Advances in Social Work and Welfare Education

A refereed journal of the Australian Association for Social Work and Welfare Education

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Advances in Social Work and Welfare Education

Volume 3, Number 1

November 2000

Advances in Social Work and Welfare Education is published by the Australian Association of Social Work and Welfare Education, c/- Department of Social Work and Social Policy, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Victoria, Australia.

Printed by Printing Edge Melbourne Pty Ltd, Preston.

ISSN 1329 - 0584

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EDITORIAL

Social Work and Welfare Education in Australia: Setting the Agenda

As Australian social work and welfare educators, where should we set our sights in the year 2000? What are the issues and challenges, and how can we provide leadership in addressing them?

Our contexts - political, economic and cultural - as always, influence how we conceptualise our challenges, and the ways in which we might act: how we structure our educational programs and the structures from which we offer them; how we teach our material; and the content we focus on. Yet how can we set the agenda, when our changing contexts seem to control our ways of working? As a way of helping to organise our thinking about future directions, we outline the following overview which crystallises the current challenges of context and some possible directions which we might take in terms of structure, teaching methods and curriculum content.

In Australia, as in much of the western world, funding cuts in the public sector have hit tertiary educational institutions. The irony in Australia however is that this coincides with a growth in demand for social work education and a projected growth in the community services industry. Social work and welfare course intake in Australia grows steadily whilst staffing numbers decrease. These cuts in staffing have also meant internal institutional restructuring. In many cases this has meant that social work and welfare has become relatively disenfranchised, losing autonomy and identity as they become one small area within much larger departmental structures. In many cases in universities, professorial positions are lost to social workers, and the professional leadership becomes downgraded to Associate Professor or Senior Lecturer levels. How long can those of us in institutions who exploit our courses tolerate this situation?

Other inequalities might flow from such a situation. For example, funding cuts have meant that staff in recent contract positions were not renewed. Since it is well known that women occupy the bulk of shorter term and lower status positions, we must be vigilant to ensure that the gender balance in staffing does not become even more skewed.

How can we use the strengths if we are to strengthen our positions in our various institutions? For example, industry partnerships, professionalism, employability and life long learning, are high on the tertiary educational agenda. These are areas in which social work and welfare have long-standing track records. How can we develop these to provide leadership within our institutions? How can we give a new take on these themes, and resell them in the current environment? Our models of community consultation, field education, workplace learning and continuing education might be reworked to model 'cutting edge' developments.

At the same time, notions of professionalism and employment are changing in ways which we, as educators and researchers, must take account of. As employment becomes more short-term and contract-based, and as managerial and bureaucratic culture competes with professional autonomy, it is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain traditional notions of professionalism. How can we provide leadership in preserving the desirable aspects of professionalism - the commitment to value ideals of social justice and ethical practice for one - whilst also demonstrating the very concrete skills and abilities of professionals? How can we claim both without devaluing the other? As both educators and researchers we should be focusing on the ways in which skills and techniques are also value-based - they are not mutually exclusive phenomena.

There are many new and innovative methods which allow this more complex conceptualisation of practice as both techniques and values. Many of these educational approaches are already familiar to us, such as the holistic, experiential and reflective methods. Coincidentally, these approaches also allow for better access to learning by diverse people and groups, so they are more inclusive as methods. They are also excellent methods for use in the workplace and for continuing education. Again, we are well placed within our institutions to lead the way in these more innovative approaches, and at the same time to further our ideals of access and participation in tertiary education. These sorts of approaches might also be used to attract students, in an era where many areas struggle for student enrolments.

Given the changes in the nature of employment, we need to develop a diversity of ways to provide education, other than the basic degree or diploma programs. Articulation between programs is an established way of doing this, as is Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). We also need to keep the possibility of studying by distance on the agenda. Newer ways might be the development of short courses which might articulate into formal award programs. We also need to revisit the issue of generic versus specialist courses, depending on need and demand in particular localities. Communication and information technologies are useful in developing innovative educational modes accessible in and from a variety of settings.

And what of curriculum content? Interestingly, Australia is in a ripe position to pick up on areas of concern globally. Indigenous issues are high on the international agenda. We have a multicultural and multi-ethnic population, with the potential to develop notions of complex identities and emerging ethnicities. We are seen as one of the leading countries in terms of literature around critical practice. Australia is acknowledged to be one of the countries in which the social work profession adheres most strongly to the ideals of social justice. Where we need to develop is in our commitment to social development in practice, an approach which should sit easily with many of our existing ideals.

In the year 2000 we have the capacity to provide leadership within our own institutions, and on a global level, with regard to the issues that have always mattered to our professions. What we would like to see in upcoming issues of this journal is more articles which speak to these issues. It is time to showcase more of our strengths. A number of the articles in this issue begin to explore these issues. We welcome and encourage more submissions in this vein.

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The Monster in All of Us? Implications of the Port Arthur Massacre for Mental Health Education

Lister Bainbridge

Introduction

On several occasions in the past few years, the world has responded with horror and bewilderment at a number of seemingly senseless mass slayings that have taken place in public places and in schools. Closest to home, of course, was the Port Arthur massacre of 1996, the reverberations of which are still being felt across the nation.

What sense, if any, can be made of such phenomena? What do they tell us of the nature of the relationship between individual and collective violence? More specifically, in the context of this journal, what are the implications of such occurrences for social work and welfare education? How do students deal with such issues? These are some of the questions that arose for me as a social work educator in response, in particular, to the Port Arthur massacre of April 28, 1996.

This paper constitutes a modified version of a talk to social work and welfare teaching colleagues at the AASWWE Conference in Melbourne in October 1996. As such it offers an account of some personal and student responses to the events at Port Arthur including ontological views about sanity and madness; and, some reflections on the ways such materials (and theories about them) may be appropriately addressed in curricula concerning the relationship between social work practice and mental health.

The paper makes no claim to offering any last word on any of these issues. It is not rigorously academic, but is intended rather to act as a catalyst to the thinking and reflection of other social work educators concerned about how issues such as Port Arthur are considered and 'treated' in social work curricula.

The Port Arthur Massacre: Some Initial Questions

On the surface, the events at Port Arthur seem to constitute a straightforward act of brutality. A host of epithets and labels tumble out. The perpetrator must be deranged, nasty, horrible, brutal; he must be sociopathic, psychopathic, manic-depressive,

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A version of this article was originally presented at the AASWWE Conference, Melbourne in 1996.

schizophrenic, mentally defective etc. Yet, one by one, such labels need to be discarded. They offer answers that are too easy, too glib. It's not that simple.

It is all too easy to categorise: people, plants and butterflies. Port Arthur was a depository for the villains of England, a beautifully constructed penitentiary to make sure that 'bad' men paid for their sins. (Their guards had the right to inflict more heinous offences on the inmates than most of the prisoners had committed.) The Port Arthur Penitentiary was not far removed from Jeremy Bentham's model of the Panopticon which Foucault (1977) records in detail. Incarceration was part of the 'grand plan' of industrialisers, colonisers, the rich and the newly found professionals of all sorts of categories. All of these groups were part and parcel of a not entirely new, but *different* set of dominant/subordinate relationships and nearly all of them toed the line to the new order.

Yet this 'grand plan' did not tell us much about dissenters who are excluded, suppressed, delegitimised, rendered mad, imbecilic or childish (Behabib 1992). We know little of the world view of those who deviated from the standard Western rationality, the 'petits recits' of women, children, fools and imbeciles: we know little of perspectives 'from the margins'.

Was it a coincidence that this massacre took place at the site of one of England's most brutal penitentiaries, one that was intrinsic to a colonisation process which also involved the systematic genocide of the Aboriginal people of Tasmania? Was it a coincidence that this massacre was closely following a public Anzac Day holiday (Thursday 25th) which celebrates a huge number of sacrificial deaths of Australians fighting for a cause a long way away from their Australian homes?

What is the nature of the interplay between individual and collective pathology and the often unconscious relationship between individual, family and cultural norms? What is the relationship here between the inner and the outer, the personal and the political? Why is it that the helping professions seem to be unable to address these issues? What is the significance and importance of the role that social welfare workers can play?

These are some of the questions that I found myself asking in immediate response to the tragedy. I was particularly concerned about how these events impacted on students and, as part of that, upon my teaching of a core fourth-year subject in the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) curriculum at James Cook University, *Social Work and Mental Health.*

Teaching *Social Work and Mental Health*: Some Issues

The subject, *Social Work and Mental Health*, for fourth year BSW students, was introduced at James Cook University (JCU) in 1995. I had 'trialled' the main themes of this subject in a paper I gave to the AASWWE (Australian Association for Social Work and Welfare Education) conference in Perth in 1994. I found this very useful and am most grateful for a wide range of comments and constructive criticisms from AASWWE

delegates at that conference. This helped greatly in enabling the new subject to kick off successfully in 1995.

This new subject replaced a much more positivist, psychology-oriented subject called *Psychopathology*, a legacy of the days at JCU when social work was a by-product of a department heavily dominated by the hegemony of psychology and geared to the accreditation needs of the Australian Psychological Society rather than the Australian Association of Social Workers.

The new subject offers a more specific focus on the social and cultural bases of mental well-being rather than on biomedical, genetic and categorical forms of 'mental illness'. Some of the major themes underlying the course include: sociological concepts of self and other; us and them; feminist discourse about the dominant/subordinate relations in patriarchal society; labelling theory and the general disability discourse around the amplification of deviance; and psychoanalytical notions from object relations theory, including splitting, repression and projective identification.

It is within the context of such ideas and insights, that the subject tries to make sense of the social construction of sanity and madness and their various ontologies.

Such an approach, however, does not have immediate appeal to all students. For many of them, it appears that 'legitimate' expertise in mental health matters lies in the domain of psychiatry, the neurosciences and biomedicine. It can be argued that this response is typical of the 'power and knowledge spiral', described by Foucault. For Foucault, forms of knowledge such as psychiatry and criminology are directly related to the exercise of power. There is a spiral of power and knowledge where political economy (which includes, of course, multinational drugs and armament companies) directs the development of knowledge *while at the same time professional knowledge may or may not be the producer of positive change.* This power creates new objects of knowledge and accumulates new bodies of information which are faithfully passed on to the public and which become part of our assumptive world (Cohen 1985). However, these bodies of information may not necessarily be in the public interest. Moreover, the public is led to internalise them in ways that are quite insidious. It is not a simple question of power as a direct form of repression, constraint, coercion or prohibition. Rather, power *produces* reality, it *produces* domains of objects and rituals of truth (Sarup 1993).

The way this happens is not through a straightforward top-down approach 'where those in authority exert various forms of coercive restraint upon the more or less compliant subjects' (Sarup 1993, p.74; see also Cohen 1985, p.173). Rather the control of knowledge is secured by persuading us to internalise those values and norms which support the dominant set of relations and which prevail within the social order. These become social constructions to which all of us are susceptible, which become part of our assumptive world and which therefore shape our ontologies of sanity and madness, of good and evil.

My experience is that most students, when they begin *Social Work and Mental Health*, have internalised the 'dominant paradigm' which sees madness and badness contained almost totally within the notion of individual pathology and therefore requiring individual, one-on-one treatment from an *expert*. The power of this is very strong and hard to throw off in spite of the fact that these students are well advanced in a social work degree. As Kleinman observes, 'biology has cachet with psychiatrists; anthropology and sociology do not' (1988 p.73). There does not appear to be much of a place for social justice and human rights, let alone issues of alienation and the labour market, in such an ontological framework. In the field of social work and mental health, this cachet embodies a huge hurdle for students, *a double indemnity* which many fear to challenge. Nevertheless, the investigation of the implications of the 'dominant paradigm' is vital if students are to develop a viable personal philosophy of practice which can be sustained in their future work.

Student Responses to Port Arthur

It was several days after the tragedy, before the *Social Work and Mental Health* class was scheduled to meet, and there was still a profound sense of shock across the nation. I was aware of the concern expressed by a number of students and colleagues regarding the massacre. Some discussion, some airing, some debriefing was needed.

When the class met, I introduced the topic and two hours later our discussion had to be curtailed, only because another class was banging on the doors.

At the start I asked for expressions of what people felt. Immediately one student said very vehemently that all she wanted to do was to get a really sharp knife and cut 'that bastard' to pieces. I was shocked. I had been unprepared for the depth of feeling and reaction that remained simmering after the event.

Many in the class of 30 students were also shocked and we decided it was important to set some group norms for this discussion. We decided first that anybody should be allowed to express exactly how they felt without fear of a negative response. There was no need to be 'politically correct.' Second, anybody was free to present personal experiences in a climate of absolute confidentiality from both sides of the perpetrator/victim 'divide', in recognition that a person's focus and reaction would reflect 'where they were coming from.' Third, we should be looking to make sense of all this in terms of social justice in general, and in terms of working towards a personal philosophy of practice in particular. Fourth, we agreed to observe collectively the one-minute silence which had been nationally announced and planned for 10.30 am.

What followed was both painful and very moving. A whole range of feelings came out. First, there was hatred, anger, the wish for summary justice toward the killer. Second, there was a genuine sense of compassion for and a professional attempt to understand the killer. Third, there was a real concern for the dead and the impact of the events on their families and loved ones. Fourth, there was a genuine interest in how social workers

would cope with this. Fifth, at a more abstract level, hung the question: why? In many ways this permeated the discussion and led to the discussion of a vast array of issues concerning moral philosophy, values and ethics, modernism and postmodernism, gender relations, 'heavy metal' and so on. (I'm using 'heavy metal' here as a generic term for patriarchal control and violence.)

The range of responses was considerable. Some normally articulate students were clearly numbed by their sense of horror. Others readily related the horror to their own personal experiences of violence. Some wrote poetry. This range is perhaps best exemplified on the one hand by the student with the sharp knife who simply wanted to cut 'the bastard' to pieces and on the other by a student who had already penned a letter to the local newspaper in which she decried the immediate labelling of the killer as schizophrenic, thus loading further our own projections onto an already disadvantaged group.

Gradually, out of the whole discussion and range of perspectives, emerged one common denominator: the strong possibility that there was a potential monster in all of us. Some of the discussion that led to this conclusion is reported further below.

Students and the 'Binary' Response

In view of the strength of the dominant paradigm, with its prevailing pattern of dominant/subordinate relationships, it is perhaps hardly surprising then that the media reacted to the Port Arthur tragedy by demonising the perpetrator and by distancing him from 'normal' people. Various accounts labelled him schizophrenic, intellectually disabled or just simply weird. It was far too painful and dangerous an idea to contemplate that a normal person could commit such a terrible act. To defend against this pain he had to be fitted into an easy diagnostic slot, and endowed with a particular kind of pathology. He had to be made into the 'other', one of 'them', to reassure the rest of 'us' that we would never do such a thing, we were not one of 'them'.

In short, the media response was to regress and to resort to the binary system of oppositions, finding comfort in the socially constructed definitions between mental health and mental disorders, normal and criminal behaviour and madness and civilised, 'rational', 'normal' society. A good example of the civilised, rational and normal society was given by a member of the Firearms Owners Association on ABC radio a few weeks later (on Tuesday, May 7, 1996):

> I tell you what the community has had enough of...the community has had enough of these disturbed people full of Prozac and other prescription drugs pumped into them by psychiatrists, shooting down Australian citizens. That's what the community is sick of and this attack on our fundamental rights is not going to address the real problem.

Such responses were very relevant and pertinent for a class of *Social Work and Mental Health* students. As indicated earlier, they were able make some progress in

deconstructing this public reaction and to arrive at a consideration of 'the monster in all of us', acknowledging that all of us have 'good bits' and 'bad bits', 'sane bits' and 'mad bits'. The discussion was valuable in enabling us to ponder how we create social constructions of what is good and bad, sane and mad, and create repositories for those whose behaviour complies with these constructions. We also considered how these repositories also serve to contain our own mad or bad bits leaving us all feeling saner and 'gooder', especially if the repositories are not in our own back yard; how the social construction of 'them' has a rebound effect which comfortably changes the social construction of ourselves. We also considered how, when this comfortable position is threatened, as in the case of Port Arthur, the media obediently fulfil their social obligation to rescue 'us'. We considered how our culture requires this splitting of the good and bad, the sane and mad, to be maintained; how it appears that there is an absolute requirement in patriarchal capitalist culture for this splitting to be maintained in the form of a dominant/subordinate (us/them) set of relations across a wide spectrum of cultural elements. We considered the great human cost to this, of course, with a residual welfare system engaged in simply band-aiding the victims.

This process left us with many questions. What is the relationship between individual pathology or evil and cultural pathology or evil, a question which the media avoided like the plague? Little was conveyed about Port Arthur's historical redolence of horrible brutality at the cultural level and discussions about gun control soon took over. Whilst this did allow scope for consideration of the potential monster in all of us, in many ways the gun control debate served as a decoy to the real issue - our cultured and gendered propensity for hate, madness and murder. This process conveniently created yet another win-lose construction, another binary opposition.

What is Legal and Normal?

Back in the 1960s, Ronnie Laing made the comment that 'normal men have killed about 100,000,000 other normal men in the last 50 years or so'. A recent book by Daniel Goldhagen, titled *Hitler's Willing Excecutioners* (1996), describes how easily the ordinary man in the street can be become compliant in committing the most terrible atrocities. Is it this splitting mechanism in western culture that seems so pervasive, so immanent, that allows the monster in all of us to emerge so easily?

Clearly, the killings at Port Arthur are manifestly criminal and illegal. But how do we decide what other killings are legal? In his book titled *Power and Prospects,* Chomsky (1996) describes how, when he arrived at Sydney Airport in January 1995, the first headline to greet him announced that Australia intended to sell to Indonesia $100 million worth of rifles. These rifles were considered to be the most advanced and deadly rifle in the Asia-Pacific region. This was the largest and most lucrative defence deal Australia has struck with Indonesia. Yet far from responding with shock and horror at this clear cultural collusion with murder, *The Australian* newspaper commented that 'the interests of our long-term relationship with Indonesia and the continuing viability of our domestic defence industry make it desirable that this opportunity be pursued as vigorously as

possible'. In view of the Indonesian government's human rights record, is not this a sanitised, almost trivialised distortion of a horrible collusion in murder?
When there is such confusion and pretence about what constitutes legal or illegal murder, there surely has to be a follow-on effect at the individual level. (*The National Council for Women Agenda 2000* makes this connection clear, in particular the gendered nature of instrumental violence at the international level). Many authors such as Benhabib (1992), Burack (1994), Richards (1984) and Fromm (1973) have looked in detail at the gendered socialisation processes which lead to this violence at both individual and cultural levels.

Conclusion

This short paper has taken a journey into an elusive arena which encompasses both the individual and the cultural and suggests that the relationship between the two is systematically distorted and fractured at great human cost. Whilst an important area of research in its own right, the research dollars go to less critical, more compliant areas.

Nevertheless, some are making the links. Warner (1985) traces the increase in the incidence of schizophrenia following industrialism and the specific effects of the political economy both on prevalence and resistance to recovery. Another observer, Frosh (1991, p.136), comments:

> Psychosis acts out something deeper in western culture; when embodied in the schizophrenic individual, it is an internalization of a pathology which is widespread. What schizophrenia reveals by its parody of politics is how mad political life is - how divorced from its own emotional roots, how deeply founded on the repression of real needs, how completely caught up and distorted it is by the acting out of phantasies of power.'

Clearly Frosh is pointing to the reciprocity of the individual and cultural, the personal and the social.

I believe this matrix to be a crucial over-arching framework for the study of mental health in social work and welfare courses that are grounded in a social justice context. I believe it is far more helpful for our students to emerge with an understanding of the damaging effects of binary thinking on social welfare practice than with a clear set of black and white 'prescriptions' for practice.

As always the education process should at least lead us to ask the right questions, even if the right answers remain elusive. My hope is that these reflections and observations, incomplete and anecdotal though they may be, may assist others to do the same.

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Constructing a Curriculum: Introducing Social Work Students to Corrections

John Dawes

Introduction

In 1998 and again in 1999, the Department of Social Administration and Social Work at the Flinders University of South Australia invited me, as a guest lecturer, to teach a half-semester elective on *Social Work and Corrections* within the topic *Social Work in Selected Settings*. Well, you might say, there is nothing unusual in that! Nothing unusual except that I am not a member of the University staff but a social worker for 30 years, most of which was spent working with offenders, including 11 years as the Chief Executive Officer of the South Australian Department of Correctional Services. Perhaps I can more accurately be described as a gaoler! I am aware that 'casual' teachers in universities have been referred to as 'gypsies' and amateurs. Both terms suggest the possibility of mediocrity and a failure to engage with students. I wanted to avoid these pitfalls and this paper will describe and analyse the *curriculum development* process and *curriculum elements* (Print 1993, p.xvii) against the backdrop of the unique social work philosophical and ethical framework and the construction of 'clients' suggested by social work thinking (AASW 1994). I did *not* simply wish to provide an introductory course in criminology, where the subject matter is studied and considered for its intrinsic interest. Rather I wished to approach criminological topics in a way which I thought would appeal to student social workers by 'tuning in' to where they were intellectually in their social work program and where they would be likely to gain employment. It was my task to construct a course (Print 1993, p.xvii) which would assist novice social workers as they begin to practise in a 'contradictory and perplexing profession' (Ife 1997, p.x) or a profession that 'reconfigures itself continuously' (Berman-Rossi 1994, p.198), but not necessarily within corrections. The material had to be presented in a way which did not overwhelm students and, to meet this requirement, a person-centred social justice framework was chosen rather than a purely legal, political or managerial framework. The curriculum process used was a 'dynamic' or 'interactive' approach (Print 1993, p.74) rather than a 'rational' or 'cyclical' one (Print 1993, pp.60-74). This enabled me to meet the deadlines set and work both backwards and forwards rather than in a linear fashion, especially given my relatively late introduction to university teaching. Hitherto, I had

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He would like to acknowledge the helpful comments of the two anonymous reviewers.

operated largely on an intuitive level but with some reflection upon my own university experiences. The curriculum assumes that working with offenders and prisoners is important and is based on our common humanity.

Situational Analysis

A situational analysis 'is a detailed examination of the context into which a curriculum is to be placed' (Print 1993, p.109). The results of that examination inform the development of the curriculum. So the background to the worth of teaching an elective on *Social Work and Corrections* is linked to the development of social work practice.

Social work practice had its origins in religion and philanthropy during the late 19th century (AASW 1994, p.1; Lee 1994, p.39). It came about as concerned citizens, usually motivated by religion, attempted to ameliorate some of the social by-products of the Industrial Revolution and unrestrained capitalism (Lee 1994, p.44; Lewis 1992, p.78; Abbott and Wallace 1990). Concern for others was a driving force as was concern for their morality (Reamer 1995, p.6). It was thought that some form of moral defect was the cause of their problems (Reamer 1995, p.6). The intellectual origins of social casework spring from Mary Richmond's *Social Diagnosis*, published in 1917 (Barber 1991, p.15) as does (at least in the USA), the fledgling *profession* of social work.

While the terms 'statutory' (or non-voluntary) and 'voluntary' were not used by the early social workers about their clients, balancing competing demands of a society wishing to assist poor, marginalised and often oppressed people and, at the same time, having to exercise some control over those persons, has always been at the centre of work for social workers (Ife 1997, p.x). During the early part of the 20th century, as structural factors (such as unemployment, changing terms of trade and the aftermath of wars and depressions) began to be understood, social work thinkers saw the need for reform (Reamer 1995, p.6).

After the Great Depression, a schism in social work saw the profession take two directions. The Diagnostic group, heavily influenced by psychoanalytic thinking, developed private practice in therapeutic work, while the other stream, known as the Functionalists, continued with public welfare (Reamer 1995, p.15; Yelajar 1986; Kendall 1986, p.xiv). The two schools of social work eventually merged. A further period of continuing structural reform incorporating feminist issues occurred after the Second World War as other forms of oppression (gender-based) became better understood (Dominelli and McLeod 1989, p.2).

In Australia, many social workers found employment in programs having their origins in the welfare state or in the criminal justice system and so they were mainly employed by state agencies (see, for example, Martin 1990, p.243 and 286). The dichotomy of statutory (or non-voluntary) and voluntary clients serves to mask a more complex reality. A statutory or so-called 'non-voluntary' client can be voluntary, in so far as seeking out a social work service is concerned. For example, a prisoner who seeks out a social worker and asks for assistance is a voluntary client, even though she/he is in custody and

deprived of personal freedom. The status of 'statutory' client, a more preferable term than 'non-voluntary', does not inevitably mean an unwilling, uncooperative client, although it is conceded that many correctional clients may be unwilling participants in programs. The debate over non-voluntary clients is an old one in social work and has not been adequately resolve (Ife 1997, p.146; Roberts 1990, pp.141-142; Turner 1979, p.47), although Barber (1991) and Trotter (1999) have offered methodologies for working with statutory and non-cooperative clients in corrections. Ife (1997, p.146) asks whether social workers should continue to define roles in child protection and corrections (to which could be added guardianship (Dawes 1998)) as legitimately within the area of social work. He concludes that not to regard such work as social work could be to deny a future to the profession and university schools of social work, thereby leaving the work for others, perhaps less qualified and able (Ife 1997, p.146), a situation which the current ethos of cutting costs and privatising already facilitates.

Constructing the Program

The limited *situational analysis* (Print 1993, p.110) described above suggested a program on *Social Work and Corrections* which would be *more* than an introduction to criminology. The topic would pay attention to the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) ethical emphases of 'Commitment to Social Justice'[1] and 'Client Self Determination' by discussing the equity and structural issues as they relate to social work practice (AASW 1994). Perhaps the clash between the social work ethical emphases of 'Commitment to Social Justice' and 'Client Self Determination'[1] and correctional philosophy and practice is more apparent than real. Given that social workers are meant to foster social responsibility on the part of clients (AASW 1994, p.2), this can be seen to extend to cover work with offenders being supervised in the community as well as work with prisoners (providing the work role is more than just routine supervision of offenders reporting to a centre in the community or prisoners simply being warehoused, increasingly the trend in Australia's crowded prison systems[2]).

The *aim* of the topic (Print 1993, p.122) was stated as: *to introduce students to some of the contemporary issues associated with social work practice in corrections and current thinking about the criminal justice system and the punishment of offenders.* It was suggested to students that social workers will meet and need to engage with people (offenders) in a variety of social work settings, for example, counselling agencies, general and mental health services and within correctional and after-care agencies. In addition, social workers work with individuals and groups aiming to prevent crime, or, if crime has occurred, to minimise the impact upon the victim. This can include attempting to create new opportunities for the victimised person to accept the results of the crime, and the many losses associated with the crime, and to move forward. Sometimes, victims can also be offenders. A social justice and structural example used to illustrate dual status persons was the problem in persuading the local rape counselling service to provide services for male prisoners who had been sexually assaulted while in prison. For many years, their gender and status proved too big an obstacle.

The more specific *goals* (Print 1993, p.124) suggested that, at the completing of the module, students should be able to:

- Discuss how we measure crime and our responses to crime, including our responses to victims;
- Recognise contemporary factors experienced by minority groups and Aborigines;
- Have an understanding of restorative justice, women and imprisonment, prisoner health and communicable diseases and deaths in custody.

Obviously, in six weeks and 18 hours classroom time, curriculum content has to be limited and carefully chosen to meet the aim of the elective.

The Nature of Curriculum in Social Work

Curriculum can be understood as a discourse or way of speaking about a subject. In social work, a number of discourses converge. Social work is an applied discipline and, in addition to its own thinking, has borrowed from the 'pure' disciplines of history, philosophy, biology, psychology, sociology, theology and law.

Another way of conceptualising curriculum is to consider it as a series of *interlocking* discourses. Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery and Taubman (1996) identify a number of discourses in modern curriculum studies. In constructing the curriculum for social work and corrections, historical 'text' and political, racial, gender, phenomenological and postmodern 'texts' were used. There could also be autobiographical/biographical, aesthetic and theological texts.[3] The following discussion will make this clear.

Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery and Taubman (1996, p.404) suggest that 'phenomenologists would probably not use the notion of 'text', but rather a disciplined, rigorous effort to understand experience profoundly and authentically' (p.405). A visit, in week five, to a disused Victorian-era prison building in Adelaide provided a basis for a profound and authentic experience. Adelaide Gaol is a quasi-Benthamite panopticon closed in 1988, the bicentennial year of European settlement in Australia. Adelaide Gaol is a visible 'architectural mass' which gave the students a chance to reflect and write about the experience of visiting this old institution - a place for inflicting 'pain'. Students were locked in a cell for a few minutes and asked to imagine living from 4.30pm to 7.45am in such a space. The cells are 'caves'. There are no windows and little natural light seeps under the door and an inadequate artificial light makes little difference to the gloom. Often two prisoners shared such an unsewered cell and were therefore forced to complete bodily functions (using a bucket and, just prior to the closure of the gaol, a 'PortaPotti') in a room about the size of a bathroom in a private house. Students were profoundly affected by this experience and, in students' assessments of the 1998 course, recommended that the visit should remain in the course if it was taught in a subsequent year.

Curriculum Content

The content of the topic included consideration of the criminal justice system, women as offenders and victims, prisoner health and mortality and restorative justice.

The Criminal Justice System

It is accepted that the major components of the criminal justice system are the police and prosecutors, the courts and corrections, supported by the law and Parliament, but that it also involves other agencies such as child protection services and aspects of the work of the Family Court. The roles of police and courts were not discussed in great detail but students were introduced to the concepts of police discretion including dominion and majoritarian approaches (Braithwaite 1992, pp.12-39), due process and the rights of victims. Much more time was spent considering corrections because social workers are employed in correctional agencies. Foucault (1977) provides the starting point:

> From the point of view of the law, detention may be a mere deprivation of liberty. But the imprisonment that performs this function has always involved a technical project. The transition from the public execution, with its spectacular rituals, its art mingled with the ceremony of pain, to the penalties of prisons buried in architectural masses and guarded by the secrecy of administrations, is not a transition to an undifferentiated, abstract, confused penalty; it is the transition from one art of punishing to another, no less skilful one. (p.257)

If detention is a mere deprivation of liberty and we live in one nation, why, if you live for example in the Northern Territory or Queensland, do you run a greater risk of being imprisoned if you are young and male? (refer endnote 3). The constitutional answer is inadequate. Why is the New South Wales imprisonment rate twice that of Victoria's? A reference to crime rates does not provide the answer. Crime has to be understood as a constructed phenomenon. Crime is behaviour which is regarded as serious at a particular point in time by lawmakers and may be punished by a sanction imposed by the state. Changing views in the community about abortion, on the one hand, and drink-driving on the other, illustrate movement both ways. Students were asked to consider when the label 'criminal' should apply to behaviour. For example, is a person who incurs a speeding fine a criminal? And when is the label removed or no longer applied? Does one cease to be a 'speeder' or 'criminal' when the offence is expiated by paying the fine? Does someone convicted of murder remain a 'murderer' for the rest of her/his life? These are important questions if you are a social worker employed to supervise prisoners on parole and you are trying to assist your client to reintegrate into the community, to find employment or housing and to cope with the sense of feeling different and perceptions of being noticed on the streets.

Students considered the possibility that governments may not make the best use of taxpayers' dollars when they take strong positions on law and order, especially when these approaches are adopted for potential electoral benefit (such as the 'three strikes and

you're in' and zero tolerance policing notions[4]). Indeed, they may even adopt contradictory positions with respect to United Nations (UN) treaties. When it is expedient, governments appeal to UN treaties and conventions. These are not seen as eroding sovereignty even though they may lead to globalisation and competitiveness. However, treaty obligations can be devalued when international treaties are seen as setting standards which are not reachable and when the apply to marginalised and oppressed groups in the community such as prisoners (e.g. *United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Offenders and Related Recommendations*).

