7

(UN)CRITICAL REFLECTION

Uncovering disciplinary values in Social Work and Business reflective writing assignments

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Introduction

There has been a long-standing interest in critical reflection and reflective writing in higher education contexts, evidenced by the growing popularity of reflective assignments. Critical reflection for professional practice is also emphasized in university strategic plans as a necessary graduate attribute that tertiary students should acquire before entering the workforce. The ability to deal with emotionally challenging situations that students can expect to face in the workplace is considered a crucial component of critical reflection (Nesi and Gardner, 2012). Another requirement in reflective writing tasks is the ability to relate *subjective knowledge* to *objective knowledge*, such as linking personal experience and theoretical knowledge (Szenes *et al*., 2015). However, students' engagement with subjective meanings is often invisible, under-valued and under-theorized in higher education pedagogy and assessment practices. This chapter will illustrate how subjective meanings and values in reflective writing can be uncovered by drawing on the concept of *axiological cosmologies* from Legitimation Code Theory (LCT).

We begin by reviewing the literature on critical reflection which explains why it is considered an important skill despite the challenges associated with its teaching, learning and assessment. Unlike learning traditional disciplinary content, critical reflection requires students to examine their actions, behaviour and feelings from a theoretical perspective. Students are also expected to challenge the 'status quo' by exploring alternative perspectives to those already established within their disciplines. However, there appears to be little consensus in the literature on what counts as *evidence* of successful critical reflection. In this paper we draw on LCT to show that high-achieving students demonstrate critical reflection by *aligning* with privileged disciplinary values in business and Social Work reflective assignments. In doing so, we illustrate the usefulness of LCT for

unpacking axiological meanings in reflective writing. We conclude by discussing the importance of demonstrating alignment with disciplinary values and its implications for learning *critical* reflection.

Reflective writing: a review of the literature

In the context of higher education, critical reflection is assessed through assignments that are exclusively designed to evaluate the capacity of students to make 'judgements about whether professional activity is equitable, just and respectful of persons or not' by drawing on 'personal action' examined within wider socio-historical and politico-cultural contexts (Hatton and Smith, 1995, p. 35). Reflective types of assignments for assessing students' capacity for critical reflection include critical reflection essays, learning journals, reflective journals, critical reflection reports, case studies, teamwork and so on. These assignments are increasingly popular in applied disciplines such as nursing (Epp, 2008; Smith, 2011), teacher education (Blaise *et al.*, 2004; Hume, 2009; Mills, 2008; Otienoh, 2009), early childhood education (Cornish and Cantor, 2008), psychology (Sutton *et al.*, 2007), business and management education (Carson and Fisher, 2006; Fisher, 2003; Swan and Bailey, 2004), and Social Work and health sciences (Fook, 2002; Fook and Askeland 2007; Fook and Gardner, 2013).

Reflective assignments are defined as 'written documents that students create as they *think* about various concepts, events, or interactions over a period of time for the purposes of gaining insights into self-awareness and learning' (Thorpe, 2004, p. 328, as cited in O'Connell and Dyment, 2011, p. 47, emphasis added). Thus, these assignments are introspective in nature, requiring students to examine their own behaviour and reactions as the object of study. In contrast with the traditional understanding of learning as 'objective', 'theoretical' and 'rational' (Fook *et al.*, 2016, p. 527), reflective writing requires students to find a connection between 'personal and emotional concerns' and the theoretical content covered in the course material (Crème, 2008, p. 60). Typically, reflective assessment tasks require students to identify a personal and 'disorienting dilemma' (Mezirow, 2000), analyse problematic situations in field placements through applying the theoretical concepts of their discipline, and/or deconstruct dominant assumptions and challenge existing power structures and the status quo in institutional settings (see e.g. Brookfield, 2000; Crème, 2008; Fook, 2004; Fook and Morley, 2005).

Due to this focus on challenging the status quo, reflective writing assignments are often lauded for presenting students with an opportunity to externalize and investigate core values and power relations inherent in their roles as practitioners (Brookfield, 2001, p. 301). Research has suggested that the shift in focus from the 'objective' and 'theoretical' in traditional assignments to the 'subjective' and 'personal' in reflective assignments allows students to 'deconstruct … personal assumptions' (Fook, 2002, pp. 98–100), engage in 'divergent and ambiguous thinking' (Fook *et al.*, 2016, p. 527), and 'call into question the power relations that […]

promote one set of practices to be defined as technically effective' over others (Brookfield, 2016, p. 6).

Despite the 'emancipatory' claims of reflective writing (Mezirow, 2003), few examples are available in the literature that show evidence of *how* students construct and engage with dominant values in their texts. This is partly due to the fact that there appears to be considerable contention on how to analyse and identify what counts as critical reflection. In a recent publication, Fook *et al.* (2016) note that the plethora of research on critical reflection appears 'piecemeal' and 'relatively unrelated (sometimes even within one discipline), meaning that it is hard to be clear about exactly what we do know about critical reflection, *how it is practised* and what it can deliver' (p. 3, emphasis added). This means that while a prolific body of research has revealed that critical reflection consists of the subjective and personal, and is emancipatory and empowering in nature, there is little research that reveals *how* these subjective meanings and their use in deconstructing institutional values are operationalized in different disciplinary contexts. We draw on Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) to make visible subjective meanings and the forms they take in reflective writing to understand how successful students engage with the subjective in their assignments in the context of their disciplinary fields. To do so, we specifically draw on the LCT concept of *axiological cosmologies* to explore what axiological values are privileged within the disciplinary fields of Business and Social Work and how they are produced within reflective writing texts.

