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Preparing tomorrow's professoriate: an examination of social justice language in social work PhD program manuals

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Abstract: Social work claims social justice as a central value of the profession with the aim of challenging and changing oppressive structures. Despite this purported emphasis, there appears to be limited knowledge of how social justice is expressed and embedded in doctoral programs of social work. Social work PhD programs are of particular interest because of the unique position of program graduates to impact social work research and practice. This article examined how social work PhD programs in the US represent social justice discourses in program manuals and mission statements. Through a qualitative content analysis of selected social work PhD program documents, a continuum of social justice engagement emerged. Four categories were identified across this continuum: *mentioning, theorizing, acting,* and *integrating*. Social work PhD programs that reflect on how social justice is expressed within and beyond their programs may provide a more equitable and inclusive learning environment in social work PhD programs, impart to students a more in-depth understanding of social justice theory and praxis, and ultimately prepare emerging scholars to be critically aware researchers and educators.

Introduction

Definitions of social justice shift over time; scholars have neither a broad, consensus definition for this complex idea, nor a common vision for the practice of justice-promoting social work (Crethar, Rivera, & Nash, 2008; Galambos, 2008; McLaughlin, 2011; Miller, 1999; Reisch, 2002; Rountree & Pomeroy, 2010). Nonetheless, trends in conceptualizations of social justice in social work include ideas of distributive justice (the equitable distribution of goods and resources; Crethar et al. 2008; Miller 1999; Reisch 2002); structural social justice perspectives (which consider the social construction of systems of power and oppression and view structural change as a means to eliminate inequality and oppression; Reisch, 2002); and social work-specific views of social justice (guided by compliance with the National Association of Social Workers *Code of Ethics'* intention to eradicate 'discrimination, oppression, and poverty and other forms of social injustice;' National Association of Social Workers [NASW, 2008, para. 2]). Little is known about how these various conceptualizations of social justice are transmitted and evolved through social work education. Both the Global Standards for the Education and Training of the Social Work Profession, jointly adopted by the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW, 2004) and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), and the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS; Council on Social Work Education, 2008) that shape social work

education in the United States, mention social justice without offering any further theorization, implied action, or integration of the term.

Social justice in social work PhD programs
Although most social work education around the globe occurs at the bachelor or masters level, the small number of students who graduate from social work PhD programs each year has a tremendous influence on the profession. PhD-level education in social work and social welfare has the task of preparing individuals for the responsibilities and actions of steering, transmitting, and expanding the knowledge base of the discipline through research, teaching, and service (Anastas & Kuerbis, 2009; Fong, 2014; Hudson, Shapiro, Moylan, Garcia, & Derr, 2014). Social work PhD students develop a specialized knowledge base but are also socialized into the moral commitments, obligations, and opportunities of the professorate (Walker, Golde, Jones, Bueschel, & Hutchings, 2008). This socialization happens through explicit (e.g. curriculum, pedagogy) and implicit (e.g. the learning environment) processes (Hudson et al., 2014).

The Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education in Social Work (GADE), a US-based group that provides quality guidelines for social work doctoral programs, asserts that graduates should 'Understand how knowledge in social work is relevant to public issues, including promoting social justice and increasing equity' (Harrington, Petr, Black, Cunningham-Williams, & Bentley, 2013, p. 2). Furthermore, a recent study exploring conceptualizations of social justice among PhD students in social work revealed that the majority of US-based PhD students included in the sample expressed a 'modern liberalist' understanding of the concept that emphasized equality, opportunity, and advocacy (Hudson, 2016; para. 17). This understanding of social justice was framed as inadequate in light of the profound ways neoliberalism shapes social work education and practice today (e.g. increasing corporatization of higher education, commodification of social goods, reliance on market-based solutions for entrenched social issues; Hudson 2016; Reisch 2013). In light of this, Hudson (2016) suggested the need to revitalize the diverse theoretical underpinnings of social justice for social work in PhD programs.

