in the same way that material goods are. Young (1990, p. 24) recognises the difference between these two fields and maintains that the conceptualization of non-material entities in this way is an overextension of the distributional paradigm. Power, rights, social rewards and other non-material phenomena are not static and cannot be measured in the same way that material objects are (Young, 1990, p. 15 & 24). These phenomena are more appropriately “understood as a function of rules and relations than as things” (Young, 1990, p. 24). They are not possessions capable of being distributed or redistributed; they are exercised in and through relationships. Taylor

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17 Närhi’s (2002) study inquired into social workers’ conceptualisations of the relationship between the
(cited in Mullaly, 2002, pp. 34-35) states that the traditional distributional model “gives primacy to substance over relations, rules, and processes”. The inclusion of non-material goods within a distributional model of social justice demonstrates a failure to recognise the limits of the application of a distributional paradigm. Social justice is then predominately conceptualised in terms of end-state patterns (Young, 1990, p. 24). In this respect, social justice and a distributional perspective are seen as co-extensive, or holding the same scope of conceptualisation (Mullaly, 2002, p. 32; Young, 1990, p. 16).

Young (1990, p. 15) defines social justice in broad terms as “the elimination of institutionalized domination and oppression”. This shifts the focus from distributions to the settings which produce unjust distributions. It is important to note that in defining social justice this way there is no suggestion that the distributional paradigm should be abandoned. Indeed, Mullaly (2002, p. 33) maintains that “the provision of general goods and services for people suffering severe deprivation must be a first priority”. Young (1990, p. 19) also highlights the enormous inequalities between the ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’ across this world and suggests that any “conception of justice must address the distribution of material goods”. However, the limits of the distributional paradigm must be recognised. This is achieved by conceptualising social justice as having a concern with institutional contexts\(^\text{18}\) and societal structures. Indeed, there is an entire paradigm of social work (structural social work) devoted to the way societal structures oppress individuals and groups (Mullaly, 1997).

In support of her focus on the institutional context and social structure, Young (1990, pp. 17-18) cites Waltzer who states that:

local living environment and social exclusion.
\(^{18}\) The institutional context “includes any structures or practices, the rules and norms that guide them, the language and symbols that mediate social interaction within them, in institutions of state, family and civil society, as well as the workplace” (Young, 1990, p. 22)
It is more appropriate to criticize the structure of dominance itself rather than merely the distribution of the dominant good. Having one sort of social good—say, money—should not give one automatic access to other social goods. If the dominance of some goods over access to other goods is broken, then the monopoly of some group over a particular good may not be unjust.

An example which illustrates the first point of this quote relates to opportunities for representation before the law. Is it just for one person who is able to secure the best representation money can buy to receive different outcomes compared to someone who can only engage the under resourced Legal Aid safety net? The last section of this quote is a little more difficult to digest, but highlights the logical conclusion of a non-distributional paradigm of social justice. I take this section to suggest that if oppression is ameliorated and the distribution of material goods is unequal, the relationship and circumstance may not necessarily be unjust. That is, unequal distribution is not necessarily a justice issue. Some other element—maybe free will, maybe a cultural imperative—could be responsible. This second point highlights the ontological difficulties that exist within the distributional paradigm in terms of equating distribution with justice (Young, 1990, p. 25). This is a critical divergence between the distributional and non-distributional paradigms.

The traditional distributional model of social justice has essentially been imported and applied as the only way to think about issues of ‘environmental justice’ (Julian, 2004, pp. 118-120; Warren, 1999). The consideration of justice within the realm of environmental issues is assumed or stated to refer to the distribution of environmental quality (Julian, 2004, pp. 120-121; Warren, 1999). However, similar shortcomings have also been observed within this domain. The structural forces which lead to unjust distributions need to be examined to establish an adequate understanding and appreciation of environmental justice. A

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19 A fine example of how these specific circumstances can transpire is observed in the ethically challenging film ‘Dead man Walking’. This film is based on a non-fictional book and, amongst other things, demonstrates how the primary instigator in a violent crime escapes the death penalty compared to his lessor responsible partner ("Dead man walking", 1995).
focus on structural sources of injustice is important because
distributional conceptions relate to circumstances that have occurred
'after the fact' (Low & Gleeson cited in Julian, 2004, p. 120) and in this
realm the consequences are not capable of being readily undone. Low
and Gleeson further suggest that a structural focus is also necessary to
avoid getting bogged down in the 'quicksand of distributional politics'
(cited in Julian, 2004, p. 120). Primarily though, the distributional
paradigm is insufficient because "crucial categories of environmental
justice issues are not about distribution" (Warren, 1999). Warren
(1999) argues for a similar focus to that of Young (1990) on institutions
of domination.

The shift of attention from distribution to conception and creation leads
to consideration of three primary categories of non-distributive issues. These are decision making structures and procedures, division of
labour and culture (Young, 1990, p. 22). The first category of 'decision
making structures and procedures' is not limited to the consideration of
who is charged with the authority of decision making. It also relates to
the rules and procedures that are structurally located within relevant
institutions so that systems of oppression and domination continue to
be perpetrated (Young, 1990, p. 23). This provides a focus on issues
such as choice, control, authority or stake.

The second category covering the 'division of labour' can be approached
from both a distributive and non-distributive paradigm. As a
distributional issue it refers to the way that particular roles or tasks are
apportioned. For example, the observation that a small percentage of
Aboriginal people attain university level education (Groome, 2002) is a
distributional issue. As a non-distributional issue the focus turns to
the way that different roles, identities or tasks are defined; what
meaning is invested in these tasks; and how they are valued. This
position also notices the "relations of cooperation, conflict, and
authority among positions" (Young, 1990, p. 23). This is useful within
the case of the community of Yarloop and Alcoa because there are a
variety of roles and tasks which have come together and are invested with authority and credibility to different degrees.

The final and broadest category is that of culture. This use of ‘culture’ as an issue of non-distributive social justice relates to the way that the symbolic meanings attached to particular groups and their activities act to impact their ‘social standing’ and limit their opportunities” (Young, 1990, p. 23). This involves judgements being made, consciously or unconsciously, in relation to the “symbols, images, meanings, habitual comportments, stories and so on” (Young, 1990, p. 23) which are invested in the attitudes, values, behaviours and institutions of a particular group (Matsumoto, 2000, p. 24; Young, 1990, p. 23). The judgements made about the differences of a particular group act to limit their opportunities or social standing and thus result in the devaluing of the particular group. This suggests the importance of a focus on the way that the Yarloop community articulates their ‘devalued differences’ (Ross, 2005).
Human Rights

The social work profession within Australia espouses a commitment to the pursuit of human rights (AASW, 2002, p. 5&8). This is consistent with the International Federation of Social Workers' view that the "principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental" to the profession (IFSW, 2004). Specifically, the purpose of the profession in Australia is, in part, to:

...maximise the fulfilment of human needs [italics added] ... [through a commitment to] ... enabling people to achieve the best possible levels of personal and social well-being. [To pursue these aims] ... "[t]he social work profession subscribes to the principles and aspirations of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international conventions derived from that Declaration (AASW, 2002, p. 5).

Various values are prescribed for the profession with consequent principles that are required to be met by social workers. These include the professional values of 'social justice' and 'human dignity and worth'(AASW, 2002, p. 8). To meet these values social workers are required to hold to the principles of "respecting the basic human rights of individuals and groups"; "affirming that civil and political rights must be accompanied by economic, social and cultural rights"; and "work[ing] to eliminate all violations of human rights" (AASW, 2002, p. 8). Whilst some social workers may not see their work as a human rights endeavour (Ife, 2001), there is little doubt that the concept is intertwined with the principles of the profession. It must be acknowledged that other professions are also concerned with the pursuit of human rights (Ife, 2006b).

The notion of human rights casts back much further than the most well known contemporary manifestation of human rights ideals: the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) 1948 (O'Byrne, 2003, p. 75). Various theological, philosophical, jurisprudential and ethical theories have been postulated from antiquity through to the middle ages, the renaissance, the age of enlightenment, the age of
industrialisation to current times (O'Byrne, 2003; Wronka, 1992). A variety of theorists have written in different forms and have contributed to the emergence of the concept of human rights during these periods. These include a focus on elements such as morals, equity, equality, social contract, universality, natural law, justice, rule of law, rights and duties, ethics and citizenship (O'Byrne, 2003; Wronka, 1992). Such theorists include Aristotle, Locke, Hobbs, Rosseau, Montesquieu, Paine, Arendt, Kant and the authors of the religious texts of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, to name just a few. Even the critiques provided by Marx and the utilitarianism of Bentham have contributed to the debate and formation of the concept of human rights (Solas, 2000).

Various key documents expressing assertions of rights have emerged over time, often as a reaction to despotic rule or conflictual relations. Many of these documents incorporate the ideas espoused by many of the historical theorists mentioned earlier (Wronka, 1992). These documents include: the Magna Carta (1215); The English ‘Bill or Rights’ (1688-1689); the French ‘Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen’ (1789); United States Declaration of Independence; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1976); and The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976) (O'Byrne, 2003, pp. 74-78; Wronka, 1992, pp. 51, 58, 67-70). These various documents represent, in Wronka's (1992, pp. 28-29) terms, rights as ideals and rights as enactments.

Human rights are frequently referred to in terms of the ‘three generations’ of human rights (Baderin & McCorquodale, 2007, pp. 9-10; Ife, 2001, pp. 25-27; O'Byrne, 2003, p. 11; Wronka, 1992, pp. 25-28). This approach to human rights reflects their historical emergence and coincides with the French notions of liberté, égalité, fraternité (Baderin & McCorquodale, 2007, p. 10; Wronka, 1992, p. 25). This typology was first coined by Karel Vasak, a French jurist, and roughly coincides with particular sections of articles from the UDHR (Wronka, 1992, pp. 25-

Wronka (1992, pp. 28-29) provides a useful three fold explanation of rights which is useful for describing and thinking about human rights. He states that rights wan be thought of as ideals, enactments or as exercised.
First generation rights (liberté) refer to the ‘civil and political rights’ of individuals and offer protection from the unjust intervention of the state (Ife, 2001, p. 25; Wronka, 1992, p. 25). In this respect they are understood as ‘negative freedoms’ (Wronka, 1992, p. 27). These rights resonate with liberal notions of freedom and are thus quite individualistic in nature (Ife, 2001, p. 25). First generation rights correlate roughly with articles 2-21 of the UDHR and (Wronka, 1992, p. 27).

Second generation rights (égalité) refer to the ‘economic, social and cultural rights’ of individuals or collectives (Baderin & McCorquodale, 2007, p. 9; Ife, 2001, p. 26; Wronka, 1992, p. 27). They acknowledge that individuals and groups have rights to a range of social provisions so they are able to maintain human well-being (Ife, 2001, p. 26). These types of rights require the state to take a more active role in ensuring the accessibility of social resources to individuals and groups and are thus seen as ‘positive freedoms’ (Wronka, 1992, p. 27). The capacity to enjoy civil and political rights and live free from fear and want is contingent upon the realisation of economic, social and cultural rights (ICESCR cited in Baderin & McCorquodale, 2007, pp. 6-7). Second generation rights have a socialist heritage (Ife, 2001, p. 26). This category of rights is consistent with articles 22-27 of the UDHR and (Wronka, 1992, p. 27).

Third generation rights (fraternité) refer to the ‘solidarity rights’ (Wronka, 1992, p. 28) which belong to “a community, population, society or nation” (Ife, 2001, p. 27). This category of rights has only been recognised during the 20th century and is thus less well understood and accepted within the human right discourse (O'Byrne, 2003, p. 387). Third generation human rights can only be understood if applied collectively to such areas as environmental, developmental, trade and land based concerns (Ife, 2001, p. 27; O'Byrne, 2003, p. 387).

Whilst the ‘three generations’ typology has been useful in a descriptive sense, there are several conceptual criticisms to this arrangement. The language of numbered ‘generations’ has problematic implications;
Baderin and McCorquodale (2007, p. 10) argue that "[t]he very unhelpful terminology has often led to the misconception of [economic, social and cultural] rights as second-class rights to [civil and political] rights". The primacy suggested by the numbering of generations leads to a hierarchy of rights and consequently the dominance of civil and political rights within the human rights discourse (Ife, 2001). This results in the subordination of other forms of rights, particularly second and third generation rights (Baderin & McCorquodale, 2007, p. 10; Ife, 2006a, p. 31). "First generation rights are a necessary prerequisite for a just society, but they do not of themselves produce social equity or social justice, as these are understood by most social workers" (Ife, 2001, pp. 28-29). These goals require the securing of second and third generation rights to be achieved.

A second criticism of the 'three generations' typology relates to the inconsistent basis of classification. First and second generation rights are "based on a classification of rights to certain things, whereas the third generation is based on rights of a particular group (Ife, 2006a, pp. 31-32). When these generations are compared they are logically assumed to be classified at the same level. By maintaining that third generation rights are collective rights, it implies that the other generations are 'not collective' rights (Ife, 2006a, pp. 31-33). This highlights a more significant conceptual problem with a 'three generations' typology. It "forces an individualistic construction on all rights belonging in the first two generations, ignoring the fact that many of these can also be understood as applying collectively" (Ife, 2006a, p. 32). This problem is echoed by the 'Asian values' critique which suggests that the individualistic bias of human rights has emerged out of the dominance of Western liberal constructions of the concept (Flynn, 2005, p. 245; Ife, 2001, pp. 26-27, 2006a, pp. 32-33).

The majority, if not all, human rights can appropriately be understood as being applied collectively or individually (Ife, 2006a, p. 32; Ife & Fiske, 2006). To talk about collective rights as a separate category heightens the neglected profile of the responsibilities which correspond
with rights (Flynn, 2005, p. 251; Rees, 2003, p. 204). Ife (2006a) suggests a seven-fold typology as a more appropriate way of conceptualising human rights. This typology is open to both individualistic and collective constructions of rights and, importantly, responsibilities (Ife, 2006a).

The typology disaggregates second generation rights due to each element having a distinct primary importance in its own right. It also incorporates individual categories previously constructed as third generation rights. Thus the seven-fold conceptualisation of human rights includes the categories of survival rights, social rights, economic rights, cultural rights, civil and political rights, environmental rights and spiritual rights (Ife, 2006a). This approach to human rights is adopted within this research as it explicitly lists an extensive range of human rights and provides a comprehensive way to explore and reveal the complexity of rights in a real situation (Ife, 2006a).

Survival rights are essentially the 'rights to live' and refer to the right to source the basic needs that sustain life. These may include water, shelter, food, security and basic health provision. As these rights are fundamental to the biological functioning of individuals and a precondition to exercise any other rights, they can be understood to be accorded some primacy (Ife, 2006a, pp. 35-36).

