Social work education and anti-oppressive practice in Greece

A thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree of PhD in the Faculty of Medical and Human Sciences

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<tr>
<td>AEIs</td>
<td>Universities</td>
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<tr>
<td>ADIP</td>
<td>Hellenic Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADP</td>
<td>Anti-Discriminatory Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AOP</td>
<td>Anti-Oppressive Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBP</td>
<td>Competence Based Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCETSW</td>
<td>Central Council for Education and Training</td>
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<td>COS</td>
<td>Charity Organisation Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>EAM</td>
<td>National Liberation Front</td>
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<tr>
<td>EBP</td>
<td>Evidence Based Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECB</td>
<td>European Central Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>EKKE</td>
<td>National Centre for Social Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>DSM</td>
<td>Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders</td>
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<tr>
<td>HCPC</td>
<td>Health and Care Professions Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>HEIs</td>
<td>Higher Education Institutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>IASSW</td>
<td>International Association of Schools of Social Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>IFSW</td>
<td>International Federation of Social Workers</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTQI</td>
<td>Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersexed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSE</td>
<td>London School of Economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Non Govermental Organisations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>NPM</td>
<td>New Public Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>PASOK</td>
<td>Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC</td>
<td>Political Correctness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SKLE</td>
<td>Professional Association of Social Workers</td>
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<tr>
<td>SYRIZA</td>
<td>Coalition of the Radical Left</td>
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<tr>
<td>TEIs</td>
<td>Technological Educational Institutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>United States (of America)</td>
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Abstract of thesis submitted by Sofia Dedotsi for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and entitled:

Social work education and anti-oppressive practice in Greece

September 2015

Greece is seven years into a socio-economic crisis, where oppression has increased as a result of austerity measures driven by the political parties in governance and Troika. In a context of attacks on social care and social work, dominant social values of intolerance and violation of human rights, the pursuit of anti-oppressive practice is more crucial than ever. However, discussions and debates on social work and anti-oppressive practice have mostly taken place outside of the context of Greece. Reflecting on this gap, this doctoral research project asks: What is the role of social work education in influencing students’ ability to manage value tensions in relation to anti-oppressive practice within the current context of social work education in Greece? It is the first such study of its kind in Greece.

Using a qualitative case study methodology, the research was based in one of the four national Departments of Social Work (subsequently abolished). Semi-structured interviews were undertaken involving social work students in their first and final years of professional education (n=32) and academic staff/placement supervisors (n=10). Data analysis was informed by a ground theory approach.

The study revealed social work education’s failure in stimulating the development of an ethical and anti-oppressive self in students. The key determinants identified were: students’ narrow understandings and individualistic approaches towards oppression; the unjust educational policies within which students are educated and educators work; an outdated curriculum with a clinical and technical approach; and lack of social action/connection with the community by the Department. Results are interpreted using the conceptual lens of Foucault (1977; 1980; 1982) and Freire (1970; 1993; 1994). A conceptual model is also presented, in order to understand and promote (anti-) oppressive practice at multiple levels: subjectivity, discipline and governmentality, as well as discourse, oppressive reality and dividing practices.

The key implications of the study are for social work education to reflect and respond to current social needs by developing a radical and anti-oppressive curriculum; being involved in social action through social movements and professional associations; establishing a dialogical and reflexive learning process with the active participation of students and service users in designing and evaluating educational content and processes; and a constant deconstruction/reconstruction of the self for students, educators and practitioners.
Declaration
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Lastly, I would like to thank the participants of this research – students and colleagues – who shared their voices, experiences and feelings with me. This thesis is dedicated to them and to all the practitioners and users who resist austerity and oppressive policies.
Μάνος Χατζιδάκις, σε απόσπασμά του για τον φασισμό
Κυριακή, 30 Ιουλίου 1978

“Η μορφή του τέρατος είναι αποκρουστική. Όταν όμως το πρόσωπο του τέρατος πάψει να μας τρομάξει, τότε πρέπει να φοβόμαστε... γιατί αυτό σημαίνει ότι έχουμε αρχίσει να του μοιάζουμε”.

“*The figure of the monster is repulsive. However, it is when the face of the monster ceases to frighten us that we must be afraid... because this means that we have begun to look like it*”.

Manos Hadjidakis, in one of his quotes about fascism
Sunday, 30 July 1978
Introduction

The social work role with respect to oppression and injustice has been a key theme of much scholarly work, research and theoretical debate throughout the profession’s history. Anti-oppressive practice (AOP) is one of the critical and emancipatory approaches that has historically emerged as a response to oppression and a challenge to traditional social work approaches within the profession (Banks, 2006; Dominelli, 1998; Healy, 2005; 2012; Lorenzetti, 2013). Rejecting the individualistic focus of traditional social work approaches, emancipatory social work involves a structural analysis of social problems, a commitment to social justice and social change, a connection with social movements, a challenge and critique of neo-liberalism, as well as advocacy and collective action (Cemlyn, 2008; Jordan, 2004; Ferguson and Lavalette, 2006). The development of ethical and anti-oppressive practitioners has therefore been fundamental to social work education. This is reflected in the educational standards and guidelines of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW\(^1\)) (2004) as well as the recent revision to the international definition of social work (http://ifsw.org/get-involved/global-definition-of-social-work/, accessed on 15/08/2014).

However, all of these theoretical debates and related research have mostly taken place outside of Greece, paying only scant, if any, reference to social work education in Greece (e.g. Dedoussi et al., 2004; Ioakimidis, 2008; 2011; Teloni, 2011a). This gap is of great importance especially now, as since 2008 Greece has been experiencing an unprecedented economic and humanitarian crisis, which has had a very significant social impact. Austerity measures and policy cuts have included a dis-investment in social work and social care and more recently an attack on social work education with the abolition of one of the four national Social Work Departments. It is a context in which both practice and education based on

\(^1\) These can be accessed on the following link: http://cdn.ifsw.org/assets/ifsw_65044-3.pdf (accessed on 20/07/2012).
the emancipatory values of the profession should have a significant role to play. Therefore, this study aimed to explore and understand the impact of social work education on students’ ability to manage value tensions in relation to anti-oppressive practice (AOP). Based on the case study of one Greek Social Work Department in a higher education institution (subsequently abolished), this study – to the best of my knowledge – addresses social work education and AOP for the first time in Greece. It contributes to the understanding of the dynamics that underpin the content and context of social work education in Greece with respect to students’ ability to develop into competent anti-oppressive practitioners, who are able to successfully manage and overcome value tensions, where their personal views may conflict with professional expectations and ethics.

Introducing myself, I was born and grew up in Greece, in a rural area, coming from a working-class family. Issues of social justice and standing up for your rights were central to my family background and values. These were the early influences that shaped in part my orientation towards social justice; hence, in my late teens, I consciously identified that I wanted to be a social worker, envisaging that role as contributing towards creating an equal and just society. However, my undergraduate studies in a Greek Social Work Department did not include any reference to or teaching on anti-oppressive concepts at all or encourage professional social work engagement in social action. The strong emphasis on clinical, therapeutic and technical approaches, embedded within my professional education, in which service users were viewed as ‘patients’, left me rather confused about my role as a social worker when I graduated in 2006. This led to me subsequently experiencing value tensions in practice and feeling frustrated because my previous education had made no reference to social justice, empowerment and value tension issues. It was only when I undertook my postgraduate studies (an MSc in Advanced Social Work in Cardiff University) and worked in Britain as a social worker (2006-2010) that I came across the various theoretical approaches, debates and research on anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practice and critical and radical
social work. Exploring such theories and perspectives influenced my professional standpoint and approach. It also shaped my core motivation to undertake this research.

Further, strong motivations for this study occurred when I returned in Greece in 2010, where the economic crisis and austerity had resulted in the violation of rights as well as the rise of inequalities. Observing inadequate social policy responses to austerity, the struggles experienced by my colleagues in frontline social services, as well as the absence of collective action and response by the profession, made me realise that the traditional, individualistic social work that prevailed in Greek practice and education was insufficient for anti-oppressive practice to take root. In addition, my teaching and working experiences as a contract academic staff member in the institution that became the case study research site for this piece of work, further influenced my research interests. More specifically, the discussions with students in and outside of the classroom about oppression, the informal chats with colleagues, our struggle against neo-liberal educational policies, and the experience of teaching almost the same clinical and technical curriculum as the one I had been educated some years ago, made me wonder about the impact of social work education on students’ critical consciousness and anti-oppressive action. It was at this point that I was motivated to undertake this research at a PhD level.

These influences, as well as my reading and understanding of the literature, stimulated the overarching research question guiding this study, which is:

*How does pre-qualifying social work education influence students’ ability to manage value tensions in relation to anti-oppressive practice within the context of social work education in Greece?*

More specifically the objectives of my research are:
a.) to explore in depth social work education’s content in a Greek Social Work Department in relation to ethics and anti-oppressive practice - how and why these are discussed;

b.) to understand and explain students’ perceptions (at the beginning and the end of their training) related to diverse groups and the discrimination and/or oppression that these groups may face;

c.) to explore students’ beliefs and experiences of value tensions in relation to diversity and anti-oppressive practice and explain their strategies for resolving any personal/professional tensions at the beginning and at the end of their training;

d.) to identify students’ expectations of their education in relation to anti-oppressive practice and how this changes over time.

Central to these objectives is the context within which students’ positions are constructed. Therefore, the intention of this study is to arrive at an holistic understanding of the role of social work education, by exploring and describing the dynamics within and between different levels of intersecting structures: students, educators, institutions and the wider socio-political context (Simons, 2015).

With regards to the structure of this thesis, it is organised into five chapters:

In Chapter 1, a literature review and discussion of the core concepts of anti-oppressive practice (AOP) both in social work practice and education, is presented. The historical development of anti-oppressive theory and its framework, as well as the various debates and research on an anti-oppressive social work education are critically discussed. It is important to note here, that this literature review was undertaken mostly through a developed world social work perspective, using mostly sources from the Western context and it is acknowledged that this discussion may not reflect worldwide social work practice and education standpoints. This point of view stems not only from my status as a Greek citizen studying in a British
university, but also from the cultural, political and socio-economic influences that Greece and social work practice and education have had from European countries, particularly the UK and also the US. In addition, considering that all these theoretical debates around and research on anti-oppressive practice and social work education have mostly taken place outside Greece, the intention of this thesis is not to impose or import a theory uncritically. Instead, the aim is to inform a more radical shift in social work education, based on both the strengths and limitations of anti-oppressive social work and the characteristics of Greek society.

In Chapter 2, the reader is introduced to the Greek context, by discussing social work’s historical evolution and the socio-political context up until today. The discussion reveals: the regulation of the profession by the Greek state through time and its silent response during times of oppression; the discourse of dominant societal values of intolerance; and lastly, the neo-liberal educational context within which social work education currently operates and its individualistic and technical content, with a focus on the specific case on which this research is based.

In Chapter 3, the research methodology and methods are critically discussed, providing a comprehensive and transparent account of research decisions, data collection methods and analysis, as well as ethical issues. The case, the informants and the research process are all discussed in detail, as is the part I played in terms of the self-reflexive researcher. The strengths and limitations of this study are covered in this chapter too.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the interviews with the participants of this study, under three main sections: Sample 1 refers to the first year students (16), sample 2 to the final year students (14) and sample 3 to academic staff/placement supervisors (10). The findings reveal an unjust context and content of social work education in which students experience and (mis-)manage their value tensions in relation to anti-oppressive practice.
Last, Chapter 5 provides the discussion and interpretation of this study’s findings. The accounts of all groups of participants are critically discussed and compared not only in the light of the wider research but also using theoretical insights provided by Foucault (1977; 1980; 1982) and Freire (1970; 1993; 1994). Both of these theorists have argued that there are no final answers to meanings and explanations, but stress a need for constant critical reflection and deconstruction. Therefore, they have been used as resources to explore and understand social work education in Greece and my findings rather than the findings of the studies being mapped on to their ‘truths’. Finally, overall conclusions and implications for policy, practice and further research are discussed.
Chapter 1: Literature review on anti-oppressive practice and education

This chapter provides a theoretical introduction to the main concepts of anti-oppressive practice (AOP) both in social work practice and education. Starting with a discussion of the historical development of concepts of AOP in the Western context, articulations and constructions of anti-oppressive theory and practice are critically discussed and debated throughout this chapter, using the insights of Paulo Freire (1970; 1993; 1994) and Michel Foucault (1977; 1980; 1982) to frame them within. This chapter also provides a review of social work education’s impact on preparing ‘political and ethical beings’ – a description of social workers provided by Freire (Freire 1989, in Moch, 2009: 94) that has been debated within literature.

It is important to acknowledge that AOP has been defined and debated mostly by British authors. The fact that AOP has not been discussed and debated in respect of different contexts (countries) has been identified as an important gap within the literature (Rush and Keenan, 2013). Therefore, it would be irrelevant, even oppressive to impose a specific definition/model on the Greek context, derived from elsewhere, without giving its possible transferability or relevance, some detailed consideration. Thus, the intention in this chapter is critically to interrogate the key debates concerning the definition of AOP that have influenced social work definition and training guidelines (IFSW and IASSW, 2004 http://cdn.ifsw.org/assets/ifsw_65044-3.pdf, accessed on 20/07/2012), prior to considering how basic assumptions and core concepts might inform a more radical shift in thinking in social work education in Greece.

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2 In the definition and guidelines, AOP is not mentioned specifically, but they are clear about the emancipatory mission of the profession against oppression and towards social justice.
1.1 The evolution of anti-oppressive social work

A brief examination of social work’s history and the evolution of its anti-oppressive focus is central to any critical reflection. Examining the profession’s shifting political positions, in relation to social injustice and oppression through time and space, is essential to understanding the strengths and weaknesses in current articulations of AOP. This review is also important because both social work practice and education in Greece have been traditionally developed along the lines of these influences, as will be discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

Social work’s recently revised version of the profession’s global definition, as adopted in July 2014 at the general meeting of IFSW and IASSW (http://ifsw.org/get-involved/global-definition-of-social-work/, accessed on 15/08/2014), states:

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

This accepted definition underpins the ethical codes of the profession internationally, and in the notes that accompany the definition, the core mandates and principles of the profession are described as: a commitment to social justice, empowerment and liberation of people from structural inequalities, discrimination and oppression. This definition indicates a clear quest for social change through the development of critical consciousness, as well as challenge and action strategies that build solidarity with the disadvantaged and the oppressed. Both the definition and the commentary notes are based on an emancipatory approach to social work, as reflected in prior global definition too (IFSW and IASSW 2001, http://ifsw.org/policies/global-standards/, accessed on, 20/07/2012).
However, an emphasis on tackling structural inequalities and oppression has not always been the case for social work.

Social work as one of the ‘psy’ or social professions (Foucault, 1980) emerged in Western contexts (the United States, the United Kingdom and continental Europe), before transferring to the then colonies and elsewhere (e.g. Australia) as the state’s response to the relief of the poor in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century (Cox and Pawar, 2006). It is worth noting here that these countries - especially the US and the UK - were initially historically highly interdependent in terms of the theoretical and practice approaches that were emerging. Thus we see that developments of models of social work in one country can set the foundations or profoundly influence social work development in another country. This observation will be further illustrated in the following discussion concerning the historical development of concepts of anti-oppressive practice as well as later in Chapter 2, in relation to how dominant thinking has transferred to Greece.

Influenced by the ethical philosophies of Immanuel Kant (1788; 1797), Jeremy Bentham (1823; 1824) and John Stuart Mill (1863), the focus of the social professions in the 1800s was on the morality of the person and personal responsibility, largely based on individualistic approaches to the social problems of that time (Banks, 2006; Barnard et al., 2008; Dominelli, 2002). Founded on private charitable work by white middle and upper-class women, pauperism (Paine, 1880) and the need to control the perceived threat to public order posed by the lower-classes, social work was developed along the lines of what has been described as a care/control dichotomy (Brydon, 2012). More specifically, an oppressive ideology driven by the Charity Organisation Society (COS), based on individualism and assessment against criteria of entitlement to social welfare, COS established the division of the deserving and the undeserving poor. Reamer (1998; 2006: 5), commenting on the controlling interventions of early social work, suggested that they took the form of paternalistic efforts to bolster the ‘rectitude of those with shiftless or wayward habits’. Forsythe (1995), through his analysis of the history of discrimination
within social work, concurred with this view, adding that these early social work interventions with a vision of a two-tier welfare system, deliberately reinforced and nourished discrimination.

In contrast, a more critical approach in social work also emerged in the same period. This was advocated by movements like the Settlement Movement (both in UK and US) and the Fabian Society, which focused on the structural causes of social problems and challenged them through community initiatives, trade unionism and involvement with other activist movements (Dalrymple and Burke, 2006; Lynn, 1999). Reflecting on the anti-discriminatory strategies of activists like Elizabeth Fry, Samuel Barnett and Josephine Butler³, Forsythe (1995: 9) observed that the most common strategy was ‘reveal and appeal’: a highly organised publicity (press, journals, public meetings) campaign that revealed the structural causes of specific social problems (e.g. child prostitution). This was combined with pressure at a local level through community initiatives. This kind of systematic challenge to discrimination and oppression, along with the introduction of social justice values and pressure for social reform, have been considered pivotal, early critical influences on the social work profession (Dalrymple and Burke, 2006; Green and Clarke, 2016).

Enduring tensions within the development of social work’s approach to AOP both in practice and education, have been extensively acknowledged within the literature (i.e. Banks, 2006; Cox and Pawar, 2006; Lynn, 1999; Payne, 2005). Through an apprenticeship model, both the COS and the Settlement Movement offered training to new recruits based on their particular ideologies – individualised care by the former and social justice philosophy by the latter. However, in 1903, we see the two different schools of thought coming closer together with the incarnation of the

³ These are some names of the various activists who challenged social oppression and discrimination via social action and other community initiatives in the Victorian England. Such advocates were also found in the American context, for example Jane Addams and Janie Porter Barrett among others, who were early anti-oppressive pioneers.
School of Sociology\textsuperscript{4}, which was later incorporated into the London School of Economics (LSE) in 1912. In spite of their co-existence, these disparate ideologies shared an uneasy relationship, although mutual tolerance was evident (Lynn, 1999).

In the following decade, (1920-1930), it appears that this uneasy relationship resulted into the consolidation of an individualistic model of practice, as the hegemonic mode of practice and education (Dominelli, 2012), whilst appeals to social justice were marginalised and weakened. The influence of psychoanalysis, at that time gaining ground in the UK and across the Atlantic in the US, was reflected in the work of Mary Richmond (Social Diagnosis, 1917\textsuperscript{5}) and can be described as favouring an individualised approach to casework. However, Richmond’s work was not without criticism of the tradition of the COS, an organisation she described as taking a ‘hard nosed approach’ to the poor. In Richmond’s work we see an appeal to science through appropriation of psychoanalytic thought, as part of an endeavour to lend professional credibility to social work as an emerging profession. Yet, a focus on the individual was very much at the heart of new casework. Whilst Richmond’s particular approach favoured an empathic sentiment towards those in need, in comparison to the COS moralistic home visitors, the structural causes of social problems were rather marginalised given her ‘psy’ lens on the causes of individual pathology.

In the following years though\textsuperscript{6}, there was a shift towards a psycho-social approach to casework based on the works of Hollis (1964) and Hamilton

\textsuperscript{4} This school offered the very first social work training course in England.

\textsuperscript{5} Social Diagnosis is one of the most early, influential social work textbooks. Based on individualistic and medical approaches, it emphasised individual behaviour and support by the ‘expert’ social worker.

\textsuperscript{6} It is acknowledged that a detailed historical account on social work in the Western context is not given here. The intention is to reflect on the development of AOP. This explains important omissions on historical references, for example the profession under Nazism. Since the research
(1951), which placed an emphasis on person in context. Here, we see authors describing the individual in interaction with the social environment and the influence of that environment. Hamilton (1951) also suggested that the participation of ‘clients’ (the phrase in use at the time) in identifying and assessing their own problems was central to the effective and ethical practice. The efforts of this body of scholars to move beyond the psychodynamic tendency to focus on individual pathology, represents the emergence of a critical stance towards the traditional casework of the time (Webb, 1981). Yet, the influence of the social environment was considered as a complicating background factor with vague references to social factors, and limited concrete discussion of the political context within which social problems emerge and more importantly within which social work operates (Allan, 2014; Bradley et al., 2012; Stubbs and Maglajlic, 2012; Taylor, 1999; Webb, 1981). Therefore, an a-political and assumed neutral position was, arguably, still taken, based on a failure to understand fully, the wider structural forces that are implicated in social problems. For example, if we examine Biestek’s (1961) value statements, there is a tendency to focus on the individual with reference to the importance of focusing on expression and response to feelings, acceptance, non-judgementalism, self-determination and confidentiality.

In discussing these points, it is not my intention to attack casework wholesale and see it as incompatible with the emancipatory mission of the social work profession. Instead, what I am arguing is that approaches to casework that have been adopted traditionally have tended to reinforce or reproduce oppression through failing to address the structural determinants of it, even when considering contextual influences. Later in time, far more critical and radical approaches to casework were developed as observed in the works of: Timms (1967) ‘A sociological approach to social problems’; Fook (1993) ‘Radical casework: a theory of practice’; and more recently in the works of Frost and Hoggett (2008) as well as Hoggett and

context of this thesis is Greece, such reflections on the profession will be briefly discussed in Chapter 2.
Thompson (2012). In these approaches there is clear recognition of the political context and structural inequalities that are central to people’s experiences and feelings, and the focus is on critical consciousness and action – concepts that will be further explored later in this chapter. It is this approach to casework, along with that of community action that is reflected in social work’s more recent definition (IFSW and IASSW, 2014) when working with individuals, families, groups and communities.

It has been widely agreed within literature (i.e. Cowden and Singh, 2007; Dominelli, 2012; Garrett, 2002; Millar, 2008; Reamer, 2006; Thompson, 2002) that it was the new social movements of the 1960s and 1970s which brought to the fore again the values of social justice and the need for social change for social work. The critiques offered by the new social movements, like the feminist movement (i.e. Beauvoir, 1969; 1989), Black activist movement (i.e. McCartney, 1992), disability movement (i.e. Zames - Fleischer and Zames, 2011), gay liberation (i.e. Shelley, 1992) and mental health survivors’ movement (i.e. Chamberlin, 1978), highlighted the marginalisation and oppression of diverse groups by society and especially social welfare services, which individualised social problems. The political mobilisation of those movements (Cowden and Singh, 2007) influenced social work greatly, as a growing radical literature emerged (Bailey and Brake, 1975; Corrigan and Leonard, 1978; Galper, 1980), influenced by Marxist thought (e.g. Marx, 1848; 1885; 1894). In response to growing recognition of the limits of social work to effect personal and community change and transformation, where the professional operates narrowly as an agent of state control, new political movements called for more radical action. The notion of challenging oppression and tackling structural inequalities through consciousness raising and collective action became central for social workers and these ideals filtered into social work education (Barnard et al., 2008).

Whilst radical social work can be understood as focusing initially on social class, critiques from the social movements focused their critical energy on other forms of structural divide (e.g. gender, race, sexuality). This led to
the diversification of the radical movement into a number of subgroups that all offered critical practice models: structural social work, feminist social work, anti-racist social work, anti-oppressive practice and anti-discriminatory practice (Healy, 2014). The greater awareness of inequalities during the 1970s and 1980s led to anti-discrimination legislation to combat racism and sexism both in US and UK (Green and Clarke, 2016; Morrish and O’ Mara, 2011), whilst at the international level social work is defined as a global profession with a common code of ethics that also addresses issues of discrimination and marginalisation (Cox and Pawar, 2006).

Banks (2006) argues that although the radical movement did not discuss ethics per se, it contributed to the embedding of values such as social justice, equality and collectivism into the moral core of the profession, compared to traditional social work’s a-historical and a-political view of the profession’s values, as exemplified by Biestek’s individualistic understanding and pioneering of social work values (Barnard et al., 2008). Thus, social work’s more recent history evidences focused moral discussion of ethical theories in practice as well as the value base of the self, and an emphasis on reflexive examination of personal values and beliefs towards diversity and social divide (Reamer, 1998; 2006).

From the mid-1980s, the social work literature evidenced a burgeoning discussion around ethical dilemmas and a greater focus was placed on decision making models (Reamer, 1998; 2006; Barnard et al. 2008) in parallel with growing concern about social inequalities. These set the foundations for anti-oppressive values expressed in the landmark Paper 30 in 1989 published by the Central Council for Education and Training (CCETSW) in Britain, which exposed the institutional and structural nature of racism and stressed the need for an anti-racist approach (Lynn, 1999; McLaughlin, 2005). However, this anti-oppressive shift in social work was not welcomed by the Conservative government of the time (The

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7 For further reading please see: Bailey and Brake (1975); Mullaly (1993); Langan and Day (1992); Graham (2002) and Thompson (2006).
New Right), who criticised CCETSW for being ‘infiltrated by ‘loony left’
political zealots’ and accused social workers of inappropriate political
correctness (PC) (McLaughlin, 2005: 297). These criticisms led to a
revised Paper 30 in 1995, which on the one hand required students to
respect diversity, challenge their own values and take action against
injustice, whilst on the other hand all the references to the structural nature
of racism and discrimination were dropped (Garrett, 2014; Green and
Clarke, 2016). Yet, the revision of Paper 30 needs to be placed in the
wider neo-liberal context of the Regan - Thatcher political alliance
between the UK and the US. As politics shifted further to the right, the
scope for radical thought and practice within social work became more
restricted. By prioritising marketisation over social injustice, the neo-
liberal trend led to welfare retrenchment and a return to individualism,
which clearly undermined social work’s potential project of collective
action. Although the individualism of the time was on the one hand
described in terms of personal efforts justifying personal gains (largely in
economic terms), its flip side was, if individuals were not succeeding, then
the roots of the lack of that success lay within the responsibility and power
of the individual and not the state.

As a result, from the 1990s onwards, the profession of social work
experienced a number of challenges, which influenced its values and
commitment to anti-oppression. First, in a context of neo-liberal,
economic-driven policies which reinforced social inequalities, the
profession particularly in the UK, became increasingly attacked by
politicians and the media, who exposed and over-exaggerated social
work’s ‘failures’, especially in child protection (Green and Clarke, 2016;
Reamer, 2006). These attacks led to moral panics and contributed to an
epoch of increasing emphasis on efficiency and effectiveness in public
services, based on performance indicators and targets subsumed within a

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8 This accusation of social work being branded as left wing and overly radical is continued by the Conservatives and other right wing supporters.
modernising managerial agenda - known initially as New Public Management (NPM) (Tilbury, 2004). These new modes of working and managerial practices resulted in a number of value challenges for social workers (Banks, 2004), and this is why Reamer (1998; 2006) characterised this period as an approach to ethics through standardisation and risk management. Barnard et al., (2008) also add that further value challenges and tensions emerged through increasing moves towards interprofessional and interagency working. Together these different challenges and changes, combined to arguably, produce a more defensive profession with a more codified approach to ethical action and ethical thought.

In a different vein, the emergence of postmodern and post-structural theory has also significantly influenced social work and more broadly the social sciences, but with very different outcomes from that of neo-liberal, new public management. Postmodernism/post-structuralism, takes social work in a different direction, through its emphasis on the recognition of different social (and intersectional) identities and the diverse manifestations of oppression (Graham and Schiele, 2010). Thompson (2002) linked this postmodern turn with shifting thinking in new social movements that called for more nuanced analyses of social divisions and in particular, called into question the validity of grand theories of, for example, Marxism and its exclusive focus on social class as being the only or most important source of oppression. Notions of class identity were replaced with notions of more fluid, and multifaceted identities to reflect the fact that individuals develop their own subjective orientation to the social world. Furthermore, that identity/those identities are a product and process both of who we are (our heritage), and the contexts that act on who we are (in one context we may be a majority in another a minority). Ongoing theoretical debates about power and justice (for example, the politics of redistribution vs the politics of recognition), identity politics, capabilities theory and intersectionality have shifted social work’s focus to fluctuating issues of diversity, otherness, advocacy and anti-oppression (Garrett, 2002; 2014; Graham and Schiele 2010; Ploesser and Mecheril, 2012).
Last but not least, is the important influence of the work of Foucault (1977; 1980; 1982), a landmark post-structuralist theorist. Social work academics and scholars (i.e. Parton, 1991; Rodger, 1991) have used Foucault’s theories to analyse the profession’s disciplinary base, but he also offers an alternative conceptualisation of power relations, and hence, anti-oppressive practice. His concepts will be analysed throughout this thesis; however, it needs to be briefly noted in this section that Foucault’s insights still influence social work thinking today (e.g. Cocker and Hafford – Letchfield, 2014; Powell, 2011; 2012), and are drawn on as a resource for political analysis of the neo-liberal dominant discourse and the deconstruction of policies, the social work profession and the self.

So, where are we now and what political and theoretical influences have left a lasting legacy? The decade of the 2000s saw further important developments regarding social work practice: ethical standards and conduct of practice became central to social work practice and education; equality legislation burgeoned (Nzina and Williams, 2009); and the profession’s commitment to social justice and anti-oppression became enshrined in global definition (IFSW and IASSW, 2001; 2014). However, the dominance of neo-liberal policies in the Western contexts, along with the austerity and austerity policies that followed (late 2000s till today) also led to the rise of poverty, inequalities and oppression (Lavalette, 2012; Reisch and Jani, 2012). Social work has been very significantly affected by this context. Budget-led imperatives and resource constraints, clash with the social justice and social change aspirations of social workers. This is why Ferguson and Woodward (2009: 74) suggested that social workers are being turned into ‘demoralised agents’. The dramatic social impact of neo-liberal agenda and the austerity measures that have followed the debt crisis, have impacted on some social work literature, which has argued for renewed energies to tackle oppressive practices and policies.

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9 For example, the General Social Care Council (in 2002) and subsequently the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) (in 2012) in Britain is founded as a regulatory body for social work with clear codes of conduct and ethical practice guidelines.
We are witnessing a reinvigoration of deeply felt concerns about entitlement and the role of social workers in advocating for people’s rights as the fundamental ethical response by social workers (Healy, 2014). Social movements outside and within the profession – like the Social Work Action Network, based in UK but with wider national and international connections – have gained perhaps greater relevance as a consequence of austerity (Lavalette, 2012; Healy, 2014).

In sum, it is evident that although social work has a dark side and stories of discomfort embedded within its history, social workers and allied groups can aspire to combat injustice, but struggle to enact this project where politics serves to elide the realities of poverty and inequality (Waaldijk, 2011). The view that social work challenges oppression wherever it comes from – even within the profession – ‘sparked uproar’ (Dominelli, 2002: 60) or was considered as ‘professional heresy’ (McLaughlin, 2005: 298) by traditional social work during those times. Yet, inspirational paradigms reveal a critical aspect and political critique to the profession and the policy context throughout social work’s history, and now anti-oppressive practice has been mainstreamed in professional regulations and academic expectations (Cocker and Hafford-Letchfield, 2014; Collins and Wilkie, 2010). However, the oppressive historical paradigm of social work reminds us of the need to continually reflect and acknowledge the political nature of social work and not to fall into claims of innocence and neutrality (Heron, 2005; Ioakimidis, 2013; McLaughlin, 2005). As discussed earlier, the political context within which social work operates shapes what is possible in welfare and social work is called to choose its side – a position far from neutral. In addition, an emancipatory approach to the profession does not have to subscribe to a simplistic division of either casework or community – based approaches. Instead, it is the critical stance that is adopted when challenging injustice and oppression that matters, enacted at both individual and structural levels. What does anti-oppressive practice involve though? The following section discusses the main concepts and controversies.
1.2 Defining anti-oppressive practice and controversies

Healy (2005; 2014) locates AOP under the umbrella term of critical social work. Critical social work encompasses a broad range of theoretical foundations including radical social work, structural social work, feminist social work, anti-racist social work and anti-discriminatory practice\(^\text{10}\). Despite the diversity of these theories, they all share hallmarks of critical social theory; the rejection of apolitical individualistic approaches, and a focus instead on the structural origins of social problems including issues of power, social justice and social change. Some of these theoretical perspectives still acknowledge individual approaches are important, but all have some kind of wider critical angle. Postmodernist and post-structuralist theories reject, for example, wider structural or macro approaches like Marxism, and see them as too totalising and focus on diversity, dynamism and power as both productive and oppressive. Therefore, AOP has been influenced by both modernist and postmodernist/post-structuralist theories, and this is further revealed in the following definitions.

Since its development, anti-oppressive practice has been defined in a number of ways, as ‘definitions are never fixed and static – rather, they reflect the debates, emerging discourses and changing contexts of practice’ (Dalrymple and Burke, 2006: 46). As stated above, AOP has been defined and debated mostly in the British context. Therefore, the discussion I present here inevitably reflects this bias. Thompson is the author most associated with anti-discriminatory practice (ADP), a term that has sometimes been used interchangeably with anti-oppressive practice. Thompson (2001, cited in Parrott, 2010: 24) defines ADP as

‘an approach to social work practice which seeks to reduce, undermine or eliminate discrimination and oppression, specifically in terms of challenging sexism, racism, ageism, and disablism...and other forms of discrimination encountered in social work...Anti-discriminatory practice is

\(^{10}\) For further reading please see: Bailey and Brake (1975); Graham (2002); Langan and Day (1992); Mullaly (1993) and Thompson (2006).
an attempt to eradicate discrimination from our own practice and challenge it in the practice of others and institutional structures in which we operate.’

Explaining that ADP is a holistic approach, Thompson introduced his ‘Personal, Cultural and Structural’ (PCS) model, linking personal experiences, beliefs and attitudes with the wider society. His publications (i.e. Thompson, 1993; 2001; 2003; 2006; 2008; 2012) have offered explanations of the meaning of ADP and its application to practice with reference to a number of social divisions (race, class, gender, disability, religious belief, sexuality and age). Despite the criticism that Thompson has received because of his focus on the legal context and the use of legislation to achieve change (see Clifford and Burke, 2009; Dalrymple and Burke, 2006; Dominelli, 2002; Healy, 2014), his concepts have significantly contributed to social work’s understandings and explanations of discrimination. Whilst a specific definition will not be adopted in this thesis as explained earlier, we will refer to AOP as an approach which encompasses ADP notions too.

Dominelli, rejecting any hierarchy of oppressions, (for example, claims that racism is more important than sexism, disablism or homophobia or vice versa) introduced the term anti-oppressive practice (AOP) in the 1990s, and emphasised structural change:

‘A form of social work practice which addresses social divisions and structural inequalities in the work that is done with people whether they be users (‘clients’) or workers. AOP aims to provide more appropriate and sensitive services by responding to people's needs regardless of their social status. AOP embodies a person centred philosophy; an egalitarian value system concerned with reducing the deleterious effects of structural inequalities upon people's lives; a methodology focusing on both process and outcome; and a way of structuring relationships between individuals that aims to empower users by reducing the negative effects of social hierarchies on their interaction and the work they do together’ (Dominelli, 1994: 3).

For Dominelli, anti-oppressive practice involves among other features an egalitarian value system, placing values at the heart of social work practice. In her subsequent publications (Dominelli, 1996; 1997c; 2002; 2004; 2009; 2012) she provides important insights about a framework for
AOP based on the core values of equality, agency, interdependence, solidarity, reciprocity, empowerment, human rights and social justice. Reflecting on these values, Dominelli has significantly contributed to social work practice emphasising its political nature and struggles against oppression and highlighting unequal power relations. Yet, as Rush and Keenan (2013) comment, her approach has attracted criticism from both academic and practice communities: for example, the promotion of experiential knowledge was seen as privileging the ‘expert’ social worker and minimising the voice of service users (i.e. McLaughlin, 2005; Wilson and Beresford, 2000).

Clifford, has been another author of major influence in anti-oppressive theory. He used the term anti-oppressive to:

‘indicate an explicit evaluative position that constructs social divisions (especially ‘race’, class gender, disability, sexual orientation and age) as matters of broad social structure, at the same time as being personal and organizational issues. It looks at the use and abuse of power not only in relation to individual or organizational behaviour, which may be overtly, covertly or indirectly racist, classist, sexist and so on, but also in relation to broader social structures, for example the health, educational, political and economic, media and cultural systems and their routine provision of services and rewards for powerful groups at local as well as national and international levels. These factors impinge on people's life stories in unique ways that have to be understood in their socio-historical complexity’ (Clifford, 1995: 65).

Within this definition, the dynamics of power and its interconnections with individuals, organisations and broader social structures are manifest. It also reflects Clifford’s five key anti-oppressive principles (social difference; linking personal histories with the wider social and political context; power; historical and geographical location; and reflexivity), which he discussed and advocated in his other publications (1992; 1998). These principles took the form of ethical guidelines in his subsequent work with Burke (Clifford and Burke, 2001; 2005; 2007; 2009), which focused on anti-oppressive ethics.

As well as writing with Clifford, Burke has also published on AOP with Dalrymple (Dalrymple and Burke, 1995; 1998; 2000; 2006) and Harrison
Acknowledging Clifford’s influence, these authors have used anti-oppressive practice to refer to:

‘a radical social work approach which is informed by humanistic and social justice values and takes account of the experiences and views of oppressed people. It is based on an understanding of how the concepts of power, oppression and inequality determine personal and structural relations. Anti-oppressive practice is based on a belief that social work should make a difference, so that those who have been oppressed may regain control of their lives and re-establish their right to be full and active members of society. To achieve this aim practitioners have to be political, reflective, reflexive and committed to promoting change’ (Dalrymple and Burke, 2000: 14).

In this definition, values are highlighted again as a central feature of AOP. Yet, the approach of these authors has been criticised by Dominelli (2002) as insufficient, with Dominelli stating that this gives primacy to the worker-service user relationship, and ignores wider organisational and institutional constraints.

Despite the substantial number of debates that the topic of AOP has invoked, an aspiration towards AOP is pervasive within UK theoretical literature, and key tenets have been incorporated into mainstream practice as discussed earlier, albeit in a variety of guises. The major strengths that have been identified both by its pioneers and sceptics include: its reconciliation of social work values – such as social justice - with practice; the recognition of interpersonal and statutory work as legitimate sites of anti-oppressive practice; and its conceptualisation of oppression and power dynamics related to different and intersectional social divisions, which occur at personal, cultural and structural levels (Banks, 2006; Dalrymple and Burke 2006; Danso, 2009; Dominelli, 2002; George, 2000; Healy, 2005; 2014; Sakamoto and Pitner, 2005). However, AOP has also caused strong divisions to be created between different commentators. For example, AOP theorists (Dalrymple and Burke, 2006) acknowledge the concerns of authors like Healy (2005; 2014) about the possibility or impossibility of applying the AOP framework to high-risk decision
making or in cases of conflicting needs, for example, between the needs of parents and their children’s needs.

A major criticism of the literature on AOP, stems from a lack of consensus regarding definition and content among its theorists, as noted in the above discussion. Whilst the fact that AOP has not a ‘fixed referent for itself’ (Chatterjee, 2015: 372) may be a cause for concern for some, it would be over simplistic or even oppressive to expect a stable, fixed framework, resistant to change. Considering that reality for Freire (1993: 75) is ‘really a process, undergoing constant transformation’, social work and anti-oppressive practice cannot but reflect these dynamics, the emerging social needs and unequal social relations, which change constantly.

Another criticism of AOP, is that it appears to have overlooked the micro and individual level due to its preoccupation with a structural analysis of oppression (Danso, 2009; Healy, 2005; 2014; Payne, 2005; Sakamoto and Pitner, 2005). Counter arguments to this are that proponents of AOP have turned to a micro approach focusing on interpersonal behaviours rather than structural inequalities (Cemlyn, 2008; McLaughlin, 2005; Strier and Binyamin, 2010). The latter, has been the main charge by McLaughlin (2005) who asserted that AOP has become co-opted by the state and institutionalised, allowing the state to conceal oppressive policies under an equality agenda. Millar (2008), Sakamoto and Pinter (2005) and Wilson and Beresford (2000) also argue that AOP has metamorphosed into a paradoxical concept, which reinforces rather than reduces unequal power relations and oppression. According to these authors, AOP has fallen into the expert trap and taken the form of a top down approach due to the limited involvement of service users in decision and policy making as well as education.

AOP has also been strongly criticised for assuming to hold the truth – the correct analysis of the world (Cocker and Hafford – Letchfield, 2014; Featherstone and Green, 2009; Healy, 2005; 2014; Wilson and Beresford, 2000). Healy (2005; 2014) highlights the inability of AOP theorists to
accept criticism and critically reflect on it. More specifically, she argues that anyone who opposes such insights is dismissed and charged for being self-interested or reactionary. However, such polarisation and inability to accept criticism are somewhat antithetical to an emancipatory social work.

In the light of these critiques, it is not surprising that AOP has been characterised as ‘anything but a gloss’ (Humphries, 2004: 105), or tokenistic, ‘having lost its political edge’ (Cocker and Hafford – Letchfield, 2014: 1). However, there appears to be a shared consensus among AOP pioneers and sceptics in relation to the key underpinning debates, if not agreement within those debates 11. These include: a.) the inclusion of theoretical underpinnings in relation to power and oppression, such as Freire’s (1970; 1993; 1994) or Foucault’s (1977; 1980; 1982) theories b.) the incorporation of bottom up knowledge and grassroots involvement of service users and social movements; and c.) the development of critical reflection and critical consciousness towards the self, practice and claims of AOP theory (Banks, 2006; Dalrymple and Burke 2006; Danso, 2009; Dominelli, 2002; 2012; Dunk-West, 2014; Healy, 2005; 2014; Sakamoto and Pitner, 2005; Wilson and Beresford, 2000). Therefore, the following section will further discuss these and other core concepts of anti-oppressive practice.

1.3 Core principles of anti-oppressive practice

This section provides a discussion of the core principles of anti-oppressive practice, which requires an understanding of the concepts of power and oppression, as well as strategies for challenging oppression and

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11 The ongoing theoretical debates on concepts of power, justice and oppression, as demonstrated throughout this chapter, offer rich insights for AOP in different contexts. The above mentioned “consensus”, therefore, is about examining the debates behind these various theories in order to inform one’s anti-oppressive practice, not necessarily agreement between those who debate. For example, Dominelli (1996) is quite critical of postmodernism, whilst other theorists (i.e. Cocker and Hafford-Letchfield, 2014; Powell, 2011) see Foucault and the postmodern thought as contributing insights to understand the conditions in which power and oppression operate enabling, therefore, anti-oppressive action.
encouraging empowerment, partnership, minimal intervention, collective action, critical reflection and critical consciousness.

1.3.1 Understanding the nature and dynamics of oppression

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the concepts of power and oppression have been the mantras for anti-oppressive approaches in social work. The terms have long been contested as they arise from situated political, philosophical and sociological thought. Discussion of their meaning, starting from ancient Greece by Plato and Aristotle, continue through the Enlightenment period with Hobbes and Locke as well as the nineteenth century in the work of Hegel, Mill and Marx. Today, these early traditions along with social movements’ critiques and the postmodern turn, continue to shape current debates (i.e. recognition vs redistribution justice) in the work of such writers as Foucault, Young, and Fraser. In AOP theory, both modernist and post-modernist/post-structuralist influences have provided useful insights in order to recognise and respond to oppression.

Modernist accounts of power conceptualise it as a thing, exercised top-down and linear in direction. Opposing this view, Foucault provided a more postmodern lens, describing power as a fluid and multidirectional force that is created and recreated within all social relationships, and can be both repressive and productive. Therefore, founded on both positions, AOP acknowledges the impact of the unequal exercise of power by the powerful groups in society, which result in dominated/subjugated groups, as well as the complex and fluid nature of power based on social interactions in different situational specifics (Clifford and Burke, 2009). It is these unequal power relations that lead to the exercise of oppression. Oppression again has not been afforded an exclusive or common agreed

12 This account is not extensive on the various theorists and philosophers who have analysed oppression and power. For an historical and theoretical introduction to the various writings on the concepts, please see Cudd, A. (2006). Analyzing Oppression, New York: Oxford University Press.
definition and explanation. However, Cudd (2006) observed a consensus, amid the various competing theories, that oppression is the result of unjust social and political institutions.

Frye (1983:2; 1992:38) using the metaphor of a birdcage, illustrated the structural nature of oppression as being ‘caught between or among forces and barriers which are so related to each other that jointly they restrain, restrict or prevent (any) motion or mobility’. She argued that this systematic network of wires ‘mold, immobilise and reduce’ the options of the oppressed people to a very few, which expose them to ‘penalty, censure or deprivation’ (1983:2; 1992:38). Frye’s discussion about the wires’ network and their systematic relation reflect the writings of Foucault on power/knowledge (1977; 1978), who raised the importance of the broader network of power relations. He defined power relation as a mode of action which acts on the existing or future actions of others (Foucault, 1982). Therefore, in order to distinguish between what oppression is and is not, one needs to look at the structure of oppression as a whole, its social context - the cage - in which people are restricted. Do social workers take this macroscopic view though? For AOP theorists, such a view is impossible without critically understanding the dynamics of oppression first.

Society is not divided into the oppressors and the oppressed – this would be a narrow understanding of oppression. Instead, according to AOP theory, people can be both oppressed and oppressive simultaneously (Hillock, 2012; Mullaly, 2002). Freire (1993) noted that oppression benefits the dominant group and thus, they have an interest in maintaining their domination; yet they may not perceive themselves as oppressors (Deutsch, 2006). Oppression can also be overt or covert, a conscious or unconscious process and it does not need to involve evil/malevolent intent (Hanna et al., 2000; Mullaly, 2002). In addition, oppression is internalised ‘...in the end (the oppressed) become convinced of their own unfitness’ (Freire, 1993: 63) or as Yamato (1992: 67) described, they ‘actually
believe that their oppression is deserved, is their lot in life, is natural and right and that it doesn’t even exist’.

Hackett (2000) argued that at the heart of oppression is difference; therefore, oppression takes multiple forms such as classism, racism, ageism and sexism, based on the unequal powers across social divisions. For Clifford and Burke (2009), social divisions are located in a particular time and place, and they can entail power and powerlessness for the very same individual in different contexts. It is this concept of intersectionality (Collins 1986; 2000; Crenshaw, 1989; 1991) that is very important to AOP practitioners, who need to understand the impact of complex intersections of peoples’ social divisions to social relationships and social practices and not examine them separately from each other (Clifford, 1992; Clifford and Burke, 2001; 2009; Danso, 2009). However, how does oppression operate?

In an attempt to explain the vicious cycle of oppression and discrimination, Beckett and Maynard (2005) described its constant recreation and reinforcement through the following illustration:

**Figure 1.1: The cycle of oppression and discrimination**

![Figure 1.1: The cycle of oppression and discrimination](image)

Source: Beckett and Maynard (2005: 161)
Thompson (2001) also illustrated the levels that oppression operates in his PCS model:

**Figure 1.2: Personal, cultural and structural levels of oppression**

![Image of Figure 1.2]

Source: Thompson (2001: 27)

It is notable that in both illustrations, the different levels of oppression are in a dynamic interplay with each other as reinforcing forces - that without each of them oppression cannot be supported and recreated.

Starting from the individual or personal level, this is the micro world, where the self moves and operates (Dunk-West, 2014). Oppression lies in those beliefs, values, thoughts and attitudes about difference, which are acquired from a lifelong process of socialisation through different institutions like family friends, and school (Parrott, 2010). This personal morality is suggested to be reinforced by stereotypes. Pickering (2001) in his book *Stereotyping: The Politics of Representation* discussed the process of stereotyping and the construction of some groups as the other, inferior and unlike and unequal to us. By portraying a social group as homogenous and disregarding the context, any diverse behaviour or characteristic within this group is uncritically ignored. This inflexible way of categorising social groups, is characterised as the fundamental cognitive process of oppression (Cudd, 2006), which is, however, reinforced by cultural and institutional influences.
Structural oppression is embedded within the policies and institutions of society: laws, state and organisational policies, social processes and other socio-economic systems all work together, marginalising, disempowering and excluding the other, by denying their rights to resources and citizenship through bureaucratic criteria of entitlement (Banks, 2001; Dominelli, 2002; 2012; Mullaly, 2002). It is this level of oppression that Freire (1970; 1993) reflected through his analysis of education as the means, among other institutions, to silence the oppressed by the dominant social groups.

However, what reinforces and reflects the personal and structural oppression is cultural oppression according to Dominelli (1997). For Thompson (2001: 27), the cultural level consists of ‘a complex web of taken-for-granted assumptions or ‘unwritten rules’’. Therefore, it involves all those shared norms, values, daily activities, patterns of thought and behaviour of the dominant culture, sewn into-the-fabric of society and perceived as a common morality of what is considered good, safe and normal. Freire (1970; 1993) discussed a number of myths to which are used to maintain the ideological and value principles that people are expected to adhere: for example, the myth of a free and equal society. He suggested that these myths are internalised through the use of stereotypes, where the subjugated groups are constructed as the other and blamed for individual or group failure and weaknesses, within literature, media, history and language.

Freire (1970; 1993) referred to this process as ‘naming the world’ by the oppressors, using stereotypes for the oppressed like the incompetent, the lazy, the ungrateful, and ‘those’ people. Such derogatory terms, humour (i.e. racist jokes) or the view of people as the objects of pity or passivity, set the foundations of the objectification of people for Freire – their perception and treatment as objects and things. This role of language was also noted by Foucault (1977), who, used the term discourse in his writings about power/knowledge to reflect the power relations within descriptions. The oppression and discrimination hidden in discourses was also argued
by Goffman in his book *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, who explained the process of social exclusion based on labelling and stigmatisation of people: they are ‘reduced in our minds from whole and usual persons to tainted and discounted ones’ (1963: 12). These cultural norms feed off in turn, the values and actions of our self and institutions in a continuum, as explained earlier. It is interesting that Pickering (2001) and Sinclair and Albert (2008) argued that othering is resistant to change, but depends on the social and historical circumstances within it operates; therefore, in times of crisis (social, political, financial) these tend to become more hostile and the other becomes the scapegoat for any tensions.

### 1.3.2 Challenging oppression – the anti-oppressive framework

Whilst the above account is not an exhaustive account of the concepts of oppression, what the discussion highlights, is that oppression is a dynamic and dehumanising process, created and reinforced through a complex web of unequal power relations in personal, cultural and structural levels. AOP practitioners are asked to be aware of these dynamics and their context when assessing peoples’ experiences of oppression. AOP theory has been criticised on the grounds that it prioritises the structural level of oppression for analysis (Healy, 2005; 2014), however, such an analysis would be myopic. It is the interaction between all levels and the complex intersectionality of social divisions in which oppression operates, that need to be examined.

It is important to note that challenging oppression is not achieved by simply celebrating diversity. Such an approach either ignores the intersectionality of difference or may lead to accepting the status quo of an oppressive society, which has constructed and imposed the different identities (Harrison and Burke, 2014; Sakamoto, 2007; Singh, 2014). Social workers also need to be aware of the role of language, which is shaped by dominant ideologies and reinforces power relations (McLaughlin, 2009), as explained earlier. Whilst they need to question the
language that they use in their verbal and written accounts, this cannot equate to an approach based on political correctness- hiding behind language games of terminology (Green and Featherstone, 2014). Instead, it requires an awareness about the power of language to label, stigmatise and oppress others when we – as social workers – define people or conditions as appropriate/inappropriate or at risk/no risk. Such critical analysis of the matrix of oppression, has been termed as moral reasoning by Jordan (1990), which is crucial for social work to be anti-oppressive and emancipatory.

Whilst it appears that oppression - the status of being caged in - has no-way out, Mullaly (2002) highlighted the power that people have to affect structures as evidenced by social change movements and acts of resistance. Therefore, it is worth wondering how social workers can challenge oppression –wherever it comes from - and fight for social change and social justice according to the moral core of the profession.

Both the definition of the profession, as well as AOP principles, urge social workers to support the empowerment and liberation of people. According to the Freirian philosophy, liberation ‘must be forged with, not for the oppressed (whether individuals or peoples) in the incessant struggle to regain their humanity’ (1970: 48). As a result, empowerment and working in partnership with service users are crucial in anti-oppressive practice. Despite their liberatory potential though, both concepts can be regulatory too: they have been used by the right-wing and neo-liberalism advocates to promote self-efficacy and responsibility for own conditions as well as to construct service users as consultants and consumers in the care market (Clifford and Burke, 2009; Cowden and Singh, 2014; Dalrymple and Burke, 2006; Green and Clarke, 2016; Lavalette and Penketh, 2014; Singh, 2014). For the liberatory approach though, empowerment and partnership mean that the oppressed take control of their lives and transform their oppressive reality (Dalrymple and Burke, 2006). However, in order to achieve this, empowerment needs to guide social work practice both at individual and structural level, as explained below.
Freire in his writings (1970; 1993; 1994) raised the importance of ‘conscientização’ - a Portuguese term for critical consciousness raising or conscientization - of the oppressed, who inhabit a culture of silence, managed by the dominant groups through institutions. Freire defined ‘conscientização’ as ‘learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality’ (1970: 35). Based on this notion, social workers need to engage in a dialogical encounter with service users, exposing and transforming the social and political causes of their oppressive reality. The empowerment of people to evaluate their position critically and perceive themselves as makers of history (Carroll and Minkler, 2000; Freire, 1994) can be achieved through a number of strategies that have been identified and discussed by AOP theorists: information sharing about rights and opportunities; user involvement in decision making, policy making, resource allocation and management; minimal intervention; advocacy and collective action (Carroll and Minkler, 2000; Dalrymple and Burke, 2006; Danso, 2009; Dominelli, 2002; Hackett, 2000; Healy, 2014; Thompson, 2006).

In implementing the above strategies, social workers need to be aware of the wider constraints and the potential controlling nature of their intervention. The unequal power relations arising from service use and increasingly constrained resources may serve to reinforce service users’ oppression by providing superficial or unwanted options under the empowerment and partnership agenda (Green and Clarke, 2016). Therefore, by focusing on egalitarian relationships and viewing service users’ as experts on their own situation, social workers can engage in a dialogical educational process - as Freire (1988) conceptualised social work - of mutual learning/ understanding of the problem and identifying shared goals and plans for action (Thompson, 2002). Under the concept of minimal intervention, social workers need to focus on early and preventative intervention, increasing service users’ knowledge and their accessibility by linking existing services and networking (Healy, 2014).
Here, continuous, open and clear communication about the nature and the context of social worker’s role and organisational constraints, are vital into establishing an egalitarian relationship (Danso, 2009; Healy, 2014).

In the light of these, it is the decision of the individual social worker to determine what is ethical, and how to implement anti-oppressive practice, or challenge oppression wherever it comes from. Yet, when it comes to challenge oppressive policies, Lavalette (2014: 189) warns us that ‘it would be wrong to advocate that individuals have to threaten their own employment by knowingly refusing to carry out (specific policy) monitoring’. Instead, AOP pioneers urge social workers to participate in collective action against structural inequality and oppression: political activism; community action and engagement with social movements (at local, national and international levels) as well as advocacy and campaigning through professional bodies and trade-unionism (Adams et al. 2009; Allen, 2008; Cowden and Singh, 2014; Dalrymple and Burke, 2006; Danso, 2009; Dominelli, 2002; Ferguson and Woodward, 2012; Harrison and Burke, 2014; Healy, 2014; Lavalette, 2012; 2014).

Despite the fact that these concepts reflect the profession’s morality, social workers are not abstract moral agents who are made to act automatically in an anti-oppressive way. Sinclair and Albert (2008) revealed that just because we are social workers and we have a code of ethics, does not mean that we are, therefore, non-oppressive. They claim such fallacy not only reinforces unequal power relations, but also makes us fall into a culture of silence of doing nothing. In the dialogical educational process of Freire, both participants (educator and student) are equally learning about their reality based on mutual critical reflection and awareness. Therefore, liberation, social change and social justice cannot be achieved without a critical understanding of the self first – the last crucial concept of AOP theory. However, what does this involve and how is it achieved?

Foucault (in O’Farrell, 2005) related ethics to oneself, suggesting four aspects that shape our construction as moral subjects: the part of the
individual which acts as the focus of moral conduct; the aspect that makes an individual recognise their moral obligations; the means by which individuals transform and work on themselves; and last the aspect of what sort of person an individual might want to be. Central to this analysis of Foucault (1992: 10-11), are the ‘techniques of the self’ or ‘arts of existence’, which are defined as ‘the reflective and voluntary practices by which (individuals) not only set themselves rules of conduct, but seek to transform themselves...’. In these Foucaultian insights, it is very evident that the subject is able to choose how to act, based on a dynamic process of critical reflection on the self. A similar position is also adopted by Freire, who considered action inseparable from critical consciousness.

It needs to be noted that discovering oneself may reveal unknown and disturbing aspects; therefore, it involves a ‘deliberate, reflexive process of engagement’ (Dunk – West, 2014: 23), and not a narrow understanding of who we are. This reflexive engagement is achieved by our understanding and awareness of: our value base and ideals in relation to difference, power and oppression (all those beliefs, thoughts, feelings, prejudices and stereotypes), as well as understanding our own social location (the membership of various social divisions, whilst being in particular position and subscribed roles, in specific social time and place) and its impact on power relations. Yet, based on Foucault and Freire’s writings, critical reflection also involves a systematic deconstruction and reconstruction process of practice: examining and questioning knowledge and actions (deconstruction) as well as developing new knowledge/understandings by focusing on service users’ narratives (reconstruction), which in turn informs practice (Fook, 2002; Payne, 2009).

Thus, ethical reflexivity (Banks, 2001; 2006; Banks and Williams, 2005) is not a one off event but on-going, because ‘the self is always in motion and is never finished’ for Foucault (Dunk-West, 2014: 28). Therefore, by using this bottom-up approach of a dialogical process of knowledge/action – critical reflection – knowledge/action, we start working anti-oppressively towards personal and social change (Adams et al., 2009; Clifford and
Burke, 2009; Dalrymple and Burke, 2006; Dominelli, 1988; 2002; Singh, 2014). In light of these, it is worth asking ‘Do we have the willingness to uncover personal attitudes and behaviours and combat stereotypes?’ (Mullaly, 2002: preface); the following section will shed some further light into value tensions between the personal and professional self.

1.4 The personal – professional dialectic

Ethical practice, as discussed earlier, is not straightforward and there has been a long-standing tradition in social work literature of acknowledging the complex challenges faced by social workers in their practice. Figures 1.3 and 1.4 provide an illustration of competing value systems, which share a dynamic relationship and lay the foundations for value tensions and ethical dilemmas in everyday practice:

**Figure 1.3: Model of tensions in social work practice**

Source: Spano and Koenig (2007: 4)
Based on these illustrations, the social worker is at a crossroads where competing values or rights occur and they are uncertain about decisions, responsible for outcomes, self-doubting of personal capacity and reluctant to face the next challenge (McAuliffe and Sudbery, 2005). However, an analysis of the various value tensions that may occur in the social work arena is beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead, the focus is on the value tensions between the personal and professional morality, which interplay with cultural and structural norms, as explored throughout this chapter.

It is well documented in literature (i.e. Banks 2001; 2005; 2006; Clifford and Burke, 2009; Dalrymple and Burke, 2006; Parrott 2009) that practitioners’ personal values may conflict with the profession’s (anti-oppressive) values. Freire (1989, in Moch, 2009: 94), acknowledged the difficulty of this tension ‘because we constantly fight and contradict..."
ourselves’. This tension has also been termed as the personal-professional dialectic (Lea et al., 1999), reflecting the tension that is the emerging argument between our professional and personal self. It is interesting that such value tensions or conflicts are distinguished by ethical dilemmas¹³, as the latter involve conflicts among competing professional values or ethical standards of conduct (Allen, 2012). Therefore, whilst value tensions between personal and professional values may be difficult and uncomfortable, the expectation (IFSW and IASSW, 2014, http://ifsw.org/get-involved/global-definition-of-social-work/, accessed on 15/08/2014) is that professional values and ethics will guide practice. How can this be possible though in real practice?