An examination of the barriers to reducing imprisonment rates and the impact of increasing imprisonment rates on state and territory budgets was included. For example, if the National Competition Policy aims to reduce electricity prices across Australia, *because we are one nation*, what would need to happen to reduce imprisonment rates across the country or at least bring the higher ones down to the national average (and thus reduce the national average)? Perhaps our enormously disparate and climbing imprisonment rates suggest major structural inequalities in the administration of justice in Australia?

There are a number of metaphors for imprisonment. Foucault (1977, p.257) is cited above. Sykes (1958, p.9) sees it as 'lying somewhere between total annihilation of the offender on one hand and warning or forgiveness on the other'. Goffman (1961, p.xiii) describes 'a total institution...', Morris (1974, p.13) 'rehabilitation: from coerced cure to facilitated change' and Hawkins (1976, p.108) 'neither slavery or involuntary servitude'. All provide a useful beginning to a discussion of the uses and misuses of imprisonment in Australia and frame the whole course.

Women in the Criminal Justice System

A whole session was allocated to a discussion of women as offenders and victims in the criminal justice system even though women are less frequently offenders than men and even less likely to be convicted of violent crime (Alder 1994, p.141). This may change over time as more women commit crime to support drug habits. Women sometimes engage in offences against property and prostitution, and the construction of women as offenders and victims in distinct categories is considered appropriate given their life experiences (Alder 1994, p.143). Much of their criminal behaviour is made explicable because of the poverty and violence in their lives. Historical constructions such as the 'unruly feminine' (Smart 1992, p.13) and the continuation of this 19th century view into Australia through transportation (where, according to Daniels (1998, p.ix), female convicts established themselves 'as sexual partners, wives or mothers' rather than as workers) provided a context for a discussion of female criminality. Where male criminality might be seen as behaviour falling at one end of a continuum (including aspects of 'larrikinism' or challenge to the authorities) with normal behaviour at the other end, women prisoners have been seen as 'other' - as bad, as challenging our ideas about femininity, virtue and motherhood.

Prisoner Health, Communicable Diseases and Deaths in Custody

Health care provision in prisons has been primarily directed at treating symptoms. Health in prisons was seen as the absence of illness rather than the presence of 'wellness', although most correctional administrators were aware that humane containment (the provision of creative work and leisure programs and facilitating contact with families and friends) would assist in achieving a 'peaceful' prison and reasonably contented prisoners (Dawes 1999). A more primary health care orientation and proactive approaches are now encouraged, especially in relation to self-harm and suicide prevention and communicable diseases.

Two very significant health issues discussed were HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C. The Hepatitis C virus (HCV) and the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) are both blood borne viruses, are both spread through needle-sharing and other practices of injecting drug-users and both represent serious health risks for Australian intravenous drug-users (Crofts, Aitken and Kaldor 1999), a very common group in Australian prisons. According to Crofts, Stewart, Hearne, Xin, Breschkin and Locarnini (1995), approximately 0.5% of prisoners are HIV positive and 39% of Victorian prisoners were Hepatitis C positive. The Hepatitis C prevalence is of concern because of its virulence (Crofts, Aitken and Kaldor 1999) and underpinned a discussion of drug usage and sexual practices in prisons. Balancing duty of care and harm minimisation objectives with the politicisation of prisons and working within the politically achievable created an interesting discussion, especially as social workers must frequently advocate on behalf of their clients (Shulman 1984, p.12).

Deaths in custody are an important issue for social workers. Harding (1997, p.18), citing Paulus (1988), makes a link between the depressed circumstances of prisoners in crowded facilities and declining prisoner health. Evidence is also available to link increasing rates of self-mutilation and suicide with crowding (Harding 1997, p.18). Pounder (1986) suggested that deaths in custody are a blunt measure of the standard of health care provided to prisoners. If this is correct, then the current Australian provisions are inadequate. During the financial year 1 July 1997 to 30 June 1998, 99 people died in police and correctional custody in Australia; 23 in policy custody and police custody related operations and 76 in prisons (Dalton 1998). The 76 who died in the nation's prisons was the highest number recorded in any one year since 1980 (Dalton 1998) and the number of deaths continues to be an issue. With at least some of the deaths being preventable, especially the suicides, the role of social workers in corrections may be an advocacy one, as well as assisting others to create their own meaning from the tragedies that these deaths represent. All of this was discussed with students, as well as the important role social workers can play in counselling other prisoners, contacting the families of deceased prisoners and assisting other staff, as well as being involved in the preparations for coronial hearings (Paleologo and Purcell 1999, p.14).

Restorative Justice

The variations in the use of imprisonment in Australia (that is, its overuse as a sanction - see endnote 3), the over-representation of Aborigines in Australian prisons[5] and the health risks associated with imprisonment provided a way of opening up discussion on alternatives to imprisonment and other approaches to dealing with offenders. Restorative justice approaches were raised with students because they provide a different way of looking at offending behaviour and traditional criminal justice responses to that behaviour. Social workers have also been influential in developing restorative justice techniques. There is no satisfactory definition of restorative justice. However, restorative justice can be understood as containing a number of elements or approaches to working with offenders and victims, such as mediation and reparation, but the central ingredient is that crime is understood as injury or harm to a person (group or corporation) and not just the state. The community is seen as the 'customer' (Hahn 1998, p.134). The Family Conferencing Program in South Australia is based on the paradigm of restorative justice (Wundersitz and Hetzel 1996, p.113) and was one of the two areas selected for assessment of student learning.

Course Delivery

Social work at Flinders University is a graduate entry program requiring a three-year degree and evidence of interest in human service work. Many students already have experience in other professions, many are mature-age. Entry to the course is highly competitive. At Flinders, when the elective was offered in first semester 1999, four Master of Social Work and six Bachelor of Social Work students presented for the course.

The course was structured into six three-hour sessions. At the first session, a detailed handout was given to each student. This handout included the aim and goals of the course, details of the assessment requirements and an extensive reading list. It was explained to the students that the reading list should be regarded as not only a guide to reading for assessment purposes, but as a resource for practice. For example, the reading list contained books on giving evidence in court and advice on writing reports for courts and tribunals.

Lectures

The first session of each week was a lecture. The lectures enabled the basic content to be provided to students. Students were provided with copies of the overhead projector transparencies used.

Seminars

The second hour was set aside for seminars. Students were encouraged to interact and debate issues that had been presented in the first hour. While a collection of readings was not provided, some individual readings were photocopied and formed the basis of the seminar discussions. Videos were also used to present material to students. Students visited Adelaide Gaol, as discussed above.

Small Group Learning

The third hour of each session was set aside for small group learning. Students were divided into two or three small groups. Each group was presented with a problem to consider and report back to the class. The reporting work was structured to represent a variety of tasks a beginning social worker might meet in the workplace, so real cases were taken from newspaper reports, coroners' reports and from practice history. The work might require a draft letter for the Minister's signature to a constituent, a briefing for the Chief Executive Officer or an outline of a pre-sentence report. A one or two paragraph statement of the problem was given to which was attached the additional readings, such as a newspaper report or coroner's report. In all of this work, a special emphasis was placed on sources of evidence and proper attribution.

Student Assessment

Students were given a choice of assessment methods - either a 500-word class paper and presentation, followed by a 2500-word essay or a 3000-word essay. A choice of two topics was provided, each requiring a broad understanding of the elective and that students make the links between social work knowledge and the special material introduced in the elective.

Students' Evaluation of the Program

Students were invited to evaluate the teaching of the component using a questionnaire from SET (Student Evaluation of Teaching) Version 4.2[6]. The seven standard questions were used with an additional five questions (see appendix 1) and mailed to students. Eight out of ten students completed evaluations. Students responded positively to the teaching style and to the content of the course, evidence for this being that several students wished it had been a full topic, or commenting that they had become more interested in corrections.

Conclusion

The curriculum I have discussed above grows out of a deep reflection on a *situational analysis* of social work practice in Australia and my personal experience of wrestling with being an 'agent of social control' while simultaneously enjoying a rich and challenging career working with offenders. Despite advances in social work thinking in Australia over the past thirty years, and the development of a deeper understanding of being a 'mandated' client, social work practice with offenders, especially with those imprisoned, is often neglected, if not rejected, as 'real' social work. This adds to the difficulty for those practising in this field. This paper has outlined one approach to the development of a suitable curriculum to introduce social work students to work with offenders and hopefully encourage greater acceptance and support of this from the profession. Thus, the course is not just an introduction to criminology but an attempt to encourage students to grapple with the notions of justice and meaning, especially client self-determination and our common humanity. Social work will be a diminished profession if it stands back and fails to engage with corrections as an area of practice, especially as it employs so many graduates.

Appendix 1

The Flinders University of South Australia

Student Evaluation of Teaching
in

SOCIAL WORK IN SELECTED SETTINGS

Semester 1, 1999

This questionnaire seeks information about your experiences of this topic. Please circle the number which most closely corresponds to your own view about each statement. I you feel that you cannot answer a particular questions, circle the 'Not Applicable' category. Your responses are anonymous. However, be aware that this questionnaire will be returned to the teacher after being analysed by the ACUE. Therefore, print your comments to preserve your anonymity.

Teacher:

Segment: SOCIAL WORK & CORRECTIONS

	Outstanding					Very Poor		Not Applicable
1. All things considered, how would you rate this person's effectiveness as a university teacher	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	x

	Strongly Agree			Undecided		Strongly Disagree		Not Applicable
2. Was well organised	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	x
3. Showed concern for students	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	x
4. Had enthusiasm for teaching	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	x
5. Encouraged students to participate in classes	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	x
6. Stimulated my interest in the topic	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	x
7. Gave clear explanations	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	x
8. Communicated effectively	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	x
9. Gave clear demonstrations	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	x
10. Emphasised the important points	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	x
11. Made good use of examples	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	x
12. Made good use of teaching materials	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	x

If you would like to comment on this person's teaching, do so below

Thank you for answering this questionnaire

Endnotes

1. '3.5 Client Self-Determination: The social worker will make every effort to foster maximum self-determination and social responsibility on the part of clients.' (AASW 1994, p.2)
2. A total of 19,082 persons were in custody in Australian prisons on the night of June 30, 1997; this corresponds to a rate of 135 per 100,000 persons over age 16 (AIC 198). The rate in 1983 was 90 (10,196 prisoners) and in 1993 118 (15,866 prisoners) and in December 1996, 120.1 (16,911 prisoners) (ABS 1997). In December 1996 the imprisonment rates per jurisdiction were: New South Wales 133.3; Victoria 70.1; Queensland 138.2; South Australia 129.1; Western Australia 161.9; Tasmania 73.8; Northern Territory 461.2; and Australian Capital Territory 58.3 (ABS 1997, p.3).
3. For example, in examining the theme 'Victimology in Myth', aesthetic and theological texts were used to introduce a discussion about victims. Richard Wagner's (1813-1893) *Ring of the Nibelung, Act 1, Die Walkure*, contains a story of brother and sister incestuous love, the affront this represented to the natural order and punishment meted out in response by the gods. The biblical story in *Genesis*, Chapter 2, is well-known and attempts to account for evil in the world and why there are victims. From the Rig-Veda, a poem, *The Sacrifice of Primal Man* is regarded as giving scriptural authority to the caste system in Hinduism, thus institutionalising a lesser or victimised status to a large part of the community.
4. Three strikes and you're in' and 'zero tolerance policing' are components of mandatory sentencing. Mandatory sentencing 'refers to the practice of parliament setting a strict penalty for the commission of a criminal offence' (Roche 1999) thereby removing discretion from the courts, resulting in a loss of proportionality and impacting upon some groups more than others. Mandatory sentences are not new and are commonly used in areas such as driving offences. Driving over the speed limit by x kilometres per hour results in a fine of y dollars. This formula is applied to all - millionaires and paupers - and you are guilty unless you choose to challenge the matter in court. The offence is expiated by payment of the fine. The argument against mandatory sentences for offences such as theft and burglary is that such sentences, especially if they involve a prison term, impact equally on all, no matter what the motivation for the offence or the quantum of goods stolen and results in more Aboriginal people being imprisoned. The argument about equal impact has superficial appeal and it is only when a number of cases are compared, does the glaring loss of proportionality become obvious. The issue came to public attention when a 15-year old Aboriginal boy from Groote Eyland died in a youth facility in Darwin, following a 21-day sentence for theft of some small items of stationery (*Sydney Morning Herald* February 17, 2000, p.14).
5. The Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Corrective Services, Australia, December Quarter*, reports that information on indigenous prisoners is not currently available for New South Wales. The highest proportion of indigenous persons in custody was recorded in the Northern Territory (72.8%), Western Australia (33.1%) and Queensland (21.6%). This translates into 440 indigenous persons in the Northern Territory, Western Australia (870) and Queensland (1090). Western Australia had the highest ratio of indigenous to non-indigenous persons in custody where the indigenous rate is 21 times the non-indigenous rate. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people comprise 2.1% of the Australian population (ABS 1999).
6. *The Student Evaluation of Teaching*, Version 4.2, Flinders University of Adelaide is administered for Flinders by the Advisory Group for University Education, University of Adelaide. There are seven standard teaching questions and a total of 310 questions from which an appropriate selection can be made.

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Teaching Structural Social Work Skills to Beginning Students

Heather Fraser and Desma Strong

Introduction

A rationale for using a structural social work approach

It is by no means novel to suggest that the politics of globalisation, corporatism, deregulation and new managerialism have created disparate living conditions between affluent and resource poor citizens who reside within the system of Western capitalism. Clearly the gap between those favourably positioned to the market place compared to those less favourably positioned, grows ever wider (O'Connor 1997). For most citizens in the West, access to resources and participation in the esteemed system of democracy has become increasingly punctuated by people's declining power over their own lives (Blackwell and Seabrook 1993, p.30). Using the case study of the state of Victoria, Australia, Larritt methodically details how there was a significant erosion of political and civil rights for ordinary citizens as the Kennett government actualised its goals of neo-conservatism (Webber and Crooks 1996). With the Bracks' Labor government still in its infancy, it is difficult to ascertain whether some of the previous expressions of citizenship rights will be re-instituted.

Having said this, we know that having power over one's life is not simply determined by institutions and access to material resources. Social processes, enshrined in institutions and played out in the microcosms of our lives, continue to be shaped by the intersecting variables of gender, race, class, sexuality, ability, age and geographical location. An exploration of these social contexts remain central to the project of educating social work students; that is, if change at the intrapersonal, interpersonal, organisational *and* societal level is to be facilitated. In doing so however, social work educators must theorise inequality, injustice and oppression in such a way as to avoid rigid prescription or naive optimism. This is no easy task, especially in relation to the teaching of skills and is reflected in the lack of available teaching resources. The few social work texts available for our use during the delivery of the skills course focused predominantly on abstracted theorising (Mullaly 1997; Ife 1997). Only one radical text made direct reference to the acquisition of structural micro-skills (Fook 1993).

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Resisting false dichotomies within Bachelor of Social Work courses

In this article, we seek to address this hiatus by providing an embryonic model of how structural skills might be operationalised. As social work educators committed to progressive teaching, we set about the task of translating the rather nebulous philosophical concept of *social justice* into a one-semester skills undergraduate subject. At present, the Australian Association of Social Workers states under the 'Principles for Practice' in the *Code of Ethics* that a commitment to social justice means, '(T)he social worker will advocate for changes in policy, service delivery and social conditions which enhance the opportunities for those most vulnerable in the community' (1994, 2).

In an attempt to advance students' understanding of this principle for practice, we aimed to achieve two basic goals through the course. Firstly, we wanted to counter the effects of neo-conservative ideas that we believed were making their way into the student population and the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) course itself. Instead of simply complaining privately that the course was becoming too oriented towards technical competence, we wanted to see how our personal commitment to the notions of equality and democracy could be demonstrated in our social work teaching.

The second goal we held related to challenging the dichotomy between 'practice subjects' and 'more academic subjects' (such as social policy and those related to social work theory). Far from being a pragmatic, 'apolitical' and 'a-theoretical' exercise, we believe the skills oriented courses present students and staff with rich possibilities for advancing progressive political ideals. We particularly hoped students would be able to move beyond the liberal humanist paradigm of a-politicised reflective listening. Yet, at the same time, we did not want to present the view that traditional social work skills (empathy, developing rapport with clients, paraphrasing, reflecting and so on) were irrelevant to the structural social work approach. Instead, we sought to assist students to see how injustice is played out in everyday lives.

Importing Structural Social Work Ideas into the Teaching of Skills

A brief background to the student population and the first year of the course

Students enter the two-year, on-campus BSW course after the successful completion of at least two years of undergraduate work in the social sciences. Most on-campus students were white, younger women aged between 20-40 years.

In the first year of the course, students undertake subjects entitled: 'Persons in Society', 'Social policy', 'Casework', 'Human development', 'Groupwork', 'Fieldwork' and 'Skills'. The concepts of citizenship, inequality, poverty and oppression underwrite the curricula of only the first two subjects listed. The 'Casework' subject, the subject traditionally paired with the 'Skills' subject, operates from an explicitly liberal humanist perspective, with interventions taught via the Problem Solving model. At the time there was little

systematic analysis of injustice in the overall course structure. For this reason, a structural skills program was developed and conducted in the second semester of 1997.

The newly devised skills program followed a semester of conventional skills training. In the previous semester's skills course, students concentrated on the various components of reflective listening and relationship development and completed their first field practicum of 70 days. While on field placement, students attended 'Integration seminars' and placement reviews during which they narrated practice 'stories', many of which highlighted forms of discrimination and disadvantage. Our facilitation of these seminars and placement reviews enabled us to integrate the issues the students presented into the new program.

Developing the structural social work skills program

Structural social work was conceptualised broadly as activities which focus on identifying, analysing and attempting to transform those social institutions and conventions which directly or indirectly discriminate against people on the basis of gender, class, ethnicity, age, ability and sexuality. As Mullaly (1997) notes, structural social work ideas are drawn heavily from radical humanism, a school of thought that situates individual human suffering within the broad social and political context. Similar to other radical social work academics (Langan and Lee 1989, p.8), Mullaly contends that, 'critical social analysis, by itself, is an important social work skill' (1997, p.163). As a corollary to this analysis, Mullaly recommends that social workers use consciousness raising strategies in their direct service work so as to facilitate service users' exploration of 'the hegemonic forces of capitalism' (1997, p.164).

From the outset, however, we realised that skills of critical analysis and consciousness-raising are not straightforward. Just as we hoped not to reinforce a philanthropic/charitable approach to social work, we were equally keen to avoid the 'Doc Martened, it's all-a-capitalist-plot' (Lette 1996, p.31) polemic. By this, we meant that students were not encouraged to simply 'blame society' for all difficulties service users might be experiencing. Similarly, we sought to avoid encouraging students to conceptualise social problems in exclusively individual or interpersonal terms.

The structural skills program was also predicated on the belief that students needed to do more than simply understand a structural analysis of a particular client's situation. They needed to be able to facilitate a structural analysis of client difficulties and appropriate strategies for change *with* the client. Through the dialogue with clients, students were expected to use language that had meaning for both parties. This translated into the skills of facilitating a critical analysis and employing non-pathologising and relevant language.

We also sought to create a skills program that would enable students to practice skills associated with democratising the professional relationship. This goal involves a subset of skills such as:

- creating an environment where all clients might feel able to directly contribute to the definition of the problems for work;

- appreciating that potentially marginal clients within a family group (for instance, elderly clients, women clients and young people) might hold contrasting interpretations of the problem/s to those being offered; and

- sharing the air space within which multiple clients might express these differences.

We realised that as group 'leaders', we needed to model these skills in the classroom and we specifically attempted to facilitate the groups in such a way as to minimise the expert/ disciple dynamic. We knew that for all group members to feel able to express their own views and for some, to resist deferring to the group leader's perspective, a safe, respectful and open learning environment needed to be created.

Delivering the Structural Skills Program

Course content

Since we only had eight weeks of two-hour sessions with which to work, we chose to begin the course by enabling students to explore the ways in which personal histories were influenced by structural dimensions of life. Students were asked at this point to contemplate their own social history, taking into account the ways in which their class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, geographical location and age had *potentially* shaped their lives.

This was followed by an introduction to a structural social work assessment framework. We modified O'Connor, Wilson and Setterlunds' (1995) assessment tool as this framework compels workers to take note of the socio-political context in which problems are located. So too, does the framework instruct social workers to consider the possibility that different parties - within a particular client group, might hold conflicting accounts of problems. These became known as the skills of *managing the sharing of air time* and *attending to different parties' perspectives.*

By week three, students were asked to view and critique a videotaped interview of a woman hospitalised as a result of sustaining injuries from domestic violence. This session helped students to consolidate the learning to date, especially in respect to the few feminist ideas they were learning in other subjects. It was also designed to prepare students for the multiple client role-play they were to perform in front of their classmates. The session specifically focused on the skills of *broad problem definition, 'critical questioning'* (Fook 1993), *use of non-pathologising language* and *handling the proceedings without becoming dogmatic or authoritarian.*

Week four emphasised the skills of *broad problem definition* and *using non-pathologising language.* Students were asked to re-write case notes and court reports in

such a way that avoided stereotyping and the use of judgemental language. It was during this week that students began to role-play the position of the social worker in one of the six case scenarios we had written. Two of the scenarios read as follows:

Scenario 1

'George (70), Mary (78), Ivan (68) and Frances (87) have recently been notified of the Port Phillip council's plan to relocate them to other units, miles outside the city so that the land can be sold off to private developers. They are all distressed by this. Frances has been living in her flat on Victoria Ave, Albert Park for 22 years and even though the bedsit is extremely small and a little damp, the views of the ocean and the proximity to the city continue to inspire her. George has lived in his little flat for 18 years, Ivan 12 years and Mary 31 years. So much of their lives relate to this tower block along this stretch of Melbourne. *They have come to see you as the local council aged care social worker, who has tended to organise leisure activities and meals-on-wheels for people.*'

Scenario 2

'Mark (25) and Tina (27) live in a community residence for people classified as having a moderate intellectual disability. For 18 months they have been sharing this sex-segregated residence with six others. Since their relationship has developed, they have approached the board of management with the support of Tina's mother to request permission be granted for them to share one bedroom in the community house. They were told that the board of management regrets to advise them that the rules covering the residence do not permit such an arrangement. *The three of them have made an appointment to see you, the social worker in the Department of Human Services, Intellectual Disability.*'

The final weeks of the course were spent almost entirely on the performance and critique of role played scenarios. All students participated both as social workers and as clients. Students were expected to conduct the role-played interview with multiple clients using skills identified in the box below. They were handed the details of the scenario they were to manage just minutes before they performed.

Student assessment

Students observing the role-plays had to rate their perceptions of their fellow students' handling of client situation using a feedback sheet which ranked 'poor' as the numerical score of 1, to 'excellent' as the numerical score of 5. The feedback sheet itemised 9 interviewing skills and invited general comments in item 10. These skills included a blend of traditional interviewing skills with those we identified as (broadly) structural (see items below with an asterisk).

	INTERVIEWING SKILLS
1.	Capacity to *engage* clients at the beginning
2.	Ability to facilitate a *broad* problem definition*
3.	Demonstration of *warmth, empathy, sensitivity and respect* to all clients in the group
4.	Attention to different parties' *perspectives**
5.	Management of *shared* air time
6.	Appropriateness of probes and questions to facilitate a consideration of the impact of *class/ gender/ ethnicity/ race/ sexuality/ ability/ age* might have on the problem*
7.	Interviewer's use of non judgemental or *non pathologising* language*
8.	Overall ability to elicit discussion which explores problems from a *critical perspective**
9.	Ability to demonstrate confident handling of proceedings without becoming *dogmatic or authoritarian**
10.	Constructive comments for the facilitator

Students observing the role-play completed the feedback sheet and handed it directly to the student (occupying the role of social worker) immediately after her/his performance. In reference to the feedback, the student-as-social-worker then had a week to write a one-page summary of her/ his reflections of the interview. Students had already been informed that it was not necessary to demonstrate technically brilliant skills to pass. In fact, it was possible to make mistakes in the role-play, but pass the subject if insight and non-defensive reflection on group feedback was demonstrated. The one-page summaries were then passed to the group facilitator who provided brief written feedback, allocating an un-graded pass.

Many students rehearsed their own role-play scenarios with friends or family members in between classes. A few students (role-playing the social worker) elected to re-enact the role-play they were initially allocated, so that they could make adjustments in light of the feedback from their peers and group facilitator.

As the weeks went by, the four facilitators reported good progress in relation to students conveying critical but respectful feedback to one another. Some students made a point of telling us how inspired they were by the course with one group of students becoming interested in learning more about how casework could be used in conjunction with other types of social work interventions, such as community work and social action. For these students, broadening the definition of casework to include a much stronger advocacy role, was an important 'outcome' of the course.

However, some students were critical of the program, particularly its theoretical orientation. For instance, a few students raised questions such as, 'won't this just depress the clients?'; 'what's the point of mentioning things that we can do nothing about?'; and

'aren't we just letting clients blame the system and thus avoid personal responsibility for change?' They wondered whether service users might be better served by learning how to adjust to albeit limiting circumstances. In accordance with adult learning principles, we threw the questions over to group members, believing it was important for students to dialogue *with each other* about these legitimate questions.

Evaluating the Skills Program

Having suggested that we thought good progress was being made both in terms of the subject material and overall group development, we requested that students formally evaluate the course. To do this, we constructed a 'Skills Evaluation' instrument (identified below).

Written student evaluations of the skills program

Using a ranking from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), the Skills Evaluation form included the following items:

Skills course evaluation form

1. At the end of the eight weeks I understood the concept of structural assessment
2. I found the role-plays a useful way to develop my structural social work skills
3. Student feedback (sheets and discussion) was helpful
4. I found completing the social history on myself an important cite of learning
5. The analysis of the domestic violence video helped me understand how intra, interpersonal and structural variables can intersect
6. The activities on language gave me insight into the importance of non-pathologising language
7. Discussion about group dynamics helped me to understand more about how groups work
8. I now feel more competent interviewing multiple clients
9. As a result of the skills classes, I gained self-knowledge
10. The classes were well facilitated
11. I enjoyed the skills classes

Almost all students enrolled in the subject completed the evaluation form. Nearly all students believed the groups were well-facilitated (97%). All students either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that they had understood the concept of structural assessment (100%). Good facilitation may have been a crucial factor in this result. (It may have also helped some students to pass the subject as a few required extra attention.)

It is obvious from Table 1 below, however, that while students overall expressed a high level of satisfaction, some course activities were assessed as more valuable. The two

activities most highly ranked by students included performing the multiple client role-plays (92%) and the analysis of the video about domestic violence (95%). In contrast, fewer students (70%) agreed that completing the social history was an important site of learning. We suggest that this may have been due to the early positioning of the task (week one) when their conceptualisation of structural social work was so new. We also wonder whether the activity might be repeated towards the end of the course as a way of critically illuminating some of the complexities associated with structural classifications.

Table 1 Student evaluation of program

Question No.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree	No Response	% Who Agreed or Strongly Agreed.
Q1.	0	0	0	27	21	1	100%
Q2.	0	2	2	15	29	1	92%
Q3.	1	0	1	19	28	0	95%
Q4.	1	2	11	26	7	2	70%
Q5.	0	0	2	30	15	2	95%
Q6.	0	1	11	25	12	0	75%
Q7.	0	14	20	15	0	0	71%
Q8.	0	1	6	28	14	0	85%
Q9.	0	1	7	22	19	0	83%
Q10.	0	0	1	25	23	0	97%
Q11.	0	0	1	19	29	0	97%

Facilitators' reflections on the obstacles to the program

Facilitators' evaluation of the skills program revolved around four specific themes. These themes include: 1) the prevailing liberal humanist orientation of the Monash University BSW; 2) the chosen content of the program; 3) the implications for students having completed the course; and 4) the practical difficulties experienced within the course. Taking each item in turn, we believe that the orientation of the Monash BSW course made it difficult to teach a structurally oriented skills program; it was time consuming trying to teach students structural social work theory *and* enable students to practice the skills related to the approach. Had there been a social work theory course that introduced the material to students, we would have had more time and space to work on the integration of skills.

Secondly, since this program was the only one conducted via small groups, students were keen to apply their group theory learning in relation to their group's dynamics. This had the potential to further complicate an already ambitious program. It also meant that some sessions ran a little over time with members sometimes staying back with the facilitators to discuss aspects of the group process.

The third theme arising from our discussions related to the impact the subject might be having on students' political orientation to social work. Concerns were raised that this approach might work in direct contrast to the practice paradigms of future field teachers. Given the time constraints, we felt frustrated that we could not allow more discussion about this potential discrepancy between students and future field teachers. We were also worried that students' learning in this program might not be built on in the ensuing 'Skills' subjects. Even though we spoke at some length to the educators responsible for the second year skills program, we could not be sure that links would be made between this skills course and the next.

Lastly, there were practical issues to contend with as we delivered the program. The 8 week program was too short for what we had hoped to achieve. In hindsight, we realise that the first 13 week skills program which dealt with the acquisition of orthodox skills should have been eight weeks long, so that 13 weeks could be spent on the more multifaceted structural skills program. Another practical issue related to the employment conditions of two of the four group facilitators. The two of us enjoying proper industrial conditions felt uncomfortable with the fact that the two staff members employed on a sessional basis (due to federal government funding cuts), effectively debriefed about the sessions in their own time.

Time constraints were not the only source of problems identified under the heading of 'practicalities'. The size of the groups also impacted on group learning. On reflection, the maximum size of the group should have been twelve members, so as to provide sufficient numbers of students to role play and observe, without having to rush through the feedback for those students scheduled in the final weeks. Finally too, the availability of relevant literature presented itself as a problem. While we could use chapters from Payne (1991), Fook (1993), Mullaly (1994) and Ife (1997), there are an insufficient number of texts focused explicitly on skills development, that take students beyond a liberal humanist paradigm.

Conclusion

This article has described and explained aspects of the structural skills course that was first delivered to beginning social work students at Monash University in 1997. Having established some of the difficulties and areas for improvement, we are confident that we made some headway traversing the dichotomy that routinely separates subjects traditionally designated as 'political' and 'theoretical' (such as social policy) from those 'practice' subjects usually classified as 'a-theoretical'. Avoiding the dichotomy between self and society was part of this exercise, with some 'traditional' skills (such as engagement and empathy) folded into a number of other skills we loosely identified as structural.

Most importantly, the students evaluated the structural skills course extremely highly, with all students specifying that they had acquired an understanding of the concept of

structural assessment. Achieving a beginning understanding of structural assessment meant students had the chance to consider how a more 'radical' definition of *social justice* might be incorporated into their practice. As a final aside, it was ironic and noteworthy that students' own consciousness raising was more likely to occur when they occupied the role of client rather than social worker.

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Contesting or Conforming? The Relationship Between Casework and Counselling

Mark Furlong

Introduction

Most social workers are employed in direct practice positions and the work this group undertakes has traditionally been known as casework. The appropriateness of this description is now being challenged at several levels. For example, on one front we have witnessed the rise of a set of approaches operating under the rubric *case management*, a designation that is currently favoured for its muscularity and agency-centredness. On the other, in many settings short-term *counselling/therapy* has become the intervention of choice as this is seen to offer cost effective, goal achieving assistance. The net effect of such developments is that the space within which, and the legitimisation for, the delivery of 'casework' has now become problematic. This can be seen in the fact that many agency managers, even some social workers, currently see little sense in providing a service as apparently indeterminate as casework.