Theoretical foundations: Legitimation Code Theory and axiological cosmologies

This research draws on the concept of *axiological cosmologies* (Maton, 2014, pp. 148–170), a useful concept for exploring values in the fields of undergraduate business and Social Work. All fields have cosmologies, i.e. specific worldviews, logic or belief systems (Maton, 2014, p. 152), underlying not only the knowledge structures of the field but also its actors, social practices, activities, values and beliefs, i.e. its 'emotional, aesthetic, ethical, political and moral stances' (Maton, 2013, p. 20). Axiological meanings within the axiological cosmology of a field are often organized into *clusters* of meanings, i.e. recognizable and recurring patterns of meanings evaluated by positive or negative *charging*. Several clusters grouped together may form a larger unit termed an *axiological constellation*, which can reveal the nature of the practices generated by axiological cosmologies (Maton, 2014; Maton *et al.*, 2016). This chapter draws on these concepts to understand how high-achieving Business and Social Work students demonstrate their alignment with the 'right' kind of values legitimated in their fields of practice.

Research methods

To understand how students engage with axiological meanings, we investigated what kind of elements form *clusters* of axiological meanings in reflective assignments.

To understand subjective meanings and values in these texts, we drew on systemic functional linguistics, an approach that has often been enacted in tandem with LCT (Martin *et al.*, 2020; Maton and Doran, 2017; Maton *et al.*, 2016). Specifically, we analysed all instances of *evaluation*, often expressed as judgements about a person's behaviour (e.g. ethical) (Martin and White, 2005). As all evaluations are aimed at something, it is equally important to study *what* is being evaluated (Martin and White, 2005, p. 59), i.e. the *targets* of evaluation (e.g. *John* is ethical). In our analyses below, we will term instances that evaluate 'evaluation' and their targets 'evaluated' to illustrate their role in the construction of clusters in the disciplines of Social Work and Business Studies. Instances of '**evaluations**' will be coded in **bold** font and their targets (i.e. the 'evaluated') will be underlined. Their charging will be indicated by the signs '+' for positive and '–' for negative evaluation. Based on *repeated* instances of positive or negative evaluations of targets, we will generalize such *recurring* patterns as a positively or a negatively charged *cluster*, as shown in Figure 7.1.

This visual representation will be used in subsequent examples to capture the nature of axiological meanings clustered together in business and Social Work reflective writing texts.

The reflective assignments analysed for this study are drawn from the international multidisciplinary research project *Knowledge practices of critical thinking in higher education: Understanding the disciplinary requirements of undergraduate reflective writing* involving Szenes, Tilakaratna and Maton. Our data set includes high-scoring third-year undergraduate critical reflection essays (3,000 words) in the field of Social Work (Pockett and Giles, 2008) and high-scoring second-year undergraduate reflective journals from Business Studies (1,000 words).

The six Social Work essays analysed in this study were published as an edited collection of high-level critical reflection essays titled *Critical reflection: Generating theory from practice* (Pockett and Giles, 2008). The Business reflective journals were collected from a second-year undergraduate unit, *Business in the Global Environment*[1]

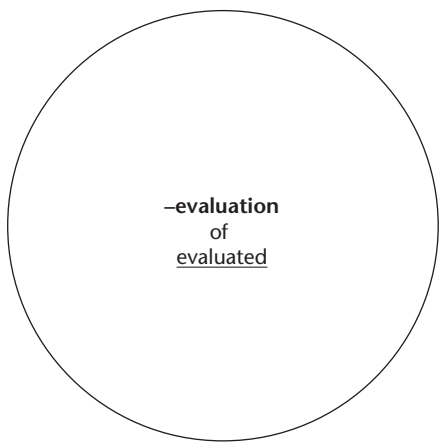

FIGURE 7.1 An example of a negatively charged cluster

(CISS2001), which was a core interdisciplinary unit within the business faculty at a large metropolitan Australian university. After gaining ethics approval for the project from the Human Research Ethics Committee, 64 students consented formally to their reflective journal assignments being collected and analysed. However, in order to study *successful* demonstrations of critical reflection, only High Distinction (HD) student assignments were chosen for the purposes of this research. All grades awarded to reflective journals were exported into an Excel spreadsheet and ordered from highest to lowest. The six highest scoring assignments were then chosen for analysis. In this chapter we only focus on identifying the recurring patterns of axiological meanings in student texts that demonstrate critical reflection (indicated by their high grades). For this reason, all identifying details of students were removed. The texts were then numbered as Text 1, 2, 3, and so on. In the following section we will show how high-achieving business and Social Work students build axiological constellations aligned with the axiological cosmologies underlying their disciplines to demonstrate successful critical reflection.