Banks, in her landmark book Ethics and Values in Social Work (1995; 2001; 2006; 2012), critically discusses the two schools of thought in relation to personal vs professional values debate. On one hand, the first approach – based on a vocational view of social work - argues that personal and professional values are inseparable and do not conflict, as the social worker is a genuine moral agent, who has a calling and can commit themselves to humanistic ideals (Ronnby, 1993; Wilkes, 1985). Professional guidelines and codes of ethics are therefore unnecessary, due to the power of personal humanistic ethics. However, in view of the earlier analysis of the multi-level oppression and its dynamics, this idealistic assumption seems rather problematic - both social workers and service users may therefore be left unprotected within a potentially oppressive context. On the other hand, the second approach positions personal and professional values as totally separate entities (Leighton, 1985), as the social worker is viewed as enacting a professional role unrelated to their personal lives. This standpoint is also problematic, as it neither considers the possibility that following organisational and/or professional procedures and guidelines may actually reinforce oppressive

¹³ The most common definition for an ethical dilemma among academics and scholars is the one by Banks (2001: 11): ‘a choice between two equally unwelcome alternatives…and it is not clear which choice will be the right one’.
policies and institutions or that one’s personal values may impinge (albeit sometimes unconsciously) on one’s professional behaviour. Therefore, Banks (2006) suggests a more balanced approach, where the social worker is a competent and ethically reflexive practitioner, able to identify interlocking and/or conflicting values and justify their decisions:

**Figure 1.5: Relationship between competing values**

![Diagram showing relationship between competing values]  
Source: Banks (2006: 136)

Whilst continuous changing social contexts may always bring value tensions to the fore, it is questionable if their resolution can be found in prescribed practice, such as the use of ethical decision making models and stage plans (Banks, 2008). Instead, following the insights on critical reflection and critical consciousness of Foucault and Freire as discussed earlier, each social worker confronts ‘a moment of decision’ in which he/she ‘picks the side of change which is pointed in the direction of humanisation...or is left in the position of favouring stagnation’ (Freire, no date, p.10, cited in Carroll and Minkler, 2000: 26). This is why social workers cannot be neutral and apolitical; they are active participants, whose decisions about taking a side have been reflected throughout the history of social work as discussed at the beginning of this chapter. In light of these, it is worth asking: how self-aware are social workers in making such decisions? In case of the personal – professional dialectic about anti-oppressive practice, which side do they pick? What influence does their education have on their ability to practice anti-oppressively? Since this is the core question of this thesis, the following section provides a context for the following chapters in this thesis, by briefly discussing
research findings and theoretical concepts within the literature about social work education and students’ commitment to emancipatory practice.

1.5 Social work education and anti-oppressive practice: Teaching the paradox?

The development of critically reflective practitioners who take action against oppression, inequalities and injustice has been fundamental to social work education. This is reflected in the global standards developed by IFSW and IAASW in 2004. According to these global standards, schools of social work are urged to consistently aspire towards the implementation of values and ethics throughout their core purpose and objectives, curricula, staff, as well as structure and policies. This role of education has also been linked with the professional socialisation of students within literature (Barretti, 2004; Hantman and Ben-Oz, 2014; Holmström, 2014; Valutis et al., 2012; Weiss et al., 2004). However, compared to disciplines like medicine and nursing, professional socialisation in social work has been subject to only limited discussion (Barretti, 2004; Mizrahi and Dodd, 2013; Valutis et al. 2012).

Whilst theories of professional development and socialisation vary, two main theoretical positions have preoccupied debates. First, the structural functionalist position considered professional education as synonymous to professional socialisation, where students\(^\text{14}\) - as unconscious subjects in the beginning - gradually internalise and adopt the professional norms by the end, through a developmental process (Merton et al., 1957). In contrast to this perspective, critical theory and symbolic interactionism considered the process of professional socialisation as an ongoing, reflective and dynamic dialectic, influenced by the conscious subject and external factors such as the political and societal context (Clark, 1997; Collins, 1994).

\(^{14}\) It needs to be acknowledged that the use of the word ‘students’ in this thesis does not reflect an homogenous concept, but instead the diversity of identities, experiences and reactions of the student body (Campbell, 2002).
Barretti (2004) in her meta-literature review of professional socialisation in social work, concluded that the structural functionalist position prevails in the social work empirical literature, which assumes that professional development and socialisation are ‘neat and unproblematic’ activities (p.276) that can be instilled on the basis of known, measurable factors. There is a tendency within this school of thought to position the student as rather passive in the face of knowledge delivery. However, Barretti also notes that the complex results of qualitative studies reveal the interactional and multi-dimensional nature of professional socialisation, where students are not passive recipients of knowledge but active and influential agents.

An understanding of students as active learners was also advocated by Freire (1970; 1993; 1994). In his writings (1993: 72), he rejected the ‘banking concept of education’ as an act of oppression and ‘depositing’, which treats students as empty vessels to be filled by the teacher (Carroll and Minkler, 2000). Instead, he introduced and advocated for a libertarian education, a dialogical, problem-posing process which progresses towards critical consciousness and action. Freire described this process as a cycle of continuous deconstruction and reconstruction of knowledge and reality between teachers as teacher-learners and students as learner-teachers (Butler et al. 2003; Freire, 1970; Lay and McGuire, 2009; Narayan, 2000). However, is this anti-oppressive framework adopted in social work education? To what extent can we see the influence of theorists, such as Freire? We could arguably assume that the teaching of anti-oppressive practice cannot but involve a libertarian approach, but what does the literature reveal?

1.5.1 Debating the content of social work education

The topic of social work education has been greatly debated within the literature, regarding its content and whether it can develop ethical practitioners. As I described in section 1.1 above, such debates, although subject to revision are now age-old, evident in the very early formal social
work programmes. The various debates\textsuperscript{15} include consideration of whether competency-based or critical approaches should drive social work education, whether teaching should be prescriptive or dialogical regarding the resolution of value conflicts and lastly, the place and mode of AOP/ethics courses within the curriculum.

In an attempt to defend social work’s scientific basis and credibility, education has been influenced by a growing interest in competence-based practice (CBP) and evidence-based practice (EBP) approaches\textsuperscript{16} or ‘what works’. Whilst acknowledging the need for accountability in social work, the major criticism of these approaches by critical social work writers is their technical-bureaucratic nature (Banks, 2006; Parton, 2000; Spolander et al. 2014). In addition, critics have focused on the negative impact of measurement-based understandings of individuals and procedure-driven forms of practice (Wilson, 2013; Wilson and Campbell, 2013). In light of the nature and mechanisms of oppression discussed earlier, such approaches appear to neutralise practice, placing an emphasis on the expert social worker, who addresses the symptoms and not the structural roots of oppression and injustice (Reisch, 2013). Therefore, the acquisition of technical skills in the absence of theoretical frameworks regarding the wider context and social structures that may influence us, whether consciously or not, is seen as limited and insufficient for an anti-oppressive and emancipatory practice (Morley, 2008).

In contrast, explicitly critical approaches to education that are advocated by AOP and other critical writers are based on consciousness raising and critical reflection on: the dynamics of power and oppression (Bernard and Campbell, 2014; Bundy-Fazioli et al. 2013; Campbell, 2002; Clifford and Burke, 2005; Harlow and Hearn, 1996; Kumashiro, 2000; McDonald and

\textsuperscript{15} The majority of these debates in relation to social work education have taken place out of the Greek context; therefore, a comprehensive analysis of them is beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead, a brief discussion of the debates in relation to the AOP in social work education will follow.

\textsuperscript{16} For further reading please see Edmond et al. (2006), Gambrill (2007), Gibbs and Gambrill (2002) and Smith (2004).
Coleman, 1999; Preston – Shoot, 1995; Walls et al. 2009); the social control functions of social work, social justice and social action (Gibson, 2014; Hancock et al. 2012; Lane et al. 2012; Morley, 2008; Phan et al. 2009; Pugh, 1998; Reisch, 2013; Rossiter, 2001; Strier and Binyamin, 2010; Swank and Fahs, 2014); the socio-political-economical context as well as global issues which affect social work practice (Preston and Aslett, 2014; Raniga and Zelnick, 2014; Reisch, 2013; Ross, 2007; Sims et al. 2014; Strier and Binyamin, 2010; Yee and Wagner, 2013); self-awareness and self-confrontation (Dalrymple and Burke, 1998; Gezisnki, 2009; Hancock et al. 2012; Jeffery, 2005; Poole, 2010; Pugh, 1998; Urdang, 2010; Valutis et al. 2012); and last moral reasoning and value conflict resolution (Banks, 2005; Banks and Williams, 1999; Burgess, 2004; Clark, 2011; Clifford and Burke, 2005; Congress, 2000; Gilligan, 2007; Gray and Gibbons, 2007; Holmström, 2014; Hughman, 2005; Kaplan, 2006; Mackay and Woodward, 2010; Osteen, 2011; Valutis et al. 2012)\textsuperscript{17}. The consideration and inclusion of various theories (for example Marxism, feminism, critical theory, postmodernism) within the core curriculum has been viewed as essential to social work education committed to emancipatory or critical practice (Harlow and Hearn, 1996).

The above account may not be extensive; however, it highlights the major suggestions of social work scholars and writers for an anti-oppressive content in social work education both in lectures and field/practice placements. The latter has long been considered as a core component of social work education, where students have the opportunity to integrate theories with practice and start developing their professional skills, approaches and identities from this standpoint (Bundy-Fazioli et al. 2013; Earls Larrison and Korr, 2013; Ford et al., 2005; Mizrahi and Dodd, 2013; Lee and Fortune, 2013; Williamson et al., 2010). More importantly though, students in placements are exposed to a number of challenges and

\textsuperscript{17} It needs to be noted that in this thesis it is not assumed that such content is not considered in the CBP and EBP approaches. Instead, it appears that the difference is placed on the process and focus.
value conflicts that practice involves. Therefore, mere contact with diverse or other populations is not enough; instead, it is a fruitful time for students to learn to combine individual and micro perspectives with attention to the power relations that are involved, through critical reflection and challenge of the self, the service user/ the other, organisational and other structural forces, with the support of their practice tutors.

Various suggestions have been offered within literature about field placements in order to stimulate students’ professional development and their familiarisation with the emancipatory values of the profession, for example: the provision of placements which offer access to social activism and political activities/projects – such as advocacy projects - within local communities (Mizrahi and Dodd, 2013; Lane, 2011; Reisch, 2013; Swank and Fahs, 2014), placements that do not subscribe to traditional social work services (Scholar et al., 2014) or even international placements in developing and developed countries as an opportunity to challenge their values and explore new practices and ways of knowing (Das and Carter – Anand, 2014; Heron, 2005). Yet, placements can also be sites of oppression (Cox and Hirst, 1995), when students experience an under-resourced system, oppressive policies, agency culture or even staff attitudes (Bundy-Fazioli et al. 2013; Collins and Wilkie, 2010; Ford et al., 2005; Wilson, 2013; Wilson and Kelly, 2010). The potential oppressive nature of education will be further discussed at a later point in the thesis, in relation to the prevailing socio-economic or political context of education and practice. For now, it is sufficient to note that placement tutors/assessors should be supported by academic schools and be under continuous reflection (Finch and Poletti, 2014; Stevens, et al. 2012; Williamson et al., 2010).

In the literature, there are also debates about how to guide students about the resolution of value conflicts and ethical dilemmas. On one hand, educators draw on models of formal rational reasoning, where they can apply ethical decision making models. Based on step-by-step frameworks that enable values to be deconstructed and decisions to be rationalised,
these models are widely offered within literature\textsuperscript{18}. Clark (2011) commenting on their popularity, acknowledged their heuristic value, because they at least propose an iterative methodology for resolving value tensions and ethical dilemmas. Yet, these formulaic prescriptions (Kaplan, 2006; Wilson, 2013) have received strong criticism because of their failure to address the context of structural power relations (Clifford and Burke, 2005; Morley, 2008; Otters, 2013); their ignorance of the personal motives/assumptions/values of the agent who makes the decision or choice (Banks, 2006; 2008; Clark, 2011; Gray and Gibbons, 2007; Osteen, 2011); and because they can reinforce the illusion that practice is based on universal and logical frameworks (Clifford and Burke, 2005; Heron, 2005; Morley, 2008; Wilson, 2013). Teaching practice by using recipes for action may be easier for both educators and students, as the latter desires to learn the ‘right’ answer, skill and methods of practice (Campbell, 2002; Gray and Gibbons, 2007; Morley, 2008; Woodward and Mackay, 2012). However, does it inspire the development of political and ethical beings, as advocated by the Freirian philosophy? This is not to dismiss practical tools or models completely; rather it is to suggest that they are part and parcel of a broader technical approach to education.

On the other hand, educators are urged to engage with students about moral reasoning (Gray and Gibbons, 2007; Kaplan, 2006) based on constant dialogue and critical reflection (Allen, 1993; Banks, 2006; Clifford and Burke, 2005; Fook, 2004; Galambos, 2009; Mackay and Woodward, 2010; Razack, 1999; Reisch, 2013; Wilson, 2013). More specifically, Hughman (2005: 542) considered that the purpose of an ethics education should be to develop a ‘framework for thinking and acting’. Such a framework, utilising the concepts of anti-oppressive and emancipatory practice, cannot but stimulate students to engage in dialogue and critical reflection about their own values and beliefs as well as the broader political context in which they make their choices and decisions.

\textsuperscript{18} For example, see: Congress, 2000; Goovaerts, 2003; Lam, 2008; Lowenberg et al, 2000; O’Sullivan, 2007; Reamer, 1999; Windheuser, 2003.
Therefore, instead of providing formulaic methods (Butler et al. 2003; Clark, 2011), where personal oppressive values and beliefs can masquerade as ethical and anti-oppressive practice, education needs to inspire conscious and critical reflexive agents, who are committed to social work values.

Despite the various suggestions regarding the critical content of social work education, it needs to be noted that such content should not encourage dogmatic thinking in students (Pugh, 1998). Anti-oppressive education according to Freire (1970; 1992; 1994) needs to stimulate our critical understanding of reality. Therefore, rather than subscribing to absolute truths or panaceas, students need to learn ‘to be constantly unsatisfied with what is being learned, said and known’ (Kumashiro, 2000: 43), through an ongoing process of deconstruction and reconstruction of knowledge (Das and Carter – Anand, 2014; de Montigny, 2011; Kumashiro, 2000; 2001). In light of such observations, how is an anti-oppressive curriculum designed?

The debates in relation to curriculum design for AOP and the teaching of ethics are offered widely within literature, with academics and scholars advocating discrete coursework (O’Sullivan, 2007; Swank and Fahs, 2014; Walls et al., 2009), infusion across the curriculum (Gezinski, 2009; Kaplan, 2006; Osteen, 2011; Phan et al., 2009) or a combination of the two (Clifford and Burke, 2005; Congress et al., 2009; Harlow and Hearn, 1996; Hugman, 2005; Lane, 2011; Preston and Aslett, 2014; Wray and Walker Benedict 2008). Whilst each approach is suggested to have advantages and disadvantages, it is observed that the majority of anti-oppressive writers subscribe to the latter approach. Offering specialised courses whilst acknowledging the connection of anti-oppressive values in every course/module of social work too, students are exposed to not only breadth, but most importantly, depth of understanding regarding an emancipatory practice. This is why Hugman (2005) did not consider (anti-oppressive) ethics as amenable to discrete module-based consideration, but
instead should be a constant theme through the learning process including field placements.

As a summative note, the anti-oppressive content of social work education has long been contested similarly to the definition of AOP. It is important to note though that Freire considered the libertarian education to be ‘present, existential, concrete situation, reflecting the aspirations of the people’ (1993: 95). Therefore, in a constantly changing reality, education content needs to ‘constantly expand and renew itself’ (Freire, 1993: 109) revealing current social needs and political issues. In light of this, it is worth wondering whether our social work curricula and courses reflect these or are based in an outdated reality. Yet, Freire considered the pedagogical process as equally important to the course content. As a result, the how and why of teaching strategies that literature has debated, are discussed in the following section.

1.5.2 Debating the teaching strategies of anti-oppressive pedagogy

Traditionally, (social work) education was based on a teaching-centred approach, over-emphasising the content at the expense of process: knowledge was presented by gifted educators to students through lectures and tutorials, who in turn had to learn and use this knowledge as passive recipients (Jack and Mosley, 1997; Morley, 2008; Preston and Aslett, 2014). Without condemning the didactic use of lectures (Abel and Campbell, 2009; Abrams and Moio, 2009), anti-oppressive educators rejected this banking concept of education (Freire, 1970; 1993) and instead developed more student-centred approaches.

There is a substantial literature suggesting and debating the how to of teaching. The various approaches stem from different epistemological/philosophical directions regarding teaching and learning, the analysis of which is beyond the scope of this thesis. Yet, as with the AOP theory, anti-oppressive social work pedagogy has been influenced by a number of theoretical perspectives: identity development and attitudinal change based on psychological theories (McDonald and Coleman, 1999;
Otters, 2013; Valutis et al., 2012); adult education (Abel and Campbell, 2009; Congress et al., 2009; Smith, 2013); critical pedagogy (DeMaria, 1992; Rossiter, 1993; 1995; 2001); feminist pedagogy (Cramer, 1995; Dore, 1994); and social constructivist pedagogy (Laird, 1994; Morley, 2008; Solas, 1994). A common consensus among theorists is the need for anti-oppressive education to be based on a problem-posing process, which develops critical consciousness and critical reflection, as Freire advocated in his writings. For Freire (1970; 1993; 1994), problem-posing education consists in acts of cognition through dialogue, communication and praxis. This problem-posing process is linked in literature with experiential learning (Allensworth Hawkins and Knox, 2014; Cramer et al., 2012; Early et al., 2003; Holmström, 2014; Razack, 1999). Pugh (2014a; 2014b) describes the experiential learning as a cycle, where learners are introduced to knowledge and critical consciousness through concrete experiences; then critically reflect on these; and lastly, they experiment with new ideas/concepts via further experiences and critical reflection.

Therefore, a number of experiential strategies and techniques – that may be used in and out of classroom - are offered within literature: the use of case studies based on vignettes or personal incidents of educators/students for assessing and critically discussing practice, knowledge, beliefs and attitudes (Banks and Williams, 1999; Barnatt et al., 2007; Congress, 2004; Dustin and Montgomery, 2010; Gezinski, 2009; Green Lister and Crisp, 2007; Heenan, 2005; Lynn, 1999; Milner and Wolfer, 2014; Reupert, 2009; Rubin, 2011); role playing as an opportunity not only to explore stereotypes and deeper experiences, but also to practice advocacy and political engagement through exercises of mock congressional hearing, campaigns and community meetings (Hafford – Letchfield, 2010; 19

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19 Whilst a number of different approaches have derived from experiential learning such as Participatory Learning and Action techniques (PLA) (Bozalek and Biersteker, 2010); Problem-Based Learning (PBL) (Abel and Campbell, 2009); Activist Pedagogy (Preston and Aslett, 2014) and Participatory Action Strategies (Peabody, 2013), in this thesis we will refer to all these as experiential learning.
Hantman and Ben-Oz, 2014; Hargreaves and Hadlow, 1997; Swank and Fahs, 2014; *dialogical techniques* such as discussion and debate (Earls Larrison and Korr, 2013; Flaherty et al., 2013; Hafford – Letchfield, 2010; Khaja and Frederick, 2008; Poole, 2010; Sakamoto and Pitner, 2005; Schatz et al., 2006) or Socratic dialogue for making reasoned arguments, questioning dominant views, critiquing AOP and developing personal qualities (Banks, 2005; Philippart, 2003; Pullen-Sansfacon, 2009; Ross, 2007; Schatz et al., 2006); *narrative techniques*, for example writing reflective essays, portfolios and action plans as tools to assess deeper value positions as well as to develop critical reflection (Banks, 2003; Browne et al., 2013; Collins and Wilkie, 2010; Graham and Megarry, 2005; Preston and Aslett, 2014; Razack, 1999; Rutten et al., 2009); *self-observation and self-awareness strategies* through the use of simulation kits, video-recording, life stories and autobiography, giving the opportunity to students to identify and challenge oppressive values and approach (Cartney, 2006; Cooper, 2002; Cramer et al., 2012; Gibson, 2014; Hantman and Ben-Oz, 2014; Logie et al., 2013; Maidment and Schuldberg, 2005; Negi et al., 2010; Sims et al., 2014; Urdang, 2010); *groupwork and game-based exercises* to understand the dynamics of oppression and explore students’ response to inequalities (Campbell, 2002; Das and Carter Anand, 2014; Hackney, 2005; Lichtenwalter and Baker, 2010; Pugh, 2014b); *contact with marginalised/oppressed groups* not only through their fieldwork but also in class with the high involvement of service users’ in the learning process, offering partnership teaching and/or inviting guest speakers (Beresford and Croft, 2001; Chand et al., 2002; Daniel, 2011; Enosh and Ben-Ari, 2013; Gollan and O’Leary, 2009; Hill et al., 2009; Jack and Mosley, 1997; Khaja and Frederick, 2008; Phan et al., 2009); *web-based techniques* such as interactive web forums for dialogue where students can discuss their values and beliefs with their educators anonymously (Friedline et al., 2013; Van Soest et al., 2000); and lastly, *artistic approaches* such as poetry (Cramer et al., 2012; Transken, 2002;), photovoice (Peabody, 2013) and theatre/drama (Rutten et al, 2009;
Schatz et al., 2006;) as creative tools to examine experiences, express deep emotions and liberate critical awareness.

To sum up, the above account is not exhaustive; these techniques have been used solely or in combination, reviewed, criticised and adapted according to the teaching approach of the educator. Whilst they can be inspirational for an anti-oppressive pedagogy, educators should not get lost in the pursuit of the best practice/teaching technique. Any attempt to box or reduce anti-oppressive pedagogy into methods/exercises and pretend that it is a straightforward process can be oppressive itself (Campbell, 2002; Ellsworth, 1992; Poole, 2010), ignoring the existential and reflexive nature of the Freirian education. More importantly, such pedagogy may be tokenistic too, if it remains as a set of exercises within the walls of a classroom. Therefore, it is argued that an anti-oppressive and libertarian pedagogy needs also to involve praxis – through social activism activities/social action: the organisation and/or participation in advocacy/community action projects, grassroots initiatives for social and political issues, attending political meetings as well as protesting with service users for their rights (Allensworth Hawkins and Knox, 2014; Dudziak, 2002; Lane et al., 2012; Mizrahi and Dodd, 2013; Preston and Aslett, 2014; Swank and Fahs, 2014). However, the adoption of such an approach requires educators who are committed to anti-oppressive practice and education themselves. The following section sheds some further light on this.

1.5.3 The learning environment and educators’ use of self

It has been already discussed, that in anti-oppressive education, students and educators share a dialogical relationship. This may seem impossible due to the inequality of power embodied in the teacher-student relationship (Das and Carter Anand, 2014; Galambos, 2009; Flaherty et al 2013). However, Freire (1970) conceptualised this relationship as being equal and democratic in the learning – both students and educators potentially being co-investigators and co-creators of knowledge and reality. Therefore,
despite them still being directive in relation to the process (Shor and Freire, 1987), educators arguably could and should involve students in the design and delivery of their education as active collaborators, recognising the potential for some forms of education to become authoritative and oppressive (Abel and Campbell, 2009; Burney Nissen and Curry-Stevens, 2012; Crisp et al., 2006; Das and Carter Anand, 2014; de Montigny, 2011; Flaherty et al., 2013).

It is well documented in literature that anti-oppressive education is not always welcomed by students. Instead, the critical consciousness process may bring discomforting and upsetting truths to the fore, such as sharing oppressive beliefs/worldviews or actions with family and peers (Bernard and Campbell, 2014). Therefore, students may express conflicting emotions ranging from anxiety, shock, insecurity, guilt and despair to anger, denial, alienation, defensiveness and feelings of being attacked (Daniel, 2011; Gibson, 2014; Hackney, 2005; Hantman and Ben-Oz, 2014; Pugh, 1998; 2014a; 2014b; Razack, 1999). Such conflicting feelings reflect the deeper personal-professional dialectic which may exist between personal values/beliefs and the professional values, which they need to be agents of. This tension is suggested by Hughes (2011) to have a negative impact on students’ well-being and quality of life, whilst Van Soest (1996) described it as a grief process of unlearning what has been learned to be normal. Despite this part of anti-oppressive education being considered as desirable, if not essential, to future anti-oppressive action (Freire, 1970; Kumashiro, 2001), students’ negative reactions may also impede learning and critical reflection.

In an attempt to repudiate challenges to their worldviews and self-concept, some students may show passive resistance and avoidance by not participating in such discussions or superficially discussing the issues, subscribing to a state of innocence whilst they blame others for being part of oppression (Abrams and Moio, 2009; Jeffery, 2005; Ying Yee and Wagner, 2013). At the other end of the spectrum, it has been suggested that students may also question or challenge anti-oppressive values or even
express hostility to the faculty (Chand et al., 2002; Gibson, 2014). Whilst strong resistance to change may reflect some students’ lack of suitability for entering the social work profession, some resistance is expected and has resulted in much discussion within the literature about the need for establishing a safe space within the learning environment. Razack (1999: 235) inspired by the work of bell hooks (1994) commented that such an environment ‘allows for transgression, excitement, insurgence and freedom’. How can this be established then?

The role of the educator has been considered as crucial in creating a non-judgmental, fair, respectful, caring and supportive atmosphere (Gezinski, 2009; Morley, 2008; Pugh, 2014b; Urdang, 2010). It is pivotal for educators to understand the origin of students’ responses and be sensitive and alert to their emotional distress: for example, students may have religious or other prohibitions in engaging into anti-oppressive debates (Hancock et al., 2012; Otters, 2013; Worsley et al., 2009). Therefore, a safe environment does not allow harmful self-revelation (Galambos, 2009), but instead students need to be prepared for the emotional challenges of anti-oppressive education (Gibson, 2014; Phan et al., 2009). When students present oppressive positions, educators need to be both challenging and supportive, as the aim is for students to critically reflect on these and take responsibility for adhering to the values of their profession (Chand et al., 2002; Daniel, 2011; Flaherty et al., 2013; Otters, 2013). Yet, it would be oppressive and unethical by educators to set unrealistic expectations by demanding too much, too soon (Blanz, 2014; Otters, 2013). Therefore, educators need to provide the appropriate time and space where students can explore, deconstruct and reconstruct their knowledge, values and positions. It is important to note here, that being available outside the classroom for students’ needs and having interpersonal relationships with students appear to contribute to a supportive environment (Abel and Campbell, 2009). However, the interactive and dialogic nature of anti-oppressive education is not limited
Research and scholarly work have raised the importance of educators’ teaching expertise and skills through ongoing training and being up to date (Abel and Campbell, 2009; Abrams and Moio, 2009; Cramer et al., 2012; Osteen et al., 2013). Desired qualities have also been suggested such as being creative, genuine, spontaneous, flexible and patient (Earls Larrison and Korr, 2013; Pugh, 2014b). However, the emphasis among scholars and researchers appears to be placed on educators’ own modelling of anti-oppressive practice.

The commitment of educators to (anti-oppressive) ethics of the profession is argued to be pivotal in developing the student’s ethical self (Bundy-Fazioli et al., 2013; Clifford and Burke, 2005; Clifford and Royce, 2008; Hantman and Ben-Oz, 2014). There is no question that educating students for emancipatory practice would be tokenistic and illusional if educators are not ethical agents themselves in their professional and pedagogical practice. Therefore, students need to observe their educators acting in ways which promote and uphold social justice and social change: in practice (i.e. placements), empowering service users and challenging oppressive agency policies (Collins and Wilkie, 2010; O’Connor et al., 2009; Wilson, 2013); in the classroom, prioritising anti-oppressive content as well as modelling critical reasoning, anti-oppressive use of power and commitment to examine and challenge their knowledge/beliefs/behaviour (Campbell, 2002; Chonody et al., 2014; Gezinski, 2009; Poole, 2010; Trotter and Gilchrist, 1996); and in the university arena, taking action personally and collectively against the oppressive practices/policy/institution (Clifford and Burke, 2005; Lane, 2011; 2012; Razack, 1999). Along with social action, appropriate self-disclosure on own identity and social location is a legitimate tool for modelling anti-oppressive practice, as well as sharing experiences from personal, professional and academic fields as these too are the use of self
Whilst the above suggestions involve an ethical use of self by educators, this can fall into a narrow and over-simplistic approach without using critical reflection on own self and practice. Therefore, genuine anti-oppressive educators are conscious of their own identity, social location and the structural context within they work and critique how these impact on their role and pedagogical practice (Clifford and Burke, 2005; Dalrymple and Burke, 1998; Preston and Aslett, 2014; Walls et al., 2009). In addition, they examine their strategies, decisions, and actions, whether they reflect an emancipatory practice or not, through a continuous process of deconstruction and dialogue with the students, service users and society (Campbell, 2002; Morley, 2008; Smith, 2013).

As a concluding note, at this point the role of content, pedagogy and educators in the libertarian education of Freire have been discussed. Yet, what does research reveal about social work education’s impact on students’ anti-oppressive practice? The last part of this chapter will critically discuss such research findings.

1.5.4 Researching the impact of social work education

In order to identify the wider research that examines the impact of social work education in students’ anti-oppressive practice, databases such as PsychINFO and Social Work Abstracts were used as well as the electronic archives of peer-reviewed journals. Inclusion criteria for this review were: a.) the research to have been undertaken in the Western context; b.) the students’ profile, views/beliefs/experiences/attitudes/positions to have been explored in regards to value tensions and any of the anti-oppressive concepts; c.) education’s content, pedagogy and context to have been discussed and d.) research on education’s impact. The exclusion criteria involved: a.) research that took place outside the Western context; b.) any

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20 A detailed account on how/when the literature review was conducted is given in the Methodology Chapter of this thesis (Chapter 3).
research that did not discuss directly social work education; c.) no academic resources like blogs, etc.

Reviewing the literature on relevant research, it was observed that the vast majority of empirical data involve quantitative studies, followed by mixed methods designs and last a minority of qualitative researches (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2). Looking at both appendices, the research methods that appear to have been adopted in these studies include: comparisons among different cohorts of student groups or in other disciplines at various stages in their education; pre-post designs or longitudinal studies at the beginning and the end of a module/course; and last but not least, studies at a single point in time (more often in final year of studies). Such observations on the employed research methods have also been discussed by Carpenter (2011) and Weiss et al. (2004).

Commenting on the prevalence of quantitative studies, Barretti (2004) noted their failure to take into account the context of educational process, oversimplifying it therefore to knowledge acquisition and attitude/value changes. Considering these limitations along with the fact that such studies have focused on different countries and course levels using different methodologies, it is not surprising that a consensus on the impact of social work education has not been achieved (Carpenter, 2011; Mizrahi and Dodd, 2013). Despite these differences, it is important to briefly examine relevant studies’ findings.

Therefore, in relation to students’ profile, socio-demographic variables reveal: average age with the majority being under their 30s (Banks, 2005; Weiss, 2005); diversity in socioeconomic backgrounds in contexts like Britain (Moriarty and Murray, 2007) and average previous social care experience (Early et al., 2003; Jack and Mosley, 1997). Ringstad (2014), also adds prevalence of liberal political ideology to the students’ profile, based on his survey with 127 graduate students in the American context. Nevertheless, such findings are only indicative and cannot be generalised to the student body worldwide. Yet, what appears to be common variable among the majority of studies is the female predominance in student
populations (Gilligan, 2007; Senreich and Strausssner, 2013; Weiss, 2006). Whilst this observation is far from new, Parker and Ashencaen Crabtree (2014) commenting on the British figures, conclude that this social construction of social work as a female profession reflects the underlying concept of masculinities in societies. An under-representation of minorities (in relation for example to race and ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability) has also been observed within social work programmes in different contexts. As a result, students’ profile may reflect wider structural values and the profession’s status within society.

In agreement with this view, Gilligan (2007) added that students’ motivations to study social work also reflect their internalised dominant cultural values and perceptions of the profession. In light of this, what do findings suggest about students’ motives?

Research in the Western context has revealed that students’ choice of the profession may be driven by a combination of personal and career motivations. Pursuing career opportunities, earlier work experience and personal life history (for example being in contact with a social worker or having an experience with social services) have been common among students’ motives (Furness, 2007; Osteen, 2011; Stevens et al., 2012). However, the primary motivation for students has been observed to be their strong desire to help others. Stevens et al., (2012) in their mixed methods study with students enrolled on social work degree programmes in England, used the term of ‘individualistic altruism’ to describe this motivation rather than ‘societal altruism’ – the desire to tackle social injustice – which was found to motivate a small number of students. The prevalence of attitudes that expressed a desire to help others, as the strongest motivation among students has been discussed by Furness (2007) and Osteen (2011). In these studies, some students were also found to believe that they hold the necessary qualities and/or personality for this profession and they asserted that they always wanted to be a social worker – a motivation that has been associated with the view of social work as a vocation (Furness, 2007). In light of these, an uncritical view of students’
profile and motivations to study social work would be myopic as it is observed to reveal deeper personal values influenced by the structural ones. Therefore, the increase of individualistic motives raises questions about students’ response to oppression and inequalities. What does research suggest about students’ anti-oppressive practice then?

As discussed earlier, research on students’ personal values and response to inequalities and oppression has been conducted at various stages of their education. Therefore, studies at the initial stages of their training have provided valuable insights and implications for its design and delivery, whilst pre-post designs or studies at the end of training discuss its influence and impact.

In relation to the initial stages of education (see Appendix 1), research has revealed students’ negative stereotypes towards specific populations, such as: disabled people (Heenan, 2005); older adults (Smith, 2013) and substance misusers (Theriot and Lodato, 2012). Holding negative stereotypes about specific social groups may result in having early preferences to (not) work with specific populations. For example, Weiss et al., (2002) in their cross-national survey with 429 first year students in universities in US, Britain and Israel, noted participants’ unwillingness to work with populations of unemployed, chronically ill and older people as well as the majority's preference for (individual) casework. A different observation was offered by Segal – Engelchin and Kaufman (2008) in their survey of 119 students, based in a Social Work School in Israel, where all students appeared committed to work with the lowest class populations. Yet, half of the student group were micropractice (individuals and families) orientated whilst the other half were interested in macropractice (communities and policy practice) offering diverse explanations for oppression. Similar findings are reported in the British context too, by Gilligan (2007) in his framework analysis of a selection process exercise with 148 applicants, where individualistic and blaming explanations for oppression predominated those which offered a structural approach. Whilst these studies do not involve mature students or graduates, their
findings are mirroring their deeper personal oppressive values and beliefs, which are in tension with the moral core of the profession. The question here is whether this tension is being challenged and resolved with a commitment to the anti-oppressive values during and after their education.

Research that has been conducted at later points of social work education (see Appendix 2) includes a.) studies with positive findings in relation to its influence on students’ commitment to anti-oppressive practice, b.) findings that reveal slightly positive but not major impacts and c.) results suggesting education fails to inspire and produce anti-oppressive agents. On the positive side, Hughes (2011) in his qualitative interviews with 5 final year students at a British university, highlighted education’s positive impact on their beliefs, values and behaviour. Whilst these students acknowledged the distress of the personal-professional dialectic, they appeared to have reconstructed their positions according to professional values. Similar observations have been offered also for the American context where both qualitative (Williamson et al., 2010) and quantitative studies (Ahn et al., 2012; Kane, 2004; Mizrahi and Dodd, 2013; Perry, 2003) have revealed education’s influence on students’ understandings and explanations of oppression, their commitment to social justice as well as their confidence to work with oppressed populations. These findings, in conjunction with evidence on positive attitudes even activism for the rights of specific oppressed groups, such as the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersexed (LGBTQI) community, women and poverty (Camilleri and Ryan, 2006; Hill Jones, 2011; Swank and Fahs, 2014; Wall and Reinford, 2013; Weaver and Hyun Yun, 2011; Weiss, 2005) reflect students’ value tension resolution and adherence to the emancipatory mission of the profession within their training. Similar positive findings about the impact of education’s anti-oppressive content have also been found in studies of other disciplines including psychology (i.e. Neville et al., 2014).

Counter to the above findings, Van Soest (1996) using pre-post measurement within a quasi-experimental design with 222 students in two
Schools of Social Work in US, concluded that anti-oppressive education may increase students’ understandings and response to oppression but unevenly so across different oppressed groups. No major changes in students’ knowledge and attitudes towards specific social groups prior and/or after anti-oppressive courses nor in their final year, have been reported by similar quantitative studies (Enosh and Ben-Ari, 2013; Osteen et al., 2013; Senreich and Straussner, 2013). When it comes to cross-national surveys, Weiss et al., (2004) compared empirical data from 223 students in Israel and US during their first and final year, and observed no major impact on students’ preferences and willingness to engage in social change. In 2006, 661 graduating students from 7 different countries were surveyed by Weiss, where a cross-national pattern favouring individualistic approaches was observed (with the exception of Brazilian, Australian and Hungarian cohorts) although macro-practice was still emphasised to some degree.

Further cause for concern arises from findings that reveal education’s limited or questionable impact on students’ values and positions. Within a 5 year longitudinal study at an Australian university, Ryan et al. (1995) revealed mainly students’ individualistic and victim blaming approaches in both assessing and managing an intervention. Whilst there was a shift in their accounts towards the end of their education, the majority of students fell into stereotyping, felt powerless to deal with value tensions and in some cases they sacrificed their professional values for their personal ones. The researchers concluded in their paper that these unchanged positions may reflect the failure of social work educational programmes to challenge dominant values and focus on experiential learning. A number of research findings have highlighted students’ unchanged group preferences, questionable understandings and explanations, as well as individualistic or even passive responses to oppression in national contexts such as the US (Bundy-Fazioli et al, 2013; Early et al., 2003; Reutebuch, 2006) Northern Ireland (Wilson and Kelly, 2010), Turkey (Buz et al., 2013) and Britain (Collins and Wilkie, 2010; Evaluation team, 2008; Galvani and Hughes,
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2010; Jack and Mosley, 1997; Mackay and Woodward, 2010; Woodward and Mackay, 2012)\textsuperscript{21}. Banks (2005) in her mixed methods study across France, England and Finland, observed that even if students were able to identify value tensions, a significant number of them did not challenge oppressive behaviour or bad practice. This lack of critical reflection and anti-oppressive action to the self and others, has been revealed in Wilson and Kelly’s (2010: 11) findings too, where students felt powerless to counteract oppression and they had been ‘in a tenuous position’ of accepting oppressive agency and institutional policies. In the light of these, Osteen’s conclusion is not surprising, that obtaining a social work degree ‘does not mean that a student supports and promotes the values of the profession’ (2011: 42). Is therefore social work education’s mission to prepare emancipatory practitioners a delusion in the real world?

Some research findings suggest that social work education’s impact on students’ beliefs/attitudes and responses to value tensions may depend on a range of factors, which may be personal. These include: demographic characteristics like gender, age and race/ethnicity (Ashton, 2010; Baretti, 2004; Schulte and Battle, 2004; Wilson and Kelly, 2010); sexuality (Mizrahi and Dodd, 2013); life experiences (Hancock et al., 2012); political ideology (Perry, 2003); socioeconomic status based on income, level of education and parental education (i.e. Croxton et al., 2002; Holtz Deal and Pittman, 2009; Kozloski, 2010; Swank and Fahs, 2014); previous experience of social care work or political activism (i.e. Wilson and Kelly, 2010; Mizrahi and Dodd, 2013); peer relationships (Swank and Fahs, 2014; Neville et al., 2014); and religion (i.e. Gilligan and Furness, 2006). Whilst indicative, these research studies have linked students’ profile characteristics with their resistance to change. For Osteen (2011), students’ motives to enter the profession are also a key factor influencing whether students will adopt an anti-oppressive self or not. Considering the earlier discussion that both students’ profile and motives may reflect wider structural and dominant values, such resistance to maintaining these is not

\textsuperscript{21} For a short account on these findings please see Appendix 2.
surprising. What it appears that education has missed though is the opportunity to challenge these, and engage with students in a process of critical consciousness and critical reflection.

This is why studies and scholarly work have also shed light on structural and institutional factors that hamper a libertarian education. Therefore, the university’s adopted policies and strategies such as: the structure/organisation within a department or faculty; decision-making for staff and resources; bureaucratic regulations and procedures; and the treatment/relationships among hierarchies/staff/students may not only reflect but actually reproduce oppressive power relations (Bransford, 2011; Burgess, 2004; Clifford and Royce, 2008; Eisenberg, 2006; Otters, 2013).

In his analysis of subjectivity and power, Foucault (1982) used the example of an educational institution to illustrate how these strategies, procedures and power relationships are all adjusted to one another and constitute the concept of discipline, which in turn constructs individual’s thinking and positions. This institutional influence is also described within literature as the hidden curriculum (Orr, 2002; Tsang, 2011) – the unconscious learning of students through their experience and observation of the university’s functionalities and operations. In light of this, the (non) prioritisation of anti-oppressive content within education needs to be seen not only through educators’ role, but also in the context of social work institutions and their own response to social needs and structural oppression despite their alleged anti-oppressive approach (Dudziak, 2002; Narayan, 2000). For this reason Sinclair and Albert (2008) likened the potential rhetoric of an anti-oppressive stance by social work schools to the Emperor’s New Clothes.

Yet, social work education is organised within a wider educational system, and thus, reflects broader state policies. The market – driven approaches in educational policies under the neo-liberal agenda have been widely discussed in several national contexts, revealing downsizing practices in staff and resources, as well as a focus on efficiency, based on measurable and quantitative outcomes (Poole, 2010; Preston and Aslett, 2014; Reisch,
Therefore, anti-oppressive education is not limited to micro-perspectives, but is also highly influenced by macro-perspectives of the wider context including the School, the University and the structural educational policies. Since the research context of this study is Greece, it would be inappropriate to discuss these further here. The following chapter (Chapter 2), turns the focus of this thesis to the national context of Greece and social work education’s (anti-) oppressive structure in that context.

1.6 Summary

This chapter has critically discussed the historical context within which AOP emerged, as well as examining the theoretical concepts and debates that have influenced it and been developed within literature. Analysing the dehumanising process of oppression and the role of social work revealed that social workers are neither neutral nor apolitical. Instead, in their personal – professional dialectic, they take a side, which hypothetically should support the oppressed, according to the contemporary morality of the profession, although this is not always the case. Foucault’s (1977; 1980; 1982) writings on power as well as Freire’s (1970; 1993; 1994) insights on critical consciousness and praxis have been central to this overall discussion, revealing the need for both practice and education to identify and challenge the oppressive self, institution and policy. The literature review on anti-oppressive education, noted its preoccupation with the how of teaching and pedagogy, whilst acknowledging structural and institutional factors may actually reinforce oppressive positions. In addition, relevant research on social work education’s impact on students’ anti-oppressive practice has not provided a consensus, about what the most productive or effective approaches or methods to help students understand oppression and practice anti-oppressively might be, due to different methodologies and contexts; the predominance of quantitative studies and ignorance of the wider political structures. What has been highlighted though in the findings of these studies is that students’ profile, motivations, values/beliefs and positions reflect wider structural values of
the political context. Therefore, before presenting the findings of this research it is imperative to critically discuss and reflect on its context: Greece.
Chapter 2: The Greek Context

Greece is situated in South-eastern Europe, comprises a total area of 131,957 km² and has a population of almost 11 million citizens. Its welfare provision has been categorised as ‘conservative-corporatist’ or ‘Southern European’ within Esping-Andersen’s (1990) and Ferrera’s (1996) welfare regimes typologies. Both typologies involve the same characteristics: minimal and ineffective state welfare provision; informal family-based care networks where women’s role is critical; and a clientilistic, as well as acentralised welfare state (Symeonidou, 1996; Katrougkalos, 1996; Kourahanis, 2014; Zamparloukou, 2014).

This chapter aims to situate the context within which the findings of this study need to be understood. Starting with the Greek social work profession’s historical evolution and the changing socio-political context up until the present day, social work’s response during times of austerity, which has sometimes given rise to oppression, is outlined and analysed. The context framing social work education and its content is also described and evaluated, with particular emphasis placed upon the actual research site, where this study was conducted.

2.1 The background of social work in Greece: History, politics and socio-economic structures

The discussion within this section has been divided into three different and distinctive time periods, significant for both Greece and for social work. The first period covers 1937-1974, extending from the birth of Greek social work up until the restoration of democracy in Greece; the 1974-2008 period engages with and describes the developments and welfare policies which preceded the current socio-economic crisis; and the last time period examined ranges from 2008 when Greece began to experience

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22 The word clientelism is used in this chapter to refer to the exchange of goods and services for political support, privileges and access to rights. This refers to an unequal relationship/relationships of patronage between groups in power and ‘clients’.
a serious financial crisis to the present day (2015). This subdivision of different time periods is important in order to reflect upon the different characteristics of the socio-economic and political context which influenced the practice and education of social work at different times.

2.1.1 The first period 1937-1974

Initial attempts to create a social welfare sector were made in 1828, by the government of Kapodistrias, which established the first orphan asylums, hospitals, schools and prisons. However, social policy in this Greek state, newly liberated by the Turks, was embryonic (Katrougalos, 1996), with the church and charities being the main helping agencies in the face of poverty (Stathopoulos, 2005). The arrival of 1,500,000 refugees in Greece, following the Asia Minor disaster in 1922, required the state to undertake a more active role in responding to their food, clothing and housing needs, with the subsidiary support of the American State and charity organisations. This socio-economic context was further influenced by the fascist dictatorship of Metaxas (1936-1941), which adopted suppression state mechanisms (e.g. persecution/deportation of opponents, legal abolition of political parties) to establish a nationalistic ideology. Despite these significant early events, there are only superficial references within literature to the birth of social work (Teloni, 2011a), limited to the attempts to establish the ‘Free School of Social Welfare’ in 1937 in Athens23 (Kallinikaki, 1998; Stathopoulos, 2005). However, this school was closed before it produced any graduates, and Greece was occupied by the Nazis in 1941.

During the Second World War, Greece experienced extreme oppression, deprivation and famine; however, the National Liberation Front (EAM)24 formed a resistance movement against fascism and collaborators with

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23 For a short description on the evolution of social work education in Greece, please see Appendix 4.
24 (In Greek: Εθνικό Απελευθερωτικό Μέτωπο). EAM constituted by communist supporters, left-wing organisations and individuals with pure patriotic feelings (Katrougalos, 1996).
fascism in the Greek elite. In relation to welfare, EAM’s initiatives for health provision, as well as education and cultural development, reflected a grassroots welfare network based on collectivism, solidarity and equality (Ioakimidis, 2008; 2012). After Greece was freed from Nazi rule in 1944, the Civil War which followed (1946-1949) represents one of the darkest chapters of Greek history.

Despite the alliance of EAM with the help of British forces in liberating the country from Nazism, Britain’s and America’s interests in local politics and the common threat of communism, led to these allies switching their support to the political right and to defeating the left\(^\text{25}\). The Civil War years have been described as a period of terrorism, with EAM and other left-wing organisations being outlawed alongside the imprisonment, torture and murder of thousands of leftists (Margaritis, 2000). During this period, the American government, through the Marshall Plan which was supported by the local political elite, funded, designed and implemented national policies including welfare (Stathopoulos, 2005). However, the criteria determining welfare provision were underpinned by political agendas. Leftists were excluded from welfare provision, creating a dual society of deserving and undeserving citizens. Therefore, this early social policy was regulated by favouritism, oppression and clientilism (Katrougkalos, 1996; Venieris, 1996). It was within and during these times of oppression (Symeonidou, 1996) that social work was born in Greece. Teloni (2011a) argues that American policy favoured the creation of the profession in Greece. Therefore, American experts noted the need for social work training (Kokinaki, 1986) and the first social work school in Greece was developed by the American College (Pierce) in 1945.

It is interesting that social work education during that time (1945-1960) did not reflect the needs of the Greek society. Curricula were based

around the norms, values and particular social and economic features of some Anglophone western countries, the academic staff was largely comprised of British and American academics, and the textbooks were translations of American and British books (Ioakimidis, 2008; 2011; Stathopoulos, 2005). The socio-political and educational context described above could not but affect social work practice. Ioakimidis (2008) observed that social workers during this period were involved in systematically discriminating against large segments of the population by limiting their services to the ‘national minded citizens’ as well as participating in the political rehabilitation of children from left-wing families in the so-called children’s cities. It is important to note here that an official ‘certificate of loyalty’ (established by the law 509/1947), and obtained through the police, was required for professions (including social work), and even for activities like attending university examinations or acquiring a driving licence (Katrougkalos, 1996; Teloni, 2011a). It would be inaccurate and unfair to describe all social workers and academics of those times as evil agents of the anti-leftist movement. Often their motivations were philanthropic or humanitarian, and stemmed from wanting to contribute to rebuilding a war-affected country, help people because of their religious beliefs or support the global promotion of the profession. However, because many social workers were unable to recognise and critique the wider socio-political context, some actually participated and complied with oppressive, discriminatory even brutal

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26 Anyone who did not have a left-wing ideology or participated in any actions connected with the communist party and other left-wing organisations.

27 (in Greek: παιδουπόλεις). These were developed by the Royal Welfare in Greece aiming at children’s protection. However, they were accused of taking children away from left-wing families on the pretext these children were victims of ‘communism’s Armageddon’. The aim was to rehabilitate them by developing a disciplined character based on the Greek – Christian ethos (Ioakimidis, 2008, 2012, 2013; Teloni, 2011a). This is why these organisations were accused of being a tool for the propagation of right propaganda (Stathopoulos, 2005; Teloni, 2011a).
interventions, despite their declaration of political neutrality (Ioakimidis, 2008; 2012).

During the 1950s and 1960s, developments both in the practice and education of social work took place, as shown in Appendices 3 and 4. Social workers were employed in the welfare sector in relation to child protection, health and mental health (Kallinikaki, 1998) whilst the Professional Association of Social Workers (SKLE) was founded with 96 members in 1954. In addition, a number of legislation pieces were introduced the same period. These involved the legal enactment of the social work profession in 1959, as well as directions about the professional licence, duties and responsibilities in 1961. It is important to note, that this piece of legislation in conjunction with the ‘certificate of loyalty’ (see above), reflected the required ethos and profile of social workers being to obey the law and to lead an ethical personal life and to

‘abstain from activities or ideologies which aim – either directly or indirectly- to upset the existent political or social status, as well as any activity that is a political propaganda or aim to satisfy illicit interests or unethical targets’ (R.D. 690/61 cited in Panoutsopoulou, 1984: 204).

Despite this authoritarian right-wing climate which profoundly influenced the development of the profession and its activities, no reflections/critique or challenges were discussed in the very first conferences conducted in Greece (the Pan-Hellenic Conference of social workers in 1961 and the International Conference of Schools of Social Welfare in 1964). In regards to social work education, the Royal Decree in 1963 was the first attempt to standardise the operation of state social work schools; set the required qualifications of academics; establish a clear set of academic goals and curriculum but also set the framework for students’ admission and evaluation (Kallinikaki, 1998). Despite these developments, welfare was still based on social polarization (deserving/undeserving division) and clientilism (Katrougkalos, 1996), whilst social work remained highly driven by religious and foreign influences and lacking a political critique. This was further reflected during the military dictatorship (junta) years (1967-1974).
During the junta, extreme violation of human and civil rights, including brutal attacks on citizens, prevailed. These included a lack of press freedom, citizens’ being denied the right to free assembly, and the imprisonment, torture and exile of thousands of suspected leftists, communists and political opponents (Woodhouse, 1985; 1998). Whilst social movements and social criticism had emerged in many European states in the 1960s and 1970s, as discussed in Chapter 1, the central issue for Greece was to overthrow the junta and the social movement against dictatorship. The junta finally collapsed following their bloody attack in response to the students’ occupation of the Athens Polytechnic and the invasion of Cyprus by Turkey in 1974 (Kritikos, 1996). During those years, social policy measures favoured specific groups (Sotiropoulos, 1999), and social work was supported as an effort by the junta to propagate a more human profile (Koukouli et al., 2008), yet oppressive. It is also interesting that social workers and academics at the time did not mount a collective challenge to this political violence or forge collaborative links with the progressive resistance movements. Instead, Ioakimidis, based on his discovery of correspondence between the junta leaders and SKLE, argues that there are signs of active social work collaboration with junta, in order to ensure the ‘social adjustment’ of the citizens, at the expense of strengthening the professional status (2008: 153). It is not surprising therefore, that the number of state social work practitioners reached its peak number in that period, whilst landmark legislation in regards to social work education came in 1973, through the formation of the first public schools of social work appointed by the Ministry of Education (Ioakimidis, 2008; 2011; Teloni, 2011a).

2.1.2 The period of 1974 - 2008

Following the re-establishment of Greek democracy in 1974, the post-Civil War ‘laws of exception’ were abolished, the communist party was legalised and the Constitution of 1975 guaranteed all basic civil and political rights (Katrougkalos, 1996). During the decade of 1980s, most European countries were making a neo-liberal turn, whereas Greece, in
contrast, for a brief period of time adopted social-democratic principles (Petmesidou, 2013). Under the government of the Pan – Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) (1981-1989), a number of landmark laws and welfare initiatives were implemented: the creation of the National Health System; increases in salaries and pensions; the introduction of progressive family, trade-union and education legislation; day care for the elderly and an extension of public services, particularly in rural areas (Kouvelakis, 2011; Symeonidou, 1996; Venieris, 1996). However, social policy commentators in Greece (Kouvelakis, 2011; Papadopoulos and Roumpakis, 2012; Symeonidou, 1996) argue that despite these progressive developments, the core problems of the Greek state, such as clientelism and the unequal social security system, remained untouched. Therefore, in spite of the increase in social expenditure, tax evasion practices privileged the elite and specific professional groups, escalating the country’s budget deficits. A number of reforms and cuts to social expenditure, especially after Greece’s accession to the European Union (1987), signaled the gradual shift to neo-liberal policies (Teloni, 2011a). In relation to social work practice and education, as shown in Appendices 3 and 4, a number of developments took place. Regular conferences were held by SKLE, in which a small critical and radical perspective appeared, evidenced by references to the profession’s role in social policy and support for service users’ rights. In addition, social work education was transferred to higher education in 1983, and was based in the Technological Educational Institutes (TEIs) requiring a four year attendance.

The decade of 1990s and early 2000s, has been described as the ‘euro bubble’ (Kouvelakis, 2011: 21), due to the illusion of an economic development (which led to consumption) based on European funds and cheap borrowing (Lapavitsas et al., 2012). Therefore, despite the EU

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28 The TEIs have lower status and are considerably unprivileged compared to Greek universities resembling the divide between the ex-polytechnics (now referred to as new universities) and the older more elite and longer established universities in UK. See later discussion in this chapter.
funding policies concerning the labour market and social care, the governments did not implement structural reforms in order to rectify past distortions in the political system (clientilism), thereby producing a more just social welfare sector and a more stable financial system (Andreou, 2006; Katrougkalos, 1996; Sotiropoulos, 2004; Venieris, 2013). As a result, overwhelming deficits led to the domination of neo-liberal, economic-driven policies the following years, which contributed to the rise of inequalities and poverty (Petmesidou, 2013; Venieris, 1996). The state welfare sector was undermined and limited to a minimal residual casualty service, whereas NGOs and EU-state partnerships, in contrast, became larger and more important, replacing welfare functions of the state (Poulopoulos, 2014).

Social work practitioners were employed in many NGO posts; yet, insecure and ‘flexible29’ forms of employment were provided under EU directions and linked to the neo-liberal agenda. Similar unstable conditions also became the norm in relation to the majority of state-funded social work posts in public settings. Research before the 2008 financial crisis revealed exploitative working conditions (Dedoussi et al., 2002; Georgoussi et al., 2003; Ioakimidis, 2008; Koukouli, 2008; Teloni, 2011a). Many social workers were overworked with heavy workloads and limited resources; often being underpaid or unpaid for many months; with no prospects of promotion or further training, some being ultimately forced into doing only voluntary work. Furthermore, Teloni (2011a) also observed the political patronage of social work, where politicians intervene in requiring access to users’ files for promoting clientilistic relations (e.g. seeking votes in election periods from users whilst promising access to welfare and other privileges).

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29 This term describes the disintegration of collective bargaining and wage formation, the release of individual and collective redundancies and the strengthening of flexible forms of work to the detriment of full-time and stable employment (Kouzis, 2015).
In the 2000s, anti-discrimination legislation was also introduced following EU directions, in relation to employment and gender inequalities (3304/2005 and 3488/2006); immigrants’ social inclusion (3336/2007); and definition of hatred acts as ‘aggravating’ (3719/2008). Yet, responses to such legislation were often tokenistic, uneven and piecemeal, reinforcing rather than reducing extant inequalities. Equality policies were limited to employment and training. Immigrants and their children (even second generation) continued to be denied Greek nationality, and almost 100% of applications for political asylum were rejected (Karantinos and Christophilopoulou, 2010). The gaps in such legislation and advocacy for human and social rights have been demonstrated mainly by the anti-racist and mental health movements, which emerged the late 1990s (Teloni and Mantanika, 2015). However, what has been social work’s response to such challenges?

 Whilst some research (Giannou, 2010; Papadaki and Papadaki, 2008) has revealed that social workers acknowledged the ethical challenges and dilemmas stemming from such oppressive environments and unjust policies, their responses were questionable as they either responded individually or silently complied. The absence of a collective challenge/response could be explained by the continuing low status of the profession alongside its historical psychodynamic, individualistic and conservative practice and educational origins, and detachment from the social and activist movements of the time (Giannou, 2010; Ioakimidis, 2008; Koukouli, 2008; Papadaki, 2005; Papadaki and Papadaki, 2008; Teloni, 2011a). As a result of this, such a silent, individualistic and seemingly apolitical profession, found itself unprepared for and unable to predict, understand and challenge the imminent financial crisis about to erupt.

**2.1.3 The crisis of 2008-today**

Greek society since 2008 has been experiencing a gargantuan economic and humanitarian crisis. The roots of this crisis, it has been suggested, lie
within the wider structural and historical context, as previously outlined: a.) the direct and indirect international influences in Greek politics b.) the neo-liberal agenda which has increasingly dominated Europe, America and much of the globe c.) the asymmetries of Greece’s economy with the other EU countries and d.) the clientilistic networks and patronage within the political system since the origins of the Greek state (Mouzelis, 2012; Papadopoulos and Roumpakis, 2012; 2013).

The results of the continuous austerity measures imposed by the political parties in governance and Troika30, are thousands of redundancies, policy decisions leading to cuts in social care and the violation of basic rights (minimum wage salary, maternity/sick leave, protection of redundancy or participation in union) (Matsaganis, 2012). Papadopoulos and Roumpakis (2012) signalled this reality as the end of the world as most Greeks knew it.

According to Eurostat (2014) results, poverty31 rose from 19.7% in 2008 to 27.3% in 2013, and unemployment rates rose from 26.3% to 28% within a year (November 2012-November 2013). Moreover, suicides increased by 22% between 2009 and 2011 (The Guardian, 21/04/2014; Kentikelenis et al., 2011) and deaths also resulted from many people having no access to basic public goods such as health services. 3.1 million people - 33% of the population - are currently without national health insurance and unable to pay for treatment they may need (The Guardian, 23/01/2015; Zamparloukou, 2014). These changes and deprivations demonstrate the harsh reality that thousands of Greek households currently confront.

Whilst one could expect that under these conditions the state would invest in social care, instead dramatic cuts (over 40% between 2009 and 2013) in public social welfare services (amongst other publicly provided services and sectors, i.e. hospitals, schools, universities) have resulted in a

30 The tripartite committee was led by the European Commission, the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that organised the financial rescue of Greece.

31 (income less than 60% of the available average income)
‘progressively enfeebled welfare state’ (Petmesidou, 2013: 613) or actually in an anti-social policy response (Papadoloulos and Roumpakis, 2012; 2013). According to the annual report by SKLE (2014), a severe lack of funding and subsequent reduced staffing in social services (the ratio of social workers to service users may even reach 1/50,000 in some municipalities) has resulted in the sudden termination of many community projects, and the fragmentation of social services, as well as an overall wider waste of human resources.

Within the context of these conditions, where austerity and policy cuts have resulted in pauperisation and deconstruction of the welfare state, oppression and inequalities are rising, with minorities - such as immigrants – often becoming the scapegoats of Greek society\(^2\). Research into the beliefs and attitudes of Greeks towards diversity has revealed intolerance and negative beliefs. For example, Tsigkanou’s (2010) analysis of the European Social Survey (4\(^{th}\) wave, in 2009), revealed indigenous Greek’s intolerance for ‘foreigners’ (54.5%) as well as increasing gender stereotypes (48%). In addition, the Pew Research Center’s 2013 Global Attitudes survey uncovered Greeks’ negative beliefs about homosexuality (45%) and many were also anti-abortion (54%). Commenting on dominant Greek nationalist discourse, Triandafyllidou and Gropas (2009) concluded that Greeks’ self-understandings remain mono-cultural, against any diverse identity.