Social rights allow for the fulfilment of interaction with and within the social environment. They include rights to various elements of social provision including basic education, health, and income (Hepple, 2002, p. 1). They also include rights to raise a family, to freedom from discrimination, to adequate leisure and to choice of lifestyle (Ife, 2006a, pp. 34-35).

Economic rights relate to the capacity for individuals or groups to be able to sustain economic independence and freedom. They include the right to fair wages, employment, protection from economic exploitation and freedom to spend income as desired (Ife, 2006a, p. 34).
Cultural rights refer to the rights of individuals, in community with others, to enjoy their own culture and participate in various forms of cultural expression (Ife, 2006a, pp. 34-35; McGoldrick, 2007, p. 452). Cultural expression involves attitudes, values, beliefs, norms and behaviours that may be manifested in language, song, and art (Ife, 2006a; Matsumoto, 2000, p. 24; McGoldrick, 2007, p. 452). A rural sub-culture can include unique “patterns of economic activity, family life, language and customs which run counter to modern economic values” (Tickamyer & Tickamyer cited in Cloke, 1997, p. 265).

Civil and political rights continue to be conceptualised as a single category due to the problems associated with establishing a boundary between them. Indeed, separation may well represent an “artificial distinction” (Ife, 2006a, p. 30). These rights are defined in the same way that traditional ‘first generation’ rights are understood, as discussed earlier and relate to the protection from misuse of political authority by the state (Healey, 2000, p. 40; Wronka, 1992, p. 27).

Environmental rights relate to the right to exist in a “clean and healthy environment” (O'Byrne, 2003, p. 387). It is the right to breathe clean air; to enjoy the natural world and wilderness; to grow produce without fear of chemical contamination; to pollution free environs across the mediums of water, earth, air and wind; and the right to ecological sustainability. This final element brings the notion of ‘intergenerational21’ rights to bear by turning the focus to systems and processes which will impact the health and well-being of future generations. This approach has, in many cases, escaped consideration and is a key anthropocentric argument within the discourse of the current ecological crisis (Flannery, 2007; IFSW, 2000, p. 2). The unsustainable activities of previous generations which deny future descendants the right to existence can be understood as ‘ecocide22’

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21 Intergenerational rights relate to “our responsibilities to address human rights violations in the past and to protect the human rights of future generations” (Falk cited in Ife, 2006a).
22 “Just as genocide is interpreted as the planned denial of the right to existence to entire groups of people, and is accordingly condemned in international law, so must human rights research recognise the ecocide is the indiscriminate denial of the right to existence of future generations, and must be equally condemned” (O’Byrne, 2003, p. 389).

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(IFSW, 2000, p. 2; O’Byrne, 2003, p. 389). Previously categorised under ‘third generation’ rights, they are primarily identified as collective rights, however, it is clear that these rights are capable of being exercised, enjoyed and violated at an individual level as well (Ife, 2006a, p. 32).

Spiritual rights are not limited to the right to religious freedom. Spirituality is a much broader concept and “involves those experiences, things, ideas, actions and beliefs that give life meaning” (Bouma, 2003, p. 428). Spirituality encompasses themes relating to the non-material world as a source of higher moral authority (Healy, 2005, pp. 83-84) to inform what is “ultimately important, worth sacrifice, and placed first in our priorities” (Bouma, 2003, p. 428). Spiritual rights are exercised in varying ways, and for some they might include the right to engage in religious practices or the right to experience nature; whilst for others the right to participate in culturally informed practices such as poetry, art, music and dance embody spiritual fulfilment (Ife, 2006a, pp. 37-38).

In addition to these seven dimensions of Ife’s (2006a) typology of human rights, there are two factors which must also be acknowledged to envision human rights in a more complete manner. The importance of corresponding responsibilities and the contentious notion of the human rights of corporations both need to be explored, particularly within the case of Alcoa and the Yarloop community.

The dominance of ‘civil and political’ rights and other individualistic constructions of rights within the human rights discourse eschews the importance of corresponding responsibilities, and thus evades a conceptual logic to the human rights paradigm (Flynn, 2005; Ife, 2001; Rees, 2003). However, the AASW’s explanation of social justice encompasses the acceptance of notions of rights and duties within society (AASW, 2002, p. 8). Ife and Fiske argue that:

It is clear that rights only make sense if there are corresponding responsibilities on others to protect, secure or realise those rights, and similarly responsibilities make no sense unless they are linked to rights; they only arise
because some individual or group has a rights claim (2006, p. 297).

In this respect the role played by the DEP and Aloca has a direct relationship to the capacity of citizens to enjoy their human rights.

De Feyter (2005, p. 45) contends that Western market based states have tended to resist the calls to recognise collective group rights, whilst at the same time have allowed corporate rights to be increasingly recognised. This has serious implications for the prioritising of private interests over the interests of the public good (De Feyter, 2005, p. 46; Paehlke, 2003, p. 23). The potential for citizens' rights to be marginalised is exacerbated by the “imbalance in consumer and corporate access to information” (Rees, 2003, p. 175).
PART TWO: THE RESEARCH
"If the social worker compartmentalises reflection (values and knowledge) from action (use of skill), she [sic] is, in fact, deceiving herself. She [sic] is in 'bad faith', as Sartre (1969, pp. 47-70) would say, because she is pretending that her [sic] action can be value-free and purely technical" (Banks, 2001, pp. 64-65)

CHAPTER 3 - Conceptual Orientation

Introduction

Qualitative research is a complex endeavour (Dominelli, 2005, p. 228) whereby its conceptual basis is often a patchwork of overlapping and intertwined contested and intricate concepts (Crotty, 1998, p. 3; Punch, 2005, pp. 134-135). The terminology employed for the arrangement of research concepts is often inconsistent and consequently confusing between authors (Clough & Nutbrown, 2002, p. 29). Different sources often refer to the same concepts in different ways highlighting the contested and political nature of research. In addition, there is seldom a thorough explanation of how categories of concepts are related to each other or fit together (Crotty, 1998, p. 1). Crotty's (1998) hierarchal typology helps to provide some structure to the research terrain by stating a clear framework of categories for research concepts.

This framework locates 'epistemology' as a conceptual foundation which is concerned with the nature and justification of knowledge whose rule are mostly unwritten (Baillie, 2003, p. 94; Walter, 2006, p. 15). Put simply, it is the 'science of knowing' or how we know what we know (Babbie, 2004, p. 6; Crotty, 1998, p. 8). The framework then moves to the theoretical perspective, then to the methodology and finally to the method. Each level informs the next so as to funnel down from the abstract notions of the character of knowledge to the more specific

23 For example Punch (2005, p. 28) warns that care should be taken in distinguishing between the concept of 'methodology' and the grammatical derivative of 'method'. Further, some authors refer to constructionism as an epistemology (Crotty, 1998), whilst others refer to it as a form of ontology (Babbie, 2007; Sarantakos, 2005).
technical actions of research methods. The use of this series of concepts can occur horizontally or vertically and in either direction depending upon the how the framework is being used (Crotty, 1998, pp. 3-13).

This framework is important because it provides consistency through the different elements of the research design and helps flesh out the assumptions inherent in the taken for granted position of the researcher and the research. Making these assumptions explicit helps to ensure the soundness of the research (Crotty, 1998, p. 6).

The specific components of this framework that have been applied to this research are outlined within this chapter. This includes a discussion of a constructionist epistemology; a critical theory inspired theoretical perspective; and a discourse analytic methodology. A discussion of qualitative content analysis as the 'method' and specific techniques employed for data collection and data analysis will be covered in chapter four. Prior to these discussions it is important to ground the research process within a social work context as this helps to make the connections between academic and practice based endeavours.

**Social Work in Research**

**Values**

Social work is, and has always been, a values based profession (Congress & McAuliffe, 2006, pp. 1-2; Ife, 1997, p. 11). This throws up an additional dimension of influence\(^{24}\) over the research process which may not be present for other disciplines. A social work researcher is guided not only by their ontological, epistemological and theoretical positionings, but also by their ethical position and the value base of the profession\(^{25}\) (Banks & Barnes, 2005, p. 241). This is reflected through

\(^{24}\) The idea of 'value-neutral' knowledge has substantially been rejected by contemporary social scientists. It is often now understood as unfeasible and, importantly, an undesirable aim of research. See Walter (2006, p. 14) for an explanation of how the social context of research underpins this argument.

\(^{25}\) Butler (2003, p. 27) argues for the recognition and embracing of social work research as a 'value based politically aware and engaged form of endeavour'. This may bring it into conflict with conventional
the explicit inclusion of provisions within various social work ethical codes which highlight that research is bound by the same ethical principals as practice (BASW cited in AASW, 2002, p. 20; Banks & Barnes, 2005, p. 241). In broad terms the Australian Association of Social Work (AASW) Code of Ethics espouses values of: human dignity and worth; social justice; service to humanity; integrity; and competence (AASW, 2002, pp. 8-10). The AASW code of ethics broadly reflects a Kantian approach to ethics through its codification of deontological principles.

These professional ethics are combined and interpreted through my personal ethic of ecologism. Ecological ethics are congruent with social works’ values as they are based on concepts of care, justice, need and responsibility (Hugman, 2005, p. 86).

Ecological ethics incorporate an ecocentric, rather than an anthropocentric view of the world (Hugman, 2005, pp. 86-90). That is, it is a view that rejects a human centred stand point which privileges human interests. This is replaced with a philosophy which places value on the functioning ecosystem as a whole and all its constituents (Ife, 2002, p. 34; Pepper, 1996, p. 19). Ecological ethics embrace “human responsibilities towards other animals, other forms of life and the conditions which make life possible” (Smith cited in Hugman, 2005, p. 89). This also extends to the ‘chronosystem’26, whereby ethical consideration must be afforded to future generations (Smith cited in Hugman, 2005, p. 90). Moral value is extended from a narrow focus on human beings “to the whole ecosystem, including that which is inanimate as well as animate” (Smith cited in Hugman, 2005, p. 90). By taking this moral perspective concepts of holism, interdependence, reciprocity, sustainability, diversity and equilibrium become important (Ife, 2002, pp. 41-45). I have accepted these characteristics as ancillary elements of the theoretical perspective which are mediated through the researcher’s reflexivity. I will return again to the issue of reflexivity in a

expectations of the roles of social work and social research, but the battle for social justice has to be what Butler calls ‘unbiddable’ (p. 28)” (Humphries, 2005, p. 282).

26 The chronosystem, in essence, acknowledges environmental timing (Vander Zanden, 2003, pp. 50-51)
more detailed fashion later in this chapter. The value position expressed within the research incorporates the logic of Kantian deontology and a concern for the well being of the entire ecosystem.

**A social work research praxis**

In addition to values, social work places importance on its knowledge and skills as the basis for practice (Ife, 1997, p. 11). Knowledge and skills are often discussed under the rubric of theory and practice. This often occurs within social work literature in terms of a developmental approach to learning requiring the integration of theory into practice (Chenoweth & McAuliffe, 2005, p. 118; Harrison, 1990, p. 114). The precise nature of these components is contested with some commentators stating that theory and practice are inseparable (Banks, 2001, p. 65), whilst others maintain that they are separate activities that have little to do with each other (Goldstein cited in Camilleri, 1999, p. 29; Pease & Fook cited in Ife, 2001, p. 141).

This thesis does not extensively engage with this debate other than to recognise the existence of these entities and the contestation. My position is that theory and practice are difficult to separate and that they are component parts of a unified process, particularly when incorporated into a social work praxis. Any separation that occurs is conceptual in nature and used to aid an explication of the different levels of a single process. The importance of these elements to this research is that they are used in praxis: an approach emphasising a cyclic process of “doing, learning and critical reflection, so that each informs the others and the three effectively become one” (Ife, 2002, p. 229). Some theorists and writers have expressed the process in terms of the fusion of ‘reflection’ and ‘action’ (Banks, 2001, p. 64; Freire cited in Crotty, 1998, p. 151). This conception of praxis will be utilised within this thesis.

It is helpful to think of research in terms of praxis because it lifts research concepts up from being words on a page to ‘action’ or
'reflection' processes, thus providing an opportunity to see research as a form of practice. Fook (2001) urges for the integration of research, theory and practice so they are all seen as integral to the social work endeavour\textsuperscript{28}. A praxis approach also helps to give clarity to Crotty’s (1998) conceptual typology by providing some consistent language about how concepts come to life in the research process. By making the praxis explicit the conceptual elements are held to account when the methods are applied to the data. This helps to illuminate the reflexive elements of the research. This will become more important later when discussing the integration of critical theory and Foucaultian methods.

When a praxis approach to social work research is overlayed on to Crotty’s typology it becomes necessary to conceptually locate the epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and method in terms of ‘reflection’ or ‘action’ processes. By doing this the different levels of research activities are articulated and the limits of such are exposed. In her discussion of praxis Banks (2001, pp. 64-65) aligns ‘reflection’ with values and knowledge, and ‘action’ with skill. This association provides a new way of visualising research concepts. I maintain that ecologism, constructionism, critical theory and discourse analysis are ‘reflection’ (values and knowledge) based activities, whilst the qualitative content analysis incorporating Foucaultian methods and grounded theory is an ‘action’ (skill) based process\textsuperscript{29}.

A significant advantage to adopting a research praxis incorporating Crotty’s typology is that distinct and sometimes contradictory conceptual and theoretical traditions can achieve compatibility through

\textsuperscript{27} Humphries (2005, pp. 281-282) highlights the importance of a research based praxis when the struggles of oppressed people and those treated unjustly by the social care system are at the heart of research.

\textsuperscript{28} This is important for the future of social work as it has historically broken into two dichotomous subcultures; one ‘theoretical subculture’ and one practice subculture, with the importance of research frequently not being seen as congruent with the realities of the practice arena (Camilleri, 1999, p. 29). “[A]cademic social workers are important for the profession since they attempt to provide its credibility” (Camilleri, 1999, p. 30).

\textsuperscript{29} This categorisation of concepts is not to argue that the different categories of concepts are separate from each other in practice. However it maintains that there are different processes running at different levels which make up the amalgam of my praxis based research design.
complementary relationships across different levels\textsuperscript{30}. This may come at the cost of some of the inherent assumptions which are historically entrenched within particular research traditions\textsuperscript{31}. In this way the deterministic elements of critical theory (Watts, 2003) can be synthesised with the scepticism of Foucaultian methods and the subjectivity of grounded theory. These elements will be revisited in the remainder of this chapter and the following chapter covering research design.

\textsuperscript{30}The 'action' level relating to methods. The 'reflection' level relating to values, epistemology, theoretical perspective and methodology.