Axiological cosmology in high-achieving reflective journals in Business Studies

The reflective journal assignment in *Business in the Global Environment* was designed to develop students' critical thinking skills, reflective practice and intercultural competence, considered important graduate attributes in business school curricula and essential skills for working in multinational organizations (Solomon and Schell, 2009). Intercultural competence is defined in the Unit of Study Outline as 'a dynamic ongoing interactive *self-reflective learning* process that *transforms* attitudes, skills and knowledge for effective communication and interaction across cultures and contexts' (Freeman, 2009, p. 1; emphases added). To demonstrate their intercultural competency and reflective skills in reflective journals, students were required to critically reflect on their experience of multinational teamwork by analyzing both their visible behaviours and hidden values, beliefs and assumptions, drawing on key concepts from Solomon and Schell's (2009) intercultural competency framework (pp. 49–50). According to this framework, 'core elements of culture' such as *myth*, *folklore*, *heroes* and *history* influence 'on the surface' personal behaviour as well as 'below the surface' cultural values (e.g. egalitarianism, honesty, loyalty, etc.). The following questions were provided to guide students when structuring their reflective journals:

1. Choose one behaviour that you thought was a strength or weakness and identify the 'below the surface' value that underpins that behaviour.
2. Having identified the cultural value that you believe underpins your particular strength or weakness, now explain how and from where that cultural value developed using the 'core elements of culture' provided on page 50 of Solomon and Schell.
3. What does this teach you about the way you behave, and your expectations of others, when working in multinational teams?

4. How might you integrate this awareness into future team work, either at university or in the workplace?

The highest scoring business reflective journals analysed for this study were found to unfold through three distinct stages:

Excavation ^ Reflection ^ Transformation

In the Excavation stage of the journals, successful student writers discussed their personal experiences of working on a multinational team assignment and described their behaviour towards team-mates. Examples include the 'bad habit of shallow listening' to team-mates' opinions or judging non-English speaking background peers as 'free-loaders'. In this stage students also explored hidden 'below the surface' values that underpinned their behaviour, for instance, the values of integrity and egalitarianism. In the subsequent Reflection stage, student writers discussed how their hidden values uncovered in the previous stage of the journal led to their inappropriate and ignorant behaviours towards their peers. In the final Transformation stage, the student writers pledged that their newly acquired intercultural competence skills would guide their behaviours in future teamwork situations.

The following section will provide textual evidence of one successful student's engagement with subjective meanings to build a value-laden constellation in a business reflective journal. Specifically, the sections below will explore what kind of values construct clusters and how those clusters are then organized into a partial constellation to reflect the 'ideal knower' in Business Studies.

Reasons for inappropriate behaviour: uncovering 'hidden' values

The first stage (i.e. the Excavation stage) of the high-scoring business reflective journals typically describes the student writers' experiences concerning a multinational team assignment, specifically, their negative experiences of teamwork, including negative judgements of their peers. This stage also reveals the 'below the surface' values that underpin students' negative attitudes towards their team-mates. It is the construction of these 'hidden' values that this chapter focuses on.

To begin, we will first investigate the types of evaluations and their targets (i.e. the instances we term 'evaluated' in this paper) in detail to understand how one of the high-scoring students explores the elements of Australian core culture that influenced her upbringing:

> I was taught about tales of the diggers of the gold rush, migrants working hard, wars in which our soldiers were **courageous** against imminent defeat, […].

As shown in Table 7.1, an instance of positive judgement **(courageous)** is used to spread positive charging over its target, our soldiers:

TABLE 7.1 An example of positive evaluation

evaluated	**evaluation**	**charging**
our soldiers	**courageous**	positive

Further analysis of the Excavation stage has revealed other instances of positive evaluations in the text. The following extract will illustrate that certain choices of evaluation can dominate longer stretches of text (even when there are no further instances of explicit evaluation) by occupying a dominant position at the beginnings or endings of texts (Hood, 2010; Martin and White, 2005). If we look at the extract from Text 2 below, we can see examples of these dominating evaluations at the beginning (e.g. values) and end of the text (fair go, equality, honesty, etc.):

> [Text 2] The core elements of culture according to (Solomon and Schell 2009) include, 'religious ideals, heroes, mythology, folklore, landscapes and history.' My **values** result little from religious ideals, as my family background is atheist. However, as an Australian born and bred, the history, heroes, mythology and folklore have impacted greatly upon my **values**, beliefs, morals and behaviour. Having been educated through the Australian schooling system I was taught about tales of the diggers of the gold rush, migrants **working hard**, wars in which our soldiers were **courageous** against imminent defeat, drovers and their wives, the indigenous dreamtime stories, the tale of Ned Kelly, William Buckley, larrikins and mateship, convicts and 'the sun burnt country'. Even the second verse of 'Advance Australia Fair' states that 'for those who've come across the sea, we've boundless plains to share', this notion of a '**fair** go' and **equality**, sharing, **honesty**, **humor**, comradery and 'having a stab' have been ***deeply engrained*** in me since birth, and hold ***great emphasis*** in my value system.