International organisations and national bodies\(^3\) have pointed out the violation of human rights in Greece numerous times in their reviews: Greece is ranked first in Europe for police brutality and racist crimes; hate speech and homophobic attacks increased during the crisis; prison conditions are alleged to be unsafe, health harming and deprive prisoners


of any human dignity; and the operation of the justice system has been strongly criticised (Michael-Matsas, 2013; SKLE, 2014). However, the blaming game towards minorities had been reinforced and naturalised both by state and media well before the crisis (Triandafyllidou and Kouki, 2014), as minorities were, even then, constructed as a public threat to health and security. The state’s response to migration has been woefully inadequate, and overwhelmingly reactive and repressive, and has not been based on any clear, long-term policy (Teloni and Mantanika, 2015). Despite the fact that some positive steps have been undertaken recently (2014), victims of racism are not protected, nor are attackers held to account, whilst the issue of obtaining Greek nationality remains untouched (Amnesty International, 2013; 2014; Human Rights Watch, 2014; Theofilopoulos, 2014). Examples of such injustice are evidenced in court decisions made in 2014, when attacks on Pakistani men and the murder of a 27-year-old worker from Pakistan in Athens were not classified as racially motivated, whilst farmers who admitted shooting 28 Bangladeshi strawberry pickers who requested months of back pay they were owed, in Manolada (southern Peloponnese), were acquitted (see The Guardian, 31/07/2014). In spite of the numerous demonstrations held by anti-racist organisations, an anti-racist law has been blocked twice in Parliament by right and far-right parties (Human Rights Watch, 2014; i-RED, 2013).

It is this oppressive context of intolerance and violation of human rights that led to the rise of fascism and the blossoming of the neo-Nazi Party ‘Golden Dawn’ (Ellinas, 2015). Given that during a campaign for the 2012 national elections, the Conservative Prime Minister Antonis Samaras stated: “Greece today has become a centre for illegal immigrants...We must take our cities back...”, the actions of Golden Dawn, of racist and

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34 New legal framework for migration (4251/2014) and further policy in regards to the creation of specialised police units to tackle racist violence across the country and the appointment of a specialised prosecutor on hate crimes in Athens.

homophobic pogroms, as well as the establishment of food and blood banks ‘only for Greeks’, should not come as any surprise (Human Rights Watch, 2014). Golden Dawn’s popularity decreased somewhat only after the assassination of the left-wing musician, Pavlos Fyssas, in September 2013, which led to the arrest of several members and MPs, including the party’s leader Nikos Michaloliakos, whose trial is taking place at the time of writing this chapter. Yet, Golden Dawn are still represented in the Greek Parliament (elected as the third most popular party in the recent elections of January 2015) and in the European Commission (in the elections of May 2014). In this respect, the economic crisis only exacerbated the chronic intolerance and institutional failures, which led to oppression and deconstruction of social cohesion (Ellinas, 2015; Pouloupolos, 2014).

Yet, numerous solidarity and social movements have developed across the country as a response to austerity and oppression, and they are participating in solidarity activities and social action. Commenting on this mobilisation, Ioakimidis et al. (2013) as well as Teloni and Mantanika (2015), described new forms of grassroots social welfare and political action in Greece. For example, the Social Medical Centres exposed the consequences of policy cuts in health care and are currently developing alternative forms of intervention and engagement in community action. In addition, grassroots groups at a local level, such as the Resident Assemblies in neighbourhoods and citizens’ mobilisation in Skouries (Halkidiki, Northern Greece) against the privatisation and destruction of their natural resources by private mining companies, reflect a broader anti-austerity and anti-oppressive movement in the years of crisis. What is social work’s response in this context though?

In the years of crisis from 2008 onwards, a gradual radicalisation and politicisation of social work seems to be occurring in Greece (Ioakimidis and Teloni, 2013). For example, the social workers’ first collective act of civil disobedience occurred in 2011, following the government’s directions they participate in committees to assess whether the electricity of people,
who were unable to pay the newly introduced head tax through electricity bills, should be disconnected. In addition, social workers’ involvement in community action and social movements’ activities (for example the actions of the Greek branch of Social Work Action Network in the neighborhoods of Patras and Athens) are clear signs the profession is starting to embrace a more collective anti-oppressive stance. However, these are very new small-scale initiatives and most social workers and social work academic departments still fail to engage with and demonstrate a more collective and critical approach.

Pentaraki (2015), in her research on the response of SKLE to austerity, observed its failure to adopt a structural approach that would have required exposing and challenging oppressive policies. In the context of a market-driven agenda and the increasing fragmentation of social services, Pentaraki (2013) and Ioakimidis and Teloni (2013) argue that if social workers only respond to oppression on an individualist case by case basis and fail to critically examine and challenge the societal maintenance of inequalities, they may actually be (albeit inadvertently) participating in the reproduction of such inequalities. Recently, there has been an official announcement that two social workers were nominated as possible MPs for Golden Dawn in the elections of May 2014. Whilst involvement with a racist neo-Nazi fascist party would be almost universally considered incompatible with being a social work professional, SKLE is not a regulatory body and has no powers to intervene. There is no official register of social workers in Greece, from which these candidates could be struck off, nor any system of accountability and challenge to suitability to be called a social worker.36

36 In order to obtain a social worker’s licence in Greece, one needs to registrate in the county headquarters of the county where they intend to practice. The only criterion is to hold a degree of social work and have a clear police check. This licence could only be retracted permanently by a court’s decision following conviction of a felony or plimmelim. For a breach of the profession’s code of ethics the disciplinary board of the Ministry could consider a temporary retraction (1 year maximum).
As a concluding note on the background of social work in Greece, it is evident that throughout history, during times of oppression, the profession has responded in a conservative even discriminatory way, which is at least partially due to its failure to reflect on the socio-political context and its role. Despite the mobilization of social movements and a reoccurring political critique, anti-oppressive practice has largely been limited to individual praxis and initiatives. Yet, the very recent appearance of critical approaches within the profession in Greece and the politicisation of some practitioners suggest a radical professional shift may be possible. At the time of writing, there is also a new radical left government elected (SYRIZA). Whilst it is too early to comment on the emergent socio-political context which is being shaped, SYRIZA’s welfare agenda and their commitment to eradicating inequalities and promoting social inclusion (Human Rights Watch, 2015), suggest a different and more socially just political approach that social work can significantly contribute to, without putting aside the need for continuous critical reflection.

2.2 The context and content of current social work education in Greece

This section reflects on the key characteristics of higher education in Greece and the structural educational policies, which have had a significant impact on social work education. It also analyses and compares the curricula of the four national Social Work Departments (Athens, Patras, Crete and Thrace) but with a greater emphasis placed on the social work department this case study is based upon.

2.2.1 The context

As discussed earlier, social work education entered the higher education arena in 1973. According to the Constitution of Greece (1975), higher education is public and provided by the state free of charge at the undergraduate level. It is divided into university education – provided by Universities (AEIs) - and higher technological education provided by the (lower status) Technological Educational Institutes (TEIs), which have a
more practical orientation (Pegkas and Tsamadias, 2014). All the Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) are supervised by the Ministry of Education whilst internal structures, operations and policies are determined by the respective provisions and the internal regulations of each University or TEI.

The differences between the AEIs and TEIs in terms of status, funding and levels of research activity, reflect deepening and entrenched social class divisions. Therefore, the lower social prestige of TEIs leads to them attracting students largely from lower-middle and working class background (Fragkoudaki, 1985; Gouvias, 1998; Ioakimidis, 2008; Papadaki, 2001; 2004; Sianou-Kyrgiou, 2008). Social work students in Greece – the majority attending TEIs – are, therefore, educated within a system which reproduces inequalities. Moreover, due to the manner in which the admissions’ system operates37, students may end up attending undergraduate courses - like social work - by accident or compromise rather than it being an actively chosen profession or their first choice of degree (Koukouli et al., 2008; Papadaki, 2004). It is not surprising therefore that such structural influences have had an impact on the low status of social work profession, as discussed earlier. However, the inadequacies of the Greek higher education extend further than the social division of AEIs and TEIs.

Since higher education does not emerge in a socio-political vacuum, the prevailing clientilism and patronage phenomena within the political spectrum have influenced the culture of HEIs too. As a result, the observations of Palios and Kyriazi about Greek higher education in 1999 were not surprising: extreme clientilism and lack of meritocracy, corruption, breaches of conduct, competitiveness and mobbing, and lastly sexism. It is worth questioning if anti-oppressive practice can ever be seriously discussed or promoted in class within such an oppressive

37 Current system is based on the high school students’ performance on nationwide examinations. For an analysis of this system please see Papadaki (2004).
institutional culture. However, further challenges for (social work) education were added to these inadequacies through the European directions, based on the Bologna Declaration of June 1999 and the Lisbon Strategy of March 2000. Under a neo-liberal agenda, EU policies have focused on the attractiveness of European educational institutions and European employability, based on the social welfare and education systems’ modernisation and opening up the market (Matthies, 2011; Papadiamantaki et al., 2006).

The impact of EU policies on social work education has been discussed and debated by academics38 across Europe (i.e. Engelberg et al. 2012; Frost et al., 2013; Lorenz, 2005; Matthies, 2011). On one hand, the social work profession appears to have been strengthened as social work programmes across Europe have already or are in process of being upgraded into higher education. In addition, the mobility of students, researchers and academics throughout Europe has been easier and more flexible, increasing knowledge and competence in different contexts. On the other hand, it has been suggested that the output-orientation and the focus on the quantification of quality measures/criteria – for example, measuring how many students are into employment - ignore the quality of the education failing to locate it within the wider socio-economic context. Therefore, the modernisation of the Greek higher education, under the neo-liberal agenda of EU directions, as well as the continuous policy cuts by the state, led to a number of reforms in the last decade. These included the abolition of article 16 of the Constitution which refers to the free and public character of higher education; the limitation of University

38 In the UK, unlike Greece, national and not European standards drive social work education. Approved courses must meet the Standards of Education and Training (SETS) which are regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) (former General Social Care Council) and the College of Social Work (TCSW). Unfortunately, TCSW was closed at the time of writing this chapter. However, the wider debate on the standardisation of education includes such policies in UK as well. Yet, the scope of this thesis is not to provide a comprehensive analysis of this debate; instead the aim is to reflect on the wider and local influences that have driven social work education in Greece.
immunity\textsuperscript{39}; the introduction of University evaluation under technocratic, managerial and commercial criteria; and lastly, establishing a maximum number years of studies students must complete their degrees within\textsuperscript{40} (Ioakimidis, 2008).

In the light of a clientilistic system in higher education, one could reasonably suggest that evaluation of HEIs and academic departments should be imperative. The establishment of the Hellenic Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency (ADIP) as an independent institutional body in 2006 initially seemed promising in this respect. However, their technocratic and market-driven criteria do not offer an in-depth evaluation, based on the differences across disciplines, fully consider the needs of students and academics, and factor in the wider socio-economic context. Therefore, accreditation criteria (law 4009/11) such as the ‘market demand’, ‘the quality of services (i.e. libraries)’ and ‘the qualifications/research of academic staff’ (ADIP, http://www.hqaa.gr/gr/accreditation.php, accessed on 02/05/2015), are tokenistic and irrelevant when actually state funding, resources and personnel are significantly reduced and unemployment rates are high in a time of financial crisis.

Recent reports (KANEP-GSEE, 2014) suggest that higher education in Greece is currently experiencing the greatest crisis in its history. Data reveal state funding decrease to -10.2%, overall understaffing -22% (but in TEIs the staff reduction reached -34.9%), lack of resources and equipment, following the bloody attack of military force (directed by junta leaders) to students’ occupation of Athens Polytechnic in 1973, the presence of police and military in university premises has been illegal.

\textsuperscript{40} This refers to the so called ‘eternal students’ – a highly controversial subject among Greek academics. However, it needs to be noted that HEIs in Greece do not offer part time studies as other European countries. Therefore, students who both work and study simultaneously (especially students from lower classes and in times of the current financial crisis) or face other personal/familial difficulties may need further time to complete their studies. However, now if two further years have passed since the estimated year of course completion and students have not graduated, they are deleted from their course without any options to re-register.
inappropriateness of academic premises, unpaid subscriptions to academic journals, and the lower attractiveness of TEIs at only 6.4%. Social work education has been significantly affected by such policies. A logic of and justification for low cost education, in evidence well before the crisis, resulted in Social Work Departments having few permanent staff members with the contract (temporary) academic fellows constituting the majority of the academic staff. Yet, a further discriminatory division has developed among permanent and contract academics. Despite the fact that academic fellows may have equal or even better qualifications than the permanent staff, they do not have any academic rights. In addition, their temporary contracts (annual or six-month) provide them with limited national insurance and they are significantly underpaid or receiving delayed payments (once every three or even six months). Ioakimidis (2008) highlighted the impact that such exploitation and marketisation of education has on the quality of teaching.

In 2013, the Ministry of Education announced the so called Athena Plan (law 4115/13) in an attempt to upgrade higher education according to EU standards. However, this plan involved an inadvertent attack to social work education in Greece, as one of TEI Social Work Department was abolished, the Social Work course at the Democritus University of Thrace was downgraded via the merging of the Department of Social Administration with that of Political Science, whilst the two other TEI Social Work Departments were deemed to be in danger of potential closure due to lack of staff. Justifying the abolition and downgrading of

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41 Greece ranked near the bottom of the EU countries for the proportion of GDP invested in higher education over time (The Guardian, 20/06/2013).
42 An average salary of an academic fellow is approximately £300 per month depending on given teaching hours and their qualifications. Permanent staff’s salaries have been reduced too but reach approximately £900-1000 per month (The Guardian, 20/06/2013).
43 A governmental plan that introduced closing down or merging of numerous Departments across University and Technological Educational Institutes in Greece.
44 According to the students’ guides of the Social Work Departments, the Department of Athens has 7 permanent academic staff members of which 5
Departments on the basis of their lack of staff and resources, appears to be unreasonable as they are the victims of a gradual dis-investment by the same institutional and structural policies based on a neo-liberal agenda. Yet, in the light of the wider oppressive policies which violate human rights and deconstruct social welfare, the profession seems to be a luxury or perhaps a threat for the Greek state.

The Athena Plan provoked numerous occupations, demonstrations and protests for several weeks, attended by millions of students and academics across the country, who demanded the Plan be withdrawn. Reflecting on the social work students’ occupation in Patras, Teloni (2013) and Ioakimidis et al. (2014: 295) noted that eventually ‘they were violently attacked by thugs who allegedly attempted to suppress the protest’. SKLE, as well as the board of the European Association of Schools of Social Work (EASSW), wrote official letters of complaint to the Minister of Education at that time, Mr Arvanitopoulos, challenging the attack on social work education in Greece. In addition, board members of the EASSW personally visited the Ministry in November 2014, voicing their concerns about the future of social work education in Greece and arguing increased investment was required to ensure the country complied with global standards for social work training (EASSW, http://www.eassw.org/news/article-140/en/welfare-state-in-crisis-challenges-and-prospects-for-social-work.html, accessed on 11/12/2014).

At the time of writing, the Athena Plan is still in force, whilst the new government has announced its intention to initiate an open dialogue with academics and departments in re-considering it.

As a summative note, the context of social work education in Greece has involved several reforms, which have not improved and strengthened

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are social work qualified. The Department of Patras has 3 permanent staff members (2 are social work qualified) and the Department of Crete has 9 permanent staff members (6 social work qualified). Following the merging of two academic Departments in the Democritus University of Thrace, the new Department now has 24 permanent academic staff members without clarifying the number of members who are social work qualified.
students’ training. Rather, continuous dis-investment and market-driven criteria have led to the recent attack on social work education through the Athena Plan. It is worth considering therefore, the potential impact of social work education on students’ anti-oppressive practice, and to what extent a higher education system of inappropriate academic conditions which reproduce educational and social inequalities (KANEP-GSEE, 2014) may have influenced it. However, before responding to the core research question framing this thesis, it is also important to review the content of social work education in Greece and particularly that which relates to the case (the Social Work Department) which informs this research study.

2.2.2 The content

In order to present the content of social work education in Greece, the stated mission and objectives as well as curricula are discussed, as these appear in the students’ guides and the various social work departments’ profiles on their websites.

2.2.2.1 Mission and objectives

The three TEI Departments (Athens, Crete and Patras), share a similar mission and objectives as stated in their students’ guides, in relation to: students’ development of knowledge, abilities and skills in social work methods; acquisition of social work values and ethics; stimulation of critical thinking; self-development and challenge of personal values and beliefs; and preparation for being agents of social justice and social change. The AEI Department (Democritus University of Thrace) raises the importance of students’ interdisciplinary working and critical thinking in designing interventions as well as identifying and challenging problems arising from state policies. All Departments make reference to the importance of adopting a structural approach to social issues and problems, yet, only the Department of Athens (on their website) refers specifically to the current crisis in Greece, discrimination and the role of social work education:
'Today, in times of crisis, social work education can significantly contribute to the resolution of complex, serious and widespread social problems like rising poverty, violence, unemployment, racism, etc.'

What do their curricula reveal?

2.2.2.2 Curricula

The curricula of Social Work Departments were reviewed in 2008 according to the ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) by EU directions for establishing credits for courses and their modules. However, a further revision took place for the social work course of the Democritus University of Thrace in 2013 following the merging of the Department of Social Administration with the Department of the Political Science. All curricula require a four year attendance (eight academic semesters) and involve both theoretical modules and field practice, as shown in Appendix 5. The field practice process is common for all Departments, involving various placements within the local community. Students spend two or three days per week on their placement and are offered weekly supervision by their academic placement supervisors whilst during their final semester they conduct a 6-month full time practice placement. Despite these similarities, there are some differences, especially between the TEIs and the AEI Department relating to both attendance and module content.

With regards to mode of attendance, TEIs in their modules may offer both lectures and workshops whilst the AEI offers only lectures. This difference is rooted in the structure of the TEIs, which are more practically orientated, so workshops are assumed to offer more opportunity to apply theory to practice. Furthermore, in the TEIs, submitting a thesis in the final semester is obligatory but this is only offered as an option in the AEI department. Last but not least, AEI offers a social work route after

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45 According to the Ministry’s framework (Φ5/89656/Β3 ΦΕΚ 1466/13.8.2007) and EU guidelines, credits mean a set of learning outcomes of an individual which have been assessed and which can be accumulated towards a qualification or transferred to other learning programmes or qualifications.
students’ third year (fifth semester) as the first years involve common courses with the political science route.

In relation to the content and focus of the curricula, one can observe many similarities if the modules, especially across the Departments of the TEIs (Athens, Crete, Patras) with only a few differences. For example, some modules are taught in different semesters, some have a different title but the same content and themes appear to be either infused across the curriculum or offered in discrete modules. A variety of subjects include references to psychology, sociology, casework, community work, social policy and social research. Regarding concepts of values, ethics and anti-oppressive practice, it is observed that: the TEI Departments offer discrete and compulsory modules for social work ethics but in different semesters; whilst a few multi-cultural or ‘working with diverse groups’ modules may be either compulsory or elective.

Previous research on social work education in Greece has suggested that individualistic and uncritical approaches within the curriculum predominate (Papadaki and Papadaki, 2008; Teloni, 2011a; Teloni and Mantanika, 2015). However, it is observed that in the revised curriculum (2013) of the social work course route in the AEI, a significant number of discrete modules refer to human, civil and social rights; national and EU policies; even modules on critical social work and minorities as well as the current socio-economic crisis’ effects on social care. Whilst very recent, such advancement is very important step for social work education in Greece and the influence of political science on this social work course is clearly evidenced. There is no doubt that curricula reflect the stimulation that students receive during their training. Yet, an in depth analysis of the curricula in Greece is beyond the scope of this thesis. Therefore, an examination of the curriculum of the Social Work Department, where the research took place, follows.
2.2.3 Value – tension resolution and anti-oppressive training in the case study site

The Department’s study guide offers a brief course description with the bibliography used and learning outcomes. There is a detailed account of the content and process in some modules, whilst others offer only a few sentences description - the reason for this is unknown. At a first glance, it seems that modules with a clinical emphasis (psychology, psychopathology, psychotherapy, clinical casework) predominate. However, either the title or the descriptors of other modules suggest some attention is paid to value tensions and anti-oppressive concepts.

During the first semester, the description of the module ‘Introduction to Social Work’ suggests social work students are introduced to the historical background of the profession, with a focus on different social work theories, professional values and self-awareness. In addition, it aims to develop students’ cultural sensitivity so they are able to work effectively and in an informed manner in a multi-cultural society. Yet, being sensitive towards diverse cultures does not necessarily imply an anti-oppressive approach. The bibliography - both Greek and international - given for this module is rather old from the 1990s. In addition this module incorporates both a lecture and workshop level (4hrs weekly in total), which suggests an intensive and in-depth discussion on the above matters. Further modules during the first semester which appear to discuss anti-oppressive concepts under a sociological perspective are the ‘Introduction to Sociology’ and

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46 Following the abolition of this Department, its curriculum is in force until 2018, when all current students are estimated to have graduated. However, the guide mentioned here - both the online and printed document- haven’t been updated since 2008, and therefore, some of the bibliographical references that are supposed to be used for training may have changed. Yet, this chapter’s reflections will be based on the only available study guide, regardless the fact that some academic staff may not use this bibliography. This is further discussed in Chapter 4, where the findings of this research are presented.
‘Social Policy’. The former, includes references to oppression, social
control and social change and draws on diverse sociological theories,
whilst the latter introduces to social welfare theories and national policies.
Finally, the ‘Law’ module includes discussing legal frameworks
concerning ‘mental illness, the foreigner (immigrant) workforce in Greece,
and service users’ rights’. Yet, it could be claimed that the use of term
‘foreigners’ is discriminatory in itself, indicating an othering process. It is
also observed that the given bibliography again is based on published
books of the 1990s.

During the second semester, the module ‘Social Work Interview’ aims to
enhance ‘students’ sensitivity’ to and awareness of stereotypes and
prejudices, as well as developing their social work interview skills. Using
theories of ‘psychological maturity’ (as stated) in relation to the social
worker and the ‘client’, importance is given to how these may affect
communication during the interview process. It is unclear if this module
refers to the mechanisms of oppression and the role of personal
stereotypes/beliefs in reinforcing an oppressive stance not only during a
social work interview but in general professional practice. Last, an
intensive module (lecture 4hrs and workshop 3hrs) entitled ‘Social welfare
programmes’, is based on developing a theoretical understanding of social
problems and examining within the context of the contemporary national
social welfare services. However, it is unknown if service provision is
examined critically in this module or if reference is made to the critiques
advanced by social movements. Again, the bibliography is outdated (from
1980s and 1990s) involving Greek, British and American textbooks.

The third semester involves a number of modules related to psychology
and psychopathology whilst students are required to attend an 8-hour
workshop ‘Introduction to field practice’. This module offers ‘practice
experiences’ such as visits to social services and contact with practitioners
and service users, in order to prepare students for field practice. In
addition, it suggests it offers the opportunity to develop a ‘professional
stance and self-awareness’ through class discussion/activities, as well as
individual and group assignments on a variety of issues, including minorities and professional ethics. However, the bibliography which may be used is not given. Field practice in various placements (both public and private sector), commences during the fourth semester. Students are required to attend placements at specific days and times whilst supervised by academic staff appointed by the Department. The student guide provides a number of duties and tasks for students, placement providers and academic supervisors in relation to the practice content and evaluation. Field practice, it is suggested, gives students the opportunity to get experience in the profession, apply social work theories in practice and familiarise themselves with ethics. It is also claimed that it is an opportunity for the Department to co-operate with local services.

Returning to the fourth semester, the module’s description ‘Clinical social work I’ (lecture 3hrs and workshop 2hrs) reveals an individualistic approach based on psychodynamic and psycho-social influences on casework. Referring to the ‘client who aims to resolve his personal problems’, the module aims to introduce students to the ‘therapeutic’ nature of social work, and stresses the importance of developing diagnostic and therapeutic skills. It is unclear, but arguably unlikely, that a discussion on the structural roots of social problems and the political role of social work takes place within this module. The bibliography includes well known American authors such as Perlman (1957) and Greek authors (Papaioannou, 1998), but more recent approaches to casework or references are not given. In contrast, the module ‘Community work’ (lecture 3hrs) seems to offer a more structural approach by connecting social problems with the wider socio-economic and political context and illuminating the importance of community work as a social work method. The stated bibliography includes again Greek, American and British textbooks from the 1980s and 1990s. Freire’s book The pedagogy of the oppressed (1970) is included on the list as one of only a few books which refer to radical approaches to community work.
The fifth semester offers a discrete module entitled ‘Deontology/ethics’ (lecture 1hr), which aims to raise students’ awareness about social work values, and educate them about national and international codes of ethics and human rights. It is also suggested that core purposes of the module are for students to critically think and reflect on a.) social work practice and ‘ethical dilemmas that occur in organisations’, whilst b.) ‘guidelines will be given for an effective practice’. Based on this description, this module appears to be the first one with a clear reference to ethical dilemmas and their resolution; however, these do not seem to include the personal–professional dialectic or references to anti-oppressive practice. With regards to its bibliography, in the absence of a published book on social work ethics in Greece, it includes British and American social work textbooks from the 1980s and 1990s, a Greek book about ethics in psychology, as well as notes with the Greek translation of international codes of ethics (IFSW) and Greek codes of ethics by SKLE. In the same semester, the modules of ‘Clinical social work II’ (lecture 4hrs and workshop 2hrs) and ‘Community organization and development’ (lecture 2hrs) are offered. The former focuses on designing and leading therapy groups, whilst the latter involves examining theories on and around community and designing/implementing community projects. In both modules’ bibliographies, the majority of references are American and British references with a few Greek books listed too.

The final modules which appear to refer to minorities and oppressed groups are the ‘Social work with population groups I&II’, delivered in the 6th and 7th semesters respectively. Yet, an anti-oppressive approach does not appear to be adopted within either module. The first module makes references to (mental) health groups and substance misuse, with students being encouraged to develop ‘techniques and skills that are necessary to deal with the diverse problems of these groups’. A technical and individualistic approach is suggested in relation of ‘those groups’ and ‘their problems’ instead of or also subscribing to a more structural approach, involving students as agents of social change and social justice.
Such a narrow approach is observed on the second module too, which refers to immigration issues. Its core purposes involve ‘understanding the principles for an harmonious co-existence in a multicultural society; developing an objective opinion about the financial, social, political and cultural impact of immigration to Greece and recognising the contribution of multi-cultural social work in dealing with discrimination’. However, it is questionable whether obtaining an ‘objective opinion’ about impact of immigration to Greece leads to an emancipatory practice or actually to a nationalist and oppressive one and questions might also be asked about what actually represents an objective viewpoint if indeed it is ever possible to be objective? Whilst the module descriptor suggests the content includes discussions about the rights of immigrants and refugees, as well as referring to racism and stereotypes, it is unclear whether students are exposed to and challenged by anti-oppressive concepts and ideas. It is also worth noting, here, that neither module makes a reference to other minorities in Greece, such as the LGBTQI community. With regards to their bibliographies, the books (from the 1980s and 1990s) refer to health issues and multi-cultural education.

As a final note, the student guide refers to the teaching strategies and pedagogy as well as the resources offered in the Department:

‘the pedagogy involves lectures, small groups, supervision as well as experiential techniques such as exercises and games, role play, and watching and discussing movies/documentaries. The premises include classrooms with audio-visual equipment (computers and projectors) and a well-resourced library’.

Yet, one needs to remember that this guide has not been updated since 2008; therefore, the limitations and the inadequacies in higher education stemming from lack of funding during the crisis years (see earlier discussion) may not be reflected in the above description. It is also observed that there is no reference to any of the Department’s social action activities or involvement with the community.

To sum up, the curriculum reveals a technical and individualistic approach, by focusing on the acquisition of skills and techniques based on a clinical-
therapy orientation. Whilst there are a few modules which claim to provide a more structural approach with references to value tensions and anti-oppressive concepts, learning objectives such as ‘cultural sensitivity’ and ‘objectivity’ do not necessarily mean these will elevate students’ critical consciousness and adherence to professional (anti-oppressive) values. Moreover, the use of discriminatory terms and nationalist references has the potential to actually reinforce dominant social stereotypes and values that students may have adopted. Last but not least, the outdated bibliography, which is based mainly upon British and American books, suggests the low status of social work research and scholarly work in Greece; and the influence of international theories but with a subsequent failure to reflect current social needs and Greek reality.

Similar observations on the same Department’s curriculum (for the academic year 2004-2005) have been made by Ioakimidis (2008: 376), where he concluded that it is focused on ‘a parochial clinical notion undermining the social and political background of social work’, whilst the few Greek books offered are based on Anglo-Saxon influences. In the light of these, the impact of such education on students’ ability to manage value tensions in relation to anti-oppressive practice is questionable as discussed in the concluding remarks of this chapter.

2.3 Summary and the need for this study

This chapter has revealed the political pressures that have influenced social work education and practice in Greece – as we could expect in any country. In recent years, practitioners find themselves working within an under-resourced welfare system where oppressive and unjust policies actually reproduce oppression and inequalities. Despite the recent politicization of some social workers, social work in Greece historically has remained silent or detached from broader social needs, even at times of oppression, tending to focus on the individual case.

Unfortunately the context and content of social work education (especially the curriculum of the case study site) do not appear to offer an alternative,
radical route. Whilst there are some references to multicultural social work, an awareness of and sensitivity to different cultures does not necessarily culminate in an understanding and explanation of the structural causes of oppression. This is further reflected in research, which, who linked social work students’ attitudes towards the LGBTQI community and ageism in Crete with their education’s limited reference to social divisions and oppression issues (Papadaki and Papadaki, 2011; Papadaki et al., 2012). Similar findings for social work education were discussed by Dedotsi and Paraskevopoulou (2014), who observed traditional, male-orientated standards and sexist beliefs about the structure and roles within the Greek family among students in the Department of Patras. Whilst these values and beliefs are indicative of broader societal attitudes, the failure of social work education to challenge these can result in passivity or even reproduction of oppressive practices, especially in times of oppression and injustice.

A review of the socio-political development of social work education and practice in Greece provides a strong justification for the present study. In light of dominant societal values of intolerance, oppressive policies which violate human rights and an unjust higher education system, this study, the first one of its kind conducted in Greece, aims to shed further light on the impact of social work education on students’ adherence to the anti-oppressive values of their profession. It is hoped that the study will contribute to understanding of the relationship between personal positions and the wider structural discourses at a time of crisis. Whilst the examination of the curriculum offered by the Social Work Department of the case study site has revealed questionable approaches, the content, context and potential impact of social work education will be further revealed in the analysis of students (first and final year) and academic staff’s accounts.
Chapter 3: Research Methodology

In this chapter, the thesis moves from the theoretical perspectives of anti-oppressive practice and the background information on the context of social work education in Greece, to the research methodology and methods. This chapter presents how the research process was designed and justifies the methods for data collection deployed and the type of analysis used. A central feature of this chapter is its critical discussion and reflection on the decisions that were made and their rationale, explaining the strengths and challenges of the research methodology, and responses of myself, the researcher, in an honest and transparent account.

3.1 The research design

My reading and understanding of the literature, my own teaching experience and my discussion with students about anti-oppressive practice, stimulated the objectives of my research, which are:

a.) to explore in depth social work education’s content in a Greek Social Work Department in relation to ethics and anti-oppressive practice - how and why these are discussed;

b.) to understand and explain students’ perceptions (at the beginning and the end of their training) related to diverse groups and the discrimination and/or oppression that these groups may face;

c.) to explore students’ beliefs and experiences of value tensions in relation to diversity and anti-oppressive practice and explain their strategies for resolving any personal/professional tensions at the beginning and at the end of their training;

d.) to identify students’ expectations of their education in relation to anti-oppressive practice and how this changes over time.

In order to understand and explain these with a focus in the context within which students’ positions are constructed, this thesis is taking an interpretive and thus qualitative research approach. Qualitative research
within an interpretive stance can be considered as a research strategy that explores and attempts to understand values, processes, experiences, language and meaning, among other things, rather than the quantification of data (Bryman, 2004; D’ Cruz and Jones, 2004; McLaughlin, 2012). As discussed earlier in the literature review, a minority of studies in social work education have adopted a qualitative approach compared to the predominance of quantitative and mixed methods research projects (see appendices 1 and 2). However, in this research, a qualitative methodology was appropriate due to the above research objectives as well as the fact that such studies in the Greek context are very rare and therefore there is little on which to build.

The choice of an appropriate research design is a key decision within research. Reflecting on the nature of the objectives of this research, and the lack of previous related research in this context, a case study design was chosen. According to Simons (2009:21), a case study is ‘an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, program or system in a real-life context’.

Yin (1994, 2003) suggests a case study is appropriate - among other criteria - when the researcher seeks to answer how and why questions, as well as to explore contextual conditions because they are believed to be relevant to the phenomenon under study. Therefore, the case study’s features – the in-depth nature, holistic approach, focus on the context and flexibility in methods - (Baxter and Jack, 2008; Brown, 2008; Macpherson et al., 2000; Simons, 2015) fit well with this research’s purpose.

My understanding and use of case study as a research design was informed by its foundational writers Yin (1994; 2003; 2005) and Stake (1994; 2005; 2008). Brown (2008), describes Yin as a methodologist because of his focus on developing logical strategies on case study methods, and Stake as an artist based on his interpretive emphasis. Despite their different positions on the methods that a case study uses, they both are theoretically driven by constructivism or constructionism, the assertion of a socially
constructed reality (Baxter and Jack, 2008). This research paradigm enables participants’ stories and views of reality to be heard in order for the researcher to understand the phenomenon under study. In addition, over time Yin’s and Stake’s original differences have shifted, with both acknowledging and appreciating each other’s value and contribution to case study methodology. This shift reflects a more balanced approach, which has been adopted by writers such as Brown (2008), Merriam (1998), Simons (2009; 2015) and Thomas (2011), who combine the rigour of Yin with the interpretive paradigm of Stake. Therefore, as Thomas (2011: 512) puts it, ‘choice of method, then, does not define case study: analytical eclecticism is the key’.

Nonetheless, the case study has been the object of much criticism as a scientific method in relation to its reliability and validity (i.e. Tight, 2010; Verschuren, 2003). Flyvbjerg (2006) rejects such criticism, claiming that it is based on misunderstandings and/or myths and suggests that the researcher should adopt a descriptive and reflexive approach, placing themselves within the context being studied and making strategic decisions/selections based on an acceptable rationale. Last but not least, the case study design’s closeness to the phenomena, as they occur, fits well with the theory building which a grounded theory approach to data analysis advocates. Grounded theory in this study, as this chapter will further demonstrate below (section 3.2.3), is used to inform the process of analysis rather than employed as an overarching theory and methodology.

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47 For example, some myths or misunderstandings like that one cannot generalise from a case study, the danger for the researcher to fall into his preconceived notions and produce a biased study, etc.
3.2 The research methods

3.2.1 Sampling

3.2.1.1 The case

The selection of the case(s) is a strategic research decision associated with the rigour of the study (Denscombe, 2007; Flyvbjerg, 2006). In this study, the case is one Department of Social Work based in a Technological Educational Institute (TEI). This Department was subsequently abolished, but the selection of this case occurred prior to this Ministry’s decision. As Yin (2009) recommends, the researcher should choose the case that will most likely illuminate their research questions and objectives. Therefore, the selection of this research’s case, among the other three potential Departments in Greece, was not randomly decided but based on criteria around its suitability for the purpose of the research and practical issues.

Firstly, it could be said that the specific Department is a typical case as it shares similar features with the university (AEI) and especially with the other two TEIs, stemming from the same context and content of social work education as discussed earlier in Chapter 2: inequalities and divisions within the macro educational policies; dis-investment in education; entrance system; and curriculum48. However, following the abolition of this Department, it could be argued that this case was also of critical interest (Flyvbjerg, 2004) to reveal the dynamics of the context in an extreme and unique situation (abolition). In addition, when it comes to pragmatic considerations, it was a case with the least travel, least expense and least difficulty to gain access. This was not a trivial consideration given that the research was occurring at a time of extreme financial hardship and economic crisis in Greece that also affected the researcher and author of the thesis. Whilst a case study including all the four Departments would have been of great interest, it would be time-consuming and expensive. Stake (2005) suggests that in order to carefully

48 Its curriculum was discussed and compared with the other Departments’ in Chapter 2 of this thesis.
select a case, the potential for learning – taking the most accessible case or
the one that we can spend the most time with - is an important criterion.
Therefore the case selection was deemed appropriate to gain insights about
social work education in Greece.

In relation to gaining access, a detailed description of the research
objectives, methodology and potential outcomes was submitted to the
Head of the Department. This was approved, since the study was
considered to offer insights in how to improve social work education (at a
time when the subsequent abolition of the Department was unknown). It
needs also to be noted here that this study was approved by the University
of Manchester ethics committee (reference number 12343) (see a detailed
account about ethics later in this chapter).

The case is in a large urban regional capital city within southwest Greece,
which has a population of approximately 260,000. The city has two
Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs), one AEI and one TEI, hosting a
large student population. Following the Athena Plan by the Ministry of
Education in 2013, major reforms were mainly imposed on the TEI;
Departments like the one of Social Work were abolished, others were
downgraded or merged with Departments of HEIs in other cities. The
maximum deadline for the final closure of the Social Work Department is
the year of 2018, in order for all current students to graduate. However,
closure could occur before 2018, if there are no further students attending
the course.

3.2.1.2 The informants

The primary criterion for the selection of the informants is again Stake’s
(2005) notion about the opportunity to learn where representativeness is
weighted by attributes of interest and practical considerations. Instead of a
random selection, this research took a purposive approach to sampling –
‘an iterative process that seeks to maximize the depth and richness of the
data to address the research question’ (DiCicco – Bloom and Crabtree
2006: 317; Brown, 2008). Based on the research objectives, the most
appropriate informants to answer them were considered to be the students (first and final year – at the start and the end of their training) and academic staff/placement supervisors. Whilst students and academic staff are two different sources of information, their contribution was deemed vital to explore students’ ability to manage value tensions from different perspectives. Students could describe their experiences first hand, while academic staff could add to this study by describing how they discuss anti-oppressive practice with students and how they challenge any oppressive thoughts or positions by them. Therefore, their different lenses allow multiple aspects of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood (Baxter and Jack, 2008).

It is important to mention that due to the nature of the higher education system in Greece (4 years attendance) and the urgent circumstances following the Department’s abolition, it was impossible to conduct a longitudinal study, either prospective or retrospective, for practical reasons. Therefore, a cross-sectional cohort was preferred for student informants. Whilst researching two different groups of students imposed some limitations on this study, the aim here was not to offer a causal relationship. Instead, the aim was to explore how and why students would respond to oppression and its relevant value tensions on different stages of their training.

There are no limits on the number of participants in qualitative research (Denscombe, 2002). The researcher continues selecting participants until there is no new information about the explored concepts (Cutcliffe, 2000; Starks and Brown Trinidad, 2007). This is called ‘theoretical sampling’ (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) or ‘focused sampling’ (Hakim, 1986, in de Vaus, 2001) because it is driven by the emerging theory and this is an integral part of the grounded theory process – the cyclical, iterative relationship between data collection and data analysis. Students’ records in the Undergraduates’ Office showed that 123 students were admitted to the Social Work Department in the academic year of 2012-2013, whilst 57 students had registered for their 4th year. Considering the difference in the
number of first and final year students, one can assume that many students may have not completed successfully their earlier academic semesters or have discontinued their studies. With regards to academic staff/placement supervisors, records showed 3 permanent academics (2 with social work qualifications) and 20 contract staff (16 with social work qualifications, including myself). Data protection was not breached in considering the possible size and constitution of the sample as I did not obtain individual personal contact details, just the number of registered students and employed academics.

The maximum variation strategy was adopted in order to achieve variation and heterogeneity, as well as common patterns across participants (Papadaki 2004; Patton, 1987). Such patterns are of particular interest with regard to capturing the core experiences and central, shared aspects regarding an issue (Patton, 1987). In this study, the selection of research participants was based on three main criteria: a.) students registered either for their first or final year, b.) student participants not enrolled in any of my teaching courses or in placements that I would supervise at the time the interviews were conducted and c.) academic staff/placement supervisors (permanent or contract) employed in the academic year of 2012-2013.

Students were approached in class before and after their lectures, whilst academic staff and placement supervisors were approached via a group email sent by a third party, the Committee of Dissertations within the Department. All potential participants were provided with the consent form and information sheet (see Appendices 6-9), as well as with my contact details for any queries or to arrange a convenient date/time for the interview. They were also informed that they could withdraw from participating in the study at any point and retract their data if they wished.

Initially, 22 first year and 28 final year students as well as 14 academics voluntarily contacted me wishing to take part in the research. However, not all volunteers turned up for the arranged interview, nor responded to my calls and emails to rearrange it at another convenient date/time. The
reason for not turning up for interview/responding, whilst they had approached me voluntarily, is unknown. However, an explanation may lie within the time and context, since the announcement of the Department’s abolition occurred during the data collection period (see later details). It was a time that any educational activity had stopped; there were several student occupations and initiatives/protests against this decision, so participation in a research study was probably less prioritised by informants. In addition, there were students that had volunteered to be interviewed and who appeared to be in their final year but it was clarified during discussion, prior to the interview, that they were actually in their third year, so did not meet inclusion criteria. Therefore, the final number of research participants was 40. This included 30 students - one group at the beginning of their course (n=16) and the other at the end of their studies (n=14) – and 10 academic staff members/placement supervisors.

Participants were fully informed about the research (i) in generalised discussions broaching the research, (ii) through the formal information sheet that all received; (iii) just before the interview commenced, (if they subsequently agreed to take part), and (iv) on the consent form. They were also afforded the opportunity to provide anonymously written information - if they wished - in relation to any aspects of the interview within sealed envelopes after the interview, but none were returned.

Appendices 10 and 11 provide a picture of students’ demographic characteristics and socio-economic background. In both cohorts, the overwhelming majority of students were female, under 30 (18-25 years), whilst all of them, except one first year student, were indigenous Greek nationals. In relation to their area of residence, the majority of first year students (9/16) came from rural areas, whilst the majority of final year students came from urban areas (9/14). Their socio-economic status was further revealed through their parents’ occupation, with the majority of their parents having lower-middle and working class origins. In both cohorts, the majority of parents were self-employed, private/public employees or farmers whilst several were unemployed. No parents
occupied managerial/higher level occupational posts. Last but not least, social work was the first choice degree for only in 4/16 students in the first year cohort, whilst for the final year cohort it was 7/14 students. For the rest of students, social work appeared as 2nd, 3rd or even 4th choice. The first position choices to study social work of the students who did not take part in the research are unknown.

The findings from this study reinforce prior research on social work students’ and professionals’ profiles in Greece (Ioakimidis, 2008; Koukouli et al., 2008; Papadaki, 2001; 2004), and confirm the profession’s low status in relation to attracting students from low socio-economic background and its social construction as a less prestigious and female occupation. Yet, the construction of social work as a female profession and the under-representation of diverse groups in the profile of students have also been discussed in contexts outside Greece (Gilligan, 2007; Parker and Ashencaen Crabtree, 2014; Senreich and Strausssner, 2013; Weiss, 2006). What appears to be related to the Greek context though, is the compromised choice of students to study social work, which in turn suggests an inequitable admission system that reproduces existing inequalities (i.e. those with a higher social status from more wealthy backgrounds are more likely to be admitted to other professions, such as psychology). This conclusion may well explain the earlier observation of the smaller number of students, who had registered for their final year, compared to the registration number of first year students. It is argued that compromised and unhappy students not only may drop out their studies (Papadaki, 2004), but also they are oppressed themselves. This is of great interest to explore the influence of such an unequal education system on students’ positions against oppression – as presented later in the findings and discussion of this thesis.

The profiles, qualifications, teaching and professional experience of the academic staff/placement supervisors interviewed, varied considerably, as did the types of courses that they taught and the placements they supervised. However, such details will not be discussed in this thesis as
they could reveal the identity of the research participants. Therefore, in order to protect the anonymity of participants, only the numbers of permanent and contract academics have been shared, as discussed earlier. These figures were obtained prior to the abolition of this Department and consequently, do not reflect the downsizing of staff which followed later. Yet, the small number of permanent academics reveals the logic of low cost education that has predominated in Greece, even before the crisis as discussed in Chapter 2. The context of this dis-investment in social work education and its effects will be further revealed though in participants’ accounts in Chapter 4.

3.2.2 Data collection

A case study design offers the opportunity to use a variety of methods, as discussed earlier, in order to explore the case and its context, as a whole, from multiple perspectives. It also enables issues around accuracy and appropriateness in qualitative research to be discussed as data sources are contrasted in order to reach convergence and confirmation of findings (Baxter and Jack, 2008). In this qualitative study, semi-structured interviews were used for the three different resources of information (first - final year students and academics), as shown in the following diagram.

Diagram 3.1: Data collection methods
Interviews are widely used in qualitative case studies (Merriam, 1998; Brown, 2008), as they allow the researcher to investigate and delve into personal and social meanings, with one aim being to relate them to contexts and experience (Stake, 2005; DiCicco Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). In this study, the use of semi-structured individual interviewing was deemed appropriate for the research objectives. It needs to be acknowledged that group interviewing could have been used instead of individual interviews for a range of views to be heard. However, individual interviews were chosen in preference, in order to protect the participants’ anonymity and because the sensitive nature of the topics discussed might have resulted in participants being wary of revealing their ‘true’ views within a group context, or fearing they might become upset in the presence of others. In addition, individual interviews were easier to arrange, control and transcribe.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted using thematic, open ended questions that enabled coverage of some fairly specific areas. These were mainly driven by the research objectives and the emerging concepts. A pre-designed interview schedule (see appendices 12, 13) was used and key ideas/questions emerging from the dialogue (between myself and the interviewee) were pursued in more detail (Britten, 1995; Bryman, 2004; DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). In addition, semi-structured interviews offered some form of flexibility in the wording and order of the questions. They also enabled pertinent questions to be posed that were not included in the initial guide, in order to enlighten areas of interest, probe or clarify the participant’s response. This flexibility in the questions enabled both the interviewees to tell their ‘story’ and myself to explore further or comment on areas of interest in relation to experiences of value tensions, as and when they arose in the interview situation. Another advantage of using semi-structured interviews was my status as a novice researcher, as some questions were prepared before, and I had familiarised myself in order to keep good communication, expressive and listening skills during the research dialogue. Considering the above, semi-structured interviews
approved to be an appropriate data collection method in order to tackle the research objectives, despite the fact that they were time consuming and needed good planning and preparation in relation to time, place, etc.

3.2.2.1 Reflections on the interviews

The interviews commenced at the beginning of February 2013. Following arrangements with the participants, who volunteered to be interviewed, initial interviews took place within the Department in a quiet, private office away from any external disruptions. However, difficulties occurred in early March 2013 when it was announced that the Social Work Department was to be abolished by the Ministry.

This announcement meant, data collection had to be speeded up in order to safeguard the data collection process. Therefore, all interviews were completed by July 2013. This did not have any impact on the methodology of the research. However, the specific and unforeseen circumstances which emerged (students’ occupation of the social work department until April 2013, student movements against the abolition decision, no access to university premises and offices and the cessation of any educational activity), required me to adapt the interview arrangements. Therefore, some of the interviews that were conducted during March and April could not take place in the above mentioned private office. Some interviews therefore had to take place in the park within the academic premises and in a private office in the TEI library. Despite the fact that these places were semi-public, this did seem not impact on the interviews and participants, as there were no interruptions and no breach of participants’ anonymity occurred at any time. The remaining interviews, following the end of students’ occupation (April 2013), continued to be conducted in the first private office as mentioned above.

The duration of the interviews was on average 45-50 minutes and they were audio recorded via a digital recorder. Before the beginning of the interview, again the aim of this research was explained. Participants were guaranteed their confidentiality and they were informed that they could
refuse to answer any specific questions or terminate the interview or the use of their data at any point in time. No participant objected to the recording of the interviews, they all confirmed that they understood the research process and content and they all signed off the consent forms (see Appendices 6, 7).

The interviews initially involved questions about the background/demographic information of participants. This is known as the ‘initial apprehension phase’ (DiCicco Bloom and Crabtree, 2006: 316), where both the interviewer and interviewee are gradually introduced to the main themes of the interview. The interviews with students involved questions around their understanding and beliefs about diversity and oppression/discrimination, reflections on the social work role against these, their ability to manage value tensions in relation to anti-oppressive practice and their expectations about/comments on their education and anti-oppressive practice. Academic staff was asked questions in relation to the content of their teaching/supervision, anti-oppressive training and students’ response, as well as students’ ability to resolve value tensions related to anti-oppressive practice.

All participants were very talkative about their educational experience within the Department, the context of higher education and the wider socio-political context. I listened to them carefully and actively, asking open-ended questions when appropriate in order to get more information about the issues raised. With regards to more personal and sensitive questions about their positions/understandings/actions, participants were further probed to expand on their descriptions or give examples. In trying to make sense of their view of reality, I repeated the words or phrases used by the interviewees, and I sought clarification when appropriate to confirm my understanding and interpretation of their views and experiences. I was sometimes corrected by the interviewees or asked to repeat/explain the questions further.
After the interview, participants were offered debriefing for relief and comfort. During this, no participant expressed any concerns about the interview or related aspects that worried them. However, it was notable that all participants used this debriefing for sharing their thoughts and fears on the incidents following the abolition of the Department and the attack on (social work) education. These discussions took the form of an informal conversation and it was clear that these would not be considered as part of the interview. However, I acknowledge that by hearing these thoughts from participants I would in some way have been influenced by them in my approach to the data analysis of the formal data I had recorded.

3.2.3 Data analysis

According to Kvale (2007) analysis is not an isolated stage of the research process but starts with the research objectives from the very beginning and continues with the data collection methods. In the case of this study, as explained earlier, data analysis and collection were concurrent until theoretical saturation emerged. This can be described as a back and forth procedure where the new emerging information influenced and adapted questions/themes in data collection until the point no new observations were forthcoming. However, this section will shed further light on the analytical strategies, as explained below.

3.2.3.1 Transcription

Transcription is part of the analysis and theoretical in its nature, due to the selectivity of information that is recorded (Davidson, 2009). Recording all the features and interaction of spoken language is considered as impossible; therefore, a number of models have been developed within literature to guide transcription practices (i.e. Mclellan et al., 2003; Oliver et al., 2005). Despite their diversity, common agreement within these models is the need for the researcher to acknowledge and explain transcription selectivity and process.
In this study, transcription started immediately with the data collection. All interviews were listened to once first and then transcribed verbatim. Punctuation marks were inserted like commas and full stops (periods) whilst the text was structured with speech markers and paragraphing as close as possible to speech presentation. In addition, pauses were noted using the symbol ‘...’ for short pauses, and ‘.....’ for longer pauses. No attention was paid to humming or other types of sounds, as well as to oral features such as ‘ums’ and ‘ers’. This decision was made on the basis that a linguistic analysis was not the aim and because such a transcript would be difficult to read too (Davidson, 2009). No additional notes were made on the transcript to indicate affective responses such as anger or irony because the person transcribing was the same as the person who had carried out the interviews (the researcher). Therefore, the sound memory was relied on to embellish the affective text of the transcript. Following transcription, the interviews were listened for a third time to ensure accuracy. Overall, the transcription was a long process, which lasted approximately two-three hours for each interview. However, before discussing data analysis, it is crucial to reflect on the translation decisions and dilemmas that I faced.

3.2.3.2 Translation dilemmas

This study took place in Greece but as I was a PhD student studying at and supervised by a British University, this meant, this thesis had to be submitted in English. The decision related to when/how of translation is deeply political and methodological; it is not just about cultural meanings but also the power of cross-cultural relationships (Temple and Young, 2004).

In literature, different approaches are debated in relation to the timing and process of translation in cross-language qualitative research (i.e. Caretta, 2015; Fersch, 2013; Santos et al., 2015; Temple, 2008; Temple and Young, 2004; van Nes et al., 2010). Issues such as whether the researcher is a native/fluent speaker of the source and/or target language as well as
the possibility of using a translator, are acknowledged as important factors that need to be considered for making translation decisions. In this study, my background as a native Greek speaker, educated in English as well as having lived and worked in Britain for four years, informed my decision to stay in the source language (Greek) as long as possible to avoid potential loss in the cultural meanings and understandings that are inherited in language (Santos et al., 2015; Temple, 2008; van Nes et al., 2010).

Therefore, the interviews were conducted, transcribed and analysed in Greek, since important nuances and themes could potentially be lost or be corrupted in the course of translation. Only the final themes of the analysis and some abstracts of the text were translated directly and verbatim into English for the writing purposes of this thesis. Yet, this was not sufficient to fully resolve the dilemma associated with inadvertently mistranslating and losing the core meaning because of language/culture barriers.

In order to tackle this quandary, the translation during some occasions was not word for word, but the focus was on retaining its accurate meaning. In the presentation of findings, it is shown and explained in footnotes where such meaning translation occurred. However, it needs to be acknowledged that this process was not straightforward, as interviewees had on occasions used slang language, metaphors or words that were impossible to accurately and directly translate into a different language. I therefore had to carefully and reflectively think about the meaning and sometimes searched in resources like dictionaries and thesauruses to find the closest match words or concepts in English. In two occasions, I also sought advice from an academic Greek – British researcher49 in order to avoid missing any valuable data or meanings.

It has been suggested that the researcher/translator role – one that I assumed in this study – should involve staying as close to the data in

49 This ‘translator’ only received anonymised material to audit, translate and discuss translations of.
source language as possible, thereby strengthening the validity of data analysis (Caretta, 2015; Temple and Young, 2004). Yet, as Fersch (2013) argues, on this occasion, interpretation in the target language that is not the researcher's native one may be a significant challenge. Whilst potential meaning loss is acknowledged in this thesis, my experience was that reading and writing in English led to also thinking in English (the target language) during analysis. This has also been discussed by van Nes et al. (2010), who observed this influence of ‘foreign’ languages to their native one in their analysis too. Last but not least, the use of my supervision as a PhD student to discuss and get feedback on the interpretation of such cultural meanings proved to be an essential methodological strategy in tackling translation dilemmas.

### 3.2.3.3 Coding and categorisation

Along with transcription, the text was carefully read again and again to familiarise myself thoroughly with the data. The analysis of interviews was based on techniques like repeated sorting, coding and constant comparison that characterise grounded theory. Coding, can be understood as ‘categorizing segments of data with a short name that simultaneously summarises and accounts for each piece of data’ (Charmaz, 2006). These pieces of text were highlighted, compared and contrasted with each other constantly in order to find consistencies (similar meanings, pattern matching) or differences among data. This approach is referred to as the constant comparison method of data analysis in grounded theory (Brown, 2008; Cutcliffe, 2000; 2005; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Merriam, 1998; Starks and Brown Trinidad, 2007; Verschuren, 2003). Themes were constructed then by placing similar data together. However, this was not just a simple grouping process; instead, it was an iterative dialogue where complex and inclusive categories emerged through constant comparison between data within each and across all interviews (Walker and Mylick, 2006; Wasserman et al., 2009).
A helpful tool to understand the data was to ask questions like: ‘What is happening in the data?’; ‘What do I have here?’; ‘What if…’; ‘What codes, categories or concepts do I need to account for the phenomena?’ (Chiovitti and Piran, 2003; Cutcliffe, 2000; 2005). Through the use of these methods and memos (see below) within an iterative process of back and forth, categories and their links led to the core category. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), the core category is the central phenomenon around which all other categories are integrated. Therefore, in our case this central phenomenon was named ‘The content and context of social work education in which students experience and manage their value tensions in relation to anti-oppressive practice’.

3.2.3.4 Memo-ing/research diary

As explained earlier, in qualitative research, the researcher is not considered separate from the data but as an integral and influential part of the process. Considering this inherited subjectivity, I used memo-ing as a reflective account throughout the research for operational decisions (what/when/how/who/why), coding purposes and theoretical concepts (see Appendix 14). Therefore, it would not be an exaggeration to say that this account can be seen as an audit trail or a chronicle of my research journey (Birks et al., 2008).

Memos/diary notes are narrative written drafts on which the researcher records not only their pre-conceptions prior to the conduct of the study but also any concept/idea/feelings that emerges during the data collection and analysis process (Birks et al., 2008; Starks and Brown Trinidad, 2007). Memos can be produced in many ways (word processor, computer software, mobile applications) but I chose to use a pen and a notebook. This notebook became so valued to me that I always had it with me and constantly noted down emerging ideas or concepts in it. Initially, my memos were more general and operational, taking the form of a question sometimes. For example: ‘What do I want to study?’ and ‘How am I going to approach students?’. However, over time, memo-ing changed to more
complex thoughts related to data analysis and theory development. Ideas for coding or how different codes related to categories were written in my memo, as well as how theoretical concepts might help me understand and interpret the findings. For example: identification of categories like ‘students’ resolution of value conflicts’ and interpretation such as ‘students’ positions (subjectivity) are carriers of the power/knowledge of the wider discourse’. These memos proved significant in order to preserve ideas for later review, reflect on my position and subjectivity, and keep a rigorous and reflective account to support the validity of the research study.

3.3 Ethical issues and rigour

In a study which is concerned with value tensions and anti-oppressive practice it would be a paradox not to consider the relevant ethical issues and the ethical dilemmas/tensions I faced myself throughout my research journey. However, thinking about these well in advance prior to data collection and analysis as well as responding to challenges as they emerged was not easy and straightforward. As Shaw (2003: 11) argues, ‘naivety about ethics is itself unethical’. Before discussing and critically reflecting on such issues, it is important to note that this study was scrutinised and approved both by the University of Manchester ethics committee (reference number 12343) and the Head of the Department in Greece.

3.3.1 Protecting the interests of participants

3.3.1.1 Avoiding stress and discomfort

Since this study involved discussing some sensitive issues (personal values for diversity-oppression-discrimination/ personal teaching approach) with participants, I was cognisant that this could potentially cause some intense feelings or physical discomfort. Therefore, a number of measures were taken in order to anticipate such risk and attempt to minimise negative effects.
Participants were informed that they could withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. They were also assured that this withdrawal would not disadvantage them or their status - as a social work student, for example, - within the TEI, in any way. They were made aware that there was no right or wrong answer to any of the questions and that I was not expecting or hoping for any specific responses. Furthermore, participants were offered the opportunity to opt out of any question that they wanted or to provide anonymously written information in relation to any aspects of the interview. It was acknowledged, prior to data collection, that participants may feel that they could not answer at all or in full detail some of the questions (i.e. admitting discriminatory beliefs or positive/negative comments about my or other academic staff’s teaching) due to their fear of being perceived unfavourably by myself. Therefore, envelopes were given out to participants which they could deliver sealed to the secretary of the Undergraduates’ Office for my attention, if they felt they wanted to add to anything to what they had said in the interview or to answer questions more honestly that they had felt compromised answering in front of one of their lecturers.

I was also prepared to provide psychological support, if appropriate, and debrief participants after the interview, in case any aspects of the interview had left them unsettled or anxious (Denscombe, 2007; DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). As discussed earlier, participants used this debriefing mainly for sharing thoughts, experiences and fears about the abolition of the Department rather than issues related to the interview. In addition, interviewees were aware of specific staff members whom I had nominated to be contacted for support after the interview. Last but not least, they were also aware that in the event they wanted to discuss the research in more detail with a neutral 3rd party or to express any concerns about the way it was conducted or subsequent negative effects, they could initially contact my PhD supervisors or the University of Manchester Research Office.
Despite the fact that no participant refused to answer specific questions or used any of the above measures, the intention of the study was not to cause any harm to participants. Interviewees were accepted and carefully listened to in order to understand and learn about their beliefs and experiences. Even when some students and academics presented with discriminatory beliefs and/or inappropriate attitudes (see further details below), my judgments were suspended as my role was neither to upset the interviewee, nor to preach or put them on the defensive.

3.3.1.2 Confidentiality/security of the data

All information shared by participants has been treated as strictly confidential in this thesis. However, I need to acknowledge the dilemmas that I experienced within my dual roles, as both an educator and a researcher, and the tensions between those roles. I was cautious that participants could potentially raise an issue of unethical practice within the TEI; therefore, prior to the interviews, students were informed about the formal complaints’ procedures that the Department had in place and what they could be used for. Participants were also informed that only if they revealed a serious criminal act against a person or disclosed that someone was currently at risk of significant harm that would confidentiality have to be breached and some action taken.

There were, however, some interviews where the position students adopted made me concerned about their suitability for the profession and some other interviews where students and staff raised issues of inappropriate practice/supervision within the TEI and placements. However, no participant decided to make a complaint about these. Whilst I had read about such dilemmas in literature (Humphrey, 2012) and was aware this could occur with my research too, the situation was, nevertheless, not an easy one to manage and could be stressful. I was, however, ultimately obliged to prioritise my researcher role over the one of the educator and keep this information confidential.
Another important ethical issue was data security. Data were anonymised immediately after the interviews prior to being put in an electronic format. In addition, the records and transcriptions of the interviews are stored on the University of Manchester’s server to which I have access via my personal computer which is encrypted. The university’s server requires also a password for access.

3.3.1.3 Protection of identities: anonymity

The preservation of interviewees’ anonymity has been a key concern during this research. In the presentation of findings, participants’ names are kept confidential and code names are used instead, for example ‘student 1’ and ‘interviewee 1’. The identity of students has been kept anonymous in all circumstances (including from peers or academic staff of the Department). Correspondingly, the identity of academic staff has not been revealed to any other participant – student or colleague.