\textsuperscript{31}It is this type of approach which allowed Hardy, Harley and Phillips (2004, p. 20) to synthesise the ordinarily incompatible traditions of content analysis and discourse analysis. However, as they explain, this synthesis comes at the cost of the positivist aims of content analysis.
Epistemology

As discussed in chapters one and two social work has a history of conceptualising the individual within their social environment and the interplay between the two. Embedded within the theory and practice of the profession is the belief that the social dynamics of society have an effect on individuals or groups. An example of this is the social model of health (Germov, 1998) The tenets of the profession are consistent with a constructionist epistemology as they both acknowledge the interaction of individual schemas with and within a social context.

Constructionism maintains that meaningful reality, and thus knowledge, is generated through the interaction that people (subjects) have with each other and their environments (objects), rather than meaning exclusively residing in objects (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). Constructionism rejects the notion that we create meaning, meaning is constructed through the interaction of the subjective (an individuals schema) and the objective (the environment) within a social context through an interpretive process (Crotty, 1998, p. 43.44; Sarantakos, 2005, p. 37). This triadic process where individuals interact with each other and their environments highlights the social construction of meaning, knowledge and social phenomena.

Constructionism contends that the meaning invested in a particular object ceases to hold such meaning in an environment that is historically devoid of social beings. In a hypothetical world without social agents meaningful reality does not exist. “There is no meaning without a mind” (Copper cited in Sarantakos, 2005, p. 37). This is not to say that an environment and its constituent parts do not exist, it is just that there has been no social beings to construct meaning about this existence. Without consciousness there ceases to be any meaningful reality. “Meaning emerges only when consciousness engages with [the world and the objects within in the world]” (Crotty,
Constructionism rejects essentialism and absolutism due to the interactive, and thus fluid nature of meaning production (O'Dowd, 2003, p. 41; Sarantakos, 2005, p. 37). Such rigid accounts of knowledge and meaning are the realm of objectivism (Crotty, 1998; Sarantakos, 2005).

Meaning is shared and for many social phenomena a consistent construction persists for a particular epoch, until reflection and inquiry lead to a progression of meaning. This is not to say that the understanding of a particular phenomena is absolute, they are merely social products of a particular time. These patterns are conveyed through a socially interpretive process which simultaneously acts to construct, sustain and reconstruct meaning (Sarantakos, 2005, p. 39). I will return to these multiple processes shortly within the discussion of ‘reflexivity’; a central component of constructionism. The patterns derived from these processes are codified into collective cultural beliefs and practices, however cultural mechanisms also act to reproduce and sustain meaning as constructed within individual constituents (Sarantakos, 2005, p. 39).

The acknowledgement of patterns and collective meaning is one element which differentiates constructionism from subjectivism. Making a conceptual distinction between these two epistemologies is important, as subjectivism is sometimes erroneously referred to under the rubric of constructionism (Crotty, 1998, p. 16). Subjectivism takes no notice of the affect of societal structures and institutions. At the other end of the spectrum, objectivism does not factor in the affect of social interaction.

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32 Discussions of constructionism such as those by Crotty (1998) and Sarantakos (2005) tend to reflect an anthropocentricism within social research as they refer only to human consciousness of meaningful reality without any acknowledgement of meaning constructed by other sentient beings.

33 A Foucaultian approach to historical examination is often referred to as the ‘history of the present’. This emphasises that the present should not be understood as an ideal or the result of progression and that history is best used to diagnose the present rather than demonstrate the achievement of a sensible state of affairs (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p. 4). Present time is therefore just a point in time which is not necessarily the result of progression or on a trajectory of achieving a more desirable state.

34 Place and space have a special meaning with human geography and increasingly within social sciences. They provide “a map upon which resources, both natural and human, have been and are used in a systematic way, providing the foundations of a human culture that have continually changed and evolved over time” (Cranby & Matthews, 2004, p. 240)
and thus the capacity for individuals to exercise agency and assert variations in meaning (Sarantakos, 2005, p. 32). "Objectivity and subjectivity need to be brought together and held together indissolubly. Constructionism does precisely that." (Crotty, 1998, p. 44).

Understanding the social process of reflexivity underpins a more extensive conceptualisation of constructionism. Constructionism is a theory of knowledge and reflexivity accounts for mechanisms which transmit knowledge. The fundamental elements within both concepts are the subject, object and the social context (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p. 246). Reflexivity has relevance to both mainstream social work practice and social research by putting the practitioner or researcher 'in the picture'. Defining this concept in the realm of practice provides some tangible ground to create an understanding. It is defined as:

being in a circular process in which social workers 'put themselves in the picture' by thinking and acting with the people that they are serving, so that their understandings and actions inevitably are changed by their experiences with others. As part of the same process, they influence and change others and their social worlds (Adams, Dominelli, & Payne, 2002, p. 3).

This definition highlights the reciprocal nature of social service provision including activities involving change, development, learning and knowledge. These activities simultaneously affect both the initiator and recipient of these processes in intended and unintended ways. Thus these reciprocal processes have an affect on clients and social workers alike through their social interaction.

In a research context 'reflexivity' has been defined by some authors in similar ways to 'reflection' (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p. 248). For instance Willis (2006, pp. 260-261) defines reflexivity as "a self-conscious awareness by the researcher of their position in the research process". I accept this interpretation, however believe it misses a critical point of reflexivity; the simultaneous mutual effects on subjects within an interpersonal interaction and the feedback of change to participants' understandings. Clegg and Hardy (cited in Alvesson &
Sköldberg, 2000, p. 248) "view reflexivity as being about ways of seeing which act back on and reflect existing ways of seeing". Thus reflexivity within a research context can be understood to be a significant part of the mechanism which *interprets, constructs, sustains* and *reconstructs* meaning; the cornerstone processes of the interaction of individual, collective and cultural meaning construction (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000; Crotty, 1998; Sarantakos, 2005).

Therefore a constructionist understanding of knowledge is required for the researcher to accept the impact of reflexivity. These elements are the theory (constructionism) and practice (reflexivity) of the same phenomena. The acceptance of constructionism paves the way for perceiving, interpreting, exercising and acknowledging reflexivity in social relations. Conversely, without the reciprocity inherent in reflexive human interaction, constructionism could not be conceptualised. Reflexivity in a research context is important because it means:

> paying attention to [the object, subject and social context] without letting any one of them dominate. In other words, it is a question of avoiding empiricism, narcissism and different varieties of social and linguistic reductionism (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p. 246)

The operation of reflexivity has implications for conceptualising meaning construction between the members of the studied community, and in relation to the interpretive process I have employed. This first area relates to the constructionist epistemology which has already been examined. The second area relates to the ‘action’ component of the research praxis and involves positioning the researcher in the research milieu. This involves a “reflective awareness of the effect that [I], personally, have on shaping the process and outcome of interaction” and the affect of that process back on the [my] understandings (Crawford, 1999, p. 125).

By accepting the tenets of constructionism there exists a dynamic interrelationship of meaning construction and reconstruction between the researcher and the research data. This is a reflexive relationship
and as Alvesson & Sköldberg (2000, p. 39) point out "there is no one-way street between the researcher and the object of study; rather, the two affect each other mutually and continually in the course of the research process". As such, what the researcher brings to the research has an effect on how the data is interpreted; and as the data is revealed there is a reciprocal effect reflected back into the dynamics of interpretation. This cycle endures and ensures that the interpretation process in not a fixed entity. Thus reflexivity and constructionism are important in the formulation of the research topic and the research process; collectively they affect the 'reflection' and 'action' elements within the research process.

**Theoretical Perspective**

Critical theory is the theoretical perspective employed within this research. The theoretical perspective is significant because it provides information about the assumptions that will be brought into the methodology and provides an answer to the question of how the nature of the social world is understood.

Critical theory is a broad theoretical perspective which has strong historical origins in the writings of Marx, and later the Frankfurt school (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p. 110; May, 2001, p. 39; Mullaly, 2002, p. 16). It is a social theory that should not be considered a unified entity: rather it is a 'theory cluster' covering a variety of specific theoretical traditions (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p. 110; Camilleri, 1999, p. 30; Ife, 1997, p. 129; Agger cited in Kincheloe & Mclaren, 2005, p. 303; Mullaly, 2002, p. 17; Pease, Allan, & Briskman, 2003, p. 2). These include forms of feminism, Marxism, ecologism, 'whiteness' studies or educative consciousness raising (Alston & Bowles, 2003, pp. 13-14; Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p. 110). Due to the variety within critical theories, the evolutionary nature of the paradigm as a whole, and the general avoidance of specificity, critical theory will be discussed in general terms.
Critical theory seeks to change the social world in addition to understanding it and thus has an emancipatory theme at its core and implies actions as well as reflections (Alston & Bowles, 2003, pp. 13-14; Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p. 110). This reveals one of the constructionist assumptions of critical theory in that individuals are capable of exercising agency to effect social change (Agger cited in Mullaly, 2002, p. 17; Pease, Allan, & Briskman, 2003, p. 2).

“Inquiry that aspires to the name ‘critical’ must be connected to an attempt to confront injustice of a particular society or public sphere within a society” (Kincheloe & Mclaren, 2005, p. 305). Critical theory is thus inherently political in nature due to the emphasis on a quest for social justice. In particular, it critiques domination within societal practices by exposing ideological and hegemonic mechanisms in an endeavour to confront oppressive institutions and practices (Crotty, 1998, p. 157; Mullaly, 2002, p. 16; Pease, Allan, & Briskman, 2003, p. 2).

The reach of critical theory is limited within this research to allow compatibility with the methodology and methods. Due to the descriptive and exploratory nature of this research the influence of critical theory is most notably apparent in the reflection element of the research praxis, that is, it does not explicitly operate through the action component. This results in methods which do not seek to directly critique the operation of domination or oppression with the case. In fact the use of Foucaultian methods, as will be discussed in the following chapter, actively seeks to neutralise such theoretical influences from my second order judgements whilst handling of data.

The critically informed reflection stream of the research praxis which runs through this research affects various elements. These include the form of the research question and some elements of the research design. A feature of these areas is the focus on the group (rural citizens) who are not invested with significant structural power. It is their statements and understandings that are the subject of this research used to provide the empirical data.
Critical theory also affects decisions about which concepts are imported into the research. Given the emancipatory nature of critical theory the focus on discourse of social justice and human rights have become engrained within the research question and the research design. They inspire the category formation of the data analysis process. These concepts have a direct concern with resisting oppressive conditions impacting upon citizens' lives (Crotty, 1998, p. 157; Ife, 2001, p. 33).

The incorporation of praxis is also consistent with the critical paradigm in terms of its tradition of educative conscious raising social movements as expounded by Freire (1996) in his 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed'. Praxis is seen as the only way to achieve 'conscientisation'35(Freire cited in Crotty, 1998, p. 151). These decisions covering what is observed and what is utilised to create understanding are all influenced by the critical paradigm. This application of critical theory is consistent with Kincheloe and McLaren's (2005, p. p. 306) assertion that social theories do not "determine how we see the world but helps us devise questions and strategies for exploring it".

This approach could be understood as a 'minimal version of critical theory' which is "more about trying to prevent research from contributing to dominance and less about directly overcoming it" (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, pp. 128-129). This is taken to mean that the influence of critical theory does not extend to overcoming oppression in terms of direct social action, however there are possibilities of unpredictable and indirect reflexive affects which will contribute the emancipation of those suffering the affects of environmental and ecological exploitation and degradation.

The use of critical theory in the aforementioned way does not directly involve critique or engage with the causal mechanisms. This occurred because of the research design, but is mostly linked to my experiences of critical theory during my exposure to the community of various undergraduate social work cohorts, the academy and social welfare

35 Conscientisation is understood as "learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire, 1996, p. 17)
institutions. These lived experiences were discussed in the 'Background' section of chapter one.

Theories are socially constructed, that is, they exist as ideas but not in the material world (Payne, 2005, p. 7). How they come to be constructed is based on individual and collective perceptions, interpretations and mediations. In this respect theories do not exclusively reside in the literature, they are living things. Whilst I adopted a 'critical' posture, the experiences discussed earlier caused some hesitation in my mind about the effects and operation of critical theory.

These lived experiences highlighted two main issues of concern for me about a critique dominated critical theory. One was the propensity to move directly from a social or distributional problem to causation with very little analysis or consideration. The second is related to a single minded commitment to a particular social dimension of oppression which had a correlation to a specific critical theory. The consequence is a failure to recognise their own relationships of power and dimensions of privilege. This singular focus comes at the expense of observing the interconnections between the many faces of oppression (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 304). As such the latent power relations common to most forms of oppression were more or less ignored in preference for the surface issue. These versions of critical theory were in fact reduced to the technical activity of critique whereby second order judgements were readily imported. Critical theory is far more than this and “...should not be treated as a universal grammar of revolutionary thought objectified and reduced to discrete formulaic pronouncements or strategies” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 304).

Despite these limitations, critical theory continues to have significant input into social work education (Fook, 2001). Indeed, many of social

35 This may include racism, patriarchy, class or homophobia.
37 The notion of second order judgments will be expanded upon within chapter four in a discussion of Foucaultian methods.
works' 'received ideas' (Rojek, Peacock, & Collins, 1988) can be understood to have been influenced by critical theory. However, appealing to critical theory within different domains creates some confusion about what is meant by the term. Within a research context 'critical' is used as an 'applauding adjective' to describe many activities including 'a critical reading of text' or a 'critical attitude towards data', (Hammersley, 1995, p. 22). The term is further conflated due to its ubiquitous use in social work including critical reflection, critical social work, critical incidents, critical sociology, critical practice or critical pedagogy (Hammersley, 1995; Ife, 1997; Pease, Allan, & Briskman, 2003). Appealing to 'critical' in such wide contexts has diffused the scope of the concept and left the specific meaning unclear (Hammersley, 1995, p. 21).

It is due to these various limitations that a 'minimal version of critical theory' (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, pp. 128-129) has been utilised within this research mainly in a descriptive form. This approach is recommended by May (2001, p. 40) who states that “Critical theory might be argued to be claiming to know the ‘wishes and struggles of the age’ regardless of whether people are conscious of it or not”. This results in a gap between people’s interpretations of social life and social theory. “Perhaps, therefore, we should abandon the idea of attempting to invent a theory which aims to achieve anything else than describe peoples everyday understandings” (May, 2001, p. 40).

Methodology

The methodology employed within this research is a discourse analytic approach as postulated by Hardy, Harley and Phillips (2004, pp. 20-21). Making the methodology explicit is important because it reveals the rationale for the choice of methods and the assumptions that inform the methods (Clough & Nutbrown, 2002, p. 29; Crotty, 1998, pp. 3-8; Fierke, 2004, p. 36).