As shown in Table 7.2, there are few instances of explicit evaluation in this text. Instead, the instance **values** repeated twice functions to spread positive evaluation over several targets indicated by the underlined examples, which represent the student's Australian ideals (e.g. the indigenous dreamtime stories, William Buckley or mateship). Further, the instances ***deeply engrained*** and *hold* ***great emphasis*** *in my value system* at the end of the text provide positive implicit evaluation of the targets listed in the Table (e.g. sharing, **honesty**, etc.) Some of these targets can be further unpacked, for example, **honesty** can be unpacked as 'someone is **honest**' to make explicit the positive judgement it encodes (i.e. how truthful someone is). This reveals the positive evaluation encoded in these kinds of targets. By identifying these axiologically charged targets and the items that evaluate them we can thus retrieve what the student constructs as Australian values in the business reflective journal.

Further analysis of these targets reveals that the student is exploring the values underpinning her behaviour through the application of key theoretical concepts from Solomon and Schell's (2009) framework of intercultural competency,

TABLE 7.2 A repeated pattern of positive evaluation of Australian values

evaluated: Australian ideals	**evaluation**	**charging**
tales of the diggers of the gold rush migrants **working hard** wars in which our soldiers were **courageous** against imminent defeat drovers and their wives the indigenous dreamtime stories the tale of Ned Kelly William Buckley larrikins mateship convicts 'the sun burnt country'	**my values**	positive
the second verse of 'Advance Australia Fair': 'for those who've come across the sea, we've boundless plains to share' this notion of a '**fair** go' **equality** sharing **honesty** **humor** comradery 'having a stab'	***deeply engrained*** *and hold* ***great emphasis*** *in my value system*	positive

especially focusing on the core elements of culture. Each of these key concepts is individually unpacked by the student writer through the examples shown above. For example, the targets diggers of the gold rush, migrants working hard, wars and drovers and their wives can be traced back to the concept of 'history', one of the core elements of culture in the theoretical framework students are required to apply in their reflective assignments. As Table 7.2 has shown, these targets are positively charged by the instance 'my **values**'. By tracing them back to the theoretical concept, we are able to retrieve the positive axiological charging of meanings within the concept of 'history' despite its lack of explicit evaluation in the text. We will generalize the construction of 'history' as an axiological value illustrated by Figure 7.2 as a positively charged stabilized cluster.

Further analysis of the data has also revealed that high-achieving students assign axiological values to other theoretical concepts applied to the analysis of their values. We will explore these values in the following section.

Building a constellation of values

As we show below, the positively charged history cluster unpacked above is not the only cluster that was constructed in the student's reflective journal. Similar to

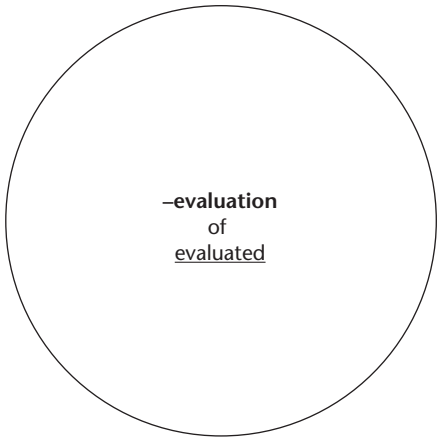

FIGURE 7.2 An example of a positively charged cluster in business

the construction of 'history' as an axiological value, for example, the term 'heroes' becomes associated with examples such as Ned Kelly and William Buckley; the concept 'folklore' can be unpacked as larrikins, mateship and the sun burnt country. Each of these concepts therefore represents a positively charged cluster. Together these clusters form a positively charged constellation of Australian values. The relationship between the clusters forming the constellation is visualized by Figure 7.3.

The construction of an axiological constellation through clusters of positively charged meanings allows student writers to omit explicit evaluation in subsequent

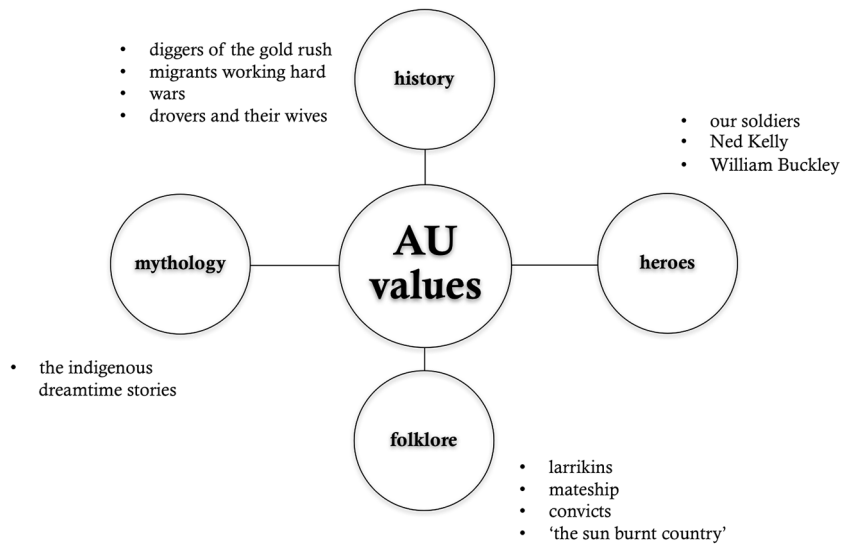

FIGURE 7.3 The construction of a positively charged constellation in Business Studies