Furthermore, regarding participants’ profiles, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, in the case of academics there was some concern that identities might have been revealed indirectly through what was said if some anonymised details were nonetheless given. Therefore, it was decided that the study should not reveal personal details like gender, ethnic origin, age group; academic status -whether they are permanent or contract staff – and which module/placement they are teaching/supervising. Whilst this anonymity limits the analysis of the research in relation to academic staff’s profile and role, it protects the informants. Instead, the focus is given to how they discuss value tensions in class and their experiences with students’ ability to resolve these.

3.3.1.4 Informed consent

Consent in research (Charmaz, 2006; Robson, 2007) is about the right of self-determination and autonomy; therefore, researchers need to ensure the participant’s adequate information, understanding, voluntariness and actual consent to participate. Therefore a clear and transparent jargon free
information sheet (see appendices 8 and 9) was given to the participants prior to the research, explaining the purpose, process and content of the study. Furthermore, as explained earlier, participants were informed that they could withdraw at any time during the research or refuse to answer any specific questions as part of their right to privacy (in interview). Whilst informants voluntarily agreed to take part in the research, an actual consent form (see appendices 6 and 7) was also signed at the beginning of every interview in order to ensure that every attempt had been made to achieve an accurate understanding and voluntary agreement to proceed. In addition, it was agreed that a brief summary of the results of research could be sent on completion of the research to all participants, if desired.

3.3.2 Protecting the rigour of the research

There have been many academic debates about what rigour means in qualitative research and what standards or criteria it should be judged by (Berger, 2015; D’ Cruz and Jones, 2004; Garton and Copeland, 2010; Guillemin and Gilam, 2004; Tracy, 2010). Qualitative case studies have been subject to much criticism (i.e. Tight, 2010; Verschuren, 2003), with their credibility and validity in relation to generating theory being questioned. Much scepticism has been voiced about the trustworthiness and transferability of qualitative research findings and how the researcher’s attitudes, political beliefs and theoretical allegiances might impact upon the questions they ask and how they interpret and theorise their findings. Whilst there are debates within the literature about whether the terms of ‘validity’ and ‘credibility’ should be used to judge qualitative research or not (Iosifidis, 2008), some authors (for example, Hammersley, 1992; 2007; Morse et al., 2002; Porter, 2007) assert that such concepts are still useful for qualitative research. Therefore, the term rigour in qualitative research could incorporate concepts such as credibility, reliability, validity and transparency through a detailed and reflective description of the decisions (when/how/why) that defined and drove the process (Baxter and Jack, 2008; Chiovitti and Piran, 2003; Morse et al., 2002). One important process/method which might help achieve this
sincerity is also self-reflexivity according to Tracy (2010). In this study, a rigorous approach has been taken throughout this chapter revealing strengths and limitations of methodology; decisions, challenges and responses to sampling, data collection and data analysis stages. However, some further issues need to be acknowledged in order to protect the rigour of this study.

### 3.3.2.1 The role of the self

Flyvbjerg (2004) argues that placing oneself within the researched context leads to the most advanced and nuanced form of understanding. In this study, it needs to be acknowledged that my status as a member of the academic staff (on contract) in the research’s case at the time that the research was conducted, offered some opportunities as well as limitations/ethical dilemmas.

At the time of data collection, I had been working in this Department for 3 academic years so I had the advantages of being an insider researcher (Berger, 2015; Humphrey, 2012). I had gained a good inside knowledge of the case from the perspective of a lecturer – including its environment, institutional culture and processes. This familiarity and knowledge provided me with valuable insights and an awareness of what I was researching and how I should best approach and conduct this research. I was also a familiar face so this contributed to facilitating my access to the field and gaining the trust of the participants (Mikecz, 2012). However, this familiarity with the research setting also had potential disadvantages, one of which related to power dynamics and inequalities at different institutional levels.

In relation to students (1st year), there was no direct professional involvement since I was teaching on later semesters. Whilst I did not have any direct professional involvement with final year students too, all students had attended one or two modules that I taught or placements that I supervised. Therefore, whether the informant was a student (who I taught before or I was going to) or a member of staff, I had to be aware of issues
around how I was perceived by interviewees and how this could affect their voluntariness to participate and provide honest responses. This chapter has described in depth already the measures that I took in order to ensure that participants were well informed about the purpose, process and content of this research and that their participation was not perceived as an institutional requirement.

In the interview setting, participants and I had to negotiate our ‘new’ identities as interviewer and interviewee (Garton and Copeland, 2010). This was found to be easier with first year students as we did not have a prior relationship already – in most occasions it was the first time we were meeting. Yet, the influence of my educational role was observed when a few students asked me operational questions which had to do with the Department, for example “when will the lectures start again?”, “do you know when we will be informed of our grades in x module?”. Such questions emerged mostly in the debriefing stage of the interview; I did not deny providing them with information that I knew or to explain where they could access such. In relation to final year students and academics though, the power dynamics of our double-roles were more complex. During the interview, some final year students and academics when they discussed about their experiences within education shared their memories that included myself, for example “it was when we did that exercise together...do you remember?” (student) and “I remember in this office the meeting we had, which...” (academic). Anderson et al. (2010) describe these as the politics of location/position, explaining that ‘place’ does not have only a geographical sense, for example the office that the research was conducted, but also a social sense based on the meaning of specific memories and experiences. Therefore, it is acknowledged that my position may have influenced the type of information obtained from informants but it did not seem to inhibit a rigorous theory development (Garton and Copland, 2010; Guillemin and Gillam, 2004).

In addition, as I discussed earlier, the dual roles of (researcher/teacher and researcher/colleague) clashed on occasions when the informants shared
opinions or practice observations that were of concern. Moreover, it needs to be noted that the data collection and analysis took place during a time of crisis: the abolition of the Department and a wider oppressive context. It was a time when both students and colleagues were upset about what had happened and also worried about the effects of this on their studies/work. These circumstances were unforeseen, and since I was part of that Department too, they influenced me as well. I was experiencing similar feelings to those my informants expressed - fear, anxiety and disappointment. It was consequently hard to remain impartial and not to ‘guide’ participants in specific directions or to impose my values and experiences when analysing the data.

Considering the above, my role as an insider researcher (researching the institution where I was working at the time; researching my prospective/older students and colleagues; being part of critical events – abolition of the Department) involved various dilemmas. I was to some extent living shared experiences with my informants (particularly with respect to closure of the department) and it was very difficult at times to filter the information coming directly from the research process and that arising from my everyday life during data collection and analysis. I was a researcher with dual roles (educator-researcher and colleague-researcher) in a time of national as well as local crisis (abolition) and my determination was to report my informants’ experiences and not mine; but of course how I reported those experiences was inevitably influenced by my living them too. In the analysis that follows (Chapter 4) I have sought to be transparent about this in how the data are presented and in the subsequent discussion (Chapter 5). Also, the process of hearing, analysing and presenting my informants’ stories was something that I found personally challenging and I sought to avoid editing out content that I might find consciously or unconsciously painful given the circumstances. I was also fearful of presenting alarming findings through my writing in case they could be used to blame students, colleagues and/or the Department without considering the complex and oppressive context.
Despite these challenges, considering the centrality of protecting the rigour of this research – as demonstrated throughout this chapter - my positionality could be seen as an insider/outsider continuum and not dichotomy (Mikecz, 2012).

I could not change my personal attributes or the circumstances that occurred during the research; however, it was imperative to be reflexive and critical as a continuous deliberate effort. This involved reflecting upon my research practice, examining myself and recording my feelings, being honest and clear about what I was doing and why and having an open mind. Here, the use of my research notebook/memo-ing was crucial in documenting the above. In addition, my supervision as a doctoral student proved to be pivotal in remaining close to the data, checking and challenging my interpretations, as well as being provided debriefing from such political and socio-emotional circumstances (Baxter and Jack, 2008; Humphrey, 2012).

3.3.2.2 Limitations and contribution of this study

Throughout this chapter, a rigorous and transparent account was given related to decisions and responses to challenges about this research’s design and methods. Strengths and limitations have been discussed and it is within these that this study needs to be seen.

It is important to note that my intention was not to use this research as a retrospective justification of the abolition of this Social Work Department. Instead, my fear is that social work practice and education in Greece is under threat and it is more important than ever to redefine its mission against oppression wherever it comes from.

It needs to be acknowledged also that this study’s findings refer to one Department of Social Work in Greece (the research’s case), at a specific time of period (spring 2013) and they cannot be generalised for the whole social work education in Greece, either at the same time or other times. However, this is the first time that research of this kind has been conducted
in Greece and it is valuable as it can initiate further debate and dialogue about social work education, not only at a national level but in other countries too, especially those experiencing serious financial and political crises.

Flyvbjerg (2004, 2006) suggests that such generalisation is the result of the force of example – the rich understandings based on detailed descriptions interpreted in the particular context. As Stake (1994: 245) explained

‘The purpose of case study is not to represent the world, but to represent the case … the utility of case research to practitioners and policy makers is in its extension of experience’.

How might this experience can be extended though? Simons (2009; 2015) argues that the context and particularity of the case study enable an interpretation in context, to discover in other words something universal in the particular. The context of this study and the content of social work education, as revealed in the informants’ accounts in the following chapters, may reflect the wider Western context in some ways, where social work education is less prioritised and individualism is reinforced within social services under a neo-liberal agenda. Therefore, what can we learn from this research’s case? How can we inform our content of social work education in order to be anti-oppressive? What kind of social work context should we advocate for? In the light of these questions, the reader of this thesis - as an active participant - is called to personally determine whether or not this study’s findings and conclusions reveal insights for their own context (Baxter and Jack, 2008).

3.4 Summary

This chapter provided a detailed and transparent account on the research methodology and methods. Using a qualitative case study methodology, the research was based in one Social Work Department, in southwest Greece. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with three groups of informants, first and final year students (n=32) and academic staff (n=10). The overwhelming majority of students were female, indigenous Greek
nationals, coming from lower-middle and working class backgrounds. It was also noted that social work was not the first choice degree for the majority of students, suggesting, therefore, an inequitable admission system that reproduces existing inequalities. Strengths and limitations of the methodology, as well as decisions on unforeseen circumstances that occurred (abolition of the Department) are all discussed and justified. Lastly, ethical issues and the role of myself are critically explained, setting the framework for the presentation of data analysis in the next chapter, as follows.
Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the interviews with the participants of this study. The analysis is divided into three sections, categorised by groups of informants. Sample 1 includes the first year students (16 interviewees), sample 2, the final year students (14 interviewees) and sample 3, the academic staff (10 interviewees). In addition, the chapter is structured under the overarching categories that were identified, enriched with the participants’ quotes. Moreover, clarifications and explanations of translation meanings are provided, where appropriate. Last but not least, the aim of this chapter is not to compare and interpret the positions of the different groups of informants (see Chapter 5); instead, the emphasis here is to provide a thorough presentation of each group’s views and accounts, as follows.

4.1 Sample 1: First year students

This is the analysis of the interviews conducted with first year students. The core categories analysed involve students’ motivations and choice to study social work, their beliefs about diversity and oppression, their positions about anti-oppressive social work and their expectations of their education.

4.1.1 Social work studies choice

Through exploring their choices, it was observed that human and social sciences were predominant among students’ choices. Interestingly, it seems that social work studies were not the first choice of most applicants (see table 3.1). Among the 16 interviewees, only 4 students said that it was their first choice. Instead, the majority of students (7) had chosen psychology or speech therapy (3), nursery teaching (1) and foreign languages (1). Some students expressed their disappointment about this result, but no regret for entering social work, for example “I got upset, but I liked social work too” (student 7) and “It is annoying that I lost speech therapy for 10 credits, but I like social work very much, I don’t regret it “
(student 14). Nonetheless, all students have included social work on their three top choices. However, what does motivate social work students to enter into the profession?

4.1.2 Motivation to study social work

All students expressed an interest in human and social sciences. In relation to social work, a variety of motivating factors were reported. It was observed that none of the students had one exclusive motivation but many simultaneously.

The motivation that seemed most predominated among the majority of students (11) was the view of social work as a vocation/calling to humanity. For example: “I always wanted to do a profession which I see as a vocation/calling. I cannot understand the cold professionalism – money making...” (student 3). Students here discussed the pleasure of offering, and the need to help others or even to change the world. They stated: “I wanted a profession to help others – it may sounds a bit egocentric – but I receive personal pleasure helping others...” (student 11); “It is a pleasure for myself to offer. I don’t know, I feel that I become a better person” (student 12) and “I believe I can change the world” (student 6). It is interesting here that the notion of offering is against selfishness according to two students. Student 8 felt that “I am not just a selfish being that I will do everything for myself. I can help others” and student 13 expressed “All young children are selfish and want everything for themselves so I don’t remember myself wanting to help. However, you learn this, as you grow up, to offer and not receive”. However, whilst a genuine interest in humanity appears to be promising, it may also be oppressive, as it does not involve an equal and empowering relationship between the self and the ones ‘in need’. Additionally, it is interesting to highlight that there was no reference to motivations of tackling social injustice or oppression.

The above missionary statements were given in conjunction with self-reports of having an appropriate character or talent for being a social
worker. For example, student 11 said “It was my dream. I feel that I am made for this vocation since I like offering, it is of my character...”. This is in agreement with other students who described their talent in helping or saving others: “I have the talent to help others successfully, I have helped a lot of persons and even in extreme cases I have managed to save them on the last moment” (student 1) and “...since I was young, I had something, helping my friends, my family, which I liked it...and because I am very good in this - it is coming naturally out of me - I said I will follow this (social work)” (student 12). Aside from this talent, some students also described their character as appropriate for social work because of their communication or empathetic skills. For example, student 14 stated “...I always listened to the problems of other people. I can support them, feel their pain, and even cry with them. Others’ problems will touch me and I will try to find a solution...”. Two students provided contradictory definitions for the appropriate character with the one suggesting that it is a matter of “sensitivity” (student 6) and the other that it is about “being strong and stronger from others” (student 12). What is evident from these quotes is students’ focus on their self. Their quotes reveal self-orientated motivations, and an emphasis on their abilities and qualities. Is it an offering or self-centred self then?

This focus on the self, was further revealed by two students who noted that their motivations were the resolution of their personal problems, and gaining self-awareness through their studies of social work. For example, “I wanted social work first to understand myself and second for being well...” (student 6) and “…social work will fulfil me as a person. I will be able to manage my problems better” (student 14). It is alarming that social work candidates consider social work as the resolution of their own personal problems, and not as a profession to challenge injustice, and to promote social change. In light of this focus on the self by students, it is worth wondering whether they will be able to challenge and change this self within their education.
Social work was also described by four students as a profession based in praxis and not in theory with the opportunity of attending placements. This was considered as a feature that motivated them to apply for social work. More specifically, their willingness to learn the ‘how to’ in their practice appeared to be more attractive than psychology or other professions. In addition to this, financial reasons were discussed by two students, for example “...because things are very difficult and you can’t leave for another city – you have to consider these factors too – therefore I chose to stay here (home) and study what I liked too” (student 1). Student 12 also raised the importance of studying a profession such as social work with job security abroad. These financial and career reasons appear to reflect current financial crisis in Greece, with a rising trend of immigration seeking job security, and more importantly survival.

Last but not least, students referred to another two motivating factors. First, the influence of a third person who is a social worker (3 students) and second, having a personal or familial experience of being supported by social services (2 students). The former influences were by experienced social workers in the family environment who advised students on social work education’s content, career prospects and social work practice. The latter motivating factor involved their personal observation of the work and practice of a social worker and a mimicking will.

As a summative note, in relation to students’ motivations and choice to study social work, it is observed that students focused more on their able, talented and offering self than the consideration of social work as the profession towards social justice issues. Such an approach appears to be founded on an oppressive us/them relation, incompatible with the profession. Therefore, it is worth exploring how these students view diversity and oppression, as follows.

50 The word that was used in the interviews was the Greek word ‘διαφορετικότητα’. Whilst the English words diversity and difference do not offer the same meaning (the notion of difference is central for ‘othering’, see discussion in Chapter 1), the above word in Greek can be used for both
4.1.3 Beliefs/perceptions about diversity and oppression

Students were asked to explore a variety of issues in relation to diversity and oppression including their views on society’s responses to these concerns, and their personal attitudes and beliefs too. The following description is based on their social constructions about the self and the other as discussed in the interview setting.

4.1.3.1 Reference to minorities

Students were asked to name and describe any oppressed groups/minorities that they were aware of, and a variety of accounts were given. The majority of students (14) demonstrated an ability to name a number of oppressed groups/minorities, although two students had difficulty with this as evidenced by long pauses and/or direct comments: “I am not sure” and “I don’t really know”.

The majority of these 14 students referred to ethnicity (14) and disability (10) as the most oppressed identities within Greek society. In relation to ethnicity, it was observed that students focused on the immigrant or refugee status as being oppressed whilst they also referred to specific countries of origin: Albanians, Pakistanis, Palestinians and black people as the ones that have been most discriminated and oppressed by Greeks among other immigrant groups. It is important to note here that some students (3) when they talked about immigrants and refugees, used discriminatory terms to describe them such as ‘foreigners’ (in Greek: αλλοδαποί, ξένοι). It was also observed that the majority of students initially used the word ‘immigrants’, but later in the interview, they called them ‘foreigners’. However, further analysis of students’ language will be discussed later.

Students also referred to sexual orientation (5), Roma (3) and women (2) as further oppressed identities in Greece. They also named exclusively meanings. Therefore, in this analysis we will refer to ‘diversity’ as the Greek translation of both meanings.
Muslims in Thrace; unemployed people; homeless; substance misusers; AIDS; older people; poor; children; shy children at school; and traffic lights children\(^{51}\). However, it was observed that only six students reflected on how being a minority equates with being minoritised. These students used quotes like: “I think our sensitivity is decreased when you see a disabled in the street. When you see a person with mobility impairment/disability you identify this with a brain problem. They are a minority.” (student 4) and “…We don’t treat them as human beings…” (student 10). Instead, the other 8 students identified what it was to be a minority in terms of classifications which demonstrated either minority of numbers or traits that were seen to be different from the mainstream, for example: “…minorities are mainly any people who don’t share the same culture or roots with us” (student 8). Such view of otherness could be described as over simplistic, and narrow with the danger of reinforcing personal oppressive positions and social oppression too. Therefore, it was worth wondering how these social work candidates explain oppression.

### 4.1.3.2 Description of Greek society’s attitude towards diversity

All students discussed Greek society’s oppressive attitudes towards diversity providing vivid descriptions of it. It is interesting to note here that when they talked about Greek society they excluded themselves from it by using different pronoun as ‘they’ and ‘their actions’. Greek society was characterised as negative (7), racist (5), not accepting (3), intolerant (2) as well as very closed, fearful and ignorant towards diversity (3). It was observed that this oppressive attitude was perceived as endemic, and not as isolated exceptions, offering a cultural trait to Greek society which is going to be discussed later.

Students did not offer just a number of characteristics of Greek society. Instead, they reflected on their experiences of witnessing oppressive

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\(^{51}\) This is referred to children that beg or work in traffic lights in Greece, selling products or offering services like cleaning the glass of the car’s windshield.
language and attitudes, even violent behaviours including the school environment. Six students witnessed bullying in school towards different children: “It was so bad, I had classmates that were from other countries and they were treated very badly. Other children hit them, swore at them or called them names...” (student 5). Student 15 also added “I have seen children 10-15 years old in my village, organised in groups against foreigners and they do extreme things like going into their houses and hitting them!”. However, the oppression seems not only to come from classmates, but from school staff too, as student 3 revealed “I had a school teacher who was well educated. Yet, he self-reported as a racist and he was saying to us that immigrants are disgusting and Pakistani people stink”. The oppression in the school environment was considered to be a reflection of the micro level of society’s wider oppression as discussed by them. “I have seen people looking with pity individuals with disability or considering them inferior too...” (student 8) and “…minorities were good as long as they could be used, for example, Albanians in building construction or farms, giving them a piece of bread” (student 3).

Considering that these students have witnessed oppression as an endemic and conventional relation towards otherness, it is worth wondering its impact on their own deeper social constructions about diversity, oppression and more importantly social work’s role into these.

The concept of multiple oppressions was also revealed by one student, who migrated to Greece with her family from another Balkan country when she was young:

“... When I was in school and complained about something, I was treated as the ‘foreigner’ that if I don’t like it here I should go home. ... I have been also called names like the ‘beautiful Russian girl’... We built a house in the village and they say - pointing at us - in a negative way, ‘look they have a house, they are going on holidays, and their child will study at the university’. ... Recently we paid 700 Euros each (for obtaining citizenship) and despite the fact that I went to school here, they abolished the citizenship...”

52 ‘a piece of bread’ is a negative term that means poor payment (in Greek: ένα κομμάτι ψωμί).
53 This implies a negative and sexual meaning in Greece.
law. Without citizenship I can’t find a job. It seems that you will always be a foreigner in a foreign country...

In this revealing quote the interaction of various sources and intersecting forms of oppression is observed. Therefore, being a woman and an immigrant from an ethnicity which attracts negative attitudes seems to attract both sexist and racist beliefs. A significant aspect of anti-oppressive practice is also observed: oppression does not come only by persons, but is also embedded in institutions too, like here in the unequal treatment by law in employment and education.

Three students felt that society seeks to provide excuses for being oppressive, by falling into stigmatisation based on a blaming approach: “They put a label that since somebody is an Albanian, he is a thief” (student 1); “You walk in the street and you see other people accusing immigrants for taking our jobs...” (student 8) and “they say ‘Greece cannot fit any more people, they can’t be here, so hitting them is for good’ or any other violent behaviour” (student 10). Here, student 12 added that “...they find diversity problematic. This is obvious from the fact that they voted Golden Dawn to be in the parliament”. Considering the above accounts, one may wonder how students explain an oppressive society – which is discussed in the following section or even where students position themselves within their (oppressive) society – which will be explored later.

4.1.3.3 Explanation for society’s oppression

When students were asked what they thought was/were the reason(s) for oppression within Greek society, different explanations were given and it was revealed that most students held positive and negative beliefs/perceptions simultaneously. It needs to be acknowledged that only 4 students out of 16, expressed positive beliefs exclusively while the rest fell into a blaming approach towards minorities, which they did not recognise themselves.
4.1.3.3.1 The structural approach

Students explained a number of factors which appear to share a dynamic relationship and co-exist. The majority (11) of students offered the structural roots of oppression raising the role of the inter-play between the current socio-economic crisis in Greece, and the state with no care/welfare arrangements for minorities and economic-led social policies. The state was not only described as absent, but also as out-dated. Student 11 also added to the oppressive profile of the state: “...the state sees diversity as a ‘problem’ and this makes it very difficult for the foundation of freedom”. Moreover, the continuous austerity measures have resulted in Greeks “being indignant” (student 12) which in turn, increased discrimination and oppression and especially raised fascism (i.e. Golden Dawn political party) according to students. Student 5 explained:

“Especially nowadays, xenophobia influences people to turn into racists” and student 11 added “oppression can be seen through political incidents, the parties/organisations that have been created, their support from citizens, how easily they can be persuaded and trust an image that is half-true – I am referring to Golden Dawn that has shocked us. The financial crisis influenced their spread”.

Within these quotes it is observed that students consider individuals’ (or personal) oppressive attitudes as the product of the structural oppression in institutions and its adopted policies. However, for 3 students this oppressive spread didn’t come all of a sudden. Student 2 explained:

“If we go a step backwards and we see more clearly, it is not sudden. It existed around us and we didn’t want to admit it or they didn’t express it out loudly. Now with the crisis people turned to the extreme. And what had been simmering in the past, now it is bubbling...”.

What has been simmering all these years?

Ten students offered a cultural trait – as discussed earlier - rooting oppression in Greeks’ “mentality”. From their descriptions it appears that this mentality is linked to a lack of empathy, blaming approach and power issues (4). In relation to the lack of empathy student 15 said, “They don’t
know/understand what these people (minorities) have been through! They
don’t wonder what the background of this person is. They just remain on
the fact that they are different”. This blaming approach, is also reflected
on student’s 3 description “…there is always a need for a
scapegoat/sacrificial victim - someone to blame as it is never my/our
fault!”. Interestingly, student 8 added that “Greeks blame minorities
because of fear. They fear if they (minorities) have an impact on them”.
As for the power issues embedded in society’s oppression, students 7 and
8 discussed: “…it is about inferiority. Abasing others to feel better for
themselves” and “they are narcissist beings that they will try to abase
others, groups, minorities...”. Based on this superiority, student 13
explained that Greek society discriminates in its decisions about welfare,
particularly against minorities, taking the view that “we shouldn’t spend
money for the 5% but for the majority of society”. Student 14 though –
interestingly - linked mentality’ with the notion of homogeneity: “… it feels
like anything foreign/unknown is not equal with us who we are in
oneness/homogeneity. It is either all with the otherness or all against
otherness”. In light of this, it is important to consider what students’
positions are towards otherness.

Another cultural explanation that five students provided referred to the
lack of culture/education (in Greek: παιδεία). Students 3 and 5 explained
that “…this is not about qualifications” but “culture - we haven’t
familiarised ourselves with diversity and its meaning...”. Students
discussed here the power of stereotypes and other social norms as they
pass, and are reinforced, through family, school and especially media.
Student 9 described the strength of this influence:

“… our view about minorities is shaped accordingly to the view
that has been shown to us. For example, since childhood, we are
taught about war and that Greeks are the ‘good ones’ and the
others are the ‘bad ones’. Then media present the ‘bad’
immigrant or ignore disability and reinforce attitudes...”.

Student 16 added: “The man who raped the little girl last summer was a
criminal. He wasn’t a Pakistani criminal. This is the label that they
(media) put and it is so obvious that it will influence you... it is very scary that the calling ‘Albania\textsuperscript{54}’ that you say spontaneously, it has been put in your mind by force since the age of 4 and 5\textsuperscript{5}. Further explanations that were given about society’s oppression were about age – older people were described as more oppressive, due to less familiarisation with diversity (students 6 and 7); and student 4 suggested that it depends on the local area/environment and the group of minorities.

As a summative note, students indicated interplay between the structural and cultural roots of oppression, where the personal oppressive behaviours appear to be its product. No matter how promising this view may be, students fell into a blaming approach too, as discussed below.

4.1.3.3.2 The blaming approach

Despite the above descriptions, twelve students also blamed minorities for their oppression. However, it needs to be acknowledged here that students did not adopt a blaming approach for all minorities. Instead, it was noted that they focused on immigrants, Roma, LGBTQI and homeless people – the same oppressed identities they accused Greek society for oppressing earlier.

It seemed that these students founded their arguments on an individualised theory of blame, focusing on minorities’ attitudes. Some students considered minorities to present with attitudes, such as disrespect “minorities should respect the environment that hosts them, because immigrants and travellers are mobile populations” (student 8) and a negative anti-oppressive reaction “sometimes minorities overreact for defence or to show something that they are not” (student 7). For example, student 2 explained: “…the gay pride and the existence of ‘decoy sisters’\textsuperscript{55} are ineffective and lead to a lot of reaction by society...you can show your sexual identity with other means”. Two students expressed that attitudes of minorities also involve a sense of denial to fight for their own rights, as

\textsuperscript{54} Vocative singular form of Albanian in Greek: Αλβανέ.
\textsuperscript{55} (in Greek: κραγμένες) – a slang term for gay male people.
well as an element of a personal choice: “...any time a job has been offered to a beggar/homeless, they continued on begging, so they don’t want to (change)” (student 6) and “...people with disabilities haven’t chosen their problem, whilst homosexuals want their condition, nobody forced them...” (student 14). Minorities were also blamed for their actions because they are criminal “...they (immigrants) came to a foreign country and started stealing and killing. Why? They also blame Greece for its conditions, while Greece has been feeding them up until now...” (student 14) and because of their culture “...people from Afghanistan....I think it is about culture when a person is self-seeking and goes to a foreign country and is dishonest...” (student 6). Without denying the responsibility that minorities have for their own oppression, two students said that minorities’ attitudes are a reaction to Greek society’s discriminatory action:

“If they (minorities) had a normal life, accommodation, food and not moving from place to place, things would be different.....because of the hostile and violent attitude that they met by Greeks, they react in the same way...” (student 10) and “...it is a matter of action-reaction. When you see the other as a thief, he will react...If there was a better treatment towards them, those people would be better too. I think that anybody under pressure without food would use means that he wouldn’t imagine himself” (student 16).

Within students’ blaming attitudes, it is observed that they fail to acknowledge variety and diversity within groups. Instead, they discuss them as a whole, offering them universal traits and characteristics based on deep-rooted stereotypes. In light of this, I wonder, how these students are going to challenge oppression and advocate social rights for oppressed groups, when some believe that it is their own fault? Such a question raises a number of implications for social work education in order to challenge and critically discuss such oppressive positions by students.

Whilst the majority of students adopted rather stereotypical views, four students did not take a blaming approach. In their words: “...it is not their fault. For example, the immigrant who has risked his neck to come here and the Golden Dawn supporter will attack him, no, it is not his fault.
Also, travellers can’t be blamed because this is the way of their living…” (student 3) and “I don’t think that minorities are responsible for anything. They just want a better future” (student 5). It seems that the difference between the students who subscribed to a blaming approach, and the ones who did not, is empathy and a deeper understanding of how social oppression operates. However, a positive or negative belief was not only observed in students’ explanation for oppression. Students’ personal attitudes, feelings and influences were also revealing, as described in the following section.

4.1.3.4 Positioning the self in the oppressive society

Students as discussed earlier, explained oppression within society excluding themselves by talking about ‘them’ and ‘their attitudes/actions’ whether these were the community, society in general or groups identified as minorities. Therefore, students were asked more personal questions to help reveal their deeper beliefs/attitudes.

In response to the question, what does accepting diversity mean, it was observed that students adopted an interpersonal, subjective and essentially psychological approach, rather than a more structural approach, such as social action, advocacy and empowerment. Students referred to having a number of appropriate attitudes such as respect (2), a non-judgemental stance (1) and being equal to rights (6). Student 9 described this as “doing the opposite of the ones who don’t accept: not excluding minorities…”. In addition, student 10 raised the importance of “treating differently not the persons but their needs…”. Students also demonstrated a want to learn more about the different attributes of: minority/diverse groups (1); appropriate communication (i.e. avoiding discriminatory looks/gazing) (2); and defending diversity in conversations with others (1). It is important to note here that four students felt that the above attitudes should be adopted, because Greeks have been treated as a minority too; by immigrating to other countries like Germany or Australia for financial reasons and experiencing stereotypes like ‘the lazy Greeks’ or ‘the Greeks who don’t
pay their taxes’ by other European countries. However, it is argued that such a motivation on its own is not enough for anti-oppressive practice.

The potential threat of such individualised approaches adopted by students, to lead to deeper oppressive thoughts/beliefs was also revealed. For example, student 1 explained: “if I speak to a person from another country I will be friendly and I will show that we agree, we are close and I am not hostile...”. Being a friendly figure is what student 11 also suggested: “when I encounter them, I always speak to them in a gentle and warm way, I think they need it”. Moreover, student 14 provided a revealing quote: “(Accepting diversity for me) means that I try to listen to their perceptions and beliefs, but I am not sure if I will accept them...I also listen to what others believe about this social group. If I agree with them then I will say ‘yes I accept you with this problem’. It is very evident that for these students, accepting diversity is often founded on personal judgements, and involves narrow and simplistic communication and interaction, which may just reinforce their self-focus. Students did not seem to acknowledge the need for a structural approach towards social change and self-questioning.

More revealing quotes were provided, where there was some acknowledgement by students of having held/holding discriminatory beliefs. Student 11 - who had positive beliefs for explaining oppression, admitted that in the past she used to consider Albanians as “bad foreigners”. Whilst she talked about the past, most students discussed about the present. Five students explained that they may look at minorities with pity for example “sometimes I am so reserved that my sympathy turns into looking at them with pity” (student 11) or judge/make fun of them as students 12 and 15 expressed: “I may see a man of different colour and in the back of my mind I will judge him. I don’t want this but I do it sometimes” and “I have been racist because it is different in your daily life, I may make fun of a person not in front of him but I will think about it...”. Whilst these students appear to be somewhat aware about their self, what is unknown is to what extent they are challenging these.
It is interesting here to note that some students (4) denied holding discriminatory beliefs, whilst their comments and suggestions (i.e. blaming approach, oppressive language) revealed this. This was observed (directly) in their quotes in which the sentences before the blaming started like that: “...I am not a person who discriminates but minorities... (blaming)...” (student 6) and indirectly, for example, student 10 discussed about her racism/oppression towards minorities in the past: “When I was working in Athens, I met so many immigrants that I felt repugnant, especially for Albanians. I used to say that they have to leave, they are not respectful”, an attitude that she stated she has since changed. However, she took a blaming approach towards minorities when discussing their oppression, and seemed to be unaware of this. Last but not least, student 16 offered a further insight into the vicious circle of oppression: “...(society’s oppression) influences my political ideology to turn completely contrary to groups such as the Golden Dawn. And I am so against them that I fear that I will be like them.”

Students also expressed intense feelings that were both positive and negative. Towards oppressive society, some students felt anger (4), repulsion (2), and fear (1), whilst towards minorities they felt mistrust (1) discomfort (1) and fear (1). Student 15 revealed contradictory feelings simultaneously “I feel anger towards minorities because they can’t defend themselves. Fear and an understanding simultaneously. On one hand I understand their conditions, but on the other it is unbelievable to not defend themselves...”. Moreover, it appears that there is a disagreement whether accepting diversity involves the feeling of identification with minorities or not: “...I can see that this (diversity) is beyond me and I don’t identify with it without putting it aside” (student 2) and “I like diversity and I identify with it...” (student 3) – again such a personal rather than structural model.

Considering the above positions and feelings, it was interesting to learn about students’ work group preferences, and if there was a group that they try to avoid, what their justification for this is. It is interesting to reflect
that students commented that in future placements or work, they would not like to work with: disability (1), prisoners (2), substance misuse (2), domestic violence (1) and child abuse (1) whereas they would try to avoid mental health(2), disability (2), prisoners/sex offenders (2), youth offenders (1), homeless (1), immigrants (1), golden dawn supporters (1), resistant service users (1), substance misuse (1) and cancer patients (1).

Students’ rationalisation for avoiding these groups included personal experiences (1) “...due to personal experiences it would be difficult to work with sex offenders or prisoners...” (student 4); inability to control personal feelings (3) “...I am so sensitive that I may not be able to control my feelings and cry...” (student 10); ambivalence about ‘appropriate’ attitude (4) “…I haven’t lived like them, so it would be difficult to understand them and to know what attitude I should have or what they need...” (student 13); and blame (3) “…it is because I feel it is their fault too (for their oppressive conditions)”. However, there were also two students who did not state any group preferences, as they felt it was too early to know.

Beyond feelings and perceptions, it was also interesting to observe the choice of words and terms used by students in describing different groups, such as “disabled”/“people with special needs” and “foreigners”. In addition, three students subscribed to the notion of normality, dividing human beings into two groups; the ones with a “problem”; and the ones that are “normal”. This was also reflected by student 1, who used more dichotomising words such as “stupid/smart”, “blacks/whites” and “good/bad people”. Similar negative words were used by students 1 and 2, student 1 said, “girl free of/without ethics” (in Greek: ελευθέρων ηθών) the person with the ‘inappropriate’ dressing, and student 2 used the slang term “decoy sisters”. It is very evident from these quotes that some students fell into discriminatory and oppressive wording/language, founded on binary thinking, and what is considered to be normal, moral and mainstream. Therefore, they were asked about their wording and how they have developed it.
The majority of students said that this is the wording that they have always used, whilst four students revealed an early social work education influence: “No, this is not my wording that I have always used. Since I came to social work, I realised that my choice of words was inappropriate. For example, ‘normal person’, ‘person with special needs’, ‘gay’ and other slang words...” (student 14). In total, only six students out of sixteen, acknowledged the oppressive impact of language, for example student 11 described: “offensive and negative terms are used both in society and my family. I don’t know the extent of my success of not using such words but I try, I want to learn terms that minorities are described more positively, without any feeling, but neutral terms”. It is important to emphasise the power that language can have to create reality, is not a matter of political correctness where deeper oppressive beliefs are just hidden behind appropriate and ‘neutral’ terms. Instead, it involves critical reflexivity and consciousness that the majority of students (10) did not realise. For example, student 9 argued: “...I think we give too much emphasis in wording. So, whether you call somebody like that or else, it is not offensive, it is the same thing. It doesn’t matter if you don’t use the right word...”. Being mindful of students’ discussions about society and the self, one may wonder what influences these thoughts and reflections. Therefore, what were the influences that shaped students’ beliefs about the self and the other?

All students suggested that the strongest influences came from their family, and these may be oppressive or not. Student 9 said: “my family gave me the tools which shaped my attitude for diversity”. School was also named as a source for shaping beliefs held by all students. Some students as discussed earlier, experienced an oppressive culture at school, but some others felt that school was an anti-oppressive influence. Students 4 and 12 commented,

“I had a teacher, who was interested to teach us about the human beings. He had brought us all closer and taught us how to work together, and challenged our racist perceptions towards others. He was a teacher beyond the book. He was a role model.”
(student 4) and “he (the teacher) was always saying to me to accept diversity, that I will see more things in my life beyond our village and that I may even experience racism because I am a woman...” (student 12).

However, nine students also referred to a significant influence which involved their personal experiences. This included having a direct/close relationship with minorities within their familial context and/or friend groups:

“I have been influenced from the fact that my dad has migrated to Australia. I saw that my father was well accepted by the state, he shared the same rights with Australian citizens, whilst immigrants here haven’t equal rights with us...” (student 12) and “...my mother had a divorce before her marriage to my father and the local society considered her as a ‘whore’...” (student 2).

It also involved having an indirect contact:

“...my father had his office in the same building where people with disability had their Union. I have grown up with these people and in the beginning I was afraid of them. But I saw the other side of the coin through them and I think I familiarised myself with diversity...” (student 15).

It is interesting to observe that whilst this student familiarised herself with diversity, she did not see herself as part of this. Last but not least, students also considered their experiences of been treated as a different/other person:

“In the past, I was considered a marginalised child because of my character and other reasons. This has made me more aware...” (student 3) and “the fact that I am the immigrants’ child has been the foundation of my ideology and other things. Being an immigrant influenced me to become a member of an anti-fascist organisation...I fear I wouldn’t be the same person without these influences, for example if I was a Greek citizen...” (student 16).

Despite the many influences that shaped students’ beliefs and attitudes towards minorities, seven students raised the importance of developing critical thinking and self-awareness. Students linked this to a process of continuous questioning and deconstruction/reconstruction. Two students said that this can be achieved by “... reading in order to learn what you
believe and why. You need to create your own thinking outside family’s influence...” (student 11). One student felt that observation can lead to thinking ‘out of the box’: “I have been watching the people around me. My family, my school, their positive and negative perceptions, examples within society and minorities themselves; and I created my own thinking, I didn’t just follow others’ thinking...” (student 5). Last, student 7 discussed the influence of brutal attacks for critical thinking: “…there was an incident of a school teacher in Crete that I heard and significantly influenced me. She was hacked away/cut\textsuperscript{56} because she was giving free teaching lessons to immigrants. It made me think about rights...”.

As a summative note, students’ self positions to the oppressive society revealed understandings and beliefs that could be described as narrow, individualistic and oppressive, founded on binary thinking and blaming approaches. Throughout their reflections, diversity is perceived as referring to the other, to the minority rather than the fact that society – all of us - actually constitutes what is diversity. Considering that these participants are social workers in the making, a number of implications rise for social work education in order to provide them with a theoretical and critical discussion about oppression, social justice and inequalities. This will be an opportunity for students to re-position themselves in an oppressive society as anti-oppressive practitioners. How do they perceive the role of social work against oppression?

4.1.3.5 Positioning social work role towards oppression

Considering students’ motivation to study social work and their positions towards diversity, it is worth wondering where social work stands against oppression for them. There was a disagreement in relation to this, as students offered a key role (9 students) but a limited one too (7 students).

In relation to social work’s key role, four students stated that anti-oppressive social work involves collective action that has been designed

\textsuperscript{56} Marking somebody’s face/body with a knife (in Greek: χαρακώνω).
“to challenge the State and oppressive social policies” (student 10) and the other five students subscribed to an empowering approach towards minorities. In their words: “a social worker will empower them to be able to manage their lives, to believe in themselves; because oppression makes minorities feel inferior to Greeks...” (student 8) and “(empowerment) to obtain the Green Card for their security but as well as to feel stronger and able to show this power” (student 15). These reflections are surprising since they appear to be somewhat disconnected to their earlier quotes, which were highly individualised.

In contrast, 7 students limited social work’s role to public awareness campaigns only in schools and neighbourhoods. For example “…to inform the people, to invite them to seminars and teach them what is diversity and how they should treat minorities” (student 5). However, student 6 – who was one among the group who offered a key role – questioned such practice saying that a public awareness project would be useless without the empowerment of the minorities too. An explanation of this limited role to social work may be that social work theory and practice is still unknown to them; it is a training to be taken so their unchallenged self is the familiar, safe and conventional source to explain phenomena as oppression and define anti-oppressive practice.

Nonetheless, the majority of students agreed that reversing society’s oppression would be difficult; “minorities won’t be accepted by Greek society easy and fast...the future is quite inauspicious” (student 2). It is interesting here, that five students acknowledged that social workers shouldn’t have oppressive thoughts/beliefs as it is incompatible with their profession: “a social worker needs first to accept minorities and then to have the will to defend them – this can change others too” (student 11).

Students 1 and 7 agreed that this acceptance is a personal issue that has to be resolved before trying to empower and support minorities. One wonders, if acceptance has been achieved by the end of a student’s social work studies – a research question that is to be answered in the analysis and comparison with final year students.
As a concluding note of the section, it was observed that students have some knowledge about the social structure of the oppression; however, their accounts and explanations reflected what they distinguished themselves from: society’s norms and beliefs. It appears that the majority of students can hold positive and negative beliefs/feelings/attitudes towards diversity simultaneously. Along with their reference to structural issues like the role of the state and socio-economic conditions embedded in oppression, they also subscribed to a blaming approach and revealed a number of discriminatory thoughts and perceptions directly and indirectly. Regardless of whether these students are aware of their personal positions or not, the crucial point here is the development of their anti-oppressive professional self against all odds (as it appears).

4.1.4 Value tensions and dilemmas

This part of the analysis presents students’ accounts of value tensions and dilemmas\(^\text{57}\). This exploration with students was important to reveal their deeper perceptions and self–awareness about their positions as these have already been discussed in relation to diversity and oppression.

4.1.4.1 The experience of value tensions

Students firstly were asked what they understood by the word value tension/dilemma and the vast majority of students (13) showed an ability to explain this in relation to acting. Four students commented that it is about being between two choices whilst the rest of the students raised further issues. Students 8 and 9 referred to it in terms of doing an action or not, whilst student 12 highlighted the moral aspect of an action: “...(dilemma) is about which is the right and wrong thing to do”. This moral aspect was explained further by students 15 and 16 who

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\(^{57}\) ‘Value tension’ (in Greek: αξιακή σύγκρουση) is a term that is not used in the Greek language often. The meaning is given by using explanatory phrasing or using the term ‘dilemma’. The term ‘dilemma’ has a Greek origin (in Greek: δίλημμα) and captures the same meaning as the use of the English word. Therefore, in the interviews, the word ‘dilemma’ was used as well as explanatory phrasing for ‘value tension’.
distinguished a desired action by the agent from an obligatory action: “...is something that you have to do instead of what you want to do” (student 15). The obligatory actions are led by the “existence of standards” (students 1 and 2) or “logic” (student 16). Student 2 offered a further insight, defining a value tension as a “trilemma” and not a dilemma: “The one part is prejudices, the other part is the ‘standards’ and the last part is the new information/situation that is unknown yet”. For student 2, this tension is an evolving process, where the agent needs to be open to the new information and not a blind rule-follower. There were also three students who found it difficult to discuss the meaning of a value tension/dilemma, and asked the researcher for explanations.

Having established an understanding of the meaning of value tension, students were asked if they have had an experience of this, such as experiencing tension between a personal value of theirs, and a social work value/principle. Their answers reflected different levels of self-awareness. It is interesting, that the majority of students (11) denied having experienced such a value tension, given their conflicting beliefs and contradictory statements in relation to diversity and oppression, as discussed in the previous section. For example, six students subscribed to a state of ignorance/lack of knowledge of social work theory and practice and that it was too early to know: “It is difficult to know as I am in the beginning and I haven’t been taught the social work values yet...so I can’t answer now” (student 4) and “It is too early. I don’t know. I may find a situation in future difficult; but I can’t think now what this situation would be like” (student 8). In contrast to this claimed ignorance, three students talked about their self-efficacy: “A dilemma for me? No. My and social work’s ideology are the same” (student 3), “I don’t think I have a personal value that is in opposition to social work” (student 5) and “No, I haven’t

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58 It needs to be noted here, that three students, suggested further sources that may trigger tensions and conflicts: keeping boundaries with service users, identification with persons or situations familiar with personal and organisation’s culture/regulations.
faced a dilemma. I am a stable person.” (student 1). Again, these quotes reveal a focus on their unquestioned self, as has been reflected throughout this analysis of students’ views of themselves as ideal for the social work profession. It is interesting to note in the above comments that student 1 would equate the lack of value tensions with an emotionally stable self. By corollary therefore, they would regard experiencing a value tension as something indicating a lack of psychological or emotional stability. Nonetheless, students’ denial may reveal deeper value tensions that they may not be aware of, or have eradicated by means of their personal beliefs overriding social work values.

In contrast, there were five students who acknowledged having experienced a value tension between their personal beliefs and social work values. More specifically, they revealed being in a state of processing between the new information of social work education and themselves. In their words: “(I have had a value tension) when a lecturer discussed about equality issues in class. I realised that I had to change my belief...” (student 14) and “I have conflicting thoughts. In other words, I try to see what I personally believe for what I am hearing in lectures. I am processing what the lecturer says.” (student 11). It appears that there is an early influence of social work education on self-questioning and consciousness, which was also discussed by student 16: “In general, I have learnt a lot. I don’t know if I have succeeded in breaking down all my beliefs. However, in lectures, where we are challenged by the lecturer, I have broken down my thinking. It makes me think and deconstruct my stereotypes”. Except from social work education’s influence, a personal availability/will for self-evaluation is also observed that was not seen in students who denied value tensions.

Despite the self-evaluation that the experience of being in a dilemma appears to involve, these students also acknowledged the negative impact of this kind of experience, and there was no reference to possible positive aspects. They described the tension as a “soul-destroying” (students 12 and 16) situation or a “burden” (student 14) that stays with you even after
the event that provoked it. Student 2 noted that the tension feels like “Being sunk in quicksand, in mire or in a well. It is ugly…” whilst student 12 revealed:

“...the tension/conflict with our self is the worst one. It can’t be compared with a conflict with a friend or family. Struggling with your own self is the worst, as you have to go against your beliefs that you have developed. It is like you are told (in social work education) to start from scratch and forget what you knew…”.

Whilst these quotes reflect hopeless feelings of a no-escape situation, students discussed a number of resolution strategies and no one referred to the possibility of a tension that could not be resolved or require resolution, revealing an inner need for catharsis. It is interesting, that all students suggested resolution options including those who had denied value tensions as they talked about future hypothetical situations. Students recommended a number of professional resolution strategies. Eight students suggested weighing up the pros and cons of alternative options: “you have to take into consideration all the aspects and weigh them up” (student 11) and “I do lists with the pros and cons, it helps! You have to weigh them up…” (student 12). However, they admitted that this is not a straightforward process and the right decision was reported to be achieved by adopting a utilitarian/consequentialist approach (5) “I will go for the decision with the least bad consequences” (student 12) and “being in dilemma is like playing chess, where you think five moves ahead. Therefore, you have to think not only about the outcome of your decision but also its’ various consequences to others…” (student 16). Another strategy that was advocated by students was discussing the issue with others (6). When they were asked to suggest the persons that would discuss these issues with them, they referred to their lecturers during their studies, or an experienced colleague in the future (5/6). However, student 9 admitted that he would turn to his parents/family or friends for advice about a value tension/conflict. Turning to his early social role models for advice – which actually will reinforce the existing personal values - may reveal an unconscious need/tendency for self-protection from the challenge of the social work principle or value.
This self-protection was also observed in the statements of two students who suggested giving the case (which triggers their value tension) to another colleague, for example “If this (the case) will significantly challenge my beliefs I would leave it...” (student 5). On the other hand, student 6 disagreed with this opinion saying that “it is not appropriate to leave a case and give it to somebody else as you have to work with yourself”. Giving the case to another could be regarded as just avoiding the conflict, which is a problematic strategy for the resolution of a value tension.

Apart from the above professional strategies that students said they would adopt, they suggested some personal ones too: relaxing activities like a walk (1), having personal relationships/bonds (partner/friends) (2) and life-long learning and studying (2). There were also two students who advocated that a great influence towards the resolution of a value tension may be the personal motivation of being a social worker. Whilst this sounds promising, it is questionable, considering the individualistic approaches and self-centredness that was revealed in students’ motivations for studying social work.

The crucial question here is what the result of students’ value tensions/conflicts is or would be in future. Students were specifically asked whether the social work value would predominate or not against their personal value, and they provided rich descriptions which revealed their self-image and consciousness further. The majority of students (10) reported that either their personal values would override the social work principles, or were ambivalent about the likely outcome. No differences were observed among students who had admitted value tensions and those who had not. For example: “I don’t think that the social work value

59 It needs to be acknowledged though that from the students who denied having experienced a value tension (11), four students reported that their personal values would override the social work ones, two other stated that they would follow the social work value/principle whilst four showed ambivalence and didn’t provide an answer. On the other hand, from the students who admitted value tensions (5), three replied that they would
would predominate. I don’t think I can be influenced.” (student 6). How do students explain this outcome of the value tension resolution?

Four students provided contradictory statements revealing on the one hand their acknowledgement of the significance of the social work value, but on the other hand, a personal choice to resist any change. For example, students 1 and 5 expressed:

“\textit{In relation to the social work value, I need to accept that this is the way. In relation to me, there is no need to change. It’s my character. However, since I study this profession I will need to accept it. Yet, even if there are some standards, there is also my personal way too...}”; and “\textit{I believe that if you are to follow this job you need to balance the rules with your beliefs. If the social work value will conflict my personal value, I will look what I personally want. I will listen to myself}” (student 5).

It is observed that social work values are perceived as a separate domain of activity and not coherent to the personal values. This reference to the self was further explained by two students who revealed their need to protect core beliefs, as anything against (social work values here) is perceived as a threat to their self-being, for example:

“\textit{I think I would do what I would believe is the right thing to do, in order for me to be OK with myself after. I can’t go against to my beliefs or if I believe something is right, even if this is against social work...}” (student 15) and “\textit{if the social work value will harm my beliefs, I will listen to myself. If something is not that serious, for example if I don’t like something, then I will listen to the social work value}” (student 9).

Here, it is also observed that student 9 refers to a personal judgement on seriousness of matters; yet, it appears that the more serious the matter is, the stronger the personal value will remain.

Nonetheless, there were also five students who reported that the social work value would override their personal one: “\textit{it will be hard but I will follow the profession and not myself}” (student 8) and “\textit{I would follow the social work value whilst two acknowledged stronger personal values.}
profession’s principle because it is there for a reason. I wouldn’t take the responsibility for another person⁶⁰. It would serve as a protection/safe choice for me” (student 7). It appears that the social work value is rooted in doubts about self-efficacy, but it is unknown whether this safe choice is a conscious action of understanding the deeper issues involved in the tension or not. In addition, student 13 said that she would find a compromise between the two: “The ideal would be to leave my personal beliefs behind and follow the profession. However, I am a human being so I would mix the two; maybe wrongly, but this is what would happen automatically.” Yet, how effective it is, fitting social work values into personal ones ethically remains unknown.

Instead of polarising the two selves (personal – professional) student 16 offered an alternative, coherent option:

“...I don’t think I will be able to get rid of myself completely and become something that is related to social work exclusively. I believe you can change a part of yourself but you will always have something there... by reading a book doesn’t mean that I will identify with immigrants less, but I will try to manage it”.

The action of managing personal values and feelings when challenged by social work ones, involves self-questioning as a life-long way towards self-awareness and consciousness – an action that was either rejected or oversimplified by the vast majority of the students.

As a summative note about this section, students were observed to be ambivalent and committed to their values and perceptions about how they would deal with a personal-professional dialectic. It is interesting that whilst all tried to offer a resolution-catharsis for the tension, their strategies are questionable. Their rationale was observed to oversimplify the deeper issues of a value tension, and to reinforce and protect the self of the social work value threat. It is not an exaggeration to say that within these quotes, social work was observed to be the other against students’

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⁶⁰ This sentence is paraphrased in order to give the meaning of student’s phrase. The student actually said “In order to avoid taking the other on my neck” (in Greek: για να μην πάρω τον άλλο στο λαιμό μου).
unquestioned and resistant to change selves. Exceptions of this were rare, with few participants offering an integrative view of value tensions in which the values of the self and the self as professional were coherent or in a process of becoming so.

4.1.5 Social work education

Towards the end of the interview, students were asked about their expectations from their education, as well as their beliefs about whether social work education has a role (and what this may be) or not, in influencing their personal beliefs. Students’ expectations from their studies focused on two main areas: the development of their self and the how - to of academic staff’s teaching.

4.1.5.1 Expectations for the self

Students were asked what their expectations were in relation to their education, focusing specifically on value tensions and anti-oppressive concepts. Their answers indicated expectations for obtaining knowledge, but also personal qualities.

In relation to value tensions/dilemmas, students indicated that education will contribute to their preparedness. This preparedness involves an ability to identify a value tension (2), for example “dilemmas to be more clear and easy to be understood” (student 11); an ability to avoid dilemmas in practice (3): “we will be helped to not face dilemmas” (student 8) and “I will be able to not experience dilemmas at all or at least not in the same frequency” (student 9); and lastly, an ability to manage the tension (4): “to learn how to deal with a dilemma better” (student 5) and “I expect that I will choose straight away the right road” (student 14).

It is interesting though, that four students offered an alternative thought about their preparedness, indicating the gap between theory and practice: “If I am told theoretically what I should do when I face a dilemma, I don’t think that it will help me - maybe at a certain point. When you are within a dilemma you see things differently” (student 15) and “in theory everything
is OK, but the problem is in practice...” (student 13). It appears that education cannot provide recipes and even if this were the case, student 12 commented: “dilemmas will always exist; fortunately or not, it is something personal and it is impossible for all the people to think in the same way”. Last but not least, only three students expected knowledge and understanding in relation to the moral core of the profession: “I expect to learn the code of ethics...” (student 3) and “I need to learn social work values and principles...” (student 4). The absence of reference to professional ethics/values by the majority of students may reveal their devaluation of these issues, and their focus on their sense of self once again.

In addition, students were also asked about their expectations in relation to diversity. Seven students subscribed to a shallow approach to learning by wanting information about minorities’ characteristics (student 3), their beliefs and lifestyle (students 4 and 8), and last, their conditions and problems (students 10 and 13). Students focused also on obtaining the know-how of practice related to case management (8) but also in adopting the ‘right’ approach towards minorities: treat each minority differently (student 4); to express their feelings, and overcome their problems (students 9 and 14). It needs to be noted here that student 13 considered the right approach to involve a judgemental approach: “I want to come in contact with all the persons who belong to minorities in order to determine whether a person experiences something very serious or not”. It is very interesting that only one student (out of 16) referred to obtaining knowledge and understanding about the deeper issues that are involved in the foundations of oppression, such as “... social constructions, how these are developed and how people interact through these” (student 6). It is also worth mentioning that student 10 acknowledged that references to dilemmas and diversity should be made very early on in their education.

Nonetheless, discussing education’s contribution to their self–image/personality was the central theme, as all students expressed this. Such perceptions ranged from developing personal qualities to challenging
and changing the self. Students did not subscribe to one category exclusively. Instead, their views included both categories of expectations.

In relation to personal qualities, students expressed expectations about becoming a stronger person (4), for example “I expect to come out as a stronger personality...” (student 3) and “…to have more strength/stamina” (student 15); obtaining self-control (3) “I hope there is some training to make us control our feelings or reactions” (student 4) and “to learn how to control my thinking, my feelings...” (student 5); acquiring self–awareness (4) “to understand myself” (student 6) and “to learn myself” (student 7); resolving own problems (2) “education must help us resolve our own problems first and then social ones...” (student 10); and being a better person (3) “to learn a lot of things that will make me a better person” (student 9). These expectations remind us of the self–orientated motivations that have been discussed and highlighted previously.

In contrast, eight students suggested the need for the development of a professional self. They linked this new self with the adoption of a professional way of thinking. What does this mean though for them? Students suggested that this is about “seeing things from different perspectives” (2) or developing an open mind, thinking outside of the box (3) and being objective (1). For student 12, this influence involves challenging and changing their own beliefs: “education can help me to not listen to my personal values and experiences but to follow what I have learned during my profession’s training”. Considering some students’ earlier strong positions of their personal values, this suggestion is surprising. How is education suggested to influence their beliefs and thoughts, when, as discussed earlier, they appear to be so resistant to change? Their continuous contradictory statements and positions reveal their limited critical consciousness.

4.1.5.2 Expectations for the educators

Students’ expectations also focused on their educators’ personal qualities, interpersonal approach, support and guidance towards them and their
teaching strategies. As student 11 noted, “It is very important whom you face, what they say and how”.

Through discussing their educators’ personal qualities, students revealed the importance of their educators individual qualities including, “they need to be respectful” (student 6), “to have an open mind” (student 13) and treat equally all students and “not discriminate in favour of the ‘good’ ones” (student 10). Three other students raised the importance of educators’ interpersonal relationships with them: “they need to become more personal” (student 3) and “to make us feel comfortable” (student 7). Students 6 and 10, also discussed their need to be supported and guided by educators, for example “I would like to be guided by a lecturer in what I should do in a specific situation” (student 6). According to four students, educators are role models, and as student 11 pointed out, “Educators are and need to be role models for us; we actually are significantly influenced by them - even by someone who we don’t like”.

However, students also expressed a number of expectations in relation to educators’ teaching strategies. Here, there was a distinction between a boring and interesting lecture. Two students linked this with educators’ ability/talent of communication: “I expect the educator to be able to deliver/transmit knowledge or information; not to do just a lecture” (student 3). How do students believe that they can learn better? Nine students expressed the need for educators to replace the traditional model of lecturing with more dialogical techniques. These techniques involve an approach far from ‘dictating’ but developing a dialogue with students (3), for example “I don’t like the lecturer to do all the talking, to come into class and dictate us. I can find information at the internet or books too. I want them...to develop a dialogue within class...” (student 12); questioning their beliefs (4) “…to question our arguments, to ask us what we believe and why...” (student 14) and “to be interested in hearing what we believe” (student 6); and stimulating them for critical thinking and professional independence (4) “I don’t want the lecturer to provide me with solutions but to make me concerned/puzzled out to find the resolution myself”
(student 10) and “to let you – with their teaching - follow your options...” (student 6). Student 6 also identified some tools that could contribute to their learning: the use of video, group work and debate.

Educators with the above qualities and teaching approach were characterised as the ones that will make the difference and “lead you beyond standard education” (student 6). In order to achieve this, educators “need to have appropriate education and expertise as well as to be evaluated (by University/Institution) more” (student 11). Despite the ideal model of the educator, and effective education, seven students also talked about mistrust in their education due to constraints stemming from the low status of the profession in Greece. They revealed a vicious circle of this, rooted in a disinvestment in social care and social work education: “since the profession is not as much respected as abroad, there is no emphasis given on social work education. There is an investment into technology and not into human and social sciences” (student 4). This disinvestment and cuts in education have resulted in technical problems, such as oversized classes, “Our oversized number within class is a problem. How can I communicate with other students when I can’t even have visual contact with them? We should be on smaller groups” (student 4). The low status of education in social work is further revealed by its place in the binary division of Universities (AEIs) and Technological Educational Institutes (TEIs): “education in TEIs is not priority” (student 11) and “how could I have expectations from my education in Greece and especially in the TEI?!” (student 16). Last, “the difficulties into finding a job” (student 12) and the fact that “most people don’t know what social work is...” (student 8) both of which appear to be contributing factors to the low status of the profession of social work.