Without adequate training and engagement with social justice content at the PhD level, emerging social work scholars may be less likely to produce knowledge or provide instruction in ways that lead to justice-informed social work practice (Shapiro, Hudson, Moylan, & Derr, 2015). For example, the downstream consequences of a narrow construction of justice among social work PhD students could be scholars that do not center or understand the broad social justice implications of their scholarship, instructors that do not center or understand the broad social justice implications of their instruction, and ultimately practitioners who unintentionally perpetuate injustices through their agencies' policies, procedures and individual practices (Crethar et al., 2008). On the other hand, education through PhD programs imparting social justice content may lead to liberatory social work research and teaching that ultimately creates transformational leaders and clinicians who fight for social change and practice social work in ways that take into account, and even challenge, systems of oppression (McLaughlin, 2011; Specht & Courtney, 1994). Therefore, as the depth of social justice content in social work, PhD-level education influences emerging scholars and educators, social work doctoral education may have far-reaching implications as to how clients are served and the structural climate in which clients access services.

Current study

Interest in the significance and scope of organizational language in schools of social work has emerged, with studies analyzing the overall content of social work program mission statements (Holosko, Winkel, Crandall, & Briggs, 2015) and the social justice content of course syllabi (Hong & Hodge, 2009; Mehrotra, Hudson, & Self, in press) and social work PhD program milestone instructions (Shapiro et al., 2015). However, no existing research has examined social work PhD program manuals. The current study explored how social work PhD programs in the United States use social justice language in these documents. It is assumed that social justice content in social work PhD program manuals shapes how these programs operate, the social justice orientations of the emerging professoriate, and ultimately how social work scholarship is conducted, social workers are taught, and clients are served. Thus, this exploratory qualitative content analysis (QCA) aimed to better under- stand how social justice language is used in the organizational language of social work PhD programs in the United States by analyzing their program manuals.

This study addressed the following research questions: (1) Where in social work PhD program manuals (e.g. program mission, vision, and goal statements, course descriptions, milestone descriptions) does social justice language appear, if at all?; (2) When and where social justice language appears, how is it used or applied? These research questions directed the study toward a more comprehensive understanding of how social justice is represented across social work PhD programs in the United States.

Methods
QCA was used to explore the use of social justice language in social work PhD program manuals. Three strategies within the QCA methodology were used (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). First, the *directed approach* was used. A directed approach relies on the use of a priori codes derived from the literature. This study selected terms to use as a priori codes based on the terms frequently used to conceptualize social justice in the peer reviewed literature. Second, the *conventional approach* was used. A conventional approach relies on developing codes directly from the text. Third, a *summative content analysis* was used. The summative content analysis results in 'counting and comparisons' (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1277). This three-pronged analysis allowed both data and theory to drive the analysis, and for the interpretation of categories and their relationships to one another.

Sample
The sampling frame included all 75 universities that confer PhD degrees in social work or social welfare in the US. A convenience sample of 54 social work PhD programs was obtained from those whose manuals were available on program websites or provided by program representatives via email in response to requests from the research team. Of the 54 social work PhD programs with available program manuals, 51 of these manuals were PhD program-specific; three of these manuals were school-wide including PhD-specific sections, with only PhD-specific content included in the study. Mission statements related to 41 programs were identified, 25 program-specific and 25 school-wide missions, with some programs having both school-level and program-level statements represented. School-wide missions were only included in the analysis when they were found in the PhD program section of the manual.

Seventy-four percent of the sample of social work PhD programs was located in public universities, while 26% were located in private institutions. Secular universities (91%) comprised the majority of programs, with 9% having a religious affiliation. Two universities in the sample were Historically Black Colleges or Universities (HBC/U). Regional representation included 17% from the West, 24% from the Midwest, 28% from the South, and 31% from the Northeast. Over half (61%) of the manuals were from the 2014–2015 academic year, with the oldest manual being from the 2009–2010 academic year. Of the programs studied, 70% were housed within institutions classified as very high intensive research universities; 15% were high research intensive universities; 4% were research intensive universities; and 11% had various other classifications (Carnegie Foundation, 2010). The study sample differed significantly from the population of social work PhD programs only in the proportion of programs in public universities (74% in sample and 64% in population). In all other examined aspects, the study sample was representative.