mentions of the theoretical concepts from Solomon and Schell's (2009) framework of core elements of culture. By removing the explicit evaluations, the assumed positive charging of the concepts of history, folklore or heroes can now be taken for granted. In producing the constellation of Australian values, the student shows that her inappropriate behaviour towards her team-mates was influenced by a system of values that are not immediately visible to the reader. In doing so, she has aligned herself with the theoretical framework of 'intercultural competency', a skill highly valued in the context of business higher education, also considered essential for becoming a business practitioner capable of working in multinational environments.

While the business reflective journal above illustrated the construction of axiologically charged clusters which form a constellation of hidden values, the following section explores how such clusters and constellations are created in a Social Work reflective essay. The section below will show how one successful student demonstrates their capacity to align with the values that are privileged in the field of Social Work through the process of critical reflection.

Axiological cosmology in high-achieving critical reflection essays in Social Work

The high-achieving reflective essays in Social Work aim to prepare students to write for publication and focus on operationalizing critical reflection to 'derive clear theoretical and practice guidelines for further professional action' (Pockett and Giles, 2008, p. vii). Students were required to focus on 'their emerging identity as "new graduate social workers" about to enter the workplace' and were asked to '*select a critical incident* from their field education experience' (pp. 98–100). In order to help students 'maximise the learning they might make' and 'to interpret and guide the reflective process', they were provided with Fook's (2002) model of critical deconstruction and reconstruction (Pockett and Giles, 2008). The model consists of four stages:

1. *critical deconstruction* involves 'searching for contradictions, different perspectives and interpretations' (p. 92);
2. *resistance* involves 'refusing to accept or participate in aspects of dominant discourses which work to disempower, or perhaps render a situation unworkable because of this' (p. 95);
3. involves 'identification or labeling of both the existence and operation of discourses and that which is hidden, glossed over or assumed' (p. 96);
4. *reconstruction*, which 'involves formulating new discourses and structures' (p. 96).

The above overview of Fook's framework for critical reflection shows that students are expected to challenge the status quo and reinterpret their actions in light of disciplinary knowledge that they acquire over the course of their degree. Five

distinct stages were identified in the Social Work reflective writing task (see also Szenes *et al.*, 2015; Tilakaratna and Szenes, 2017a). They are as follows:

Introduction ^ Critical Incident[2] ^ Excavation ^ Transformation ^ Coda

Due to the length of the individual Social Work texts (3,000 words), illustrative examples from one Social Work essay will be presented in this chapter. In this essay, following a brief introduction to the task, the student narrates a 'problematic incident' encountered during her field placement in the Critical Incident stage of the text (Wieczorek, 2008). The narrative focuses on an instance when, as a young female apprentice social worker, she was subjected to verbal sexual harassment by a young male client attending a drug and alcohol rehabilitation programme. In the Excavation section that follows, the student contrasts her initial reaction (to report the incident with resulting consequences for the male client) with her understanding of the incident as a result of critical self-reflection from a disciplinary perspective. To do this, she identifies three major themes that she will focus on in her essay: 'power', 'gender' and 'boundaries'. In this chapter we specifically focus on the student's analysis of 'power' by exploring how she presents this concept through reference to the theoretical frameworks relevant to Social Work.

The section below shows the development of two clusters that allows the student to explore the concept of 'power', its construction in the discipline of Social Work and its influence on relations between social worker and client. This relationship is construed via two clusters: a positively charged cluster constructing the social worker as powerful and a negatively charged cluster constructing the client as powerless. The section below will demonstrate that these two clusters constitute a partial constellation of the field of Social Work.

Power and powerlessness in Social Work: revealing disciplinary values

In the first stage of the text, the Critical Incident, the student narrates the incident in which a client verbally sexually harasses her during a field placement. In the final 'Transformation' stage, she explains how she would change her future behaviour following her reflection on the critical incident and her understanding of her role as a social worker. In this stage, the student draws on the Australian Association of Social Work Code of Ethics to illustrate her understanding of the roles assigned to the social worker and the client in Social Work practice. As highlighted in the example below, both social worker and client function as the targets evaluated in the text:

> According to the AASW Code of Ethics, social workers **have an obligation to work for social justice** and **to advocate with and on behalf of the disadvantaged and the marginalised**.

> Working from an anti-oppressive stance, **I could endeavour to work in partnership wherever possible to assist** clients **to gain more control** over **their lives** and **to overcome the obstacles in meeting their aspirations** and **to ensure that their voices are heard in decision-making**.
>
> *(Payne, 1997, p. 250) (Wieczorek, 2008, p. 27)*

The above analysis of the literature on the social worker/client relationship reveals a repeated pattern of positive evaluations of the professional social worker as powerful and in control as shown in Table 7.3.