For these kinds of reasons it appears that the term 'casework' has become less popular (Fook 1991; Barber 1991; 1995) and it is not difficult to understand why. In today's pragmatic human service environments the connotations of the term seem to imply a quality of indecision, in stark contrast to the connotations of its firm cousin 'case management'. The term 'casework' also lacks the self-importance and sexiness which accrue to the therapeutic as well as apparently lacking definitional specificity and research cachet. For these kind of reasons the status of the term, as well as the activity itself, is increasingly seen to lie uncertainly along an uncomfortable continuum with irrelevance at one pole and outright embarrassment at the other.

Yet, if seen from a different angle the term 'casework' offers our profession a range of constructive possibilities. For example, social workers can employ the term to contest today's apparently commonsensical habit of redefining all presenting problems into either issues of *psychological adjustment*, which by definition simply require psychological counselling, or as *risks* that need to be case managed, which the assertive introduction of managerial techniques can deliver. The term 'casework' can also be used in ways that emphasise, rather than remove, questions of fairness and resource allocation. The use of the term 'casework' - and its possible disappearance -

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An earlier version of this paper was presented to the 'Victorian Mental Health Social Work Education Day' on 23 March 1998.

also speaks to the question of social work identity. It is against these, and related matters, that an examination of the distinctions between casework and counselling seems timely.

In order to politicise this argument, that is in order to clearly etch out respective positions, a degree of rhetoric, even irony, is employed in what follows. It is hoped this will assist the argument maintain a reflexive connection between the foreground material, concerned with casework and counselling, and our current historico-cultural conditions. These conditions are characterised by an ideology of ascendant individualism where the practice of psychologising public issues is now so routine as to be regarded as simply pragmatic and sensible.

Perhaps, the most significant result of the current examination of the relationship between casework and counselling is the contention this analysis raises that casework draws from a vastly richer palette to the single beige available to psychologically oriented practitioners. On this basis it will be argued that casework is, and should be, a more complex and demanding project than is simple counselling. Casework can be envisaged as that which is about finding ways to be creative, ideologically informed and pro-active within the narrow limits of the practice context.

Experts and their Magic Bullets

The cue for developing this material was an engagement with the position and interests of student social workers. Given these students are aware that the great majority of newly graduated social workers work in direct practice positions, it follows that they want to be prepared for the demands of such roles: they want to know how to 'do it'. They expect to get from their training, in the argot of many a student, a 'tool kit'. Sometimes this expectation is felt by students in a dramatic kind of way as the need to have a fully loaded magazine of magic bullets in order to be, and be seen to be, prepared for and effective in these highly charged, direct practice positions (Saleeby 1991). For this reason these students, like all professionals in training, are both eager to learn and anxious at the prospect of not knowing.

Students are also likely to bring to the educational process a set of culturally determined assumptions and historically contingent values that actively condition their expectations of what 'I need to get from my course'. In so far as these students are well-socialised citizens they have been persistently acculturated to think within the common sense of our late capitalist, hyper-modern culture. This common sense assumes that if someone has a problem, the individual can, and must find, an instrumental way to 'deal with it'. There is no point moaning and whingeing, 'what are *you* going to do about it'. So, what does a person do if they are stuck, if they can't find the right strategy or technology, on their own?

The well-adjusted person will know that they need to locate a bona fide expert (Frank 1995). If they have listened to the talk-back tin gods, such as the Professor of Psychology at Bond University, watched enough TV, read enough of the life style

columns in the broad-sheets, they would be aware that the bona fide experts for this kind of problem are those properly credentialled clinicians, counsellors and therapists who have available unproblematic interventions to any and all personal problems. They will lead the subject to the solution if s/he is not performing to their best, getting what s/he wants sexually, and so on. 'You haven't got a job?' Well this can be understood as a personal challenge: 'you are not 'job ready', well a course of brief therapy, where you will learn the correct motivational attitudes and skills, will fix that.'

Supposedly, counselling/therapy provides the best available solution to every problem faced by individuals. This is increasingly accepted as fact, as a taken for granted aspect of reality, within our globalised late twentieth century culture. We are being constantly exhorted to understand that it is necessary to be 'pragmatic' and that it makes sense to see difficulties in terms of an individual's attitude and adjustment rather than seeing problems in relation to what cannot be changed. As citizens we are relentlessly pressed to accept the reality, if not the joy, of globalisation. We are repeatedly taught that we have to be, for example, 'competitive' and that it is not pragmatic to see problems in relation to non-negotiable facts, such as the structurally inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities, as these kinds of dimensions cannot be changed: 'You can't change the world, you can only change how you deal with it'.[1]

Simultaneously, students are animated by questions of fairness and (generally) recognize that they are not training to be psychotherapists. They are uncomfortable with the idea that there can be private solutions to public issues. In this clash between 'cultural programming' and 'social work values' students have every reason to be uncertain: 'I want to be effective, I want to know how to do it, but I also want to work constructively with clients, perhaps even groups of clients, in ways that are not simply based on the assumption that my job is to psychologise the problems of my clients and then to brainwash them into an acceptance of the subject position of insightful, nay grateful, counselling recipient.'

Another way of saying this is: 'What, if anything, is the difference between counselling and casework?' As everyday citizens, incoming students have been trained (in a sense) to know what 'counselling' is and is for; we all have been acculturated to recognise it as a familiar entity. Many have also discovered that the terms 'counselling' and 'therapy' have a delineated meaning and high status within many practice environments. On the other hand, the term 'casework' is opaque and uncertain to them, the lay public and to our colleagues/professional competitors. It seems to many practicing social workers that the term 'casework' is an odd, old fashioned and unappealing term which is perceived to have little, if any, market value.[2]

Given the clash between what is now accepted as the common sense of the broader culture and the values of the profession, the relationship between casework and counselling is a significant, to some extent a defining, issue for the profession: if we cannot be clear about what is casework, and how this profession specific activity

relates to other references such as 'therapy', 'counselling' and 'case management', we may slide into a less than constructively contesting position. If we can be clear, we can more effectively engage with this culture and also be better able to secure our boundaries.[3] It is to these matters that this paper is directed.

The content of the paper comprises:

- the definition of the key terms, that is '*counselling*', including this term's relationship with the allied term 'therapy', and '*casework*';

- the identification and articulation of differences in the ideology, ethics, genealogy and practice of casework and counselling; and

- the development of an argument as to why it is preferable for social workers to retain, at least at an internal level, our allegiance to the theory and practice of casework mindful that casework is likely to involve the use of, but is not synonymous with, what have been variously known as 'interpersonal', 'counselling skills' or 'micro-skills'.

Defining the Terms

I start by identifying, and then resolving, key definitional questions. The first of these relates to the respective meanings of the terms 'counselling' and 'therapy' prior to examining the relationship between these terms.

The definitions of, and the relationship between, 'therapy' and 'counselling'

The Shorter Oxford Dictionary states that therapy relates to healing and disease and counselling to the provision of guidance and advice. This usage is typical and, on this kind of reading, dictionaries distinguish between '(psycho)therapy' and 'counselling'. Notwithstanding this apparently clear academic statement, such a distinction is not observable across particular fields of practice or practice methods. For example, although grief counsellors intend to offer healing experiences it is just not said that they offer 'grief therapy' whereas cognitive therapists give advice and, by their own account, are not in the business of healing. Moreover, some therapists contest the relevance of a medical, disease-centred epistemology and some counsellors distinctly frame their work within such terms. Such inconsistencies are so frequent as to suggest that the field does not observe the conventions found in dictionary definitions.

For example, in 1998 the Victorian Department of Human Services sponsored a consultancy to establish conceptual and funding guidelines for those services that Department somewhat arbitrarily funded under its 'counselling program' budget line. As part of this work an interdisciplinary panel was convened to, in part, consider the

matter of definition and delineation in relation to 'therapy' and 'counselling'. Despite an extensive literature search and prolonged debates concerned with the relevant theoretical and practical dimensions, this working group could find no sustainable distinction between the two terms (People Care Australia 1998). It was noted that the terms 'counselling' and 'therapy' have different valences, significantly distinct accents, yet the conclusion that there was no sustainable distinction mirrored the earlier findings of the bipartisan, Social Development Committee's 1987 review of the proposed Victorian 'Psychological Practices Act'. That is, it was found that the terms 'counselling' and 'therapy' have their particular uses yet are in practice inseparable.[4] Moreover, this latter Committee concluded that 'counselling' and 'therapy' were 'method-specific', rather than 'profession-specific', activities and that no one profession could justifiably claim ownership of any of the many recognized methods of practice.

Thus, whether it is psycho-dynamic or gestalt therapy, person-centered counselling or grief work, crisis intervention or financial advice, no one professional group can claim sovereignty. Of course, this does not stop the more imperialist and rapacious professional groups claiming ownership of some, or even all, therapeutic methods. Nor does it stop the average citizen understanding, under the tutelage of particular advocates that - for example - propagate the claim that only clinical psychologists can offer therapy. There is always a powerful and dynamic set of politics around professional domains which provides a lively context for these matters. Returning to our major focus, if 'therapy' and 'counselling' are terms with inextricably blurred boundaries, for the sake of being able to continue the current inquiry the more general term 'counselling' will be used as the broader, more inclusive rubric. The next question then arises: what is 'counselling?'

What is Counselling?

To a degree there are differences between respective understandings of the counselling project encountered across the texts of bourgeois psychology. For example, it is sometimes said, or inferred, that the project is a romanticised one of 'a journey between the client and the counsellor'; others see the counsellor as a technician, just like a motor mechanic for example. Notwithstanding these differences in overarching metaphor, there is consensus with respect to (at least) the scope and the orientation, if not to the exact character, of the enterprise across texts.

For example, Ivey (1996) assumes that the scope of the enterprise is bounded by the consulting room and specifically states that the goal of the counselling enterprise is to redefine any and all presenting problems into the need to have the client learn better, supposedly more adaptive, 'skills' and 'strategies'. No matter what the problem is, purportedly there are better ways to deal with it and making the client know, and then perform, this is the goal of the project. In effect the counsellor says: 'you tell me the problem and I'll tell you the solution.' Whatever the problem, the counsellor's task is

to enable the client to learn the (said to be) 'appropriate' self-management techniques. Another example may make this clearer.

In an emboldened and indented summary statement Egan (1990, p.5) states that the goal of the counselling project is to have clients be:

> in a better position to manage their problem situations and/or develop the unused resources and opportunities of their lives more effectively.

He states in the next (non-emboldened) paragraph that 'in the end, clients can choose to live more effectively or not.'

Such an understanding of the counselling project raises a number of questions:

- Is the counselling project necessarily *amoral* given that the above appears to assume that the counsellor is, like the barristers say of themselves, simply a 'hired gun'?[5]

- Is the formulating practice, that is the specific conceptual procedure that is used to re-define the presenting problem and which structures the project, oblivious to the concrete life circumstances of the recipient?

- Are there circumstances where teaching people to be *relatively* 'in a better position', to be 'more effective', etc, not an appropriate goal given the basic facts of this person's life?[6]

Not long after I graduated I engaged an experienced and able private supervisor to support and extend my casework practice. Over and over again, this person would suggest: 'don't worry about what *you* think is right or wrong, gently nudge your client in the direction they are already heading.' From a pragmatic point of view this advice was very useful, particularly in relation to the question of positioning, yet it left me somehow troubled as this technical advice seemed to lack an ethical dimension. A quality of amorality is consistent with the counselling project as it is aligned with the counselling psychology premise, mentioned earlier, that '... in the end clients can choose to live more effectively or not.' From a structural point of view this premise is highly problematic and in so far as this is an assumption underlying the counselling project, it reflects a banal and misleading belief in individualism.

Putting these broad questions to one side, the theme of language use within the above texts is instructive. For example, in the descriptions of the mission and purpose of contemporary counselling the terms 'effective', 'manage', 'choice', 'skills', 'strategies', etc, are repeatedly found. These strong, apparently self-validating, terms seem to serve a purpose. From where do these terms derive their power and why are they repeated as plainsong and statute, as mantra and rallying call?

These specific terms are amongst that linguistic set which is emblematic of, and simultaneously are the building blocks for, the imperatives of the current individualistic order. As such these terms are the icons of, and are actively constitutive of what is understood to possess, rightness and sense. It is indubitable that 'to be effective', 'to have choice', 'to have skills and strategies', and so forth, are right and appropriate values so it follows that the contemporary person, the very attributes of the self, should be of the same stuff. These 'specifications for self' (Rose 1990) reflect directly this culture's contemporary godheads. Other iconic and self-legitimating terms in this set include: challenge, opportunity, performance, competition, work, realistic (Furlong 1997).

That bourgeois psychology invokes the icons of modern common sense to provide its raison d'etre is entirely logical as this language-set simply reflects the language of neo-liberalism. As Raulston-Saul (1997) has precisely noted, 'sensible' speech acts - such as the oft repeated calls to pragmatism and the need to prioritize that the media and politicians echo each day - should not be seen as value neutral. On the contrary, these 'technical' terms are actively prescriptive as they strip the moral, the aesthetic and the relational dimensions from what is being discussed.

Three related, broader questions arise as a result of considering the relationship between counselling and this broader, neo-liberal context:

- is the purpose of counselling no more than the production of 'adjustment' which, in the current conditions, is about reinforcing of the values that drive 'market reform' transposed for the mind and behavior of the private citizen;

- can the selfhood and subjectivity of the modern citizen be appropriately constructed within the terms of the market place and market relations ('are you personally effective?...maximising your opportunities...performing to your best...accepting the challenge?'); and

- more rhetorically, is counselling and, more generally, bourgeoisie psychology the 'catch fart' of neo-liberal rationality if the same terminology can be employed for the 'reform needs' of, for example, the waterfront as for the task of 'best practice' adjustment of the human subject?

In terms of our current ideology, the answer to both these appears to be 'yes'.

The Techniques and Theories of Counselling

Before proceeding further it is necessary to offer some degree of differentiation between various counselling schools and traditions. Counselling styles may involve an allegiance to the ***cognitive***, as in sport psychology's interest in 'focus', 'visualisation', 'the positive attitude', etc. They may be *behavioural*, as in having the client learn to ask open questions, elaborate her/his answers, be assertive, positively

self project, etc. They may be to do with the client's *emotional* life, such as learning how to manage one's feelings better, to grieve and so forth. What determines which technique is used is most likely related to the framework for practice selected, or assumed to be valid, by the counsellor: 'I am a Cognitive Behavioural Therapist, so I offer CBT'; 'I'm a grief counsellor, so I think in terms of loss and grief issues'.

Of course, in the real world counselling is (in one strong sense) less pure and more promiscuous than the advocates of the branded, market-leader therapeutic methodologies, such as CBT, would have the public believe. Much of the theory of counselling, and many practitioners who call themselves 'counsellors', are multi-modal and do not presume that one dimension of the cognitive/affective/behavioural merry-go-round has primacy. For this reason these practitioners move between these three interconnected levels of human experience. Nonetheless, what arguably remains the common hub of the counselling project is the belief that it is the job of the counsellor to re-define any and all presenting problems into an absence of adaptive 'skills' and 'strategies' in order to solve and/better accommodate to/manage that problem.

Sometimes this process for acquiring personal skills is not so coldly named. It may even be set out in (depending on your sensibilities) more religious or commonsensical terms.[7] Humanistic, 'third force' counselling theory, for example, is not so openly task or problem focused and generally characterises the job to be done in an argot of non-directiveness: the mission is one of 'improving self awareness', 'enhancing human growth', 'finding fulfilment', 'self realisation or actualisation', etc, rather than as problem or symptom-specific.

Similarly, psycho-dynamically oriented counsellors also cast their brief in broader, rather than specific, terms: achieving 'insight' or 'ambivalence' or 'understanding' is put forward as the goal. Generic counselling may talk in an apparently de-mystified language of action and pragmatism: 'identify the difficulty and work through it', 'dealing with your own issues'. Some poststructurally informed therapists, such as those identifying with the narrative tradition, go the other way and imply that there are no 'objective' problems, only problems in language and perception, which is clearly a travesty of what these approaches were envisaged to offer.

Yet, if one strips such variations in the particular accent of the description down to the commonalties between descriptions, *the task is to change how the person is in relation to, and is dealing with, their situation rather than attempt to change that situation*. This is very much in touch with the *leit motif* of our times; both public policy and culturally constructed 'common sense' recognise that there are no problems with - or put more precisely it is not sensible to frame problems in relation to - resources or the distribution of opportunities. The only problems which are appropriate for attention are problems of personal attitude and individual adjustment because in this time of pragmatism and bare knuckle individualism you only have yourself to blame if you are not getting what you want. Counsellors, of course, are only there to tune you up so that you can perform better and get more of what you

want, what you think you deserve or, in the argot of 'identity politics', become more what you want to be. As Rose (Furlong 1998) has noted, 'The self is now a project to be worked on' (p.89).

This habit of simply psychologising problems is premised on 'public issues' being understood as purely 'private troubles'. Thus, in so far as:

- counselling aims to change how the person is in relation to, and is dealing with, their situation rather than attempting to change that situation;

- the counselling project is premised on 'public issues' being understood as 'private troubles'; and

- the counsellor assumes that her/his task is to enable the client to learn the skills necessary to solve and /or manage and /or accommodate to that problem more effectively.

This project is in danger of being in conflict with the basic values of the profession.

Depending on one's reading of the history and nature of social work, the above characterisation of counselling is at least at tension with, if not is exactly the opposite of, the core values and defining traditions of the profession. That is social work thinking stresses 'the social' - in terms of emphasising the ethical, contextual and the interactional - rather than simply the personal *as well* as emphasising the relationship between the private and the public (Mills 1957; Birenbaum and Sagarin 1972; Schwartz 1974; Furlong 1998). Moreover, from a social work perspective the contention that the task of the professional, in this case the counsellor, is to be the expert teacher/guide to the ignorant client is banal, presumptuous and grandiose. One would be attacked by uncontrollable mirth at the sheer ignorance of this 'I have the solution, now tell me the problem' methodology if it wasn't so dangerous, obscene and so in tune with these economically rationalist times. Today both public policy and (culturally constructed) 'common sense' hold that there are only problems of personal attitude and individual adjustment which the bona fide expert efficiently solves.

Counselling and Power

The image of the benevolent expert and the motivated client found in many counselling texts offers, as Barber (1995) and others have noted, a poor fit with the realities of most social work practice. Potential service users/clients rarely put up their hand and say 'I want to see a social worker' and this tends to be true whether the field is public welfare or mental health, aged care or practice in general hospitals. As social workers we are aware that you need to be able to keep three balls in the air, that is:

- be engaged with the client/service user;
- be aware of, and find constructive ways to be engaged with, your agency and its definition of your purpose and role; and

- be aware of, and engaged with, your professional and personal self.

An allegiance to simplistic counselling theory is simply not useful in so far as one believes it is necessary to acknowledge the role of the agency and how this role, in turn, tends to shape the role of the social worker.

At a higher level of abstraction, there is a problem in that the benevolent image of the help seeking client and the expert practitioner excises the social control and constitutive dimensions that are inherent in all human practice activities including those offered by counsellors. We do not benignly teach people new and discrete skills: we change them, we re-socialise them into being particular kinds of subjects. The process usually involves the subject 'learning' to be a particular kind of entity, that is someone who is more self entitled, free choosing, self appreciating, independent, less fused.

At the level of social analysis, counselling/therapy is therefore inevitably concerned with the shaping and managing of the subjectivity of persons. This is not - as authors as diverse as Heller (1985), Pentony (1981), Foucault (1967; 1973) and Rose (1990) - some kind of non-instrumental helpfulness. Implicitly all counselling practice valorises particular cultural values, or to put it in Foucault's terms, promotes certain 'person-specifications' and discounts, if not proscribes, others irrespective of the counsellor's espoused intentions. At the risk of rampant exaggeration, it could be argued that most western counsellors/therapists tend to teach the worried well why they should be, and how they can be, more autonomous, that is less relationally oriented and more psychopathic.

As western people have became more 'educated' we have tended to see ourselves as more pragmatic, independent and entitled rather than as moral agents who are inevitably and properly part of a broader, interdependent family/tribe. Do we wish as social workers to conform to, or to contest, this development? Perhaps, the more self-entitled, the more self-determining we are and seek to be, the more we need counselling for our sense of anomie, our sense of purposelessness just as the dog is condemned to chase its tail. As a contrast to these generalisations about bourgeois counselling, casework is informed by social work values which, by definition, emphasise the 'social'. We do not pretend to be value free: perhaps we can put a more or less direct plug in for connectedness and not just self-determination for example.

Casework

Definition

As with other professions, one of the complications in social work is that the use of key terms has evolved across an extended historical period and international, as well

as intra-national, practice settings. Additionally, one suspects the usage of key terms has also varied according to what could be labelled 'fashion drift'. For example, if one is interested in tracing the history of how, and to what extent, social workers have worked with a focus on families, one encounters a confusing variety of terms including 'family work', 'family-centred practice' and 'social work with (family) groups' that are directly relevant to this topic (Furlong and Smith 1995). Similarly, although the term 'casework' has been explicitly employed for more than a 100 years in the writings and speech of the profession, a number of allied terms are also frequently encountered and this diversity has the potential to confuse an appreciation of continuities in terms of history, meaning and definition. From the briefest reflection a number of familiar terms come to mind: 'social casework', 'one-to-one work', 'direct practice' and 'clinical work' arise as well as 'casework' (Mineahan 1987). Nevertheless, it is still possible to generalise as to what 'casework' is and is not.

Although the emphasis varies between authors and traditions, a central theme to all is the premise that casework theory is based on a psycho-social understanding of the relationship between private troubles and public issues (Biestek 1957; Wright-Mills 1957; Bartlett 1970; Birenbaum and Sagarin 1972), the personal and the social, the linkages between the subjective and the structural. To misuse a phrase from Rojek, Peacock and Collins (1988), there has always been a 'social' in social work even as the degree to which the social has been, and should be, the focus has continued to enjoy a vivacious contest. What has been called 'the common base of social work practice' (Bartlett 1970) or 'the social work gaze' (Furlong 1996) provides the lens that formulates the presenting problem within the contexts/social fields that are regarded as primary in producing/maintaining this presenting problem. This provides a significant degree of consistency, and also significant variety, in how a caseworker understands, and therefore responds to, the problems s/he encounters. Social workers know that there are other useful points of view, such as a legal or a medical or a psychological lens, but that ours is distinctive and important.

A case vignette may clarify this point. Why might a particular woman, who has two young children and happens to be married to an unemployed man, feel depressed and regard herself as a failure? Looking through our lens, we might raise a number of a priori speculations in relation to the social fields that may be interpenetrating, may be impacting upon, this woman's subjectivity. From our knowledge of the links between private troubles and public issues, we might begin to speculate that:

- this woman may be personalising a structural problem relating to resourcing, such as the lack of a balanced gender ecology in relation to work allocation within the home;

- may be blaming herself as she has the expectation she is responsible for the emotional life of each person in, and for the emotional whole of, the family;

- may be without an adequate social network and is therefore physically and emotionally isolated;

- may be exhausted, and therefore vulnerable, because she is trying to juggle the multiple roles of carer to her and her partner's aging parents, her children and her own partner;

- may be intimidated by, or even the victim of, her partner, her employer; or

- may be heir to, and have internalisd, a negative image of herself from her family of origin and/or her family.

To speculate about the above is not to say there may not be other, quite possibly more accurate, descriptions of the causes of her distress. For example, this woman may be malnourished or suffering from an undiagnosed or poorly treated illness which has psycho-tropic effects; she may be legally in strife. Nonetheless, there are many possible social factors, factors which are not necessarily mutually exclusive of biological or legal issues, which are quite possibly implicated in the production and maintenance of this woman's presenting difficulties.

At a second level of thinking, the above set of possible factors leads directly to, and forms the basis of, social work thinking in relation to constructing what is usually referred to as an 'intervention' but what might be better termed an 'action process'. Depending on the particular emphasis, *the social worker can intervene anywhere along a continuum, anywhere between providing one-to-one casework (around providing temporary but change oriented support) to providing an indirect service at the level of the client's environment.* One may decide to intervene at several levels at once or in a particular sequence.

Decisions about providing creative responses rest on the capacity of the social worker to have an advanced degree of discretion as they are, unlike most counselling approaches, not able to be proceduralised, that is we are required to be reflective, advanced conceptually and practically, and flexible in being able to move between foreground (the clients experience) and background (the different levels of social context).[8]

Casework is hard to define. It is not just about who one sees, or is in contact with, but is also about how one goes about one's business: by the particular values and principles that animate the work, by the aesthetics of how the work is done as much or more as how one formally conceptualises the tasks. An example may help. One of the more inventive and parsimonious 'interventions' I have encountered concerned a 13 year old girl, someone we might call Beth, who was an in-patient in a children's hospital where she was expected to remain for the course of her illness, an illness that was expected to be fatal. Some months after her admission a social worker telephoned Beth's mother to ask the mother for her view on the ward staff's plan for Beth to be given a haircut. The staff, who were doing everything they could to care

for Beth, had (benevolently and comprehensively) taken over day-to-day decisions about Beth's care and had - prior to the social worker intervening - simply arranged for Beth to be taken to the hospital's hairdresser. In response to the telephone call, Beth's mother apparently said 'yes, that's fine.'

Some months later, after Beth had died, the social worker was surprised to have the parents make a point of saying to her that her call had prompted the parents to consider, and later to reclaim subjectively, their sense of their role as parents. The simple act of telephoning had been crucial as it had reminded them they had not - as one shift does to the next - 'handed over' their daughter to the hospital. Over some time, their reappraisal led to the parents being emboldened to regard themselves as central, rather than peripheral, to their daughter.

What values and principles had animated the social worker's call to the mother? The social worker's act had been simple yet its power to prompt suggests an ethical and aesthetic depth. The call to Beth's mother was created by a social worker's prescience and creativity and, in one important sense, actuated the space within which parents and daughter might relate more directly and with more immediacy than was set-up by the hospital's inadvertent and benevolent 'take over'. It was a commitment to 'the social', an abiding interest in the value of connectedness, that had moved the social worker to act as she had done.

What Distinguishes Casework from Counselling

The devolution to the strictly psychological which is the essential component of counselling can be contrasted with what characterises casework as a social work specific orientation and activity. Social work practice is informed by, and should conform to, the distinctive principles of social work. These principles include propositions such as:

- People are not their problems;
- Social workers are in the business of aligning with clients in their process of becoming;
- Working well with clients is about developing and maintaining well differentiated partnerships;
- People with problems are almost certainly doing the best they can even if their 'attempted solutions' are counter-productive;
- Being an expert practitioner is about facilitating positive patterns of relationship;
- People are more likely to change if they feel their personhood is supported and acknowledged;

- Problems people experience need to be acknowledged to the degree to which they are distressing, yet it is often also important to consider such problems can be 'contexts for growth';

- If not as a foreground priority, our casework concerns an interest in helping people find a sustainable ecology, that is a sound balance between their 'autonomous and 'relational' selves rather than with simply valorising the ideal of autonomy.[9]

These principles can and should be performed across theory punctuations and across the disparate fields of practice within which social workers are employed (Furlong 1996).

Counselling is a component of, or a dimension in, the practice of casework (and group work and community development). Generally the casework enterprise will include the use of at least some counselling skills in the pursuit of its aims. In many instances this will involve a greater or lesser component of counselling per se. Yet, one of the crucial distinctions between the two is that, rather than devolving to the psychological, *casework draws from a vastly richer palette to the single beige available to psychologically oriented counsellors.* Casework is a far more complex and demanding, far more about finding ways to be creative and pro-active within narrow limits, than is simple counselling.

Caseworkers often have some social protection and social control functions, for example in making referrals to, and working with, child protection services. We may take on positions which necessitate having an advocacy function, such as to employers or to schools. We may construct our tasks around the use of indirect service roles, such as the review of an agency's accessibility to particular client groups. This set of non-counselling dimensions is (at a theoretical level) only limited by the bounds we place on our imagination. These additional possibilities for action, and the distinctly social work thinking that informs the construction of these non-counselling priorities, speak to what separates casework form counselling/therapy. Casework is a term, a reference, that has many advantages. One particular advantage will be briefly discussed under the heading 'The Continuum of Casework' and this relates to the focus of the social work activity.

The Continuum of Casework: From Exclusively 'Direct Contact' to Exclusively 'Indirect Interventions'

In terms of the focus, or foci, of the casework process a continuum can be observed in relation to the social work activity that is undertaken. At one pole of the continuum is the kind of work that is purely 'Direct Contact'. Here are clustered a set of possible activities which, depending on the client and practice context, entail *only* face-to-face contact, for example, the provision of education and/or support, an emphasis on narrative work or consciousness raising, and so forth. That is all of the work has a

face-to-face character. At the opposite end of the continuum is that work which is concerned with 'Indirect Interventions', that is, where *all* the work takes place without any face-to-face contact. Such work may involve 'advocacy, 'systems-environmental change', 'network promotion', and so forth.

Between these poles lies the vast majority of casework activity. Over time, or perhaps even concurrently, social workers will work at different point on this continuum so that the multiple aspects of the psycho-social are brought into play. This involves creativity and is so much richer than simply devolving to the psychological. Thinking that what we do is 'casework' rather than counselling assists one envisage, and subsequently to act, creatively. Clearly, good casework practice usually involves aspects from several points on this continuum.

Why the Term 'Casework' is More Appropriate than the Term 'Counselling'

There are many reasons for preferring the term casework to counselling in addition to the fact that the term 'casework' is likely to lead to a richer and more relevant form of practice. Seven of these advantages will be briefly, and perhaps polemically, considered.

(1) Casework is a social work specific term

Claims to identity are usually put forwarded in terms of a set of positive statements, eg. 'I am a social worker because I believe in social justice'. Yet, a dialectical appreciation of identity honours the importance of opposition, 'I am not a counsellor, I am a caseworker'. This quality was noted by the much derided Chairman Mao who stated, 'a rock continues to be a rock only in so far as it refuses to be anything else'. I recycle this aphorism because it is a tart reminder that identity is, in part, generated by the quality of difference. That is, identity is a characteristic that needs to be maintained, needs to be actively renewed as a process. This process, in part, is performed through acts of ongoing refusal, 'I will not be sand in the wind today, sediment in the stream tomorrow. I will hold my boundaries and not allow my character to be undermined by erosion and entropy'.

The term 'casework' is a social work specific term. In an environment that is not positive about social work, we benefit from stimuli that produce and maintain a sense of our uniqueness and worth, that act to support a positive sense of identify, belonging and boundaries, and that contribute to a sense of tribe. In so far as we can continue to be 'not counsellors', 'not therapists' - indeed not lots of other designations - and to continue to see ourselves as 'caseworkers' this contributes to us persisting in being social workers.

(2) Casework and inventiveness

As a caseworker one can act as an advocate, a systems coordinator who tries to match the person to a set of complementary resource streams, a co- conspirator, a coach, a co-participant, etc. Being a counsellor or a therapist involves acting from a subject position that (at times; in certain ways) constrains rather than inspires. Thus, there is a far wider set of activities and roles available under a casework rubric than is available if one's self-designation is limited to that of 'counsellor'.

(3) The agency base of practice

It is clear that we social workers are, and that we recognise ourselves as, mediated in the 'what' and the 'how' of our practice by the agencies and roles we are employed within (Weissman, Epstein and Savage 1984). On the contrary, counselling theory tends to be blind to organisational context. Rather than encouraging workers to adapt, interpret and even re-invent in order to make the 'local knowledge' required for the sites of their actual practice (Rein and White 1981), calling oneself a therapist or a counsellor tends to narrow one's understanding of one's accountabilities: 'it is just me and my client'. In addition, one is more likely to be organisationally oriented, as well as seeing the other as a 'service user' rather than as a one-down client, if our direct practice work is defined as 'casework'.