38 The notion of ‘received ideas’ refers to the taken for granted generalised language used within social work that is often plagued with difficulties in defining as it is often vague, imprecise or self-contradictory (Rojek, Peacock, & Collins, 1988, pp. 17-18)
Discourse analysis is a broad term which covers various\textsuperscript{39} approaches to textual analysis (Jacobs, 2006, p. 137; Perakyla, 2005, p. 871; Scheurich & Delamont, 2005, p. 871). Discourse analysis extends past the realm of discrete methods or techniques and is understood within this research as a methodology (Hardy, Harley, & Phillips, 2004, p. 20; Jacobs, 2006, p. 153). In this respect it informs the qualitative content analysis as the method. In plain terms discourse can be understood as 'language use' and discourse analysis as the study of 'talk and text\textsuperscript{40} in context' (Van Dijk cited in Jacobs, 2006, p. 139). It is concerned with the way that texts, be these oral or written, are produced and consumed within a particular social setting (Jacobs, 2006, p. 138).

The discourse analytic approach used here is a departure from the ordinary application of discourse analysis as a method and methodology. The design incorporates a qualitative content analysis as the method and retains the philosophical and methodological underpinnings of discourse analysis. The specific characteristics of the qualitative content analysis will be explained in chapter four but it is suffice to point out for now that the traditional content analysis is quantitative and based on a positivist theoretical perspective and a objectivist epistemology (Babbie, 2007, pp. 320-322; Bernard, 2000, p. 456; Hardy, Harley, & Phillips, 2004, p. 20). The discourse analytic approach contemplates an increased compatibility between discourse analysis and content analysis at the expense of the content analysis's positivist objectives (Hardy, Harley, & Phillips, 2004, p. 20).

The discourse analytic approach has various features which provide principles, but not techniques, to inform the textual analysis. These include: the rejection of an objectivist epistemology; inductive category creation\textsuperscript{41}; an iterative back and forth approach to coding, category creation and analysis; the influence on meaning construction by

\textsuperscript{39} These approaches may focus on historical, political or linguistic elements (Jacobs, 2006, p. 137; Perakyla, 2005, p. 871).

\textsuperscript{40} Text refers to any written, oral or other symbolic representation where meaning is constructed by the viewer rather than being an inherent reflection of the item assignment (Jary & Jary, 2000, p. 634; Sturken & Cartwright, 2001, p. 369)
context; and the acknowledgement of reflexivity (Hardy, Harley, & Phillips, 2004, p. 21). These principles are compatible with a qualitative content analysis because the specific techniques do not contradict the epistemological or theoretical underpinnings of the research.

It is important not to confuse the discourse analytic methodology informed by critical theory with a 'critical discourse analysis'\(^{42}\) as their purposes and principles are quite different. The discourse analytic approach does not explore the performative role of language or the way language is deployed to achieve desired actions, understandings and social practices (Jacobs, 2006, p. 138; Sarantakos, 2005, p. 310). However, there is general acceptance that language is neither neutral nor transparent and it consequently has a political and ideological dimension (Jacobs, 2006, p. 137 & 153; Pfeifer cited in Sarantakos, 2005, p. 310).

**Discourse and Foucault**

Foucault was interested in the way socially constructed societal practices regulated an individual's notion of what is appropriate and what is inappropriate; what is valued and not valued (Jacobs, 2006, p. 143; Sarantakos, 2005, p. 309). Discourses are thus value laden as they contain judgements of what is okay and what is not. These judgements are interwoven with various phenomena including language, assumptions, social practices and beliefs. Social agents interact with these phenomena and apply these judgements, often in an unconscious fashion (Sarantakos, 2005, p. 309). Sturken and Cartwright (2001) discuss Foucault's notion of discourse and state:

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\(^{41}\) The research question and existing empirical and theoretical work may offer a starting point for the inductive process (Hardy, Harley, & Phillips, 2004, p. 21).

\(^{42}\) Jacobs (2006, pp. 141-143) states that the aims of a critical discourse analysis are to engage in a "detailed critique of text to highlight the connections to ideology and the exercise of power". Kendal and Wickham (2006) have identified various shortfalls of this approach stating that it tends to "insert the researchers belief system into the more descriptive work of textual research".

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By discourse he meant a group of statements which provide a means for talking about (and a way of representing knowledge about) a particular topic at a particular historical moment. Hence, for Foucault discourse is a body of knowledge that both defines and limits what can be said about something (p. 94).

The defining and limiting that Sturken and Cartwright (2001) refer to, creates a discourse’s boundaries and associated rules. ‘Regimes of truth’ are derived from within these boundaries and form the foundation from which individuals assert their understanding of the social world at a particular point in time (Jacobs, 2006, p. 142). I take these to be the generalised truths that are speakable and actionable within the context of a particular society. Meaning is captured and enacted from these ‘regimes of truth’ through ‘linguistic repertoires’. ‘Linguistic repertoires’ are the common building blocks utilised to construct and transmit meaning from within discourses (Sarantakos, 2005, p. 310). They are the intermediary elements between meaning and text.

 Alvesson & Sköldberg (2000, p. 250) discuss the interpretive element as ‘repertoires of interpretation’ and make the point that “certain interpretations are given priority, that others are possible but are not so readily emphasised, while yet others never even appear possible”. Thus the notion of a ‘repertoire of interpretations’ acknowledges the scope of interpretations that are accessible to an individual socialised to particular blueprints that mediate ways of knowing and seeing. Available ‘interpretive repertoires’ underpin the form of ‘linguistic constructions’ (Sarantakos, 2005, p. 310). These internalised and externalised elements of ‘linguistic repertoires’ are central to discourse analysis as they offer insights into the background rules and principles of the discourse (Sarantakos, 2005, p. 310).
CHAPTER 4 - Research Design

Design Strategy

The design strategy pursues the aim of extending the limited social work notion of 'environment', to include the physical environment. The strategy involves the description of citizens' understandings of how an identified environmental problem has directly and indirectly impacted upon their well-being. These descriptions are organised using a framework underpinned by different elements of the concepts of social justice and human rights. The framework captures the various ways citizens have experienced an identified environmental problem in terms of their health and well-being.

The various elements of social justice and human rights provide the 'units of analysis' within this research. These units are the focus of this study and it is these elements which inferences will be made about (Brewer & Hunter, 2006, p. 88). It is important to note that the actual 'units of observation' are the statements of citizens rather than the citizens themselves. Often in social research people are the observational units (Babbie, 2007, p. 94).

This study is descriptive in that citizens' experiences of an identified environmental problem are used to describe how social justice and human rights are relevant to problems with the physical environment. Miles and Huberman (cited in Punch, 2005) point to the importance of this form of research. They state that:

If we want to know why something happens, it is important to have a good description of exactly what happens. There are often clues to explanation in a full description, and it is hard to explain something satisfactorily until you understand just what the something is (2005, p. 15).

43 'Units of analysis' refer to those entities about which data is collected (Brewer & Hunter, 2006, p. 88). They are the units about which conclusions seek to be made (Engel & Schutt, 2005, p. 147).
44 'Units of observation' refer to those entities from which data is collected (Brewer & Hunter, 2006, p. 88).
Descriptive studies relate to ‘how’ based questions (Neumann, 2007, p. 16; Punch, 2005, p. 15). In this respect, there is continuity within the research design as: the research question; the purposes of the research; the use of a Foucaultian inspired methodology, all have a focus on issues of ‘how’. Punch (2005, p. 20) maintains that a good question-method fit is important to the overall validity of the research.

The research borrows from some characteristics of grounded theory including: the development of categories; the adoption of iterative and inductive process; the use of concepts; and theory generation as its goal (Bryman, 2004, pp. 403-404; Punch, 2005, pp. 155-160). The main divergence with grounded theory is the use of a fixed purposive sample rather than an ongoing theoretical sample (Punch, 2005, p. 187; Sarantakos, 2005, p. 166). This does not provide limitations to the integrity of the design as both are non-probability forms of sampling (Alston & Bowles, 2003, pp. 88-91; Sarantakos, 2005, pp. 163-167).

The influence of grounded theory means that the precise characteristics of categories are unclear until they emerge from the data (Babbie, 2007; Bernard, 2000). In this respect the study is also explorative as the specific nature of the territory to be covered in not known. Neumann (2007, p. 16) contemplates this situation and states that “[d]escriptive and explorative research often blur together in practice”. This process also reveals the inductive logic of the research. That is, it evolves from the specificity of the citizens’ experiences to generalisations about social justice and human rights (Alston & Bowles, 2003, p. 10). This style of study is very much a ‘theory-after’ approach to research (Wolcott cited in Punch, 2005, p. 16) in which the aim is theory generation rather than theory verification (Punch, 2005, pp. 17-18).

Grounded theory applies a series of methods (Alston & Bowles, 2003, pp. 208-209) which have been deployed in combination with Foucault’s methods for historical investigation. These will be elaborated upon later in this chapter. This combination forms the overall procedural

45 Foucaultian inspired inquiry which incorporates notions of discourse maintains a strong focus on questions of ‘how’ (Holstein & Gubrium, 2005, pp. 490-492; Jacobs, 2006, p. 143)
approach which will guide the conduct of the technical processes of a qualitative content analysis. All of these elements contribute to different factors within the ‘action’ component of the research praxis.

Methods

Introduction

This section explores the remaining element of Crotty’s (1998) research typology; the research methods. The discussion of methods will set out the actual mechanics that have been utilised to seek resolution of the research question. Crotty’s (1998) typology refers to ‘method’ as a component of the research process, however it is of itself a significant entity which has component parts and thus should be thought of in the plural. These methods include the various interrelated activities of data collection, sampling, analysis and coding (Punch, 2005). Thus, the scope of the research method employed should be thought of as a collection of various discrete methods and techniques. These elements will be discussed throughout this chapter under the rubric of a qualitative content analysis.

Qualitative Content Analysis

Broadly speaking this research has been carried out as a content analysis: that is, the analysis of ‘text’ by subjecting data to categories and observing emerging patterns (Sarantakos, 2005, pp. 299-306). Content analysis is ordinarily associated with an objective, quantitative and positivist form of research (Babbie, 2007, pp. 320-322; Bernard, 2000, p. 456; Hardy, Harley, & Phillips, 2004, p. 20). However, Wendt makes the point that “methods are not epistemologies, and there is nothing about content analytic methodology that decides epistemological position” (cited in Lowe, 2004, p. 27). There are some scattered contemporary research writers and theorists that have explicitly contemplated a qualitative form of content analysis methods and have delineated varying degrees of practice principles (Babbie, 2007, p. 328; Bryman, 2004; Mayring, 2000; Neuendorf, 2004; Sarantakos, 2005). This form of content analysis is compatible with the
conceptionist epistemology and the discourse analytic methodology stipulated in the previous chapter with respect to the way meaning, reflexivity and categories are handled.

The aims of the qualitative content analysis in this research differ from a conventional content analysis in that themes are distilled from categories rather than counting and collating presence of specific elements (Bryman, 2004, p. 392). This design distinguishes between categories and themes. The important differences between categories and themes within this design will be returned to later in this chapter. Bryman's (2004, pp. 392-393) explanation of qualitative content analysis is quite useful as it consolidates specific procedures and elements for practice. He draws on Altheide's approach to an 'ethnographic content analysis' (ECA) to inform the operation of a qualitative content analysis. The procedures for this approach require the researcher to:

1. Generate a question
2. Become familiar with context within which documents were generated
3. Become familiar with a small no of docs (6-10)
4. Generate some categories that will guide collection of data
5. Test the schedule by using it for collecting data from a number of documents
6. Revise the schedule and select further cases to sharpen it up
   (Altheide cited in Bryman, 2004, p. 393)

A key element to this process is its iterative nature: "there is much movement back and forth between conceptualisation, data collection, analysis and interpretation" (Bryman, 2004, p. 393). The categories are constantly reviewed whilst working with the data allowing for their emergence from the data rather than imposing pre-decided categories. This is fundamental to the 'theory generation' aims of this research (Punch, 2005, pp. 15-17). These issues are particularly evident within the coding and data analysis process. I will now turn to the way that the qualitative content analysis takes form in relation to Foucault's methods, the research design, data collection, sampling, coding and analysis.
The integration of Foucaultian methods

The content analysis also integrates some of Foucault’s methods used for historical investigations\(^{46}\) which mitigate the impact of “complexes of power and knowledge” (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p. 5). This is important within this study as the assumptions of modernity (see chapter one) and the theoretical ballast (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p. 242) that comes with the profession’s education can skew how the data is handled.

Two specific techniques are postulated which assist in the pursuit of these aims. They are:

1. looking for contingencies instead of causes
2. being as sceptical as possible in regard to all political arguments (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p. 5).

These techniques are part of a much larger set of principles governing Foucaultian discourse analysis and it is not possible to do full justice to the complexity of each within this section. To this end I will only explain these techniques to the extent that they relate to the execution of the qualitative content analysis.

Looking for contingencies requires the acknowledgement that the emergence of a particular phenomenon was not necessary, “but was one possible result of a whole series of complex relations between other events” (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p. 5). This focuses the emphasis on description of events rather than speculation of causes. Establishing causation requires the prioritising of one possibility over others. Considering contingencies is more a process of not looking for causes than doing any extra intellectual analysis (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p. 6).

“To be sceptical is not to be cynical. Scepticism is a careful, deliberate way of thinking” (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, pp. 9-10). It can be

\(^{46}\) Foucault’s approach relating to the ‘history of the present suggest that “[w]hen we use history, we must ensure that we do not allow this history to stop, do not allow it to settle on a patch of imagined sensibleness in the field of strangeness” (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p. 4)
achieved by attempting to ‘suspend second order judgements’. Kendall and Wickham explain second order judgements as follows.

When any aspect of any object being investigated is granted a status (perhaps this status is labelled ‘cause’, perhaps something else) which draws its authority from another investigation, a second order judgement is made: a judgement made previously [italics added] is exercised, brought out from its kennel and given a walk (1999, pp. 14-15).

What is important here is that the judgements are not directly considered. They are introduced from previously established inquiries which may or may not have bearing on the present inquiry. These judgements often become habitual and thus occur unconsciously. These judgements are particularly relevant to social theories and the importing of deep, hidden causal meanings (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p. 16).

**Praxis oriented by Foucaultian Methods**

The methodical, disciplined and attentive nature of performing methods in this way means they are appropriately located as practices or skills and thus are connected to the ‘action’ element of the research praxis. Foucaultian methods are used within the praxis to reconcile the assumptions and tendencies of other elements within the research design, the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings, and the empirical data. Indeed, Babbie observes that the “[f]or all research methods, conceptualization and operationalization typically involve the interaction of theoretical concerns and empirical observations” (2007, p. 326).