As in the business text explored in the previous section, the repeated pattern of positive evaluation targeting 'social workers' in general and the student as a social worker ('I') results in the formation of a positively charged stabilized cluster of the *social worker as powerful* as shown in Figure 7.4.

In contrast to the position of power that social workers occupy, the literature negatively evaluates clients' capacity by highlighting their inability to act. Table 7.4 illustrates this recurring pattern of negative evaluations targeting the client, which indicates their lack of control or '*powerlessness*':

Similar to the cluster of social worker as *powerful*, the pattern results in the formation of a negatively charged stabilized cluster. This cluster, where the client is constructed as *powerless* within the discipline of Social Work, is illustrated in Figure 7.5.

A further significant pattern that emerges is that the positively charged cluster of the *professional social worker as powerful* enters into a symbiotic relationship with the negatively charged cluster of *the client as powerless*. These oppositionally charged clusters of *professional as powerful* and *client as powerless* are shown in Figure 7.6.

It needs noting that the oppositional clusters in Figure 7.6 do not refer to a *specific* social workers and client, but 'social workers' and 'clients' as groups of people

TABLE 7.3 A pattern of positive charging of the professional social worker

evaluated: the social worker/I	**evaluation**	**charging**
social workers	**have an obligation to work for social justice**	positive
[social workers]	**to advocate with and on behalf of the disadvantaged and the marginalised**	positive
[I]	**working from an anti-oppressive stance**	positive
I	**could endeavour to work in partnership wherever possible**	positive
[I]	**to assist clients to gain more control over their lives**	positive
[I]	**to overcome the obstacles in meeting their aspirations**	positive
[I]	**to ensure that their voices are heard in decision-making**	positive

FIGURE 7.4 A positively charged cluster of the social worker as powerful

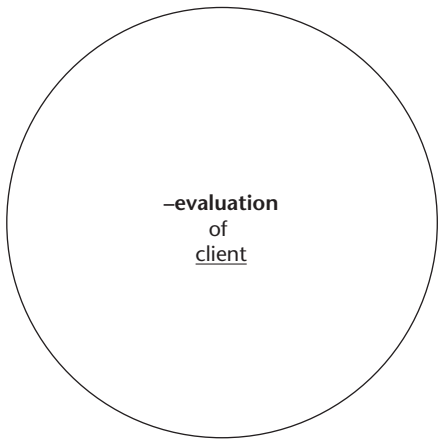

FIGURE 7.5 A negatively charged cluster of the client

TABLE 7.4 A pattern of negative charging of the client

evaluated: clients	**evaluation**	**charging**
[clients]	**the disadvantaged and the marginalised**	negative
clients	**to gain more control over their lives**	negative
clients	**to overcome the obstacles in meeting their aspiration**	negative
[clients]	**to ensure that their voices are heard in decision-making**	negative

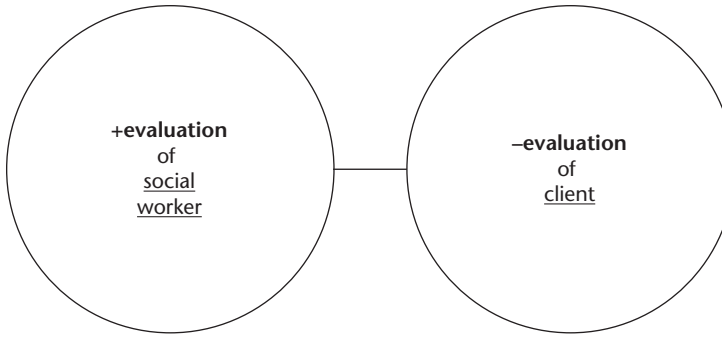

FIGURE 7.6 Oppositionally charged clusters in Social Work theory: 'social worker as powerful' and 'client as powerless'

who function *within the field of Social Work* with whom the student aligns herself. Significantly, these *generic* Social Work clusters (i.e. *social worker as powerful* and *client as powerless*) influence the student's interpretation of the relationship between her and the client, Jared, who verbally sexually harasses her in her field placement in the Excavation stage. In the final Transformation stage, the student presents her understanding of Social Work values in order to show why she interprets the critical incident in a specific and surprising way. Rather than finding Jared's behaviour unacceptable, the student explains that his response can be contextualized by the field of Social Work practice where power, inherent in her role as the professional social worker, remains in her hands. Further, she argues that Jared's inappropriate response must be interpreted as an attempt to 'subvert the power balance' (Wieczorek, 2008, p. 23), as giving him a 'voice' in an institutional context where the client is essentially powerless:

> On a structural level, it would be important to challenge policies and structures that serve to disempower young people, like Jared and strip them of choice … [t]he issues that would need to be explored relate to how social workers can work with involuntary clients to empower them to make decisions that lift them out of the state system into meaningful participation in society.

In the Transformation stage of the text the student reconstructs the disciplinary clusters illustrated in Figure 7.6 but this time with reference to the specific client, Jared, who was involved in this incident. This pattern of negative capacity of the client and his conflation with the generic role of the 'client' is shown in Table 7.5.