Being mindful of students’ motivations, expectations, and their worries about social work education, it was worth wondering about what students believed about the role of their studies, in relation to their personal beliefs. Students’ responses are discussed below.
4.1.5.3 Social work education vs oppressive self

This was the last question of the interview, and students gave a range of answers. Eight students acknowledged social work education’s role in adopting an acceptance towards diversity gradually: “yes, you learn how to accept the other through education” (student 11). This was described allegorically as a “journey” by student 16. This journey of gradual acceptance mainly involves “discovering and dealing with personal stereotypes” (student 5) and “challenging personal experiences and social norms” (student 12), which eventually will lead into “rejecting racist approaches” (student 9). Social work education in anti-oppressive practice, does not appear to be impossible then for these students but inevitable: “(social work education’s role) it is pivotal! If you don’t accept diversity, how are you going to work with it? You can’t avoid diversity as all day you will be involved with it. If you haven’t accepted it, you will be fake” (student 15). No matter how promising this may sound, students’ accounts up until now have revealed high possibilities of adopting oppressive attitudes that they may not be aware of. This lack of awareness was reflected again in the denial and ambivalence of four students, who stated: “I don’t think education can have any impact/change on me” (student 7); and “I don’t think I will change my attitude” (student 8).

What the vast majority of students (14) agreed on though is the need for working with one’s own self in conjunction with education. Students discussed stimulating factors such as lifelong learning (2): “by reading, being up to date with research on the field” (student 12); contact with ‘important’ others whether these are professionals or oppressed individuals (3): “after your studies you need to be close to remarkable persons (of the profession)” (student 6) or “to come in contact with people and see their problems closely and ask them firsthand what their difficulties are....” (student 16); being in therapy (1) and being involved in physical activities (1). The above stimuli appear to offer the opportunity to engage in a self-dialogue, asking “What if my beliefs are wrong?” (student 14) or “is this the right thing to believe? Have I surpassed beliefs that I used to believe in
the past? Am I more influenced by my emotions on this matter?” (student 16). This self-dialogue of questioning and challenging “the self that we hide” (student 16) may be a “slow process” (student 15) but can lead to “evaluating early recordings that we hold and keep some but change those that are dysfunctional” (student 2).

However, students (9) protested that this self-dialogue involves a personal choice to review and deconstruct core beliefs based on consciousness, for example: “we must admit (personal beliefs) and work on these...” (student1) and “we need to stop lying to ourselves and be honest on our accounts...changing comes with reviewing own self on a daily basis”(student 16). A denial to self-review is incompatible with the profession according to student 14: “It is a matter of personal choice. However, if you are not ready for this you shouldn’t continue into the profession. You need to have the will to become better”. It needs to be noted that students’ thoughts here appear to be contradictory to what they have stated previously. On one hand they appeared devoted to their strong personal values, and on the other hand, they suggested guidelines for self-review and questioning. If working with one’s self is the key in education to impact on personal beliefs, how is this process going to occur when they are resistant to this? One explanation may be that they do not have the knowledge or the educational stimulation on doing so.

As a concluding note, education appears to be the means to obtaining an anti-oppressive self: “it is the bridge between what exists and my beliefs. For the transition, I need to go to the other side” (student 7) and “education opens the road but you are to decide if you will continue or return back” (student 15). Whether students do successfully take the ride or not, or how, this will be discussed in the analysis of final year students which follows.

4.2 Sample 2: Final year students

This is the analysis of the interviews with final year students. Its structure involves the analysis of four core categories: the social work study choice
and motivations, beliefs about diversity, experiences of value tensions and dilemmas and reflections on social work education.

4.2.1 Social work study choice and motivations

Students were asked to reflect on their choice to study social work four years ago. All students discussed their interest in human and social sciences, and that social work was in their top three choices. The majority of students (9) had chosen other sciences like psychology (3), speech or occupational therapy (2), linguistics (2) and elementary teaching (2); however, due to their low grades they did not enter the above Departments/Schools, but instead they were admitted into social work. No student expressed disappointment or regret about this; instead six students revealed feelings of gratitude and relief that they studied social work: “I never regretted it. It is like I was supposed to come here; it was exactly what I wanted...” (student 1); “a thousand times better that I entered into social work” (student 5) and “I regret that I wanted to study psychology. I am grateful that I am here...” (student 11). It is important to note though, that among these 14 students, five mentioned that they were not familiar to the profession and only became familiar with it at the end of their schooling or during the application process: “the profession was unknown to me when I was in school. I had never heard it and I didn’t know what a social worker does” (student 3); and “I didn’t know the existence of this profession” (student 13). This ignorance of the profession, along with the admission process (low grades) are factors that help to demonstrate the low status of the profession in Greece. It is also interesting to reflect on student 7 statement: “I wanted to be a psychologist; I was told the differences between psychology and social work but I didn’t understand them. OK, I still don’t know them (the differences)”. The fact that this graduate does not know, even at the end of four years professional education, the differences between the two sciences is alarming for social work education. What motivated these students to apply for human and social sciences, and more specifically social work?
Students expressed a number of motivating factors; the most significant factor seemed to involve being their perception of their own appropriateness and suitability in relation to their character and personal qualities, to fulfil the profession of social work (the appropriate self). Two students wondered about being sensitive: “I wanted to do a profession about people and problems, because I am very sensitive and when I see people with problems I identify with them...” (student 12). A further three students wanted to give to others: “I was looking (for a profession) to care about others” (student 10) and “I wanted a profession that I would need to help others” (student 7). This offering self was described as “having the syndrome of Mother Teresa” by a student – a concept that is based on considerations that social work is a vocation and philanthropic. In addition, it would be no exaggeration to say that this locus for helping others, appears to be oppressive itself as it dichotomises the us/Them relationship: raising/giving value to a strong, able self to help the ‘unable’ and others in need. It was also observed that whilst students reflected on their motivations to study social work 4 years ago, no one was overly critical of these early factors, except student 10: “It was the ‘syndrome of God’ then - we the social workers that will save everybody – which has completely changed now”.

Furthermore, two students discussed their talented selves for social work: “The reason I chose social work is that I have a talent for working with substance misusers...” (student 4) and “I wanted to do a human profession because I was always the one who was helping others” (student 13). Lastly, student 3 based her motivation on the opportunity “to put something from your own character, personality, personal values into practice”. An interesting aspect is the absence of students’ reference to structural issues such as social justice and tackling inequalities; instead, students’ motivations are self orientated, fitting the social work profession into their needs and qualities.

Another motivation for four students was the influence of a third person. Students referred to professional social workers within their family and
friends, who suggested they apply for social work. Last but not least, student 9 referred to financial reasons contributing to her decision to study social work: “My dad died when I was making my applications so I couldn’t go to another city due to the expenses, especially during this financial crisis...”.

As a concluding note for this section, it is evident that the decision to apply for and study social work, does not involve the consideration of social work being a profession orientated towards social change and social justice; instead, there is a focus to the self, with an absence of critical thinking and questioning of these early and even oppressive motivations. It is worth wondering whether this self-centredness is observed in their accounts for diversity and oppression too, which follows.

4.2.2 Beliefs/perceptions about diversity and oppression

A variety of questions were asked in order to ascertain students’ beliefs and perceptions about diversity and oppression. It was observed that students initially discussed others’ (society’s) oppressive actions without referring to themselves also. Therefore, more personal questions were asked, and these revealed where students fell into the same oppressive beliefs and actions as the ones that they excluded themselves from: society.

4.2.2.1 Defining diversity and oppression

Students were asked to answer what they understood about diversity and oppression/discrimination. The response from the vast majority of students could be described as narrow and individualistic, offering quite simple understandings based on unchallenged deep-rooted stereotypes.

In relation to diversity, students’ understanding appeared to be based on: a simplistic view of otherness (6) “diversity for me is in life choices, or in how you seat, speak, drink your coffee, and read. Diversity is everywhere not only in humans, but in nature too” (student 3), “diversity is natural, we are all different even if we are dressed the same” (student 13) and
“diversity is when the other is not alike you, but has other characteristics in race, behaviour even in physical appearance” (student 5); attitudes towards otherness (4) “overcoming prejudices, thoughts and beliefs about diversity and trying to discover and understand it...” (student 1) and “diversity is something interesting to discover without losing yourself” (student 2); individualisation (2) “every person is unique either in brain, feelings, personality, as a human being is different. It is about individualisation” (student 9); a more structural approach (2) “diversity is the other identity, like sexual orientation...diversity includes social exclusion too and it should be linked with this otherwise it could be diversity in hair, etc” (student 10); and lastly, even an oppressive understanding of otherness (1) “regarding diversity, I have in my mind people that have a special nature, some weaknesses, a disability or if originate from another country” (student 8). The fact that only two students mentioned the structural components of diversity (social identities, social exclusion) with the vast majority falling into narrow and even oppressive approaches, suggests not only their limited understanding, but also the potential threat of oppressive behaviours based on unchallenged deep rooted stereotypes. How do students understand oppression/discrimination?

Again, the understanding of oppression and discrimination by the majority of students (9), seemed to include simplistic and individual approaches. Some students commented: “it means to distinguish some people whether you like or don’t like them or you just don’t care” (student 8), “it is the judgement of one towards another” (student 2) and “it is to underestimate the one and overestimate the other” (student 14). In opposition to this simplistic view, five students offered a more structural approach: linking discrimination and oppression with diversity (4/5) “it is when people distinguish others because of different colour skin or race, and they can’t understand that this doesn’t divide people in the good or bad ones” (student 7) and “discrimination is when I distinguish somebody negatively because he is different” (student 5); and providing its social operation (3/5)
“discrimination and oppression are social norms and stereotypes are deep rooted” (student 9) and “these are linked with social exclusion, when society excludes the other” (student 10). What is interesting here is that no one of these students referred to the oppression and discrimination by social institutions and to issues of justice, power, equality and respect. Instead, based on limited understandings, the majority focused on negative divisions of individuals by individuals. Being mindful of students’ thoughts, a crucial point to ask is: how students are going to tackle oppression and discrimination at a personal, institutional, and social level, given such narrow and individual understandings?

4.2.2.2 Reference to minorities

Students were asked to name any oppressed groups/minorities that they are aware of, and a variety of accounts were given. The majority of students referred to ethnicity (14), disability (11) and Roma (11) as the most oppressed identities within Greek society currently. In relation to ethnicity, it should be noted, that students mainly talked about immigrants; however, three students distinguished between a refugee or an asylum seeker. There were also three students who referred to the country of origin – Albanians, Pakistanis and Afghans - and not ethnicity as the minorities that face most discrimination among other immigrant groups. Lastly, students named sexual orientation (6), substance misuse (6), mental health (4), unmarried mothers (4), women (2), unemployed (2), prisoners (2), elderly (2), children in residential care (1), prostitutes (1), HIV/AIDS patients (1) and cancer patients (1) as further oppressed identities in Greece.

Students also appeared to be confident in naming different groups of minorities. However, only half of their group (7) linked being a minority with being minoritised. For these seven students, the minoritisation of groups is founded on: social exclusion and marginalisation “Minorities are (defined) with the meaning of being socially excluded, right? They are marginalised” (student 2), “... they are a minority because they are
marginalised and society moves on without them…” (student 11) and “…they are excluded, for example, in (the right of) employment. If they reveal their ethnicity they will be kicked out” (student 12); and on discriminatory treatment based on prejudices and stereotypes “they are being treated badly…” (student 12) and “they face lots of discrimination, there is a lot of racism…” (student 9). Instead, the other seven students oversimplified the status of minority by referring just to diverse classifications (i.e. ethnicity, disability, etc), and the otherness from the mainstream – a questionable view that may reinforce oppressive beliefs and attitudes itself. In the light of these assumptions, how do students explain oppression?

4.2.2.3 Explanation for society’s oppression

In response to the question that sought to explore the roots and causes of oppression within Greek society, students offered a variety of accounts which revealed that they held positive and negative beliefs simultaneously. Only 2 students out of 14 offered an explanation of the roots of oppression that drew on structural causes including poverty and social policy. In the students’ accounts about the root causes of oppression, they consistently apportioned blame to minorities, claiming that minorities’ own actions were implicated in their oppression.

4.2.2.3.1 The structural approach

The structural causes of oppression were discussed and seven students highlighted the role of current socio-economic conditions in conjunction with the State’s social policies. According to these students, oppression is rooted in an “absent” (student 1) and ineffective welfare state as “it is limited only in a benefits’ policy. It is a smearing, like chocolate onto a cake…” (student 2). For students 11 and 13, such policies do not focus on social needs, but instead on profit seeking and other economic interests: “This is wrong from the beginning, as the state does not provide (to minorities) what is needed, instead, has been seeking its own interests…” (student 13). Such economic-led policies along with the financial crisis
were thought to increase discrimination and oppression within Greek society, making minorities the scapegoats for all the society’s suffering: “we place our responsibilities to immigrants that it is their fault what we experience (the financial crisis)” (student 8) and “the crisis has made us to marginalise them more” (student 2). According to four students, the above conditions set the foundations of the rise of fascism which sustains and replicates further inequalities and oppression: “extremism has come in light...” (student 3) and “we experience political events currently... you hear they kill immigrants and they try to present this as a normal thing...” (student 9).

However, the continuous rise of oppression through fascism, inequalities and economic – led social policies are only a part of the picture for three students as they discussed society’s passive role against these: “(Golden Dawn) was voted by a part of the society, but the majority tolerates its existence. The point is in whether the majority will tolerate oppression and let it work like a carcinoma or not...” (student 3). This tolerance - a silent acceptance by people - was further illustrated in the words of student 11:

“we see them (Golden Dawn and other fascist groups) and we move on with our lives. We stay idly in this phenomenon...People are not interested, they prefer to not see what is happening around and move on. For example, in Athens at Omonoia Square, you may see a person using drugs in front of you and you just go to your work uninterested...”.

These attitudes raise the question of how people or society can be tolerant and passive towards oppression?

Ten students explained this passivity by providing its cultural origins: an oppressive Greek “mentality” and a lack of culture/education. More specifically, it was thought that Greeks’ mentality appears to be founded on: a tendency for homogeneity (3) “society has learnt to live within its own standards”\(^{61}\), a fishbowl, and they can’t accept diversity as they want

\(^{61}\) This is paraphrased in order to give the meaning of students’ phrase. The student actually used the expression ‘to live within a norm’ (in Greek: να ζει μέσα σε μια...
to keep their homogeneity as ‘the normals’...” (student 10) and “we are afraid of otherness...and we exclude it” (student 14); lack of empathy and a blaming approach (3) “diversity is considered as wrong, bad and problematic by society” (student 7) and “it is our mentality, for example we say ‘look how he looks like’, ‘look, he has a smell’, or ‘how it comes to be a friend of yours?’” (student 12); and lastly, a lack of questioning skills (1) “people are influenced from negative things that they listen without trying to critically think” (student 8). Whilst these appear to be the components which shape an oppressive mentality, three students also rooted oppression in a lack of culture/education (in Greek: παιδεία): “there is no appropriate culture/education in people who discriminate” (student 6).

Other explanations for oppression included: the stigmatisation of the media (2) “...for example, you hear in the news that ‘am Albanian man raped a 13 year old girl’, and this is the reason that there are stereotypes about Albanians – that they are not good people - and they become a minority” (student 12); and the power of stereotypes in rural areas (3) “…most of us come from villages or rural areas, where there are many stereotypes; for example, in relation to unmarried women or mental health patients. They are being stigmatised as the black sheep of the community” (student 11).

4.2.2.3.2 The blaming approach

Despite the above explanations that focus on the structural origins of oppression, the vast majority of students (11) also fell into a blaming approach towards minorities. It is important to note that students did not discuss all minority groups. Student 7 explained “it depends on the minority group, if they share responsibility about their oppression or not”. Therefore, they focused their blaming towards immigrants, mental health patients, lone parents (women), Roma and LGBTQI – reflecting the same oppressed identities that they discussed earlier about Greek society. It was observed that among these eleven students, seven were confident about

vórmα) meaning the tendency of society to create and re-create its own standards and common rules.
minorities’ responsibility for their own oppression, whilst four were somewhat ambivalent about this. Only two students did not subscribe to this blaming approach. However, how did students argue their case that minorities were to blame?

They saw oppression as the result of personal failure/fault rather than considering the contribution of the context’s unjust and oppressive policies on someone’s conditions. Their arguments included beliefs that minorities are passive or even reproduce their exclusion and oppression (5) “they are not organised to react against or to create an anti-oppressive climate. For example, I haven’t seen gypsies changing the notion of ‘oh the gypsy will approach me begging and he will try take my money with cunning’” (student 6) and “mental health patients can’t control themselves sometimes. In addition, gypsies are inclined to steal...” (student 2). Student 14 added:

“mental health patients present their illness as a problem. They shouldn’t be house-bounded, hiding, but they should be out, having communication with other people and their friends; they shouldn’t be afraid to talk about their problem and be lost in their own world. In relation to gypsies and asylum seekers, they don’t know how to have the world around them without their raging”.

Other arguments revealed: beliefs that being a minority is a matter of personal choice (1) “...homosexuals don’t have a real problem, it is their choice...” (student 7); and even an understanding/justification towards oppressors themselves (1) “...when Albanians came to Greece they did bad things; therefore they have been provoking others and it is reasonable to be treated like that” (student 1). Within these quotes, deep rooted stereotypes are observed which are founded on a view of these groups as a whole (they are all the same) and a failure to acknowledge the variety and diversity within. There is also a tendency to focus on traits as characteristic of a whole group, for example Roma and stealing.

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62 In order to give the exact meaning, another phrase is used here. The student actually said “they have given rights” (to the oppressors/society) (in Greek: έχουν δώσει δικαιώματα).
Similar observations were identified in relation to the four students who showed ambivalence about whether minorities should be blamed for their oppression or not. Their arguments again revealed deep rooted stereotypes with failure to acknowledge variations within groups. Students’ thoughts conflicted between blame and empathy (2) “...asylum seekers may have a share of the responsibility but I don’t think this is on purpose. I don’t know. It is for survival” (student 5); and conflicting beliefs about minorities’ ability to resist oppression (2):

“They may haven’t tried to be assimilated. It may suit them. I don’t know. Do we give them the chance to assimilate within society since we are the ones who exclude them? So I don’t know if they are to be blamed. Maybe a small share of the responsibility. For example, unmarried mothers may have not overcome their taboo themselves so as society to overcome it after” (student 8) and “they may are to be blamed, because they have experienced their oppression and then they say themselves that they are different. They adopt their oppression. I don’t know” (student 13).

Student 3 was also ambivalent about whether oppression involves a personal choice, “I believe it is minorities’ fault too. I don’t know though if all minorities are at fault. For example, you can’t blame mental health patients...So you can’t say that it is always the fault on minorities. Maybe gypsies are at fault to a certain degree, but again I don’t know. I can’t understand... It may be their choice”. The exception to the above stereotypes and blaming approach were two students who refused to blame minorities for their oppression, and remained firmly focussed on structural influences and causes. As student 11 explained “society creates your personality. I don’t blame these people (minorities) because they live in this society without the necessary goods, and they are not encouraged to deal with this problem (oppression)”.

As a summative note, students’ explanation of oppression revealed a theoretical understanding of the construction of oppression that is group based, stereotypical and uncritical. However, it is unknown to what extent their explanations of the dynamics of oppression, influences their deeply held stereotypes or vice versa. Whilst they were talking initially about the
‘how –making’ of an oppressive society, their quotes later represented stereotypes, an inability to acknowledge variations within groups, blame and even justification of oppressors’ attitudes. Whether these graduates are aware of their oppressive beliefs or not will be discussed in the following section.

4.2.2.4 Positioning the self in the oppressive society

In order to reveal students’ deeper values and beliefs, further personal questions were asked. Therefore, in response to the question about their feelings towards minorities and oppression the vast majority of students (10) expressed feelings against oppression: anger/frustration (4), sadness (4), and repulsion (1). Four students (4/10) expressed a willingness for action as a result of these feelings. This action involves: trying to change others’ opinions and behaviours (3) “I feel awful, I am trying to speak with people and explain things...It is a battle and I am trying to be surrounded by people who feel like me” (student 10) and “I feel sad and I am trying to not let it happening, for example, if I see somebody to speak inappropriately to a foreigner...” (student 14); and volunteering (1) “I am so sad about this oppression that I am a volunteer in the Red Cross to help minorities” (student 5). Two students (2/10) appeared ambivalent about whether they could do something against oppression or not, “I want to change the situation but I don’t know if I can do it or how” (student 13). Whilst students discussed feelings against oppression, these feelings appear to conflict with their own beliefs and stereotypes as discussed above. It is also worth noting from the data that any action against oppression involves an individual – not a collective - approach to change others, and disregards the necessity for self examination.

Also, for four students (4/14) who expressed both positive and negative feelings simultaneously – there seemed to be a tension that they may not be aware of. On one hand, they expressed fear (2), pity (2) and even hatred (1) against minorities or specific groups, whilst on the other hand they revealed anger (2), sadness (2) and injustice/unfairness (1) against the
oppressive society. They stated: “I hate sex offenders very much...(but later)... I feel sad and angry that the majority of people are judgemental towards minorities” (student 4) and “I have felt threatened and fear for gypsies or mental health patients...(and later) ...I feel that it is unfair that society treats minorities like that...” (student 2). In the light of these contradictory statements it is important to examine the extent to which students are aware of their own feelings, and potentially contradictory positions.

Students were asked about whether they think they hold any discriminatory/oppressive beliefs about minorities, and diversity. Eight students acknowledged holding such beliefs. What is evident from what they said is that these beliefs are based on their notion of what is taken to be central, safe, normal and conventional. For example, they stated:

“I am not certain that I accept diversity... I have prejudices, for example, if an immigrant would touch me or if I go to the super market and everybody has a different colour skin, I wouldn’t feel OK. I am also very against to the people that work in the traffic lights” (student 1) and “If a gypsy or a black man approaches me in the traffic lights in order to wash my car window, I may react badly...” (student 6).

It is interesting to note that students 10 and 11, who expressed positive beliefs about oppression, also acknowledged discriminatory beliefs: “I acknowledge that sometimes I treat differently the diverse groups; not with racism but I feel it inside. I am thinking ‘oops what is happening here? He has other daily life or other choices than me’ (student10). An increased self-awareness is observed in students who acknowledged holding discriminatory beliefs. However, is self – awareness enough to challenge deep rooted stereotypes and discriminatory beliefs? Student 8 revealed: “I don’t feel comfortable with all minorities, for example the gypsies. I don’t think there is anyone who has overcome all his prejudices. I haven’t managed to overcome mine and I don’t know if I ever will, because I may don’t want to...”. The denial to challenge and change the self that is presented here has the potential to limit self-awareness into an intellectual
activity without action. It is also what perpetuates stereotypes and sets the foundations for falling into oppressive attitudes.

In contrast to the above, there were students who either denied holding discriminatory beliefs (5) or talked about having them in the past (1). Some of their answers included statements like “I don’t have discriminatory beliefs” (student 5) and “I don’t treat them differently than my friends, or you...” (student 3). Student 12 also denied this, but admitted, “I had classmates in school that were from Albany; I wasn’t their friend and I was making fun of them”. Despite the fact that these six students denied holding any discriminatory or oppressive beliefs, their statements throughout their interviews (blaming approach, oppressive language, and stereotypes) revealed the opposite. These students also revealed limited critical consciousness and an absence of self-questioning compared to the students who acknowledged holding discriminatory beliefs.

Exploring students’ feelings and positions, students were asked whether there are any groups that they wouldn’t want to work with, and what their rationalisation for this was. Students responded by saying that they would try to avoid working with disability (3), Roma (3), immigrants (2), abused women (1), children (1), elderly (1), sex offenders (1), substance misuse (1) and mental health (1). Their rationalisation for avoiding these groups was related to their self as being inadequate, or unable to face challenges (7).

“I would like to avoid disability. Disability cases are difficult because you need to know how to behave and you wonder everyday ‘oh what am I going to do now?’” (student 9); “the reason that I don’t want to work with the elderly is because I think that I can’t help them or tell them anything. I don’t know how I can approach them and if I can’t help, what am I going to do with them?” (student 13) and “there is so high risk when working with children. I doubt if I am able to influence a child’s life or personality and I wonder if I am going to do it rightly or wrongly” (student 3).
Here, student 1 added to this view of the self: “it would be difficult to work with immigrants or gypsies, I don’t know if I am ready for this. How am I going to communicate with them? I don’t have knowledge or experience; I need further reading and experience”. Considering this inadequate self rationalisation made by students, one may wonder whether this covers deeper tensions based on oppressive beliefs and stereotypes or even a resistance to change at a personal level. Therefore, is this just an inadequate self or an unchallenged one?

Other explanations for students’ preferences towards particular groups involved their inability to control personal feelings (6). Some stated that: “I would face difficulty with mental health. The patients’ image would scare me...some may be dangerous too and I would be frightened...” (student 14); “I can’t work with disability, I can’t stand seeing those kids like that! I can’t control my feelings” (student 5) and “I am too sensitive. When I see children with disability, I feel very sad and pity for them” (student 7). It is important to note that one student did not state any group preferences whilst another one acknowledged the power of his discriminatory beliefs: “...I am afraid my negative attitude towards immigrants is something that will obstacle me to work with them” (student 6). It was also observed that the majority of students (13/14) had not taken a placement working with groups which they preferred actively to avoid. However, they admitted to have been in limited contact through academic assignments or visits. Last but not least, is the observation of two students’ willingness and openness to challenge themselves: “It would be so difficult to work with an abused woman or gypsies...however I would like to fight and change this. I would like to have the experience working with them to work my limits” (student 12) and “I would find difficulty with substance misuse...but this is the biggest challenge for me to take and I want to do it” (student 11). The exception here is that these students are not only conscious about their attitudes and positions, but also open to challenge, question and even change these.
Beyond these positions, it was also observed that twelve students used derogatory terms when referring to the diverse groups and/or minorities. It was interesting to note that students did not use discriminatory words initially, but later in the interview spoke about “gypsies”, “people with special needs”, “narcomaniac” and “foreigners”. In addition, three students (3/12) used further oppressing language dividing human beings into “the normal people” and the “the ones with a problem”. It is very evident that the majority of students fell into labelling and binary thinking, underpinning a stereotypical us/them relation. Therefore, by diminishing them into stereotyped characteristics through the use of language, intensifies their discriminatory beliefs – which in turn, they may not be aware of.

All students (14) explained that their choice of words and language has been influenced by their studies in social work, for example “my wording was developed here. It was taught and it wasn’t difficult for me to use it” (student 1) and “after entering social work, we learnt new things and terminology. I didn’t say ‘disability’ but ‘he has a problem’; however, I changed after my studies”. Whilst an anti-oppressive terminology appears to have been taught within their education, it is questionable whether students acknowledge the power of language to shape and represent stereotypes and create an (oppressive) reality. Such failure is reflected on students’ 4 suggestion:

“my studies created a word restriction to me and I reached a point where I was offended by people who didn’t know the word meaning. Well, we speak about the same thing using different words. Terminology is good to be used between professionals but in practice in order to be understood you need to use easier words or expressions”.

What is observed here is the danger of a twisted understanding, where jargon-free language can be potentially used as an excuse for oppressive

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63 This is a negative term which is used to refer to people who substance misuse (in Greek: ναρκομανείς).
language. However, what further influences have shaped students’ beliefs and positions?

The majority of students (13) discussed the strong influences on their beliefs stemming from their families, regardless of whether these were positive towards diversity and minorities or not. For example: “my family has been the strongest influence as they support accepting diversity and minorities and look things under the surface...” (student 1). It is important to note though that among these thirteen students, there were five who admitted that their families hold discriminatory beliefs and that this results in tension within them: “I have experienced oppressive beliefs in my family and I was furious. My views are so diverge compared to the ones that my parents hold. They hold such bad prejudices and stereotypes...” (student 11). Another major influence for eleven students was identified to be their personal experiences, by having a direct/close relationship with diversity/minorities (7/11) in their family/friends:

“It is very different to talk about excluded groups as an observer - and then say that ‘I am trying to not discriminate’ - than when it happens to you. You can be shocked. For example, I didn’t have any problem with homosexuals, but when my sister told me that she was in love with a girl, there was a boom inside me, despite the fact that I told her that it was OK...now if I was going to work with homosexuals, I would enjoy it much more” (student 10) and “I experienced discrimination in school, where two of my friends were Albatrians and I felt what it was like to stare at them in the street, to make fun of and exclude them. This has made me more open” (student 7).

Students also noted the influence of meeting minorities through placements in their education but this will be discussed in further detail later. Another personal experience which seems to have influenced students, is being discriminated against themselves (5/11), for example “I lost my dad and I have grown up in a one-parent family in a small community which has influenced me a lot. I understood how people think and made me aware” (student 14). Other influences that were mentioned included: being raised in rural areas (4) “I grew up in a village, so you can imagine what views I had for diverse groups. Very bad.” (student 8) and
inspiring school teachers (student 1). The identification of influences which have impacted on personal beliefs (positive and negative), appears to be a crucial milestone towards students’ self-awareness. However, critical thinking is pivotal too in order to challenge and change these. According to two students: “it is about how you personally develop these beliefs. Can you detach yourself from the beliefs that have been given to you all these years or not? You can definitely make a good effort...” (student 9).

In the light of the above contradictory positions towards the self, the other and their influences, it was crucial to investigate students’ views on positioning social work against oppression. This discussion follows.

4.2.2.5 Positioning social work in the oppressive society

Students were specifically asked to share their views about social work working with oppressed groups and diversity, and to describe the role of social work within this. A variety of answers were provided, which helped to demonstrate further, their understandings and positions as social work graduates.

Social work was characterised as the profession which is concerned with oppression and minorities exclusively (8), “Social work is the profession which deals with marginalised people and minorities” (student 5). It is interesting that students (7) provided different points of view in relation to social work’s mission against oppression: a structural social work (3) “it serves, what I was feeling since I was young, justice and equality. The kind values when we ask our mother ‘why the other is hungry? or cold?’” (student 2) and “Social work is both the vision and motivation to fight for a society without oppression and stereotypes” (student 11); and a vocational social work (2) “it is in the nature of social work to be the supporting hand that the other will catch. We will act like Mother Teresa...giving more than taking” (student 9). Whilst these approaches appear to be at two contradictory ends of the spectrum, two students provided an alternative view of social work as an oppressive profession saying:
“On one hand you help practically some minorities like people with disabilities...but on the other hand in cases where society itself creates ‘problems’ like drugs, social work can be a tool. In other words, you make the problems and then you offer services to deal with it, fact which hides a lot of traps and oppressive practices and policies” (student 4) and “it feels like we as social workers continue the oppression further, we stigmatisate these groups more by working them exclusively. I like working with communities, neighbourhoods, with people whether they are in minorities or not” (student 13).

In a continuum of these contradictory views of social work, students also disagreed about what social work can actually do against oppression. Some offered a key role (6), but others said it has a limited one (8). In relation to its key role, students considered social work as fighting oppression: through collective action (4) “social workers need to leave the office and do more street work; this is how people from community will participate into this collectively...” (student 3) and “to fight collectively for peoples’ rights and against oppression” (student 11); and empowering minorities and communities (3) “making communities and minorities aware about things, being the ombudsman in community conflicts and bringing new strategies for social development” (student 2).

Instead, eight students described a social work approach limited to: public awareness campaigns only (3) “social workers can do a very good awareness campaign in the community” (student 7) and “inform neighbourhoods about immigrants even educate them to live together nicely” (student 13); to individual support (4) “social work can’t do anything to change society. Maybe to decrease the extent which the person experiences the oppression...” (student 5) and even to inaction (1) “a social worker can’t do anything. The community needs to realise first its needs (in relation to oppression) and then a social worker can act within it” (student 10).

Nonetheless, whether social work plays a key or limited role against oppression, students also discussed the foundations for an oppression-free society. Four of them characterised this society as utopian and idealistic, whilst another four students raised the importance of a change of the
political and social system: “the uppers in hierarchy ignore systematically these problems (oppression). To my point of view there is a need of grassroot change” (student 11) and “the political and social context needs to change...” (student 9). Five students also spoke about the ideal social worker, with a “personal will to do things”, whilst three students discussed a professional self which: is educated (student 1), has a thick skin (student 9) and an increased empathy (student 2) towards minorities.

In summary, numerous contradictory beliefs and positions were revealed where students were observed to hold both positive and negative beliefs simultaneously. Whilst some may appear more conscious of acknowledging that they hold stereotypical and discriminatory beliefs, their openness to challenge and even change these was limited. It was also evident that there was a limited understanding of the roots of oppression. Social work’s role in challenging oppression was conceptualised largely on an individualistic basis with little reference to structural change and challenge. Social work education was also revealed to only marginally influence the development of an anti-oppressive professional self. Therefore, it would not be an exaggeration to wonder about what extent these graduates will be able to identify, and challenge oppression structurally and personally.

4.2.3 Value tensions and dilemmas

Students were asked about their experiences of value tensions, and dilemmas, in order to uncover not only their deeper understandings about this, but also the way they response to tensions between their personal and professional self.

4.2.3.1 Defining a value tension/dilemma

Students were asked what they understood of a value tension or dilemma, and their definitions reflected different levels of knowledge and understanding. The majority of students (12) appeared confident about their knowledge, whilst one showed ambivalence “I know some basic stuff,
but I am afraid I don’t know much about our professional ethics...”

(student 3) and another student subscribed to an ignorant state by saying “I don’t understand what it is (the dilemma for social work)” (student 7). These quotes also reveal gaps in their education, but this is going to be explored in detail later. Students understood dilemmas either as the tension between professional and personal values (7), or professional and organisational ones (3). In relation to the conflict of personal-professional values, students’ definitions revealed:

“It is when a personal principle conflicts with a professional one” (student 2); “a dilemma is when our personal beliefs -for example, about a group or minority - come into collision with what we have learnt in our studies or with what we have to do; and we don’t know what to do. The professional or the personal (value) will be the stronger?” (student 14) and “as a human being you have some beliefs, images, a personality which may come into collision with a group or a situation and you are wondering ‘what am I doing now, do I overcome my beliefs and my thinking? This is a dilemma.’” (student 8).

It is evident that these students were confident in discussing about the personal self that may hold oppressive beliefs and thoughts.

However, there were students - as explained above - who discussed the conflict between the organisational values and the profession, i.e. “the dilemma is when the professional values come into collision with my organisation and I wonder: do I act as a social worker who advocates these values or as a pawn in the game of the system?” (student 11). It is interesting to note that all of these students except for one, provided either one or the other. Considering that these students are graduates, their failure to offer insights into the multiple tensions that may be involved in their professional life, may reveal their limited and narrow insight. Moreover, there were two students who provided an alternative view of ethics being an obstacle “on one hand there are our ethics, which I need to respect and follow, whilst on the other hand, I may have to override them

64 The student here used a word (in Greek: κολλήματα μου) that it was impossible to find an equivalent English word. The meaning refers to somebody who ‘has a thing for’ or ‘blocked thinking about something’.
in order to advocate for a programme, a group or minority” (student 1) and “dilemmas exist when there is a need to not follow the code of ethics” (student 5). This view of professional ethics – including an anti-oppressive approach – reveals not only their limited understanding but also a potential threat of rationalisation of deeper stereotypes and oppressive beliefs in practice. To what extent students are aware of this, is not yet clear. What their experiences and thoughts about value tensions between their personal and professional self suggest?

4.2.3.2 The experience of value tensions

Students were asked if they have ever been faced with a dilemma between their personal and professional self, which revealed different levels of consciousness and self awareness. The majority of students (9) denied having experienced a personal – professional value tension, despite providing conflicting beliefs and contradictive statements throughout their accounts on oppression and diversity (see section above). Five of them (5/9) acknowledged experiences of dilemmas in relation to keeping boundaries and/or intervention “when I was in a placement with children who have learning disability, I noticed that my feelings were beyond the professional ones; however, it was good as it helped their development” (student 2) and “I felt a dilemma in placement at the community house where I was very close with patients, I loved them and I still phone them. There were times that I was trying to balance my boundaries in order to not make them dependent on me...” (student 7); whilst four students (4/9) responded that they had never experienced any. Student 13 explained: “I haven’t felt any dilemmas in placements because I was myself. In academic assignments sometimes I believed other things than the ones I was writing about, but I did it just for the lecturer...In relation to personal – professional tensions, I don’t know, I haven’t deepen so much into this”. What is evident here is not only a limited level of self-awareness, but also a depreciation of professional values and ethics, often driven by a narrow appreciation of their significance, as well as their focus on their self concept (as discussed earlier).
On the contrary, five students admitted having experienced a value tension. This tension was described in the context of their placements, “It has happened to unlike some people in placements where this was in conflict with what I should do. I was thinking ‘why do I unlike them? I need to treat them equally’” (student 11) or in their personal lives “I have experienced such (tensions) in my thoughts. I have prejudices whilst I need (by social work values) to minimize and get rid of them” (student 1). It seems that these students are not only self-aware, but also ethically aware, questioning and locating their personal prejudices and oppressive beliefs – abilities that were not observed in students who denied experiencing value tensions. Nonetheless, it needs to be noted that student 4 provided an alternative view of her personal – professional value tension:

“I have caught myself having different beliefs than the professional ones. For example, I don’t believe in psychopathology, the DSM65 divisions or even disability. However, when I am acting as a professional, I see myself seeking information in my books and trying to characterise a person or situation or make an intervention plan according to psychopathology”.

The same student had referred to social work as an oppressive profession, so this adds to her argument about the labelling and stigmatisation effects of social work. Whilst the debate about DSM continues amongst scholars and academics, it is interesting that she classified the profession’s values into individual and clinical theories only, and as part of her professional self without acknowledging the various alternative, critical and radical theories of social work. It is worth wondering whether her social work education has made references to such alternative theories or not – an analysis that will be discussed later.

Students also provided vivid descriptions of their negative experiences of a value tension between their personal – professional values:

“It is very difficult and soul-destroying. You are within a chaos and you don’t know what is happening, what you should do.

65 The student used the abbreviation for the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM).
Actually, you know what you should do by the codes of ethics but then you fight what you want for yourself and what you need...” (student 1); “I felt tied up, wondering what to do. If I would do what I wanted to, I would think ‘oh, I override the code of ethics instead of following it’ but on the other hand I would cut out my personality” (student 3) and “the tension is continuous, every time you meet that person. It puzzles you and raises obstacles to your work” (student 11).

Similar descriptions were reported by students who denied having experienced personal – professional value tensions: “it is very difficult not knowing what to do. I felt awkward; I was sad and disappointed with myself” (student 5) and “it is extremely difficult to control yourself” (student 7). The question arises, how do students’ manage these tensions.

Whilst the above descriptions reveal a vicious circle of contradictory values and beliefs, students provided resolution strategies, reflecting their need for redemption from this. It is interesting that even students who denied any value tensions provided resolution strategies talking about future situations. A diversity of professional strategies were suggested, such as weighing up the pros and cons of alternative options using a utilitarian/consequentialist approach (5) “I think a lot about the pros and cons of each choice” (student 1) and “I am thinking about the consequences that the one choice would have or the other” (student 5). Four students highlighted the importance of discussing the issue with others, like an experienced colleague but also friends and family too. Two students said, “I try to discuss this with my family and especially my friends in order to act differently next time I face a dilemma” (student 6).

Seeking advice from family and friends though is a problematic strategy, which may reinforce existing personal values and beliefs, and impact on confidentiality – an issue that was not considered by the student.

There were also two students who disagreed about whether empathy can help in the resolution of a value tensions: “It helps trying to feel what is like in the other person’s position” (student 10) whilst “I would see good results after a systematic desensitisation...” (student 9). This is questionable though as a desensitisation of the professional does not mean
that the conflict is gone. Instead, it reveals a tendency to self-protection through blinded, automatic, and ethically unaware actions. Such a tendency was revealed in student 13’s suggestion too: “it is about the love for others. If you love, you will succeed. OK, the ‘do’s and don’ts’ must exist but if you have willingness, zeal and love, they may come out naturally anyway”. Again, an over-simplification of the issue and an absence of critical reflection on their ethical identity are evident. Last but not least, psychotherapy was suggested by student 6 as a personal strategy which may contribute to the tension’s resolution. Although thus far the focus has been on the identification and resolution of value tensions, there is another aspect too; what students perceive the outcome of such value tensions to be.

There were no differences between students talking about past and/or future tensions. The majority (9), admitted that their personal values overrode the code of ethics/social work values. Their explanations involved: the argument that praxis is different from theory (2) “in most occasions my values predominate. The praxis is far away from theory” (student 8); self-centredness (2) “I will always listen to myself, it has proved to be very helpful up until now” (student 9) and a personal judgement of what is urgent/risky “if the matter isn’t extreme, I will choose myself of course. If it is extreme and will put the service user at risk, I will follow the code of ethics probably” (student 13). It is interesting that not one of these students acknowledged the significance of social work values in guiding professional practice. Instead, they appeared to rely on their unquestioned personal judgements and potentially their unrecognised oppressive self.

In contrast, there were five students who suggested a compromise between the two, acknowledging both the significance of social work ethics, and the difficulty of rejecting their personal values totally. Two of them discussed this issue in terms of a choice against a self-robot “we are human beings; if you reject your personal beliefs completely, it is like being a robot which executes orders. This is the other extreme (of
overriding social work values)” (student 3). Whilst these quotes highlight the need for a self who holds personal and professional values in coherence, its efficacy is unknown without continuous critical reflection and deconstruction-reconstruction. All of which have been limited, and/or absent throughout their statements and explanations. Instead, there is potential risk that social work values will be made to fit their various stereotypes and oppressive beliefs, without being consciously aware of this. Therefore, the resolution appears to lie in student’s 4 suggestion, “I can’t change from one day to another. I will be fake. I believe that this is a gradual process. You need to start seeing things from the social work’s point of view and then gradually conquer social work values through continuous reposition of our self and reasoning of its changes” (student 4). Critical consiousness and self reasoning is a gradual and continuous process – something that the vast majority of students appear to have not understood or oversimplified. It would be no exaggeration to say that these students whilst being graduates, are not prepared to manage value tensions with an awareness of the oppressive aspects of the self. This raises an important question about the role of social work education in perpetuating this position and/or failing to challenge it. Students’ evaluation of social work education is discussed below.

4.2.4 Social work education

Students extensively discussed their education, commenting on its contribution, indicating its gaps, and providing recommendations for an anti-oppressive approach moving foreword. Students’ evaluation focused on two main areas: the content of their education and their individual response to it. These are discussed below.

4.2.4.1 Reflections on education’s content

Questioned about their education’s reference to oppression and diversity, students provided various answers focusing on the educators’ role in class,
and/or in placement instead of the curriculum itself. The vast majority of students (12) said that there was limited reference to this: “there was some information by the individual initiative of some lecturers. It didn’t happen to all modules” (student 3); “the reference was by books, which is very limited for me” (student 13) and “we were taught about these during the initial semesters most, and then more occasionally. The truth is that I feel that I haven’t been educated enough on diversity issues. Placements helped, but lectures not really” (student 10). In contrast, two students disagreed about their education on diversity and oppression: “we had the worst of such education...we weren’t taught about socially excluded people, even in the relevant modules” (student 2) and “there was great reference on diversity issues, especially after the 3rd semester that we had placements” (student 11). Comparing students’ earlier accounts on diversity and oppression, with these reflections on their education, it is revealed that there does not seem an anti-oppressive focus in the curriculum. It appears that it depends on the lecturer/supervisor as to whether they discuss these issues in depth or not. So, what was the extent of their educational content on diversity and oppression?

Five students suggested that their education included information on: diverse vulnerable groups (2) “we learned about each minority, what services are available, what their needs are, etc” (student 5); discrimination and oppression (2) “within the initial semesters, one-two lecturers discussed about stereotypes, prejudices and diversity in a great extent” (student 4) and intervention plans “lecturers were trying to prepare us in applying the right method of intervention/management of such groups” (student 9). Here student 3 stated “I have developed a theoretical foundation about mental health patients for example, but not for other group and this is where our education misses the point”. It appears that their education focused on how to work, instead of providing theoretical

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66 It needs to be highlighted here that the academic staff and lecturers who teach modules of the curriculum do not teach specific modules on a permanent basis or over a long period of time. Therefore, modules are taught by different people each semester/year.
explanations about the roots of oppression, as well as the role of social work in being able to challenge this. This absence may explain students’ unquestioned stereotypes and narrow understandings about otherness and social work’s role against oppression as discussed earlier.

Similar thoughts were shared about their education in regards to exploring value tensions and dilemmas. Students revealed a limited reference to this (9) “there was one or two lecturers, who referred on ethics and the code of ethics but nothing more, it was not clear” (student 4) and “we had very limited reference on tensions and dilemmas” (student 5); whilst five students revealed that they had no such exposure to this, “I haven’t been taught about tensions and dilemmas… it would be helpful to learn about these issues instead of struggling alone” (student 1) and “there was no reference on dilemmas. This is obvious by the fact that I don’t even know if I have experienced a dilemma or not, as well as what ethics is in practice” (student 10).

Considering this, one may wonder, how limited and/or no reference to value tensions is possible given that ‘Deontology/Ethics’ module is part of their curriculum. Three students acknowledged that any discussion tended to focus on “confidentiality issues” (student 9) and “theoretical discussions” (student 8), whilst another student said “I never understood this module. It was boring and felt like a chore” (student 7). Five students made reference to their placements, and their curriculum bibliography as a source of obtaining and developing their knowledge in relation to value tensions and dilemmas. Given this, it would seem that students’ difficulties in reflecting on potential value tension experiences, is not surprising and understandable.

It was also noted that students discussed the role of their educators in their learning at a great extent. Students revealed both positive and negative

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67 The curriculum of the research’s case has been discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.2.3).
68 The student used the word (in Greek: αγγαρεία), which means ‘a routine, boring duty’ or ‘chore’.
experiences simultaneously. All students agreed that it is about who and how they teach, distinguishing the interesting lectures from boring and ineffective ones. Within students’ quotes, there was a focus on educators’ ability to deliver/communicate educational content (3) “some educators tried to communicate us knowledge, whilst others didn’t” (student 1); and personal availability (2) “some lecturers were available (after class) for further information about the module or our thoughts. However this happened by a few not all the lecturers” (student 6). Academic staff’s personal qualities were also considered as important (4):

“Some educators were very good. They could ‘read’ the students, and knew when we had inquiries. Some others were a bad contribution to the Department. For example, I had a lecturer in my first semester who was ‘wild’ with students, you couldn’t dare to ask something” (student 7) and “Some educators were interested in us, some others weren’t. There were though educators especially after my 3rd, 4th semester that through their contribution I took many things. One had more humour, another had more qualifications, and another more simplicity” (student 11).

Last but not least, student 13 revealed: “Some lecturers were not open minded and provided limited education, which made me disappointed. However, there were others who gave me a lot of things. Unfortunately, these were only a few and towards the end of my studies”.

There were also discussions about educators’ teaching strategies, revealing the importance of experiential learning through: sharing their experiences (2) “I was influenced by educators who shared their experiences. It was more helpful than theoretical stuff or general guidelines, like ‘you need to this or the other’” (student 1); discussing examples/case scenarios (4) “...for example, one lecturer was giving us scenarios with immigrants, homosexuals etc, and we were discussing our beliefs, so you could understand yourself and change” (student 4) and “discussing examples was very important and helpful in our learning” (student 7); role playing (2) “examples and role playing were the teaching strategies that have had duration in our learning. Lecturers can’t come in class and dictate by reading a book. Knowledge is not food to be served in a plate” (student 3);
and finally debate and dialogue within class (2) “In last semester, our supervisor asked us to discuss social work principles, to comment and reflect on these. This was much more helpful than dictating that social work has five principles-values which we should write them in an examination. I would have forgotten them by now” (student 13).

Considering students’ reflections on their educational experiences, it is evident that they are taught through a traditional and didactic model (adopted by the majority of their educators) whereby students are considered as passive recipients of knowledge. This approach may have contributed to students’ simplistic and narrow understandings of oppression and value tensions – regardless of whether there was or was not reference made to this - as discussed throughout this analysis. This was mentioned by student 4, “(the result is) that they (academic staff) pass students like me without having understood the content of the module, the issues, and they give us the grade of 9⁶⁹/10”. An alternative view of education was offered by student 1: “…Education is not only about who communicates the knowledge; it is also about what you want to get from your education. Students play a role too. It is us, as its recipients, if we want to study, to investigate and understand it further and not just say ‘this is the theory’”. According to this student, the relationship between educators and students appears to be a dynamic one, where the failure of learning is a result of both parts. Therefore, it is interesting at this point to discuss students’ attendance to lectures and their explanations for their attendance.

All students admitted that they did not attend all of their lectures – a significant finding in relation to their learning. The main reason for this explanation by 10 students was linked to the educator’s teaching approach, for example:

“I attended almost all lectures. However, after some years I knew the way the lecturers were teaching us, so I was choosing whom to attend. When I felt that I am not going to gain anything, I was

⁶⁹ 9/10 scale, in other words a grade of ‘excellent’.
not attending. You feel it is pointless” (student 4) and “I was trying to attend my lectures, but there were some boring because of the lecturers. Therefore, I either didn’t attend them or I did just because I had to; but I didn’t learn much. On the other hand, other educators were easy to understand and it was a pleasure to attend their lectures” (student 1).

What is evident, here, is a personal judgement about the potential efficacy and contribution of lectures. Student 9 revealed a lack of consistency and reliability on behalf of academic staff: “…it was also disappointing the fact that sometimes the lecturer was absent without any notification or kept us for a 15’ lecture instead of 3 hours as he was supposed to”. Further explanations for not attending lectures were: working (2), the distance between their home and academic premises (1) and early morning lectures (1). In the light of these, to what extent are students educated without attending their lectures? More revealing but disappointing reflections were made on their experiences in field placements.

Students talked about their experiences of a variety of social services/organisations and diverse groups that they have undertaken during their education: children and families, unemployed, prisoners, palliative care, disability, elderly, mental health, cancer patients, Roma, immigrants/refugees and substance misuse. Once again, they expanded on both positive and negative experiences. Their positive experiences were based on: supervisor’s contribution to taking initiatives and obtaining critical thinking (3) “our supervisor helped us see the forest and not the tree” (student 1) and “I learnt the most things in the placement, where I had more chances to participate in things and take initiatives” (student 6); and their opportunity to be challenged (3) “when I took the placement in a mental health community house I felt fear initially and I was influenced emotionally; but then I managed it and took a lot of things from this” (student 3) and “in the placement with children with autism, others (society) treat them differently so I was shocked and I felt fear for myself and pity for them. But then these feelings were gone and I liked it very much” (student 13). Further positive factors were reported to be: meeting
targets (1) and developing a professional relationship with service users (1).

However, students revealed negative experiences too, which were linked to: unethical even oppressive practice by staff (3) “the medical staff in the hospital had a challenging and oppressive attitude towards minorities, especially the gypsies. Sometimes, they were saying ‘get out! You stink’ or ‘you bother me’. I tried to discuss this with them but there was no willingness to listen to me and change their behaviour” (student 6) and “I have observed professionals breaking the code of ethics. When I challenged them they either didn’t answer to me or said ‘it is OK, don’t worry’” (student 3); inconsistency of the supervisor (2) “the worst placement was when we didn’t have a social worker at the placement, so, we didn’t have access to assessments and any other guidance, as well as an ‘absent’ academic supervisor. We had only two supervision sessions in the whole semester – instead of one every week – and everything was very unclear. When we challenged this with her (the supervisor) – me and another person – we were the only ones who almost failed that placement...” (student 4); and lack of tasks/work actions in the placement (2) “in that placement we were nine students. We didn’t do anything than just sitting around and drinking coffee... It was a pointless placement” (student 2). Last but not least, two students (student 3 and 12) highlighted the negative aspects of spending an academic semester in one placement:

“I think it is a mistake to spend only one semester of almost two months in a placement. Service users are not guinea pigs, as we treat them. Five or six of us (students) go to the placement, do some things and leave on the moment that you have started building a relationship with them. I think this is a bad procedure for them...” (student 3).

Students’ quotes, here, indicate ineffective, even inappropriate placements and professional practice, which not only leave unquestioned students’ stereotypes but also reproduce oppression. Consequently, it would not be an exaggeration to question the role of education in shaping anti-
oppressive professionals, when anti-oppressive practice appears to be the occasional initiative by academics and professionals.

Finally, students were asked to compare their initial expectations four years ago, with their evaluation now in relation to their education. All students expressed that they are satisfied to a certain extent by their education; highlighting both its positive contribution (4) in learning about social work, for example “I wasn’t interested in my initial semesters. But after, lecturers made me love social work and after my 3rd semester I received substantial knowledge” (student 11) but its gaps too (10).

Students indicated gaps in their teaching (7) “I am moderate satisfied. A connection of social work theory and practice was absent” (student 10) and “I have so many gaps that I feel I can’t work yet. I should have fulfilled these gaps during my education” (student 7); and also in the organisation of the Department (3) “I am a bit disappointed with the organisational issues of the Department. They should have offered us better conditions in our placements or seek more effective things” (student 1) and “there was a panic in everything. When I first came I didn’t know where to go, what to do, so, I was asking. However, a few knew and a few were eager to explain. The process of taking books, the semesters’ registration and the announcements, i.e. for the examination content, were huge problems. If you were not at the premises you wouldn’t know about the announcements – issue that would have been resolved if these were electronically via internet” (student 7). There were also two students who referred to the low status of education in social work within a Technological Educational Institute (TEIs) compared to a British University (student 2) or to Greek Universities (AEIs).

The majority of students’ reflections on the content of their education were disappointing. The failure of their education in stimulating the development of an anti-oppressive self is observed. Whilst it was reported that a few lecturers took the initiative to focus on these issues, this appears to have been taught without truly comprehending what students are
learning or thinking. Nevertheless, students also discussed their personal development and response to their education, as follows.

### 4.2.4.2 Reflections on the self

Students were asked if and what has changed in themselves during their studies, and their responses revealed that their education contributed mostly to their self-awareness including insight into their oppressive beliefs (8):

> “I realised a change in myself. I had some beliefs and behaviours for specific people which changed. I can also identify, now, my behaviour when it is wrong – awareness that I didn’t have before social work” (student 6); “I never had extreme reactions, but I had reservations towards some groups, which I realised within my social work studies” (student 13) and “compared to other studies, social work helps into self-awareness a lot. I don’t know if I would be the same person in relation to my stance towards diversity, if I was studying something else” (student 10).

Whilst this self-awareness sounds promising, it is questionable, to what extent this has been achieved in relation to their deep-rooted stereotypes about otherness (as previously discussed, see section 4.2.2). Another contribution of social work education was acknowledged to be the adoption of a critical or out of the box thinking (5): “social work broadens your horizons...” (student 2) and “I started seeing things and my whole ideology from another point of view. You change your way of thinking...” (student 11). Additional changes were reported to be: the ability to control feelings (1), working on communication skills (1), rising self-esteem (1), and maturity (1).

Having responded in this way, students were asked if they feel prepared to manage value tensions in relation to anti-oppressive practice. The vast majority of them (13) felt that they did not feel prepared, or were ambivalent about this: “I have neither the knowledge nor the experience for this” (student 1); “I am not ready to face value tensions in relation to diversity and oppression” (student 3) and “I can’t say if I am ready for sure” (student 13). It is important to note that two students admitted that
due to their unpreparedness, it is easier for their personal judgements and beliefs to override social work values: “I will follow my judgement. I can’t do anything else” (student 2). In contrast, student 11 challenged the notion of preparedness: “what my studies have taught me, is to face things and get into them. I may have not learnt as much as I should have, but I really want to get into things with impetus and to face whatever fear or (oppressive) beliefs I have”. The difference with student 11 is that instead of complying with an inadequate social work education, and rationalising his oppressive self, he moves forward willing and prepared to undertake continuous self deconstruction and reconstruction.

4.2.4.3 The way forward

Towards the end of the interview, students were asked what they would recommend for their education in relation to anti-oppressive theory and practice. A variety of suggestions were provided, including organisational issues, the curriculum, personal qualities and teaching strategies of staff.

Whilst discussing organisational issues, the majority of students (9) recommended the importance of higher educational institutions of social work to be involved with community projects and/or street work beyond field placements. Such an involvement is believed to offer the opportunity for students to have direct contact with minorities and oppressed groups (4) “we will be able to come in contact with diversity more frequently” (student 12) and “more direct contact with oppressed groups is pivotal along with a good theoretical background. Because, if you don’t experience and see things closely, theory is not enough on its own” (student 3). An additional opportunity identified through the involvement of the community, is to raise awareness, and according to student 11: “we should show what social work is, because society either is not aware or believes that we are the evil servants of the government and we take kids from their families”.

Another organisational issue that was noted by seven students was staff recruitment and continuous evaluation: “We don’t have permanent
lecturers, so, it is crucial to have 15 permanent academic staff members who will be evaluated both by students and higher management” (student 4). A revealing observation was offered by student 8 for the evaluation that happens already within the Department: “My greatest complaint is the absence of evaluation for educators by students. Lately, there is something, but it is not real. There should be evaluation among staff too”. An absent or questionable staff evaluation leaves no space for challenging, updating and improving ineffective policies. Finally, recommendations were suggested by students 2 and 6: “there should be a connection with universities abroad and to have postgraduate studies in social work too” (student 2) and “even our logistical means are limited. For example, we wanted to present our assignment and we did it on paper whilst we could have the opportunity to use power point, etc” (student 6). Considering the organisational issues that students raised, it is worth wondering how education can challenge students when it appears to not challenge and review itself.

A review and update of the curriculum was suggested by seven students. Specifically, it was noted that the existing curriculum is focused on a clinical model “the problem is that they want to make us psychologists or psychotherapists, this is how we are inclined” (student 2) and is not up to date with current socio-economic conditions and social problems:

“For example, some books make reference of Ottoman Greece and the lecturer of a module70 used this reference as examination syllabus and it was an examination topic too. As a profession, we need to keep up with current problems. OK, we could have made a reference to this as a historical note, but you can’t focus on Ottoman Greece and everything else that happens now is not even discussed within class” (student 3).

Therefore, students suggested an up to date curriculum, which will focus on ethics, diversity and oppression either as specific modules (3) or to be integrated in all courses and modules (4) but with compulsory attendance

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70 Whilst the student named the module, such a reference is avoided as there is a danger in revealing the lecturer’s identity.
too (1). Students 6 and 11 raised the importance of discussing these issues from the first semester “education needs to make reference on oppression from the first semester” (student 6) whilst students 4 and 10 added that the curriculum needs a more “sociological perspective”. Except from the inclusion of more sociological theories, student 2 added that the curriculum should include references on “minorities’ characteristics, culture, multiple oppressions, successful intervention projects in Europe and US and all these to be companied with theories of community work, design and development”. Social work education’s limited reference to sociological and critical approaches appears to have contributed into students’ individualistic perspectives in their understandings and explanations for oppression and the role of social work against this.

Last but not least a suggestion common to all students was related to staff and their teaching strategies. The staff need to be: well qualified but have the ability to communicate/deliver knowledge effectively too (3) “we need qualified staff, but able to work with students, to have communicability” (student 5); open minded (1) “we need new people at first, open minded, eager to do things within the Department...” (student 13); able to listen carefully to students (3) “to be available to listen to us. It helps us” (student 5); not judgemental but respectful (3) “to not be judgemental even when we express stereotypes” (student 9); committed to lifelong learning (2) and with a passion about their job (1) “they need to be really interested and passionate with their job and interested in us and not to do it just for the money” (student 11). In relation to their teaching strategies, students provided a number of suggestions highlighting the need, again, for more experiential learning via: group discussions and debate (6), role playing (5), the use of video (1), user involvement (1), case studies/scenarios (2) and educators’ sharing experiences (2). Students revealed that such an approach “is motivating” (4) and links theory with practice (5).

As a summative note, it is revealed that students need not only an updated education reflecting current social problems and oppression, but also a critical education, where the educator-student relationship is dynamic with
equal contributions to learning. Students protested that education should release itself from traditional and inflexible policies and adopt a critical and reflexive approach whereby students actively participate in their learning and academic staff is evaluated too. However, even if such reviews take place, can social work education have an impact on students’ oppressive beliefs and stereotypes?

It is very interesting that all students replied that education alone cannot have a major impact on their self. What is further needed according to students is working with one’s self along with the education. Stimulating factors for working with the self were acknowledged to be lifelong learning (4) “by reading, being up to date with research” (student 3) and “being curious to learn new things everyday” (student 9); the feedback by colleagues or supervision (4) “the feedback by others and supervision are very helpful in order to find what is not going well” (student 2) and “even the conversation with a person, who has completely different point of view, can be helpful” (student 3); and facing fears, feelings and stereotypes (4) “what has been helpful is taking my book and reading in the square, seeking a chance to speak with homosexuals and substance misusers” (student 10) or “seeking to work with what I fear, for example disability” (student 7). Students 8 and 5 admitted that these help them in “trying to overcome what I fear of, to break the wall of my prejudices, thoughts and feelings” (student 8) and “going beyond self limits” (student 5). Additional strategies for working with the self were named to be psychotherapy (1) and having role models from education (1). The above stimulating factors appear to offer students the opportunity to engage in a self-dialogue asking “what do I think? What do I feel? Why?” (student 1), “what does it mean diversity for me?” (student 7) and “how did I behave?” (student 12). This self-dialogue might be “difficult” (student 1) or “endless” (student 3) but was considered to lead to critical reflection. Yet, it is worth questioning to what extent they have engaged in such self-dialogue and critical consciousness, since they appear to hold stereotypes and conflicting positions that were limited/not aware of, as discussed above. This was also
discussed by student 2, who offered an alternative view “sometimes self-challenging cannot be objective. I may find myself perfect or weak”. How can self deconstruction be achieved?