Procedure

Data analysis procedures included three phases. First, consistent with the *directed approach* to QCA, three members of the research team searched for social justice-related keywords using the qualitative analysis software Dedoose, which allowed for a collaborative coding process and facilitated searching within and across documents . Keywords were used to quickly and efficiently direct the analysis to the most relevant content in the texts to be included in the study. Based on a review of literature from key authorities on social justice in social work (National Association of Social Workers, 2008; Reisch, 2002, 2013), a priori codes were developed. These included: social justice, discrimination, diversity, power, and oppression. Additional emergent keywords were identified after the coding process began, for example: culture, equal, equitable/inequitable, impoverished or poverty, privilege, and social change. On occasion, the keyword appeared in the text in non-social-justice-related ways (e.g. the use of 'PowerPoint' when searching for 'power'). In other instances, keywords were used in contexts outside of the scope of this study (e.g. using 'diverse' as a synonym for 'many' or 'varied' when describing ideas or research interests). These instances were excluded from the analysis.

Second, consistent with a *conventional approach* to QCA, the research team also coded missions, visions, goals, and objectives to find any additional social justice content that was not captured through the keyword searches. Third, through an iterative, collaborative process, codes were organized into categories that were operationally distinct from one another while remaining conceptually linked. This third stage allowed for the interpretation of patterns in the data. Finally, these patterns were quantified through a *summative content analysis.* A qualitative codebook was created through a collaborative, iterative process among the research team. Differences in coding were reconciled through discussion among raters and consultation with substantive and methodological experts. In order to maintain methodological rigor, researchers maintained regular and frequent communication with one another throughout the coding process, especially as methodological consultation was needed regarding unique or difficult-to-code instances of social justice language.

Ethical considerations

According to the Office for the Protection of Human Subjects at the University of California, Berkeley, a project is considered human subjects research if it is research that obtains information

about individuals through interaction or intervention. This study did not request or receive any information about individuals (e.g. behavior, viewpoint, or perspective), only elicited information about institutions and institutional processes. No identifiable information about human subjects was collected or analyzed. Furthermore, aggregating available information about institutions, and analyzing text from these documents, did not pose any risks to human subjects. Because program manuals are distributed for public consumption, there is no reasonable expectation for privacy. Therefore, this was not considered human subjects research, did not involve private information, and no further protections were required for the ethical conduct and dissemination of this research.

Findings

The first research question sought to determine where in the program manuals social justice language appeared, if at all. Thirty-eight programs had social justice language in their mission statement and coursework section of the program manuals. Additionally, 26 programs had social justice language in program goals and objectives, and 14 program manuals had social justice language in their vision statements. Program milestones including admissions, coursework, candidacy, and dissertation were examined more closely to determine if professional, ethical ideals were translated into the educational experiences central to PhD-level education in social work (Shapiro et al., 2015). Among the PhD milestone-related sections of the manuals, 15 programs had social justice language in the candidacy sections of the manuals, 9 programs had social justice language related to the dissertation, and only 5 programs had social justice language pertaining to admissions.

The second research question asked how social justice language was used or applied. Findings indicated four primary ways in which social justice language was used in social work PhD program documents: *mentioning, theorizing, acting,* and *integrating. Mentioning* language*,* defined as the use of social justice keywords without discussion or elaboration, was used by all 54 programs and was the most common use of social justice language, accounting for 44% of instances within and across all programs. *Theorizing* language, which defined the program's orientation to social justice, represented a much smaller portion (12% of instances within and across 43 programs) of instances of social justice language use. *Acting* language*,* defined as the operationalization of social justice values outside of the program, accounted for 32% of social justice-related language, and was used by 51 programs. *Integrating* language, the operationalization of social justice values within the program, was used by 42 programs, and represented the smallest portion (12%) of social justice language use. *Mentioning*, *theorizing,* and *acting* language appeared most often in coursework and mission statements, while *integrating* language was most often found in program goals, candidacy, and dissertation sections.