These instances can be contrasted against the social worker's role as represented by the student. She maintains that 'social workers' are clustered with the positive capacity to act to 'empower', 'make decisions' and 'lift [clients] out of the state

TABLE 7.5 A pattern of negative charging of the client's power

evaluated: client (Jared)	evaluation	charging
young people, like Jared	disempower	negative
them	strip … of choice	negative
clients	involuntary	negative

system'. The student thus reinterprets Jared's verbal sexual harassment from an institutional perspective and essentially reproduces the same oppositional clusters seen in Figure 7.6, i.e. *social worker as powerful* and *client as powerless*, but in relation to a specific social worker (herself) and client (Jared). This second set of oppositional clusters informed by her disciplinary gaze is illustrated in Figure 7.7.

Based on the above analysis, we can surmise that uncovering stabilized clusters of axiological meanings reveals the student's understanding of disciplinary values. Drawing on the Australian Association of Social Workers **(**AASW) Code of Ethics in the field of Social Work, the student social worker creates two sets of oppositionally charged stabilized clusters of *social worker as powerful* and *client as powerless*. As visualized by Figure 7.8, these clusters constitute a partial constellation of the field of Social Work.

Notably, by reinterpreting the incident the student establishes the constellation of privileged Social Work values in order to demonstrate her ability to reflect the cultivated gaze of Social Work. The following section will discuss the implications of making explicit the basis of achievement in business and Social Work reflective assignments in relation to disciplinary values.

Discussion of findings

In the introduction we argued that the way students engage with axiological meanings is often under-theorized in higher education research. By using LCT to make

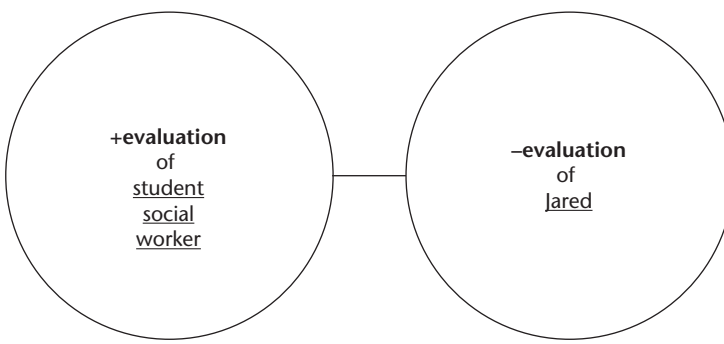

FIGURE 7.7 Oppositionally charged clusters contrasting the student social worker with her client

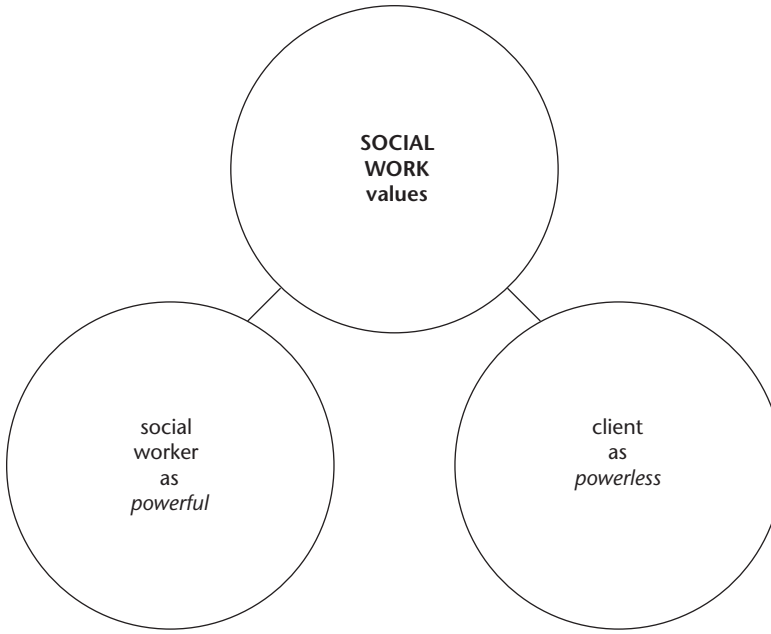

FIGURE 7.8 A partial constellation of Social Work values

these kinds of meanings visible we unpacked the axiological clusters that form partial constellations in two high-achieving students' reflective writing assignments from the fields of Business Studies and Social Work. In producing axiological constellations in their reflective writing, both students demonstrated their *alignment* with valorized disciplinary values in their respective fields.

This is a significant finding contrary to the arguments presented in the literature on critical reflection. Previous studies have emphasized the importance of critical reflection as a form of 'emancipatory education' (see Mezirow, 2003), which requires students to 'challenge the status quo' (see e.g. Brookfield, 2000; Crème, 2008; Fook, 2004; Fook and Morley, 2005). However, the findings of the current study do not support these emancipatory claims in previous research. For instance, in the Business reflective journal the student unquestioningly applied her internalized Australian values to justify her prejudices and negative judgement of her teammates during multinational teamwork. Similarly, the Social Work critical reflection essay drew on a range of literature to construct clusters of meaning that represent disciplinary Social Work values. These values were reflected in the student's analysis of the 'critical incident': despite the client's inappropriate comment, the student social worker maintained that even in an instance of clear vulnerability on her part, *the client was powerless* within the institutional and social structures of the field placement. In light of this, she argued that his comment was an attempt at 'regaining' power where he had none while she, as the social worker, remained in a position

of power over the client. One aspect common to both texts is that they demonstrate mastery of constructing axiologically charged clusters of meaning, in other words, they *align* with the disciplinary values of Business and Social Work rather than questioning or challenging them.