(4) Seeing oneself as part of a network of services

An occupational hazard of being a therapist is that one tends to see oneself as centre-stage, perhaps even as heroic or 'therapo-centric' (Furlong 1985). That is, it is tempting to see therapeutic work with the client as the centre of, rather than as an aid to, the client in their world. Given that many of our service users have complex needs, it is preferable that each professional in the service network sees other professionals as 'colleagues' (Robinson 1986). The network is supposed to have a quality of interdependence and for this to happen it is necessary that the actors in the network understand that their roles should have the quality of interdependence whether these colleagues work directly with you in your agency or are found in the broader system. It is more likely for this to occur if at least one of the people in the network see themselves as with some humility, for example as some who is 'doing casework' rather than as 'the therapist' or 'the counsellor'.

(5) Cases and clinicians

More speculatively, it seems possible that one is less likely to see the people we work with and for as 'cases', and ourselves less as 'clinicians', if one's reference is the more humble one of 'casework' rather than 'I'm a counsellor' or 'this is (holy) therapy'.

(6) Counselling tends to be culturally insensitive

Have you ever had a client mock you, and/or others, for employing the affectations of 'the counsellor'; the solemn nodding, serious and unremitting eye contact, the earnest sitting forward in the chair, the holy church ambiance and the overripe tones. However amusing this exaggeration may be, it remains that there is a serious possibility of mono-cultural ideas about eye contact, of assumptions about 'independence', 'autonomy', 'confidentiality' and the other detritus concerned with North American presumptions about the specifications for normality, being performed in counselling theory and practice. Certainly, there is a seam of cross-cultural counselling material to be found but, just on reflection, does the term 'counselling' move one towards, or away from, a focus on technique or upon culture?

(7) You tend to value yourself for what you are and bring, rather than think you need a personality by-pass, if you see yourself as a caseworker rather than a counsellor

As in (6) above, it appears that many trainee, and many experienced, counsellors act as if they need to have had a personality by-pass in order to be 'the good counsellor'. In so far as this occurs, technique and image become more important than person (Saleeby 1991). What about being oneself in the way that Biestek (1957) advises, that is doing our face-to-face work in ways that avoid becoming the cliché that is 'the counselor'? Our presence, experience, knowledge and self is preferable to any artificial personae.

Good Social Work Practice: The Difference Between 'Casework' and 'Counselling'

The spirit that informs social work is not, and never has been, slavish to the conditions that prevail in any given social order. Nor would this spirit wish to bow from the ankles to whichever gods happen to be worshipped in these places. Yes, we are always interested in understanding, and working in relation to, local deities but the practice of social work has to be prepared to contest the 'way that it is' in any given location. Whilst this is our intention and our inspiration, it is never a total surprise that we sometimes find ourselves having inadvertently absorbed, and then *acting to reproduce rather than contest*, problematic aspects of the surrounding order.

Thus, it should not be a shock that many of us find ourselves thinking - at least from time to time - that 'counselling and therapy are sexy, casework is not'. The broader culture, and the culture of our employing organisations, support the view that what is put forward as a private, efficient and technical solution to the problems individuals and families experience is that which will be valued. Given that many, if not most, of these problems can be understood as 'public issues', rather than as purely 'private

troubles', the fact that to-day's favoured solutions are avowedly technical and individualistic, purportedly pragmatic and efficient, creates persistent challenges if not categorical dilemmas for our tribe. In such an increasingly mono-cultural human service environment one therefore needs to be extremely thoughtful how social work principles are to be enacted.

Like everything done in social work, the activity known as 'casework' is informed by the principles of the profession. These principles are summary statements that give definition to the ethical base and/or to the broad mission and purpose of social work. In so far as one is able to be successful in being able to continually work to social work principles, it is helpful if we as social workers continue to identify with our 'tribe' and to take the trouble to remain actively connected to our colleagues within and beyond our specific service settings. This can be done 'in person' by way of collective activity but it can also be furthered by one's internal language patterns. This can be as simple as saying to oneself, 'how can my casework be creative, constructive yet critical with this service user?' This is different in orientation and identification to saying, 'what's the most effective intervention I can undertake with this case?'

It will always remain a personal decision what someone with a qualification in social work decides to call themselves or aspires to be. I am not suggesting it is shameful to aspire to become a therapist (or a policy analyst; a manager; a consultant). It is rarely useful to polarise options into dichotomous choices and social work is and should be a broad church. From this point of view it is possible to dismiss the claims made by advocates of specialist therapies that their practice ideologies are foundational truths *and* to also value the practical sense in, for example, the psycho-analytic and gestalt traditions. To dismiss everything about these approaches because some people identified with these pursuits are helplessly 'therapo-centric' makes little sense (Furlong 1985). On the basis that we can, and in fact are obliged to, interrogate particular ideas/frameworks against clear principles, it is possible to take from many sources without being mindlessly and uncritically eclectic or becoming captured by the therapeutic game.

Many ideas for practice can be consistent with, or at least can be utilized in ways that are consistent with, the traditions of the profession if we understand our work is necessarily to do with the social, the ethical and the contextual and how these levels interpenetrate with what is experienced as 'the personal' by both clients and ourselves. Casework has to utilise some counselling skills but at a theoretical and practical level this is not to say that casework is counselling. At the level of practice it is not appropriate that casework activity defaults to the scheduling of 'the next (counselling) session'.

There are persuasive calls to name ourselves - and to be seen - as experts.[10] For the vast majority of social workers employed in direct practice positions, this is associated with an attraction to the terms 'clinician', 'therapist' and 'counsellor', or in a somewhat different case, to the term 'case manager'. One possibility is to choose to

take up these terms publicly, or to allow them to be given to us, and to do so with an awareness that these terms have Trojan horse possibilities. If we do, I think we can still be clear to ourselves, to have a subjective conviction, that I am a caseworker. This is a reference that keeps the stage clear for creative, yet modest, practice and for a continuing identification with our profession.

Notes

1. For example, when the Federal Minister for Employment Services can get away with blithely saying that, despite structural change, the unemployed are the 'authors of their own individual destiny and their own success' (Abbot 1999) it is clear that you only have yourself to blame if your life is not going well. Being 'job ready' is, as we have to understand, best regarded as an individual and, more specifically a psychological, matter. This practice of psychologising public issues and the assumption that this practice is no more than 'common sense', has to be contested. The fact that this assumption has come to pass as 'common sense' speaks to the operations of contemporary governmentality, for example, the recent McClure report.
2. The perceived status and social valence of the term 'casework' is a theme that will be discussed later as it constitutes one of the more important contexts within which the relationship between casework and counselling is contested and its meaning dynamically forged.
3. Like counselling, the term 'case management' has a complex relationship with social work/casework but it is beyond the aims of the present paper to explore this relationship (see the AASW (Victorian Branch)/AMHSW 'Standards' document; Furlong 1997).
4. An umbrella organisation was recently formed to represent all counsellors and psychotherapists in this country, that is the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA). The very fact that this organisation has been formed on the basis of a practical synonymy between these titles/roles acknowledges the point that there is no practically sustainable distinction.
5. There are a number of different types of counselling and it is likely that some of these may have their own codes of practical ethics, eg. religious or legal forms of mentoring or guiding. Such examples constitute a separate category to the particular kind of psycho-therapeutic counselling which is the current reference. In relation to this reference, I do not back away from the contention that the term 'counsellor' has an a priori quality of amorality even if feminist or narrative therapists, for example, would object to this pejorative suggestion. Depending on the in-use characteristics of particular qualifiers, such as 'feminist' or 'narrative', such adjectives *may* qualitatively negate the accusation of amorality.
6. Frances Fanon tells the story of trying to psycho-therapeutically treat a man with recurring nightmares. After finding that this work was not proceeding well, a fact which caused Fanon to doubt his approach, he found that this man's occupation was that of torturer of Algerian prisoners. This latter discovery caused him to put his therapeutic project under a moral lens (as quoted in Stagoll 1986).
7. It is a strong indicator of how the educated middle classes, and increasingly all citizens, have been socialised to 'know' the necessity of being well adjusted, and the legitimate procedures involved in achieving this state, that psycho-babble terms/phrases such as 'working through', 'dealing with one's personal issues', etc. are not the butt of contempt but are, on the contrary, assumed to be sensible and without prior question.

8. Although it tends to be theorised and articulated in different ways, the capacity to move between foreground and background can be found in the practice of many social workers. A clear example is found in White's (1991) notion of 'landscape of action' and 'landscape of meaning' questions.
9. There are, of course, many versions of social work values and principles. The principles listed in the current paper are taken from an in-progress work, that is *A Partial Account of the Principles of Practice* (available from the author).
10. The broader question of how we choose to name ourselves is an important one for this paper. For many it is important to feel that one's role is, and is seen as, legitimate and is associated with a positive regard. Thus, when being introduced to others at a social or a professional gathering, some find it preferable to call themselves, and be known as, a 'support worker' or a 'case manager', than to be known as a 'protective worker' or a 'social worker'. The same can be said of those in management or policy positions who often go some distance to avoid being identified as (having been) social workers. This theme is worth considerable attention.

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More than Gatekeeping ...Enacting Conflicting Duty(ies) of Care in Field Education

Nola Kunnen and Sabina Leitmann

Introduction

There is ongoing interest in examining gatekeeping processes within Australian Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) programs (Hughes, Heycox and Eisenberg 1994; Gleed 1996; Ryan, Habibis and Craft 1997; Ryan, Habibis and Craft 1998). As Ryan et al. (1997, p.6) contend, 'In Australia the challenge of gatekeeping is of major concern to those of us educating future practitioners both in educational institutions and in the field'. Moore and Urwin (1991, p.8) describe gatekeeping as 'the professional responsibility of social work educators to determine whether or not a student should enter the social work profession.' A number of authors have argued that educational institutions have a responsibility to safeguard the profession and the people it serves by preventing the graduation of students who do not possess the requisite knowledge, skills, understandings and values for competent practice as beginning practitioners (Hughes et al. 1994; Koerin and Miller 1995; Gleed 1996; Younes 1996; Ryan et al. 1997; Ryan et al. 1998).

The literature suggests that gatekeeping in social work programs occurs at different points in the educational process, 'which begins with admissions, continues with the evaluation of potential and performance during the course, particularly in relation to field education placements and concludes with exit from the course' (Ryan et al., 1997, p.5).

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An earlier version of this paper was presented at the AASWWE Conference, 28-30 September 1998, Cairns, Queensland.

Over the past four years, as they attempted to articulate a response to the dilemmas explored in this paper, they benefited from the considered opinions of colleagues and students. Particular appreciation is extended to colleagues at Curtin University, including Pamela Hass, Director, Legal and Administrative Services; Gillian McFarlane and Gianna Renshaw, field representatives on our Field Practice Committee; Social Work Students Association (SWSA). The AASW (WA Branch), particularly Brian Wooller, participated in an ongoing dialogue on duty of care dimensions in social work education.

The comments and suggestions of two anonymous referees assisted in finalising this paper and their input is sincerely appreciated.

Field education remains central to the development of a well prepared social work graduate and is seen as a critical point where a student's competency for practice is assessed (Slocombe 1993; Hughes et al. 1994; Cooper 1994). Not unexpectedly the field education program is often the place where questions arise of how to identify and deal with students deemed unsuitable for practice. Gleed (1996, p.98) drawing on her experience as field education coordinator at Northern Territory University believes that 'as educators we have a responsibility to clients and field supervisors to act in ways which support and protect them from students we know to be unsuitable'.

In this paper we explore an evolving framework for field education with the purpose of more effectively addressing issues around gatekeeping and duties of care. Reflecting on our experiences as field education coordinator and lecturer in the field education program we have become increasingly aware of limitations inherent in traditional thinking around these issues.

Rather than adopting a residual approach with policies and mechanisms specifically targeted at weeding out 'unsuitable' students, we suggest it is more fruitful to develop field education policies and practices that delineate potential and performance requirements for all students. Taking a more integrated, institutional approach to gatekeeping also requires the active involvement of all those concerned with field education. We believe that coming to grips with student performance issues is not the sole responsibility of designated staff in schools of social work or even the school as a whole. The wider university system, the professional association, field educators and social work students all have a part to play in arriving at decisions on who should have a social work degree and who should be excluded.

Gatekeeping and Duty of Care: Problematic[1] Concepts?

Our reading of the literature on gatekeeping raises for us three key areas of contention which we will briefly explore. From here, we will move on to articulate Curtin School of Social Work's developing framework for addressing issues of gatekeeping and duties of care in field education.

Should we distinguish between academic and non-academic criteria for evaluating students' performance?

The literature often draws a distinction between the use of academic and non-academic criteria for screening students out of courses (Moore and Urwin 1991; Gibb 1994; Koerin and Miller 1995; Younes 1996; Ryan et al. 1997; Ryan et al. 1998). Both North American (Gibb 1994; Koerin and Miller 1995) and Australian (Ryan et al. 1997; Ryan et al. 1998) studies found that academic criteria (demonstration of curriculum related knowledge and skills) were most often used for terminating students from their course. Yet social work educators on both sides of the Pacific speak of the importance of evaluating students with regard to 'non-academic' criteria such as values held; ethical behaviour demonstrated; personal qualities exhibited and psychological well being. Commenting on findings from

their Australian study on gatekeeping, Ryan et al. (1998, p.11) suggest that 'the issue is not whether non-academic criteria should be applied but the problem of how to apply them'.

The field education program is viewed as a main arena in which students' abilities to demonstrate effective practice behaviours are tested. When assessing students' practice performance, field educators judge students in terms of both demonstrated knowledge and skills, and the personal characteristics they bring to the task. In their study of Australian field educators, Hughes et al. (1994, p.4) found that 'the importance field teachers placed on students' personal characteristics in assessing their competence focused on the view that social work is about interpersonal relations and skills vis a vis both the client and co-workers. That is, social work is essentially about the 'use of self'.[2]

We take a dissenting position from those who conceptualise the 'use of self' and personal values as constituting non-academic criteria for assessing students' suitability for practice (Koerin and Miller 1995; Ryan et al. 1997; Ryan et al. 1998). In holding this position, we do not discount the importance personal qualities play in becoming a competent practitioner. On the contrary, we argue that such assessment criteria must be incorporated into the academic curriculum by which all students are assessed. Only by translating these criteria into observable and definable learning objectives do we begin to fulfil our gatekeeping obligations. Adopting a similar approach, Flinders University in South Australia has developed a code of conduct for students and field educators setting out minimum expectations for acceptable behaviour during field placement (Cooper and Forward 1996, p.70).

Should we use 'counselling out' for terminating students for non-academic reasons?

In their struggle to deal with the less tangible issues of students' professional suitability, some BSW programs in Australia (Ryan et al. 1997) and overseas (Gibbs 1994; Koerin and Miller 1995) have resorted to 'counselling out' unsuitable students from the course. This takes place even when 'counselling out' as a process has no official status within their universities. Although frequently referred to in the literature on gatekeeping, the term 'counselling out' is rarely defined. Koerin and Miller (1995, p.255) found that 'counselling out' included a range of procedures from informal remediation efforts to more formal committees of review.

Drawing on our experiences at Curtin, we question the validity of 'counselling out' of students. Generally, universities only terminate students from courses on academic grounds or if they breach university by-laws. Therefore even if we were to attempt to 'counsel out' a student exhibiting unacceptable behaviour, there is no requirement that the student comply with our directive. Often those students who have 'obvious' emotional/mental problems, or are unable to respect human diversity, are the least receptive to 'counselling out'. Further, should these students withdraw from the course, there is always the possibility that they may re-enrol at some future time.

In our view, pursuing 'counselling out' strategies for dealing with problematic students is fraught with difficulties. Social work educators engaging in this process may confuse their role, seeing their students as clients in treatment rather than as consumers of an educational service (Cole 1991, p. 21). Procedures for 'counselling out' also have the potential to be arbitrary and unfair, targeting some students and not others.

We concur with the observations made by Ryan et al. (1998), who argue that general university policies are 'patently not designed to deal with issues of professional suitability but are narrowly focused on issues relating to academic performance...and behaviours that might compromise academic standards' (p.12). In our experience, the university did not regard the practice of supplementing inadequate institutional processes with course based 'counselling out' as legitimate. Under these circumstances, we identified a need to secure the university's commitment to developing policies and procedures to meet gatekeeping and duty of care responsibilities.

To whom do we have duties of care in field education?

In terms of field education, schools of social work have to negotiate multiple responsibilities, in meeting their duties of care. Gleed (1996 p.98) identifies these multiple and often competing responsibilities as being 'to the student, to the field supervisor, to the employing agency, and ultimately to the client whether this be an individual or group'.

Briefly, duty of care means: 'Being in a position where someone else is relying on you to be careful and where, if you are not careful, it is reasonably predictable that the other person might suffer some harm' (Parsons 1997, p.3). We have a duty to be careful only in terms of those aspects for which we have a responsibility. For example, in field education we have a responsibility to students to be careful in relation to issues directly impacting on their education, but not in relation to their issues of housing. Similarly, in our view, universities have a 'duty of care' to ensure students referred to agencies for field placement have been assessed as ready to undertake field education.

Gleed (1996) argues that in field education there are a number of 'duties of care' to be considered and balanced. In addressing conflicting duties of care, we suggest a whole of university response is required. That response includes articulating the organisational polices and procedures which inform practices not only within the school of social work but also in other human service-based disciplines. These policies and procedures need to be framed with reference to commonwealth and state equal opportunity, anti-discrimination and privacy legislation.

Identifying the Problematics

In seeking to enact our duty of care, we have had to work with the contradictions, complexity and tensions arising in our relationships with the primary stakeholders in field

education. These relationships are between the School of Social Work and other areas of the University; the profession, placement agencies and field educators; and social work students. We perceive the contradictory nature of these relationships arises from differing perceptions of vulnerability. Universities position students as the most vulnerable party in all contexts, while the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) and field agencies are appropriately mindful of the vulnerable position of clients of social work services. Schools of social work occupy an uncomfortable position that recognises the potential vulnerability of students, agencies and clients, and seeks to enact a duty of care in all contexts.

In navigating a way forward, we identified a range of tasks to be undertaken in response to the tensions within our relationships with the various stakeholders. The tasks we identified were:

- articulating a field education curriculum which would make observable and definable aspects of students' conduct suggesting unsuitability for field education, but which would enable 'gatekeeping' assessments to made as part of assessable field education activities;

- developing school-based practices which complied with university privacy and affirmative action requirements. University policies required that the School effectively maintain students' privacy and confidentiality in all negotiations between student, school and field placement agencies/supervisors. Privacy considerations applied to information relating to students' psychiatric or physical health, personal or family circumstances, any aspects of physical disability, criminal records or students' prior or current status as clients of social work/welfare agencies;

- identifying field education expectations, grounded in academic and educational processes, which would assist students in developing awareness of their professional self, and accompanying responsibilities. We sought to articulate expectations that students become critically reflexive about their own position, actions and responsibilities as developing professionals in the placement and pre-placement contexts. Our approach was informed by a commitment to the view that standards of professional behaviour are part of the academic requirements to which students must be held accountable (Gibbs 1994b in Ryan 1998, p.13);

- building trust with field-based agencies and individual social work supervisors. Relationships were strained by a perceived reluctance by schools of social work to provide information about students' personal circumstances, particularly aspects likely to be reflected negatively in team contexts or service delivery to clients. Field educators and placement agencies in Western Australia expressed a preference for high levels of disclosure of sensitive information about students. International studies similarly reveal a desire on the part of field educators to 'know all' about the student prior to the commencement of placement (Reeser and Wertkin 1997; Gelman, Pollack, and Auerbach 1996);

- building trust with students. Our experience (which again parallels findings of Reeser and Wertkin's 1997 research) led us to be sensitive to the likelihood that students would react strongly against any suggestions that non-academic criteria would be applied to any aspect of field education. We needed to develop an educational framework to facilitate discussion with students of our potentially conflicting 'duty of care' responsibilities;

- facilitating University-wide acceptance that duty(ies) of care and legal liability extends beyond relationships with students. In the period 1994-1997 we actively sought to engage in discussion of duty of care responsibilities with areas of the university outside the school. Our initial conversations were unproductive. University administration did not consider that duty of care extended to putting in place strategies for assessing whether students' personal attributes impacted on placement performance. At the same time, University officers were pre-occupied with implementing legislative and policy initiatives[3] as part of the duty of care to students as consumers of our educational services. The University extended limited acknowledge of duty of care by indemnifying agencies against malpractice by students on placement. Provision also existed to withdraw from placement any student considered a 'danger to themselves or others' (Curtin University Handbook 1998). We had attempted to use this provision to exclude a student from commencing placement, but found it inadequate as the stated provision only allows a means of withdrawing students after a 'dangerous event' has occurred within the placement. We perceived a need to move beyond procedures that only addressed issues after a crisis had arisen.

Articulating a Way Forward

The tasks summarised above are not discrete entities and cannot be tackled in isolation from one another. Strategies developed for one task sometimes resulted in unintended consequences for another. Consequently, the process of articulating a way forward was somewhat fragmented and we achieved varying degrees of success. Different strategies emerged with varying rates of progress. In an attempt to present a concise overview of our responses, strategies are discussed below under three themes, which we now identify as having constituted reference points throughout the process.

Facilitating whole of University responsibility for duty(ies) of care

We sought ongoing dialogue across the University. On occasion we invited AASW representation to provide field and professional perspectives. During discussions, we requested formal clarification of School and University liability and responsibilities to agencies and clients. Detailed hypothetical scenarios were provided, drawn from the School's recent experiences. The University ultimately referred the matters raised for an external legal opinion, which concluded in part that the University would, in specific circumstances, hold a duty of care to agencies and clients as well as students. The process of securing such an opinion was time consuming, expensive (the University rather than

the School bore most of the cost) and protracted. The accompanying negotiations, however, facilitated a clearer understanding between the broader University and Curtin School of Social Work around the complexities of duty of care in field education. We may also speculate that the prospect of legal action by students or field agencies, arising from different perspectives on 'duty of care', contributed to shifting awareness and perceptions of University responsibilities. As others have noted 'The pastoral image of campus life is now at odds with a potential adversarial reality: the university as defendant' (Gelman et al. 1996, p.353).

Framing a revised field education curriculum

Our response to the diverse tasks identified was based on the premise that all stakeholders accepted the legitimacy of the School's role in defining the academic requirements of field education. Having rejected what we perceived to be an artificial distinction between academic and non-academic components in field education, we sought to replace non-academic strategies with clearly articulated learning objectives within the curriculum. Aspects of students performance and/or personal qualities previously considered grounds for gatekeeping (including values held, ethical behaviour demonstrated, personal qualities exhibited and psychological well-being) were translated into learning objectives that required students to demonstrate appropriate use of self, ethical practice, and professional conduct.

In revising field education unit objectives, we referred to the AASW 1994 Competencies Statement for entry level graduates and incorporated these into the unit learning objectives.[4] Among the expectations included in the AASW Competencies Statement are several 'strands' relating to 'use of self' in professional practice (AASW 1994, p.6):

- Using personal attributes: including insight into the influence of own values on practice; awareness of and ability to use own attributes appropriately; demonstrating awareness of own impact on clients and colleagues; developing professional performance in response to self reflection and feedback from other.

- Employs an ethical and professional approach to practice: including adherence to the AASW Code of Ethics; practising in a professional and accountable manner, practising confidentiality.

Drawing on these 'strands the unit objectives for first field placement (School of Social Work, Curtin University of Technology 1998, pp.8-12) now require students to:

- Understand and apply values and ethics of social work in practice settings.

- Demonstrate self-awareness including an appreciation of her/his impact on others and the way she/he is affected by their experience of the placement and utilise this awareness to enhance practice.

- Demonstrate a capacity for self evaluation and change, and a willingness to use supervision.

These requirements are further developed (ibid.) in the expectations that, during final field placement, students will:

- Establish and maintain effective working relationships with others in order to meet the client's interests.

- Evaluate the effects and outcomes of her/his practice and utilise this understanding to maintain standards of practice and use supervision to facilitate this process.

- Demonstrate an awareness of, and be able to consistently use her/his personal attributes appropriately when working with clients and client systems.

- Practice in accordance with social work values and ethics, including a commitment to social justice and anti-discriminatory practices.

- Critically articulate their views on the role and identity of professional social work and their place in relation to it.

Framing the identification and assessment of 'use of self' as curriculum objectives, informed by competency standards of the professional body accrediting the BSW program provide a useful basis when proposing curriculum amendments through school and university subject committees and boards of study.

Developing field education expectations, policies and procedures applicable to all social work students

When implementing the new curriculum objectives, 'use of self' was identified as one of the four essential learning areas to be included in each student's placement learning contract (with the others being social work practice, organisational context, and socio-political context). Thus 'use of self' becomes an educational activity for which all students are expected to identify learning goals, strategies and points of assessment in consultation with their field educator and liaison person. Placement based learning activities are supported by emphasising critical reflection by students on their placements during the campus based integration seminars held during placement.

In instances where Curtin School of Social Work staff anticipate inappropriate 'use of self' may arise in field education or where students disclosure of personal information raises duty of care considerations, we seek to engage students in discussion around the complexity of rights and responsibilities involved in duty(ies) of care when arranging the placement. Students are advised of their rights in relation to confidentiality and privacy, informed about student and disability support services provided by University and informed of the School's position on 'duty of care'. The consequences of not disclosing information to agencies or supervisors about factors that may affect students'

performance or 'use of self' during placement are explored. The School may limit the type of placement agencies or fields of practice considered appropriate for a particular student, whether or not the student agrees with the School's assessment. Similarly, where previous academic or placement performance indicates particular learning areas require development, the School may stipulate particular learning goals for inclusion in the student's placement learning contract.

Discussions with students may result in expressions of anger, and threats of legal action, from students who encounter the 'collision of ideal and reality (Younes 1998, p.145) when their desire to enter the social work profession is, in their view, potentially impeded by decisions by the School.

Drawing on the revised field education curriculum objectives, University privacy and affirmative action policies and the School's position on duty(ies) of care, we now communicate to students our expectations of rights and responsibilities during field education. Communication occurs at different points. Information is provided to students at key points in the course: during orientation following initial enrolment in the course; several months prior to each placement; and during discussion with individual students. From 1999, information packages prepared for applicants to tertiary institutions and the University Handbook will advise prospective applicants that several disciplines (including social work) require criminal records and/or agency records checks.

The School simultaneously revised placement pre-requisites and assessment strategies. A stronger emphasis is placed on assessment in units designed to prepare students for appropriate 'use of self' during placement. Where serious reservations are held about the appropriateness of students 'use of self' within the educational environment, a formal School panel may be convened and recommendations noted on the student's file. In all instances, the emphasis is on identifying, and communicating to the student involved, observable and definable aspects of their educational performance or conduct which raises concerns either about the students 'use of self' in practice, or 'duty of care' issues for clients.

Summary

We are now able to identify our revised approach to dealing with performance related issues in field education as premised on the following principles:

- That the School had to gain the University's acceptance of responsibility for duty of care to students, agencies and clients within field education programs;

- That the field education curriculum needed to overcome distinctions between academic and non-academic criteria for assessment of students performance during field placement;

- That field education policies and procedures must be universally applicable to all social work students;

Although these principles are presented as discrete points of reference, in practice the problematics overlapped, and finding a way forward was messy, disjointed, and in part remains incomplete.

Our assessment is that while several steps forward have been achieved, more work remains to be done. Implementing changes to field education policies and practices has required us to clearly communicate our changing expectations and processes to a diversity of field agencies and field educators. School initiated field educator seminars held on a regular basis provides one platform for such an open, ongoing and informative dialogue to take place. Though many field educators attend these seminars, a number do not. It remains for us to find alternate ways, within the constraints of time and resources, to facilitate these field educators and agencies engagement with a collaborative approach to field education.

School liaison staff are responsible for assisting individual field educators and students to implement the fine grain detail of linking unit objectives, learning contracts and assessment strategies. We recognise further development is required of liaison staff expertise and experience in this area. Despite these limitations, we conclude a coordinated approach to the complex tasks involved in addressing liability and duty(ies) of care is proving effective and workable in contemporary social work education and practice contexts.

In the current practice climate where litigation seems to be increasing (Shardlow 2000), there is a heightened urgency to ensure that all parties involved in field education (the university, the field educator and agency and the student) become more actively engaged in working with issues of duty(ies) of care. In documenting the ongoing approach taken by Curtin School of Social Work in meeting this challenge, we hope that others with similar responsibilities may work with and build on our experiences.

Notes

1. We use the term 'problematic' rather than problems, to direct attention on the tricky, challenging and fluid aspects embedded in the concepts of gatekeeping or duty of care.
2. The notion of 'use of self' is widely referred to in social work theory and practice. O'Donnor, Wilson and Setterlund (1995 pp.54-59) describe the skilful, disciplined use of self as fundamental to good social work. Similarly, Howe (1987 p.109) comments that 'a deliberate use, understanding and appreciation of self is basic to any worthwhile social work practice'. Both texts refer to Goldstein's (1973) notion of self as encompassing self conception (being); perceiving self (knowing) and intentional self (becoming). This requires social workers to reflect on their behaviour in everyday practice' to articulate the meaning making they bring to a particular situation; and to identify the explanded awareness they could then apply in shaping their practice. Implicit in this process is the '...awareness of the effect that you, personally, have on shaping the processes and

outcomes of interaction and the effect of these processes on yourself' (Crawford 1996, p.77).

3. *Privacy Act 1988* (Cwlth)
   Disability Discrimination Act (Cwlth)
   Equal Opportunity Act (WA)
   Spent Convictions Act 1988 (WA)
   Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act (Cwlth)
   Crimes Act (Cwlth)

4. We considered the AASW Competencies Statement for entry level social workers provided a valid reference point when framing some fo the unit objectives of our field education curriculum. Whilst the approach we outline in this paper incorporates elements of some competency approaches, comprehensive discussions of the potential and limitations of competency-based learning and assessment is beyond the scope of this paper. Additional useful comment on competency issues within field education is provided by Hopkins and Cooper (Cooper and Briggs 2000, pp.55-69).

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Indigenous Relationships and Social Service Courses in the Academy

Donna Matahaere-Atariki and Pat Shannon

Introduction

Consistent with the 1998 AASWE conference theme of 'collaboration in the tropics' this paper seeks to make a contribution towards the resolution of what might be called a 'crisis' of indigenous representation in the academy. At the conference itself this became apparent in the demands from both Maori and Australian Aboriginal speakers that they alone be entitled to research and teach their own issues among their own people. The reaction to this among the overwhelmingly European academic audience ranged from insensitive naiveté ('please tell us how to research your children') to offence.

Aside from lesser issues of hurt feelings, or even lost research funds, such demands can be construed as an attack on the whole academic enterprise. It challenges the very base of the academy when it is not the quality of academic thought that is seen to matter but the ethnic origin of the thinker. For certain ideas to be the province only of people of specific ethnic backgrounds (despite that being de facto the situation for so long) does not fit with conceptions of the academy as having a 'quasi-constitutional role...of maintaining the intellectual space and contest of ideas which are necessary for democracy to survive'.(Kelsey1998, p.14)

In this paper, we attempt to sort the issues and explore positive ways of responding to such challenges from indigenous people - especially if, as we suspect most would agree, we can at least understand where the complaints are coming from, even if we might not agree with the solutions they propose.