Mentioning

Excerpts were coded as *mentioning* when they included a social justice-related keyword without further elaboration, used a keyword in a title (of a student group, resource, or class, for instance), or implied that value is placed on social justice ideals without delving into the meaning or definition of the complex concept. A course titled 'Treatment with Oppressed Populations,' for example, appeared in one program manual without further description of the course. Another program manual indicated that they 'hope that our graduates will play key roles in integrating diversity in their social welfare activities' without describing what 'integrating diversity' might look like. In

some cases, ideas and words were presented as a list of terms: for example, one program posed its mission as 'The passionate pursuit of social innovation, impact and justice' while another promoted 'health, well-being, and social and economic justice in a diverse world.' These examples may indicate that these programs placed value on these ideals; however, little information was provided as to how these ideals were operationalized within the program.

Many programs employed social justice concepts in the policies that govern compliance, anti-discrimination, anti-harassment, student conduct, and other legalities of both the larger educational institution and the individual social work program. Similar to many others, one program manual had the following anti-discrimination policy: As a standing policy, the [University] does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, disability, or status as a disabled veteran or Vietnam-era veteran. Any discriminatory action can be a cause for disciplinary action.

Similarly, this analysis revealed that a small subset of programs ($n = 11$) referred to or adopted direct language from either the NASW *Code of Ethics* or an official GADE document. Few of these programs incorporated any additional interpretation of these texts into their manuals; rather, most programs inserted the language verbatim and cited its origin. This may indicate a lack of explicit reflection on or integration of social justice values and principles within the program, or alignment with the stated standards of the profession.

Theorizing

The *theorizing* theme referred to language that described the theoretical underpinnings of the program's working conceptions of social justice. Here, some of the conceptualizations from the literature review (such as, distributive, structural, and strengths-based definitions of social justice) emerged. Such language provided clues as to how programs understood and explained social justice, as a foundation for orienting students to social justice. Included within this theme were descriptions of the negative consequences of injustice; for example, one social work program's mission asserted, 'Oppression objectively and subjectively permeates the lives of people, resulting in the denial of human dignity, individual and cultural diversity, and social and economic justice.' Additionally, several programs conceptualized social justice from a strengths-based perspective, describing 'personal and community strengths as fundamental' to addressing social problems, while a few programs expressed a religious mission behind their call to social justice work.

Seventy percent of theorizing language was related to distributive and structural social justice. With respect to distributive justice, many references included declarations of 'economic justice' as well as the duty of social workers to improve their clients' access to services and other resources. One program incorporated the concept into its mission, declaring the school's purpose 'to advance social work practice and social welfare policy in order to promote social, cultural, and economic justice for the betterment of poor, vulnerable, and oppressed individuals, families, groups, communities, organizations, and society.' Additionally, much theorizing language used a structural definition of justice, highlighting the need for justice advocacy at the institutional or community level, improvement of delivery of social work services broadly, or an ecological view that takes into account the client's social system.

Acting

Acting was defined as language describing the program's action, effort, or commitment to social change through the profession, external to the social work program (versus internally within the program). This theme included descriptions of working to improve conditions for particular marginalized groups with some indications of mechanisms of change, most often research or advocacy. This language tended to conceptualize social justice as something the program, especially the faculty, students, and administration that comprise it, did for the benefit of a community facing social ills. For example, one program asserted generally that 'preparing social work personnel to meet some of society's human needs through the compassionate application of expertise in health and social services is central to the mission of the University,' and many references were made to skills taught to students in order to contribute to social justice beyond the university.