The praxis mediates the subjective character of a grounded approach with the determinism (Watts, 2003) of critical theory by utilising Foucault’s methods of scepticism to neutralise the importing of causal assumptions. Put simply this approach to methods seeks to avoid making up one’s mind of what has been found before it has been interpreted.
The research praxis is a deliberate attempt to get the most from historical inquiry. It also heightens the consciousness of reflexive elements within the research by actively scrutinising the interpretation of data. The praxis helps to make explicit the “recursive and reflexive movement between concept development-sampling-data, collection-data, coding-data, and analysis-interpretation” of qualitative content analysis (Altheide cited in Bryman, 2004, p. 393).

It is through the attention to method orientated decisions that the true implications of the conceptual orientation may be realised. The methods are the nexus for the extensive conceptual elements within this research and the data. Both elements are mediated through my research praxis which attempts to honourably hold the intimacy of the data with the complexity of the intertwined concepts, values, philosophies and theories. In this respect ‘the care is in the method’.

**Data collection**

The qualitative content analysis uses unobtrusive research methods in that it does not have a direct impact on the social behaviour that is being observed (Babbie, 2007, p. 319). It is possible that there are indirect reflexive affects, however these affects will not have any altering affect on the data being observed. The secondary data collection methods involve the use of a variety of ‘texts’. These include:

- Written submissions to ‘The Inquiry’
- Transcribed verbal submissions to ‘The Inquiry’
- Newspaper articles
- ‘In the Loop’ documentary

These ‘texts’ are known as secondary sources of data as they are pre-existing and do not require the construction a research instrument to collect (Kumar, 1996, p. 104).

At this point it is worth clarifying terminology. Within this study I am distinguishing between the use of ‘data’ and ‘data sources’. Data sources are the ‘texts’ in their entirety which have been selected in accordance with the sampling regime. Data is the collection of information which has been selected through the coding process.
Sampling

A non-probability form of sampling has been adopted for this study as it is most suitable for qualitative research (Alston & Bowles, 2003, pp. 89-90; Punch, 2005, p. 187). Specifically, purposive sampling has been utilised as it allows for the realm of the sample to be deliberately decided based on the purpose of the research (Punch, 2005, p. 187). Thus, a sample of citizens' statements from within the Yarloop, Wagerup and Cookernup community has been selected for the purpose of exploring and describing how citizens experience social justice and human rights when affected by an identified environmental problem.

The sampling occurred across the two dimensions of 'when' and 'who'. The first related to 'texts' published between November 2001 and October 2002 (12 months) and the second related to statements made within the 'texts' by citizens from within the communities of Yarloop, Wagerup or Hamel. These criteria represent the limits of which 'texts' would be eligible for use within this study. There was an additional limitation on the availability of 'texts' in relation to evidence provided to 'The Inquiry'. Some submissions, both written and verbal, were made privately and consequently access was not permitted. Only publicly available documents were utilised within this study.

The newspaper articles were sourced from various state and national newspapers. These were: 'The West Australian', 'The Sunday Times', 'The Australian', and 'The Australian Financial Review'.

These data sources were accessed and collected through an electronic search using Factiva. Search returns were based upon the aforementioned date range and two separate field searches. The fist used 'Yarloop, Alcoa and resident' and the second used 'Wagerup, Alcoa and resident' as search credentials. These yielded several returns with some overlap between the two searches. These search credentials should not be seen as sampling rules. They simply represent necessary parameters to filter the significant amount of available data. Similar
parameters are applied to the other data sources in terms of the 'The Inquiry's' terms of reference and in the documentary's focus.

**Coding – A Table for Everything**

Coding is a substantial and important process which allows for the transformation of raw data into a standardised form to help facilitate retrieval and the observation of patterns (Babbie, 2007, p. 325; Punch, 2005, p. 199). In others words coding provides for the organisation of data into a manageable form so that something systematic and analytic can be done with it to answer the research question. Within this research the coding and data analysis followed an iterative process moving between the data, category formation and the code. Iteration is a key technique utilised in the development of grounded theory (Bernard, 2000, p. 444). To facilitate the organisation of data, word processing tables were used to store and manipulate the data. A variety of tables were drafted throughout the data collection and data analysis process. The first table, labelled ‘Data collection and sorting’ (see table one), represented the fields of:

1. Sources
2. Status of source – employee or resident
3. Statements representing ‘what problem is’
4. Statement representing ‘what solution is’
### Table 1 - Data Collection and Sorting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text (Source&amp;date)</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>What is problem</th>
<th>What is solution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘In the Loop’ 2002</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>“What I’ve got here III never get anywhere else”</td>
<td>Alcoa needs to fix its noise and odour issues. We do not believe we should have to move in order to fix up Alcoa’s problem, nor should we have to live with Alcoa’s problem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Once the liquor burner went up people started getting sick</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Denial, Took yrs to acknowledge there was a real prob. Ackow it, then went out and hid it.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Alcoa too noisy” 02/04/02</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>&quot;We are forced to live with all the windows shut and even then we can still hear the noise,&quot; he said, &quot;We want the DEP to take action against the company now to get them to do whatever it takes to comply with the Environmental Protection Act.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Completing this table required an initial sweep of the data sources looking for items representing citizens’ claims about problems they were experiencing. There was a very rudimentary level of coding going on at this stage. The data that was extracted that related to citizens’ formations of problems or solutions was selected based on the possibility that these items ‘could’ broadly be conceptualised in terms of social justice or human rights. This was the primary level of the open coding process which would be complemented by a secondary open coding step operationalised in a further table. Open coding is a form of inductive coding in that the researcher becomes grounded in the data to allow categories and code to emerge (Bernard, 2000, p. 444). This is consistent with the theory generation aims of this research and the tenets of qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2000; Punch, 2005).

This initial step of sorting the data served the beginning elements of open coding as it acted to open up the text by breaking down data sources to relevant pieces of data (Strauss and Corbin cited in: Babbie, 2007, p. 385; Bryman, 2004, p. 402). A more intensive form of conceptualisation would occur in later tables. At this stage the
engagement with meaning was at a low level. However, issues of interpretation had to be decided upon at this early stage. Statements of citizens were not altered, they were taken and used in the form of direct quotations. This kept the integrity of meaning intact, albeit de-contextualised, and ensured that the entire data analysis process was not based on multi levels of interpretation. To allow this would have resulted in findings being based upon interpretations of interpretations rather than interpretations of data. The ‘Data Collection and Sorting’ table resulted in extracting the desired ‘data’ from the ‘data sources’; it reduced the overall size of what needed to be analysed; and, began the familiarisation with the content of the data. Intermediary steps such as this are important as they build capacity for robust and rigorous category development. Alston and Bowles (2003, p. 212) warn that “[i]t is important to not become committed to particular codes too early”.

A second table was created to facilitate the creation of categories. This process was the secondary stage of open coding. Similarities and differences were examined by breaking the data set down into elements; those which appeared to be related in meaning formed tentative categories (Strauss and Corbin cited in Bryman, 2004, p. 402). Whilst the first ‘Data collection and sorting’ table received data from all data sources, this second table was tested with a limited section of the entire sample. Approximately one third of the entire sample was tested from three out of the four separate data sources. This second table was titled ‘Trial Category Framework’ (see table 2) and had two main fields. The first was for the ‘category’ and second was for corresponding ‘statements’ of citizens. Further, the ‘category’ field was split into two further columns. The first showed the category represented in terms of its conceptual foundations. These conceptual elements are taken from chapter two and were based on: the distributable paradigm of social justice (AASW, 2002); the three elements of Young’s (1990) non-distributable paradigm of social justice; and, Ife’s (2006a) seven fold typology of human rights. The second column showed the category represented in terms of the actual grounded phenomena derived from the texts. This approach to category creation and coding is a synthesis
of deductive and inductive processes. That is, the categories had a foundation in some theoretical knowledge, but took shape from the data. This approach to inductive coding is contemplated by Willms et al., and Miles and Huberman (cited in Bernard, 2000, p. 445). They suggest:

starting with some general themes derived from reading the literature and adding more themes and sub-themes as you go. This is somewhere between inductive and deductive coding. You have a general idea of what you’re after and you know what at least some of the big themes are, but you’re still in discovery mode, so you let new themes emerge from the texts. (cited in Bernard, 2000, p. 445)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SJ-dist.</td>
<td>Distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SJ non-dist.</td>
<td>Processes/Practices initiated by external organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SJ non-dist.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social rights</td>
<td>• trapped in house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental rights</td>
<td>• Dying flora and fauna (poultry, geese, budgies, frogs, butterflies, bees, dragonflies) (standard and garden plants)5,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human rights</td>
<td>• “not much to ask to live in our homes and to breath clean air”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This second table allowed the main categories to emerge; the commencement of multi levels of analysis; and, the commencement of more pointed thought in relation to the specific coding rules needed for each category. Alston and Bowles highlight the importance of this level of open coding as helping “the researcher to move quickly to an analytic
level by 'fracturing the data' ...so that the exciting processes of developing grounded theory can begin" (Alston & Bowles, 2003, p. 212).

A third table was constructed to sharpen up the parameters of the categories by delineating coding rules. This table was not populated with any data and was used in tandem with the second table. By completing this table a final coding framework then became available to run the entire data set through. The table shown in appendix one titled 'Category and Coding Matrix' utilised the following headings:

1. Conceptual foundation
2. Category name
3. Category definition
4. Coding rules

A significantly higher level of intensity in application and analysis was required to transform the previous informal common sense code into specific 'definitions' and 'coding rules' for each category. Attempting to hold the complexity of conceptual and empirical elements and codify these into technical elements was a difficult endeavour. Berg (cited in Babbie, 2007, p. 326) argues that “coding and other fundamental procedures associated with grounded theory development are certainly hard work and must be taken seriously". Despite the challenge of the task, it is important to continue putting the most into a rigorous and robust set of codes as the quality of the coding underpins the quality of the research (Strauss cited in Alston & Bowles, 2003, p. 211)

The 'Category and Coding Matrix' table is an important document because it is the backbone for making sense of all of the data. It is the equivalent of a rule book for working with data. You will also notice a second level of headings separating the 'conceptual' and 'empirical' elements of each category. This served as a useful reminder of the different status that should be invested in the differing aspects of each category. It also highlighted the difference between the ‘units of analysis’ and the ‘units of observation’; the ‘conceptual’ relating to the former and the latter relating to the ‘empirical’. 
Data Analysis

These various tables represented different sweeps of the data and resulted in an increased consciousness and awareness of the nature of the data that I was working with. These preliminary stages augured well for the saturation of the final coding and category framework with the entire data set. The final table was a reincarnation of the ‘Trial Category Framework’ shown in table one, except with the addition of columns to show themes and cross-themes. Another important alteration was to track statements that were relevant to multiple categories. This occurred by nominating abbreviations for categories and marking only those statements which fitted multiple categories with the abbreviations. By doing this the table would easily reveal, at a glance, those statements that related to a single category (no abbreviations present) and those which related to multiple categories (abbreviation present showing categories related to). This allowed the possibility to identify key pieces of data within data analysis if needed.

This final table was known as the ‘Final Category Framework’ (see table three). It emerged after the bulk of iterative processes and category creation had been completed.

Table 3 - Final Category Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Text and abbreviation of other categories this statement is applicable to.</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Cross themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• DEP staff are based far away – problem does not exist Stake, Prob Processes.</td>
<td>• Impartiality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• DEP has problem simultaneously being regulator of industry and protector of env</td>
<td>• Prescriptive processes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• DEP working with alcoa w/out making community part of process – then letting community know very late and they have very little opportunity to respond</td>
<td>• Tokenistic process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prob Processes, Control,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

47 Bryman (2004, p. 409) states that the same data may be appropriate for more than one category.
This final table was the template used to explore and analyse the ‘texts’. The process of developing categories, definitions and coding rules had necessitated a level of analysis already. Many research writers make the point that “coding is analysis” (Miles and Huberman cited in Bernard, 2000, p. 446; Punch, 2005, p. 199). However Miles and Huberman (cited in Bryman, 2004, p. 409) remind the researcher to:

keep coding in perspective. Do not equate coding with analysis. It is part of your analysis, albeit an important one. It is a mechanism for thinking about the meaning of your data and for reducing the vast amount of data that you are facing. You must still interpret your findings. (2004, p. 409)

In this respect, coding utilising a series of tables allowed for the partial analysis of data, but there still remained a further level of interpretative and representative work to be completed. This was required so that themes were able to be distilled from the categorised data. However, prior to explaining the emergence of themes, it is important at this juncture to avoid any possible methodological confusion by clarifying the relationship between categories and themes, and their significance to this study. This is important as it underpins the understandings of the findings.

Categories are a way of organising a collection of real world phenomena that exist within a given case and are classed together, however any patterns or qualities within this class are not considered. Whereas themes represent judgements about, or inclinations of, such qualities within a category (Bryman, 2004, p. 403&410). They represent different levels of abstraction, with themes being more specific and grounded in the detailed patterns of the data. Within this case the definition of categories themselves do not represent or define social justice or human rights. Rather, they provide a ‘point of focus’ where the capacity to pursue social justice and human rights becomes visible. Patterns of how people experience these ‘points of focus’ are relayed as themes.
The analyses which led to the final themes were based on a similar inductive approach to that which was used earlier for category development. This was the search for 'broad analytic themes' (Bryman, 2004, p. 410) based upon underlying meaning or the 'latent content' of statements (Babbie, 2007, p. 410). The underlying meaning was sought out from the various collections of statements which were arranged based on their categories. This utilised a dual layer interpretive approach which initially sought out main themes that presented from each category. One or two main themes emerged from each category. This resulted in significant numbers of emergent themes. These were shown in the 'themes' column of the 'final category framework'.

Grounded theory refers to outcomes in terms of 'concepts'. These are "labels given to discrete phenomena" which are also the "building blocks of theory" (Strauss & Corbin cited in Bryman, 2004, p. 403). The properties and interconnections between these themes or concepts were compared to establish whether some of them may be dimensions of broader phenomena (Bryman, 2004, pp. 410-411). Consistencies did appear across the themes and a theory did emerge. This theory is at the level of a 'substantive theory' as it relates to the empirical dimensions of this case. Whether this theory is capable of being applied more widely would require testing against an empirical sample from another case. This would lead to the validation of a 'formal theory' (Strauss & Corbin cited in Bryman, 2004, p. 404). The actual concepts, themes and theory will be elaborated on in chapter six.

**Limitations and Delimitations**

As with all research limitations and delimitations exist which provide contingencies for the findings (Mauch & Park, 2003, p. 115). The use of secondary data provides the most obvious limitation to this research. Secondary data and data which is unobtrusive is considered to have potential problems with reliability and validity (Babbie, 2007, p. 319; Kumar, 1996, p. 125). Both of these elements are significantly contingent upon the interpretation that is applied by the researcher. In
the case of reliability, this relates to how the data and concepts are interpreted to create categories. In relation to the validity, this refers to how the findings are interpreted based on the conceptual orientation of the research and the researcher. By explicitly detailing the literature in relation to both the social justice and human rights and the conceptual orientation of the researcher, the research is as reliable and valid as is practicable.