To do so we suggest that we need to look broadly at the changing functions of the academy in society, including other , more serious(?) attacks on what is perceived to be human rights and academic freedom. We therefore briefly consider some of the recent developments and change, identifying the existing (and often implicit) theories about the

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Revised version of a paper presented at the Australian Association of Social Work and Welfare Educators Conference, 28-30 September 1998, Cairns, Queensland.

nature of power in the university/tertiary setting and how they represent and privilege certain interests over others. The position of indigenous people and their continued subjection to various forms of imperialism and colonialism are especially powerful examples of such effects.

In the face of the unsatisfactory nature of these explanations we seek to develop a new strategic form of theorising about power more in tune with the fragmentary and contested nature of the modern world. The implications of this especially with respect to groups such as indigenous Treaty-partners and other major stakeholders requires a fundamental shift in the way that we have previously perceived governance. We attempt to develop the implications of this – especially with respect to indigenous people - and propose a structure of power relations which embodies them, as stakeholders in an evolving university system. While our focus and examples are specifically the setting of our own University, Otago/Otakou, in southern New Zealand, we argue that the principles are applicable generally to situations of indigenous peoples.

In conclusion we will propose a structure of power which is especially relevant to the social services and university social service departments offering some suggestions as to how effective changes might be implemented in practice. It will be seen that increased involvement by indigenous groups at all levels of social services education is not only an important requirement for a substantive response to the Treaty of Waitangi (in New Zealand) and the rights of indigenous peoples generally, but also may provide a buffer against cruder market reforms.

A Crisis of Indigenous Representation in the Academy

Social service education seems to have major difficulties over indigenous demands, such as those at the Cairns conference, perhaps because it has tried so hard to respond. Some social service courses in New Zealand for example, which attempted to privilege the contribution and involvement of indigenous people, have been found to be in breach of such rights. The decision of the Race Relations Conciliator in finding Wanganui Polytechnic in breach of the Human Rights Act by having 'discriminated against two (European) students on the basis of their race' in a social work course is one such example (Prasad 1998, p.1). At about the same time, a confidential report on Victoria University's social work program (the oldest in New Zealand) contains allegations of 'reverse racism' against non-Maori students and recommends the 'programme's immediate disestablishment' (*The Dominion*, 10 November 1998, p..3)

These attempts to implement a Treaty perspective into social services courses in New Zealand seem to have resulted in a backlash. They have failed to substantively alter existing power relations within social services education and perhaps have even made them worse. Maori staff in particular have borne the brunt of these tensions on a number of levels which is indicative of a much larger inability to translate the Treaty into measurable outcomes of practice. The lack of support at a governance level coupled with the overall structure of inequality that exists in both policy and practice has produced a

culture of complaint against anything deemed not to be inclusive. The absolute power to define an offence or, to examine inclusivity remains very much in the hands of non-Maori.

What both the Wanganui and Victoria examples show us, among other things, is that attempting to develop and deepen the representation of indigenous perspectives beyond access concerns (whether the specific actions themselves are well or ill conceived) is very difficult. Indeed, in the Wanganui case, the Race Relations Conciliator seems to restrict the currently fashionable 'affirmative action' response (presumably by tertiary staff using academic freedom to decide what and who needed affirming) to access issues alone:

Dr Prasad said that this decision had implications for other providers of tertiary education who target particular students:

> 'While the positive discrimination provisions entitle a provider to target a particular group who are demonstrably disadvantaged, it does not entitle a provider to offer course on less favourable terms to different ethnic groups with similar needs in the same course'. (1998, p.1)

If affirmative action, as Prasad argues, is permissible only for certain purposes, notably access, it rules out the possibility of affirmative action within learning and with regard to what counts as valid knowledge. The actual results of access to the academy by indigenous groups is a poignant reminder of the limits of inclusion. If the aim of earlier struggles was to gain access to those institutions where knowledge is not only produced, but also privileged, little attention has been paid to what happens once access has been achieved. In New Zealand subsequent demands for indigenous presence, articulated as 'affirmative action', provide an alibi for dominant group interests. This is not intended to endorse an anti-intellectualist stance, neither is it an encouragement for refusing access into the academy under those terms. What it seeks is an understanding of the connections between knowledge and power that supports the exclusion of indigenous groups from participating in 'academic freedom'.

Instead of provoking an epistemological dilemma, their presence could be used as an example of the success of inclusionary politics. An understanding of the connections between knowledge and power that compelled them to seek access, has led to a misunderstanding of those complexities that underpin power in society. What we find instead, is that while knowledge is related to power, it is certainly not the same thing. Attempts by staff and students to repeat the 'affirmative action' of access with regard to course content and assessment has led to severe backlash, with complaints of discrimination against 'Pakeha' students (of European origin) formally upheld in both the above examples.

Power is coded discursively as an effect of a specific type of knowledge and indigenous demands are seen to challenge the very basis of the academic endeavour and the formal requirements of free, impartial, scholarly teaching and research independent of any personal characteristics. From our point of view, however, the notion of liberty that

frames such a concept of 'academic freedom' rests on the assumption that privileging individual autonomy over social justice is essential to human freedom. The primacy of individual liberty ascribed to by proponents of 'academic freedom' does not allow for the possibility that other concerns might have equal constitutional or moral importance. We wish to argue that such a way of thinking separates social justice from being a collective concern to providing it only for a privileged few. While it might suit the purposes of a privileged academic elite, it operates like blinkers to obscure issues of social power that determine what constitutes knowledge.

Active only under certain conditions, its value is dependent on its ability to reproduce itself. This knowledge does not, apparently, include these versions of indigenous knowledge. We wish to investigate those power relationships to develop a view which is more likely to advantage indigenous peoples. As with colonialism, we start with history, as espousal of traditional academic values is always embedded in social and political situations which have shaped and directed adaptation by Universities throughout their history. Before doing so, however, we shall also look at the other contemporary 'crisis' for the academy - the challenge from the Right.

The Modern University Crisis: Economic Rationalists and Managerialism

Undoubtedly, the most significant current challenge to academic freedom in the modern tertiary education system is from the Right. Recent governments throughout the western world, have introduced significant change in the academy directed towards these ends. Alongside reduction in state support has been the development of managerialism bringing about a marked change of approach and philosophy of university governance. This was sharpened in New Zealand by the Education Amendment Act (1989) which turned Vice-Chancellors into 'Chief Executive Officers' (CEO) with full responsibility for management. Management, now seemingly selected for (putative) business knowledge rather than academic excellence, in many cases indulge in all the behaviours of conspicuous consumption characteristic of the 'executive washroom' behaviour of the American corporate elite upon whom they, apparently, model themselves:

> Executive tiers have continued expanding while staff numbers and salaries are frozen or cut, and academics are increasingly marginalised from senior appointments and important decisions which have serious academic impacts.(Kelsey 1998b, p.14)

Further elements have been increasing pressure on academic staff both in terms of workloads and academic opinions, management decisions to close university departments on grounds of financial viability and (officially supported) backlash complaints about affirmative action on gender or ethnic grounds. As has been pointed out so often before, there is little faith in the invisible hand as the very visible control agents and agencies proliferate under such regimes. In New Zealand this is part of a national explosion of transaction and control bureaucracies, under economic rationalist policies, to the extent

that managers formerly responsible, on average, for 20 front-line workers in 1956 are now responsible for about four (Hazeldine 1998, p.124).

Universities throughout the world have responded to these challenges through what has been characterised by Trow (1994) as 'appeasement based on 'soft' managerialism':

> it recognises the problem of complacency, conservatism, inefficiency, indifference to industry needs, and inequity, but it also values universities' norms and traditions, which in turn depend on their continued relative autonomy. (Kelsey 1998a, p.70)

Thus New Zealand universities have moved to set up their own 'Audit' unit and in various ways have sought to pre-empt criticism. Australia, seems committed to making the tertiary education 'market' transparent through abolition of the binary system and the development of league tables and the like (McInnis 1995, p.39).

All this, however, does not seem to be enough. Recent discussions of university and tertiary education, in the United Kingdom (Dearing Report 1997) or Australia (West Committee 1998) have recommended the introduction of even more market-oriented approaches to tertiary level education, albeit with significant reservations (Kelsey 1998a; 1988b). In New Zealand, key elements have been an open tertiary student funding market (which was facilitated by the introduction of the Universal Tertiary Tuition Allowance) and a corporate approach to tertiary decision making (forced on institutions by the Ministry of Education's newly established Tertiary Ownership Monitoring Unit). All of these were implemented (without legislation) in 1989 (*NZAUS Bulletin* 20, 14 August 1998). Current government recommendations (in 'White' (policy) papers) include market challenge to both 'ownership' and management of universities and to control of qualifications by giving approvals for these to a government body set up to represent employer control through Industry Training Organisations.

At the level of abstract theory this is consistent with economic rationalist proposals that market relationships should be simulated as closely as possible. In this theory the economic system should dominate the sector and management dominate through Chief Executive Officers. In the present context the managerialism of the corporation acting through the power and authority of the CEO is very much required, but only as a first step. The most recent suggestions of government appointed businessmen on University Councils restructured as Boards of Directors, would seek to approach total dominance of the decision-making processes by market force principles. Similarly, the construction of League tables and the like are meant to be a move to giving market choice some meaning as it can then become a criterion for student choice supposedly leading to diversity and competition (McInnis 1995).

Social service courses will not find it easy in today's neo-liberal environment. Social service qualifications are hardly likely to be of high value to prospective students in terms of potential earnings but, as applied courses, they are often of higher cost. So unsubsidised price signals will not work to our advantage. As O'Connor noted in a recent

paper, employers in this sector, as in many others, will be attempting to control the knowledge and requirements of their workforces much more and this may not involve social services departments of universities (O'Connor, 1997). Similarly, there is little future for indigenous concerns here.

The response from academic staff to such 'deprofessionalisation' has been one of claiming a 'quasi-constitutional role...of maintaining the intellectual space and contest of ideas which are necessary for democracy to survive' (Kelsey 1988b, p.14) while issuing a clarion call to arms:

> It is vital that we fight to retain the recognition of university autonomy, academic freedom, and the critic and conscience role in the Education Act (Kelsey 1998b, p.15).

However a concern that 'industries' will impinge on 'academic freedom' ignores the history of intellectual capital used in the development of imperial interests. It is this amnesia that not only thwarts the possibility for a substantive response but considerably narrows the terms of reference on which counter claims can be made. We would like to explore the terms of reference for such counter claims and how they might be made effective.

Freedom of any sort is something to be accomplished and rebuilt whenever inhibited. It is not automatic or necessary. While academic staff now find themselves on the defensive, the proposed changes and pressures have not fallen from heaven – they are the result of specific and historic forces of change.

An Historical Perspective on Development

An historical perspective on so-called traditional values of universities such as the disinterested pursuit of knowledge, academic freedom, 'conscience of society' and the like have always taken very specific forms which, however disinterested and 'free', have served specific interests. The reality is academics have only had a very limited sphere of 'freedom'. Claims which do not acknowledge this are not only insensitive to the historical context in which institutions developed, but also seek to privilege the production of knowledge, over its political impact in society. The academy has never been, nor is likely to ever be, the exclusive haven of 'intellectual freedom' although to claim it reinvests the institution with the moral prerogative that it has always craved. Indeed the nostalgia that frames much of the local discourse of resistance in New Zealand, has a particularly moral flavour that is not only insensitive to the historical context in which institutions developed, but also seeks to valorise the production of knowledge over its political impact in society.

It must be recalled that, behind the cloak of academic freedom, the old elitist universities of the recent past served by providing an educating and rationing device for the elite and ruling class. The traditional elitist view of the university found powerful expression in

Newman's 'Idea of the University' a very influential statement of the Oxbridge philosophy of an undergraduate university, through a liberal arts education, producing cultured, but unspecialised, elite civil servants. It must be noted that it was a view geared to the production of a specialised elite. Because elites differed it was only one model - sharply at odds with Newman's own practice in Ireland - and with the Scottish tradition of attention to intellectual independence and the 'democratic intellect (Walker 1994). It is interesting that much the same line as Newman is now that of the United States' elite ivy league over a century later (Pelikan 1992) although now focused on a Wall Street elite.

This conception has been challenged by the development of mass universities over the last 30 years and has resulted in an accommodation between government funding/direction and academic (staff) control. It has been a time when new subjects have been able to press claims and, according to their social power, get established in the groves of academe. Boyer's (1990) discussion of contemporary changes in the United States is important in illustrating the effects of the links between power structures and higher education. He sees the empirical 'discovery'-research based, 'publish or perish' approach to academic progression (both personal and institutional) as the product of a very short period of history and an elite response to government demands for new knowledge useful to the Cold War effort.

The change came about because the huge system of Cold War funding of 'useful' research came to an end and the money for it was simply no longer available. The response of the 'mass' university has been to highlight what was seen as the 'systematic and systemic' undervaluing of teaching and teaching-related research. In contrast, funding, in the dominant United States system, is now defined much on the basis of students - thus teaching and professional issues become much more important as a source of university funds than defence oriented spending. In place of the traditional focus Boyer proposed an academic system based around four forms of 'scholarship' emphasising those of application, teaching and integration rather than (what he called) the scholarship of '...'

While a different trajectory might have determined southern hemisphere academic development, similar processes are clearly occurring. The period has, therefore, been especially a time for the development of courses and faculties for business and commerce, especially the MBA. It has also has been mainly positive from the point of view of social service courses and departments. On the coat tails of such development and on the basis of a need for a qualified and trained social service workforce, social service courses have trailed (usually under the patronage of social democratic/Labour type governments). Without such developments and the demands for equity associated with them, it is very doubtful if the social sciences, let alone social service courses, would even exist in the academy.

At the abstract level this is Social Democratic/Welfare State theory, with its embedded technological determinism, which supports both professional academic dominance and government direction through funding. It is the view which created the bureaucratic mass universities of the recent past. In it academic decision-making bodies should be subordinate to government planning and funding. Political forces are present in the form

of state funding of students where there is no longer simple reliance on the job market but also on actual politically defined processes and definitions of required numbers of students, categories of graduates, sizes of classes and the like. It was control through tight funding arrangements with academic staff operating in collegial decision-making systems (faculties) within the limits imposed by both funding and direct government involvement in control.

At the level of the social services departments our involvement has been very much tied up with this development of state intervention and the growth of mass tertiary education – especially in that based on the social sciences. Often the pressure has actually meant government directly targeting funding to develop such courses which the universities would have never done themselves. With respect to indigenous peoples, even when, as in New Zealand in recent years, they have been able to force themselves upon politicians as significant social groups – the responses have largely been ones of paternalism rather than control and empowerment. This has especially taken the form of special 'affirmative action' access arrangements ('lower' standards) or marginalisation of Maori issues into Departments of Maori Studies (with an academic focus largely concentrated on language and cultural studies) rather than embodying indigenous perspectives into all departments and divisions of the university. More often than not, indigenous interests are represented only as curriculum content within courses and there is a sense that Maori are continually invited to share in a vision of themselves as the purported beneficiaries of policies developed by others.

This compromise is now being challenged in their turn by the forces and ideas of economic rationalism. The crisis of the challenge from the Right and decreased public spending is clearly causing tensions. There has been much discussion of the millennium of University history – celebrating the 1000 years of universities but also capturing present concerns. These were canvassed at the recent Australian conference 'Universities: Enduring Institutions?' (Australian Centre for Educational Research 28-29 May, 1998) where various luminaries discussed the prospects for the future – at least in Australia. The discussion ranged from factors of history through to the present situation with universities being subjected to the challenges identified above and to debates about the organisation of knowledge in disciplinary and inter-disciplinary degrees, information technology and research. The basic argument is a technologically determinist one that the world is changing and therefore, universities also must change.

Similar concerns have surfaced in the United Kingdom. McNay (1995) identifies four separate models of universities as organisations – ranging from the (traditional?) 'collegium' to the 'bureaucracy', the 'enterprise' and the 'corporation'. His historical argument is that the traditional (and elitist) 'collegium' was replaced by the 'bureaucracy' (mass university) and now by the 'corporation' – with the enterprise being the required form for the future. It is McNay's belief that the enterprise culture will develop further with a focus on both customers and professionals it is the ideal form of the 'new' university for him and for others (Mintzberg 1989; Deal and Kennedy 1988; Schuller 1992).

The power elements of this are disguised in many discussions of the 'new' issues facing the tertiary teaching sector. We, as social scientists, know that there is far more to it than some simplistic technological determinism of finding the 'right' organisational structure, degree mix or best CEO, as it is clear that each form involves a specific and determinate embodiment of power and power relationships. McNay explicitly foregrounds this, identifying 'freedom' as the 'key word' (1995 p.106) for the collegium while that for the bureaucracy is 'regulation', 'client' for the enterprise and 'power' (authority of the CEO) for the corporation. In short, for him, key power relationships structure the form of the organisation.

What is the appropriate form for an institution which can take full account of indigenous concerns? If earlier arguments are correct it seems not to be the collegium, bureaucracy or corporation. Is it the enterprise with its focus on the 'client'? To decide this, as Charlesworth argued at the recent Australian 'Enduring Institutions' seminar, we need a theory. We would claim we need a new theorisation of the issues.

Oscillation from old Liberal to Social Democratic and, now to neo-Liberal, is the pattern of the past and the present. Despite all the commotion, the challenges and changes, there is little that is new. If these traditional views are our only options, are we then doomed to forever oscillate over considerable time periods of time between different paths which go nowhere? Certainly indigenous peoples (and other low status groups) are clearly left out of the picture in these theories - none of which seem to meet the needs of clients and indigenous groups in the social services. The representation of Maori as clients of social services rather than educators or providers continues to support a much wider view of the Treaty of Waitangi as an act of colonial benevolence.

An Alternative Theorisation of Universities and Power Structures

If we were to reframe the present crisis in different terms then perhaps we can free it up in order to serve 'other' purposes and reinsert indigenous peoples into the picture. Framing our resistance in a different way uncovers new questions such as, 'what is at stake for whom, and under what conditions can these demands be made?' In order to examine this we need to analyse the power groups or stakeholders of tertiary education. McNay's term *client* is, however, indeterminate as there is no single unambiguous client of the academy. Is it the government, civil society itself, the students, professions, employers? In place of client therefore we shall speak of *stakeholders* - it seems to have much the same referents but much more breadth.

The currently fashionable term 'stakeholder' is therefore a useful way to begin to define power groups. The term was developed with a view to arguing that private corporations had responsibilities to a wider group of people than their shareholders (those owning equity in the business). The suggestion is that private businesses are also responsible to all who have a 'stake' in the operation (Freeman 1984), with implications of active participation rather than merely being passive recipients of the effects of the business. The basic insight is that of seeing all organisations - especially private enterprise

corporations - as political institutions with stakeholders competing, at all levels, for control. Despite its popularity, the concept has remained very vague and lacking in any detail or practical cutting edge with regard to its application and prioritising of the interests of various stakeholders. However, whatever the merits of the concept of stakeholders with regard to private corporations it would seem very appropriate with respect to universities which always, even in the bastions of free enterprise, involve public funding and are thus, even in conventional terms, political. It is therefore appropriate to consider a wide group of stakeholders.

Secondly, an open-ended poststructuralist and postmodern attention to the diversity and levels of power and powers arguably may provide the basis for an alternative theorisation. Despite all their quibbling over terminology most contemporary theorists – even those avowedly not 'post' (eg. Giddens 1990; 1991; Beck 1992) eschew certainty and predictability, seeing a world of 'risk' and uncertainty especially for the 'excluded', powerless and poor - with indigenous peoples looming large in these groups. Such an orientation is used here in an attempt to analyse and theorise the issue of representation of indigenous discourse within the academy (specifically social services aspects), the social relationships and forms and levels of governance required, and make some suggestions as to how that might be implemented in practice.

This gives us a different understanding of power. From such a perspective the world is seen as providing a much more fragmented and less predictive understanding of control since competing groups with changing power resources operate in a permanent terrain of struggle over basic institutions. This would not necessarily mean that power is shared, the reality is that power, as a relationship, is not some 'thing' you can either give away or distribute. This is a fallacy that keeps particular groups disciplined while also perceiving power outside our particular domain. What is required is an understanding of how power works and as such a recognition of those sites that are vulnerable to outside intervention (Sibeon 1996). The theory suggests viewing the structure as a system of power relationships not as distinct, albeit mutually influential, 'thing 'or institutions but as the ongoing interaction of social actors with certain power resources (financial, political cultural etc.) at their disposal. The contest between them then becomes more than the institutionalisation of a dichotomous opposition of irreconcilable opposites or a stable zero-sum outcome of 'winners' and 'losers'. It begins to be seen as the uncertain and contingent acting out of power relationships between significant stakeholders - without any necessary guaranteed or stable 'answer' or 'resolution'. In such a world, social services and indigenous knowledges become important if we have the power to make them important.

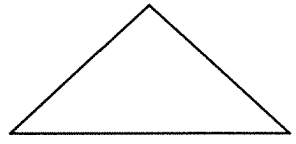
At one level, with the value attached to the free exchange of ideas, it is the population of the world which can be deemed a large undifferentiated stakeholder. Certainly at national or regional level - whatever the ambit of a particular academic institution - all citizens through government funding have stakes in the institution. Indigenous people are involved here and, in New Zealand through the Treaty of Waitangi, iwi Maori are constitutionally established as stakeholders by being one of the two sets of Treaty

partners. Merely listing the whole population, however, does not solve the issue of the actual practicalities of the operation of stakeholder participation.

At another level we need to see universities as 'voluntary associations' - albeit publicly funded ones. This means that, in addition to the legitimate role of government, universities are made up of stakeholders who voluntarily associate with the institution - as staff, students (and later graduates). This would seem an appropriate basis on which to establish three main groups of direct decision-level stakeholders - government, students/graduates and staff. However, behind them at the power/resource level, are others such as research funders, taxpayers and employers.

Figure 1: University Power Relationships

Government/Constitution (Treaty)
Graduate Community/Central and Local Government Appointees



Academics **Students**

international academic community | research funders | course funding | employers (job market)

In Figure 1, each group of actors and their power resources are set into a set of power relationships based on their interests and their use of specific power resources. Thus the state can influence directly through its representatives but also indirectly, through its funding arrangements for students and research. Similarly indigenous people under the Treaty are given specific direct representation as part of the polity but can be similarly indirectly represented at other levels (eg. through international support from indigenous peoples' movements, employment for students and research funding). The subjugation of rival interests, in the name of an overarching market or state, in order to serve status quo politics, is no longer so easy. What exists is a complex set of arrangements that is not only reliant on the ability to document the greatest moral urgency, but is dependent on th degree of credibility that is attached to competing claims. Points of leverage for indigenous groups will be dependent on their ability to exploit enabling violations that exist in the recent developments concerned with tertiary education, notably the contest between an economic rationalist government and academics. The earlier static pattern of relationships then can be seen in dynamic terms with the strength and direction of the power relationships (represented by the lines of the triangle) and always open to contestation.

There are several points to be made in connection with the identification of stakeholders in such a dynamic set of relationships.

First, it is important to point out that at the geographically regional level of a university the Treaty partner (in Maori terms) is the mana whenua (local iwi /tribal group of that place) and should therefore represent themselves in such a forum acting as representatives of their political community (the same may apply to the aboriginal nations in Australia). There is no place for token representation of indigenous interests by staff or students (Matahaere-Atariki 1998). If such people participate they participate as representative of staff or students not in an official 'indigenous capacity'. All citizens, through providing government funding, have a stake in the institution. Indigenous people are involved here both individually as citizens (community), and as one of the two sets of Treaty partners. It is not possible to marginalise/separate indigenous and Maori/Aboriginal concerns as somehow outside this power structure and not subject to its control.

The embedded nature of this involvement is fundamental. It is important to note that the Treaty of Waitangi, in New Zealand, not only recognised individual Iwi (tribes)and Hapu (subtribes) as having distinct rights over their resources but also conferred the right of citizenship as enjoyed by all others. In contemporary terms it can be seen that subsequent Treaty settlements further endorse rather than cancel Iwi rights to citizenship. In the southern region of the University of Otago, Ngai Tahu Iwi representation as a major stakeholder in tertiary education in Te Waipounamu (South Island) was recognised in ground-breaking legislation. For the first time in the history of this nation, Kai Tahu Rangatiratanga (control/possession) within Te Wai Pounamu, as preserved by the Treaty, is now officially recognised by statute. The implications of this for social service education, provision and delivery are immense. The expectations of the Iwi's role as the legitimate community (*the* major stakeholder alongside the crown) have yet to be fully realised. Nevertheless, the legal precedent has been established so that in effect Iwi are not reliant on the good wishes of non-Maori for their inclusion in the academy. How and where they choose to position themselves and form working relationships is their greatest challenge in a post-Treaty context as this will impact on Iwi developmental planning as, unlike other stakeholders, Iwi have yet to exercise their rights in any substantive way.

Thus at Otago University at present there is a lack of legitimate Iwi authority within the academy due to no representation of the relevant Iwi on the Council. Thus there has been some difficulty ensuring effective consultation over academic and research issues as there is no legitimate Ngai Tahu vehicle within the University of Otago. We would suggest that this is a path to be followed generally in the academy to develop indigenous participation.

The second major issue with regard to stakeholders relates to the inroads of New Right managerialism. In the diagram above the relevant stakeholders (who voluntarily associate with the institution) are students/graduates and staff. Attempts of the new managerialism to limit the Council itself by turning it into a narrowly based Board of Directors as a legitimation body for management decisions (CEOs etc.) cannot be merely neutral but serves to falsely represent management as stakeholders. Yet, management is a staff and

not a governance function in the academy. Indeed it was these very problems in the commercial sector that gave rise to the concepts and practices around stakeholding in an attempt to limit managerial self-aggrandisement (Wheeler 1997, p.45).

Finally, the power and decisions made will be constructed by patterns of negotiation and coalition among the differing stakeholders - none will have final and permanent authority without the others -there will be no final answer but indigenous people will be inserted as central to the role of the polity in the academy. Existing educational institutions have for too long paid lip-service to indigenous groups through tokenistic recognition of the Treaty (or corresponding documents or constitutional statutes in other places) within their charters and assorted documents. Following the recent Treaty Audit of Otago University, for example, and despite considerable shortcomings in the Report itself, it has become clear that the academy can no longer rest on its laurels. As a consequence Iwi have consolidated their position within the academy and pose a legitimate challenge to the structure and content of the university. In this way such audits can become part of the normal governance process of the academy and have an impact on the what - and - how knowledge about a wide range of disciplines.

This provokes a series of implications for existing programs on a number of levels. In terms of the debate surrounding 'academic freedom' posed by some groups, especially the 'backlash' against affirmative action to the extent of threatening the very existence of courses, closer links with Iwi could provide the buffer between competing interests of 'town and gown' because Iwi are at once, both the community and the industry. Of course, in line with the model, nothing is automatic. If Iwi can position themselves as major stakeholders, as we believe is currently happening, then the onus is on existing program to formulate relationships that would include taking on the visions and expectations of Iwi.

At departmental/school level there needs to be the same pattern of relationships as at higher levels of the academy. Within the parameters (agendas) set for decisions at this level there is a clear need for a similar set of power relationships to operate as the integrity of the subject area and the requirements of both academic freedom and responsibility involve the full representation of the full Treaty-based community. Academic staff themselves alone making such decisions are neither defensible or advisable. This may solve some of the endemic problems of social service departments and is especially relevant to our situation.

Social Services Departments

Professional programs, such as those that proliferate around the area of social services, find themselves caught between the interests of academic rigour and the need to develop skills needed within the profession. These programs have tended to be liminal, that is in between the desires of 'disinterested scholarship' on one hand, and industry standards on the other. This ability to inhabit both sides of existing arguments, places professional programs in a unique position to negotiate the structures in which we are located.

As social service academics we often see ourselves as committed to social justice yet we cannot claim to do other than represent ourselves. As stakeholders we are academic staff of professional courses/schools, even if we are poor cousins alongside the medical professionals and lawyers. The danger is that the poor and indigenous citizens as stakeholders are still excluded - but now by social service academics who can also determine how they can be treated - often with patronising affirmative action.

From the alternative point of view participation is the key to stakeholding so that it is not really possible to act 'on behalf' - or to 'empower' others. It demands that we develop ways to share governance with indigenous groups in ways that offer potential benefits for all. If the movement towards increased participation of stakeholders into what is to count as valid knowledge, then the potential for indigenous groups to become a major stakeholder in the area of indigenous social services will provide them with the opportunity to substantially influence what counts as knowledge here. Our power here as academics is of course dependent on our ability to negotiate a proposal that would further our own interests. As a result professional programs would need to accept their vulnerability as an effect of the institutions that spurned them and come to terms with the fact that their legitimacy to date was not exclusive but reliant on their relationship to both the academy and the political community.

We often already have 'Advisory Committees' in social service departments because, as applied areas, we need industry and community support and involvement. Here, however, we are speaking of something far more significant. Advisory committees are usually only of the agencies in the social service sector, tend to be concerned mainly with professional representation and, if anything, tend towards employer influence and direction. The function suggested here is that of actual governance and it is the Treaty-based community which is to be represented, not employers. What is being suggested is actual executive authority so that the governing body of the unit becomes representative of the Treaty community and thus of the mana whenua - indigenous people - without staff being able to take that position. It is a joint venture operation with staff and students similarly involved each exercising their power in making decisions.

We would suggest that heads of academic social service departments, within their limited decision-making authority, have the mandate to put this system into operation - constructing decision-making systems where the three major groups of stakeholders can negotiate, mediate and act on decisions. Any threat to collegial academic autonomy implied here is clearly less than that of managers who seek to remove themselves from the sphere of negotiation and struggle, and in any event, is to be welcomed. Academic autonomy becomes privilege, arrogance and self-serving when it is uncontested.

Conclusion

This paper has traversed the current situation and pressures on universities from the point of view of a social service department which seeks to implement a constitutionally based

relationship with its indigenous groups. The current situation is at once the result of determinate historical and social processes which must be confronted.

Challenges to the academy from indigenous peoples should not be seen as an attack on academic values or knowledge. They are, however, challenges to the various positions on university governance which are the application of closed, unitary theories of power which privilege some stakeholders over others.

They should be seen as demands for inclusion in decision-making and governance by representatives of indigenous communities as stakeholders. Participation in governance is not a simplistic 'answer'. It is not the same as tokenistic representation or patronising affirmative action - where the power relationships remain undisturbed - it is about taking part in actual decision-making itself on their own behalf.

A more open-ended and theoretically adequate approach to power and powers enables us to develop a system where the appropriate stakeholders at decision level are able to negotiate and interact to produce a university and constituent departments which truly respond to and reflect its distinctive mission of teaching and research. Indigenous people are fully involved in that process as part of it in shifting and unstable relationships of power which comprise social reality.

The actual embodiment of this vision, as always, will shift and change over time - the point is to be in control of it in a way that acknowledges social justice and the self-determination of indigenous peoples.

While the argument has been developed for New Zealand, within the constitutional context of the Treaty of Waitangi, the issues for indigenous peoples' movements seem to be international in scope - certainly in the white settler colonies (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United States of America). Whether constitutional status and embedded rights are established through treaty or common law (eg. decisions rejecting the *terra nullus* doctrine), the challenge to the academy and social justice remains. The experience of academic departments in New Zealand who have suffered major loss over these issues warns of the dangers. As social service academics we can, and must, confront them.