Some manuals named particular groups that their programs intentionally sought to serve through action-oriented endeavors. For instance, one program 'promotes research that examines and chronicles the strengths and accomplishments of urban African-American families, communities, and organizations,' while another manual expressed, 'emphasis is placed on knowledge development which enhances the wellbeing of Native Hawaiians, and the diverse people and communities of Hawai`i and Asian-Pacific Region.' Both of these examples illustrate the social work program's call to action by using research that promotes the wellbeing and advancement of particular groups.

Integrating

Integrating language revealed a process internal to the program, wherein it turned its efforts to enact social justice inward. Manuals that included *integrating* language communicated ways in which the program itself reflected on its role and engaged in social justice through the program's procedures and operations, culture and classroom climate, and educational expectations. While 29 program manuals included in the study contained a formal anti-dis- crimination policy, only 6 manuals went beyond the standard legal jargon to make a reflective statement about the program's unique role in preventing discrimination and, thereby, participating in social justice. For instance, one manual stated: "We will not tolerate behavior that makes any person feel unsafe, including any discrimination against race, religion, ability, sexual orientation or gender expression, or any oppression. We will gently and respectfully interrupt any form of discrimination. We will listen, grow, change, and stay committed to one another and the process of learning." This excerpt exemplifies the reflective tone some programs employed in order to interrupt injustice in favor of a more just learning community.

Other programs demonstrated their internal commitment to social justice by communicating their intention to maintain a diverse student body. One program manual said the university 'seeks to fulfill the educational needs of members of the metropolitan area who come from diverse social, economic, and ethnic backgrounds' while another university's goal was to 'increase the number of doctorally educated social workers from underrepresented ethnic and minority groups.' Within this theme, some programs stated a commitment to diversifying the people holding social work PhDs, encouraging applications 'from minorities, women, people with disabilities, and individuals from cultural, linguistic, geographic, and socio-economic backgrounds who would otherwise not adequately be represented in the graduate student and faculty populations.' On several occasions, program manuals listed student groups or resources available to students that exhibited

how the program both encouraged and engaged in ongoing and active reflection toward social justice.

Not only did *integrating* language refer to ways in which the programs themselves engaged in social justice, but this theme also revealed how programs could hold PhD students accountable to certain standards of social justice reflection. For example, several programs seemed to view skills of self-reflection 'and self awareness [as] necessary to advocate for equity, social justice, and the right for all people to have an opportunity to thrive' and encouraged 'reflecting on the impact of identity, power, and the privilege of the academy in service work.' On some rare occasions, manuals used evaluation criteria that required students to participate in the promotion of social justice through their academic work. For example, one manual articulated an expectation that students explicate 'biases, prejudices, and omissions, especially those relevant to vulnerable populations' in the milestone that advanced the student to candidacy; another manual asked students to 'clearly articulate how the dissertation is relevant to social work's mission to enhance social justice' in their prospectus; and yet another program requested students address the 'power differential between the researcher and participants…in the study' in their dissertation. These examples demonstrate various methods by which some social work PhD programs integrated social justice into their student expectations and learning goals.

Select programs also attempted to create a program-wide atmosphere reflective of social justice values. One program described its teaching philosophy as 'directed toward preparing effective and creative social work professionals who are ethical and have knowledge and skills in anti-oppression social work practice.' Another program illustrated in its 'Social Justice Learning Objectives' that they strive to train PhD students to become educators that: "Effectively facilitate group dynamics around issues of power and oppression in the classroom […] create instructional spaces that are engaging, inclusive, responsive, liberatory, and non-oppressive […] understand how historical and contemporary education policies have shaped social work education in ways that oppress, liberate, and transform the classroom and the profession." Both of these programs demonstrated their commitment to incorporate social justice themes and practices into their pedagogy in order to concretely model for their students how a just environment may be felt and experienced.