Four students advocated that self-dialogue and self-questioning involves a personal availability and willingness to change, for example “if you are not prepared to change and you don’t want it, nothing can have any impact on you, even education” (student 11) and “It is your will and how much you are after it” (student 9). A denial of this process was considered as incompatible with the profession by three students: “you either have got it or not. If you can’t put yourself under review and change, you need to acknowledge that this profession is not for you; so don’t practice it” (student 13). It is interesting that students here appear to be critical; however, this critical stance contradicts their unquestioned positions as discussed throughout this analysis.

Therefore, there is a need for students to actively engage in critical consciousness through continuous stimuli of an anti-oppressive education: “you take the stimuli (by education) and then cultivate them and evolve yourself” (student 11). These are the key findings of this analysis: education’s failure to provide anti-oppressive stimuli, and students’ resistance to place themselves under continuous ‘cultivation’ and evolution.

4.3 Sample 3: Academic Staff

This last part of the chapter, involves the analysis of the interviews that were conducted with academic staff. The discussion is structured around interviewees’ descriptions and comments about educational policies and social work education; students’ beliefs and response towards diversity and oppression; as well as their suggestions for how to teach and instil anti-oppressive practice within the curriculum.
4.3.1 Reflections on educational policies

Staff discussed the context in which they work and teach, commenting on issues which stem from a top down model i.e. institutional policies from the top (Governmental policy) to down (the Department). They also remarked on aspects localised to the specific Department’s adopted policy. Therefore, this analysis encompasses both macro and micro level concerns of these educational policies as discussed by participants.

4.3.1.1 The macro level

All staff interviewed mentioned ineffective, economic – led, educational policies, which they regarded as resulting in the continuous disinvestment in (social work) education as one aspect amongst other austerity measures and policy cuts “We are under crisis. Crisis in our Department and crisis in the social welfare services too...” (interviewee 2). This disinvestment was seen as having resulted in a decline of the Department compared to previous years. For example, “I think we go from bad to worse. The Department has lost its power...” (interviewee 3). It was observed that the majority of interviewees (7) linked this decline with the gradual reduction in permanent staff (7):

“There are only two permanent staff members now, and some contract staff... in the past, the Department had qualified staff members that were for years here. Some of them had a vision for social work education and left their mark. However, when they left without new people to replace them - especially in relation to qualifications and vision - the Department gradually fell down and it raised much dust” (interviewee 6) and “there has been a lack of qualified permanent staff for years. Now, two or three people can’t run/manage a Department with so many difficulties” (interviewee 7).

A key consequence of this disinvestment and reduction in permanent staff, as identified by seven interviewees was the significant increase in student class sizes: (5): “we are forced to teach on workshops/seminars of 40, 50,
60 students" (interviewee 4) and "the big number of students within the workshops is a very dark result of the lack of funding" (interviewee 1).

Teaching in high staff/student ratios classes was perceived as a poor educational experience by these interviewees (this is discussed further below). As interviewee 1 concluded, disinvestment in social work meant: "they (current and previous governments) left Departments like ours without permanent staff, they abolished it".

Although an investment in (social work) education and welfare appears to have been the least priority for the state for years according to these informants, it is worth wondering if/what social action and challenge has taken place by professional associations, academics, students and service users against such disinvestment? However, the lack of funding and staff, are not the only problems.

Six Interviewees (6) raised the issue of the division between permanent and contract staff in terms of payments and insurance thus creating a two tier work force (4): "as contract staff we are paid once per six or eight months, and we have also problems with insurance, we fight to get the minimum insurance stamps..." (interviewee 1) and "you are not able to do research, to go on conferences, you are unpaid for months. How are you going to do it? You need to have a strong vision and passion for this" (interviewee 8). It is observed that such an unequal treatment makes contract staff feel undervalued and less important. This is further revealed in interviewee 9’s description of these working conditions as ‘slavery’: “we are being treated like working stiffs or slaves comparing the money we get with what we offer. This is not an education. They take advantage of the fact that we would never hang students“.

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71 In the past, the required maximum number of attendants in such workshops/seminars (in Greek: εργαστήρια) was 20 students.
72 ‘we would never hang the students’ (in Greek: ποτέ δεν θα κρεμούσαμε τους φοιτητές): The interviewee here uses a metaphor, which means that one would never do something against their commitment/service to someone else. Here, this service (education) - even under such exploitative working conditions - is perceived to be towards students and not the Department.
In addition, two interviewees reflected this division further by commenting on their lack of rights and limited career opportunities:

“...contract staff never had or will have any rights in future” (interviewee 6) and “I have had a very difficult time as a contract staff member, I have been treated even with hostility, as it happened once to have more qualifications than the permanent staff in another university...I never became a permanent member because I didn’t belong to a political party or didn’t have an important acquaintance - these are necessary requirements in order to have an academic career in Greece” (interviewee 1).

In light of these reflections, it would appear that educators work within an oppressive environment themselves. Also, the approach raises questions about the criteria used to recruit and evaluate staff members. Is it qualifications or financial expediency that drives the shape of the education work force?

Another problem that was discussed by interviewees was the limited available resources to assist in their educational practice despite working in a university. For example, five interviewees discussed the inadequate equipment that is offered within a bureaucratic process: “I had to carry my own laptop and projector from home every day. After a while, despite my will, I couldn’t do it anymore. We don’t even have internet access...” (interviewee 8) and “We have nothing on equipment...There is one projector somewhere but the process to apply to have access on it is so bureaucratic that I was forced to ask students to bring laptops and speakers from their homes...” (interviewee 9). There were also complaints about inappropriate physical conditions (3): “the classrooms are very bad, with not enough seats and no desk, there is nowhere to seat properly like a human being” (interviewee 5) and “we don’t have heating and appropriate venues...” (interviewee 6); and last but not least an underused and under resourced library (2): “the TEI’s library is hidden with limited access in Greek and international sources” (interviewee 4).

In the light of this, one may wonder the impact of the limited and to some extent inappropriate conditions to promote education and scholarship in students. However, it is interesting to note how interviewee 9 tries to teach
against all odds, stimulated by their own philosophical and pedagogical commitment:

“If someone asks me ‘how do you teach?’ I will answer ‘in co-operation with students’. I mean that students will find me solutions; i.e. means to watch videos, etc...I say to them ‘this is Freire’s education or grassroots education, we need to find solutions together!’”.

However, no matter how promising a single individual’s initiative may appear, it has very limited influence to replace more structural gaps in educational provision.

Finally, five interviewees remarked on the student admission system, which allows students to enter into a social work education programme accidentally (rather than deliberately) or does not stop students who are considered ‘inappropriate’ for social work practice from registering. This happens because students who apply for one course on entry into university and do not succeed in gaining a place can simply be transferred to another course with available places such as social work. According to the interviewees, such students may have serious mental health disorders for example, or do not really want to study social work. It was observed that whilst interviewees agreed that some students should not be allowed to practice social work, they disagreed in how to prevent this from happening. For example, interviewee 3 suggested that “there should be an interview too” whilst interviewees 4 and 8 questioned how controlling or subjective this could be in the absence of relevant policy: “We don’t have any policy to rely on such issues. The interview would be difficult too because who is going to do it? What kind of questions will be asked?” (interviewee 4) and “Who is going to do the evaluation? With what criteria, i.e. customer relationships, etc? There is a danger of control here without a clear policy” (interviewee 8). It is interesting to highlight the emphasis on bureaucratic level concerns, rather than professional standards as deeper unequal power relations appear to drive educational processes.

What is evident from staff views is that staff members feel that they are asked to educate students within ineffective or absent policies, which
reproduce further inequalities and oppression both at institutional and personal level. Interviewees – as explained earlier – regarded the root of these effects to be structural, for example “it’s governments’ educational policies' responsibility” (interviewee 8) and “the mistakes of Greek state” (interviewee 1). Furthermore, they discussed aspects of the organisation and policies of the specific Department too, which were contributory to the unsatisfactory conditions, as discussed below.

4.3.1.2 The micro level

In relation to the micro-policies stemming from the organisation of the Department itself, it was observed interviewees’ reflections on the Department’s perceived reluctance to challenge and change institutional policies, as shown in the words of interviewee 7: “...most people remove the burden of any responsibility, by saying ‘this is how it was in the past, and this happens everywhere’. However, I don’t care about everywhere. Can you do something to change this here, where you belong?”.

Considering the quest for students to challenge and promote social change, this is somewhat paradoxical since social work education is reluctant to challenge and change itself. The policies that interviewees discussed reflected further the point that was illustrated earlier – students’ and staffs’ undervalued treatment.

A lack of organisation appears to be the central issue as discussed by six interviewees in matters of: resources towards students (2) “there are complaints by students about not receiving their books/notes on time, having belayed lectures and so on. There is a climate of incoherence, and I do not think that the Department operates as appropriate like a higher educational institution” (interviewee 3); teaching conditions (3) “there is no guidance about teaching...we don’t even teach the same modules every semester...” (interviewee 4) and “you don’t know in advance which module you are going to teach. You are only informed the same week that you are going to start teaching” (interviewee 6); evaluation of students (2) “the system of how students pass their modules should be more strict; it is
rooted in the curriculum (educational objectives) and the expectations of the Department” (interviewee 3); and lack of connection with the community “the system (Department and Institution) doesn’t allow you to do things in the community. There have been proposals for community work and research but there was never a response…” (interviewee 8) and “there is no involvement in social action…” (interviewee 6). The latter issue was further commented on by interviewee 8 who observed: “An education in the fishbowl, cut off from political incidents and social problems, can never prepare students. For example, there is a violation of social rights in Greece by the state and social work departments haven’t done anything against this”.

In a situation such as this, it is of note to wonder how social work education can prepare students to promote social change, and social action, when it appears to be sterilised and unable itself to challenge oppression. In the absence of such challenge, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the decline or the falling of the Department was just a matter of time.

Furthermore, this lack of organisation concerning internal policies and procedures, does not just impact negatively on educational and community development and research; it was also seen to affect significantly the process of students’ practice placements as discussed by seven interviewees. It was noted that there are no clearly identified obligations and agreement policies between the Department and the placement provider organisations. The absence of such agreements was considered to result in inefficiencies, and other difficulties which included large student groups (5/7) “I have had 14-15 students in this placement lately and their individual supervision was for 15 minutes the most (each) according to my few given teaching hours” (interviewee 10); insufficient time spent on placements (4/7) “you don’t have enough time within 3 months to meet the placement, the population, study the bibliography and learn how to work. Students should stay longer in placements as I never felt that they have completed something or met any objective” (interviewee 9) and “I am trying to give them the best, but there is not enough time...you only do...
basic stuff with so many students in such little time. If they stayed longer they would develop much more” (interviewee 10); and continuous changes of supervisors linked to the placements (2/7) “every semester I have a different organisation as supervisor, so the work that has been started elsewhere stops and you start again from the beginning” (interviewee 9).

Given that the supervision of practice appears to involve large numbers of students, lack of time and continuity, the question arises whether students are fully engaged in critical reflection of their practice? There appears to be few structures and guidance from supervisors to encourage the development of such reflexivity that requires time and attention.

Further alarming reflections included the absence of evaluation of placements in terms of their resources to meet student learning needs and the potential for practice development they might offer (3):

“there are placements, where students take nothing from them. There should be some standards, like space, things to do and a computer. You can’t just sit there drinking coffee for 5 hours” (interviewee 6) and “placements should be evaluated. It is unacceptable to have students saying ‘I went there, but we did nothing, we were 10 people and we were drinking coffee or we never saw our supervisor” (interviewee 7).

A characteristic example of difficulties with such placements was given by interviewee 9 who revealed: “there are placements that you fight for final year students even to see an assessment what it looks like!”. Considering these comments, an inflexible even dangerous approach to the organisation of placements is observed as it appears that social work education during placements for students is a matter of luck.

It was observed that there was an agreement among interviewees about the problems that arise as a result of the above departmental practices and procedures. In the following comments, the unequal treatment of students, service users, educators and placement provider organisations is once more evident. This included what was seen as victimisation of the students and the service users during placements:
“it is unacceptable to cause disruption in the organisations and ‘use’ service users to learn in this way” (interviewee 3) and “students, service users and professionals in placements are being treated like guinea pigs. 10-20 students are sent to a mental health community apartment and they are more than the patients!...they are all upset and a lot of things are sacrificed in order to convenient the Department’s under-functional policies” (interviewee 7).

It was also suggested that such disruption results in a ‘bad’ relationship between the Department and the placement provider organisations (3) where students sometimes are considered as a “burden” (interviewee 5). It was noted, that in the absence of formalised agreements between the Department and the placement provider organisations, an unofficial climate of begging has resulted, rather than mutual agreement, working together or clearly identified obligations (4):

“It is a great concession of education to beg colleagues, ‘please take 5 or 10 students’, whilst they can take only 3. Education is not a charity/philanthropy with the poor students who need our help and mercy. No, it is in their rights to be educated and have an appropriate placement” and “these customer relationships by begging your colleague or being begged by others to take students are so bad. This begging ‘take 2, 3 more please’ is not found not even into the local grocery” (interviewee 6).

There is no doubt that terms like ‘guinea pigs’, ‘customer relationships’, and ‘begging’ are not usually familiar with a pedagogic and professional education approach, which protests anti-oppressive practice and social justice. Therefore, it is worth questioning what the impact is of this kind of micro culture that has developed in the social work students? There is no model of negotiated practice between agencies that might be an exemplar of just and equal practices for the benefit of others. It is also questionable why a structural challenging approach has not taken place instead of the begging one towards professionals in organisations.

Another issue that was extensively discussed by interviewees was the curriculum. The majority of the interviewees (7) agreed that an out-dated curriculum is used which: includes an out-dated bibliography (4) “the bibliography is very old, some books are from the ’80s and things have
changed since then!” (interviewee 5). According to interviewee 9, this has resulted in an out-dated culture, where she has met students – even some graduates – using “wording like ‘patient’ or ‘customer’ or perceptions of the social worker as a psychologist or psychotherapist”. However, four interviewees also raised the importance of a further disadvantage inherent in the curriculum because it does not reflect current social needs “it may reflected the society’s needs 5-6 years ago but things have changed a lot now; specific modules should be added or cut” (interviewee 4) and “The curriculum is far away from current social needs. We are a decade behind...” (interviewee 6).

The absence of reference to current social needs, is very evident, also in the curriculum’s lack of emphasis on issues of ethics, social justice and anti-oppressive practice (6):

“There is only one module, which is one hour per week in a semester and it is up to the educator to take the initiative to discuss ethical issues in class. It is not enough. As a result, we see graduates making very serious mistakes when in practice and nobody knows that the code of ethics is broken or there is no advocacy on social rights” (interviewee 8); “there is no reference on collective action or on ethics. It was shocking to have students in their final year, who didn’t know the code of ethics or where to look for it” (interviewee 9) and “the curriculum doesn’t reflect issues of diversity, minorities, stereotypes and oppression. Even now after 20 years that immigration issues are so pivotal within the Greek society, the curriculum may just refer to these in one module in a very general, vague and theoretical way. How are students going to work with these issues without even having been taught?” (interviewee 6).

Considering the comments on the curriculum’s content, interviewee 6’s question is crucial. If education does not prioritise issues of social justice and ethics, how then might students do this themselves? Such an approach to education not only appears to not prepare students for anti-oppressive practice, but also students may not be aware of basic ethical issues. This explains interviewee 3’s disappointment: “I feel the curriculum doesn’t fulfil its purposes. I would be satisfied even if there was an 80% but no, there is mediocrity”.
In summary, both at a macro and micro level, what appears to characterise social work education is disorganisation, inflexibility, ineffective and inappropriate policies and an out-dated curriculum, where issues of social justice, inequalities and ethics are not a priority. This observation is very alarming not only for social work education, but also for the moral and ethical core of the profession itself. It is also very evident within interviewees’ comments that unequal treatment takes place at all levels including educators (permanent and contract staff), and placement provider organisations as well as students. In light of this, it would not be an exaggeration to say that there is a danger of students, not being able to identify and challenge oppression when they have observed and experienced unjust treatment within their education. Yet, what is the response of the educators in relation to these issues?

4.3.2 Educators’ reflections on their self

The participants in this research noted that they teach a range of theoretical or workshop/seminar modules and/or they supervise students’ placements. However, further details cannot be revealed in order to protect their anonymity (see Chapter 3, section 3.4.1). Their reflections on their self included discussions about their teaching content, their adopted pedagogical strategies and techniques within class and last but not least their own positions as anti-oppressive educators.

Considering their previous comments and reflections on the curriculum, participants were asked if they followed it. The majority (7) replied that they do not follow it whilst the rest (3) said that they may follow the general guidelines, but nothing more in relation to content and bibliography. If lip service is being paid to the standard curriculum, what are they teaching instead?

All participants revealed that they take advice from previous colleagues “I followed the content of previous colleagues who were teaching before (this module)...” (interviewee 1) and “It was a matter of having good colleagues. I took their advice, they told me what they are doing, they gave
me their notes, so I made my own notes for the placement (supervision)” (interviewee 9). It appears that staff have developed some kind of solidarity between themselves, sharing ideas and teaching material. Additionally, staff revealed that they also create their own bibliographies, for example “when I teach a module, I redesign it. I use other books or I make my own notes based on up to date research” (interviewee 8). Whilst taking the initiative to go outside the curriculum in this case may sound promising, there is a danger in relation to consistency and content in what students are actually being taught. Also a lack of clear policies, educational objectives and suitable curriculum guides raises questions about the accountability of those who educate and those who learn to match the requirements of the social work profession. Furthermore, if re-design and amendment is done on an individual basis, then this approach is unlikely to bring to light and challenge the real gaps in higher educational policies and practices. Nonetheless, what is the content that the interviewees’ are teaching?

Staff outlined the content of their teaching and it was observed that it largely involves guidance on practical issues and skills on ‘how to work’: “students narrate what they are doing in their placement and write assignments about the organisation, the population, any assessments, or inter-disciplinary collaboration too” (interviewee 2) and “we are discussing issues that arise in the placement, as well as behaviours of service users that might need intervention and how we can do it” (interviewee 5). An explanation of this practical approach may be that most interviewees were supervisors of placements, and only a few taught in theoretical modules or workshops too. Considering this central feature of staff’s teaching, participants were asked whether they include references on issues of anti-oppressive practice, value tensions, stereotypes and inequalities.

They all replied that these issues are discussed; but a difference was observed among interviewees: Seven of them replied that this reference is pivotal and that they include it in any module that they may teach “...these
are extensively discussed, as I believe it is a lifelong learning skill, very pivotal in our job...” (interviewee 3) and “I discuss these issues in all my modules, as both from my professional experience and theoretical approach – radical and critical social work – make me consider these to be crucial” (interviewee 8); whilst three participants said that such reference depends on students’ questions in supervision or in class, for example “this reference arises by the cases that students will have (in placement)” (interviewee 5).

This difference among interviewees in prioritising issues of anti-oppressive practice and ethics appears to be founded on their personal judgement as they used phrases like ‘I believe’, ‘I consider’, ‘I decide what is practical for me’, ‘My aim is...’, etc. In light of this, the fact that three participants do not consider issues of social justice and value tensions as a priority is alarming. It appears that students may have an anti-oppressive education as a matter of chance, in other words dependent on the educator and whether they consider these as important. However, interviewees 4 and 6 noted:

“we also need to remember that in classes of 40, 50, 60 students, you can’t focus on each student in a great depth. How are you going to discuss stereotypes and prejudices?” (interviewee 4) and “I need to be honest that last year, for example, due to my many other professional duties, I wasn’t fully available to students, I didn’t give them much in placement...” (interviewee 6).

There is no doubt that high staff-student ratios and large classes leave little or no room for critical reflection on such issues. However, these quotes reveal further the point that education appears to miss here: an anti-oppressive education based on an up to date and critical curriculum, and not on the possible and individual initiative by some educators.

The seven participants, who prioritise anti-oppressive discussions in class, were asked about the teaching strategies that they adopt. They all agreed that giving just a lecture via a monologue is not effective, for example:

“I have observed through my teaching experience, and I am determined now, that a monologue in a lecture doesn’t help at
"all" (interviewee 1) and “listening to a monologue by a professor doesn’t catch your attention. Therefore, why should students lose their time attending just a lecture whilst they can read a book from the library? As a result, students attend their lectures for an education beyond a monologue...” (interviewee 3).

Hence, they suggested experiential learning strategies, like group discussion (6), case studies (4), sharing personal experiences from practice (3), presentations by frontline professionals (1) and visits to organisations (1). They considered the use of such exercises as important, highlighting their effect on discussing issues of oppression, stereotypes and ethics: “I use a lot of such exercises, for example, about stereotypes. They have great success as students start to think differently” (interviewee 9) and “I use exercises like role-play, for self-awareness and stereotypes. It is the best way to help students ‘dive into’ their self and find the beliefs that they need to change” (interviewee 3). In order for these exercises to be successful, there must be a climate of mutual comfort and trust according to three interviewees. However, interviewee 8 observed that using experiential learning exercises on its own without discussing the structural roots of oppression, is ineffective: “it is not enough. You cannot do some exercises about your stereotypes for immigrants or poverty only, without knowing the policy in Greece. Therefore, these exercises should be combined with theoretical explanations (of the roots of social problems and how they are perceived)”.

It needs to be noted that among these interviewees who discuss anti-oppressive practice, only two participants mentioned the inclusion of theoretical approaches of social work as well as structural explanations of oppression and social exclusion. This observation is further reflected in interviewee 8’s comments: “in most occasions academic staff here doesn’t have a theoretical foundation or they come from psychodynamic approaches; therefore a theoretical analysis doesn’t take place but instead a ‘smearing’73”. However, such limited reference or smearing on social problems and issues could hinder the effectiveness of the educational process and fail to address the root causes of oppression.

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73 This is the translation of the Greek word which was used here (πασάλειμμα), meaning the coat of something in a mess or careless way with
justice issues would not take place if an appropriate curriculum was in force. Instead, the content of education appears to be decided at an individual basis by educators, based on their own personal judgements and perceptions of what is and how oppression is constructed.

Last but not least, interviewees reflected on their observations of inappropriate approaches among staff too (3). Two interviewees described an improper (in) tolerance of students:

“it is surprising that 40% of students are evaluated as ‘A’/excellent students by some staff. It is unacceptable to not fail the student who writes that ‘immigrants should leave Greece’ in their assignment…On the other hand, I have seen colleagues to be judgemental towards students because of their appearance, for example their piercing…” (interviewee 4).

Interviewee 7’s comment is further revealing: “I think a lot of unethical things happen and this has to do with staff. Therefore, how can you expect students to be ethical when you (the educator) are not?”.

There is no doubt that such unethical behaviour is incompatible not only in education but in the profession too. An explanation of such an approach, may be again related to the absence of relevant policies, clear obligations and expectations both by students and educators too. It is important to highlight here one participant’s comment during the interview, where race stereotypes were observed: “Crisis raises a lot of problems that even we as Greeks cannot deal with. How can we deal with the Albanians then?”.

Based on these descriptions, it would not be an exaggeration to say that such dangerous beliefs and attitudes fail to educate social work students not only for an anti-oppressive stance, but also in relation to any value-based action and attitude. What is more interesting though is that whilst such alleged behaviours and approaches have been witnessed by educators and students, it appears that these have remained unchallenged. How are students expected to challenge discrimination and oppression wherever it something else. Therefore, the word is used here by the academic to reflect a shallow and ‘careless’ educational approach.
comes from, when some educators themselves are passive towards unethical behaviours and attitudes?

To sum up, educators’ descriptions and reflections on their self revealed that whilst they try to enrich the out-dated existing education, not everyone prioritises anti-oppressive practice in their teaching. Even educators who discuss these issues in class, it appears that they do it on the surface without deepening students’ learning and development through theoretical explanations and discussions. Therefore, education appears to be based on educators’ personal assumptions and judgements of what is important instead of an appropriate curriculum that embeds a developmental and structural approach to instilling anti-oppressive practice. Last, the observations on educators’ stereotypical attitudes and their passive response towards alleged unethical practice reveal further the failure of social work education to commit on its mission: to prepare ethical and anti-oppressive practitioners.

4.3.3 Students and anti-oppressive practice

Here, staff provide vivid descriptions of students’ beliefs, response to their education, and ability to manage value tensions in relation to anti-oppressive practice.

4.3.3.1 Students’ profile

In relation to the students’ profile, there was no common agreement about its description among interviewees, as they expressed that a number of different factors may play a role. Discussions focused on students’ choice and motivations to study social work as well as their academic performance.

Reflecting on students choice to study social work, six interviewees discussed their ambivalence whether they want to or not, due to the admission’s system process (6) “… in their first year, the majority of students are not sure if this is what they want” (interviewee 3). Here, interviewees 8 and 9 explained that most students before entering social
work want to study psychology or primary teaching and they may not even know what social work is – a fact which may reflect a low status of the profession among other disciplines. This low status of the profession is further revealed by the social status of the majority of students as discussed by two participants: “in the TEIs you meet students that most of them come from medium or low social classes compared to AEIs” (interviewee 8). In combination with the low status of the profession, two interviewees highlighted the female dominant prevalence among social work students, rooting this to the society’s perception of social work as a caring – female profession: “this is because of gender inequalities and stereotypes within Greek society, about how they want women and in which professions” (interviewee 3).

In light of these views, it is worth considering the impact of social work’s position as a low status, less important and feminine profession on students’ perceptions of social work role against inequalities and oppression. Moreover, discussing students’ motivations, interviewee 4 observed: “I have met students in their first year who say that they want to be social workers because they consider themselves as ‘good’ people”. What is interesting here is that no interviewees made any reference to students’ possible motivations being based on social justice issues.

In relation to students’ academic performance, five interviewees acknowledged that a key feature is their non-attendance to their lectures (5) “whilst 100 students should attend the module’s lectures, there are only 4,5,6 of them” (interviewee 4) and “there are 7-10 students only who attend permanently my lectures” (interviewee 1). Three interviewees explained this phenomenon raising the importance of the educators’ teaching strategies in order for “a module to be interesting” (interviewee 1). However, interviewee 4 disagreed with this explanation, noting that “It can’t be the fault of the educators only. I can’t accept that all educators

74 This is a division between the two HEIs, like the one of Universities and Polytechnics in Britain in the past (discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.2.1).
don’t have qualifications or they are useless…” Therefore, another explanation indicated students’ overload (2):

“There are too many modules each semester, too many assignments and a very busy schedule for students. As a result, if a student spends 15 hours per week in placements and many other hours in workshops where attendance is mandatory, it is reasonable that they will not attend their lecture at 8 am as they have to spend all their day until the night in the academic premises” (interviewee 8).

Further explanations involved students’ interest in social work (1) and teaching conditions (1). In these quotes, it is observed that students’ non-attendance is based on a number of factors raising again the importance of updating and revising the curriculum; yet, it also involves their personal judgment in relation to whom and why they attend. However, this approach is very questionable considering that future graduates don’t attend their education. It is also worth considering whether this phenomenon is an effect/reaction of students’ undervalued treatment as explained earlier (section 4.3.1). Last but not least, interviewee 4 reflecting on students’ academic performance, highlighted that the majority struggle to write academic assignments indicating not only grammar mistakes but also difficulty in structuring an essay.

4.3.3.2 Students’ response to anti-oppressive practice

When staff was asked whether they have observed students using social work values in practice or not, it was revealed that whilst some students appear to do so, the majority may not even know them (6):

“students are often confused, they don’t know social work values” (interviewee 2) and “the majority of students don’t use social work values in practice. Their learning is not reflected on their approach in practice in relation to ethics, stereotypes, etc. They could be any students from another - irrelevant to social work – field, like mathematics” (interviewee 6).

This observation is very alarming for social work education. If students are unaware of social work values, how are they going to use them to underpin their professional practice and advocate them? However, interviewee 3
reflected: “On one hand I have met students that they try to practice social work values or they are trying to improve. On the other hand, I have met uninterested students too”. What is observed is that the failure to use social work values in practice is founded not only by education’s gaps and failures, but also by students’ personal choice to not develop an ethical self. Therefore, staff members were asked to comment further on students’ beliefs and positions.

All interviewees agreed that they have observed students holding many stereotypes and oppressive beliefs. These stereotypes were reported to focus on the following identities: ethnicity (7), Roma (5), gender (4), religion (2), sexual orientation (2), disability (2), mental health (1) and age (1). In relation to ethnicity, two interviewees discussed a specific country of origin (Albania) that students’ hold most stereotyped views about.

Six interviewees gave examples of their observations on students’ stereotypes and it was revealed that otherness is considered as unsafe, immoral and abnormal from the mainstream. Such an oppressive approach appears to be founded on notions about normality:

“Students may have an oppressive wording or deeper beliefs about ‘normality’, for example, one student wrote ‘in my village we didn’t have such things like homosexuals’, or another wrote that ‘disabled people are not like us; this is why we call them disabled’” (interviewee 4);

Also, a blaming approach combined with binary thinking:

“they say ‘immigrants will take our jobs’ or ‘I am afraid of them’” (interviewee 8) and “for example they may say for the lady who is ‘inappropriately’ dressed: ‘why did she go out like that? Doesn’t she think of her children? Good for her husband that he left her!’ Or about Roma, they think that their living conditions are their problem and their fault so ‘there is no point to work with this population’” (interviewee 9).

Interviewee 2 also indicated some students’ disgust towards older people: “we had issues with the smell or the illness, for example they were saying that after their placement visit to an elderly community house they should go into the ‘furnace’!”. Within these views are deep-rooted stereotypes,
failure to acknowledge diversity within groups, and justification of oppressive attitudes. Minorities’ objectification by students is also very evident as they appear to refer to them as ‘things’, based on an oppressive us-them relation. It is interesting to observe how this oppressive approach is linked with their positions about social work practice as pointless with some (blamed) minorities. This favouritism is further illustrated in interviewee 7’s example: “some students refer to mental health patients saying that ‘since they are not able to understand, is there any point to approach them?’”. Considering the above, it appears that social workers in the making confer to the social work profession causes that anti-oppressive theory strongly protests against, such as reinforcing social control and denial to advocate for social rights.

In an attempt to explain such attitudes, interviewee 2 noted: “(the deeper issue) is that this minority experiences problems that the students don’t want to have themselves”. Here, students’ focus on self is observed where otherness is perceived as a threat to the unchallenged self. However, this notion of power and exclusion is what gives birth to and sustains inequalities. Last but not least, interviewee 9 highlighted a further function of oppression – its internalisation: “They (students) express stereotypes (when talking about themselves) about marriage and children like ‘I need to hurry to have kids’ or ‘How am I going to work if/when I will have children?’”. It is observed that students may have unconsciously internalised sexist beliefs of society about gender and family roles with the risk of reproducing and reinforcing them in their practice. Considering the fact that these examples by interviewees involve students that may be in their final year, one may wonder if and how they will challenge social inequalities, and advocate for social justice when they are not even self-conscious.

At this point, interviewees were asked how they challenge the above positions and oppressive beliefs. It was alleged that they tend to reach students’ deep - rooted perceptions and stereotypes. They all reported that strategies like group discussion and debate are useful tools. In some of
their words: “I am asking the group to discuss their opinions and argue why they hold these beliefs” (interviewee 3) and “I use a lot group discussion and debates. Sometimes I let the group...have a dialogue and develop critical thinking” (interviewee 8). According to four interviewees it is important to create a comfortable and trusted climate in these discussions in order for students to open up: “if they trust you and they don’t fear that you will judge them then it is easier to express stereotypes and their doubts. Educators’ approach is very important...” (interviewee 3). Interviewee 7 agreed about the importance of this trusting relationship and added that it is also crucial “to be available and after class for them”.

Based on these suggestions, it appears that in order to raise critical consciousness for the self and the other, educators try to engage students in a dialogical process through equal interaction. However, it is questionable to what extent they succeed this in conditions, where absent or limited and disempowering policies are in place.

Similar observations are made in the comments of three interviewees who highlighted the need to provide students with theoretical explanations for the structural roots of oppression in combination with direct contact too, for example: “I had students with stereotypes about Roma, so I gave them some bibliography, I asked them to read the given references and also to visit a Roma camp. I think that contact as well as knowledge development, is the best combination” (interviewee 8). Considering the fact that such a theoretical – critical discussion is not a priority neither for the majority of the participants or for the curriculum itself, such a promising approach is very limited to individual initiatives only and it cannot be regarded as a general educational approach. However, what is the students’ response to such challenges?

Four interviewees described that the initial response may be negative or even hostile towards the educator “I have met students with extreme far right-wing ideologies who spoke to me with insolence because I had an anti-racist content in my teaching and it was bothering them” (interviewee 1) and “I have had some very bad reactions by students. Initially they may
get angry” (interviewee 9). Resistance to self-challenge may be somewhat expected especially in the early years of education. This was also acknowledged by these four participants, stating that at a later stage after some weeks or months, students may change their initial hostile stance/reactions, for example “…in the end some students would say ‘things are different since the beginning’ or they were much more relaxed about what they feared initially” (interviewee 7). Yet, it is unknown to what extent students are open to self review and challenge of their stereotypes. In the absence of an anti-oppressive focus within education, students could just adjust their oppressive positions and beliefs into a shallow and surface adoption of social work principles and values without having questioned and reviewed their deeper social constructions. Therefore, staff members were further asked to reflect on students’ ability to manage value tensions in relation anti-oppressive practice.

It is disappointing that the majority of staff (9) stated that the majority of students are not able to manage such dilemmas, for example “I believe that a small percent has this ability, but the majority does not” (interviewee 1). Four interviewees noted that students have difficulty in identifying when they experience a value tension, for example “students find it very hard to identify a dilemma” (interviewee 3). This observation is not surprising as students appear to be unaware about their self and the moral core of the profession; therefore, how are they going to identify a dilemma? Interviewee 4 highlighted the potential of such inability to lead to professional malpractice when “…the majority of students will either ‘pass by’ it (the dilemma/value tension) or they will rely on their personal values” (interviewee 4). Such a consideration does not seem to be an exaggeration as students appear to be self-focused and resistant to self-challenge, reflection and review. It is important to note though that interviewee 10 disagreed with this point of view, saying “I think students have some knowledge...In their placement I didn’t see them making ethical mistakes”.
However, considering the above, it is unknown to what extent students are able to have an ethical and anti-oppressive identity even if they appear to be ethical practitioners. The missing milestone appears to be their lack of commitment and engagement to critical consciousness about social structures and policies, the profession and the self. It is interesting that two interviewees added a further missing milestone highlighting the gaps of students’ education: “whilst there is a great difference among students who study on their 2nd or 6th semester, students in their majority are not prepared for these value tensions” (interviewee 8). Based on these reflections, it is worth questioning the mission of social work education if not to prepare ethical and anti-oppressive practitioners? That said, what did staff identify as influences on students’ response to diversity?

Interviewees provided a number of explanations in relation to the influences on students’ beliefs and positions. Whilst education’s gaps and inefficiencies were discussed (5), for example “it has to do with the Department, the teaching conditions, the staff, the number of students, etc.” (interviewee 6) the majority of interviewees (8) focused more on the familial and environmental roots of students’ beliefs. Some stated: “students are the mirror of their family and how they have been brought up. If their family discriminated Roma, then they will do it too...” (interviewee 5) and “In the TEI, most of the students come from rural areas, where society is much ‘closed’ and there are a lot of stereotypes, which you can see in students” (interviewee 3). In light of this, self deconstruction actually involves questioning early childhood experiences, family role models and every socio-cultural influence that construct our core positions about morality and justice. However, in the absence of an anti-oppressive education and the resistance of students to challenge their self, such questioning seems to remain theoretical.

Another influence which was discussed by two interviewees was the impact of the socio-economic crisis:

“we live in very hard times and the image of a homeless person is nothing like 10 years ago. Now, it is a daily image and it could be
anyone, even students’ themselves. Therefore, they may be more
familiarized with diversity” (interviewee 1) and “there were a lot
of stereotypes towards poverty in the past, but now everybody in
Greece have started to differentiate themselves from their
previous attitudes” (interviewee 8).

However, considering the participants’ earlier reflections, it is unknown
whether students actually acknowledge the structural roots of oppression
and want to challenge it or they just show some empathy. Finally, other
influences which were discussed, included: having direct contact with
diversity (4) either through placements (3) “it helps being in a placement
with what you fear or have stereotypes about” (interviewee 7) or through
their family/friends (1); influences by media and internet (2); and
experiences of racism within schools (1). Whilst students’ beliefs and
positions appear to be founded on the interplay among familial, social and
environmental influences, the majority of the interviewees (7) highlighted
the use of their self as influential too.

Staff viewed an anti-oppressive use of self as having a genuine interest for
social work and social justice issues (4), for example “students that they
choose social work and have a specific ideology for society, yes they can
filter and challenge their stereotypes” (interview 9). Conversely, students
with self-centeredness “if they think that they have been godsend and this
is what they were born for…” (interviewee 2), then “they won’t try to
change either because they don’t want to or because their beliefs are
convenient for them” (interviewee 4). Therefore, it appears that regardless
the background influences that a student may have, it is their personal will
and intellectual availability that will lead to self-review and questioning.

4.3.3.3 Social work education vs students’ oppressive self

Towards the end of the interview, staff members were asked to reflect
generally on social work education’s role in stimulating an anti-oppressive
self for students. They all agreed that social work education can be a great
stimulus, for example, in raising self awareness (interviewee 7) and critical
thinking (interviewee 8). However, six interviewees questioned the
efficacy of the specific education due to its adopted (and the lack of other)
policies that have been explained throughout this analysis. In some of their words:

“the disinvestment in education has made it inadequate and this is very dangerous. Education, now, can influence students to be anti-oppressive only at a small extent” (interviewee 3); “I highly question the kind of social workers that will graduate” (interviewee 4) and “it is illusionary to expect students change or learn managing their prejudices when their education is discriminatory at all levels” (interviewee 7).

In these comments, interviewees’ disappointment is very evident in relation to the education’s efficacy not only on students’ anti-oppressive self but on any professional self.

This disappointment was further discussed by two interviewees:

“It is natural to feel disappointed, as it is a Department under abolition, with very bad working conditions for the staff and educational conditions for the students” (interviewee 8) and “I subscribe to this disappointment, as the more we go back in time the better the education was. Now, there is a logic of production. We all share responsibility on this. It is a pyramid; the higher you look, the more responsibilities you find” (interviewee 6).

It appears that in this pyramid which has been discussed throughout this analysis, all levels are characterised by inflexibility, disorganisation, even discrimination. Even if individual initiatives are promising, they are unable of themselves to embed a process of anti-oppressive education.

In summary, students’ response to anti-oppressive practice has been suggested by their educators to involve deep rooted stereotypes about minorities, and inability to manage tensions stemming from their oppressive self. Whilst students’ beliefs may be challenged within class, there is nonetheless a clear distrust by staff of students’ ability to develop of an anti-oppressive self through their education. If an anti-oppressive self appears to be an illusion then within the specific policies and

75 In order to give the exact meaning, the phrase has been somewhat altered. The interviewee actually said “a logic to produce for producing” (in Greek: λογική του βγάζουμε για να βγάζουμε.)
conditions in which educators are working, what do they suggest may be a resolution? The last part of this analysis aims to shed light on this matter.

4.3.4 The way forward

Following staff’s vivid descriptions and reflections on education and students, they were asked about their suggestions for an improved anti-oppressive education and practice. Their recommendations reflected their earlier accounts of the failures of the institutional and Departmental policies, and the significance of the use of self – both for educators and students.

All interviewees focused on issues of policy suggesting a grassroots change. It is interesting that some used quotes like “a ‘bomb’ should blow up everything in education policy so as to rebuild everything from the very beginning” (interviewee 3) and “I wish everything could just start again from scratch” (interviewee 7). Such a restart – for seven interviewees - is rooted within the state’s educational and social policy by reinvesting in social care and social work: “the prosecution of social work in the name of economy should stop!” (interviewee 2) and “current devaluation and degradation of social sciences should change. If there is no change on educational and social policy – because we don’t even have a basic social policy – nothing can change” (interviewee 8).

According to these interviewees, a re-investment in social work education should include: replacement of people in higher educational positions (2) “the people who have held higher positions in the AEIs and TEIs all these years and they belong in political parties’ circuits should retire now...” (interviewee 1); merit policies for staff recruitment and development (5) “more staff is needed, but through objective criteria and not through (political) acquaintances. In Greece, most people came through ‘the window’ and not via meritocracy” (interviewee 5) and “there should be more permanent qualified staff with ongoing training and career development opportunities” (interviewee 8); and change in the admission system process (2). In the above quotes, the need for an equal and just
treatment for educators is once again observed. Whilst the above appear to involve changes in the central educational policies of the state, interviewees also referred to the need for a change and re-organisation of the policies by the Department.

The majority of staff (8) suggested a radical change of the curriculum towards an anti-oppressive focus reflecting current social needs and establishing social action within the community; for example “there should be a connection with the outside social reality. Social problems are many, huge and outside the walls of the TEF” (interviewee 7) and “a new curriculum without social action and community involvement won’t be successful. Therefore, students and educators need to be involved with the community’s social problems” (interviewee 8). According to interviewee 6 such an involvement can prove to be an opportunity for a political and “penetrating” analysis on oppression and students’ deep rooted stereotypes and beliefs. In addition, two interviewees discussed the importance of prioritising issues of social justice throughout the curriculum “ethics and anti-oppressive practice should be discussed in all courses” (interviewee 9) and “the curriculum should focus on ethics and it shouldn’t be left on the educator’s initiative” (interviewee 10).

Another suggestion by interviewees (5) was the evaluation of placements and staff. In some of their words: “an evaluation of the content and conditions of each placement should take place, for example what responsibilities are going to be given to students or how many students can a placement afford” (interviewee 7) and “evaluation of placements and academic staff should exist” (interviewee 6). Yet, considering the above descriptions of politics’ role into educational matters, in the absence of clear educational policies, expectations and objectives there is a danger of such an evaluation to be a controlling and oppressive tool itself towards educators. Last but not least suggestion by two interviewees was related to the resources: appropriate teaching venues, digital means and a library with full access to all Greek and international literature. However, these policy changes do not appear to be effective for engendering an anti-
oppressive education on their own. Once again, interviewees considered policy to be in interplay with the development of the use of self.

It was observed that the majority of staff (7) discussed the significance of students’ engagement with critical consciousness whilst four also referred to this in relation to themselves too. Therefore, in relation to the educators’ self, interviewees discussed the need for lifelong learning (2) “you need to get better and better” (interviewee 7) and development of personal qualities (2) “students wait for you to make a mistake and then you need to prove that you understand and accept that you are wrong” (interviewee 9). According to these interviewees, the educator may be considered as a role model by students; they observe and learn from their educators’ personal skills and qualities as well as approach to social work practice. However, it is alarming that the majority of interviewees did not consider the use of their self as important too. How are students expected to challenge, and review their attitudes and beliefs throughout their professional practice, when educators do not see it as a priority for themselves?

The majority of interviewees (7) indicated that students need to work with their own self towards self-awareness about their oppressive self or the oppressive society. All seven interviewees agreed that working with own self is a “lifelong process” (interviewee 2) and “very tough effort” (interviewee 1). Whilst this sounds promising, two interviewees questioned the efficacy of this practice “I doubt a lot in what extent these students will question their self, as they appear to try the minimum for everything” (interviewee 4) and “working with own self doesn’t say anything about your anti-oppressive stance. You may attend psychotherapy for example, but you are guided by your stereotypes or racism in practice when you work with Roma or immigrants” (interviewee 8). In light of this, working with one’s self appears to involve a personal continuous effort for self deconstruction/reconstruction, and not a matter of individual bliss and personal happiness.
As a concluding note, the answer to the previous question, whether an anti-oppressive self for students is an illusion or not, appears to lie in the revealing comment of interviewee 1: “...it is a combination of personal will and availability for self review and the stimuli by the environment and institutions”.

The analysis of this interplay among students, their educators/Department and institutional educational policies revealed that unless a grassroots change is achieved in the content and context of social work education, such a self can only be an illusion.

**4.3.5 Summary**

This study, as previously discussed (Chapter 3), sought to explore and understand the role of social work education in students’ ability to manage value tensions, in relation to anti-oppressive practice via a case study in Greece. The analysis of the interviews with the three groups of participants (first year students, final year students and academic staff) was presented in this chapter, using their direct quotes to illustrate the categories that have been identified.

In relation to students’ profile, this research found that studying social work may be a compromised choice for the majority of students, whilst self-orientated motivations predominate with the complete absence of social justice issues. Students’ beliefs in relation to diversity and oppression, involved conflicting views and perceptions, mostly based on deep-rooted stereotypes and blaming approaches. Students appeared to reflect critically about others’ attitudes (Greek society) in a confident way, but failed to see their self as bearer of oppressive ideologies, and their profession as emancipatory. When it comes to value tensions, a focus on the self was mainly observed among students against the ‘threat’ of social work anti-oppressive values. Educators also discussed students’ lack of critical consciousness, and they questioned whether students could be agents of social change. All participants throughout this chapter gave vivid descriptions on the unjust educational content and context that students are exposed and educators work. The curriculum, practice
placements and other educational processes revealed a lack of anti-oppressive and social justice focus. Instead, the individualistic emphasis driven by the neo-liberal logic of the wider educational policies appeared to permeate social work education. Yet, educators’ response to oppression and the Department was found to be a silent compromise and/or limited to individual initiatives. Last but not least, the suggestions of all participants involved: an investment to social work education; a radical and anti-oppressive shift of the curriculum; social action and community work of the Department; a dialogical learning process; and a constant deconstruction/reconstruction of the self both for students and educators.

However, how are these findings explained? How are the mechanisms of oppression revealed within the participants’ accounts? The next chapter (Chapter 5) critically discusses and compares the informants’ positions, using the interpretive lens of Freire (1970; 1993; 1994) and Foucault (1977; 1980; 1982).
Chapter 5: Discussion, conclusions and implications

This chapter provides an overview of the thesis and presents a potential model as an overarching theoretical explanation of this study’s findings. The accounts of all groups of participants are compared and contrasted in this discussion and their positions interpreted using the conceptual lens of Foucault (1977; 1980; 1982) and of Freire (1970; 1993; 1994). Finally, overall conclusions and implications for policy, practice and further research are discussed.

5.1 Overview of the thesis

The main objective of this study is the in depth understanding and critical analysis of social work education and its impact on students’ ability to manage value tensions in relation to anti-oppressive practice, based on the case of one Greek Social Work Department in a higher education institution. For the first time in Greece, this study attempted to explore the content and context of social work education, with respect to anti-oppressive practice, through the voices of first and final year students as well as their educators. It also attempted to illuminate the how and why of students’ experiences, with personal-professional value tensions and their adherence to an emancipatory and anti-oppressive practice before and after their training.

A review of the literature on the background evolution and concepts of anti-oppressive practice, as well as wider research on the role/impact of social work education is presented in Chapter 1. It is highlighted that such debates and research have taken place outside Greece, and therefore they cannot be transferred to this context. The Greek context is described in Chapter 2, with discussion of social work practice, education and the socio-economic and political background. The review demonstrates the gap in the Greek literature, discussing social work education and anti-oppressive practice and situates the need for the current study.
The qualitative methodology adopted and the methods used in this doctoral research are presented in Chapter 3. Based on a case study of a Social Work Department, data was collected via three sources of informants: first and final year students, and their educators. The process of data analysis as well as issues of ethics and rigour are critically discussed and explained.

The findings of this research are presented in Chapter 4, and structured to three sections as the groups of participants and organized under the main categories that were identified from data analysis. The key finding of this research is social work education’s failure to stimulate students’ critical consciousness and to engage in praxis against oppression – key concepts for an anti-oppressive social work. Furthermore, this study has demonstrated that exposure to a social work curriculum and professional formation over time does not necessarily and of itself markedly change this feature of student’s professional profiles. However, in order to understand the underlying mechanisms that might explain these findings, it is necessary to understand the influence of the wider context, both in the sense of contemporary Greece, in particular the current austerity crisis, and more broadly the historico-cultural contextualization of social work in Greece.

5.2 A model for understanding and promoting (anti-) oppressive practice

As discussed throughout this thesis, the study is situated within the anti-oppressive theory (AOP) of critical social work (Healy, 2005; 2014). Rejecting the focus on the individual as traditional approaches to casework advocated (see section 1.1, Chapter 1), critical approaches to social work place the emphasis on the political context and the structural forces that produce oppression and inequalities (Clifford and Burke, 2009; Dominelli, 2002; 2012; Lavalette, 2014; Mullaly, 2002; Sakamoto and Pitner, 2005; Wilson and Beresford, 2000).

Therefore, in recognising and understanding the intersecting nature of oppression and its dynamic interplay within the personal/individual,
structural and cultural levels, anti-oppressive theory provides a framework that acknowledges the power relations which are produced and reinforced through institutions such as (social work) education (Dominelli, 2002; Morley, 2008; Mullaly, 2002; Sinclair and Albert, 2008; Thompson, 1997). Adopting the key conceptual notions of Foucault (1977; 1980; 1982) and Freire (1970; 1993; 1994), this PhD research has identified the influences on students’ value tension resolution about anti-oppressive practice at multiple levels: subjectivity; discipline and governmentality; as well as discourse, oppressive reality and dividing practices, as illustrated in the following model.

Figure 5.1: Conceptual model of the dynamics of oppression

Foucault (1982) argues that it is these layers that are bearers of discourse’s power/knowledge, both reinforcing and being produced by it. As discussed in Chapter 1 (section 1.3.1), Frye’s (1983; 1992) metaphor of the birdcage for the structural nature of oppression, reminds us that if one looks only at each ‘wire’, is difficult to see how and why a bird cannot escape. It is only when one steps back, and sees the cage that we can understand the power relations within which subjectivity is constructed. It
is argued therefore, that one needs to critically reflect on all of these levels, in order to understand and protest an anti-oppressive practice. These are described in the following sections with specific reference to the findings from this study.

5.2.1 Subjectivity

In his writings, Foucault (1977; 1982; 1993) locates the subject within broader discursive mechanisms and processes that constitute not only their ‘truth’ – ideations, values and beliefs – but also their actions (Carey and Foster, 2013; Gilbert and Powell, 2010). Foucault (1980: 98) conceptualised the subject as ‘one of power’s prime effects’, subjected to the meanings and regulation of specific discourse(s) whilst being simultaneously the expression of the self. How we are defined through language that we and others use of and about ourselves constructs our self too (we are subjectified). Yet, in one of his lectures About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self, Foucault (1993) suggested that we can rid the self of the discourse’s incitement through ‘a critical ontology of ourselves’ (p.199). He explained that this involves ‘a theoretical analysis with a political dimension…that relates to what we are willing to accept in our world, to refuse, and to change, both in ourselves and in our circumstances’ (1993: 224). Subjectivity, therefore, is the position that we take within the discourse, which is not fixed and static but dynamic, based on complex and contradictory discursive processes (Cocker and Hafford-Letchfield, 2014; Tew, 2006).

Examining, thus, the concept of subjectivity in this research contributes in our understanding and explanation of how and why subjects (the informants) have taken specific positions in relation to oppression and social work, as discussed in Chapter 4. In addition, it sets the foundations of constructing a ‘critical ontology’ (Foucault, 1993) for transforming both our subject positions and the discourse itself.

For Foucault, subjectivity is based on an analysis of the opinions of the individuals (subjects), which are founded both on what they know and
what they have experienced, whether directly or indirectly (Cocker and Hafford-Letchfield, 2014). The characteristics of that subjectivity when studied thus become revealing of both how a concept might be understood or defined, and of what it is that has formed and sustained that understanding. Therefore in this study, how the three sets of subjects (students at the start of their course, students at the end and their educators) discussed topics such as personal/professional dilemmas, oppression, the social work role in challenging oppression and so forth was as illuminating as the content of their discussion; both revealed the nature of their subjectivity.

Students’ ‘knowledge’ appeared to have been founded on generalisations from subjective/personal experiences, and/or extrapolated from single cases concerning e.g. media reports, limited to the context of Greece. Making sense of life experiences and giving meaning to them (categorising), has been described as a necessary brain ability to process information, organise the world and our position within it in our minds (Kriz and Skivenes, 2010; MacKeracher, 2004; Mezirow, 1991). However, the concept of power/knowledge (Foucault, 1977; 1978) reminds us that this process is not created ex nihilo (Cudd, 2006).

Considering that mechanisms of power produce what subjects make sense of and perceive as significant (Lazaroiou, 2013), reasoning too is socially learned through various institutions like family, friends and school (Parrott, 2010; Poole, 2010), as discussed in Chapter 1 (section 1.3.1). Therefore, through conscious or unconscious processes, subjects tend to shape or adopt their meanings to be similar with the ones shared by their environment, including stereotypes and other dominant oppressive values (discourse) (MacKeracher, 2004). The participants of this study recognised that their family, school environment and personal experiences, were the foundational influences on the formation of their values and beliefs (sections 4.1.3.4; 4.2.2.4). However, they did not recognise that these were socially produced and open to crucial reflection and challenge. Rather, they presented their understandings of oppression and diversity as
the derived ‘truth’ from sources they trusted, unquestioningly. They neither critically reflected on nor questioned the inflexible, stereotyped structure they too were reproducing in response to the questions being asked.

Stereotypes set the foundations for othering, as our social position towards difference is formed and sustained on minimal evidence and generalisations, binary oppositions (us/them, either/or), and manipulation of any new information/experience to match prior meanings (Brown, 2012; Cudd, 2006; Kaplan, 2006; Kriz and Skivenes, 2010; Pickering, 2001). Based on this inflexible and binary system, Ploesser and Mecheril (2012) conclude that otherness is constructed and strictly sanctioned from the norm and mainstream commonsense. In the light of this, students’ (both cohorts) simplified difference by focusing on different traits or classifications from the Greek mainstream and extrapolating from personal experience (sections 4.1.3; 4.2.2), are well explained. In Freire’s words, ‘this is their model of humanity’ (1993: 45) that has been socially learned. As later sections will discuss, there was no evidence that this model was challenged by their education.

This cognitive process of oppression (Cudd, 2006) leads to unequal power relations of subordination and domination (Hillock, 2012; Ross, 2007). This was observed not only through students’ binary thinking, but also in their minority-blaming explanations for oppression (sections 4.1.3.3.2; 4.2.2.3.2). The vast majority of students in both cohorts, placed personal responsibility on the oppressed minorities for their conditions, based on stereotypical and oppressive views. Only a few students discussed contextual and structural issues (sections 4.1.3.3.1; 4.2.2.3.1). This us/them oppressive relationship was further revealed through students’ specific group work preferences and their derogatory use of language (slang words for referring to minorities or notions of normality - the ‘normal people’ and ‘the ones with a problem’) (sections 4.1.3.4; 4.2.2.4). Similar observations in relation to students’ values/beliefs were reported by academic staff, who suggested that students perceive otherness as
unsafe, immoral and abnormal based on an uncritical acceptance of the
wider social norms (section 4.3.3.2). Foucault’s works (1977; 1978; 1992)
on sexuality, madness, prison and psychiatry explain well here how and
why such definitions of (ab)normality – as suggested by students – enable
and constrain the sense of self incited by discourse.

Wider research in various stages of social work education, as discussed in
Chapters 1 and 2 (sections 1.5.4; 2.3 and Appendices 1 and 2) both in
Greece (Dedotsi and Paraskevopoulou, 2014; Papadaki and Papadaki,
2011; Papadaki et al., 2012) and in the Western context (i.e. Buz et al.,
2013; Gilligan, 2007; Heenan, 2005; Ryan et al., 1995; Weiss et al., 2002),
suggests that students’ oppressive values and beliefs as well as specific
group preferences are not unique characteristics of this research’s case.
Nevertheless, anti-oppressive theory supports both Freire’s and Foucault’s
consideration of subjects to be active and not trapped, having the power to
affect the structures which construct them and resist oppression
(Dominelli, 2002; Mullaly, 2002; Ploesser and Mecheril, 2012; Green and
Featherstone, 2014).

Importantly, and, as explained in Chapter 1 (sections 1.3.2), is
conscientização - critical consciousness (Freire, 1970; 1993; 1994) both on
the nature and dynamics of oppression as well as on our political position.
It was this lack of reflection that was very evident in students’ accounts.
Even if they highlighted the importance of deconstruction-reconstruction
of ‘knowledge’ through critical reflection, they discussed it in a theoretical
and abstract way without making reference to how they do it in relation to
their own subjectivity (sections 4.1.3; 4.1.5; 4.2.2; 4.2.4). In other words,
there was little or no commitment to praxis.

Insights offered from anti-oppressive concepts (see discussion in section
1.3.1) like intersectionality and domination (Collins 1986; 2000;
Crenshaw, 1989; 1991; Dominelli, 2002; Poole, 2010; Sinclair and Albert,
2008; Ying Yee and Wagner, 2013) would have influenced students to
engage in a more complex and critical thinking. This would involve being
aware of and critically reflecting on the various intersecting oppressions of social divisions within a matrix of domination and their personal positions as key players within it (Brown, 2012; Carr, 2014; Collins, 2000; Hillock, 2012; Hoggett et al., 2006; Kaplan, 2006; Mattsson, 2014). Instead, their binary thinking and lack of such consciousness was further revealed when the majority of students (12/16 first year and 8/14 final year students) admitted holding stereotypes and discriminatory beliefs but denied having experienced a personal-professional value tension (11/16 first year and 9/14 final year students) (sections 4.1.4.1; 4.1.3.4; 4.2.3.2; 4.2.2.4).

This denial, along with their alleged adherence to their personal morals instead of social work (anti-oppressive values) in a personal–professional dialectic (sections 4.1.4.1; 4.2.3.2) reflect a deeper self-focus - concept that has been widely discussed by critical theorists. When Foucault described the individual as ‘one of power’s prime effects’ (1980: 98), he suggested that the very sense of our identity is constituted by the worldviews, values and beliefs we hold – subjected to the meanings, power and regulation of discourse (Cocker and Hafford–Letchfield, 2014; Cudd, 2006; Hoggett et al., 2006; Tew, 2006). Therefore, as Kumashiro (2001: 5) argues, ‘perhaps we resist anti-oppressive practices because they trouble how we think and feel about not only the other, but also ourselves’. Insights into how this study’s students think about themselves are found in some of their motivations to study social work where their self was perceived as ideal, talented and appropriate to help others in need (sections 4.1.2; 4.2.1). They excluded themselves from the oppressive society and their actions (sections 4.1.3.2; 4.2.2), being convinced of their safe, normal and caring worldviews. Discussion in literature (Beckett and Maynard, 2005; Furness, 2007; Stevens et al., 2012) suggests that such altruistic motivations are broadly dominant among social work students; however, even best intentions can act as a self-fulfillment in the absence of critical reflection, undermining personal responsibility and subsequently then fostering oppression.
Hence, students’ need for an ontological security (Pugh, 1998) is suggested to drive their tensions with either fitting the social work values with their similar personal morals, or rejecting them completely. As Jeffery (2005) concluded following his teaching experience with social work students, any questioning of their (students’) identity would be perceived to be incompatible with their identification as good and caring people. In the light of the above lack of critical consciousness, and a strong focus on the socially structured self, students’ failure to manage such tensions ethically and anti-oppressively was revealed. Their explanations reflected that they considered the professional values as a separate domain from their personal ones, and focusing on the self was felt as a safer and familiar choice. Whilst some students in both cohorts, proposed integrating personal and professional values (sections 4.1.4.1; 4.2.3.2) as Banks (2006) suggested (Chapter 1, section 1.4), their uncritical positions as revealed throughout the analysis leave little space for emancipatory practice. This conclusion was also noted by the vast majority of academic staff (9/10), who questioned students’ ability to resolve a value tension ethically as they suggested that they may not even know the social work values (section 4.3.3.2).

What is the impact of students’ subjectivity though? As explained in Chapter 1 (section 1.3.2), insights from Foucault’s (1992) ‘techniques of the self’ and Freire’s (1970; 1993) ‘critical consciousness’ consider action as inseparable from reflection. Freire (1970; 1993; 1994) explained that the two notions are so interconnected that reflection without action results in verbalism whereas action without reflection leads to naïve activism (action for action’s sake). Therefore, praxis in this sense is a core feature of anti-oppressive theory, in order to challenge oppression and act towards social justice and social change (Banks, 2006). In the light of this, students’ contradictory views about social work’s role against oppression are well explained in the absence of critical consciousness. Despite the contribution of theoretical debates and insights by the user involvement and social movements into anti-oppressive practice (see Chapter 1 sections
1.2, 1.3), not all students (9/16 first year and 6/14 final year students) offered a key anti-oppressive role to social work (collective action, advocacy and empowerment) (sections 4.1.3.5; 4.2.2.5). Instead, students in both cohorts saw social work as of a little influence, limited to public awareness, individual support even inaction. A strong ambivalence about whether students can be agents of social change and social justice or not, was expressed by their educators too, suggesting students’ inability to critically reflect on their deeper values and stereotypes (section 4.3.3) and to see their connection with action and change.