However, Silverman (2001, p. 13) and Bryman (2004, pp. 273-276) suggest that authenticity is a more appropriate measure for qualitative research. This involves ensuring that an authentic understanding of peoples circumstances is faithfully portrayed (Silverman, 2001, p. 13). The disciplined approach to handling citizens' statements by utilising Foucaultian methods demonstrated a systematic care for the stories of citizens. This was buttressed by the praxis approach taken which situated research as a form of practice. In this sense, the 'holding' of people's stories was honoured and valued with the same seriousness that would be applied to a person to person contact in a counselling context. Authenticity supports the notion that within this research 'the care was in the method'.

An additional limitation is that the texts were produced with a different purpose in mind to that which is pursued within this inquiry. In this respect, it is possible that the meaning inferred to statements may have have skewed. This limitation does not have extensive impact on the quality of the findings as there is some cross over in the purposes as they both relate to the impacts of environmental problems on health and amenity.

The study also has limitations in terms of generalisability. This is due to the use of a non-probability sample (Alston & Bowles, 2003, p. 87; Sarantakos, 2005, p. 163). However, this form of sampling is appropriate given that the research is seeking insights into an essentially unexplored area (Alston & Bowles, 2003, p. 87). This limitation is expected in any case due to the constructionist
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assumptions. The meanings articulated within the conclusions of this research may experience variability within other contexts.

A corresponding limitation is the veracity of theory that is produced as a result of this research. Bryman (2004, p. 10) suggests that an inductive approach has the potential to develop ‘empirical generalisations’ rather than a formal theory. Indeed, the grounded theory approach may be more suited to yielding rigorously produced categories than generalisable theory (Bryman, 2004, p. 405).

A final limiting characteristic of this research is the delimitation is that the framework is solely informed by the values base of the social work profession. Ife (1997, pp. 11-12) maintains that the profession is comprised of values, knowledge and skills. The research does not inquire into the ways that the profession’s skills and knowledge are suited to working with issues identified as environmental problems. As suggested in the introduction, knowledge and skills have developed to new fields of practice as they have emerged.

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48 Various writers discuss the compatibility of social work’s skills and knowledge base to working with environmental problems and some go on suggest appropriate roles for social workers (Berger & Kelly, 1993; McKinnon, 2005).
Ethics

The majority of the literature (Alston & Bowles, 2003; Punch, 2005) including the AASW (2002) code of ethics which discuss ethics for social research tends to assume that studies use 'primary data' and thus relates to the collection of data directly from individuals (Kumar, 1996, p. 104). As this research uses secondary data the potential to directly harm participants is minimised. All of the data sources were publicly available and would be easily accessible to any interested party. Thus the confidentiality of citizens was not compromised.

Some of the submissions to the parliamentary inquiry were marked as 'private' and were thus not available for use with this research. Many of these documents were sealed due to the sensitivity of medical circumstances (M. Warner, personal communication, August 1, 2007). I carried this ethic of respecting privacy in relation to medical circumstances to the public documents that I sourced. Any representation of health matters was presented in general terms, without reference to specific ailments or tests. An additional measure which was used related to the representation of themes within the research. This was done without juxtaposing citizens' names with particular statements. This eliminated any direct links to specific citizens within the body of the findings, discussion or conclusion. In this respect, I have attempted to avoid the unnecessary exposure of community citizens, notwithstanding the texts are in the public domain. This is brought about through a personal ethic as much a professional ethic of protection from possible harm and consideration of possible consequences (AASW, 2002, p. 20; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p. 101)

The main ethical focus related to the representation of participants views. Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000, p. 194) state that “[h]ow representations are made is always in some sense arbitrary, since there is no unambiguous relation between language and 'extra-linguistic' reality”. The research design minimised the degree of possible slippage that could occur through interpretation. The process or organising and
categorising the data ensured that the integrity of statements was kept intact until the final stage of data analysis. Further, the research praxis provided a mechanism to make visible the reflexive impacts that I had on the outcomes. This was effective for reflecting on the process of the research and the meaning of the data.
PART THREE: THE RESULTS
The liquor burner emitted more than 300 chemicals, many of them highly toxic and carcinogenic, such as benzene, xylene, toluene and naphthalene, Galton-Fenzi's report stated. But the company's central task, he said, was to reduce public outrage. He offered some remarkable advice: "Accept the moral relevance of pollution and strive for a zero goal; that is, to take the moral value seriously. You don't have to get to zero, you have to want to ..." (Galton-Fenzi cited in Mayman, 2002)

Extensive and rich insights about citizens' experiences and understandings of an identified environmental problem became accessible through the adoption of Young's (1990) three primary categories of a non-distributable paradigm of social justice and Ife's (2006a) seven fold typology of human rights. This wide conceptual net informed the framework which captured a constellation of categorised data in the form of citizens' statements. This arrangement of data ensured sufficient fertile ground was covered to answer the research question.

A summary of the research results across varying levels of abstractions, including the dimensions of concepts, categories and themes, is listed in Appendix 2 'Final Themes and Their Origins'. This sets out diagrammatically the: evolution (including discontinuance, consolidation and emergence) of the categories that were grounded in the patterns of the data; the themes which emerged from the specificity of the categorised data; and the concepts which they were derived from.

It is the themes which provide answers to the research question. They provide an explanation of how citizens affected by an identified environmental problem experienced social justice and human rights. The findings expressed through the various emergent themes can be generalised to a core theme of 'loss'. Loss was experienced in terms of
material and non-material phenomena and includes such elements as: control, lifestyle, health and legitimacy. I will return to a discussion of this theme in the following chapter.

In the following sections I will discuss the emergent themes within the context of each category. Some of the statements of citizens have been used more than once as they relate to various elements of how social justice and human rights have been experienced. The table in appendix two, ‘Final Themes and Their Origins’, may be of assistance to help contextualise this conversation. The order of the discussion starts with the categories with the most prominent themes and ends with the least prominent. Thus, the order is different from that in Appendix 1.

**Culture and Spirituality**

The categories of ‘Culture’ and ‘Spirituality’ came to be amalgamated through the data analysis process. Whilst these categories are conceptually distinct, their amalgamation for the purpose of interrogating data could be justified. This was implemented because citizens’ statements were often broad enough to fit either category. In addition, the purpose of establishing categories was to observe from empirical data how human rights were experienced, and not to define discrete elements definitively. There were a surprisingly high proportion of statements which identified with this single category. Citizens frequently articulated the high importance of their unique lifestyle. They also identified connectedness with the land, the district, their heritage and future generations. These elements were often articulated nostalgically or emotionally and appeared to provide contentment and fulfilment. The dominant themes which emerged were *connection to the area* and *irreplaceable lifestyle*. The following statements exemplified the first theme.

*The Wickham family originally settled the farm in 1894 (EPAC, 2002d)*
My husband’s family have lived in the Yarloop area for fifty years. His Parents subdivided their own land for their children, so they too could live in what we think is a beautiful area with, what was, a first class quality of life. Would have never considered leaving. Ever! (EPAC, 2001f)

I grew up here. It was such a lovely spot (Mayman, 2002)

I am the fifth generation of my family to live in the Waroona shire and the surrounding districts. My forefathers settled here in the 1840s. I was born in Yarloop and have lived and worked there all my life. I have worked for Alcoa for 21 years. I commenced work in Alcoa’s farmlands (EPAC, 2001a)

The following statements supported the emergence of the theme irreplaceable lifestyle.

How is this [offer to purchase home by Alcoa] going to replace our homes that we never had any intention of leaving? (EPAC, 2001f)

What I’ve got here I’ll never get anywhere else ("In the loop", 2002)

Thought we would be here forever. This was my life. Family is so close. I don’t know what to do ("In the loop", 2002)

We were so happy here (Mayman, 2002)

**Stake**

Whilst Alcoa staff worked at the refinery for portions of time and DEP employees may have visited periodically, the community members ‘lived’ every part of their lives in close proximity to the site. The category of ‘Stake’ captured the discrepancy between residents and other stakeholders of what each had to loose. The differences were articulated in terms of citizens’ observations of their own lives and those of Alcoa and DEP employees. The main theme that emerged from this category was that community members had a *multifaceted stake* in the
Yarloop/Wagerup/Cookernup 'environment': that is, the environment impacted many parts of their lives, both material and non-material. This theme was mostly characterised by non-financial elements and included elements such as the future, home life and health. The following statements typified this theme.

We have heard about a glossy presentation on all the testing being done; how all the consultants have been employed and all of that side of this argument. What we are living with, and have been for a long time, is the reality of the situation; that is, that south of the refinery, and now in other spots, we have people who are sick with symptoms in common with those of the workers; we have sick and dying animals; we cannot keep poultry in our area - it is a death sentence to bring them there (EPAC, 2001b).

For six months of the year we are locked inside our house trying to escape the disgusting odours coming from Alcoa. These odours cause cancellations of things most people take for granted, weeding the garden, putting the washing on the line, letting the kids play outside, having friends over without having to explain what the odour is, organising a barbeque or party, eating your own produce without worrying about your health and the list goes on (EPAC, 2001f)

Not only is the odour a problem socially, it is now becoming.... A physical problem....we have become prisoners in our own homes (EPAC, 2001f)

not too much to ask to live in our homes and to breath clean air (EPAC, 2001f)

We are forced to live with all the windows shut and even then we can still hear the noise (Southwell, 2002a)

ALCOA has given the residents two whole weeks to decide their future (EPAC, 2001f)

How can we as a community entrust our future health, safety and environment to this unacceptable set of rules?" (EPAC, 2001e)

49 Environment is used here in its broadest sense to include physical, social, economic and material components.
We are no longer living our lives... (EPAC, 2001f)

Thought we would be here forever. This was my life. Family is so close. I don’t know what to do ("In the loop", 2002)

Symbolic Meanings -

The identification of non-financial elements within the ‘Stake’ category also carried into the category of ‘Symbolic meanings’. This category highlighted citizens’ expressions of values which related to non-anthropocentric or non-financial issues. The data was not as strongly represented within the ‘Symbolic meanings’ category as with previous categories, however there were sufficient statements to establish a dominant theme. The emergent theme was non-financial costs. This theme related to the identification of moral, ecological, familial and human costs. The follow statements exemplify these sentiments.

"Few figures floating around" [Alcoa Community Development Fund] ....That’s dollars we’re talking about, what about the human element....that’s what leads me to believe that they are not serious about solving the problems here ("In the loop", 2002)

Come out in this town and earn people’s respect and not buy it ("In the loop", 2002)

These are the things [death of native flora and fauna] in Mother Nature that are sending us the clear message that something is very wrong in our environment. .... They [native birds] no longer exist in the significant numbers that existed before. I have noticed that in every hay season we would get the rainbow birds from Asia. Several pairs of them came to our property. I have not seen them for two years (EPAC, 2001d)

How is this [offer to purchase home by Alcoa] going to replace our homes that we never had any intention of leaving?" (EPAC, 2001f)

We thought it was wrong to continue raising food and animals when we realised what was falling on our property.
It was a moral decision, not a business decision (Mayman, 2002)

Choice

The key themes that emerged from the category of ‘Choice’ were uncertainty and limited choice. Statements of residents demonstrated that they were experiencing significant uncertainty and had no meaningful choices or were denied choice. These themes related to: the impact of emissions on health, buffer zone proposals, possibilities of replicating their lifestyle, and their financial circumstances. The following statements highlight this theme.

We feel the Wagerup Land Management Proposal is making our lives worse, not better, as uncertainty of our future on this property of ours is at the forefront of our minds. (EPAC, 2001g)

Uncertainty of impact on health - immediate affects, those later in life and health of unborn child. Do I move away for pregnancy because of a mining Co.? (EPAC, 2001b)

Directly or indirectly they are controlling our future..... we’ve really got two options: live in this town under their control or we can get out. While that’s not forcing you, its not giving you the option that you want (, "In the loop", 2002)

If we want to accept their choice then we can stay in town, but if we want freedom of choice we have only got one option – that’s to get out ("In the loop", 2002)

Processes/Practices Initiated by External Organisations

The experiences of citizens which related to the category of ‘Processes/practices initiated by external organisations’ highlighted the dominating conduct of the DEP and Alcoa. There were significant instances of statements which fitted this category. Some instances related to the consultative processes, others to Alcoa’s emissions monitoring processes and others to the privileging of Alcoa’s position. The dominant themes which emerged from the data were lack of
impartiality and tokenistic processes. Citizens articulated a strong dissatisfaction with the unequal approach that the DEP had applied towards the community and Alcoa. In this respect they questioned the seriousness of the consultative and emissions monitoring processes whereby Alcoa was seemingly driving the agenda. Statements that typified these sentiments include:

The DEP accepts Alcoa’s figures willingly and even quotes them, even though there are error margins (EPAC, 2001d)

So instead of [Alcoa] being forced to meet the regulation as it stands, they [DEP] are moving the goalposts (EPAC, 2001a)

Alcoa and the DEP appear to have a firm grip on the process and ---- they ain’t letting go! (EPAC, 2001e)

The DEP is not doing its job as an umpire; it is looking the other way (EPAC, 2001d)

what is the point of the community investing valuable time, resources and energy into a process that clearly we never had any say in?” (EPAC, 2001d)

I don’t think Alcoa is serious (“In the loop”, 2002)

Capacity to Influence Control over Circumstances

The key theme which emerged under the category of ‘Control’ was that of lack of community legitimacy. This broad theme related to the community’s perception of the treatment it was subjected to by DEP and Alcoa. It incorporated issues such as unequal treatment by DEP, reach of Alcoa and not being taken seriously by Alcoa or DEP. The following statements highlight different dimensions of this theme whereby the community’s legitimacy was neglected.

DEP working with Alcoa without making community part of process – then letting community know very late and they have very little opportunity to respond. ...DEP and Alcoa have control of process (EPAC, 2001d)
DEP should recognise complaints as such and not as data/information – should be complaints against industry (EPAC, 2001d)

You’re not in control of your own destiny, you’re not in control of the value of your house, how it’s affected. Directly or indirectly they are controlling our future .....("In the loop", 2002)

They’ve [Alcoa] been manipulating people’s lives ... by their policies ("In the loop", 2002)

Health, Wellbeing and Safety

Citizens experiences of ‘Survival Rights’ highlighted the degree of health, well-being and safety problems experienced by the community. There were many instances of citizens recounting their various ailments which were attributed to the actions of Alcoa. These included respiratory problems, ‘Multiple chemical sensitivity’, nose bleeds and migraines. In addition stress and mental anguish was experienced due to the uncertainty of future circumstances. The dominant theme which emerged was the belief that the health problems were caused by emissions. The following statements demonstrate this theme.