Finally, one program explicitly identified anti-racism as its primary focus in *integrating* social justice into the program's culture and climate: "Racism is a system of privilege, inequality, and oppression based on perceived categorical differences, value assigned to those differences, and a system of oppression that rewards and punishes people based on the assigned differences. It is manifested politically, socially, economically, culturally, interpersonally, and intrapersonally in the history of the United States … The School recognizes the pernicious consequences of racism and works to identify and diminish the overt and covert aspects of racism. [The School] is committed to work toward becoming an anti-racism institution."

This program not only provided a definition for racism, but also publicly declared its intention and duty to ensure an anti-racist educational experience for students. The pro- grams mentioned above seemed to perceive social justice not as an end to be achieved, but rather a process of education and discussion that is vital to PhD students' learning. Through this model, the school can become a conduit through which students intellectually consider and actively experience degree-

consistent means of justice promotion that can be applied to anticipated activities in scholarship, teaching, and service.

Discussion
Previous studies have asked social work PhD students the extent to which they are satisfied with their education, and a gap in addressing issues of social justice was identified (Anastas & Kuerbis, 2009; Shapiro, Hudson, & Downey, in press). Case studies at single institutions have explored the creation and infusion of Social Justice Learning Objectives to respond to student demands (Shapiro et al., 2015). The current study was an exploratory analysis of the use of social justice language in program manuals across social work PhD programs in the US. These documents are artifacts that shape and reflect the implicit curricula of doctoral education, likely to shape the educational experience and educational outcomes. The authors are not aware of any attempt to do so previously, and argue that is important to understand social work PhD programs in this way, since doctoral education is a socializing mechanism that shapes the scholarship, instruction, service priorities of social work faculty, and in turn, the next generation of social work practitioners.

Findings indicated diversity in where and how social work PhD programs presented social justice language in their manuals. Social justice language tended to be concentrated in mission and coursework sections of the PhD program manuals, with fewer instances coming from other sections. The majority of such language appeared as mentions; however, a substantial number promoted external action. Fewer program manuals had language presenting conceptualizations of social justice. Conceptualizations on social justice in social work presents broad and diverse notions of social justice (see Reisch, 2002), and social work PhD programs have similarly varied presentations and promises of social justice. It may simply be expedient for programs to refer to social justice in their manuals in a brief manner, without giving much explanation. However, program manuals that included *theorizing* language clarified the assumptions underlying vague assertions, which is arguably an important skill to model for emerging scholars. *Acting* language often dealt with skills social workers and scholars learn to alleviate the effects of inequality for certain groups of people, in line with social work's traditional focus on populations and problems, but rarely provided reflection on the program's core values related to social justice.

While most of the programs in this study used some combination of *mentioning* and *acting* language, fewer programs used *theorizing* language and even less incorporated an *integrating* framework. This study found that programs that incorporated *integrating* language may be better positioned to educate students to be social change agents. Rather than simply compartmentalizing social justice into a specialty or action that is done outside of the school, programs that used *integrating* language took the important steps of engaging in social justice as a reflective and ongoing process and infusing social justice into the inner workings of the program. *Integrating* language provided a framework for understanding what social justice might look like at the institutional level, while simultaneously promoting justice-informed learning environments and encouraging personal social justice reflection and practice for students.

Limitations and future research
There are several limitations to this study. First, the sample was partial, as 28% of social work PhD programs were not represented. Social work PhD program manuals were analyzed without accounting for any university level sources of variances that may shape the contents of these

manuals. Furthermore, program manuals and mission statements may be insufficient reflections of a program's conceptualization or enactment of social justice. In other words, this study did not address how, if at all, the social justice ideas evoked in the program manuals are translated into the program's veritable operations or curricula. This study did not attempt to examine the explicit curriculum of social work PhD programs, but rather the program manuals that inform the implicit curriculum (e.g. shape the learning environment, communicate values) that socializes students into the work of a social welfare scholar, teacher, and servant. Therefore, actual PhD faculty teaching and PhD student learning were not assessed. Similarly, this study did not examine the extent to which PhD students and faculty understand and employ themes related to social justice in their work. It was beyond the scope of this project to address the program manual implementation in these programs. Despite these limitations, the documents examined in this study, as public proclamations of a program's values and policies, provided insight into how social work PhD programs present and employ social justice language.