Again, similar research in the Western context (Banks, 2005; Bundy-Fazioli et al, 2013; Jack and Mosley, 1997; Mackay and Woodward, 2010; Weiss et al., 2004; Weiss, 2006; Wilson and Kelly, 2010; Woodward and Mackay, 2012) discussed in Chapter 1 (section 1.5.4) have revealed students’ individualistic approaches and question their commitment to an emancipatory practice (Osteen, 2011). However, such uncritical positions of subjectivity may favour stagnation and domiation as evidenced throughout the ‘dark’ historical examples within the social work profession (Chapter 1, section 1.1).

Therefore, following this discussion on the characteristics of students’ subjectivity, a crucial question is raised: why were such positions evident, even in students that have had a four-year social work education? It would be wrong to cast the students as entirely the source of the uncritical attitudes revealed both in this study and wider research. Freire (1970; 1993) explained that oppressive positions should not be considered as an essential characteristic of the behaviour of subjects. As illustrated in the figure 5.1 at the start of this chapter, subjects are located within broader structures. It is within these structures that subjects are produced and subjected to its power and order of domination. According to Dunk – West (2014), such an understanding indicates that an analysis of oppression at the individual level is insufficient. Therefore, ‘fatalistic attitudes like ‘what can I do? I’m only a peasant’’ (Freire, 1993: 61), are the result of discourses that the oppressed are not conscious of. How then
has this study revealed the wider mechanisms of oppression on students’ subjectivity? The following section explains students’ subjectivity further.

5.2.2 Discipline and governmentality

*Discipline* as discussed earlier in this thesis (Chapter 1, section 1.5.4) according to Foucault (1980; 1982) describes the way in which power and dominant discourses are governed through institutions, such as universities, schools and hospitals. Therefore, the power relations inherent within how institutions function and how education operates in practice also constitute individuals’ unconscious learning and adherence to norms enacted through those functions. This theoretical view in part, explains some of the findings in this study concerning, the maintenance rather than challenge of the limited views of the mechanisms of oppression; and the failure of students to develop more critical, and sophisticated understandings, through their social work education.

A central concept throughout this thesis has been both Freire’s and Foucault’s rejection of the view that education is neutral. Instead, they both considered education to be the instrument of domination or transformation. Foucault (1980) used the concept of ‘docile bodies’ in his book ‘*Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*’, arguing education’s ‘production’ of compliant subjects who do not challenge the dominant norms. Similarly, Freire (1970; 1993) used the term ‘docility’ to describe the situation that the oppressed are within, silenced by education to maintain discourse’s domination.

In an attempt to define the content of an anti-oppressive social work education, literature offers numerous debates and suggestions, as discussed in Chapter 1 (section 1.5.1). Yet, common consensus among debates is education’s primary purpose to stimulate students’ critical consciousness through a reflexive and political analysis of oppression and inequalities and engage with them into anti-oppressive praxis (Banks, 2006; Clifford and Burke, 2005; Galambos, 2009; Mackay and Woodward, 2010; Razack, 1999; Reisch and Jani, 2012; Reisch, 2013). In implementing this, the aim
is not to impose a dogmatic thinking on students (Pugh, 1998), but to engage in an ongoing process of deconstruction – reconstruction of ‘knowledge’ (Kumashiro, 2000, 2001; de Montigny, 2011; Das and Carter – Anand, 2014).

However, the findings of this study reflect that such an approach was not prioritised in this case. Discussion about the Department’s curriculum in Chapter 2 (section 2.2.3) revealed the absence of an anti-oppressive focus – a fact which was evidenced both in final year students and academic staff accounts (sections 4.2.4.1; 4.3.1.2). Instead, a technical, individualistic and clinical approach focusing on the acquisition of skills of ‘how to work’ predominate the curriculum. Yet, uncritical approaches within the social work curricula have been identified both in the Greek context (Ioakimidis, 2008; Papadaki and Papadaki, 2008; Teloni, 2011a; Teloni and Mantanika, 2015) (section 2.2.2) and the Western context where the widely debated competence-based practice (CBP) and evidence-based practice (EBP) approaches prevail (section 1.5.1). Despite the importance of obtaining technical skills, the sacrifice of social justice and anti-oppressive issues discourage critical consciousness and neutralise practice (Banks, 2006; Gray and Gibbons, 2007; Morley, 2008; Parton, 2000; Spolander et al., 2014), as reflected in students’ subjectivity earlier.

Whilst individual initiatives by a few academics to include anti-oppressive concepts were reflected in this study’s interviewees’ quotes (sections 4.2.4.1; 4.3.2), these were still found to follow a shallow approach, without including theoretical explanations and discussions about the mechanisms of oppression and the political role of social work. According to Kumashiro (2001) and Ellsworth (1992) such teaching does not challenge or change the ‘mis-knowledge’ of students shaped by the social norms. Instead, as Burney Nissen and Curry – Stevens (2012) argue, it leaves issues of social justice under-addressed or even misappropriated to blame—the-victim ideology. In light of this, students’ use of their personal experiences, stereotypes and binary thinking to define oppression and diversity are further explained. Students did not have the resources during
their education to question their self or the discursive ideologies that sustain oppression (Humphries, 2004). Therefore, turning to the self as a resolution for the value tensions is reinforced, leaving students confused about what they can actually do against oppression (Walls et al., 2009).

Nevertheless, the concept of discipline also involves how education functions and operates – issues that were vividly discussed by final year students and academic staff. Cudd (2006) argued that oppression in institutions (education) lies in the injustices and unequal treatment of individuals. In agreement with this view, sociologists of education such as Bowles and Gintis (1976: 5) and Mickelson and Smith (1992) describe educational institutions - such as universities - as ‘the laboratory, where social inequalities are tested’ and reproduced. This is one of the main findings of this study too: students, educators, even service users are all subjected to an unequal and unjust system in the how of teaching, the operation of the Department and the neo-liberal educational policies, as explained further below.

In relation to the how of teaching, Freire (1979; 1993; 1994) proposed a dialogic, problem – posing process, where students and educators share an equal relationship in their learning, as co-learners. A number of suggestions are offered within literature for such an anti-oppressive pedagogy (section 1.5.2) but the common base is to engage students in dialogue, reflection and praxis (Allensworth Hawkins and Knox, 2014; Cramer et al., 2012; Early et al., 2003; Razack, 1999; Sakamoto and Pitner, 2005). However, in this case the quotes by final year students revealed that their education involved the banking concept – the one that Freire (1993; 1994) rejected. This was evidenced in a traditional teaching-centred approach (Jack and Mosley, 1997; Morley, 2008), that the majority of their educators were said to use. Whilst the inclusion of experiential learning exercises (Holmström, 2014; Pugh, 2014a,b) as well as attempts to establish a ‘safe’ environment within class (Abel and Campbell, 2009; Galambos, 2009; Gezinski, 2009; Urdang, 2010) were discussed by academic staff (section 4.3.2), this would not necessarily mean that a
process of an equal deconstruction and reconstruction of knowledge occurred. This argument is further revealed through educators’ use of self as an anti-oppressive resource.

Anti-oppressive theorists urge educators to be critically conscious themselves and act towards social justice both in and outside the classroom: modeling critical reasoning, challenging own knowledge and acting against oppressive institutional policies (Campbell, 2002; Clifford and Burke, 2005; Collins and Wilkie, 2010; Chonody et al., 2014, Lane, 2011, 2012). Failure to do so, has been suggested to have a negative impact on students’ development of an (ant)oppressive ethical self (Clifford and Royce, 2008; Bundy – Fazioli et al., 2013; Hantman and Ben – Oz, 2014). Therefore, students’ subjectivity needs also to be seen in the light of their educators’ lack of anti-oppressive practice, as observed in their failure not only to challenge alleged inappropriate/unethical practices and inconsistencies, but also to respond collectively to the identified gaps of education (sections 4.3.1.2; 4.3.2). Yet, McDonald and Coleman (1999) highlighted that educators’ resistance to challenge is part and parcel of a wider perpetuation of oppression within social work universities.

Earlier in Chapter 1 (section 1.5.4), it was discussed that the university’s functionalities – the hidden curriculum - may hamper an anti-oppressive education (Burgess, 2004; Bransford, 2011; Kumashiro, 2001; Mickelson and Smith, 1993; Orr, 2002; Tsang, 2011) by reproducing oppressive power relations. The hidden curriculum in this case was found to involve a lack of organisation and absent/insufficient policies/guidelines within the Department (sections 4.3.1.2). These micro-policies have resulted in the undervalued treatment or even victimisation of students, educators and service users in educational sites such as practice placements (sections 4.2.4.1; 4.3.1.2). The potential of practice placements to serve as a site of oppression has been acknowledged within literature (Clifford and Royce, 2008; Collins and Wilkie, 2010; Cox and Hirst, 1995; Otters, 2013; Wilson, 2013) (section 1.5.1), with authors proposing instead a reflexive and supporting approach by academic schools (Williamson et al., 2010;
However, by exposing students to disrespectful treatment (Dubrosky, 2013), their oppressive ‘thought is conditioned’ (Freire, 1993: 45) because this is the norm, the mainstream commonsense. This view in part explains students’ and educators’ uncritical positions as they are all subjected to oppressive power relations. Nevertheless, further inequalities and injustices were found to stem from the wider neo-liberal educational policies within which social work education is formally organised.

The description of the context within which HEIs operate in Greece (section 2.2.1), revealed the reproduction of social inequalities and oppression (KANEP-GSEE, 2014) through the operation of the national educational system (class division of AEIs and TEIs; restrictions of the admission system; clientilism and lack of meritocracy) (Fragkoudaki, 1985; Palios and Kyriazi, 1999; Papadaki, 2001; 2004; Ioakimidis, 2008) as well as the market-driven policies of a neo-liberal agenda across Europe (Engelberg et al. 2012; Frost et al., 2013; Ioakimidis, 2008; Lorenz, 2005; Matthies, 2011). The neo-liberal logic in a combination with the austerity that Greece has experienced since 2008, led to a continuous dis-investment and finally the abolition of the Department that was studied based on economic criteria. Academics illustrated the deleterious effects of such an approach: an underfunded and understaffed Department with poor even oppressive/exploitative teaching and working conditions (section 4.3.1.1). However, these are not limited to the Greek case. Downsizing practices, managerial evaluation methods, and abolitions/closures in the name of efficiency (i.e. recent closure of The College of Social Work in Britain) prevail in the welfare and higher education arena across the Western context (Preston and Aslett, 2014; Reisch, 2013; Wilson and Campbell, 2013; Ying Yee and Wagner, 2013). These oppressive policies within which social work education operates, have led to a demoralised (Ferguson and Woodward, 2009) or depoliticised (Giroux, 2010) learning environment. It is therefore questionable as to whether social work
students can perceive themselves as ‘ethical and political beings’ in such an environment (Freire 1989, in Moch, 2009: 94).

Whilst Freire (1993: 25) protested resistance to the ‘neo-liberal fatalism’ and anti-oppressive praxis throughout his writings, the response of this Department was found to be passive towards social needs or oppressive policies (sections 4.2.4.1; 4.3.1.2). Social work education sterilised from action has been accused to be meaningless rhetoric (Narayan, 2000; Reisch, 2013; Sinclair and Albert, 2008) of a profession which claims to act towards social justice and social change. In the light of such a conservative response towards oppression, students’ limited approach to social work as a site of change is well explained. They have not seen their Department challenge oppressive educational policies, neither to express solidarity with the oppressed nor to get involved in advocacy/activist projects within the community (Dudziak, 2002). This is an example of what McDonald and Coleman (1999: 31) concluded when they argued that ‘social work education practices and structures serve to perpetuate hierarchies of oppression and thus to perpetuate oppression itself’.

In light of these experiences, the skepticism expressed by all groups of interviewees regarding the impact of social work education on students’ ability to manage their value tensions in relation to anti-oppressive practice (sections 4.1.5.3; 4.2.4.2; 4.3.3.3) is not surprising. Whilst both final year students and academic staff suggested that education can contribute to self-awareness and critical thinking, the vast majority of the former (13) alleged that they do not feel prepared or are ambivalent to manage such tensions (sections 4.2.3.2; 4.2.4.2). However, the evidenced docility of students and educators is in interplay with the governmentality of the profession of social work in Greece.

Foucault (1982: 790) explained that governmentality ‘is to structure the possible field of action of others’ through state mechanisms and disciplines. In his writings (1977; 1980; 1982) he argued that governmentality and its link with the socio-political context enabled the
emergence of the ‘psy’/social professions – such as social work – in the 19th century (section 1.1). He also referred explicitly to social workers as the ‘judges of normality’ among other professionals (1977: 304). Therefore, social work scholars (i.e. Carey and Foster, 2013; Cocker and Hafford-Letchfield, 2014; Gilbert and Powell, 2010; Rossiter, 2001), have used this concept to problematise the profession as an instrument reproducing state control. However, in order to make sense of the findings of this study considering this concept, we need to focus first in one of the central characteristics of governmentality for Foucault: history and its power/knowledge.

Both Foucault and Freire considered history as a *possibility*, where things could have been and could be otherwise based on subjects’ decisions. This is why they argued that by looking at history and its power/knowledge within discursive practices and disciplinary mechanisms, we can not only understand the ‘history of the present’ but also become ‘historical – social beings’ by creating history (Foucault, 1982: 777; Freire, 1993: 101). Therefore, the concept of governmentality allows us to understand how the profession has been structured over time, the political choices made by professionals and their response to oppression in order to reflect on their role in students’/educators’ subjectivity today.

In relation to the structural presentation of the profession in Greece, discussion on its historical evolution (section 2.1) revealed that historically it has been perceived as a vocation with a low status, which in part is evidenced in students’ socio-economic background (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Langston, 1992). This study as well as earlier research observations within the Greek context (Ioakimidis, 2008; Koukouli et al., 2008; Papadaki, 2004; Papadaki and Papadaki, 2008; Teloni, 2011a; Teloni and Mantanika, 2015), reveal students’ low socio-economic background and their low preference to study social work compared to prestigious disciplines like psychology offered by AEIs (sections 4.1.1; 4.2.1). In addition, when it comes to students’ motives, it was observed by all groups’ accounts that these suggest a vocational view of social work.
practiced by ‘appropriate’ and talented missionaries as discussed earlier. Whilst this observation has been noted in research outside Greece too (Gilligan, 2007; Furness, 2007; Osteen, 2011; Stevens et al., 2012), it is argued that the governmentality of the profession as a low status profession or vocation, does not require social workers to engage in political reflexivity because being committed to helping others it is all what it is required (Furness, 2007). However, history reveals that social workers’ good intentions are not enough for supporting an anti-oppressive practice.

The historical background of social work in Greece (section 2.1) showed that social workers during times of oppression not only did not challenge oppressive policies and discrimination, but complied and even participated in brutal interventions (Ioakimidis, 2008; 2012). In the absence of reflection on the socio-political context and their political role in this, professionals of those times perceived social work to be neutral, devoted to helping those in need. They did not reflect on how the profession was governed by the Greek state by establishing the ‘appropriate’ profile of social workers (i.e. the ‘certificate of loyalty’ in 1940s-1960s, section 2.1.1) and strengthening professionalism at the expense of the practitioners’ participation in the ‘social adjustment’ of the citizens (during junta) (Ioakimidis, 2008: 153; Koukouli et al., 2008; Teloni, 2011a). The lack of critical consciousness, collective challenge and action against oppression through time led to a ‘culture of silence’ (Freire, 1970; 1993; 1994), where social workers either responded individually to unjust policies or silently complied (Giannou, 2010; Ioakimidis, 2008; Papadaki, 2005; Papadaki and Papadaki, 2008; Pentarakis, 2015; Teloni, 2011a). It is within this governmentality that students’ individualistic positions, educators’ and Department’s reluctance to challenge, even a few practitioners’ support of neo-Nazism (section 2.1.3) need also to be placed and explained. This is why Weiss (2006: 147) concluded in her research, that students’ subjectivity appeared to ‘reflect the history, practice and ideological contexts of social work in each country’.
Freire (1970; 1988; 1993) considered this ‘anti-dialogical action’ of (social work) professionals as both the instrument and result of oppression, which is constituted in this historical process and throughout their (mis)education, where they are finally convinced of their discursive worldview. Yet, as the discussion of the evolution of anti-oppressive practice earlier (Chapter 1) and research on the European history of social work (i.e. Lorenz, 1993; Waaldijk, 2011) illustrate, oppressive and inspiring stories historically traced within the profession cannot be left unnoticed. Being conscious of our participation in the governmentality of the profession enables us to ‘create’ history today – consciousness that was reflected neither by students nor their educators. Therefore, it is suggested that students’ subjectivity (questionable resolution of their personal-professional dialectic and oppressive positions) is produced within a network of power relations between the discipline of their education (non-prioritisation of social justice and anti-oppressive content; unjust and unequal context of the Department driven by the market-driven policies by the state) and the governmentality (low status, uncritical approaches of the profession) of the social work profession in Greece. As a result, from students’ perspective, what can an undermined, unimportant and historically ‘silent’ profession possibly do against oppression? This matrix of power relations is what Freire (1970; 1993) called prescription, illustrating the internalised images, guidelines and practices that the oppressed have been prescribed and finally adopted from wider discourses. It is within this final concept of discourse that subjectivity, discipline and governmentality need to be placed, as explained below.

5.2.3 Discourse, oppressive reality and dividing practices

Within critical social theory, a number of thinkers have debated the explanations of oppression and domination within society (section 1.3.1). The concept of ‘ideology’ was introduced by Marx (1848; 1885; 1894), to explain how dominant ideas by the ruling economic class function to subordinate classes’ participation in exploitative relations of production (Ferguson et al., 2002). Echoing Marx, theorists from the Frankfurt...
School such as Horkheimer and Adorno (2002) expanded this concept focusing on the role of culture as the dominant ideology in subjects’ passivity, by representing capitalist power relations as natural and unchangeable. This concept of ideology as used by Marx and the Frankfurt School theorists, is useful in recognising culture’s power in relations of oppression and subordination; however, it is limited in perceiving culture as a stable and homogenous ideology, as well as considering power to be linear in direction, and absent from everyday social interactions (Stoddart, 2007).

Gramsci (1971; 1992; 1996) in an attempt to reinterpret the concept of ideology used the notion of hegemony – the form of social power as everyday common sense, which manipulates the consent of dominated groups in unequal power relations. The Gramscian theory contributed to the Marxist analysis of ideology, by offering understandings about the ongoing process of contestation between the oppressors and the oppressed, where the former produce ‘common sense’ ideologies to justify their power and privileges through mundane activities connected with education, religion, and media (McDonald and Coleman, 1999). Yet, Gramsci’s concept of hegemony retained Marxists’ focus on class, the capitalist process of production and ‘true’ knowledge as the opposite of ideology (Cudd, 2006; Stoddart, 2007).

A different view was offered by post-structuralist and post-modernist theories, and mainly the work of Foucault (1972; 1977; 1980; 1982). Using the concept of discourse, Foucault (1972) described the systematic mechanisms that constitute the truth or reality in a society through shared values, norms, beliefs and daily activities, all sewn into the social fabric and operated within and across institutions. Therefore, oppression exists within unequal power relations that we take up from discourse through institutions –such as education – and incorporate it to our own subjectivity. The discourse theory advances our understanding by illustrating that power is fluid and multidirectional within all social interactions, class is not the only channel of social power and last but not least, power offers
opportunities for resistance (Cudd, 2006; Green and Featherstone, 2014; Parrott, 2010). Yet, as Stoddart (2007) argued, it would be useful to locate the concepts of ideology, hegemony and discourse along a continuum in understanding power and oppression and not as contradictory explanations.

As explained in Chapter 1 (section 1.3.1) AOP theory uses insights from each of these theoretical positions, and this is why its proponents have used them in their analysis as contributory. With regard to the analysis of this study and in accordance with anti-oppressive theory, the concept of discourse as adopted throughout this chapter interrelates ideology and hegemony as discursive effects and forms. Therefore, this concept of discourse enables us to understand both how oppression –the ‘truth’– is produced and perpetuated within Greek society, and why this has influenced the formation of students’ subjectivity.

Within Greek history (Chapter 2) it is evidenced that oppression has manifested throughout time both in overt and covert forms (Hanna et al., 2000; Mullaly, 2002). Killings, imprisonment, tortures, exiles and lack of press freedom have been evidenced under Nazism in the Second World War, during the Civil War years and junta (section 2.1.1). However, since the re-establishment of Greek democracy in 1974, oppression is not found in the explicit tyranny of a ruling group but is hidden within social institutions violating the rights of people, assigning to them a second-class citizenship and blocking them from access to services or opportunities (Dominelli, 2002; Mullaly, 2002; Pickering, 2001). Especially in the period of crisis (2008-today), the dominant discourse in Greece reveals values of intolerance, inequalities, violation of human rights and an unjust state system driven from the neo-liberal logic (section 2.1.3). All participants of this study described in a very vivid way these inequalities and injustice that permeates Greek society currently (sections 4.1.3.2; 4.1.3.3.1; 4.2.2; 4.2.2.3.1; 4.3.1.1); however, they did not seem to realise how they reproduced this discourse within their own subjectivity. It would not be an exaggeration therefore, to liken this discourse with what Freire (1993) termed oppressive reality, which is ‘maintained by its own
mechanical and unconscious functionality…and perpetuated from generation to generation’ (p. 51). In order to uncover this unconscious functionality, it would be useful to explore the mechanisms of discursive ideologies.

An essential mechanism of this discourse is division for Freire (1993) or the dividing practices for Foucault (1982), where people are divided and defined in legal frameworks, media and language in different ways (i.e. the normal/abnormal, us/them, safe/unsafe, legal/illegal, deserving/undeserving, etc) and as a result, social problems are individualised. In the current context of Greece, this division is evidenced not only in the insufficient and unjust legal frameworks (i.e. migration, citizenship, hate crimes) (Amnesty International, 2013, 2014; Human Rights Watch, 2014; Teloni and Mantanika, 2015; Theofilopoulos, 2014), but also in the deserving/undeserving distribution of services like health care—a basic human right (The Guardian, 23/05/2015; Zamparloukou, 2014). Freire (1970; 1993) protested that this process makes inequalities invisible; they are taken for granted and result in people’s subjugation as they are structurally perceived to be responsible for their own ‘failures’ and ‘disadvantages’. Therefore, privileged groups obtain hegemonic power by having better access to rights, institutions and higher-status employment because of ‘their own effort and their courage to take risks’ (Freire, 1993: 59) in contrast to the divided oppressed groups. This explains well why both groups of students placed personal responsibility on the oppressed about their behaviour and passivity against their oppression (sections 4.1.3.3.2; 4.1.3.4; 4.2.2.3.2; 4.2.2.4; 4.2.4.2), without reflecting that they have taken for granted discourse’s commonsense.

However, as discussed in Chapter 1 (section 1.3.1) this blame-the-victim ideology becomes more hostile in times of crisis constructing the other as a scapegoat for any tensions, injustices or suffering (Mullaly, 2002; McDonald and Coleman, 1999; Pickering, 2001; Sinclair and Albert, 2008). Hence, the rise of fascism and attacks on minorities during the economic crisis in Greece are further explained, as media, language and
politicians have directed the austerity/poverty causes towards i.e. the presence of ‘illegal’ immigrants (racist ideology) (section 2.1.3) (Ellinas, 2015; Michael-Matsas, 2013; Poulopoulos, 2014; Triandafyllidou and Kouki, 2014). Both groups of students described that such ideologies have permeated Greek culture resulting in an oppressive mentality of Greeks towards diversity (sections 4.1.3.3.1; 4.2.2.3.1). Yet, as explained throughout the analysis and discussion of findings, students were not conscious of their position as bearers of these discursive mentality/ideologies. This is why Mullaly (2002: 29) concluded that oppression ‘carries out certain social or political functions ensuring that society reproduces itself and maintains the same dominant-subordinate relationships’.

The maintenance of oppressive ideologies is secured through another mechanism – the use of depositing myths (Freire, 1970, 1993, 1994). Freire and a number of anti-oppressive authors (i.e. Bishop, 1994; McDonald and Coleman, 1999; Miller and Schamess, 2015; Mullaly, 2002; Sinclair and Albert, 2008) have suggested that the myths of social meritocracy, equality and freedom rationalise stereotypes and blaming ideology as they do not acknowledge systemic constraints, and oppressive policies that do not actually offer the same or equal opportunities to all people. Similarly, the myth of scarcity is perpetuated to justify policy cuts – especially in times of recession – despite the fact that world’s resources/wealth are disproportionally distributed. Such myths can be traced in the Greek context, where policies and reforms have mainly attacked the more disadvantaged populations throughout time (Katrougkalos, 1996; Papadopoulos and Roumpakis, 2012; 2013; Symeonidou, 1996; Teloni, 2011a), and in the wider neo-liberal context where the individualistic focus constructs service users as consultants and consumers (Carey and Foster, 2013; Cowden and Singh, 2014; Mattsson, 2014; Reisch, 2013). In such a climate, the governmentality of social work as discussed earlier, can serve social control reducing demands for limited public resources (Dominelli, 1988). This notion explains further the
historical silent response of the profession in Greece in times of oppression, as professionals failed to critically reflect on such systemic legal myths and their role in justice/resources distribution. This is why Freire (1993) considered welfare programs as the instruments of *manipulation* which ‘anesthetise the people’ (p. 152), so they will not perceive the true causes of their problems and turn into passive recipients.

In the light of these mechanisms of discourse, students’ subjectivity is further explained. Foucault viewed discourse as regimes of ‘truth’ (Cocker and Hafford–Letchfield, 2014) of which power/knowledge permeates and is reproduced within and across disciplines of institutions such as social work education, the governmentality of the (social work) profession and people’s subjectivity as shown in the model (Figure 5.1) and explained throughout this chapter. Whilst the oppressive reality appears to ‘absorb those within it’ (Freire, 1993: 51), subjects as discussed earlier are never entrapped within discourse (Green and Featherstone, 2014) but able to transform it through critical consciousness and anti-oppressive action. Similarly, Foucault (1977; 1980; 1982) argued that the networks of power/knowledge are also sites of resistance. Therefore, in times of oppression, where neo-liberal policies dominate in the Western context (Reisch, 2013; Preston and Aslett, 2014; Spolander et al., 2014), South-East Europe faces extreme debt crises and inequalities rise, this study reveals a number of implications as follows.

### 5.3 Anti-oppressive praxis – implications

As previously discussed, Freire (1970; 1993) conceptualised anti-oppressive praxis through the interrelated notions of action and reflection. How can these concepts inspire an anti-oppressive praxis towards social work education and practice in Greece?

The findings of this research reveal an urgent need to re-define the structure, content and mission of social work education in Greece in order to reflect the emancipatory focus of the profession. Bowles and Gintis (1976) argued that education does not only produce ‘docile bodies’
(Foucault, 1980) but also rebels. According to Ying Yee and Wagner (2013) a revolutionary change will be impossible without addressing how and why education is conceptualised and delivered. Therefore, in the context of Greece today, such an education cannot but reflect and respond to current social needs and it should be redefined and restructured continuously. Especially in times of oppression, social work education cannot afford to stay behind or being slower than social needs. Final year students and academic staff raised the importance of developing a curriculum, which prioritises issues of social justice and social change, including critical approaches like that of anti-oppressive practice and examples of community resistance (sections 4.2.4.3; 4.3.4). Building on the works of Foucault and Freire, social work students can be engaged in a critical and political analysis about their self and the policies of institutions in which they are situated. In this way they will be equipped to expose the structural origins of social problems, and not blame the oppressed for personal failure (Ferguson, 2012).

Such an education though needs also to be dialogical and reflexive, with the active participation of students and service users in designing and evaluating educational content and processes (Mackay et al., 2009; Robinson and Webber, 2013; Wilson and Beresford, 2000). Clear agreements with placement providers need to be in place as well as guidelines on educators to prioritise a just and anti-oppressive content and context of students’ learning. Yet, such a process should not be based on a fixed checklist; instead, it should involve a dynamic and dialogical process where students’ and service users’ views of reality can contribute to an anti-oppressive pedagogy through constant critical reflection (Beresford and Croft, 2001; Clifford and Burke, 2005; Das and Carter – Anand, 2014; Jack and Mosley, 1997; Kumashiro, 2000, 2001; Poole, 2010, Sakamoto and Pitner, 2005).

In addition, a genuine anti-oppressive education cannot be sterilised from social action. Resistance to the ‘neo-liberal fatalism’ (Freire, 1993: 25) can be achieved via the collective participation of students and academics
against austerity measures and policy cuts, violation of human and social rights, and through social movements and professional associations. This was considered as pivotal by both final year students and their educators (sections 4.2.4.3; 4.3.4). The profession’s historical evolution and response to social needs both in and outside Greece has evidenced stories that instead of taking the side of the oppressed, actually reinforced and reproduced oppression. Therefore, we need constantly to reflect in our practice and challenge any notions of expertise, innocence and neutrality (McLaughlin, 2005; Ioakimidis, 2013). The paradigm of social movements as well as social work initiatives in the Greek context and other countries like the ‘Orange Tide’\textsuperscript{76} in Spain, can be inspirational of a radical/politicised path in social work. Such a path needs to reflect the moral core of the profession as given in its recent definition (IFSW and IASSW, 2014) joining the resistance in solidarity with the disadvantaged and the oppressed, participating in collective action, empowerment and advocacy.

Social Work Departments can play a key role here via connecting with wider political demands for social justice and redistribution of resources. Therefore, the need for a re-investment in social care and social work education can be argued according to the needs of the people, students and Departments and not the neo-liberal agenda criteria. Educational policies in Greece need to include: the resolution of social division between AEIs and TEIs; an admission system which reflects the aspirations and potential of young people; staff recruitment and development in the Departments via merit and just processes; and last but not least, investment through funding and resources like digital means and libraries with subscriptions to (inter)national literature even appropriate teaching venues with basic provisions such as heating and seats. Without investing in an anti-

\textsuperscript{76} The Orange Tide is a grassroots movement by social work practitioners, educators and students along with service users denouncing the policy cuts in welfare and protesting an investment in social care.
oppressive and libertarian education, students will continue to be ‘disciplined’ in unjust and oppressive contexts.

However, the political task of criticising the working of institutions according to Foucault (Lazaroiu, 2013), involves also a critical and reflexive self. Therefore, it is more important than ever for social workers in the making, to be aware of their personal beliefs and stereotypes too (Sinclair and Albert, 2008). All participants of this study raised the importance of self-dialogue and working with one’s self. However, this is not limited to self-awareness, as it would lead to a shallow verbalism (Freire, 1970; 1993). Instead, it requires a deliberate engagement for self-deconstruction/reconstruction (Kumashiro, 2000; 2001). Discovering the oppressive self who is a bearer of the power/knowledge of the wider discourse may be a traumatic process according to Freire, because this discourse is so ‘entrenched within professionals that renouncing from it would become a threat to their own identities’ (1993: 156) as discussed earlier. However, in Freire’s view, the decision to engage in anti-oppressive praxis and see oneself as maker of history demands maximum political wisdom (1970; 1993). Therefore, we all need – whether we are students, educators and/or practitioners – to critically reflect on our role in wider policies and political contexts, and question ourselves: in times of oppression whose side are we on and what position do we take?

It is also vital to reflect on our own roles as educators and to take responsibility at a personal and institutional level, for ethical issues that arise in the world of higher education (Campbell, 2002; Clifford and Royce, 2008; Lane, 2011; 2012; Razack, 1999). Here students can learn from educators as role models through observing anti-oppressive practice in and outside classroom (Clifford and Burke, 2005; Chonody et al., 2014; Gezinski, 2009; Poole, 2010). Without a critical and reflexive stance to the self, institutions and wider discourses, social work will only objectify the student, the ‘other’, the service user or more broadly – the oppressed. The model presented in this chapter (Figure 5.1) can contribute to such an analysis of (anti) oppressive practices. Yet, it is not claimed that such an
approach is the only politicized path in social work. The intention is to inform our practice and education based on the emancipatory purpose of our profession.

Finally, further research is strongly recommended to be undertaken both in social work practice and education specifically within Greece. There is only recent and limited social work research in Greece as explained earlier in this thesis; therefore research and scholarly work will significantly contribute to strengthening the profession’s status and enrich practice in context. Such research should explore: the voices of service users about social work practice and social welfare; the understandings/experiences/resolution of the personal – professional dialectic and other intersecting tensions by professionals; practitioners’ anti-oppressive practice; and last the involvement of practitioners and the professional association in policy making. Moreover, action research could be used for researching solidarity and social movements in regards to their grassroots practices of collective action, empowerment and advocacy. In addition, social work education policies and processes across Greece, need to be explored further in order to inform training content and context: how unethical practices by students or educators are challenged; user-involvement in academia; and educators’ social action. Last but not least, cross-national research of social work education between Greece and other South-European countries, which face similar debt crisis or international contexts, would significantly impact towards an existential and anti-oppressive education.

**5.4 Concluding remarks**

I have argued throughout this chapter for the significance of critical reflection and a reflexive orientation, whatever our role. Therefore having reached the end of my interpretive discussion of the findings of this thesis and offered some thoughts on its implications, it is only right that I end with some brief reflexive comments on my journey through this thesis, and the reflection and growth in knowledge and understanding it has prompted.
When I started my PhD, my initial ambitions were to contribute to Greek social work research and also acquire the ‘appropriate’ qualifications to enter the arena of academia. However, this thesis offered me more than technical research/academic skills. As discussed in the Introduction of this thesis, my personal and professional background have stimulated my curiosity/interest on issues such as oppression, diversity, value tensions and the political role of social work within institutions and policies. Yet, it was only through this thesis, that I started deconstructing my own subjectivity. Reading the wider literature, and listening to the voices of the participants of my research, I became aware of my own deep-rooted stereotypes and oppressive values, the power that is inherited in my position as a social worker, and educator, as well as the impact of my actions/response to inequalities and injustice. At times I became a severe critic of myself, feeling disappointed and angry at my own silence and compliance with oppressive structures in the past.

However, I found comfort in the insights of Freire and Foucault, realising the ability to resist and challenge the oppressive self, institution and context, in multiple ways. I became more involved with solidarity and social movements, in social work initiatives for denouncing policy cuts and austerity in Greece, and collective action with colleagues and students against Athena Plan. I discovered that being involved in social action is not easy and oppressive institutions/policies do not change overnight. I questioned myself many times, and wondered whether the elimination of oppression is in vain. However, observing the solidarity among people and oppressed groups through the years of crisis in Greece, as well as the power of ‘small’ victories against oppressive policies throughout social work history, I realised the importance of serving through our profession not social control, but the fight for a more just and equal society.

Moreover, this research affected my teaching approach by prioritising anti-oppressive concepts and trying to establish a more dialogical process with the active participation of students, service users and the use of experiential learning exercises. The literature and research I read for
promoting such an anti-oppressive pedagogy, became very valuable to me, in order to improve my teaching content and process, along with students’ contribution and feedback.

The most important influence of my thesis, is the reminder that I am not a neutral, neither an expert, nor an innocent subject. This consciousness helps me to be open and reflexive about my subjectivity, as well as reconstruct it by learning from the voices and reality of my students and the people I work with.

Taking the insights of anti-oppressive theory to a new context – Greece, this thesis has demonstrated that the discourse of oppression and the praxis against it are (re)produced within a matrix of complex and interrelated historical, cultural, socio-economic and political processes. Without this consciousness – context related – anti-oppressive theory will only remain a top down, apolitical ‘knowledge’ as its sceptics protest (McLaughlin, 2005; Millar, 2008; Sakamoto and Pinter, 2005; Wilson and Beresford, 2000). Anti-oppressive praxis was revealed to not be limited in the simple rejection of the unjust and oppressive discourse. Instead, it involves the action for an alternative discourse based on solidarity, social justice and equality. In times of (global) crisis, social work education – not only in Greece, but internationally – can be a crucial part of shaping such an anti-oppressive and emancipatory alternative discourse against neo-liberalism, injustice and oppression.
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Appendix 1: Research in students' attitudes, values and beliefs about oppression at the initial stages of education

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biographic details</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Findings/Conclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Galveni and Hughes 2010</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Purposive sample</td>
<td>UK - university</td>
<td>-98 female &amp; 23 male students; -BA = 43; MA = 43; P.Q. = 36</td>
<td>Limited knowledge and a lack of confidence to work with substance misuse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilligan 2007</td>
<td>Frame analysis</td>
<td>All applicants</td>
<td>Bradford university UK</td>
<td>-Applicants for BA in social work; -age range 17-53; -123 female 22 male; -122 home students</td>
<td>Participants provided individualistic explanations for social problems; They suggested liberal/reformist solutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heenan 2005</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Northern Ireland - university within Social Policy module class</td>
<td>-BSc students (first year); -96% female; -92% aged 19-25</td>
<td>Findings revealed negative stereotypes towards disability, especially about people getting access to benefits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segal-Engelstein and Kaufman 2008</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>All first year students</td>
<td>1 School of Social Work, Israel</td>
<td>-Undergraduate students; -first week of their studies; -average age 23 years; -90.7% female</td>
<td>Half of the students favoured micro-practice, with an interest to work with individuals, couples, and families. The other half preferred macro-practice, with an interest to work with communities and engage in policy-practice and social change activities. Both macro-oriented and micro-oriented students were committed to working with people from low socio-economic background.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith 2013</td>
<td>Journal of Social Work Education</td>
<td>Qualitative study: Grounded Theory analysis</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews at least three times individually during their foundation year of classes and one time in a group.</td>
<td>Purposive sample</td>
<td>Fordham University, NY, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swank and Fals 2014</td>
<td>Social Work Education</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>Two channels: students in college-based protests and students of random sampling</td>
<td>-159 (34 students recruited in protests)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Theriot and Lodato | Journal of Social Work Education | Survey | Questionnaire based on three standardized tools: the Attribution Questionnaire-Short Form; the Attitudes to Mental Illness Questionnaire; the Level of Familiarity Scale | All students | 120/160 SW students and 55/80 other university students | One university in the Southeastern United States | - Undergraduate students
- SW students enrolled in an Introduction to SW course in first semester (first course)
- other first year university students | - New social work students were found to hold more positive attitudes about mental health than other students.
- In general, social work students had negative beliefs of specific service user groups, such as people with substance misuse and criminal histories.
- There is a need for courses to include issues of mental health and substance misuse.
- Courses should also involve self-exploration and encourage self-awareness.
- Students from USA and Israeli universities appeared with service user group preferences that did not involve the most oppressed social groups, compared to UK students.
- All groups of students did not want to work with unemployed, chronically ill and elderly service users.
- Casework predominated as the most preferred social work practice in all universities. |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Weiss et al. | British Journal of Social Work | Cross-national Survey | Questionnaire | All students | 429 (USA: 145; UK: 42; Israel: 242) | 4 universities in USA (1), UK (1), Israel (2) | - First year students
- Majority female
- Israeli students were younger compared to British and American sample | - New social work students were found to hold more positive attitudes about mental health than other students.
- In general, social work students had negative beliefs of specific service user groups, such as people with substance misuse and criminal histories.
- There is a need for courses to include issues of mental health and substance misuse.
- Courses should also involve self-exploration and encourage self-awareness.
- Students from USA and Israeli universities appeared with service user group preferences that did not involve the most oppressed social groups, compared to UK students.
- All groups of students did not want to work with unemployed, chronically ill and elderly service users.
- Casework predominated as the most preferred social work practice in all universities. |
### Appendix 2: Research in social work education's impact to influence students' attitudes, values and beliefs (later states of education)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biographic details</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Author and date</strong></td>
<td><strong>Journal</strong></td>
<td><strong>Methodology</strong></td>
<td><strong>Method</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahn et al. 2012</td>
<td>Journal of Teaching in Social Work</td>
<td>Survey cross-sectional design</td>
<td>Questionnaire using the Foundation Practice Self-Efficacy scale (FPSE) (Holden et al., 2003, 2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banks 2005</td>
<td>Social Work Education</td>
<td>Mixed methods design</td>
<td>Analysis of course documents and materials in libraries; interviews with educators; self-completed questionnaires and discussion groups with students with the use of case studies and debate of codes of ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Journal/Dates</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Data Collection/Variables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bundy-Pazioli et al. 2013</td>
<td>Journal of Social Work Education</td>
<td>Qualitative study</td>
<td>Grounded Theory analysis of written student papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buz et al. 2013</td>
<td>International Social Work</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camilleri and Ryan 2006</td>
<td>Social Work Education</td>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>Quantitative and qualitative data: use of questionnaire containing Index of Homophobia scale, Knowledge of Homosexual Parenting scale, case vignettes via Course Rating Questionnaire; and All final year students 61/86 Australia university undergraduate students (final year) 85% female, 15% male 53% 25 years old or less 68% Anglo or Australian. The majority of students had great knowledge and were receptive towards homosexuality and homosexual parenting. Inclusion of the topic of homosexuality within the curriculum was extremely minimal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>National/Research Methodology</td>
<td>Fieldwork Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chonody et al. 2014</td>
<td>Journal of Social Work Education</td>
<td>National cross-sectional Survey</td>
<td>Internet-based questionnaire, Sexual Prejudice Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collins and Wilkie 2010</td>
<td>Social Work Education</td>
<td>Content analysis</td>
<td>Written portfolios</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early et al. 2003</td>
<td>Advances in Social Work</td>
<td>Survey - Mail</td>
<td>Questionnaire (Likert scale): Pre-test (students) and post-test (students and field instructors) design.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation team</td>
<td>European Journal of Social Work</td>
<td>Cross-sectional survey</td>
<td>Questionnaire with the use of vignettes</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation of the New Social Work Degree Qualification in England</td>
<td>3 year study</td>
<td>Mixed methods design</td>
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<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Journal/Title</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Sample Characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
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<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ford et al. 2005</td>
<td>Social Work Education</td>
<td>Case study</td>
<td>Multiple interviews; observation in placements and classrooms; analysis of written work and dissertations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hancock et al. 2012</td>
<td>Journal of Social Work Education</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Questionnaire: the Orientation to Oppression and Oppressed Populations Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill-Jones 2011</td>
<td>Advances in Social Work</td>
<td>Mixed methods</td>
<td>Quantitative: Geriatric Social Work Competency Scale II in the first and last class. Qualitative: content analysis of student journals and final presentations on course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Hughes</td>
<td>Social Work Education</td>
<td>Unitary appreciative inquiry (UA1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Jack and Mosley</td>
<td>British Journal of Social Work</td>
<td>Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Kane</td>
<td>Social Work Education</td>
<td>Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaplan 2006</td>
<td>Journal of Social Work Education</td>
<td>Cross-sectional Survey</td>
<td>Use of DIT instrument (Defining Issues Test)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maidment &amp; Cooper 2002</td>
<td>Social Work Education: The International Journal</td>
<td>Qualitative study</td>
<td>-recordings of supervision sessions -commentaries on the course of the session by field educators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Journal Title</td>
<td>Method</td>
<td>Data Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mizrahi and Dodd 2013</td>
<td>Journal of Social Work Education</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Questionnaire based on Social Activism Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osteen 2011</td>
<td>Social Work Education</td>
<td>Thematic Analysis</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osteenk et al. 2013</td>
<td>Journal of Teaching in Social Work</td>
<td>Secondary analysis of cross-sectional data of a mixed-methods study</td>
<td>Online survey using 6 measure scales: the Modern Racism Scale (MRS) and the AntiBlack Scale (ABS); the Personal Beliefs about Diversity Scale and the Middle-Guzman Universality-Diversity Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan et al. 1995</td>
<td>British Journal of Social Work</td>
<td>Content analysis</td>
<td>Longitudinal study: Semi-structured interviews (11 each within 5 years) using vignettes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seneich and Strausser 2013</td>
<td>Journal of Teaching in Social Work</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Self-completed questionnaire measuring knowledge and attitudes towards substance misuse based on the Drug and Drug Problems Perceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Journal/Media</td>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>Measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trotter and Gilchrist 1996</td>
<td>Social Work Education</td>
<td>Content Analysis</td>
<td>CQSW and DipSW practice assessment reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Van Soest 1996</td>
<td>Journal of Social Work Education</td>
<td>Quasi-experimental design</td>
<td>pre- and post- measurements for two comparison groups (on both occasions comparison groups involved one that attended course on oppression whilst the other did not) -3 Scales: Belief in a Just World Scale, Social Justice Advocacy Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Journal/Media</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Scale Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wall and Reinford</td>
<td>Teaching in Social Work</td>
<td>Quasi-experimental one-group, pretest-posttest design</td>
<td>Questionnaire using the LGB-KASH scale Before and after a diversity course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaver and Hyun Yun</td>
<td>Journal of Teaching in Social Work</td>
<td>Prettest-posttest design</td>
<td>-modified version of the Attitude About Poverty and Poor People Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weiss et al.</td>
<td>Journal of Social Service Research</td>
<td>Cross-national Survey</td>
<td>Questionnaire in their first and final year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weiss 2005</td>
<td>Journal of Social Work</td>
<td>Cross-national survey</td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weiss 2005</td>
<td>Journal of Social Work Research and Evaluation</td>
<td>Cross-national survey</td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weiss 2006</td>
<td>Journal of Social Service Research</td>
<td>Cross-national survey</td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- It was concluded that no major differences were found on the impact of social work education to students' professional socialisation.
- Students emphasised the social causes of poverty, followed by the psychological explanation.
- The majority of students in all cohorts suggested extending state social welfare as the best way of tackling poverty, whilst psychological treatment received the second place of their suggestions.
- Regarding the goals of social work, students in all 10 cohorts emphasised social justice and individual well-being and less social control.
- The majority of students preferred to work mostly with victims of abuse whilst the chronically ill and disabled people ranked relatively low in their preferences.
- It was observed that the preference to work with socially excluded groups ranked relatively higher in the Brazilian and Australian cohorts compared to the other cohorts.
- It was observed that there were three distinct subgroups of students' preferences: a generic group, a direct/micro group, and a macro group.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Study Design</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
<th>Country and Context</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Williamson et al. 2010</td>
<td>Qualitative study, collaborative and strengths based approach</td>
<td>Structured interviews over the course of 3 academic years</td>
<td>Purposive and convenience sample</td>
<td>38/74</td>
<td>Mid-western University</td>
<td>Students differed between country cohorts. Generally, students in all country cohorts engaged in three groups. However, three country cohorts (Brazil, Australia, Hungary) showed a majority of students subscribing to a generic group and a considerable number seeking to engage in micro-practice compared to the majority of students in the other country cohorts, who were micro-practice oriented. Field experiences helped students to develop self-awareness and enhance their confidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson and Kelly 2010</td>
<td>Mixed methods: Quantitative survey, Qualitative focus groups</td>
<td>Survey: Self-completed questionnaire Focus Group: Discussion</td>
<td>Survey: All students on the university recall day Focus group: purposive sample of the same cohort used in the survey</td>
<td>Survey: 55/74 Focus groups: first; second</td>
<td>Northern Ireland – University</td>
<td>Students in their first placement were 67% aged 30 years and under, 16% 18-20, 11% 20-30 or over, 82% female, 7% with disability, 53% obtained another undergraduate degree, 51% on previous social care experience. Field placements experience was essential. The findings suggest that students were exposed to working environments that undermined AOP. Students reported that they felt powerless to challenge oppression and manage ethical tensions. The majority of students noted their satisfaction with their preparatory teaching for practice placements, particularly in relation to the development of their social work skills and values; however, they felt unprepared for practice challenges.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3: Key – dates in the evolution of social work as a profession in Greece

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event/action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>The systematic appliance of social work as a profession started this period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>The Professional Association of Social Workers (SKLE) in Greece was established, with its first 96 members. Since 1956, SKLE is a member of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). In 2008, SKLE had 5,000 registered members; yet, this number may not reflect the actual number of practitioners since registration to SKLE is not mandatory.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1956  | - Social Services were established in hospitals.  
- In addition, the ‘Committee of Constant Education in Social Work’ came in force. |
| 1954, 1955 | After the destroying earthquakes in the Ionian islands (1953), more social workers were recruited in the welfare sector and later in other parts of Greece in 1955 and 1957 (Mastrogiannis, 1960 cited in Kallinikaki, 1998). |
| 1959  | Legal enactment of social work as a profession (law decree 4018, FEK 247/12.11.1959). |
| 1961-1962 | - A set of preconditions, duties and ethical issues related to the professional license of social workers came in force (Royal Decree 690/61).  
- The first Pan-Hellenic Conference of Social Workers took place, organized by the Committee of Constant Education in Social Work under the authority of the Queen. |
| 1963  | The first journal for social welfare, named as ‘Eklogi’, was established. |
| 1964  | The Council of Education in Social Work (SEKE) is established. |
| 1965  | Social workers were included by the law 4464/1965 in the first category of public servants. |
| 1973-1974 | Social workers are recruited in various posts in the Ministries of Social Services and Justice (law decree 1375/73 and 272/74). |
| 1977  | Social Work Departments are constituted within the Ministry of Social Services. |
| 1978  | - The Law Decree 891/7.12.78 defined the object of work of social workers (social welfare, health, social insurance, education, community organisation and development, criminality, occupational guidance).  
- The second Pan-Hellenic Conference of social workers took place, organised by SKLE. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>The third Pan-Hellenic Conference of social workers took place, with the title ‘Social work and Social Change’, organised by SKLE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986 - today</td>
<td>The first issue of the Greek scientific journal ‘Social Work’ was published by SKLE. The journal stopped being published in 2013 due to financial reasons. However, its publication restarted in an online basis in the summer of 2015.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>The Law Decree 23/26.1.89 defined the professional rights of the social work graduates from the TEIs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992 - today</td>
<td>The Law Decree 23/30.1.92 reviewed and set the preconditions for social workers to obtaining a professional license. In addition, it addressed issues of ethics, sectors of social work practice, duties to users and employers-organizations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Pan-Hellenic Conference by SKLE with the title ‘Social services in local government’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Pan-Hellenic Conference by SKLE with the title ‘Social services and social work in health and welfare: A need not a luxury’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Pan-Hellenic Conference by SKLE with the title ‘Social state: Social work in peripheral and local network of social care services’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Report by SKLE revealing the impact of crisis in social work and social welfare: redundancies of social work practitioners, understaffed social services and violation of human rights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>The 1st Post Qualifying Symposium in Social Work took place, organized by the Department of Social Work (TEI) in Athens, SKLE and the European Association of Schools of Social Work. The name of this Symposium was ‘Welfare State in Crisis – Challenges and prospects for social work’.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Teloni (2011: 29, 30)
### Appendix 4: The historical evolution of social work education in Greece

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>School/event/action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1937-1939</td>
<td>The ‘Free School of Social Welfare’ was established by the Ministry of Health and Welfare.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>The American College Pierce was established, which functioned until 1975.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>The Christian Union established a one year course school, which became a two years course in 1950 and subsequently three years course in 1954.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>A group of graduates from US universities initiated a series of seminars in Panteio University, Athens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>The same group established the ‘School of Social Welfare of the National Institution’ under the umbrella of Royal National Foundation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>The School of Social Welfare of American College by Christian Union and the Royal National Foundation established the Permanent Committee of Education in Social Work later known as SEKE (Council of Education in Social Work). They translated basic textbooks of social work from UK and USA. Also, the Royal National Foundation operated the Postgraduate School of Social Welfare but only for a short time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Greek Church established the School of Social Welfare named as ‘School of Deaconesses’. It offered a one year course and was accessed to women only.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>The Department of Theology of the University of Thessalonica created the Department of Social Deaconesses in order to work in the welfare sector (operated until 1967).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962-1963</td>
<td>The Royal Decree 319/1962:2 stated that the training of social workers should be provided only by the state. It also set a number of ‘moral’ criteria for the board of schools that could be used for the interview of applicants. In 1963, the studies of social work required a 3 years attendance, after High School. The same year, the Juveniles Protection Association (supervised by the Ministry of Education) established the School for Social Work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970 – 1973</td>
<td>The social work training is for the first time under the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Welfare. Two Social Work Schools are established in Patras and Irakleio named as KATEE that had technological direction (polytechnics).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>- Compound course of study for KATEE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The Christian Union established the Foundation of Development of Social Work (IAKE) and their School changed its name to ‘School of Social Work of IAKE’..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983 until 2013</td>
<td>Social work was taught in Departments of Social Work in the public Technological Educational Institutes (TEIs) in Athens, Patras, and Crete. The courses required a three year attendance; since 1995 until today, social work education requires a 4-year attendance, which leads to a BA degree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>The first social work course at a University (AEI) level is established: the Department of Social Administration of Democritus University, in Thrace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate studies</td>
<td>Only since 1995, with the law of 2327/1995 the TEI graduates are allowed to apply for Master degrees in Greece. Up until recently (2009) there were no postgraduate studies in social work but only in similar areas such as social exclusion, counselling etc. However, in 2009 the Department of Social Administration of Democritus University announced a postgraduate course on social work and social policy. Moreover, the first PhD degrees on social work are provided by the same Department the recent years. In 2015, postgraduate studies were offered by the Department of Social Work in Athens too, being the first Master degree in social work by TEIs in Greece. This master offers two routes: a.) Clinical social work with children and families b.) Community social work.</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>In March 2013, the ‘Athena Plan’ by the Ministry of Education, introduced the abolition of one TEI Social Work Department; the downgrading of social work course by merging the Department of Social Administration with the Department of Political Studies at the University of Thrace; as well as announcements about the two other TEI Departments being in danger of similar reforms due to lack of staff.</td>
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Adapted from Teloni (2011:22, 23)
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<th>Department of Social Administration and Political Science (Social work route) Democritus University of Thrace</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction to social work (lecture 3 hrs)</td>
<td>Introduction to social work (lecture 2hrs and workshop 2hrs)</td>
<td>Introduction to social work (lecture 2hrs and workshop 2hrs)</td>
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<td>General sociology (lecture 2hrs weekly)</td>
<td>Introduction to psychology (lecture 3hrs weekly)</td>
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<td>Introduction to psychology (lecture 2hrs weekly)</td>
<td>Law (lecture 3hrs)</td>
<td>Introduction to psychology (lecture 3hrs)</td>
<td>Social problems and social policy (lecture 3hrs)</td>
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<td>Law (lecture 2hrs weekly)</td>
<td>Law (lecture 2hrs)</td>
<td>Social policy (lecture 3hrs)</td>
<td>Introduction to public law (lecture 3hrs)</td>
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<td>Writing a scientific essay and searching bibliography (lecture 2hrs weekly and workshop 2hrs weekly)</td>
<td>Computing in social work (lecture 2hrs and workshop 2hrs)</td>
<td>Social policy (lecture 3hrs)</td>
<td>Economic Analysis I (lecture 3hrs)</td>
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<td>The social worker's self awareness (lecture 2hrs and workshop 2hrs)</td>
<td>Social policy (lecture 2hrs)</td>
<td>Scientific writing – Informatics I (lecture 2hrs and workshop 2hrs)</td>
<td>Lecture courses:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Security and human rights (lecture 3hrs)</td>
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<td>Semester II</td>
<td>Contemporary social policy and the European Union (lecture 3hrs)</td>
<td>Political economy (lecture 2hrs)</td>
<td>Communication and interviewing in social work (lecture 4hrs)</td>
<td>- Introduction to political science (lecture 3hrs)</td>
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<td>Empowerment and communication techniques in group social work (workshop 3hrs)</td>
<td>Social work interview (lecture 2hrs and workshop 2 hrs)</td>
<td>Sociology of institutions (lecture 3hrs)</td>
<td>- Child protection and domestic violence (lecture 3hrs)</td>
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<td>Ethics, professional practice and business enterprises (lecture 3hrs)</td>
<td>Social welfare programs (lecture 4hrs and workshop 3hrs)</td>
<td>Clinical psychology (lecture 3hrs)</td>
<td>- Society and the environment (lecture 3hrs)</td>
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<td>Social welfare programs (lecture 3hrs and workshop 4hrs)</td>
<td>Sociology of family (lecture 3hrs)</td>
<td>Family policy (lecture 3hrs and workshop 2hrs)</td>
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<td>Health sociology (lecture 3hrs)</td>
<td>Developmental psychology (lecture 3hrs)</td>
<td>Health and social care policy (lecture 2hrs)</td>
<td>- Introduction to psychology (lecture 3hrs)</td>
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<td>Social psychology (lecture 3hrs)</td>
<td>Writing a scientific essay with computers (lecture 1hr and workshop 1hr)</td>
<td>Informatics II (workshop 3hrs)</td>
<td>- Introduction to international relations (lecture 3hrs)</td>
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<td>- History of social policy (lecture 3hrs)</td>
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<td>- Information society and the protection of the individual (lecture 3hrs)</td>
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<td>- Social work in education (lecture 3hrs)</td>
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<td>Semester III</td>
<td>- Groupwork methodology (lecture 3hrs) &lt;br&gt; - Community work methodology (lecture 3hrs and workshop 1 hr) &lt;br&gt; - Sociology of the family (lecture 3hrs and workshop 1 hr) &lt;br&gt; - Developmental psychology (lecture 3hrs and workshop 1 hr) &lt;br&gt; - Information, Technologies in social work (workshop 3 hrs) &lt;br&gt; - Psychiatry (lecture 4 hrs)</td>
<td>- General social work (lecture 3 hrs) &lt;br&gt; - Adult psychopathology (lecture 3 hrs) &lt;br&gt; - Introduction to field practice I (workshop 8 hrs) &lt;br&gt; - Social psychology (lecture 2 hrs) &lt;br&gt; - Sociology of education (lecture 3 hrs) &lt;br&gt; - Clinical psychology (lecture 2 hrs and workshop 2 hrs)</td>
<td>- Psychopathology of adults, adolescents and children (lecture 4 hrs) &lt;br&gt; - Social work with groups (lecture 2 hrs and workshop 3 hrs)</td>
<td>- Social statistics I (lecture 3 hrs) &lt;br&gt; - Social planning (lecture 2 hrs) &lt;br&gt; - Community work (lecture 3 hrs) &lt;br&gt; - The European Union’s institutions and core functions (lecture 3 hrs) &lt;br&gt; - Theories of social change (lecture 3 hrs) &lt;br&gt; - Social research methodology II (lecture 3 hrs) &lt;br&gt; - Constitutional law (lecture 3 hrs) &lt;br&gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Semester IV</td>
<td>- Groupwork methodology (lecture 3 hrs) &lt;br&gt; - Community work on a local level (lecture 3 hrs and workshop 1 hr) &lt;br&gt; - Sociology of the family (lecture 3 hrs and workshop 1 hr)</td>
<td>- Clinical social work I (lecture 3 hrs and workshop 2 hrs) &lt;br&gt; - Community work (lecture 3 hrs) &lt;br&gt; - Statistics (lecture 2 hrs) &lt;br&gt; - Social research I (lecture 4 hrs) &lt;br&gt; - Psychopathology of children and adolescents (lecture 3 hrs) &lt;br&gt; - Field practice II (12 hrs in various placements)</td>
<td>- Generalist social work practice theory (lecture 2 hrs and workshop 2 hrs) &lt;br&gt; - Community work (lecture 3 hrs) &lt;br&gt; - Statistics (lecture 2 hrs and workshop 2 hrs) &lt;br&gt; - Practice learning I (9 hrs in various placements) &lt;br&gt; - Cross-cultural social work (lecture 3 hrs) &lt;br&gt; - Family social work (lecture 2 hrs and workshop 1 hr)</td>
<td>- Public finance (lecture 3 hrs) &lt;br&gt; - Principles of administration and organization (lecture 3 hrs) &lt;br&gt; - Social psychology (lecture 3 hrs) &lt;br&gt; - Comparative social policy (lecture 3 hrs) &lt;br&gt; - Administrative law (lecture 3 hrs) &lt;br&gt;</td>
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<td>Year 3</td>
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<td>SW Department TEI of Patras</td>
<td>SW Department TEI of Crete</td>
<td>Department of Social Administration and Political Science (Social work route) Democritus University of Thrace</td>
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| Semester V | - Social planning and social services (lecture 3hrs)  
- Deviance sociology (lecture 3hrs and workshop 1 hr)  
- Social work with children and adolescents (lecture 3hrs)  
- Field practice education I (12 hrs in various placements)  
- Elective courses:  
- Social work with the disabled and the elderly (lecture 2hrs)  
- Social work in the labor sector (lecture 2hrs) | - Clinical social work II (lecture 4hrs and workshop 2hrs)  
- Community organization and development (lecture 2hrs)  
- Social work with families (lecture 2hrs and workshop 3hrs)  
- Field practice III (12 hrs in various placements)  
- Field practice IV (14 hrs in various placements)  
- Social research II (lecture 1hr and workshop 2hrs)  
- Deontology/ethics (lecture 1hr) | - Clinical social work lecture 2hrs and workshop 2hrs  
- Theoretical approaches in social work (lecture 2hrs)  
- Community work and intervention methods (lecture 3hrs)  
- Social services administration (lecture 3hrs)  
- Practice learning II (6 hrs in various placements)  
- Methodology of social research (lecture 4hrs) | - Developmental psychology (lecture 3hrs)  
- Practice I  
- Practice II (12 hrs in various placements)  
- Special issues of methods and techniques of intervention I (lecture 3hrs)  
- Special issues of methods and techniques of intervention II (lecture 3hrs)  
- Elective courses:  
- History of social theories (lecture 3hrs)  
- Social entrepreneurship, social and political marketing (lecture 3hrs)  
- Statistical data analysis (lecture 3hrs)  
- Counseling (lecture 3hrs)  
- Local government and social policy (lecture 3hrs)  
- International political economy (lecture 3hrs) |
| Semester VI | - Social research in social work (lecture 2hrs and workshop 3hrs)  
- Foreign language (lecture 2hrs)  
- Field practice education II (12 hrs in various placements)  
- Elective courses:  
- Social exclusion in Greek society (lecture 3hrs weekly)  
- Sociology of communication (lecture 3hrs weekly)  
- Social work with addictions (lecture 3hrs weekly)  
- Social work in health and mental health (lecture 3hrs weekly) | - Social work with population groups I (lecture 3hrs)  
- Interdisciplinary co-working (lecture 2hrs)  
- Sociology of deviation (lecture 2hrs)  
- Field practice V (14 hrs in various placements)  
- Needs assessment and social planning (lecture 3hrs)  
- Practice learning III (12 hrs in various placements)  
- Qualitative social research (lecture 1hr and workshop 2hrs)  
- Elective courses:  
- Local government and social policy (lecture 3hrs)  
- Family counseling/crisis intervention (lecture 3hrs)  
- European social policy - a comparative approach (lecture 3hrs)  
- Social work and health care (lecture 3hrs) | - Social work in health services (lecture 3hrs)  
- Social work with groups (lecture 3hrs)  
- Law and delinquency (lecture 3hrs)  
- Critical social work and minorities (lecture 3hrs)  
- Elective courses:  
- Act in social work (lecture 3hrs)  
- Theoretical and empirical analysis of economic inequality (lecture 3hrs)  
- Social demography (lecture 3hrs)  
- European union policies (from market to solidarity) (lecture 3hrs)  
- Financial (public) management (lecture 3hrs)  
- Social statistics II (lecture 3hrs)  
- European area of freedom and citizenship (lecture 3hrs) |

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The above curricula are in force since the academic year of 2007-2008, except from the Department of Social Administration and Political Science at the Democritus University of Thrace where the curriculum was reviewed in 2013, following the merging of two Departments (Department of Social Administration and Department of Political Science) through the ‘Athena Plan’.