From a pedagogic perspective, then, we argue that both Business and Social Work students need to learn, through the use of clusters of axiological meanings, the axiological cosmologies underlying their disciplines to be able to demonstrate their capacity for critical self-reflection. Students are expected to move from common-sense understandings of events and unprofessional behaviour to professional and ethical behaviour and values upheld by their disciplines. However, students are rarely taught *explicitly* the process by which they are expected to re-interpret and transform their behaviour to align with disciplinary values. Our findings are similar to those of other studies that have used LCT to explore axiological cosmologies of particular fields. A project on the teaching and learning of history discourse in Australian secondary school classrooms (Martin *et al.*, 2010), for instance, revealed that students are not only required to learn the abstract concepts and events of history through a focus on epistemological knowledge but also the systems of 'right values', i.e. the axiologically loaded and 'ideologically invested' gazes of various historical perspectives (p. 435). Similarly, a study by Martin, Zappavigna and Dwyer (2013) on youth justice conferencing revealed that young offenders in the proceeding are given a number of personae they can affiliate with, all of which require them to display self-discipline as a social subject (p. 40).

Previous research also reports that while teachers laud critical reflection, students are often resentful of reflective writing tasks. Reasons include the lack of explicit pedagogy, unclear assessment criteria, the requirement to share personal and private matters, and the perception among students that reflective tasks have little relevance to traditional learning that takes place at university (O'Connell and Dyment, 2011; Sinclair Penwarden, 2006). We propose an additional reason why critical reflection is often met with resistance by students. According to Maton (personal communication), displaying capacity for critical reflection is an issue of social justice: not all students are able to demonstrate the mastery of constructing axiologically charged clusters and constellations that pedagogic research suggests is so highly valued across many academic disciplines. This means that an assignment type that has long been praised for enabling 'transformative learning' (Mezirow, 2003), expected to result in students' 'empowerment' (Fook *et al.*, 2016), can, in fact, disadvantage students who lack the cultivated gaze of their disciplines.

Concluding remarks

In recent years, reflective writing tasks which test students' critical reflection skills have been gaining popularity in higher education. The importance of equipping students with critical reflection skills is also emphasized in higher education research and policy documents. Reflective assignments are especially valued in applied disciplines where students often face difficult or problematic incidents that may trigger

an emotional and opinionated response. However, in higher education students are not explicitly taught how to engage with subjective meanings in their texts. Few studies explore how reflective writing tasks are designed to ensure that students can engage with subjective feelings by drawing on their understanding of theoretical frameworks from their individual disciplines. The ability to bring theory together with 'feelings' and 'opinions', we have argued elsewhere, is an important feature of reflective writing (Tilakaratna and Szenes, 2017a, 2017b). However, much less attention has been paid to the way students demonstrate their ability to move beyond merely expressing their emotions or opinions to relating these to privileged values in their disciplinary fields. By drawing on the concept of *axiological cosmologies* from LCT, we made visible the processes by which high-scoring students engage with subjective meanings in higher education assessment tasks. For reasons of space, we focused only on two illustrative texts from Business Studies and Social Work. We conclude by arguing that using a common descriptive framework for analyzing knowledge practices in individual disciplines allows us to make visible and *compare* valued reflective practices across two distinct disciplinary fields.

In this chapter we have argued that the construction of axiologically charged clusters of meanings that form a constellation of social and disciplinary values in the business and Social Work texts represents a *reproduction* of these values rather than a challenge to them. We have demonstrated that LCT offers a useful framework for making explicit the nature of these reproduced axiological cosmologies and their application to everyday experiences that allow students to demonstrate their capacity to align with discipline-specific values. If, as our analysis of these high-scoring texts appear to suggest, reproduction of these values is the basis for success in reflective writing tasks in these disciplines, then we need to also account for the implications of this research and the potential pedagogical interventions it could contribute to. In Maton's terms, students need to learn the axiological cosmologies of the field because:

> one's intellectual choices classify and they morally classify the classifier. They show whether your heart is in the right place, your aesthetic, ethical, moral or political affiliations correct, and so whether you are one of us or one of them
> *(2014, p. 163)*

Not only has using the LCT concept of axiological cosmologies for analyzing reflective assignments enabled us to challenge the *emancipatory* claims of critical reflection, it has also enabled us to uncover that successful critical reflection at undergraduate level appears to be a sophisticated form of *uncritical* reproduction.

Notes

1. In the old *Bachelor of Commerce* degree.
2. Throughout this chapter *Critical Incident* with initial letters capitalized will refer to the generic stage, while *critical incident* with lowercase letters will be used to refer to the actual event the student social worker discusses in her assignment.

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