Future research on social justice in social work PhD programs could build upon this study by including social welfare PhD programs outside the United States, making comparisons between programs based on institutional characteristics (e.g. program size), and conducting a primary data collection (e.g. interviews, focus groups, observations, and student surveys) that could enable an exploration of teaching practices and student outcomes. Examining the teaching and learning process in social work PhD programs, as it relates to social justice content, is suggested. Future research could also explore tensions that can emerge when balancing fast-paced research productivity and the ethical imperative to create more participatory and just scholarship, institutions, and communities. Future studies should examine if and how the nature of social justice discourse in social work program manuals actually relates to outcomes across social work research, teaching, and practice. Finally, future research should consider the important distinguishing characteristics of other doctoral programs, such as Doctor of Social Work programs.

Implications for social work
As social work education at the PhD-level impacts emerging scholars, instructors, practitioners, and ultimately clients, it is critical that social work PhD programs integrate and model ideals of social justice, advocacy, and change. While it appears that all models of discourse presented have value and utility for incorporating social justice into social work programs, *theorizing* and *integrating* concepts were least common, yet are arguably most consistent with actualizing social justice in PhD-level social work education. Strengthening *theorizing* and *integrating* language in social work PhD programs would not be easy, requiring clarification of programs' theoretical orientations and embodied commitments toward social justice, but it might lead to a meaningful change. *Integrating* social justice language into social work PhD program manuals could lead to a greater enactment of social justice within program operations, knowledge production, and classroom pedagogy. In this way, integrating social justice language into social work PhD programs, could, over time, affect social work practice with clients.

The use of *theorizing*, *acting,* and *integrating* language throughout program manuals might provide a more conceptually clear, action-oriented, and infused approach to social justice in social work PhD programs. Furthermore, PhD program directors and governing faculty are urged to consider incorporating social justice discourse throughout their entire manuals, not just specific

sections. For example, program directors and governing faculty might consider how themes of social justice in their mission statements and course titles could be aligned with expectations and evaluations of PhD program milestones (Shapiro et al., 2015). Such reflection, consideration, and integration of thoughtful social justice language into program documents would require programs to clarify the theoretical foundations from which they operate and incorporate socially just processes into their operations.

Conclusion

Social work PhD programs that express and enact social justice in their program may create a more comprehensive educational experience for emerging social work scholars and educators. Social work PhD programs are not just research training centers and incubators, they are also inherently and intimately tied to the future of the profession and the values social work professes. If individuals who shape the knowledge base, teach practitioners, and serve our profession and communities are not expected to understand, act, and integrate social justice in their doctoral education, we might expect a professoriate that misunderstands, harms, or fails to integrate the social justice ideals of our profession into their work. Social work PhD programs that pay attention to how social justice is enacted within their own implicit and explicit curricula may model justice-promoting climates and provide learning opportunities that integrate research with the core values of the profession.

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Disclosure statement

Notes on contributors

Kimberly D. Hudson, PhD, is an assistant professor and faculty fellow in the Silver School of Social Work at NYU. Kimberly's current research focuses on LGBTQ health equity, social workers beliefs about individual and social change, and graduate level social justice education in social work.

Valerie B. Shapiro, PhD, is an assistant professor in the School of Social Welfare at UC Berkeley. Valerie's primary research is in the prevention of mental, emotional, and behavioral problems in children and youth through the adoption, implementation, and sustainability of effective prevention practices.

Isabel A. Ebiner, *Annie Berenberg*, and *Nora Bacher* are graduates of the MSW program at the UC Berkeley School of Social Welfare and are currently social work practitioners.

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