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AASW Code of Ethics: The Impact of Progressive Theory on Moral and Ethical Assumptions

Carolyn Noble and Linda Briskman

Introduction

Social work theory, practice and values, encapsulated in code of ethics, are interrelated and together underpin social work's professional and practice base. This is agreed by all who identify with the professional activity. The disagreement, we content, arises when on closer examination it is asked: which theory and what practices inform ethical positions? Mullaly (1997) identifies two competing worldviews that have dominated the social work literature over the last 25 years as firstly, the conventional view and secondly, the critical or progressive view. A competing theoretical base characterising a different approach to practice informs each perspective (see Noble and Briskman 1998). The progressive view is assuming increasing importance as a major social work perspective, theory, practice and educational framework (Leonard 1997; Mullaly 1997; Ife 1997; Fook 1993; Moreau 1993; Williams 1989). In drawing heavily from critical theory, transformative feminism, Black liberation theory, postmodernism and discursive thought, 'progressive' theory incorporates the importance of social transformation and individual empowerment as integrating both the personal and the political in the same process in order to develop an empowering mode of practice (Moreau 1993; Fook 1993; Mullaly 1997; Leonard 1997; Ife 1997). What remains largely unexplored is how, if at all, this progressive view resonates with the moral and ethical reasoning in the Australian Association of Social Worker's (AASW) Code of Ethics that underpins the very basis of social work's philosophical commitment? This article reports on a research project, conducted between 1994 and 1997, both in New South Wales and Victoria, eastern states of Australia which explored the relationship between the more critically focused social work theory and practice and its relationship with the Australian Code of Ethics as ascertained by practitioners and academics and students of social work in newly accredited courses which draw specifically on educative forms of critical theory.

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Progressive Curricula

Since the 1990s, many schools of social work in Australia have either revised or developed new curriculum in light of the progressive perspective in social work theory. The identification of barriers inherent in gender, class, 'race', ethnicity, age and sexuality prompted the development of an anti-discriminatory practice as an alternative to the previous dominant person and social reform model of social work, which Mullaly refers to as the conventional view (Mullaly 1997; Noble and Briskman 1998). This alternative progressive perspective has now incorporated some postmodern ideas where a decentralised and localised view of politics and a concern for diversity and the recognition of otherness is regarded as a positive addition to understanding social and political relations, without giving up a politically engaging critique (Butler 1992; Howe 1994; Mullaly 1997; Leonard 1994, 1997). Most students currently studying social work are reasonably well-grounded in progressive theory as the basis of an anti-discriminatory, culturally sensitive practice. The question arises, then, how do practitioners using this progressive stance to inform their work relate this perspective to the AASW's Code of Ethics used to guide their actions? Additionally, what impact has this progressive stance had on the teaching of ethics, an important component of the professional education of the students? If progressive academics are teaching that social work comprises a multifaceted view of difference and diversity in any particular situation, what are they teaching about the code as a stand alone document guiding all practice situations and professional conduct? Firstly, we turned to the literature on ethics for some guidance.

Literature Review: Ethical Codes and the Progressive Debate

While theory development has not stood still, the code of ethics, universally agreed as being close to the heart of the profession, had, at least until the 1990s, been seen to be set apart from social and political discourse (Rhodes 1992). These formalised codes informing prescribed philosophies, standards and professional conduct for practitioners are, in the main, posited as a separate and discrete document to theory and practice models. An overview of the literature would suggest that social work, in western countries, places great importance on ethical guidelines, where having a unified and universal code is judged as essential to professional practice (Banks 1995; Hugman and Smith 1995). There is general agreement in the literature that codes of ethics provide an important contribution to the professional status of social work by establishing and maintaining professional identity and accountability and providing practitioners with a guide as to how to act in order to protect service users from abuse or malpractice (Lousada 1993; Banks 1995; Siggins 1996). Ife (1997) regards the code as a form of accountability that has the possibility to redress the unequal and potentially disempowering client/professional relationship. However, not all writers and researchers accept this perspective uncritically.

In particular, Rhodes (1992) argues that any discussion of ethical decision-making must be understood in its social, political and historical context as well as the 'purpose' it serves. Banks (1995) raises doubts as to whether codes can achieve a consensus of values

between the profession and the public. Lundy and Gauthier (1989) describe the Canadian code as an amalgam of competing, contradictory, even antagonist ideologies in that ideas of conservatism, liberalism and collectivism are all included. Rossiter, Prilleltensky and Bowers (1996; 2000) criticise social work codes as forms of individualism that deny social dependence and structural influences. Ramanathan and Link (2000) remind us that uniformity in professional behaviour must not be at the expense of dialogue and power sharing between service users and those in authority. Gaha (1996) draws attention to the Australian code for not taking into account indigenous perpsectives on ethical positions and de Maria (1997) laments it lack of engagement with radical politics. We have argued elsewhere that the progressive critique challenges the validity of singular categories of 'social worker' or 'client' as hiding a dangerous illusion of an assumed unified value and moral perspective, which in reality defines those included and those excluded (Noble and Briskman 1996a; 1996b). Further, this progressive perspective not only challenges notions of language and power, but that power actually pervades the authorship of the document itself and the purpose it serves.

Hugman and Smith (1995, p.11) argue that for a profession to be living, robust and relevant we must expect codes of ethics to be constantly disputed and evolving in determining what sort of society we are trying to create and what 'excellences go to make good social work practice'. However, in so doing, we contend it is essential that social workers are clear about the sort of vision social work should pursue as well as the sort of ideals that social work attempt to achieve, and the means by which it does this. This kind of debate makes for an exciting time in theory development. However, for us then, what emerges is what impact, if any, have these theoretical debates about the kind of vision social work pursues had on the framing of the Code of Ethics? And, specifically, does the Australian code (revised in 1990) reflect, if at all, an understanding of a progressive framework and issues of diversity and difference in their moral and ethical reasoning? In drawing out the main issues raised by this concern, we set about researching the issues and hoped to identify some answers and to establish leads for further inquiry.

Background to the Research

We began our research in 1994 with the assumption, later shared by Rossiter, Prilleltensky and Bowers (1996) that social work codes in general were rule bound, conservative, individualist and informed by the philosophy underpinning liberal politics, without a progressive perspective. In exploring this issue, we initially analysed several contemporary western codes including the Australian, North American, Canadian and New Zealand codes and concluded that, like the Australian code, the North American and Canadian codes placed high value on individual independence and on an assumed homogeneity of the client group, ignoring differences, diversity and issues of marginalisation (Noble and Briskman 1996b; 1998). The exception was the New Zealand Code (1993) which attempts to accommodate difference in an emancipatory and social justice context by including a bi-cultural Code of Practice, giving a positive valuation to difference (Noble and Briskman 1996b). In taking into account the unique cultural and legal identity of both the Maori and Pakeha perspective, the revised New Zealand

Association of Social Worker's (NZASW) bi-cultural code stresses a partnership in difference as a basis for professional standards and moral conduct and responsibilities.

Heartened by the NZASW's attempt to accommodate a more progressive theoretical perspective in framing their code of ethics to incorporate a bi-cultural code that reflects the nature of their society and a particular vision of social work's inclusiveness, we wanted to explore how particular practitioners, informed by progressive theory, worked with the current AASW Code (1990). Did they, in their practice, identify any dissonance between progressive theory and their work with clients, and if so, what were the issues raised as a result? We were not only interested in how indigenous perspectives were seen to be reflected in the code but other marginalised voices from similarly disadvantaged peoples. The results, discussed below, led to an exploration of how academics, informed by a progressive perspective, taught students about the code and to further explore if social work students studying in these schools were similarly confronted by a dissonance between theory and practice in their field placements. Finally, what implications for social work education could be drawn from our inquiry?

The Research

The research was conducted between 1994 and 1997 as a collaborative project between the University of Western Sydney in New South Wales and Deakin University in Victoria, eastern states of Australia. The progressive definition outlined in the beginning of this article was used to inform our study. Three stages characterised this study. Stage one involved interviewing social work practitioners who identified as working with a progressive stance to ascertain how they incorporated the code in their practice. Two progressive universities were then selected on the basis as having a self-identified social work curriculum that explicitly positioned its teaching philosophy has being informed by a critical/structural/feminist perspective, incorporating notions of difference and identity. The third and final stage involved focus groups with students whose course philosophy and teaching program reflected this progressive view.

We employed an adapted action-based model with the research moving through a series of spiral steps. Each stage involved the use of a semi-structured questionnaire, modified to each constituent group, to elicit information. The questions for each group were centred on four perspectives: The Code of Ethics, Philosophical Underpinnings of Practice and Practice Ethics, The Engagement of the Code with Progressive Theory and Directions for a New Code. This interactive methodology was chosen in order to take advantage of the development of ideas that unfolded, so that the findings of one stage then directed the development of the next stages until the research was completed. The literature on social action research is encouraging of this methodology if the results from each stage complement each other and move to complete an integrated piece of analysis (McRobbie 1982; McTaggart 1989; Fook 1996).

This next section discussed both the process and the results of this research.

Stage One - Progressive Practitioners

Research process

Based on our field teaching and practice knowledge, we made the assumption that progressive practitioners were more likely found in non-traditional areas of practice whose agencies' philosophies and practice methods reflected a more politically engaging critique of the human services and where a progressive analysis was known to be encouraged. For comparison, we also interviewed self-identified progressive practitioners in state and local government departments, health services and church-auspiced NGOs not traditionally known for their critical perspective. Our research with practitioners involved qualitative interviews with 12 social workers; covering a range of constituent groups including survivors of torture, women's services, HIV/AIDS, mental health, prisoners and migrants. Of the 12 participants, 6 were from Melbourne and 6 were from Sydney.

Research findings

In the main, most participants were in agreement that it was important to have a code as a means by which acceptable practice standards could be maintained, not only for judging one's own practice, but as a benchmark for service users and others to evaluate agencies and practitioners. The general nature of the then current AASW Code's (1990) preamble was viewed, by most practitioners in this study, as flexible enough to incorporate, without too much tension, the interpretation of different theoretical views. Participants stated that their practice philosophies on social justice were consistent with the Code's general principles addressing inequities, ensuring equal rights and equal access to services and resources. and acknowledging and accepting difference. It was in the body of the document that dissonances were identified.

In relation to their practice, participants raised the difficulties inherent in a Code that purports to be 'all things to all people', binding together social workers irrespective of their philosophies, practice settings and clientele. The generalist and all encompassing prescriptives were inadequate with regard to the many and often conflicting theoretical and ethical dilemmas they faced in practice. Frequently, conflict of interest occurred that could not be simply addressed by appeal to an 'absolute' code. Although not totally dissastisfied with some aspects, particularly the preamble, most participants criticised the Code overall as being 'unrealistic', 'tokenistic', 'lacking in detail' and over reliant on the role of social worker as expert in relation to their work. This focus on legislating ethical practice was seen as failing to address the issues of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, ability, age and class in specific practice and professional situations. As one respondent stated, 'the AASW needs to change its image from an Anglo-Celtic institution to something else', while another commented, in relation to human rights, 'there are thousands of social workers who couldn't give a shit (about human rights)'. In this context, most of the participants were critical of the Code's lack of specificity in applying progressive theory to practice issues. On further exploration, they felt improvements could be made by being less tokenistic about difference, taking account of the diversity of practitioners and

practice settings, and expanding the current focus by incorporating international human rights and cultural and sexual differences. It is, by recognising and then questioning social work's ethnocentric and geocentric approach, that improvements can be made.

Overall, the main criticism of the Code was that its focus was on rules, principles and standards that social workers were expected to follow. They questioned what they saw as an over reliance on having fixed moral rules that hold in all circumstances irrespective of the context or consequences. It was this regard for standards and rules that are either right or wrong in themselves where practitioners identified a lag between progressive theory and their practice. In their view it was important that a Code includes concepts of social justice and social change and the notion of differentiation as well as self-representation of client disadvantage. Otherwise, how can a profession be true to itself if the values are contradictory and inconsistent? All argued that committing social workers to social change by proactively engaging with anti-disciminatory practice would make the Code more consistent with their philosophy of social work and the nature and type of their client-base. In this way, the Code would engage with their politics and that of the existing Code expressing, instead, a commitment to local, community or agency-based Codes. By avoiding the profession's Code altogether and relying on agency-based codes developed in dialogue with service users hinted at what may indeed be a more general practice in agencies, and with progressive practitioners working outside of the more traditional social work settings.

These findings led us to ask what academics in schools of social work with a progressive educational philosophy were teaching about the Code and its relationship to the teaching of progressive practice.

Stage Two - Progressive Academics

Research process

Consistent with the progressive social work literature (Mullaly 1997; Fook 1996; Leonard 1994; 1997; Dominelli and McLeod 1989), progressive academics actively and deliberately question the current socio-political arrangements and their underlining moral, philosophical and ideological perspectives in relation to their impact on service delivery and the lives of people struggling with limited resources. Focusing on issues of oppression and discrimination faced by many people in capitalist, patriarchal societies, students are encouraged to explore the inequalities experienced as a result, especially in regard to the assessments that social workers make of their clients. In acknowledging multiple interacting factors that create and impact upon individual situations, this progressive view represents a fundamental challenge to the existing norms and values which focuses on the individual as subject, exposing a need to create a new value system incorporating the notion of power and inequality in social justice terms (McNay 1992, p.55).

Given that these theoretical developments were informing curricula then, the question arising here is how (if at all) the Code of Ethics is taught within this context and how these academics regard the current Code in light of their politics? For this stage we interviewed five academics, three from universities in Melbourne and two from a university in Sydney. All participants were academics responsible for the teaching of social work ethics in the social work degree and all identified as being committed to progressive theory politics and practice in their curriculum content.

Research findings

In responding to the research questions, most agreed that on reflection, some sort of code was desirable, essential even, as a guide to setting standards and as an ethical framework that informs practice philosophy and behaviour. Some saw a code as providing a means in which standards could be monitored and 'if breached, would mean being expelled from that body'. There was general agreement that the current AASW Code adequately covered issues concerning professional behaviour, which was embodied in the view of one participant as:

> knowledge that social workers need to have, the way they conduct their practice and research, their relationship with their agency, with colleagues, and with clients and the boundaries of those things...(in addition) it incorporates core values like respect for difference, respect for confidentiality, privacy, promoting the best interests and welfare of the clients, individuals, groups and communities.

There was general agreement that the Code's attention to social justice, human rights and structural forms of oppression in the opening preamble supported their teaching perspectives. However, several participants stated that it was in the detail, the precise prescriptives of practice directions in making judgements about ethical issues and dilemmas that made the Code problematic for teaching progressive ethics. The strongest criticism was in relation to the values and philosophical perspectives underpinning the Code and its lack of a more transformative feminist perspective. The predominantly casework directed focus with regard to practice principles and professional behaviour was, in their opinion, in contradiction to collective notions of social and community change which informed a more progressive stance. This implied that any real commitment to structural change was in name only and the major focus was on the positivist perspective of the traditional relationship between worker and client reinforcing authority, expertise and a professional relationship. This assumed inequality between the worker and the client evident in the Code compromised values of equality, self-determination and client empowerment.

In discussing the Code's details for practice, participants identified further contradictions in the teaching of progressive practice. In particular, the 'paternalistic, white, middle-class, Anglo-centric social work values' in the body of the document was seen to undermine any real commitment to progressive politics, especially feminism and postmodernisn, contradicting the opening preamble's commitment to structural analyses of social problems. Some pessimism was also identified in the overall value of a code if

the political commitment was supportive of the more conservative stance. One participant explained, ' in the end, the Code's philosophical stance doesn't mean anything because of the ambiguity and nebulousness of the document itself' (Noble and Briskman 1998). There is a clear assumption, according to these participants, that the authors of the Code assume a separation between knowledge and values and that the practice of social work is potentially a value-neutral, technical activity. Another said the Code provided a 'very simplistic analysis of people's lives' and, as a result, was limited in relation to her work.

All participants were able to identify what was missing from the Code or what areas were not addressed fully but, in their opinion, should be incorporated. Disabilities, homosexual communities, non-English speaking background (NESB) and ethnic communities and Aboriginal communities were specifically identified as well as the Code's lack in addressing of multi-disciplinary and cross-cultural approaches to practice. More overt statements about how social workers see certain forms of discrimination as wrong and how they might be addressed could, they argued, also be included. A positive contribution the Code makes is that it excluded the 'far right' position from any legitimacy, but ignores further issues such as affirmative action, double disadvantage, community development, social active (or any form of political work) and conflict of rights (eg. children's rights over adults' rights).

In accepting the value of a code, especially to define professional standards, these participants all identified several strategies used in their teaching that attempted to include a more progressive stance. First, students were encouraged to critically analyse the Code and identify what are the gaps, what knowledge is assumed, who is defining the terminology and what are the absences, for example whose voices are not represented? In this way, students are asked to look for alternatives in order to develop their own code and therefore act differently in practice. Second, students are asked to analyse the language, to identify the dominant ideology, to 'unpack' the Code and develop their own thinking and responses to their own needs, so as to encourage some critical thinking. Third, several academics used the current Code to illustrate the conservatism of social work and to identify the resulting dangers the current Code represents to an empowering form of practice.

In addressing what alternative to the existing Code might exist, there were a variety of responses ranging from a need to rework the current Code to include a more critical stance to working within it. In arguing for a reworking of the current Code, some participants felt that the Code does not address the arduousness of 'the struggle' and would like to see, as result, a more pro-active Code. In particular, one participant wanted a reworked code that included changes in theory development which reflected the multiplicity and complexities of diversity while, at the same time, making strong pro-active statements about political actions, social transformations and the use of advocacy in social work. Moreover, many stated that a reworked code needed to include issues around power, gender, NESB issues and engage more critically in systematic abuse perpetrated by social work as a profession and as individuals. One participant suggested that any reworking of the Code would need to consult with a wide range of social

workers and agencies, as well as clients, so as to redefine what social work is and what it should be, particularly in light of progressive theory and politics.

Despite their reservations about the limits and conservative casework dominated focus of the current Code, there was a general reluctance to jettison it altogether. There was equal concern that, at the same time, a revised code in the current neo-conservative climate may be more conservative and prescriptive and water down what small commitments to progressive theory and politics there are. Like the practitioners, these academics felt that its general focus provided enough flexibility to engage with it how you will and although critical of its overall conservative nature, many respondents were also sceptical that a reworked Code would be any different.

We then moved to the final stage of the research and asked students from schools of social work, where progressive theory informs the current philosophy, their perceptions of the link between the philosophy of the teaching program and the teaching and application of ethics in their practicums.

Stage Three -Students in Progressive Schools

Research process

A focus group consisting of third and fourth year social work students, in a feminist elective class, was formed in a university in Melbourne and a focus group of final, fourth year students was formed in a university in Sydney. A total of 22 students participated, 12 in Melbourne and ten in Sydney. Both universities have four-year undergraduate programs in social work, informed by a progressive perspective. Third and fourth year students were selected because they had experienced placements, especially the fourth year students, who had completed all their practicums as well as most of their coursework. Their common link was as students in courses that draw specifically on educative forms of critical theory.

Research findings

Students from both groups were familiar with certain aspects of the Code including confidentiality, self-determination, development of knowledge and commitment to social justice which all agreed were continually emphasised throughout both courses. However, there were differences in students' responses with regard to the importance and predominance of the Code in the core-teaching subjects. The Sydney group readily identified several subjects where the Code was signalled out for discussion and critique, while the Melbourne group stated that, in their experience, none of the academic staff had developed an effective way of teaching ethics. It depended on who was teaching it, including whether or not they were members of the AASW and what their political persuasion was, thus making the teaching of ethics quite idiosyncratic.

Overall, in both groups, there was concern that students had limited opportunity to critique the Code against the content and philosophy of their courses and this was regarded as a major omission. Additionally, inconsistencies in the teaching of ethics were identified and most students said that it was a placement that many issues, particularly those concerned with professional integrity and conduct, were worked out. Again, discrepancies were identified. Like the academic staff, few field supervisors, according to these students, were members of the AASW, so that doubts about their expertise in teaching social work ethics were raised. Additionally, there were few practice placements available where students could see and experience a progressive view of social work practice.

With regard to the possible tensions between progressive theory and the actual workings of the agencies, there were differences in responses from the two groups. The Sydney group agreed that either, in their experience, the agencies were flexible enough to allow for individual work (based on differing political perspectives) to occur or, that agencies' philosophies or agency-based guidelines had precedence over theory. Many of these students accepted the focus on individualism in practice as closer to the actual reality they would soon face. The Melbourne group was more supportive of the structural/feminist perspective and critiqued the Code and their placement experiences as being conservative in this regard. These students were highly critical of what they called 'rampant individualism' in agencies and policy development, without much engagement with progressive theory and politics. The Melbourne group did not know how this tension could be addressed without first discussing and critiquing the Code in their course so that social workers could act differently in practice. 'What about a women-centred Code of Ethics?' one student suggested.

Discussion

This study set out to explore the relationship between progressive theory development in social work and its nexus with the Australian Code of Ethics. We shared the view, supported by the critical literature on ethics, that any workings of a living and relevant code must engage with the socio-politico-economic debate that supports non-discriminatory and non-oppressive practice where difference and diversity are also acknowledged and accepted (Mullaly 1997; Ife 1997). To attempt to separate knowledge and values is to deny the value basis of all knowledge and an understanding of how 'knowledge' is socially and linguistically constructed as part of any analysis of power. From a progressive theoretical perspective, such a separation is untenable. In accepting this position, we also challenge the notion that codes are politically neutral. To this end, we wanted to explore what, in fact, were the perceptions of practitioners, academics and students informed by this progressive stance to the current Code and their view of its connection with theory and practice. As a result of this research, we found that, in general, **all** participants:

- were supportive of some sort of code to inform social workers' practice philosophy and behaviour and ensure accountable practice as well as to monitor standards and discipline members who breech those standards;

- agreed that some notion of progressive theory was mainly incorporated in the preamble where a commitment to addressing inequality, ensuring equal rights and access to services and acknowledging and accepting difference was clearly stated. However, most claimed that this position was undermined in the body of the document by the assumption that social work's practice skills were essentially a value-free technical activity, which focused primarily on individual change;

- were critical of the Code's lack of specificity. This could be addressed by incorporating diversity of practitioner settings and modes of practice and expanding the current focus by including human rights, cultural differences and engaging more pro-actively with anti-discriminatory practice. This would ensure that gender, age, culture, sexuality and disability issues would be incorporated in any ethical discourse. This would also ensure that the Code would engage with the politics of specific client groups. However, there were differences as to whether there would be any value in reworking the current code in the present neo-conservative environment.

Specifically:

- practitioners agreed that the general nature of the Code's framework allowed for flexibility in interpretation of differing theoretical views but argued for the Code to engage more fully with anti-discriminatory practice. In this way, the Code would reflect their politics more fully;

- practitioners were critical of the Code's lack of specificity and felt that incorporating diversity and cultural differences, as well as attention to human rights, both nationally and internationally, could make improvements;

- participants raised the difficulties inherent in a Code that is 'all things to all people' and the lack of recognition of the many and often conflicting ethical dilemmas they faced in their work. Emphasis on dialogue, consultation and listening to client's experiences of the world would address this difficulty;

- there was more general support for adopting agency-based codes that reflected the client groups' needs more fully and which supported client input;

- academics identified their ambivalence in the actual teaching of ethics, within a progressive stance. Mainly, the teaching of ethics was incorporated more generally around how to act ethically without critiquing the underlying philosophy, or using the Code as the single 'truth'. When the Code was a focus for teaching, it was used as an example of the more conservative social work position and used as a basis to explore alternatives for its applicability to progressive practice;

- academics identified the lack of attention to disabilities issues, homosexual communities, NESB, ethnic and Aboriginal communities, as well as lacking attention to addressing multi-disciplinary and cross-cultural practice;

- academics felt that the Code was dominated by a casework focus and lacked any commitment to collective notions of progressive work with clients. Most acknowledged that the teaching of a progressive stance was difficult and one that needed constant reflection;

- students were getting mixed messages from the teaching of ethics and its value for placements. All agreed that there was little attention to the teaching and critiquing of ethics in their course and, on placement, their exposure was again quite idiosyncratic, depending on the supervisor and agency setting. Many stated that there was limited opportunity to study or evaluate the Code and that the teaching was again quite idiosyncratic;

- some students felt that agency-based practice guidelines should take precedence over progressive theory as the reality of practice supported a more conservative position, while others felt that if the Code was discussed and critiqued more fully in their course, it may be possible to act differently in practice.

Conclusion

It must be stressed that this was an exploratory study and the findings must be seen as tentative. However, important issues were identified that will contribute to the theory and practice debate were new theory development often demands a fundamental rethinking of the philosophical basis of a profession and the moral and socio-political impact on actions. While the research with progressive practitioners gave evidence for this occurring, it was not directly related to the Code of Ethics that was viewed, by most participants, as conservative and tokenistic. A variety of teaching strategies was identified which addressed their concern regarding the inherent limitations of the Code as they saw them. Again, while some academics were critiquing the Code, the overall teaching was, in this study, seen to be idiosyncratic and dependent upon academics' individual perspectives. Most students' experiences on placement reinforced the more conventional view of social work where economic individualism prevailed, identifying tensions between theory and practice, where practice was less critical and reflective of the complexities of people's lives.

It would seem to us that the critical stance taken by many universities to inform the students' theory and practice development still finds a significant lag in the actual teaching and use of the Code of Ethics to inform a more progressive practice. This research also demonstrated that the nature and form of practice and vision of society differs depending on what perspective you take and what sort of agency one is working in. We also identified tensions in any code that assumes to incorporate competing and conflicting philosophies. A code that attempts to be all things to all peoples will, by

definition, be tokenistic or reflect a particular regulatory practice onto all aspects of social work activity. It is clearly a difficult task to synthesise competing worldviews into one regulatory document. Yet, given that the provision of a code appears to be a non-negotiable requirement of professional activity, it is, in our view, incumbent upon the profession to ensure that, in particular, the framing of the AASW's Code remains open for critique and dialogue from all aspects of professional activity.

We have some evidence of this happening. The AASW has now undertaken an extensive review of Code of Ethics (1999), consulting widely with its constituent members. While it is beyond the scope of this article to critique this new Code in light of these research findings, we invite practitioners, academics and students in social work to explore its contents and philosophical underpinnings in light of a progressive lens.

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Deconstructing Values and Ethics – A Narrative Approach to Transformative Learning for Social Work and Welfare Students

Debbie Notara

Introduction

The teaching of values and ethics in social work and welfare courses has always been a challenging task which raises many dilemmas, particularly in response to students whose values and beliefs appear to conflict with those of the social work and welfare professions. Personal values and professional ethics are inextricably linked. 'Values consist of beliefs, preferences, or assumptions about what is good or desirable for people' (Mullaly 1997, p.27). Ethics, on the other hand, refer to 'how we should act in relation to others...what we see as right or wrong in relation to others' (O'Connor, Wilson and Setterlund 1995, p.218). Ethical practice is never clear-cut and codes of ethics only give broad guidelines. The interventions welfare workers make are a direct result of the interplay of personal values and professional ethics. The term 'welfare workers' is used to refer to both social work and welfare trained workers.

Codes of ethics cannot take into account people's emotions, relationships, roles and the context in which workers live and have lived their lives. Ethical actions are themselves socially determined and so are subject to changing social attitudes. Ethics bear a close relationship to broad social values which are often underpinned by human rights conventions and legally enforceable requirements. When teaching professional ethics, we cannot avoid the examination of personal values. This paper reviews the current practices and difficulties encountered in teaching values and ethics in the area of social welfare. Learning theories which inform this teaching will be discussed and finally, a narrative approach presented as a way to create space for students to explore their values and make shifts in their world view.

Issues in Teaching Values and Ethics

Personal experience of teaching values and ethics has led to questioning of the efficacy of traditional approaches. Commonly, in traditional approaches, students have taken part in a variety of experiential exercises addressing personal values aimed at increasing their level of self-awareness regarding their belief systems – essentially a humanist approach to teaching. Professional codes of ethics and service codes of conduct are also presented when then lead to examination of the management of ethical dilemmas that may arise in

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the workplace. This is usually addressed by the use of scenarios and critical incidents. These approaches are based on the assumption that students, through this self-awareness process, will adopt the welfare profession's set of beliefs.

Yet, students enter welfare courses with certain views about the world and the way people operate within it. Students whose personal beliefs are consistent with those of the profession do not have difficulty embracing the codes of ethics comprising the concepts of access, equity and social justice. However, there are those students whose personal philosophies differ significantly. Traditional teaching approaches do not adequately respond to these students. The student may openly argue against the values being taught, effectively becoming more deeply entrenched in their value stance or, alternatively, they may close off and remain silent for fear of rejection or attack if they express their view. Teachers may find themselves drawn into attempt to convince these students of the need to change their view. The result does not allow for movement by the students in terms of attitudinal change or for consideration by those students of the future impact of their beliefs and attitudes on their clients.

Another deficit of traditional approaches is the absence of linking of the construction of personal beliefs with the processes of political oppression. This would require students to be introduced to the notion that their own beliefs, and also those of their clients, have been constructed by external social, economic and political forces. Students could also consider the effect of this on the development of professional codes of ethics. It has been recognised that while individual theorists have attempted to develop and analyse practice from both individual and structural perspectives (Mulally 1993; Fook 1993), minimal attention has been given to critiquing the relationship between differing philosophical world views and the welfare professions' ethical consensus encased in the codes of ethics (Noble and Briskman 1996). Noble and Briskman (1996) conclude, from studying a range of social work codes of ethics that:

> It is evident that there is...a high value on individual independence and on the homogeneity of the client, characterised by the liberal democratic philosophy. This is despite espousing some anti-discriminatory concepts...Each Code of Ethics...implies a liberal construction of group identity where all persons (clients and workers) are regarded as having full and active participation in all aspects of the society and polity to which they belong. This is contradictory to the progressive critique that recognises oppression, discrimination and exclusion of certain social groupings. There is no recognition of structural disadvantage and marginalisation from society. (p.60)

To be effective, welfare education must involve consciousness-raising of the structural forces that shape our values and thus impact on students as future welfare workers in order to ensure intentional anti-oppressive work practices.

These issues are particularly interesting in the context of recent changes in vocational education and training where competency standards have been developed and are continuing to be refined for both social work and welfare. Three standard components of

welfare curricula are knowledge, values and skills. The whole concept of competence continues to be debated in adult education. Initially, ideas of technical skills were elevated over the interpersonal, but this was then criticised as a very narrow view of education. 'Such criticism encouraged the National Training Board to adjust their guidelines so that the knowledge and values base underpinning work could be addressed in the competency standards description' (Chappell, Gonczi and Hager 1995, p.180).

The assessment of competence of knowledge and skills is much clearer than that of values. This leads to the question: 'when is a student considered to be competent in terms of learning in the areas of values and ethics?'

The Australian Social Work Competency Standards for Entry Level Workers refers to students gaining competence in relation to practising in accordance with social work values, using personal attributes and employing an ethical and professional approach to practice. This document states that: 'The ultimate goal of the competency standards is to provide a basis for the objective evaluation of job performance i.e. those work related activities by which the profession delivers its services to the community' (AASW 1994, p.6). However, when these competency standards refer to the student demonstrating 'a commitment to the dignity, value and uniqueness of clients and adhering to the Codes of Ethics', in what way is the student to perform these acts and by whose definition? Individual workers will often differ in their interpretation of what comprises ethical practice. When the standards state that the student is required to have 'insight into the influence of their own values on practice' and demonstrate 'a commitment to anti-discriminatory practice', how exactly are these to be measured? Assessment often takes place by journal writing exercises and by observation of the student in the field. Yet both of these forms are open to the subjective evaluation by the teacher or supervisor and, as such, cannot be measured in a standardised fashion, as competency-based education would imply.