It’s impossible to prove what is making people sick but it is well established that symptoms being experienced by many people here, such as nosebleeds and respiratory problems, occur when weather conditions send the pollution our way," (Southwell, 2002b)

Once the liquor burner went up people started getting sick ("In the loop", 2002)

During March 2000 my husband and I both independently noticed an improvement in my wellbeing. The joint pains, constant fatigue, nausea and general feeling of ill health abated to the point of being almost non-existent, and my sleep patterns improved greatly. This was the best health I had experienced in the previous three years. It was only after reflection that my husband and I realised that there had been a lengthy period of six months - over the summer of 1999-2000 - with almost no Alcoa fume intrusions (EPAC, 2002b)
The consequence of Public Health dept advise (stay indoors when or vacate when presented with air pollution) is that we would have had to spend 65 days out of the period April – Sept inside our homes (EPAC, 2001f)

How can we as a community entrust our future health, safety and environment to this unacceptable set of rules [Alcoa being allowed to self monitor]? (EPAC, 2001e)

Not only is the odour a problem socially, it is now becoming.... a physical problem....we have become prisoners in our own homes (EPAC, 2001f)

Divided, uncertain depressive, down, stressed out, nobody knows ("In the loop", 2002)

**Interaction in Social Environment**

There were significant statements which related to the capacity for social interaction by residents. Many highlighted the limitations that were faced which made social interaction difficult. These included being confined to their houses to escape emissions exposure and the consequent taken-for-granted activities that then became impossible.

[We are] trapped in our houses (EPAC, 2001b)

*For six months of the year we are locked inside our house trying to escape the disgusting odours coming from Alcoa. These odours cause cancellations of things most people take for granted, weeding the garden, putting the washing on the line, letting the kids play outside, having friends over without having to explain what the odour is, organising a barbeque or party, eating your own produce without worrying about your health and the list goes on (EPAC, 2001f)*

However, the dominant theme that emerged was related to the social consequences of Alcoa's impact rather than the symptoms. The theme of *diminished interpersonal capacity/spirit* dominated the data and is relayed in the following statements.

*People also fear that the town will diminish, even with Alcoa's best intentions to keep the community together, but*
who wants to live in an industrial buffer zone? (EPAC, 2001e)

...there are currently 70 students at the school compared to 140 last year, and a further 19 students will leave at the end of this year due to families leaving town. There has been an overall drop in confidence in the town's future (EPAC, 2002d)

How do you shift them [elderly relatives living close by].....without causing them major upset? ("In the loop", 2002)

Cant escape the constant talk of what is happening in Yarloop – phone never stops and the meetings continue to eat in to our spare time. We are no longer living our lives. (EPAC, 2001f)

...a lack of certainly in being able to appropriately plan for the future, which has let to increased stress and increased pressure on relationships (EPAC, 2002d)

[Spli[ting the town into areas A and B] created two classes of people
Turned the people against each other, that was the saddest aspect of all
Two splits, 1) people sick of hearing about Alcoa and 2)[buffer zone] area A and B ("In the loop", 2002)

Community spirit had gone, the bubble had burst - shit look after number one now ("In the loop", 2002)
Economic and Financial Impacts

There were many comments which drew out various elements from the category 'Economic and Financial Impacts'. This was to be expected given Alcoa's approach to 'buy out' a portion of residential land holders (Area A). The trends within this category were that citizens across a variety of sectors were experiencing a downturn in financial capacity and activity, with the future economic prospects looking poor. This related to town residents, business holders and farmers alike. The key theme which emerged from citizens' statements was economic hardship. This was experienced through current and projected financial insecurity and was due mostly to depressed property values or the costs of moving.

*The buffer strategy will do nothing but devalue our land* (EPAC, 2001a)

*Devalued our land. Nobody wants to buy a nice tranquil bit of property when it is near something that is a health concern* (*"In the loop", 2002*)

*We have been forced to sell off assets that we were saving for our superannuation fund to flee our farm and build at Preston Beach for my health and safety and my husband's health and safety. Even the goldfish are with us at Preston Beach* (EPAC, 2001b)

*Problems added to by [financial] cost to move and attempting to find a rural property with those amenities taken for granted by others in urban areas – scheme water, rubbish collection, power and sealed roads* (EPAC, 2001f)

Other citizens highlighted the stymieing of current commercial and potential development opportunities.

*With this proposal they are intending to prevent land owners starting or improving small cottage industry on their own land, with no compensation or concessions of any kind* (EPAC, 2001g)
In 2002, it was our intention to establish an organic ginkgo crop to compliment existing agricultural operations. This proposal has been placed on hold due to concerns about the impacts of Alcoa’s Wagerup operation (EPAC, 2002d)

Business are having a hard time, they are down 17%-40%... the company is only buying property not businesses ("In the loop", 2002)

There now is an infertility problem with the cattle in the area, to the point that when we sold our dairy herd... 30 per cent of our herd was barren. That is big dollars to a farmer (EPAC, 2001b)

Natural and Physical Environment

Surprisingly, the category of ‘Natural and Physical Environment’ was not as strongly represented in citizens’ statements as the previous categories. However, there was still sufficient data to establish a pattern. The standout theme that emerged from the statements in this category was diminished environment/ ecology.

These are the things [death of native flora and fauna] in Mother Nature that are sending us the clear message that something is very wrong in our environment. .... [Native birds] no longer exist in the significant numbers that existed before. I have noticed that in every hay season we would get the rainbow birds from Asia. Several pairs of them came to our property. I have not seen them for two years. (EPAC, 2001b)

Further community concerns extend to the pollution of the ground and rainwater that many people use for drinking in this area and to the pollution of garden and farming soils. It is a pity that people in a rural environment cannot be confident of the water they drink, nor the soils in which they grow their produce (EPAC, 2001c)

Responsibilities

Citizens frequently appealed to the responsibilities which others, principally Alcoa, had failed to fulfil. These comments were generally in relation to circumstances which were affected by the refinery’s
emissions. Solutions suggested by Alcoa often required that citizens make changes to their lives. This category captures the sentiments citizens held in relation to what Alcoa should do or should be responsible for. The theme which dominated this category was that Alcoa should take more responsibility to rectify problem not symptoms.

Denial, Took years to acknowledge there was a real problem. Acknowledge it, then went out and hid it. ("In the loop", 2002)

Instead of buying the town out, fix your problem, don't worry about buffer ("In the loop", 2002)

Eight years ago - Why did they let us build if now they are saying 'you are too close to build?' They are gathering us into their mess. They made the mistakes they need to fix them ("In the loop", 2002)

Clean it up or close it down, we don't care how many corporate dollars go down the drain ("In the loop", 2002)

We do not believe we should have to move in order to fix up Alcoa's problem, nor should we have to live with Alcoa's problem (EPAC, 2001a)

Alcoa have met none of their responsibilities due to the impacts from local operations, have not met any of their requirements in their 'Land Management Proposal', which the majority of the residents do not support as it falls a long way short of dealing with any of the issues caused by Alcoa, have not allowed in any way for the societal impacts of such a proposal, and ongoing and still widening health impacts...(EPAC, 2002c)

On ALCOA merry go round, not by choice but because of decisions made by people without regard as the effects.... on community population (EPAC, 2001f)

The following chapter will distil they key elements of these findings and discuss the meaning of these in relation to the aims of the research and the research question.
CHAPTER 6 – A Reconstructed Story of a Small Rural Community and a Refinery….and the State

Introduction

It is clear from the findings that a variety of themes emerged which were related to human well-being and domination. These elements are the mainstay for the pursuit of human rights and social justice respectively (Porter & Offord, 2006, p. 3; Young, 1990, p. 7). However, there is significance in what wasn’t found as well as what was. Indeed, the elements which did not emerge through the social justice and human rights framework may have greater importance in understanding the relationship between social work and environmental issues than those themes which were prevalent. As indicated in Appendix 2 (‘Final Themes and Their Origins’) both the ‘Distribution’ and ‘Civil and Political Life’ categories failed to be viable. Surprisingly, there was a distinct lack of data which came to populate these categories.

What did not emerge

The ‘Distribution’ category was informed by the distributional paradigm of social justice and the ‘Civil and Political Life’ category was informed by the concept of civil and political human rights. These particular forms of social justice and human rights dominate the discourse of their respective domains (Ife, 2001, pp. 28-29; Young, 1990, pp. 16-17). It is paradoxical that citizens articulated such broad and deep accounts of suffering whilst neither of these concepts were appealed to. Indeed, there were essentially no specific references to ‘justice’ or ‘rights’ within the statements of citizens.

The omission of these areas is significant as it provides insights about the discourse of social justice and human rights, and consequently the discourse of social work. In particular the contemporary dominant understandings of social justice and human rights are inadequate to
engage with the suffering that occurs as a result of environmental problems. This is supported within the literature. Warren (1999, p. 153) makes the argument that a distributional paradigm of social justice is insufficient as "crucial categories of environmental justice issues are not, or are not simply or exclusively, about distribution". In relation to human rights Ife argues that (2006a, p. 31) the dominance of civil and political rights tends to eschew other forms of human rights. Indeed the structural approach that is inherent in a non-distributional paradigm of social justice may be of assistance in conceptualising the lack of rights based language in environmental problems. Ife (2001, p. 147) comments that "[u]nderstanding why human rights are not defined, realised or protected for many people requires an analysis of structural oppression or disadvantage". The non-distributive paradigm of social justice provides a structural lens (Mullaly, 2002) to help perceive, understand and explain suffering caused by environmental problems across the various domains of human rights.

**What did emerge**

This research has brought into relief the ways in which rural citizens have experienced an identified environmental problem. These are expressed as themes which have emerged from an extensive social justice and human rights framework. The themes of connection to the area and irreplaceable lifestyle were amongst the most significant findings. They revealed aspects of citizens' sense of identity and in many ways made possible the identification of other themes such as choice, uncertainty, stake and responsibility. In particular these two themes represent what is at stake or already lost by citizens. Many citizens had a rich heritage that was connected to farming enterprises which had passed through various generations of a single family, one dating back to 1840 (EPAC, 2001a). Others had moved to the area as newly arrived European migrants and made their home on the same site since arriving in Australia during the last century (EPAC, 2001f, "Something in the air", 2005). Both of these circumstances represent a
strong cultural connection to heritage which has a significant symbolic value.

For others their connection was based on the lifestyle offered by a unique and idyllic rural location. This lifestyle represented peoples’ ‘dreams’; their ‘legacy’; and their ‘lives’, and manifested as a connection to their ‘homes’, the location and its natural environment. It is in essence a spiritual connection as citizens articulated a preference which is of ultimate importance to them (Bouma, 2003, p. 428), not that dissimilar to the relationship with nature espoused by traditional Pagans\(^5\) (Harpur, 2004, p. 151). This spiritual connection is also characterised as holding a strong symbolic value.

The notion to a ‘home’ is a subjective mental construction (Read, 1996, pp. 101-102), rather than simply a functional structure providing a place of abode. Home can be represented in many ways, including a suburb or locality, a house, a street, a room within a building or some other object such as a garden or tree (Read, 1996, pp. 101-102). “The loss of a loved place sharpens perceptions of what is most valuable in the shaped and fashioned space” (Read, 1996, p. 101). The notion of ‘place’ embodies the localised symbolic valuing of particular places (Lanegran, 2007, p. 181) This concept is recognised more routinely in the field of human and cultural geography, but is less widely acknowledged or associated with social work (Chenoweth & McAuliffe, 2005, pp. 108-110; Lanegran, 2007, p. 181).

By framing the connection to ‘place’ as a spiritual and cultural attachment its significance becomes clearer. The capacity to replicate these elements by moving to another location, as suggested in Alcoa’s ‘Wagerup Land Management Strategy’, can now be understood as problematic. Whilst Alcoa ("In the loop", 2002; Sharp et al., 2004, p. 238) sees this as providing choice, citizens are emphatic that they have no choice (EPAC, 2001b, 2001g; , "In the loop", 2002). This exposes the

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\(^5\) Care should be taken in the interpretation of ‘Pagan’. Early Christianity flexed its power to construct Pagan beliefs in a negative way, however its historical definition is neutral and translates to peasant
reality of different stakeholders' interpretations and constructions of the situation. Community citizens, Alcoa, and in all likelihood the DEP are resourced differently in terms of their 'interpretive repertoires' (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p. 250). It seems likely that neither Alcoa nor the DEP were able to access interpretations which comprehend the cultural or spiritual connections and rights that citizens have to the Yarloop district and its associated lifestyle (Silverman, 2001, p. 182).

The connectedness to 'place' also represented a significant element of citizens' understandings of what was at stake for them compared to other parties. Indeed, citizens articulated a multitude of ways that they were disproportionately exposed to costs derived from the environmental problem or the seeking of a solution to such. These costs were overwhelmingly non-material and symbolic rather than financial. They included the already discussed cultural and spiritual costs relating to their irreplaceable lifestyle. In addition to these were the social costs that manifested in terms of being trapped and diminished interpersonal capacity/spirit. These non-material costs were essentially aligned with traditional second generation rights.

The remaining categories, informed by survival, economic and environmental rights, related to material costs. The themes of emissions based health problems, economic hardship and diminished environment/ecology emerged from these categories. These material costs also demonstrated the differential of what was at stake for community citizens. There were some indications that the aggregate of both the material and non-material costs was causing secondary emotional costs in the form of stress and anguish.

Both the material and non-material costs were, in the main, attributable to the refinery or processes related to the refinery. Various authors (Ife, 1997; Isbister, 2001; Lockie, 2004; Mies & Shiva, 1993) refer to the notion of 'externalisation of cost' as a symptom of the

(Harpur, 2004). Paganism held a spiritual discernment which, amongst other things, valued various elements of nature (Harpur, 2004, p. 151).
structures of capitalism. In this respect the 'external costs\textsuperscript{51}' of production are transferred to society in the form of social, economic and ecological costs (Iybister, 2001, p. 231; Mies & Shiva, 1993, p. 58). These costs are even externalised to future generations (Mies & Shiva, 1993, p. 59).

The burden of these costs is disproportionately met by those in close proximity to the refinery, those with the most at stake: the citizens of Yarloop, Wagerup and Cookernup. Industries that cause pollution and environmental degradation frequently use areas where populations have less structural status (McKinnon, 2005, p. 226). This is very much a form of exploitation where the domination of a particular subjugated population shoulders the bulk of externalised costs to support those who profit economically (Mies & Shiva, 1993, p. 58). In this respect rurality can be understood as a site of structural oppression (Young, 1990, pp. 48-52) as it is less able to resist the exploitative processes of capitalist based industries. Further, this relationship is supported by governments which act to prioritise market based ideals. This is also an instance of corporate rights being prioritised over the rights of citizens. It also reveals the lack of acknowledgement of the corresponding responsibilities that must be abided if human rights are to be secured (Ife & Fiske, 2006, pp. 1-3). The externalisation of cost represents a shifting of responsibility from corporations to society and its citizens. Despite the suffering that this causes, this is not recognised because the discourse of rights lacks a correspondingly powerful discourse of responsibilities (Ife & Fiske, 2006).