Sources: Democritus University of Thrace (http://www.socadm.duth.gr/undergraduate/lessons/lessons.pdf, accessed on 10/12/2014); TEI of Athens (http://www.teiath.gr/userfiles/lamveny/documents/tmima_koinonikis_ergasias/Perigramma.pdf, accessed on 02/02/2015); TEI of Crete (http://www.teicrete.gr/koinerg/el/%CF%83%CE%B5%CE%BB%CE%AF%CE%B4%CE%B5%CF%82%CE%BC%CE%B5%CE%BD%CE%BF%CF%8D/%CE%BF%CE%B4%CE%B7%CE%B3%CF%82-%CF%83%CF%80%CE%BF%CF%85%CE%B4%CF%8E%CE%BD, accessed on 02/02/2015); TEI of Patras (http://www.teipat.gr/pages/koin_erg/Greek/Perigrama%20ma8imaton/Perigrama%20Ma8imaton.htm, accessed on 10/12/2014).
Appendix 6: Consent forms for participants in English

Social Work Education and Anti-Oppressive Practice in Greece

Consent Form for 1st Year Social Work Students

If you are happy to participate please complete and sign the consent form below

I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above project and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.

I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to myself or my status as a student at this University

I understand that the interviews will be audio-recorded.

I agree to the use of anonymous quotes

I agree that any data collected may be used by myself and my supervisors

I understand that there is no advantage to me in taking part nor disadvantage in not taking part

I agree to take part in the above project

________________________  ________________  ________________
Name of participant    Date    Signature

________________________  ________________  ________________
Name of person taking consent    Date    Signature
Social Work Education and Anti-Oppressive Practice in Greece

Consent Form for 4th Year Social Work Students

If you are happy to participate please complete and sign the consent form below

I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above project and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.

I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to myself or in relation to my status as a student here.

I understand that the interviews will be audio-recorded.

I agree to the use of anonymous quotes.

I agree that any data collected may be used by myself and my supervisors.

I understand that there is no advantage to me in taking part nor disadvantage in not taking part

I agree to take part in the above project

________________________  _______________  _______________
Name of participant      Date           Signature

________________________  _______________  _______________
Name of person taking consent      Date           Signature
Social Work Education and Anti-Oppressive Practice in Greece

Consent Form for Social Work Academic Staff

If you are happy to participate please complete and sign the consent form below

I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above project and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.

I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to myself personally or professionally.

I understand that the interviews will be audio-recorded.

I agree to the use of anonymous quotes

I agree that any data collected may be used by myself and her supervisors

I understand that there is no advantage to me in taking part nor disadvantage in not taking part

I agree to take part in the above project

__________________________  ______________________  ______________________
Name of participant            Date                  Signature

__________________________  ______________________  ______________________
Name of person taking consent  Date                  Signature
Η εκπαίδευση στην κοινωνική εργασία και η αντι-καταπιεστική προσέγγιση στην Ελλάδα

Έντυπο Συγκατάθεσης για τους Πρωτοετείς Φοιτητές Κοινωνικής Έργας

Εάν επιθυμείτε να συμμετέχετε στην έρευνα, παρακαλώ συμπληρώστε και υπογράψτε τα παρακάτω:

Επιβεβαιώνω ότι έχω διαβάσει το ενημερωτικό έντυπο για την συγκεκριμένη έρευνα, είχα τον χρόνο και την ευκαιρία να επεξεργαστώ τις πληροφορίες και να ζητήσω διευκρινήσεις και έλαβα ικανοποιητικές απαντήσεις.

Κατανοώ ότι η συμμετοχή μου στην έρευνα είναι εθελοντική και μπορώ να αποσυρθώ οποιαδήποτε στιγμή χωρίς να δώσω κάποιο λόγο και χωρίς καμία συνέπεια προσωπική ή επαγγελματική.

Κατανοώ ότι η συνέντευξη θα μαγνητοφωνηθεί.

Συμφωνώ στο να χρησιμοποιηθούν ανώνυμα αποσπάσματα της συνέντευξης.

Συμφωνώ στην χρήση των δεδομένων που θα συλλέχθουν, από την ερευνήτρια και τους επόπτες.

Κατανοώ ότι δεν θα έχω κανένα προσωπικό θετικό ή αρνητικό αποτέλεσμα με την άρνηση της συμμετοχής μου.

Συμφωνώ να πάρω μέρος στην έρευνα

_________________________  ___________________________  ___________________________
Όνομα συμμετέχοντος       Ημερομηνία                    Υπογραφή

_________________________  ___________________________  ___________________________
Όνομα ερευνητή              Ημερομηνία                    Υπογραφή

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Η εκπαίδευση στην κοινωνική εργασία και η αντι-καταπιεστική προσέγγιση στην Ελλάδα

Έντυπο Συγκατάθεσης για τους Τελειόφοιτους Φοιτητές Κοινωνικής Εργασίας

Εάν επιθυμείτε να συμμετέχετε στην έρευνα, παρακαλώ συμπληρώστε και υπογράψτε τα παρακάτω:

Επιβεβαιώνω ότι έχω διαβάσει το ενημερωτικό έντυπο για την συγκεκριμένη έρευνα, είχα τον χρόνο και την ευκαιρία να επεξεργαστώ τις πληροφορίες και να ζητήσω διευκρινήσεις και έλαβα ικανοποιητικές απαντήσεις.

Κατανοώ ότι η συμμετοχή μου στην έρευνα είναι εθελοντική και μπορώ να αποσύρω αποδήμου στιγμή χωρίς να δώσω κάποιο λόγο και χωρίς καμία συνέπεια προσωπική ή επαγγελματική.

Κατανοώ ότι η συνέντευξη θα μαγνητοφωνηθεί.

Συμφωνώ στο να χρησιμοποιηθούν ανώνυμα αποσπάσματα της συνέντευξης.

Συμφωνώ στην χρήση των δεδομένων που θα συλλέγονται, από την ερευνήτρια και τους επόπτες.

Κατανοώ ότι δεν θα έχω κανένα προσωπικό θετικό ή αρνητικό αποτέλεσμα με την άρνηση της συμμετοχής μου.

Συμφωνώ να πάρω μέρος στην έρευνα

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Η εκπαίδευση στην κοινωνική εργασία και η αντι-καταπιεστική προσέγγιση στην Ελλάδα

Έντυπο Συγκατάθεσης για το Ακαδημαϊκό Προσωπικό Κοινωνικής Εργασίας

Εάν επιθυμείτε να συμμετέχετε στην έρευνα, παρακαλώ συμπληρώστε και υπογράψτε τα παρακάτω:

Επιβεβαιώνω ότι έχω διαβάσει το ενημερωτικό έντυπο για την συγκεκριμένη έρευνα, είχα τον χρόνο και την ευκαιρία να επεξεργάσω τις πληροφορίες και να ζητήσω διευκρινίσεις και έλαβα ικανοποιητικές απαντήσεις.

Κατανοώ ότι η συμμετοχή μου στην έρευνα είναι εθελοντική και μπορώ να αποσυρθώ χωρίς να δώσω κάποιο λόγο και χωρίς καμία συνέπεια προσωπική ή επαγγελματική.

Εάν συμμετέχω στην έρευνα, θα μαγνητοφωνηθεί.

Συμφωνώ στο να χρησιμοποιηθούν ανώνυμα αποσπάσματα της συνέντευξης.

Συμφωνώ στην χρήση των δεδομένων που θα συλλέξω, από την ερευνήτρια και τους επόπτες.

Συμφωνώ να πάρω μέρος στην έρευνα

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Appendix 8: Information sheets for participants in English

Research project: Social Work Education and Anti-Oppressive Practice in Greece

Participant Information Sheet for 1st Year Social Work Students

You are being invited to take part in a research study [as part of a student project which will be submitted in order to obtain a PhD in social work]. Before you decide whether you would like to participate it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

Who will conduct the research?

Researcher: Miss Sofia Dedotsi

School Address: School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work
Jean McFarlane Building
Oxford Road
Manchester. M13 9PL

Title of the Research

Social Work Education and Anti-Oppressive Practice in Greece

What is the aim of the research?

This research explores social work education’s content in relation to diversity, value tensions and social work students’ ability to manage and resolve such. The aim of this dissertation is to identify if/how/why social work education makes an impact on students’ experiences of ethical dilemmas and resolution strategies.

Why have I been chosen?

I am approaching 1st semester social work students who are at the beginning of their education and training. The Undergraduates’ Office
records section estimate that xxx no of students are registered for a social work degree in your cohort - and of those (n= 123) I am hoping to involve at least (25) of you in this research. Your participation in this project is very important because you will contribute to the evidence base informing social work education in future. Your participation is completely voluntary and the interview will be conducted at your convenience in relation to dates/times. If you are interested, please contact me on the details as shown at the end of this information sheet.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?

Taking part will involve participating in a semi-structured face-to-face individual interview which will last approximately 50 minutes. The interview will take place at your earliest convenience, in a private and quiet office within the Department. The interview will be conducted by myself and will be audio-recorded. All names will be kept anonymous whilst access to data will be limited only to supervisors and myself. Participants may withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

What happens to the data collected?

The interview will be audio-recorded and then transcribed. Real names and any other identifying features will be anonymised immediately after the interviews and pseudonyms/code names or numbers will be used. Your interview and later the cumulative findings that come out of the interviews will then be analysed and your information will not be used by any other parties other than my supervisors and myself. I will be happy to send you a brief summary of final results of this research when completed.

How is confidentiality maintained?

Anonymity is to be protected first and foremost. Data will be anonymised immediately after the interviews prior to being put in an electronic format. In addition, the records and transcriptions of the interviews will be stored in my personal computer and will be encrypted with a password being required for access.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?

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

Will I be paid for participating in the research?

No, there are not any payment arrangements in place.
What is the duration of the research?

One interview of 50’ minutes.

Where will the research be conducted?

The interview will be conducted at your earliest convenience in a private and quiet office within the Department.

Will the outcomes of the research be published?

The research will be written up in a form of a thesis and submitted as part of the requirements for the academic qualification. The results will also published in journals and presented in conferences in and out of Greece. Any quotations either in Greek or English translation will be fully anonymised. It is hoped that the findings of the study will contribute to the evidence base informing social work education.

Contact for further information

sofia.dedotsi@gmail.com

tel: 00306973529948

What if something goes wrong?

For any assistance, help or advice please contact me on the above details. Therefore, if you have any worries or reservations please initially discuss them with me. If however, after talking to me, you still want to discuss the research in more detail with a 3rd party or have concerns, you could contact my research supervisors, Dr Lorraine Green and Professor Alys Young - details below.

Professor Alys Young

Email: alys.young@manchester.ac.uk

Tel: +44 (0)161 306 7747

Address: The School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work
The University of Manchester
Room 4.327b, Jean McFarlane Building
University Place
Oxford Road
Manchester
M13 9PL

Dr Lorraine Green
Email: lorraine.green@manchester.ac.uk
Tel: +44 (0)161 306 7743
Address: The School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work
The University of Manchester
Room 4.322b, Jean McFarlane Building
University Place
Oxford Road
Manchester
M13 9PL

You could also contact:
Head of the Research Office, Christie Building, University of Manchester,
Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL

Research project: Social Work Education and Anti-Oppressive Practice in Greece

Participant Information Sheet for 4th Year Social Work Students

You are being invited to take part in a research study [as part of a student project which will be submitted in order to obtain a PhD in social work]. Before you decide whether you would like to participate it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

Who will conduct the research?

Researcher: Miss Sofia Dedotsi
School Address: School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work
Jean McFarlane Building
Oxford Road
Title of the Research

Social Work Education and Anti-Oppressive Practice in Greece

What is the aim of the research?

This research explores social work education’s content in relation to diversity, value tensions and social work students’ ability to manage and resolve such. The aim of this dissertation is to identify if/how/why social work education makes an impact on students’ experiences of ethical dilemmas and resolution strategies.

Why have I been chosen?

I am approaching 8th semester students who are at the end of their training. The sample of students has been identified by the records of Undergraduates’ Office. In total, a number of 25, 8th semester students, are estimated to participate in this research. Your participation in this project is very important because you will contribute to the evidence base informing social work education in future. Your participation is completely voluntary and the interview will be conducted on your convenient dates/times. If you are interested, please contact me on the details as shown at the end of this information sheet.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?

Taking part will involve participating in a semi-structured interview which will last approximately 50 minutes. The interview will take place at your early convenience, in a private and quiet office within the Department. The interview will be completed by myself and will be audio-recorded. All names will be kept anonymous whilst access to data will be limited only to supervisors and myself. Participants may withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

What happens to the data collected?

The interview will be audio-recorded and then transcribed. Real names and any other identifying features will be anonymised immediately after the interviews and pseudonyms/code names or numbers will be used. Your interview and later the cumulative findings that come out of the interviews will then be analysed and your information will not be used by any other parties other than my supervisors and myself. I will be happy to send you a brief summary of final results of this research when completed.

How is confidentiality maintained?
Anonymity is to be protected first and foremost. Data will be anonymised immediately after the interviews prior to being put in an electronic format. In addition, the records and transcriptions of the interviews will be stored in my personal computer and will be encrypted with a password being required for access.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?

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

Will I be paid for participating in the research?

No, there are not any payment arrangements in place.

What is the duration of the research?

One interview of 50’ minutes.

Where will the research be conducted?

The interview will be conducted at your early convenience in a private and quiet office within the Department.

Will the outcomes of the research be published?

The research will be written up in a form of a thesis and submitted as part of the requirements for the academic qualification. The results will also published in journals and presented in conferences in and out of Greece. Any quotations either in Greek or English translation will be fully anonymised. It is hoped that the findings of the study will contribute to the evidence base informing social work education.

Contact for further information

sofia.dedotsi@gmail.com

tel: 00306973529948

What if something goes wrong?

For any assistance, help or advice please contact me on the above details. Therefore, if you have any worries or reservations please initially discuss them with me. If however, after talking to me, you still want to discuss the research in more detail with a 3rd party or have concerns, you could contact my research supervisors, Dr Lorraine Green and Professor Alys Young - details below.
Professor Alys Young

**Email:** alys.young@manchester.ac.uk

**Tel:** +44 (0)161 306 7747

**Address:** The School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work
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M13 9PL

Dr Lorraine Green

**Email:** lorraine.green@manchester.ac.uk

**Tel:** +44 (0)161 306 7743

**Address:** The School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work
The University of Manchester
Room 4.322b, Jean McFarlane Building
University Place
Oxford Road
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M13 9PL

You could also contact:

Head of the Research Office, Christie Building, University of Manchester,
Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL
Research project: **Social Work Education and Anti-Oppressive Practice in Greece**

**Participant Information Sheet for Academic Social Work Staff**

You are being invited to take part in a research study [as part of a student project which will be submitted in order to obtain a PhD in social work]. Before you decide whether you would like to participate it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

**Who will conduct the research?**

Researcher: Miss Sofia Dedotsi

School Address: School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work
Jean McFarlane Building
Oxford Road
Manchester. M13 9PL

**Title of the Research**

Social Work Education and Anti-Oppressive Practice in Greece

**What is the aim of the research?**

This research explores social work education’s content in relation to diversity, value tensions and social work students’ ability to manage and resolve such. The aim of this dissertation is to identify if/how/why social work education makes an impact on students’ experiences of ethical dilemmas and resolution strategies.

**Why have I been chosen?**

I am approaching all academic staff and supervisors of the Department. Your details have been obtained by the records of Undergraduates’ Office. In total, it is hoped at least 15 social work academic staff members will participate in this research. Your involvement
in this project is very important because you will contribute to the evidence base informing social work education in future. Your participation is completely voluntary and the interview will be conducted at your convenience in relation to dates/times. If you are interested or require further information, please contact me on the details as shown at the end of this information sheet.

**What would I be asked to do if I took part?**

Taking part will involve participating in a one to one semi-structured interview which will last approximately 50 minutes. The interview will take place at your earliest convenience, in a private and quiet office within the Department. The interview will be conducted by myself and will be audio-recorded. All names, settings and places you mention will be kept anonymous whilst access to data will be limited only to supervisors and myself. You may withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

**What happens to the data collected?**

The interview will be audio-recorded then transcribed. Real names and other identifying feature such as the names of any settings discussed will be anonymised immediately after the interviews and pseudonyms/code names will be used. Data will be analysed by myself -the researcher and will not be used by any other parties other than my supervisors and myself. I will be happy to send you a brief summary of final results of this research when completed.

**How is confidentiality maintained?**

Anonymity is to be protected first and foremost. Data will be anonymised immediately after the interviews prior to being put in an electronic format. In addition, the records and transcriptions of the interviews will be stored in my personal computer and will be encrypted with a password being required for access.

**What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?**

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

**Will I be paid for participating in the research?**

No, there are not any payment arrangements in place.

**What is the duration of the research?**

346
One interview of 50’ minutes.

**Where will the research be conducted?**

The interview will be conducted at your earliest convenience in a private and quiet office within the Department.

**Will the outcomes of the research be published?**

The research will be written up in a form of a thesis and submitted as part of the requirements for the academic qualification. The findings will also be published in journals and presented in conferences in and outside of Greece. Any quotations either in Greek or the equivalent English translation will be fully anonymised. It is hoped that the findings of the study will contribute to the evidence base informing social work education.

**Contact for further information**

sofia.dedotsi@gmail.com

tel: 00306973529948

**What if something goes wrong?**

For any assistance, help or advice please contact me on the above details. Therefore, if you have any worries or reservations please initially discuss them with me. If however, after talking to me, you still want to discuss the research in more detail with a 3rd party please contact my research supervisors, Dr Lorraine Green and Professor Alys Young.

Professor Alys Young

**Email:** alys.young@manchester.ac.uk

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Dr Lorraine Green

Email: lorraine.green@manchester.ac.uk
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You could also contact: Head of the Research Office, Christie Building,
University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL
Έρευνα: Η εκπαίδευση στην κοινωνική εργασία και η αντι-καταπιεστική προσέγγιση στην Ελλάδα

Ενημερωτικό Έντυπο Συμμετέχόντων για τους Πρωτοετείς Φοιτητές Κοινωνικής Εργασίας

Η παρούσα έρευνα γίνεται στα πλαίσια απόκτησης διδακτορικού στην κοινωνική εργασία. Πριν αποφασίσετε να συμμετέχετε, είναι σημαντικό να καταλάβετε για ποιο λόγο γίνεται η έρευνα και τι περιλαμβάνει. Παρακαλώ, διαβάστε προσεχτικά τις ακόλουθες πληροφορίες και ρωτήστε με εάν θέλετε διευκρινίσεις ή περισσότερες πληροφορίες. Σκεφτείτε αν θέλετε να συμμετέχετε ή όχι. Σας ευχαριστώ.

Ποιος διεξάγει την έρευνα;

Ερευνητής: Σοφία Δεδότση

Διεύθυνση Πανεπιστημίου:
University of Manchester,
School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work
Jean McFarlane Building
Oxford Road
Manchester. M13 9PL
United Kingdom

Τίτλος της έρευνας
«Η εκπαίδευση στην κοινωνική εργασία και η αντι-καταπιεστική προσέγγιση στην Ελλάδα»

Ποιος είναι ο στόχος της έρευνας;

Διερευνάται το περιεχόμενο της εκπαίδευσης στην κοινωνική εργασία σε σχέση με την διαφορετικότητα, τα δεοντολογικά διλήμματα και την ικανότητα των σπουδαστών να τα διαχειριστούν και να τα
επιλύσουν. Ο στόχος της έρευνας είναι να προσδιοριστεί εάν/πώς/γιατί η εκπαίδευση στην κοινωνική εργασία επηρεάζει τις εμπειρίες των σπουδαστών ως προς τα δεοντολογικά διλήμματα και την ικανότητά τους να τα διαχειριστούν.

Γιατί με έχουν επιλέξει να συμμετέχω;

Προσκαλούνται οι πρωτοετείς φοιτητές Κοινωνικής Εργασίας που βρίσκονται στην αρχή της εκπαίδευσής τους. Σύμφωνα με την Γραμματεία περίπου 123 αριθμός σπουδαστών έχουν εγγραφεί στο εξάμηνο αυτό – από τους οποίους εκτιμάται ότι θα συμμετέχουν στην έρευνα τουλάχιστον 25 από εσάς. Η συμμετοχή σας είναι πολύ σημαντική και η συνέντευξη θα πραγματοποιηθεί στην ημερομηνία και ώρα που εξυπηρετεί εσάς. Εάν ενδιαφέρεστε ή εάν επιθυμείτε περαιτέρω πληροφορίες, παρακαλώ επικοινωνήστε μαζί μου στο τηλέφωνο ή mail όπως αναφέρεται στο τέλος αυτού του εντύπου.

Τι θα μου ζητηθεί να κάνω εάν αποφασίσω να συμμετέχω;

Η συμμετοχή σας θα συμπεριλαμβάνει ημι-δομημένη συνέντευξη η οποία θα διαρκέσει 50 λεπτά περίπου. Η συνέντευξη θα πραγματοποιηθεί στον Τμήματος Κοινωνικής Εργασίας. Η συνέντευξη θα διεξαχθεί από εμένα, και θα μαγνητοφωνηθεί. Όλα τα ονόματα, μέρη/υπηρεσίες και άλλα προσωπικά σας στοιχεία θα διατηρηθούν ανώνυμα ενώ δεν θα έχει πρόσβαση στα δεδομένα κανείς άλλος εκτός από εμένα και τους επόπτες μου. Επίσης, μπορείτε να αποσυρθείτε από τη διαδικασία οποιαδήποτε στιγμή εάν το επιθυμείτε, χωρίς να δώσετε κάποιο λόγο.

Τι θα συμβεί με τα δεδομένα που θα συλλεχθούν;

Η συνέντευξη θα απομαγνητοφωνηθεί ενώ τα προσωπικά στοιχεία των συμμετεχόντων θα γίνουν ανώνυμα αμέσως μετά τις συνεντεύξεις και στη θέση τους θα χρησιμοποιηθούν ψευδόνυμα. Τα δεδομένα θα αναλυθούν και δεν θα χρησιμοποιηθούν από τρίτα πρόσωπα πέρα από εμένα και τους επόπτες μου. Θα ήταν ευχαρίστησή μου να σας στείλω μια περίληψη των τελικών αποτελεσμάτων από αυτή την έρευνα μόλις ολοκληρωθεί.

Πώς θα διατηρηθούν απόρρητα τα δεδομένα;

Η προστασία της ανωνυμίας αποτελεί τον πρωταρχικό στόχο αυτής της έρευνας. Τα προσωπικά στοιχεία των συμμετεχόντων θα γίνουν ανώνυμα αμέσως μετά τις συνεντεύξεις πριν εισαχθούν σε ηλεκτρονικό πρόγραμμα. Επιπλέον, τα αρχεία και οι απομαγνητοφωνήσεις των συνεντεύξεων θα αποθηκευτούν στον
προσωπικό μου υπολογιστή τα οποία θα είναι σε κρυπτογραφημένους ηλεκτρονικούς φακέλους με κωδικό ο οποίος θα είναι απαραίτητος για την πρόσβαση σε αυτούς.

Τι θα συμβεί εάν δεν επιθυμώ να συμμετέχω ή αν αλλάξω γνώμη;

Εναπόκειται σε εσάς να αποφασίσετε εάν θα πάρετε μέρος ή όχι. Εάν αποφασίσετε να συμμετέχετε θα σας ζητηθεί να υπογράψετε ένα έντυπο συγκατάθεση. Σε αυτή τη περίπτωση διατηρείτε το δικαίωμα να αποχωρίσετε οποιαδήποτε στιγμή χωρίς να δώσετε κάποιο λόγο και χωρίς καμία συνέπεια για εσάς.

Θα πληρωθώ εάν συμμετέχω;

Όχι, η συμμετοχή δεν περιλαμβάνει οποιαδήποτε πληρωμή.

Πόσο θα διαρκέσει η συμμετοχή μου στην έρευνα;

Η συνέντευξη εκτιμάται ότι θα διαρκέσει περίπου 50’.

Ποια πηγή πραγματοποιηθεί η συνέντευξη;

Η συνέντευξη θα πραγματοποιηθεί σε ένα ιδιωτικό, ήσυχο γραφείο στο Τμήμα Κοινωνικής Εργασίας την ημερομηνία και ώρα που σας εξυπηρετεί.

Τα αποτελέσματα αυτής της έρευνας θα δημοσιευθούν;

Η έρευνα θα γραφεί σε μορφή διατριβής και θα υποβληθεί για την απόκτηση ακαδημαϊκού τίτλου. Τα αποτελέσματα θα δημοσιευθούν επίσης σε περιοδικά και συνέδρια εντός και εκτός Ελλάδας. Οποιαδήποτε αποσπάσματα της συνέντευξης χρησιμοποιούνται στα Ελληνικά ή σε ακριβής μετάφραση στα Αγγλικά θα παραμείνουν ανώνυμα. Εκφράζεται η ελπίδα ότι τα αποτελέσματα αυτής της έρευνας θα συμβάλλουν στη προαγωγή και βελτίωση της εκπαίδευσης στην κοινωνική εργασία.

Στοιχεία επικοινωνίας

sofiadot@gmail.com

τηλ.: 6973529948

Τι μπορώ να κάνω εάν κάτι πάει στραβά;

Για οποιαδήποτε βοήθεια ή συμβουλή, είμαι στη διάθεσή σας στα παραπάνω στοιχεία επικοινωνίας. Έτσι, εάν έχετε οποιαδήποτε ανησυχία ή αμφιβολία παρακαλώ συζητήστε μαζί μου. Εάν σε συνέχεια της συζήτησης μας, θέλετε να συζητήσετε περισσότερες λεπτομέρειες για την έρευνα αυτή με
ένα τρίτο πρόσωπο, παρακαλώ επικοινωνήστε με τους ερευνητικούς επόπτες μου, Dr Lorraine Green και Professor Alys Young.

Professor Alys Young

Email: alys.young@manchester.ac.uk

Τηλ.: +44 (0)161 306 7747

Διεύθυνση: The School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work
The University of Manchester
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M13 9PL

Dr Lorraine Green

Email: lorraine.green@manchester.ac.uk

Τηλ.: +44 (0)161 306 7743

Διεύθυνση: The School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work
The University of Manchester
Room 4.322b, Jean McFarlane Building
University Place
Oxford Road
Manchester
M13 9PL

Μπορείτε ακόμα να επικοινωνήσετε με: Head of the Research Office,
Christie Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester,
M13 9PL
Έρευνα: Η εκπαίδευση στην κοινωνική εργασία και η αντιμετώπιση των διακρίσεων στην Ελλάδα

Ενημερωτικό Έντυπο Συμμετεχόντων για τους Τελείωφοιτούς Φοιτητές Κοινωνικής Εργασίας

Η παρούσα έρευνα γίνεται στα πλαίσια απόκτησης διδακτορικού στην κοινωνική εργασία. Πριν αποφασίσετε να συμμετέχετε, είναι σημαντικό να καταλάβετε για ποιο λόγο γίνεται η έρευνα και τι περιλαμβάνει. Παρακαλώ, διαβάστε προσεκτικά τις ακόλουθες πληροφορίες και ρωτήστε με εάν θέλετε διευκρινήσεις ή περισσότερες πληροφορίες. Σκεφτείτε αν θέλετε να συμμετέχετε ή όχι. Σας ευχαριστώ.

Ποιος διεξάγει την έρευνα;
Ερευνητής: Σοφία Δεδότση

Διεύθυνση Πανεπιστημίου:
University of Manchester,
School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work
Jean McFarlane Building
Oxford Road
Manchester. M13 9PL
United Kingdom

Τίτλος της έρευνας:
«Η εκπαίδευση στην κοινωνική εργασία και η αντι-καταπιεστική προσέγγιση στην Ελλάδα»

Ποιος είναι ο στόχος της έρευνας;

Διερευνάται το περιεχόμενο της εκπαίδευσης στην κοινωνική εργασία σε σχέση με την διαφορετικότητα, τα δεοντολογικά διλήμματα και την ικανότητα των σπουδαστών να τα διαχειριστούν και να τα επιλύσουν. Ο στόχος της έρευνας είναι να προσδιοριστεί εάν/ποις/γιατί η εκπαίδευση στην κοινωνική εργασία επηρεάζει τις εμπειρίες των σπουδαστών ως προς τα δεοντολογικά διλήμματα και την ικανότητά τους να τα διαχειριστούν.
Γιατί με έχουν επιλέξει να συμμετέχω;

Προσκαλούνται οι τελειόφοιτοι φοιτητές Κοινωνικής Εργασίας που βρίσκονται στο τέλος της εκπαίδευσής τους. Τα στοιχεία όσον αφορά τον άριθμο του πληθυσμού σας δόθηκαν από την Γραμματεία. Συνολικά 25 άτομα τουλάχιστον από εσάς εκτιμάται ότι θα συμμετέχουν στην έρευνα. Η συμμετοχή σας είναι πολύ σημαντική επειδή θα συμβάλετε στην βελτίωση της εκπαίδευσης στην κοινωνική εργασία στο μέλλον. Η συμμετοχή σας είναι εθελοντική και η συνέντευξη θα πραγματοποιηθεί στην ημερομηνία και ώρα που εξυπηρετείτε εσάς. Εάν ενδιαφέρεστε ή εάν επιθυμείτε περαιτέρω πληροφορίες, παρακαλώ επικοινωνήστε μαζί μου στο τηλέφωνο ή mail όπως αναφέρεται στο τέλος αυτού του εντύπου.

Τι θα μου ζητηθεί να κάνω εάν αποφασίσω να συμμετέχω;

Η συμμετοχή σας θα συμπεριλαμβάνει μια ημι-δομημένη συνέντευξη η οποία θα διαρκέσει 50 λεπτά περίπου. Η συνέντευξη θα πραγματοποιηθεί την ημερομηνία και ώρα που σας εξυπηρετεί, σε ένα ιδιωτικό, ήσυχο γραφείο του Τμήματος Κοινωνικής Εργασίας. Η συνέντευξη θα διεξάχθει από εμένα, και θα μαγνητοφωνηθεί. Όλα τα ονόματα, μέρη/υπηρεσίες και άλλα προσωπικά σας στοιχεία θα διατηρηθούν ανώνυμα ενώ δεν θα έχει πρόσβαση οποιοδήποτε άλλος εκτός από εμένα και τους επόπτες μου. Επίσης, μπορείτε να αποσυρθείτε από τη διαδικασία από οποιοδήποτε στιγμή εάν το επιθυμείτε, χωρίς να δώσετε κάποιο λόγο.

Τι θα συμβεί με τα δεδομένα που θα συλληφθούν;

Η συνέντευξη θα απομαγνητοφωνηθεί ενώ τα προσωπικά στοιχεία των συμμετεχόντων θα γίνουν ανώνυμα αμέσως μετά τις συνεντεύξεις και στη θέση τους θα χρησιμοποιηθούν ψευδώνυμα. Τα δεδομένα θα αναλυθούν και δεν θα χρησιμοποιηθούν από τρίτα πρόσωπα πέρα από εμένα και τους επόπτες μου. Θα ήταν ευχαρίστηση μου να σας στέλνω μια περίληψη των τελικών αποτελεσμάτων από αυτή την έρευνα μόλις ολοκληρωθεί.

Πώς θα διατηρηθούν απόρρητα τα δεδομένα;

Η προστασία της ανωνυμίας αποτελεί τον πρωταρχικό στόχο αυτής της έρευνας. Τα προσωπικά στοιχεία των συμμετεχόντων θα γίνουν ανώνυμα αμέσως μετά τις συνεντεύξεις πριν εισαχθούν σε ηλεκτρονικό πρόγραμμα. Επιπλέον, τα αρχεία και οι απομαγνητοφωνήσεις των συνεντεύξεων θα αποθηκευτούν στον προσωπικό μου υπολογιστή τα οποία θα είναι σε κρυπτογραφημένους ηλεκτρονικούς φακέλους με κωδικό ο οποίος θα είναι απαραίτητος για την πρόσβαση σε αυτούς.

Τι θα συμβεί εάν δεν επιθυμώ να συμμετέχω ή αν αλλάξω γνώμη;
Εναπόκειται σε εσάς να αποφασίσετε εάν θα πάρετε μέρος ή όχι. Εάν αποφασίσετε να συμμετέχετε θα σας ζητηθεί να υπογράψετε ένα έντυπο συγκατάθεσης. Σε αυτή τη περίπτωση διατυπώστε το δικαίωμα να αποχωρίσετε οποιαδήποτε στιγμή χωρίς να δώσετε κάποιο λόγο και χωρίς καμία συνέπεια για εσάς.

Τα πληροθό εάν συμμετέχω;

Όχι, η συμμετοχή δεν περιλαμβάνει οποιαδήποτε πληρωμή.

Πόσο θα διαρκέσει η συμμετοχή μου στην έρευνα;

Η συνέντευξη εκτιμάται ότι θα διαρκέσει περίπου 50’.

Ποια πραγματοποιηθεί η συνέντευξη;

Η συνέντευξη θα πραγματοποιηθεί σε ένα ιδιωτικό, ήσυχο γραφείο στο Τμήμα Κοινωνικής Εργασίας την ημερομηνία και ώρα που σας εξυπηρετεί.

Τα αποτελέσματα αυτής της έρευνας θα δημοσιοποιηθούν;

Η έρευνα θα γραφεί σε μορφή διατριβής και θα υποβληθεί για την απόκτηση ακαδημαϊκού τίτλου. Τα αποτελέσματα θα δημοσιευθούν επίσης σε περιοδικά και συνέδρια εντός και εκτός Ελλάδας. Οποιαδήποτε αποσπάσματα της συνέντευξης χρησιμοποιηθούν στα Ελληνικά ή σε ακριβή μετάφραση στα Αγγλικά θα παραμείνουν ανώνυμα. Εκφράζεται η ελπίδα ότι τα αποτελέσματα αυτής της έρευνας θα συμβάλουν στην πρόοδο και βελτίωση της εκπαίδευσης στην κοινωνική εργασία.

Στοιχεία επικοινωνίας

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tηλ.: 6973529948

Τι μπορώ να κάνω εάν κάτι πάει στραβά;

Για οποιαδήποτε βοήθεια ή συμβουλή, είμαι στη διάθεσή σας στα παραπάνω στοιχεία επικοινωνίας. Έτσι, εάν έχετε οποιαδήποτε ανησυχία ή αμφιβολία παρακαλώ επικοινωνήστε με μας επίσης. Εάν σε συνέχεια της συζήτησης μας, θέλετε να συζητήσετε περισσότερες λεπτομέρειες για την έρευνα αυτή με ένα τρίτο πρόσωπο, παρακαλώ επικοινωνήστε με τους ερευνητικούς επόπτες μου, Dr Lorraine Green και Professor Alys Young.

Professor Alys Young

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Christie Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester,
M13 9PL
Έρευνα: Η εκπαίδευση στην κοινωνική εργασία και η αντιμετώπιση των διακρίσεων στην Ελλάδα

Ενημερωτικό έντυπο συμμετεχόντων για το Ακαδημαϊκό Προσωπικό Κοινωνικής Εργασίας

Η παρούσα έρευνα γίνεται στα πλαίσια απόκτησης διδακτορικού στην κοινωνική εργασία. Πριν αποφασίσετε να συμμετέχετε, είναι σημαντικό να καταλάβετε για ποιο λόγο γίνεται η έρευνα και τι περιλαμβάνει. Παρακαλώ, διαβάστε προσεχτικά τις ακόλουθες πληροφορίες και ρωτήστε με εάν θέλετε διευκρίνισης ή περισσότερες πληροφορίες. Σκεφτείτε αν θέλετε να συμμετέχετε ή όχι. Σας ευχαριστώ.

Ποιος διεξάγει την έρευνα;

Ερευνητής: Σοφία Δεδότση

Διεύθυνση Πανεπιστημίου:

University of Manchester,
School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work
Jean McFarlane Building
Oxford Road
Manchester. M13 9PL
United Kingdom

Τίτλος της έρευνας

«Η εκπαίδευση στην κοινωνική εργασία και η αντι-καταπιεστική προεσέγγιση στην Ελλάδα»

Ποιος είναι ο στόχος της έρευνας;

Διερευνάται το περιεχόμενο της εκπαίδευσης στην κοινωνική εργασία σε σχέση με την διαφορετικότητα, τα δεοντολογικά διλήμματα και την ικανότητα των σπουδαστών να τα διαχειριστούν και να τα επιλύσουν. Ο στόχος της έρευνας είναι να προσδιοριστεί εάν/πώς/γιατί η εκπαίδευση στην κοινωνική εργασία επηρεάζει τις εμπειρίες των σπουδαστών ως προς τα δεοντολογικά διλήμματα και την ικανότητά τους να τα διαχειριστούν.

Γιατί με έχουν επιλέξει να συμμετέχουν;
Προσκαλούνται οι εκπαιδευτικοί του Τμήματος Κοινωνικής Εργασίας (μόνιμοι και ωρομίσθιοι). Τα στοιχεία επικοινωνίας σας δόθηκαν από την Γραμματεία του Τμήματος. Συνολικά, εκτιμάται ότι τουλάχιστον 15 μέλη εκπαιδευτικού προσωπικού θα συμμετέχουν σε αυτή την έρευνα. Η συμμετοχή σας είναι πολύ σημαντική επειδή θα συμβάλει στη βελτίωση της εκπαίδευσης στην κοινωνική εργασία στο μέλλον. Η συμμετοχή σας είναι εθελοντική και η συνέντευξη θα πραγματοποιηθεί στην ημερομηνία και ώρα που εξυπηρετείτε σας. Εάν ενδιαφέρεστε ή εάν επιθυμείτε περαιτέρω πληροφορίες, παρακαλώ επικοινωνήστε μαζί μου στο τηλέφωνο ή mail όπως αναφέρεται στο τέλος αυτού του εντύπου.

Τι θα μου ζητηθεί να κάνω εάν αποφασίσω να συμμετέχω;

Η συμμετοχή σας θα συμπεριλαμβάνει μια ημι-δομημένη συνέντευξη η οποία θα διαρκέσει 50 λεπτά περίπου. Η συνέντευξη θα πραγματοποιηθεί την ημερομηνία και ώρα που σας εξυπηρετεί, σε ένα ιδιωτικό, ήσυχο γραφείο του Τμήματος Κοινωνικής Εργασίας. Η συνέντευξη θα διεξαχθεί από εμένα, και θα μαγνητοφωνηθεί. Όλα τα ονόματα, μέρη/υπηρεσίες και άλλα προσωπικά σας στοιχεία θα διατηρηθούν ανώνυμα ενώ δεν θα έχει πρόσβαση στο δεδομένο κανείς άλλος εκτός από εμένα και τους επόπτες μου. Επίσης, μπορείτε να αποσυρθείτε από τη διαδικασία αποστάσεις οποιαδήποτε στιγμή εάν το επιθυμείτε, χωρίς να δώσετε κάποιο λόγο.

Τι θα συμβεί με τα δεδομένα που θα συλλεχθούν;

Η συνέντευξη θα απομαγνητοφωνηθεί ενώ τα προσωπικά στοιχεία των συμμετεχόντων θα γίνουν ανώνυμα αμέσως μετά τις συνεντεύξεις και στη θέση τους θα χρησιμοποιηθούν ψευδώνυμα. Τα δεδομένα θα αναλυθούν και δεν θα χρησιμοποιηθούν από τρίτα πρόσωπα πέρα από εμένα και τους επόπτες μου. Θα ήταν ευχαριστήση μου να σας στείλω μια περίληψη των τελικών αποτελεσμάτων από αυτή την έρευνα μόλις ολοκληρωθεί.

Πώς θα διατηρηθούν απόρρητα τα δεδομένα;

Η προστασία της ανωμαλίας αποτελεί τον πρωταρχικό στόχο αυτής της έρευνας. Τα προσωπικά στοιχεία των συμμετεχόντων θα γίνουν ανώνυμα αμέσως μετά τις συνεντεύξεις σε ηλεκτρονικό πρόγραμμα. Επιπλέον, τα αρχεία και οι απομαγνητοφωνήσεις των συνεντεύξεων θα αποθηκευτούν στον προσωπικό μου υπολογιστή τα οποία θα είναι σε κρυπτογραφήμενους ηλεκτρονικούς φακέλους με κωδικό ο οποίος θα είναι απαραίτητος για την πρόσβαση σε αυτούς.

Τι θα συμβεί εάν δεν επιθυμώ να συμμετέχω ή αν αλλάξω γνώμη;
Εναπόκειται σε εσάς να αποφασίσετε εάν θα πάρετε μέρος ή όχι. Εάν αποφασίσετε να συμμετέχετε θα σας ζητηθεί να υπογράψετε ένα έντυπο συγκατάθεσης. Σε αυτή τη περίπτωση διατηρείτε το δικαίωμα να αποχωρήσετε οποιαδήποτε στιγμή χωρίς να δώσετε κάποιο λόγο και χωρίς καμία συνέπεια για εσάς.

Θα πληρωθώ εάν συμμετέχω;
Όχι, η συμμετοχή δεν περιλαμβάνει οποιαδήποτε πληρωμή.

Πόσο θα διαρκέσει η συμμετοχή μου στην έρευνα;
Η συνέντευξη εκτιμάται ότι θα διαρκέσει περίπου 50’.

Ποια πραγματοποιεί η συνέντευξη;
Η συνέντευξη θα πραγματοποιηθεί σε ένα ιδιωτικό, ήσυχο γραφείο στο Τμήμα Κοινωνικής Εργασίας την ημερομηνία και ώρα που σας εξυπηρετεί.

Τα αποτελέσματα αυτής της έρευνας θα δημοσιοποιηθούν;
Η έρευνα θα γραφεί σε μορφή ακαδημαϊκού τίτλου. Τα αποτελέσματα θα δημοσιευθούν επίσης σε περιοδικά και συνέδρια εντός και εκτός Ελλάδας. Οποιαδήποτε αποσπάσματα της συνέντευξης χρησιμοποιηθούν στα Ελληνικά ή σε ακριβής μετάφραση στα Αγγλικά θα παραμείνουν ανώνυμα. Εκφράζεται η ελπίδα ότι τα αποτελέσματα αυτής της έρευνας θα συμβάλλουν στην προαγωγή και βελτίωση της εκπαίδευσης στην κοινωνική εργασία.

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τηλ.: 6973529948

Τι μπορώ να κάνω εάν κάτι πάει στραβά;
Για οποιαδήποτε βοήθεια ή συμβουλή, είμαι στη διάθεσή σας στα παραπάνω στοιχεία επικοινωνίας. Έτσι, εάν έχετε οποιαδήποτε ανησυχία ή αμφιβολία παρακαλώ αφήστε την ανησυχία μου και είμαι στη διάθεσή σας με ένα τρίτο πρόσωπο, παρακαλώ επικοινωνήστε με τον Ερευνητικό Επίτροπο μου, Dr Lorraine Green και Professor Alys Young.

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## Appendix 10: First year students’ profile (demographic characteristics and socio-economic background)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Mother job category</th>
<th>Father job category</th>
<th>Ethnic Origin</th>
<th>Rural/Urban area of residence</th>
<th>SW study choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>Balkan</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Private sector employee (low-middle level)</td>
<td>Private sector employee (low-middle level)</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Public sector employee (low-middle level)</td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>Greek</td>
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<td>1st</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>1st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Homemaker</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Public sector employee (low-middle level)</td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Unskilled worker</td>
<td>Skilled worker - Unemployed</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Rural</td>
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<td>Urban</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Unskilled worker</td>
<td>Skilled worker - Unemployed</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Private sector employee (low-middle level)</td>
<td>Private sector employee (low-middle level)</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Homemaker</td>
<td>Public sector employee (low-middle level)</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>1st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Unskilled worker –  Unskilled worker -</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Status</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td>Living</td>
<td>Rank</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
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<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>1st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>Public sector employee (low-middle level)</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 11: Final year students’ profile (demographic characteristics and socio-economic background)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Mother job category</th>
<th>Father job category</th>
<th>Ethnic Origin</th>
<th>Rural/Urb an area of residence</th>
<th>SW study choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Private sector employee (low-middle level)</td>
<td>Deceased - not stated</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>1st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Unskilled worker</td>
<td>Public sector employee (low-middle level)</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>1st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Private sector employee (low-middle level)</td>
<td>Private sector employee (low-middle level)</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>4th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Private sector employee (low-middle level)</td>
<td>Public sector employee (low-middle level)</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>Private sector employee (low-middle level)</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>1st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Skilled worker</td>
<td>Skilled worker</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Home maker</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>1st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Private sector employee (low-middle level)</td>
<td>Private sector employee (low-middle level)</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>1st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Unskilled worker</td>
<td>Private sector employee (low-middle level)</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>4th</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>F</td>
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<td>Not stated</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Private sector employee (low-)</td>
<td>Private sector employee (low-)</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>1st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Finish Year</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Home maker</td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Unskilled worker</td>
<td>Skilled worker</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>1st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Home maker</td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>3rd</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 12: Interview schedules for participants in English

Social Work - academic staff/placement supervisors – interview schedule

Biographical Information

Qualifications
Years of professional experience
Years of academic experience

Content of teaching courses/placements

What courses do you teach/ placements supervise?
What is the aim/learning objective of these courses/placements?
How many students do attend these and what is their profile?
Is there a reference to ethics especially in anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practice?
How are these discussed within class?
What literature references do you use and how do you decide to use such?

Students and value tensions

What have you experienced from discussing with your students issues such as diversity and oppressed groups?
How do you challenge any stereotypes?
What are students’ responses?
What have you experienced from students’ use of social work (anti-oppressive) values in practice?
How do you think that students manage any value tensions between their personal and professional?

Are there any differences on students’ attitudes/beliefs/ability to manage tensions during their years of training?

Social work education

How do you feel about social work education’s role in shaping students’ anti-oppressive identity?

What has been effective, or not?

What would you suggest?

Interview schedule Social Work students (year one)

Biographical Information

Age
Gender
Ethnic Origin
Previous qualifications
Years of previous social care professional experience
Choice/motivation to study social work
Attendance in lectures

Beliefs/perceptions about diversity

What oppressed groups/minorities do you know and what do you think about their discrimination and oppression? How do you feel about this?

How do you explain oppression?

How do you think about social work working with oppressed groups and diversity?
Is there a minority, oppressed or marginalized group that you would find difficult to work with in the future or on placement? If yes/no, why?

Which influences would you identify that have shaped your beliefs?

**Beliefs/perceptions about ethical dilemmas/value tensions and resolution**

Have you experienced any value tensions between your personal beliefs and social work (anti-oppressive) values? Can you describe it/them?

If yes, how did you try to resolve it? Why? Was it successful?

Would you use the same strategy again?

**Social work education and ethics**

What do you expect from your education in relation to the values of a social worker and response to oppression?

Would you consider this training as important for your personal values/beliefs around diversity and oppressed groups? Why?

What other expectations do you have from your education?

---

**Interview schedule Social Work students (year four)**

**Biographical Information**

Age
Gender
Ethnic Origin
Previous qualifications
Years of previous social care professional experience
Choice/motivation to study social work
Attendance in lectures
Beliefs/perceptions about diversity

What do you understand the words diversity and oppression/discrimination to mean?

What oppressed groups do you know about and what do you think of their discrimination and oppression? How and why? How do you feel about this?

How do you explain oppression?

What are your views about social work working with oppressed groups and diversity?

Have you worked with any diverse group? What was your experience?

Is there a diverse group that you would find difficult to work with? If yes/no, why?

Which influences would you identify that have shaped your beliefs?

Beliefs/perceptions about ethical dilemmas/value tensions and resolution

What do you understand by value tension?

Have you experienced any value tensions between your personal beliefs and social work (anti-oppressive) values? Can you describe it/them?

If yes, how did you try to resolve it? Why? Was it successful?

Would you use the same strategy again?

Social work education and ethics

What training/reference with regards to ethics and value tensions and their relationship to anti-oppressive practice have you had in your studies?
What has been effective or not into helping you to resolve such value tensions?

Do you feel prepared from your training to use social work (anti-oppressive) values and resolve value tensions when in practice?

What would you suggest?
Appendix 13: Interview schedules for participants in Greek

Οδηγός συνέντευξης για πρωτοετείς

Βιογραφικές πληροφορίες
Ηλικία
Φύλο
Εθνική καταγωγή
Προηγούμενες σπουδές/προσόντα
Χρόνια προϋπηρεσίας σε συναφή αντικείμενο
Επιλογή/κίνητρο επιλογής Κοινωνικής Εργασίας
Παρακολούθηση θεωρίων

Πεποιθήσεις/αντιλήψεις για την διαφορετικότητα
Ποιες μειονότητες γνωρίζετε και τι πιστεύετε σχετικά με τις διακρίσεις/καταπίεση που βιώνουν; Πώς νιώθετε;
Πώς εξηγείτε την κοινωνική καταπίεση/διακρίσεις;
Ποια η άποψη σας για το γεγονός ότι η κοινωνική εργασία δουλεύει με μειονότητες/καταπιεσμένες ομάδες και τη διαφορετικότητα;
Υπάρχει κάποια διαφορετική ομάδα που θεωρείτε «αδιατέρως απαιτητική» ώστε να δουλέψετε μαζί τους;
Ποις διαμορφώθηκαν οι πεποιθήσεις σας; Μπορείτε να αναγνωρίσετε κάποιες επιρροές;
Πεποιθήσεις/αντιλήψεις για τα δεοντολογικά διλήμματα/αξιακές συγκρούσεις και η επίλυσή τους
Έχετε βρεθεί σε δίλημμα ανάμεσα στις αρχές (αντι-καταπιεστικές) της κοινωνικής εργασίας ως επάγγελμα και στα δικά σας πιστεύω/πεποιθήσεις/αντιλήψεις; Μπορείτε να μου το περιγράψετε;
Εάν ναι, πως ανταποκρίθηκατε σε ένα τέτοιο δίλημμα; Γιατί; Ήταν επιτυχές;
Θα χρησιμοποιούσατε την ίδια στρατηγική ξανά;

Εκπαίδευση στην ΚΕ και δεοντολογία
Τι περιμένετε από την εκπαίδευσή σας ως προς την διαφορετικότητα, τις μειονότητες/καταπιεσμένους και τα διλήμματα;
Πιστεύετε ότι η εκπαίδευση στο επάγγελμα συντελεί στην υιοθέτηση αντι-καταπιεστικών προσεγγίσεων και διαχείριση συγκρούσεων με τις προσωπικές μας αξίες σύμφωνα με την δεοντολογία του επαγγέλματός; Πώς; Γιατί;

Οδηγός συνέντευξης τελοίφοιτοι

Βιογραφικές πληροφορίες
Ηλικία
Φύλο
Εθνική καταγωγή
Προηγούμενες σπουδές/προσόντα
Χρόνια προκήρυξης σε συναφές αντικείμενο
Επιλογή/κίνητρο επιλογής Κοινωνικής Εργασίας
Παρακολούθηση θεωρίας
Έτος παρακολούθησης
Πλαίσια Πρακτικής

Πεποιθήσεις/αντιλήψεις για την διαφορετικότητα
Ποια η σημασία της διαφορετικότητας και διακρίσεων/καταπίεσης για εσάς;
Ποιες μειονότητες γνωρίζετε; Πιστεύετε αντιμετωπίζουν διακρίσεις/καταπίεση; Πως/γιατί; Πως νιώθετε για αυτό;
Ποια η άποψη σας για το γεγονός ότι η κοινωνική εργασία δουλεύει με μειονότητες/καταπιεσμένους και τη διαφορετικότητα;
Υπάρχει κάποια μειονότητα/καταπιεσμένη ομάδα που δουλέψατε μαζί της; Ποια η εμπειρία σας;
Υπάρχει κάποια διαφορετική ομάδα που θεωρείτε «αδιαίρετος απαίτητη» ώστε να δουλέψετε μαζί τους;
Πως διαμορφώθηκαν οι πεποιθήσεις σας; Μπορείτε να αναγνωρίσετε κάποιες επιρροές;

Πεποιθήσεις/αντιλήψεις για τα δεοντολογικά διλήμματα/αξιακές συγκρούσεις και η επίλυσή τους
Τι καταλαβαίνετε από την έννοια του δεοντολογικού
dιλήμματος/αξιακής σύγκρουσης;

Έχετε βιώσει δεοντολογικά διλήμματα ανάμεσα στις αρχές (αντι-
cαταπιεστικές) της κοινωνικής εργασίας ως επάγγελμα και στα δικά
σας πιστεύω/πεποιθήσεις/αντιλήψεις; Μπορείτε να μου το περιγράψετε;

Εάν ναι, πως ανταποκριθήκατε σε ένα τέτοιο δίλημμα; Γιατί; Ήταν επιτυχές;

Θα χρησιμοποιούσατε την ίδια στρατηγική ξανά;

Εκπαίδευση στην ΚΕ και δεοντολογία

Ποια εκπαίδευση/αναφορές ως προς τα δεοντολογικά διλήμματα και η
σύνδεσή τους με την αντι-καταπιεστική προσέγγιση είχατε κατά τις
σπουδές σας;

Τι υπήρξε βοηθητικό στο να διαχειριστείτε αξιακές συγκρούσεις;

Νιώθετε προετοιμασμένος/η από την εκπαίδευσή σας να
χρησιμοποιήσετε αρχές της ΚΕ και να διαχειριστείτε συγκρούσεις στην
εργασία σας;

Τι θα προτείνατε;

Οδηγός συνέντευξης ακαδημαϊκό προσωπικό

Βιογραφικές πληροφορίες
Ακαδημαϊκά Προσόντα
Χρόνια Επαγγελματικής εμπειρίας
Χρόνια Ακαδημαϊκής εμπειρίας
Περιεχόμενο εκπαίδευσης/πλαίσιο πρακτικής
Ποια μαθήματα διδάσκετε/πλαίσια εποπτεύετε;
Ποιος ο μαθησιακός στόχος τους;
Πόσοι φοιτητές παρευρίσκονται και ποιο το προφίλ τους;
Υπάρχει κάποια ιδιαίτερη αναφορά στη δεοντολογία και την αντι-καταπιεστική προσέγγιση;
Πως συζητιέται μέσα στην τάξη;
Ποια η βιβλιογραφία που χρησιμοποιείτε και πως την αποφασίζετε;
Φοιτητές και δεοντολογικά διλήμματα
Ποια η εμπειρία σας από συζήτησεις με φοιτητές για θέματα όπως η διαφορετικότητα και οι μειονότητες/καταπιεσμένες ομάδες;
Πως αντιμετωπίζετε οποιαδήποτε στερεότυπα;
Ποια η ανταπόκριση των φοιτητών;
Ποια η εμπειρία σας από την χρήση των αρχών (αντι-καταπιεστικών) της ΚΕ από μεριά των φοιτητών;
Πιστεύετε οι φοιτητές διαχειρίζονται αξιακές συγκρούσεις ανάμεσα στις προσωπικές και επαγγελματικές (αντι-καταπιεστικές) αξίες;
Υπάρχουν διαφορές στις στάσεις/πεποιθήσεις/ικανότητα διαχείρισης φοιτητών στη διάρκεια των σπουδών τους;
Εκπαίδευση στην κοινωνική εργασία
Ποια η αποψή σας για τον ρόλο της εκπαίδευσης στη διαμόρφωση της δεοντολογικής και αντι-καταπιεστικής ταυτότητας των σπουδαστών;
Τι είναι επιτυχές και τι όχι;
Τι θα προτείνατε;
## Appendix 14: Examples of memo-ing/research diary notes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Memo/Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23/10/2010</td>
<td>What kind of literature should I explore? Possibly: literature on social work ethics, oppression, education. What has been discussed in Greek literature?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/12/2010</td>
<td>I am one of the academic staff. What power issues are involved and will students be able to express themselves honestly?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/04/2011</td>
<td>Social movements have challenged the traditional model of social work. How social work in Greece has been shaped?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/11/2011</td>
<td>So many debates on teaching anti-oppressive practice. However: outside Greek context. Freire’s views on social work professionals. Control vs emancipation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/07/2012</td>
<td>Potential questions for interview guide with students: - what do you understand of diversity? - what is oppression? - have you ever felt a value tension in relation to anti-oppressive practice? - what did you do? How did you resolve it? → to discuss with supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/02/2013</td>
<td>Participant x did not turn up for the interview despite the fact that I was waiting for almost 2 hours and did not answer any of my messages and calls!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/03/2013</td>
<td>Abolition of the Department. Now what? I am afraid I will lose my data. I am panicking. Will I lose my job too? I need to speak with supervisor. I need to discuss these issues in the thesis too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29/05/2013</td>
<td>Concerns about the positions of the student interviewee today. I can’t do anything but isn’t it dangerous such students to graduate and become social workers of people that they blame? Foucault analysed institutions such as universities and their embedded oppression. Does this explain such positions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/06/2013</td>
<td>Is choice of studies by students reflecting possibly a low status of social work in Greece?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/07/2013</td>
<td>Codes of: 1.) thinking about the pros/cons of choices - utilitarian/consequentialist approach 2.) seeking advice from colleague/family/friends 3.) psychotherapy → make category of ‘students’ resolution strategies of value conflicts’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/12/2014</td>
<td>Conclusion of analysis: Education failed to stimulate students’ critical consciousness and to engage in praxis against oppression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20/01/2015</td>
<td>For Foucault and Freire, the subject is also subjected to discourse. Therefore, students’ positions (subjectivity) are carriers of the power/knowledge of the wider discourse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/02/2015</td>
<td>Students’ individualistic approaches reflect the governmentality of the profession in Greece. Similar conclusion by Weiss (2006) about the influence of history and ideology of the profession in each country within students’ accounts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/05/2015</td>
<td>Social work education cannot stay behind social needs. Implications for continuous evaluation and reconstruction of curriculum. Also user involvement in academia.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>