Finally, the teaching of values and ethics could play a vital role in the process of gatekeeping in social work and welfare education. Research into gatekeeping mechanisms used by social work educators found that academic criteria are the main mechanism for selection for entry into a course (Ryan, Habibis and Craft 1998). Counselling out for non-academic reasons was evident in most institutions, but there was concern expressed as to the legal status of this process and any other policies regarding 'suitability' of students:

> The use of values as a gatekeeping criterion may be fairly uncontroversial if its meaning is restricted to its use in the AASW Code of Ethics. However, if broadened to cover personal beliefs and attitudes it clearly becomes contentious and may raise claims of censorship and the imposition of political correctness. (Ryan, Habibis and Craft 1998, p.14).

It could be argued that by using an approach to teaching values and ethics which involves exploration of personal attitudes and professional ethics in a socio-political context, students would increasingly be involved in 'self-gatekeeping'. The idea of the students

themselves coming to the conclusion that they are not suited to work in welfare could be much more acceptable than the educators acting as agents of social control.

Learning Theories Informing Use of a New Approach to Teaching Values and Ethics

The ideas discussed above have led to investigation into teaching methods which address personal values and which result in attitudinal change. Mezirow (1990) calls this process 'transformative learning'. Transformative learning:

> helps adults identify the frames of reference and structures of assumptions that influence the way they perceive, think, decide, feel and act on their experience...For the most, these frames of reference, which serve as the context for construing meaning are culturally assimilated rather than intentionally learned. Yet we can and do become aware of these meaning perspectives, their sources and their consequences; and by critically analysing them as they influence adult learning, we can transform them.' (Mezirow 1990, pp.xiv-xv)

'Meaning perspectives' refer to the set of criteria which form our value judgements and personal belief systems. This involves the variety of influences on different levels of personal experience, family, subgroups, institutions, community, politics and economy.

Effective learning involves reflection of experiences on an intellectual and emotional level which will then have an impact on our meaning perspectives. Mezirow (1990) points out that for adult learning, what is even more central, is the reflecting back on previously learned 'meaning schemes' in order to assess whether these frames of reference adequately fit with current experience. He then elaborates further to suggest that even though reflection encompasses the idea of critiquing, critical reflection (that is challenging the validity of the beliefs on which learning has been based) is vital for transformative learning to occur. The learner is, in fact, questioning their basic truths in a way which may lead to a new understanding or world view.

Mezirow sees meaning perspectives as being able to be transformed on three levels – epistemological, sociocultural and psychic. Critical reflection on an epistemic level challenges the nature and use of knowledge. For example, the positivist scientific view of knowledge and truth, as is evident in the practices of medicine and psychiatry, results in the reification of social phenomena leading to the view that they are beyond human control. For example, when a woman is diagnosed with post-natal depression, she is viewed as having an inevitable biological predisposition to this mental illness. The sociocultural level of critical reflection involves those taken for granted beliefs that reinforce power and social relationships, for example, the belief that all new mothers will immediately love their baby and revel in the role of nurturer. The psychic level relates to learners' individual life experiences which are impacting on their learning process, such as the mother seeing herself as a failure because she delivered by caesarean rather than by a natural birth.

Kennedy (1990) describes the taking on of a set of beliefs as 'enculturation'. He builds on Mezirow's ideas by drawing attention to the fact that the meaning-making which occurs in social groups also reflects the 'overall hegemonic ideology of the broader society' (Kennedy in Mezirow 1990, p.99). The resulting set of personal beliefs then shapes the way that person views all future relationships and will favour the vested interests of those with power. Kennedy discusses the need to explore moments in personal histories when there is questioning of experience or simply a sense of discomfort in lived experiences. He says there will always be cultural and personal characteristics which encourage resistance in the individual and group to blindly accept dominant beliefs. This leads to questioning on some level but often these are fleeting and do not lead to a full analysis.

Freire (1970) saw education, not as a process of banking information, but as one of dialogue which requires critical thinking and the creation of knowledge. He proposed that dominant groups enforce their views through a variety of political acts in order to 'encourage passivity in the oppressed' (1970, p.67). Hence, an educational process of analysis and critiquing of the position of the 'oppressed' with the 'oppressed' themselves can lead to a 'struggle for liberation'. This liberation may involve taking direct social action but it equally may take the form of individual internal attitudinal change.

An example of exploration leading to transformative learning can be seen from the women's movement and the feminist education involved in consciousness-raising groups. In these groups, the boundaries between the personal and political were broken down by women sharing their experiences and thereby giving them new meaning (Hart 1990). By deconstructing, that is, 'critically examining internalised social norms and cultural code' (Mezirow 1990, p.357), the dominant belief of women's personal failure, dependence and lack of power can be transformed to one which recognises their fight against society's patriarchal structures and their strength in maintaining that fight. Feminist-based therapeutic groups, such as incest survivor groups, also critically question the way survivors have constructed meaning of their experience. In these groups, questions are asked about whose interests are served by these constructs, resulting in a transformation of the members' views of themselves and their relationships (Sheridan 1992).

Brookfield (1987) addresses the difficulties involved in identifying the value assumptions on which our thoughts and actions are based. He says 'Attempting to identify them is like trying to catch our psychological tail. We twist and turn in a frantic attempt to grasp hold of ever more elusive suspicions about the reasons for out actions.' (Brookfield 1990, p.178). Part of this difficulty lies in the fact that these assumptions are so ingrained that we consider them simply to be the way things are and to explain our beliefs as 'common sense'. He uses the analysis of critical incidents, or brief descriptions of significant events in people's lives, as focal point for transformative learning. He believes people's attitudes and beliefs are embedded in these critical incidents - the learner's reality of the world. They are also an opportunity to connect with learners through specific personal experience from which further considerations can be made about the broader impact of their assumptions. Brookfield believes this is a far less threatening and difficulty process for the learner than directly asking them to enumerate their beliefs. The results of these analyses cannot be predicted and as such, there is no definition of success or failure of the

process. What is important is that a conversation has occurred which encourages questioning of taken-for-granted beliefs which are almost too ever-present to be recognised and critiqued.

Boud and Walker (1993), in studying the features of earning from experience, decided that reflection by the learner on his or her own experience was a central focus. In posing the question, 'what are the key elements in encouraging reflection following a learning activity?', they noted three activity clusters:

- Returning to the experience;
- Attending to feelings; and
- Re-evaluating the experience.

Through these steps, learners can integrate new information with old, test out their newly integrated knowledge base and then make it their own. Boud (1995) states that 'individuals' construction of their own learning from their experiences has been the key foundation of this approach. Using experiential methods has been particularly productive in the affective 'domain where attitude recognition prior to change is imperative' (Andresen, Boud and Cohen 1995, p.215).

A Narrative Approach to Transformative Learning

Narrative Therapy is a counselling approach for working with individuals, groups of communities which recognises that beliefs and attitudes are social constructed, organised and maintained through the 'storying of experience' (Epston and White 1989). It is respectful of clients' views by seeing them as the experts on themselves rather than the counsellor having diagnostic expert knowledge. With the client's cooperation, narrative therapists explore the historical development of client's stories and the impact on their lives and relationships. As a result, the person is not seen as the cause of the problem. Rather, problems are seen as externally constructed stories which dominate people's lives and get in the way of their feeling in control (Freedman and Combs 1996; Monk, Winslade, Crocket and Epston 1997; Morgan 2000). Narrative therapy also recognises that people will always struggle against these oppressive stories and these points of struggle represent an alternate story about them which is often lost in the background. Finding a time when a person stood up to the problem, even in a small way, is an entry point to flesh out the history of that resistance, its knowledge base, establish if it is a preferred story and finally, consider future possibilities if this story were to continue to develop (Freeman and Combs 1996; Monk, Winslade, Crocket and Epston 1997; Morgan 2000). In a narrative therapy approach, 'people are seen as making sense of their lives by assembling significant events together into a series of dominant plots' (Monk, Winslade, Crocket and Epston 1997, p.85). It can be likened to a photo album of various snapshots that link together to represent the story of who we are.

The parallels between narrative concepts and those of learning theorists discussed in the previous section have led to the idea of using a similar approach in teaching values and

ethics to social work and welfare students by inviting them to deconstruct their own personal values. Just as narrative therapy can be used as a context in which clients make a shift in their beliefs about themselves, so too can it be used in exploring welfare students' pre-judgements and personal belief systems. It is preferable to consider these as pre-judgements rather than prejudices to enable the teacher to engage with students in a non-threatening fashion allowing exploration. These pre-judgements constitute the student's view of truth which becomes the 'natural' state of the world – the way the world is. This becomes the student's story which can blind him or her to other alternative stories. For example, a study who believes that people have to stand on their own two feet to be successful and that support of any kind only encourages dependence, may not be open to ideas about social construction and structural discrimination.

These dominant stories often have a direct connection to the dominant discourses or ideologies of our society associated with areas such as gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation. 'There are various ideologies at work in society but it tends to be the ideas of powerful groups which become dominant...The ideologies of capitalism, patriarchy and imperialism are examples of such dominant ideologies' (Thompson 1993, p.25). Foucault (cited in Freeman and Combs 1996), proposes that discourses constitute the self, but are much more than systems of thinking as they include power aspects of being in the world. Foucault argues that there is an inseparable link between knowledge and power – the knowledge/power nexus – whereby societal discourses, determined by those with power, are seen as 'truth' for individuals. These dominant discourses or stories disempower groups of people by silencing the validity of their alternate stories of their life experience.

Using a narrative approach, it is vital for a teacher of values initially to hear the student's dominant story in order to understand and help the student nominate their underlying beliefs. Any number of values clarification exercises could be used to facilitate this. The challenge then is to deconstruct the belief or pre-judgement. 'Deconstruction is the process of disassembling the taken-for-granted assumptions that are made about an event or circumstance. (It) is a process in which discourses are exposed and people's positions within them are revealed' (Monk, Winslade, Crocket and Epston 1997, p.95). The students would be asked questions such as:

- Where do these ideas come from? What is the history of your belief – the first time you were aware of taking on this belief?
- What has been the effect of this belief on your life in terms of family, work, spirituality, relationships, life position?
- Who in your life had an interest in maintaining this belief?
- Who in society had a vested interest in maintaining this belief?
- If you were to continue to hold this belief, what impact would it have on you as a future welfare worker?

Having spent this time to understand how these beliefs were established and maintained, the teacher can then move on to seeking out times when the student's actions in some way challenged this dominant story and its underlying belief. The teacher explains to the student that we are often not totally consistent in acting on our beliefs, but do not always

notice this. The student is asked to consider large and small actions as both are just as relevant:

- Can you recall an occasion when, in reflecting back, you can recognise that you acted or had a thought (no matter how small) which did not quite fit with this belief – for example, a time when you noticed that you accepted someone relying on another or found yourself being supportive to someone in need?

An alternative story has now been located but needs to be fleshed out in order to give it the strength to come into the foreground of the student's awareness. This story also has a history of construction and a future if the student chooses:

- How would you account for the fact that you moved away from your belief on that occasion and supported another way of thinking?
- Where does this ability come from?
- Reflecting back on your life, what did you do that could now be seen as an indicator that you would consider and act on this different way of thinking?
- Who else would have known that this was likely to happen?
- What or who supported you in this process?
- What does the fact that you found yourself thinking in slightly different ways tell you about yourself and your beliefs? How does it affect your view of yourself as a welfare worker?

Further future oriented questions could provide students with the opportunity to think about the role they would play with clients as participants in producing other people's worlds. Power relationships and the oppression of marginalised groups could be made more visible to increase welfare students' awareness of ways in which they can ensure their practice is anti-oppressive. Such questions as:

- What difference could this alternate way of thinking make for you in the future as a welfare worker?
- What difference could this alternate way of thinking make for your clients in terms of their view of themselves and their place in society?
- Is it preferable for you to maintain this alternate way of thinking in your future development as a welfare worker?
- If yes, what strategies could you put in place to ensure these views were kept alive?
- What would you observe yourself doing that would indicate to you that these alternate views were operating?

Deconstructive questioning engages people in what White (1991) calls 'externalising conversations'. In using this with welfare students, they are invited into a different way of speaking about themselves and their experiences. Language plays an important role in the construction and maintenance of oppressive practices (Thompson 1993). Ideologies involve communicating ideas and, as a result, the use of language is central to the deconstruction process. The way we speak and what we speak about are a part of our

cultural background and how we view the world. Equally, we can change the way we speak which then changes the way we understand our world and operate within it.

The use of dualistic thinking in language leads to words being used hierarchically as 'one' in opposition to 'the other', for example, male/female, black/white, heterosexual/homosexual, normal/deviant or in the case of the example, independent/dependent. Dualistic thinking serves the purpose of one group having power over the other and supporting adherence to polarities which has the function of categorising, assessing and the silencing of conversations. With dualistic thinking, the language does not exist for any movement between opposite positions. Engagement in conversation about the relationship of people with the beliefs makes space for movement and change in personal ideologies (Bird 2000).

Mullaly (1997) also recognises that language and discourse are important considerations for welfare workers who are operating in ways which address structural factors. Mullaly defines structural social work as occurring within the system by 'changing people's consciousness on a massive scale as a pre-requisite to changing society' and outside the system by 'changing material conditions and oppressive structural patterns such as patriarchy, racism, and ageism' (1997, p.187). Just as a narrative approach to teaching values allows the students to be experts on themselves and empowers them to choose alternate ideologies, it also facilitates students to reflect on this experience in a way which would relate it to their future relationships with service-users. It invites students to consider how they might listen to the voices of marginalised groups and learn their story directly from them (Mullaly 1997).

Further questions could be asked of the student such as:

- What was the effect of the experience of answering these questions?
- What was the impact on you in terms of having a sense of control and power in the process of examination of your own knowledge of yourself?
- What connections do you make, if any, between this process and the ways in which you might relate to clients as a welfare worker?

Deconstructive questioning need not only focus directly on particular pre-judgements of individual students. It can be used in analysing media representations of our society in newspapers and on television or in considering specific occasions when a student is aware of discrepancies between the dominant view of the norm and their own experience. Deconstruction can take place in private journal writing exercises, in class individual self-reflection, small group and large group exercises. It can be used within the context of any learning situation in any area of study. The same or similar questions discussed could equally be asked of social work and welfare educators themselves. They could be asked about a particular view they hold regarding best practice in education in order to invite conversation around professional and personal belief systems.

Ethical Issues of Transformative Learning

There are a number of ethical issues requiring consideration which relate to practising in accordance with the value base of transformative learning itself.

The power imbalance between teacher and student is an ever-present issue keeping in mind the fact that there is likely to be some form of assessment attached to the activities. The teacher must establish with the students that what is being assessed is not the content of their discoveries but their ability to take part in them. It should be explained that the purpose is not to tell students how they should think but to give them a framework for critiquing their own views and to look as possible consequences and issues for them as welfare workers. For some students, this may result in reinforcement of existing values and beliefs, for some it may lead to a change in their values and beliefs, and other may decide welfare work is not for them. The key is that the student has an awareness of their own agency in the study of their personal ideology and that the student leaves with the knowledge and experience of a process through which critical reflection can occur.

A comprehensive introductory phase to the process of deconstructive questioning would be important to ensure that students are fully informed of the assumptions underlying this approach. A useful introduction to these assumptions, and a basis for future deconstructive exercises, would be the use of Fook's (1993) social self-awareness exercise, where students identify who they are socially and how social structures have influenced who they are today. Fook's questions for discussion attached to this exercise are useful:

- Which factors have been important in determining who you are today?
- Particular beliefs, expectations, rules or restrictions which resulted from these social structures which have affected you personally?
- What labels were used to define you socially and what beliefs do they reflect about what is socially normal or desirable?
- What personal factors have influenced your life and how do these interact with structural factors? (1993, pp.158-159).

It is very important that this process occurs in a framework of curiosity and self-discovery by the teacher and the student. Cade (1993), in his brief therapy approach to counselling, points to the feelings of ambivalence that accompany potential change. Cade explains that the best way to set the scene for potential change of values and attitudes is to ensure that those facilitating change do not 'colonise' the arguments in favour of change, effectively giving people no choice other than to defend their original position, thereby losing the ability to be self-determining. Any discoveries would be made by the students themselves and not imposed by others.

An environment where there is trust and a sense of safety is vital for transformative learning to take place. It involves risk-taking and a significant degree of soul-searching which for some students can be very threatening. The teacher could model the process using their own experiences in order to address this (Kennedy 1990; Brookfield 1990).

Confidentiality is a vital component of the environment. It is also important to allow students the choice of level of participation at all times, especially in class activities. It would be necessary for assessment purposes though, for students to demonstrate the ability to work through a deconstructive process at some point but this could always occur individually in writing.

Deconstructive questioning can only be successful if there is an atmosphere of underlying respect. Without this, it could be seen as quite unethical to challenge people's basic belief systems which are the cement of their lives. Change which is actively encouraged could even be seen as bordering on indoctrination. We cannot make people think differently, but we can offer a process to engage students in conversations which may provide a space where some movement can occur. The types of questions discussed attempt, at all times, to be respectful and inclusive in that they are not solely based on 'western' discourses. Their use can be just as inclusive of women's indigenous or any other cultural knowledges.

Lastly, it is vital for teachers to be mindful of the potential impact of value change by students on their existing relationships with family, friends and work colleagues. They need to discuss this with students, not only on an ethical basis, but also in considering it as a potential restraint to making discoveries about themselves.

Conclusion

The ideas presented here are not a formula or set of techniques which can be followed step by step, but rather a product of a particular way of viewing how beliefs are constructed and maintained. Any number of activities could involve similar 'externalising conversations' about dominant discourses in society and their effects on a personal level. These ideas need not be limited to the teaching of values and ethics. They are equally applicable to other strands in social work and welfare course including those addressing skills, sociology, psychology and fieldwork, as an opportunity for students to deconstruct the ideologies and assumptions underlying knowledge and practice.

Just as there are no right or wrong values, there are no right or wrong outcomes of a narrative approach to teaching. However, if a student could display the ability to progress through a schema such as that described to examine their values, then it could be used in order to assess if an acceptable level of competence has been achieved. It may establish a space where students can consider the possibility of attitudinal change and even discover that alternate beliefs already exist in their life and relationships.

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An Exploratory Study of the Relationship of Admission Criteria and Field Education Performance in an Australian Bachelor of Social Work Course

Martin Ryan, Helen Cleak, Lisa Brophy and Mark Furlong

Introduction

A significant concern for any profession is the selection of students to study in the course that provides the recognition to practice in that profession. Social work and welfare work are no exceptions in this regard. Our aim is to produce graduates who will be effective, ethical and competent practitioners. How can students best be selected to meet the objective of producing such practitioners? Which criteria give the most accurate predictions of desired outcomes, particularly in field education performance? This paper reports on one social work school's efforts to examine the relationship of BSW preadmission criteria to first year field education performance.

Studies in the United States on admissions to social work programs (where they have both Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) and Master of Social Work (MSW) programs designed to prepare students for practice) have found that criteria for entering the program and field placement tend to be weighted towards academic performance standards such as course completion and GPA (Grade Point Average), rather than characteristics which are more difficult to measure, such as sensitivity to diversity and ethical behaviour (Cunningham 1982; Gibbs 1994). A more recent study by Miller & Koerin (1998) found in a survey of MSW programs that over 80% of respondents identified nonacademic indicators were being used to assess the suitability of applicants. These studies overall suggest firstly, that admission to a social work program is a fairly non-selective process, regardless of the criteria used, and secondly, that very few students' enrolments are ever terminated once they are admitted (Dinerman 1981, 1982; Wahlberg and Lommen 1990; Gibbs 1994).

Previous research on gatekeeping mechanisms in Australian Bachelor of Social Work programs (Ryan, Habibis and Craft, 1997; 1998) was based on a survey of heads of

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This paper was previously presented at the Australian Association of Social Work and Welfare Educators' Conference, 28-30 September 1998, Cairns, Queensland.

schools in 1994-95. Eighteen schools were sent questionnaires and 15 subsequently returned a completed questionnaire (an 83% return rate).

Their key findings in relation to admissions criteria were that in terms of **formal criteria** the schools used for determining entry into the BSW course, it was found that potential/demonstrated academic ability emerged as the criterion most frequently cited (n=11, 73%) followed by 'commitment and interest in social work' (n=9, 60%). Only 27% cited skills and personal qualities (or less than 4 respondents) with 'emotional/mental maturity' least often cited (7% or n=1).

Respondents were also asked about the **informal criteria** they used based on a list of factors supplied for them to check. The factors mentioned most frequently were: 'consistency between personal values & social work values' (n=7, 47%); 'commitment to and interest in social work' (n=6, 40%) and 'communication skills' (n=6, 40%).

They were also questioned about the **methods used to assess the formal and informal criteria** they used and again a list of factors was supplied for them to check. Virtually all (n=14, 93%) used formal academic records, followed by employment record and voluntary work (n=10, 66%). Written essays and references came next (n=7, 47% each). Only four schools (27%) used interviews.

When the opportunity was given to respondents to rank all the criteria (formal and informal) they utilised, the results were consistent with the previous data in that academic ability is ranked higher than anything else (by 67%) with a range of personal qualities being ranked lowest (13%).

Ryan, Habibis and Craft (1997; 1998) also asked respondents about the percentage of applicants denied admission to the course in the 1994 admissions cycle. Of those schools able to respond to this question (n=9), 63% of these (n=6) said that 50% or more of their applicants were denied admission and 13% denied admission to 75% or more of their applicants. The most common reasons for applicants to be refused entry to the course were related to academic achievement. No other category of reasons was listed. All 15 schools allowed students to apply for admission more than once (in a subsequent year).

Respondents were also asked how often a student failure in field education has occurred in the last five years. Thirteen schools provided quantifiable annual data which when averaged out produced a figure of 15 field education failures per annum across all 13 schools. Only two schools have failed more than 15 students in five years. Sixty percent of the schools have failed less than two per year. Whilst the size of enrolments clearly varied across the schools, the number of failures is very small regardless of enrolment size.

Overall these findings indicate, similar to US schools, that the admissions process would seem to be of key importance in the gatekeeping, particularly as failure in field

education units was relatively rare and exclusion on non-academic grounds was problematic.

A number of recent Australian studies have examined university admission procedures and outcomes for specific groups such as low SES (Socio Economic Status) school leavers (Ramsey, Tranter, Charlton and Sumner 1998), TAFE graduates (Cohen, Lewis, Stone and Wood 1997), as well as outcomes of flexible admission policies (Ramsey, Tranter, Sumner and Barrett 1996) and selection methods in general (Pascoe, McClelland and McGaw 1997). Older Australian research focuses more generally on predictors of student success at university. A group of the latter studies attempt to develop regression or econometric models in order to chart student performance and progress through courses. The other group of studies tries to explain pass and retention rates.

Key pieces of research in the first group, which are most relevant to the present research study, include West (1985) and Lewis (1994). West (1985) investigated the effects of pre-entry characteristics on the academic performance of students who entered Monash University from secondary school in 1975, 1980 and 1982. The author found that students who undertook most of their schooling in government schools performed better at the end of first year of university than students with the same selection score from independent schools. Neither father's occupation or country of birth were significant predictors of university performance over the three years researched.

Lewis (1994) analysed the results of just over 10,000 commencing students at the University of Wollongong between 1990 and 1993. This study concluded that female students, students who attended government schools and older students who were not school leavers, performed significantly better than the university-wide average.

Despite the crucial nature of decisions made about who is to be admitted to social work courses, there appears to have been no Australian research done on the admission process and its relationship to student placement performance outcomes in social work courses.

Cunningham's US study (1982) and its methodology was used as the basis for the present study. In her study, conducted at the University of Texas at Austin with a sample of 83 BSW students, she examined the relationship between 11 preadmission independent variables and the dependent variable of performance ratings in a fieldwork program using multiple regression. She was particularly interested in previous academic performance and the age of students. She found that only grade point average and age were significant success predictors. She concluded that, 'young students and those with a high grade point average seemed to be the best candidates for the fieldwork program' (1982, p.31).

Obviously this is a somewhat controversial finding which tends to run against the common wisdom and experience of those involved in social work education. It is

probably more likely that educators would contend that mature-aged students with life and work experience would perform better in the social work role. Would such findings hold true in an Australian program?

The authors had the opportunity to test these findings in an Australian BSW course, namely La Trobe University in Melbourne, where they were all involved in either the admissions process, fieldwork education or both. The BSW course, at the time of the study, was a two-year course largely admitting graduates.

Prior to 1996, decisions on accepting applicants into the La Trobe University BSW course, were based on applicants completing an application form, supplying two referees' reports (one academic and one non-academic) and an academic record. A member of the three-person admissions committee would then read this information, make an overall unscored assessment as to acceptance or not and make a recommendation to the whole committee, who would then reach a final decision.

In 1996 a new scoring system for admission to the two-year BSW course at La Trobe University was introduced which incorporated variables including previous academic level and grades, relevant subjects, work/volunteer experience, referees' reports and a discretionary points category. Applicants were scored on each of these factors and from them a total percentage score was calculated. Given the introduction of this scoring system into the BSW application process and hence having quantitative data available to students in relation to preadmission variables, it seemed to present a good opportunity to carry out a replication of Cunningham's study at La Trobe University.

Our aim in carrying out the study was to subject the variables which we thought to be predictive to empirical testing to see if they were in fact related to outcome. The study was exploratory in nature and sought to examine the relationship between a range of preadmission variables and performance in the first year BSW field education program in 1997. We were particularly interested in the variables of age of the students at entry and academic ability as predictor variables.

Literature Review

In reviewing the literature, it quickly became apparent that the area of admission predictions in social work programs was a field of research that was very much in vogue in the United States from the late 1960s, through to the 1970s and in to the early 1980s. (After that time, the research literature has tended to focus on gatekeeping in social work programs more broadly (eg. Hepler and Noble 1990; Younes 1998). In that country, there were a number of research studies that examined the predictive factors for student success in schools of social work (Dailey 1974; 1979; Pfouts and Henley 1977; Hughes 1979; Johnson 1980; Cunningham 1982). Even though these studies are in some instances over 20 years old, they are still significant as they remain the key pieces of research on social work admissions in the United States given the relative dearth of more recent studies. These studies followed

on from the initial survey work on admissions policies done by Constable (1977) and McNeece (1979). McNeece found that despite the disrepute into which grades had fallen as a screening criterion, the majority of schools still selected the grade-point average as the single best predictor of an applicant's chances for success in graduate school.

Dailey (1974; 1979) replicated his own previous study of the correlation of predictions by academic staff on admission (admission ratings) and student outcome measures of classroom performance and field performance. In both studies, it was found that full-time faculty had some capacity to predict classroom performance, but no ability to predict field performance. Pfouts and Henley (1977) constructed a multivariate predictive index to be used as an admissions tool based on four factors: intellectual ability; maturity and work experience; quality of undergraduate school and sex.

Dunlap (1979) evaluated six admission criteria as a predictor of academic performance (based on grade point average) and professional potential of the student (a rating by the faculty) using discriminant analysis to distinguish between above and below average social work students. He found that the faculty interview and undergraduate GPA were useful predictors. The Graduate Record Examination score was a relatively weak predictor and letters of reference were of little value. (Glisson and Hudson (1981) were to later write that Dunlap's study was seriously flawed due to a number of misuses of statistical analyses.)

Johnson (1980) found a strong relationship between writing ability and classroom performance, but not with admission status. Hughes (1979) found that the monitoring of in-program learning experiences was the most appropriate means of selecting students for undergraduate social work education.

Pfouts and Henley (1977), in reviewing the admissions research to that time in the US, state that undergraduate GPA has been shown to be associated with performance by a number of researchers. But they add that a minority found no relation between undergraduate grades and success in social work school. They also report that, in general, middle-aged students have been found to be less successful than younger students, although one previous study found no correlation between age and success.

A more recent study by Dunlap, Henley and Fraser (1998) examined the correlation between admissions criteria and academic performance at one state university. The data was based on 654 MSW students who attended from 1985-1992. The measure of academic performance was based on a score in a comprehensive exam just prior to graduation. It was found that undergraduate GPA, Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores and gender and race were significantly correlated with academic performance. In relation to latter point, it was found that females scored significantly higher than males on the exam and Caucasian students scored significantly higher than African-American students.

In conclusion, the available US research appears to be equivocal when evaluating exactly which variables are good predictors of successful outcomes, including field education performance. This is compounded by the fact that there are problems associated with generalising from US MSW programs to undergraduate BSW programs and vice-versa. In a BSW program applicants are admitted straight from the completion of high school and for an MSW program they already possess a first degree. Academic ability has been found to be the most consistently successful predictor, with others like age of the students having a less certain predictive value. In Australia these issues appear to have not been researched at all in social work programs.

Methodology

The study aimed to examine the relationship between a range of preadmission variables and performance in the first year BSW field education program. Preadmission variable data in the form of an admission score were gathered on all commencing BSW students at La Trobe University, Bundoora, Melbourne, prior to their acceptance into the two-year course at the beginning of the 1997 academic year. Data were utilised on 55 students who commenced their first field education placement in September of that year.

The following variables were the eight preadmission variables utilised in the admission scoring and for this study:

1) Academic Record (level of previous academic qualifications - weighted at 20 points of a total score of 100 points given to each student.) For example, an incomplete or complete Bachelor's degree or any postgraduate qualifications;

2) Preadmission Academic Standard (based on all previous subjects undertaken at tertiary level and calculated on median grade - worth 20 points). For example, a D average was given 5, a C average 10, a B average 15 and an A average 20;

3) Work experience (both paid and unpaid for which a score out of 10 points was given for the type of work and 10% for the quality of the work, to give a total of 20 points);

4) Life Experience (up to 5 points was given for travel, personal experience of living with a disability or serious illness, as a carer, migration. It had to be demonstrated that the applicant had gained from experience or can be related to motivation to study social work, rather than just had the experience);

5) Academic References (up to 5 points could be scored on references from an academic referee);

6) Other References (up to 5 points could be scored on a reference from a non-academic referee);

7) Discretionary Points (up to 20 points could be given under this variable, with no more than 5% for any of the following grounds: demonstrated regional interest; a second language; research experience/skill; management experience/skill; equity grounds; outstanding interpersonal skills; or any other grounds); and

8) A total preadmission score was given out of 100 points on these 7 variables to enable a quick and consistent means of comparison.

There was another category of 'relevant subjects' which was worth 5 points, with 1 point being awarded for each year of passing a relevant subject in the social/behavioural sciences area. (This variable was not included in this study as virtually all successful applicants received the maximum score of 5 points.)

There were two additional variables included in the study. The first of these was the student's academic standard in the first and second semesters of the first year of their BSW which was undertaken prior to placement. This was scored in the same way as the preadmission academic standard ie. the median grade in the four subjects undertaken. By doing this we were interested in the relationship between the academic component of the BSW and performance in the field education program. The second additional one was the student's date of birth, which Cunningham had also utilised as a variable in her study. The 11 variables that Cunningham had utilised in her study were: grade point average at the junior level, student birth year, score on the Rathus Assertion Inventory, the number of organisations students belonged to in high school, the number of leadership roles held in these organisations, the number of college organisational leadership and membership roles, the number of hours in relevant volunteer work, and the number of months in previous employment in social service related jobs, other service related employment, and general work experience.