Structural oppression also occurred through the marginalisation of the citizens of Yarloop and Wagerup. The themes of lack of procedural impartiality and tokenistic processes illustrate the marginalisation of citizens. This occurs through the "deprive[ation]... of rights and freedoms that others have" (Young, 1990, p. 54). In this case the 'others' refer to Alcoa. The citizens of the Yarloop community \textsuperscript{51}Iymbister (2001, p. 231) contrasts 'internal costs' with 'external costs' in that the former relate to economic costs of inputs paid by producer and the latter relates to costs of incurred by the producer but paid for by society. External costs may relate to non-economic elements.
articulated various ways in which there was a disparity of treatment between Alcoa and themselves by DEP. These included accepting Alcoa's emissions figures, control of the process and control of timelines. A second way in which marginalisation occurs relates to the exclusion from "meaningful social participation" (Mullaly, 2002, p. 44). Various citizens reported a lack of confidence in the DEP or in the processes of the DEP and Alcoa. Whilst there was not direct exclusion, the lack of confidence implies that their interaction has not been meaningful. The theme of lack of community legitimacy also supports this latter understanding of marginalisation as it suggests that citizens believed that they were systematically not being taken seriously.

This theme of lack of legitimacy in addition to those of limited choice and uncertainty suggests the powerlessness of community citizens. The notion of powerlessness is discussed by Young (1990, pp. 56-57) mostly in terms of class and professional and non-professional workers. However, the mechanism of power in terms of the "relations of cooperation, conflict and authority" (Young, 1990, p. 23) are still relevant to the context of this case. The statements of citizens refer to the ways that Aloca had directly or indirectly asserted its authority to provide very little meaningful choice for citizens. This is also based on the special cultural and spiritual relationship to 'place' that citizens have. In addition the emissions from the refinery and the conditions of 'Wagerup Land Management Proposal' provided significant uncertainty for citizens' future health and well-being. These processes of powerlessness and marginalisation have led to the structural disempowerment of citizens.

It is not possible from the available data to establish with any certainty a single culture within the Yarloop and Wagerup community. The design and aims of the research do not focus on this dimension. In any case, there is diversity within rural Australia which is increasing (Alston, 2004, p. 169; Hugo, 2004) and thus the claim of a single rural culture may be futile. However, within this case some features of the culture have emerged. These include the valuing of non-financial
elements such as family, nature and the ‘home’. Tickamyer and Tickermeyer (cited in Cloke, 1997, p. 265) suggest that the rural subculture is unique “with its own pattern of economic activity, family life, language, and customs which run counter to modern economic values”.

Young (1990, p. 23) maintains that culture may be a site of oppression in terms of the symbolic meanings that are attached to particular cultural groups which act to limit their social standing or opportunities. This research was not designed to establish these types of relations of causality. However, there is little doubt that citizens did experience structural disempowerment and that there is a distinct subculture within the community. Given the urban-centric nature of the DEP and Alcoa and their focus on economic and technical matters, it is quite feasible that this rural subculture’s differences were devalued. This would have involved the othering of rural people and significantly, it would have also involved the othering of citizen rights by giving priority to corporate rights. Cloke and Little (1997, p. 1) maintain that “...representations of rurality and rural life are replete with such devices of exclusion and marginalisation by which mainstream ‘self’ serves to ‘other’ the positioning of all kinds of people in the socio-spatial relations of different countrysides”. This othering takes place at the structural level as a mostly covert process (Mullaly, 2002, p. 113) and results in significant loss across varying dimension of human rights.

The various themes covered in the preceding paragraphs have provided a detailed answer to the research question by delineating the most significant ways that social justice and human rights were experienced. The totality of these themes suggests that citizens have experienced loss or fear of loss across a spectrum of material and non-material domains. These include loss of: citizenship, a reasonable level of future certainty, autonomy, legitimacy, lifestyle, confidence in the safety of their environment, health, freedom, relationships, livelihood, financial security, quiet enjoyment of natural surroundings, lifestyle, heritage and legacy.
Bright (1996, pp. 60-64) maintains that the experience of loss can relate to a multitude of phenomena that have significance to the holder and explicitly includes many of the items listed above. These represent loss of material, non-material and symbolic objects (Bright, 1996). The marginalisation of the citizens through their structural disempowerment is a significant social justice issue. This, in part, manifested as powerlessness within the existing relational structures of stakeholders. As a consequence they were powerless to exercise control over what was being done to their environment. Loss can be exacerbated by powerlessness and can be linked to sadness, fear, regret, disappointment and further powerlessness (Bright, 1996, pp. 60-64). A common sense approach to justice would suggest that the multitude of losses experienced by citizens should hold more weight than the externalisation of costs by a corporation.

The emergence of loss as the meta-theme was unexpected result for this study, despite the fact that loss is a familiar concept within social work and has occupied a place in the knowledge and skills of the profession. More importantly, it has a firm hold within the discourse of the profession and could potentially contribute to the emergence of an authentic ecologically informed account of social work practice.
Conclusion

In 1996, long before the ‘Inquiry’ commenced, the chief occupational health physician of the Department of Mineral and Petroleum Resources, Brian Galton-Fenzi was asked to provide a report for Alcoa. His findings point to the moral responsibilities of Alcoa and, in light of this research, seem prophetic. He stated that Alcoa should:

[a]ccept the moral relevance of pollution and strive for a zero goal; that is, to take the moral value seriously. You don't have to get to zero, you have to want to. [Form committees and talk to the locals]. Share the benefits with the community, yolk [sic] control with fairness... Ask the community what do they want in compensation for the 'risk' they have to bear. When the company feels 'blackmailed', rather than the community feeling 'bribed', then a redistribution has occurred (Galton-Fenzi cited in Mayman, 2002).

This research found that rural citizens who are affected by an identified environmental problem articulated the experience in terms of social justice and human rights in a variety of ways which impacted their well-being. The core theme which characterised these experiences was that of loss. Citizens' experienced loss in relation to a variety of material and non-material elements. The most significant element related to loss of 'place'. Further, citizens’ experiences of loss were augmented by the structural oppression of community members. This was based on the exploitation, marginalisation and powerlessness of citizens in the face of the processes and activities implemented by statutory and corporate enterprises. This resulted in citizens experiencing structural disempowerment within a context where they, in fact, had the most at stake but were the least able to act or use their capacity to effect change in this particular instance. The mechanisms of structural disempowerment and oppression precipitated 'loss' as their experience of social justice and human rights.

The range of findings were only capable of being brought into view because the typologies offered by Young (1990) and Ife (2006a) explicitly
mapped out the various forms of social justice and human rights. This allowed the citizens’ experiences of suffering, domination and loss of well-being to emerge from the data. The dominant mainstream conceptualisations of social justice and human rights, based on distributional forms of justice and civil and political rights, were not sufficient to reveal these important issues relating to environmental problems. The most significant domain of rights was that of cultural and spiritual rights however citizens’ appealed to all categories of Young’s (1990) non-distributional paradigm of social justice when discussing the impact they experienced as a result of this particular environmental issue. Having said that, however, the intersection of culture as a domain of oppression and as a form of rights was especially important for the conceptualisation of rurality.

This research sought to extend the traditional notions of ‘environment’ within social work to include the physical environment. The suffering of rural citizens revealed through the conceptualisation of an environmental problem using a framework based on the values of social work, provides an impetus for this aim to be realised. Indeed, this research has confirmed the proposition that environmental problems are indeed within the scope of social work and further that such an involvement may yield solutions that pursue the problems in a holistic way that is informed by politics, psychology, culture and sociology.

There are implications from this for the profession of social work, too, because if it is to rise to the challenge and participate in efforts to confront problems raised in the wake of the emerging ecological crisis, it must go beyond the dominant discourses of what constitutes social justice and human rights. Indeed, if social work is to live up to its holistic ‘tag’ then conceptualisations of structural and cultural oppression must accompany surface understandings. This is necessary if we, as a profession, are to move competently from the abstract domain of concepts to the concrete lived experiences of those who seek well-being. This may also encourage a professional culture which seeks to escape the traps of blindly subscribing to the profession’s ‘received
ideas' without proper appraisal, and thus embrace an anti-deterministic ontology.

This research provides a contribution to social work's knowledge by testing the boundaries of the profession's value base. It has contributed in three ways to the profession's knowledge base. Firstly, it has extended the understanding of environment to include the physical environment. Secondly, it has demonstrated the connection between the notion of loss and the experience of environmental problems. Thirdly, the research process has produced a series of categories which may have a practical application for the exploration of other rural communities' experiences of environmental problems.

As this research has not actively engaged in an ongoing process of theoretical sampling it is not able to claim a 'formal theory' as an outcome. However, the grounded approach has been rigorous enough to generate a 'substantive theory'. This theory stipulates that:

The loss sustained by rural citizens encountering an environmental problem is a result of social injustice and encroachments upon human rights.

This theory could be tested within similar communities experiencing environmental problems to increase generalisability and pursue the status of a 'formal theory'. In addition to this, the inquiry could be complemented by further research testing the knowledge and skills of the profession in relation to environmental problems. These endeavours are crucial if the profession is to take seriously the suffering which is currently occurring and which is highly likely to dominate in the future.

Three recommendations emerge from this research which would be of assistance in ameliorating the suffering associated with environmental problems. Firstly, explicit statements which cover the full dimensions of human rights and non-distributional categories of social justice should be adopted by social and community service organisations; the social work profession and more widely within Government and
regulatory institutions. Secondly, political and democratic empowerment should receive a similar level of focus to personal empowerment within the profession. Lastly, the knowledge base locating environmental problems as social problems should be expanded (Burgmann, 2003, p. 193; Ife, 2006b).

These recommendations could contribute to the discourse of social justice and human rights, and consequently to the social work discourse. In doing so, support could be gained for an 'ecological rights' paradigm (Booth & Dunne, 1999, p. 318). This would provide a significant framework for the deconstruction of exploitative capitalist process which externalise cost to the wider society. A rights based approach judged through the well-being of the entire ecosystem would necessitate the profile of responsibilities being raised. It would also expose the exploitation and oppression of the most disconnected voices on the planet; a necessary progression if the viability of the planet's future generations, flora and fauna and ecological balance is to be secured.

52 "Ecological rights are seen by some authors as the embodiment of human and environmental rights, both redefining 'the relationship of human beings with one another and of rich countries with poor countries, as well as of all mankind with its natural environment'" (Booth & Dunne, 1999, p. 318).
**APPENDIX 1. - Category and Coding Matrix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conceptual</th>
<th>Empirical – actual phenomena</th>
<th>Coding rules</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Element of SJ/HR</td>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distributable</td>
<td>Distribution of material resources</td>
<td>Articulate view that there are inequities in how resources (benefits and burdens) are distributed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social justice</td>
<td>1. Decision making structure and procedures</td>
<td>Processes practices initiated by external organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Distributable</td>
<td>1. Decision making structure and procedures.</td>
<td>Choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Decision making structure and procedures. 2 Division of labour</td>
<td>Capacity to influence control over circumstances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 Division of labour</td>
<td>Stake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Culture</td>
<td>Alternate symbolic meanings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human rights</td>
<td>Survival rights</td>
<td>Health, wellbeing and safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social rights</td>
<td>Interaction in social environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economic rights</td>
<td>Economic and financial impacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Civil and political rights (freedom protection from...)</td>
<td>Impacts upon civil and political life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Environmental rights</td>
<td>Natural and Physical Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural rights</td>
<td>Culture and Spirituality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spiritual rights</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others' responsibilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Explanations of non-distributive issues of
1. Decision making structures and procedures – structurally located rules and procedures for making decisions.
2. Division of labour – Definition of occupation/roles/identities themselves and the value of such. Encompasses relations of cooperation, conflict, and authority among such roles.
3. Culture – meaning attached to other kinds of people (cultural groups) can affect their social standing or opportunities
(Youn, 1990, p. 22)
## APPENDIX 2. - Final Themes and Their Origins

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concepts</th>
<th>Element of SJHR and Defn.</th>
<th>Initial Categories</th>
<th>Final Categories</th>
<th>Data: Themes derived from data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distribution of material resources</td>
<td>Distribution of material resources</td>
<td>Discontinued</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Non-distributable 1** | * Decision making structure and procedures – Acknowledges who, but also rules and procedures for making decisions | Problematic processes practices initiated by external organisations | Processes practices initiated by external organisations | • Lack of procedural impartiality  
• Tokenistic processes |
| **Non-distributable 2** | * Decision making structure and procedures – Acknowledges who, but also rules and procedures for making decisions | Limited choices  
Denied choice – no real choice. Uncertainty | Choice | • Uncertainty  
• Limited choice |
| **Non-distributable 1, 2** | * Division of labour – Defn of occupations (roles identities) themselves and value of such. relations of cooperation, conflict, and authority among positions: roles | Capacity to influence control over circumstances | Capacity to influence control over circumstances | • Lack of community legitimacy |
| **Non-distributable 3** | *Culture – meaning attached to other kinds of people (cultural groups) can affect their social standing or opportunities | Stale in affected environment | Stake | • Multifaceted reciprocal stake |
| **Non-distributable 3** | Alternate symbolic meanings | Symbolic meanings | • Non-financial costs |

### Human Rights

| Survival rights | Health, wellbeing and safety | Health, wellbeing and safety | • Health problem caused by emissions |
| Social rights | Interaction in social environment | Interaction in social environment | • Diminished interpersonal capacity: spirit spirit |
| Economic rights | Economic and financial impacts | Economic and financial impacts | • Economic hardship |
| Civil and political rights (freedom protection from...) | Impacts upon civil and political life | Discontinued |
| Environmental rights | Undiminished environment | Natural and physical Environment | • Diminished environment: ecology |
| Cultural rights | shared attitudes, beliefs, norms and behaviours | Consolidated category: Culture and spirituality | • Connection to the area  
• Irreplaceable lifestyle |
| Spiritual rights | Spirituality | Others' responsibilities | • Alcoa should take more responsibility to rectify problem not symptoms |

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Explanations of non-distributive issues of:
1. Decision making structures and procedures – structurally located rules and procedures for making decisions.
2. Division of labour – Definition of occupations/roles/identities themselves and the value of such. Encompasses relations of cooperation, conflict, and authority among such roles.
3. Culture – meaning attached to other kinds of people (cultural groups) can affect their social standing or opportunities (Young, 1990, p. 22)


In the loop. (2002). [Documentary]. Australia: Fish Eye Films.