The dependent variable for this study was a five-point rating (unsatisfactory, below average, average, above average, excellent) of the student's overall performance in field education at the end of their first year field education placement in the first year of the course. The assumption was made that a student's performance in a field education placement most closely mirrors the demands and expectations of their later role as a graduate social worker. The instrument used a five-point scale as a measure rather than the Department's pass/fail range as it allowed greater specificity and was also a means of making direct comparison of the present study's results with those of Cunningham (1982).

This performance rating was done by each of the 13 members of staff of the Department of Social Work & Social Policy who conducted liaison duties for the students. Liaison persons made at least two agency visits per placement to the students they were evaluating.

The students were in placement on a full-time basis (Monday-Friday 9-5) for 12 weeks from September to December. This measure was completed shortly after placement ended in 1997.

The outcome data were gathered after the liaison persons had carried out these two visits which were three-way meetings with the agency field teacher and the student and after the grade for the student's placement had been determined on a pass/fail basis. The Department of Social Work & Social Policy uses an evaluation instrument for students in field education placements that rates their performance in eight key areas. This evaluation was completed by the field teacher and student.

As Cunningham (1982) had also done, it was decided to use university liaison persons for the rating data to ensure as much uniformity and consistency as possible and to make data collection less burdensome (ie. 13 people to collect from rather than 55 field teachers). Only one staff person had contact with the student and therefore it was not possible to have two persons rate the students for inter-rater reliability. This may have been desirable, but not practically possible in this case. It should be noted that the liaison persons were all experienced staff to whom instructions were given on rating the students.

Data Analysis

A variety of methods of statistical analysis were used in the study. The SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) for Windows computer package was utilised to analyse the data. These were:

1) Frequencies on all variables;
2) Correlations (using Spearman's correlation coefficient) were drawn up based on the preadmission variables' correlations with the dependent variable;
3) From these correlations, matrices were drawn up using only statistically significant associations using McQuitty's (1957) elementary linkage analysis, as a means of reorganising and simplifying the patterns of association that may exist in the data (Phillip, McCulloch and Smith 1975), so that any relationships can be easily comprehended and communicated (Everitt 1974). McQuitty's analysis techniques searches for linkages between 2 variables and defines a linkage as being the largest association which a variable has with any of the other variables being studied. Thus every variable is assigned to a group or a cluster in terms of its highest correlation. It is a technique based on logical linkage rather than a statistical one and therefore can stimulate a logical explanation for linkages between variables. It has been used in a number of research studies in social work (Philip et al.., 1975; McCulloch and Smith, 1978; Ryan 1991); and 4) the Mann Whitney U test was used to determine if two independent samples (the students who were 1) those rated unsatisfactory

to average and 2) those rated above average to excellent) were significantly different.

Findings

Sample Description

The sample consisted of 55 students, of which 51 were female and four were male. Of the 55 students, 52 students were admitted as normal entry students and three as special entry applicants (ie. did not meet the normal requirements of having at least two years of tertiary study). Based on frequency tables that were constructed on each of the preadmission variables, it was found that the age of students in 1997 ranged from 20 to 48 years with a median of 28 years. The modal age was 22 years (n=8 students).

Preadmission academic standards (assessed in terms of median grades) ranged from a D (50-59%) grade (n=6, 11%) to an A (80-100%) (n=6, 11%) with the median standard being C (60-69%) (n=26, 47%). In terms of previous studies, 30 (56%) had completed a three year degree, with only eight (15%) having completed the minimum two years of a first degree.

The only applicants interviewed before being admitted were special entry applicants who were being seriously considered for admission and those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent. (The University requires, as a positive discrimination measure, that all applicants of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent be interviewed.) The remainder of the applicants were assessed for admission based on information in their application form, their academic record and referees' reports (one academic and one non-academic).

In terms of volunteer and work experience, all of the students had at least done some work or volunteer experience ie. no student had scored lower than 10 out of 20. Twenty students (36%) scored the maximum 20 points for this variable indicating significant, relevant paid or volunteer welfare experience.

Preadmission scores were computed for all applicants. The mean admission score was 63 with a standard deviation of 11.3. The range was 48-81 with a median of 64.

Study Findings

The frequencies and percentages for the performance rating categories (dependent variable) as scored by the liaison staff members are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Performance outcome ratings of first field education placement students in sample (N=55)

Rating	No of Students	%
Unsatisfactory	3	5.5
Below Average	3	5.5
Average	11	20.0
Above Average	27	49.0
Excellent	11	20.0
Totals	55	100.0

As can be seen in Table 1, the distribution of performance outcome ratings was negatively skewed with 70% of the students scoring in the above average to excellent range, but all points on the rating scale were represented, including three students graded as unsatisfactory and 3 below average.

The eight preadmission (independent or predictor) variables were each correlated with the performance ratings (dependent) variable using Spearman's correlation coefficient. Spearman's correlation coefficient was thought to be more appropriate than Pearson's correlation coefficient given the skewed nature of the data. The additional two independent variables (student's academic standard in the first and second semesters of the first year of their BSW and date of birth) were also correlated with the dependent variable.

As can be seen from Table 2, none of the correlations of the predictor variables with the dependent variable were statistically significant (at the .05 level), apart from the first year BSW academic standard variable with the field education rating which was r_s (55) = .28, p= .034. This correlation suggests that those who did well in placement also tend to experience greater academic success, as measured by their performance in the academic subjects in their first year of the BSW.

Other interesting findings from Table 2 include:

1) Date of birth and the rating of performance in field education - r_s (55) = .0798, not significant at .05 level (p= .562). This indicates that younger students did very slightly better in their field education placement than older students, but still not at a statistically significant level.

2) Preadmission academic record and the rating of performance in field education - r_s (55) = .0378, not significant at .05 level (p=.79). This indicates that students who performed relatively well academically prior to admission to the BSW did slightly better in terms of performance in the field placement, but again this was not statistically significant.

Table 2: Correlations and significance levels of the 10 predictor variables with the dependent variable(performance rating)

	Predictor Variables	Correlation Coefficient (Spearman's) with Dependent Variable (performance rating in field education placement)	Significance
1)	Academic record	-.22	.11
2)	Preadmission academic standard	.04	.79
3)	Work experience	.23	.08
4)	Life experience	-.06	.70
5)	Academic references	.05	.68
6)	Other references	.21	.11
7)	Discretionary points	.02	.88
8)	Total score	.04	.78
9)	Student's academic standard in the first and second semesters of the first year of their BSW	.28*	.03
10)	Date of birth	.08	.56

* $P < .05$

Other significant correlations

Other correlations amongst the independent or predictor variables that were statistically significant at the .05 level were:

1) Discretionary points (awarded for skills and characteristics possessed by applicants not covered by other categories eg. a second language or management skills) and the applicant's total score: $r_s (55) = .43$, $p = .001$. This correlation which indicates that those who got a high score on the discretionary points variable tended to also achieve a high total admission score.

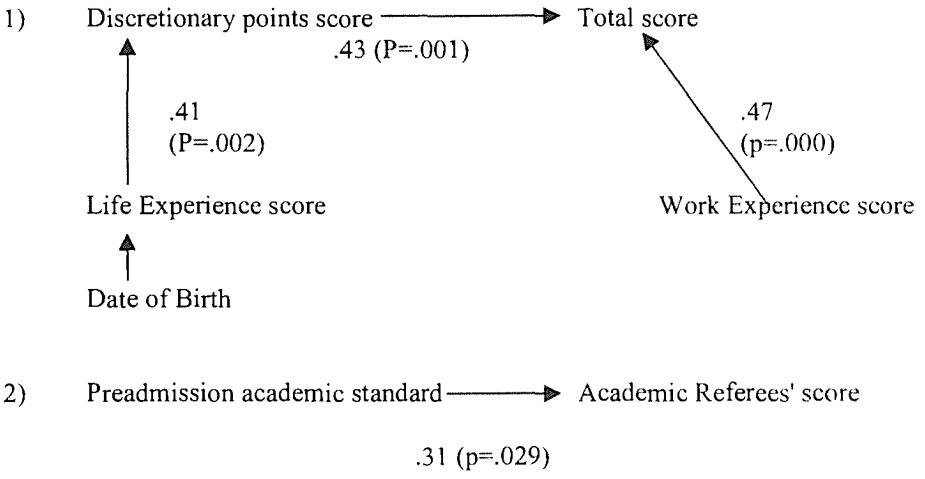
2) Life Experience score and Date of Birth: $r_s (55) = -.31$, $p = .02$. This was a logical correlation in that those who tended to score relatively low on the life experience variable were the younger students.

3) Life Experience score and Discretionary points score: $r_s (55) = .41$, $p = .002$. This was again an understandable correlation with those students who scored highly on life experience also scoring well on the discretionary points variable.

4) Preadmission academic standard and academic references: r_s (55) = - .31, p=.03. This was another logical correlation with students with better academic grades receiving academic references which scored relatively highly.

The authors were also interested in examining the relationship between the preadmission variables to see if any patterns emerged amongst them in order to shed light on the way they may have inter-related, which may have in turn revealed the way they were associated with field education performance. McQuitty's cluster hierarchies were drawn up based on the preadmission variables' correlations (with the first year BSW academic standard variable removed) in order to examine relationships between the preadmission variables only. The following picture emerged as displayed in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Preadmission variables' correlation clusters using McQuitty's cluster analysis



What are these two clusters saying? First in 1) there were a number of variables that are associated. A high discretionary points score was associated first with a high total score on admission with the latter variable being most closely associated with a high work experience score. The discretionary points score was in turn most closely associated with the life experience score, and this latter variable was negatively associated with date of birth (ie. younger students score more poorly in terms of work experience). In the second cluster a relatively high preadmission academic standard was associated with a high score from academic referees.

The first year BSW academic standard was the variable that had the highest correlation with the field education performance rating at r_s (55) = .28, p<.05, but it

was not one of the preadmission variables. In contrast, the preadmission academic standard variable's correlation with the field education rating was only r_s (55) = .0378, not significant at .05 level (p=.79). Interestingly, the first year BSW academic standard variable's correlation with the Preadmission academic record variable was not significant (r_s (55) =.1615, not significant at .05 level (p=.253)).

The dependent variable was divided into two distinct groups in order to compare them on the independent/predictor variables. In this case, the groups were: 1) those rated unsatisfactory to average (17 students) and 2) those rated above average to excellent (38). These two groups were then compared by using the Mann Whitney U test to determine if the two independent samples were significantly different.

It was found that again only on the independent variable 'the 1st Year BSW academic standard' was there a statistically significant difference between the two groups with a p = .0169 (p<.05). But overall these results indicate that the chosen variables were poor predictors of performance in the field education placement.

This overall trend was borne out when there was an examination of the field placement performance of a sample of the students on a case-by-case basis by the authors. The six students who were rated unsatisfactory (3) and below average (3) on field education ratings were compared with the top six of the 11 who were rated as excellent in terms of their admission scores. It was found that those rated 1) Unsatisfactory (three who failed placement) had admission scores which ranged from 60-79, with a mean score of 69. Those rated 2) Below Average (three) had admission scores which ranged from 57-81, with a mean score of 70. Those rated 3) Excellent (with six of 11 with the highest admission scores being selected), had admission scores ranging from 59-73, with a mean score of 68. Therefore the admission scores of those in the excellent sub-group were marginally lower than those in either the unsatisfactory or below average group.

In summary, it was found that the preadmission variables utilised in the BSW admission process were poorly associated with the first year BSW field education performance. The only variable that both correlated highly and at a statistically significant level with field education placement performance was the first year BSW academic standard (which was not a preadmission variable). Neither the age of students nor the preadmission academic standard were highly correlated with field education placement performance, as previous US studies had found. The poor associative qualities of the preadmission variables was verified by a case-by-case examination of the field education performance scores, with those students who were judged to have had the best field education performances having lower admission scores than those who had the poorest field education performances.

Discussion

We have taken the view in writing this paper that results that run counter to expectations or hypotheses and which produce non-statistically significant results can

be equally important as predicted statistically significant results. They can be equally worthy of discussion and something can be learnt from them.

Overall, our starkest finding was that the preadmission variables that La Trobe University utilise in their BSW admission process had generally low levels of association with performance in field education placement, which as Cunningham (1982) argues is the part of the curriculum 'most like the later professional work role' (p.28).

It was comforting to find that there was a significant correlation between academic performance in the BSW and subsequent field education performance, which indicates that there are common aspects that there seem to be important for successful performance in both parts of the course (academic and field education).

There was however no significant relationship between preadmission GPA (academic record) and academic performance in the BSW (r_s = .04, N.S., p= .79). This suggests that performance in previous studies bears little relationship to academic performance in the BSW. This may have been amplified in this case by allowing applicants to have a wide range of relevant subjects in the humanities and social sciences (rather than more narrowly confining it to sociology and psychology) and that they also came from a wide variety of institutions and courses which may have varying assessment standards. It could also be suggested that the nature of social work subjects is markedly different from those previously undertaken.

Students who performed most poorly in the field education placement tended to have personal problems and/or limited conceptualisation skills (as assessed by the staff engaged in the field education liaison visits) which could not necessarily or easily be identified in the selection process or on measurement of the pre-admission variables that were used at the time. It could be argued that these factors may have been more likely to be identified if an interview prior to admission had been in place.

In adopting the present admission scoring system, we were searching for: i) an efficient, equitable system that would facilitate processing of large numbers of applicants (in excess of 500 applications) at both first and third year levels; and ii) a way of getting the highest quality students. We think we have achieved the first aim, but have some way to go to attain on the second aim, particularly in terms of identifying and excluding unsuitable and less competent students and admitting the most competent ones.

A number of possible explanations can be postulated for the lack of statistically significant results.

1) ***Small sample size***

The sample had 55 cases in it and 10 predictor variables were tested in the study. This meant that there was a ratio of only five cases to one predictor variable. Such a low

ratio precluded the use of general linear regression techniques such as multiple regression and discriminant analysis which ideally require such a ratio of the order of 20 to one (Cohen 1988). Use of such techniques would have increased the statistical power of the analysis considerably.

2) ***Measurement issues***

There was a lack of differentiation and specificity in the measurement of some of the independent variables such as referees' scores (for example, 96% of students on other referees' references scored either 2.4 or 5 on this variable), total admission scores (range from 48-81, median 64) and academic scores (89% scored either 10, 15 or 20).

The same lack of differentiation could also have applied to the measurement of the dependent variable (student performance in placement) which had a negatively skewed distribution with 70% of the students scoring in the above average to excellent range. Problems with measurement of the variables would seem to be the most parsimonious explanation for the failure to achieve statistically significant results, and therefore the most likely one.

3) ***Model problem***

A model problem indicates that the variables selected for study are incorrect. It is possible that this is the case, but it is probably not so, as none of the pre-admission variables at all, rather than some of them, proved to be statistically significant in the correlational analysis or with the Mann Whitney U test.

4) ***Theoretical issue***

A theoretical issue indicates that there is no relationship between the variables selected for investigation. Some relationships were found amongst the variables eg. discretionary points and the applicant's total score and academic record (level of previous academic qualifications) and other referees' score, but they were not strong ones. In addition, many of the variables utilised in the research had been found to be significant in previous research studies such as those by Cunningham (1982) and Dunlap et al.. (1998).

Further Research

The authors intend to undertake further research on this topic, particularly given the inconclusive results of the present study. Students undertaking the course in 1998 (the year following the present study) were selected purely on the basis of academic record. This was due to a change to the use of the centralised university admission system which meant that this was the only consistent information available on applicants. Also for the first time, students were admitted to the first year of La Trobe University's new four-year course. Data on those seeking third year entry to this four-

year course will be compared to those in the present study. For 1999 applicants we reverted back to the complete scoring system with the Department's own supplementary application form in addition to the centralised one. Based partly on the findings of the present study, the supplementary application for 1999 was modified in order to create greater precision in the measurement of a number of variables.

The other direction for future research is to extend the analysis beyond univariate and bivariate analyses to multivariate analysis, including linear regression techniques to enable a multiple regression model using preadmission predictor variables to be built. This will require a smaller number of independent variables than were tested in the present study and/or a larger number of students in the study sample. The results of the present study may enable some of the predictor variables, which had very weak associations with the dependent variable to be eliminated from the testing in a future regression model, and thereby only retaining those variables with stronger associations.

In conclusion, this study produced an interesting set of results that were certainly not anticipated. Clearly further thought and research needs to be done, but we think that an important first step has been made in researching admissions predictors in Australian social work courses in a systematic way.

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Research Education in Australian BSW Programs: Results of a Survey

Martin Ryan and Rosemary Sheehan

Introduction

The AASW Review of Australian of Australian Social Work Courses policy document (1990) currently requires that social work research methods be one of six compulsory components in courses and that such a component' should provide opportunity for students to develop skills in a range of research approaches relevant to social work practice in order to be able to participate in and evaluate research projects' (p.7).

More recently, the AASW (Australian Association of Social Workers) document on Australian Social Work Competency Standards for Entry Level Social Workers (1994) suggests that as part of 'Strand 4 - Developing Ideas and Information' that a social worker '...undertakes research and contributes to the building of knowledge base' (p.21). The document then goes on to list ten sub-competencies under this heading. These present a formidable list and include having a knowledge of all stages of social research, being able to conduct research '...using sound methodological approaches' and an ability to critically research reports.

The contents of these two documents need to be set in the context of debate around issues in research teaching in social work programs. Exactly what are the goals of such research teaching is a contested issue. Is the primary goal to create informed consumers of research? Is it to prepare students to evaluate their own practice? Is it to prepare students to contribute to the generation of knowledge for practice and theory-building (the practitioner-researcher goal)?

There have been debates in the US literature for a number of years on the goals and content of research teaching (Smith, De Weaver and Kilpatrick 1986; Poulin 1989). Glisson and Fischer (1987, p.50) contend that research education in social work is

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Earlier versions of this article were previously presented as conference papers at the 25th Australian Association of Social Workers National Conference, September 1997, Canberra and at the Australian Association of Social Work and Welfare Educators Conference, October 1996.

characterised in that country by '... confusion and disagreement over the extent and type of research content to be included in the curricula'. The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) issued a revised set of guidelines for research courses in MSW programs in 1983 after a decade of conflict over the nature of research training for practice. These Guidelines set up two basic goals for courses: 1) to prepare students to evaluate their own practice and 2) to prepare students to contribute to the generation of knowledge for practice. After coming under attack as being unrealistic, the second goal was abandoned in 1986.

Fraser and Lewis (Fraser, Lewis and Norman 1990; Fraser and Lewis 1993) surveyed MSW courses across the United States of America in an attempt to describe the content and structure in research curricula, with particular attention to evaluating the latest Guidelines four years after their implementation. They found there were four competing perspectives in programs: 1) the 'de riguer' approach (rigorous training across a full range of basic and advanced research and statistical methods); 2) the single-subject plus approach (main emphasis on teaching single subject research methods); 3) the traditionalist approach (emphasis on teaching basic research methods with modest attention to basic statistics); and 4) the minimalist approach (basic research methods taught at a modest level with minimal exposure to basic statistics and single-subject designs). Based on the survey of 83 schools, the single-subject plus approach and the traditionalist approach predominated amongst the US schools with 29 each, followed by the minimalist approach with 15 schools and, lastly, the 'de rigueur' approach with ten schools.

In contrast, there has been little literature on research education in Australia. There have been articles calling for particular emphases in research or research teaching such as those by Brown (1988) who advocated an 'Australianising' of research including research training and Grichting and Smithson (1984) who wanted more quantitative research training in social work. Recently, there have been calls in Australia for social workers to engage in more practice research (Tierney 1993) and to use greater scientific rigour in research (Barber 1996) if they are to survive as members of a distinct, respected and viable profession in the future. There have been case studies of the efforts of individual schools in teaching research such as Grichting (1994a; 1994b) who reported on aspects of postgraduate research education at the University of Tasmania at Launceston and Crisp (1998) recounted her experiences at Deakin University in teaching research via distance education.

In order to respond to and inform these debates, the authors believed that baseline data on the nature of research education in schools of social work was necessary. They conducted a study of all Australian BSW programs in 1996-97. The study had the following research objectives: 1) to describe the content of research subjects in Australian BSW programs and 2) to provide a direct Australian comparison with the US results of Fraser and his colleagues (Fraser, Lewis and Norman 1990; Fraser and Lewis 1993), particularly in relation to the four distinct types of research sequences they identified. The study consisted of a survey of research subject coordinators using a mailed questionnaire on the

content of subjects. This paper will present the findings of the study and discuss their implications for future social work education.

Methodology

The study consisted of a survey questionnaire sent to all BSW research subject coordinators in all Australian Schools of Social Work. If the name of the research subject coordinator was not known to the authors, the covering letter and questionnaire were sent to the Head of School who was requested to pass it on to the relevant staff member to complete and return.

All Schools of Social Work conducting a BSW course were contacted. They numbered 21 in total and included a school who had not yet received provisional accreditation from the AASW. All of the other 20 schools had received at least provisional accreditation from the AASW.

The mailed questionnaire was sent out in August 1996. The further follow up letter was sent out in late September 1996. Follow up letters were sent to individual schools in October and November 1996 and again in October 1997. The last response was received in November 1997. Twenty schools eventually responded (95% response rate).

The survey questionnaire that was used was based on one developed previously by the authors to survey the health content in BSW courses (Ryan and Martyn 1994). The questionnaire focused on the content of these subjects and covered the following topics:

1) whether there was a separate research unit in the Bachelor of Social Work course;
2) the title of the research unit;
3) the year the unit was first offered;
4) the stage of the course the unit was offered;
5) the length of the unit;
6) whether the unit was compulsory or optional;
7) the weighting of the unit;
8) the aims, objectives and rationale of the unit;
9) topics taught in the unit;
10) teaching methods utilised in the unit;
11) assessment involved in the unit;
12) number of school staff involved in teaching in the unit;
13) whether the unit is directly linked to fieldwork;
14) particular problems experienced in developing the unit;
15) any gaps perceived in the present format and content of the unit;
16) the decision-making process involved in determining the content of the unit;
17) textbooks used in the unit; and
19) any other units in the course with a research methods component and their relationship to the social work research methods unit.

As part of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to rate the degree to which the 26 content areas are taught in the subject. A four-point scale was utilised, based on that used by Fraser, Lewis and Norman (1990). It consisted of: 0 = not taught; 1 = taught for recognition or awareness only; 2 = taught for comprehension or understanding in detail; 3 = taught for skill or the ability to apply in practice. Fraser, Lewis and Norman (1990) had based these categories on Bloom (1956) and Gronlund's (1982) work on learning theory and knowledge acquisition.

The authors utilised 14 of the 24 content items from the instrument developed by Fraser and Lewis (1993) from which Fraser and Lewis identified five dimensions ie. basic research methods; basic statistics; single-subject design; advanced statistics and advanced experimental design. This selection of the 14 items was based on including items that the authors thought were likely to be familiar to and taught by Australian social work academics. In selecting these 14 items, care was also taken to ensure that all five dimensions identified by Fraser et al. were represented with at least one content area in the present study's questionnaire eg. 'designing Solomon four-group studies', 'designing classical experiments' and 'designing factorial studies' (from Fraser and Lewis 1993, p.76) were covered by the single term 'advanced experimental design'.

The 14 content areas chosen were: defining research problems; drafting research questions; designing a data collection instrument; using standardised instruments; assessing validity and reliability; writing research reports; single-subject designs; calculating means, medians, modes; calculating t tests; calculating Chi-square tests; using ANOVA; using regression analysis; using multivariate techniques/statistical techniques; and advanced experimental design.

Whilst it was not explicitly stated by Fraser et al.. (1990), it is apparent from their choice of content areas that there was a heavily quantitative bias and a complete exclusion of a qualitative approach or methods. In order to redress this bias, the authors included additional content areas in the survey questionnaire. These areas were based on the authors' own knowledge of research subject content in Australia (through both having taught social work research), areas of current interest and concern in Australian social work research and research-related sub-competencies from the document on Australian Social Work Competency Standards for Entry Level Social Workers (1994). The additional 12 content areas chosen were: the use of statistical computer software packages; use of qualitative computer software packages; qualitative research/qualitative data analysis; research ethics; philosophical underpinnings of social research; conducting a literature review; program evaluation; direct practice research and evaluation; assessment of research articles/studies; feminist research; research and postmodernism; and the politics of conducting research.

Analysis was based on the collation of responses and was largely based on the frequencies of responses.

Findings

Twenty of the 21 (95%) schools of social work in Australia responded to the survey questionnaire. One school indicated their curriculum was currently changing from a subject-based curriculum so that the teaching of research would not take place within a specific subject, so was not included in the analysis. One other school integrated the teaching of research with other subjects of the course. Where appropriate this particular school's responses have been included in the results.

The remaining 18 schools of social work offered a specific research subject within the BSW course. The subjects were generally entitled 'social work research'. There were also slight variations on this title such as 'social policy and research' or 'social work research in action'. One subject was entitled 'methods of social enquiry', another was called 'research design' and another simply 'research methods'. The length of time the subjects have been offered coincide with the age of the particular school or department. Given that the AASW requirements include the teaching of research as a core course in BSW programs, this was not surprising.

The teaching of research occurred in the penultimate year of the BSW in six of the respondent schools. In four of the courses, research was taught in the final year of the BSW. Four schools offered one semester of research in each of the final two years of the course. Three schools taught research in the second and third year of a four-year course. One school offered one semester of research in each of the four years of the BSW course. Generally, the research subject was one semester in length. In seven courses the subject ran for two semesters and in one course the subject ran for four semesters.

In all cases, the subject was compulsory which was again expected given the AASW course requirements. The weighting of the subject varied considerably across courses according to how each school weighted the component subjects of the BSW. It was impossible to extract a generalised finding about weighting except to note that it is a core course in the BSW and must be satisfactorily completed during the course.

Overall, the aims of the subject were generally similar across the respondent schools. The aims were to introduce students to the nature of social work research and to the application of research approaches to practice. It was generally expected that students could complete an independent research task as a consequence of doing the subject. One subject aimed also to provide students with an understanding of the social, political and ethical constraints in social work research. Eight of the subjects specifically noted the ability to critique social work research as a subject aim, despite the AASW guidelines reference to the need to teach students to 'participate in and **evaluate** research projects'.

The extent to which the content areas were taught in the unit were rated according to the four point scale developed by Fraser, Lewis and Norman (1990). Based on these scores for individual content areas, total scores for each school were computed with the higher the score representing a greater likelihood of a greater number of areas being taught for

comprehension or application. The scores for the schools ranged from 27-66 with the median score being 46.

Table 1: Coverage of content areas in the social work research methods subject

Content Area	0	1	2	3	Median
Defining research problems	-	-	2	17	3
Drafting research questions	-	1	4	14	3
Designing a data collection instrument	-	6	1	11	3
Using standardised instruments	2	10	5	2	1
Assessing reliability and validity	-	8	8	4	2
Writing research reports	1	1	5	11	3
Calculating means, medians, modes	1	3	4	11	3
Calculating t tests	2	6	2	2	1
Calculating Chi-square tests	4	4	3	7	2
Using ANOVA	9	4	3	2	1
Using regression analysis	13	3	1	1	0
Single-subject design	4	8	6	1	1
Using multivariate analysis techniques	12	4	2	2	0
Advanced experimental design	16	2	1	-	0
Conducting a literature review	-	4	6	8	2
Use of statistical computer software packages	3	9	2	2	1
Use of qualitative computer software packages	6	7	4	1	1
Qualitative research/data analysis	-	5	6	8	2
Research ethics	-	1	5	13	3
Philosophical underpinnings of social research	1	2	5	11	3
Program evaluation	-	8	6	5	2
Direct practice research and evaluation	-	4	8	7	2
Assessment of research articles/studies	3	2	6	8	2
Feminist research	5	5	4	3	1
Research and postmodernism	10	5	3	-	0
The politics of conducting research	1	5	6	6	2

Scale: 0 = not taught; 1 = taught for recognition or awareness only; 2 = taught for comprehension or understanding in detail; 3 = taught for skill or the ability to apply in practice

Note. The highest number of schools for any one content area will total 19 as one school was excluded as their teaching of research was not taking place within a specific subject. Despite this, not all rows total 19 as not every school scored every item. Unless an item was given a number by a school, it was not scored.

The scores for each of the 26 content areas are displayed in Table 1, along with the median score for each area. Based on these results, the following topics appear to be well canvassed, in that at least 11 of the 19 schools that responded to this question on content areas in their questionnaire supplied a category 3 response (taught for application in practice):

1) defining research problems (17 schools)
2) drafting research questions (14)
3) designing a data collection instrument (11)
4) writing a research report (11)
5) calculating means, medians, modes (11)
6) the explication of the philosophical underpinnings of social research (11)
7) research ethics (13)

Note that of these content areas, the top four were in the basic research methods dimension of Fraser and Lewis, the next one was covered under their basic statistics dimension and the final two were included in the survey questionnaire by the authors.

The methodological tasks of the use of standardised instruments, the assessment of validity and reliability and the specifics of research design were not as well covered as the above areas. The politics of conducting research was addressed in virtually all courses.

A concentration on quantitative research methodology was not apparent overall, with only two schools teaching advanced statistics at an application level and neither of these schools taught advanced experimental design. Three schools taught advanced experimental design, but only at the minimal 1-2 level. All schools taught qualitative research/analysis, with 14 of them teaching it at a comprehension -application level. Most schools seemed to strive for a balance of quantitative and qualitative methods, but none could be accused of having an overwhelmingly qualitative bias. With the exception of calculating measures of central tendency (11 schools rated this area at an application level) and chi square test calculation (seven schools rated it at an application level with a median of two), it could be considered that the basic statistics content areas were covered relatively poorly overall with median ratings of 0-1 for t-test calculation, use of ANOVA and regression analysis.

Advanced statistics were either not taught at all by the majority (12) or were taught for comprehension rather than application for practice, with only two respondent schools covering them at the recognition-application level. Thirteen schools introduced students to the use of a statistical computer software package and the same number to a qualitative computer software package at the level of recognition-comprehension about their use rather than applying this knowledge to practice settings. Just under half of the schools (nine) taught both to their students.

All 19 schools taught students about program evaluation with eight schools teaching this at the application level. Feminist research was included in most curricula (12 schools), but tended to be taught recognition and comprehension rather than application.. Postmodern research was relatively poorly represented, with eight schools teaching it at any level. Whilst only eight schools specifically referred to the critique of social work research in their subject aims, the content areas covered by the various courses show that 16 schools covered the assessment of social work research, with a median rating of two overall.

As stated previously, Fraser and Lewis (1993) identified four differing approaches to the teaching of research in US schools: 1) the 'de rigeuer' approach); 2) the single-subject plus approach; 3) the traditionalist approach and 4) the minimalist approach). In analysing the results of the present study, the criteria developed by Fraser and Lewis for inclusion of schools under their various approaches were utilised. The different approaches and their frequencies are listed below:

1) 'De Rigeuer' approach - schools that adopt this approach provide vigorous training across all of the research content dimensions. Schools with this approach will mainly score 3s (application level), except for the advanced statistics dimension where they are likely have 1-2s (recognition-comprehension). Two Australian schools were judged to have adopted this approach with scores of 66 and 56 respectively. (It should be noted that both of these schools scored themselves at an application level (3) on qualitative research, and one of each of them scored three for the politics of research and the use of a qualitative computer software package.)

2) Single-Subject Plus approach - one school was characterised as adopting this approach as it scored an application level score on the single-subject design area and moderate to low scores on basic statistics and advanced research design.

3) Traditionalist approach - in these schools there is an emphasis on teaching basic research methods with modest attention to basic statistics. There is minimal exposure to single-subject and advanced research design and statistics. Based on this criteria, eight Australian schools were judged to be in this category with scores ranging from 42 to 53. (Again it should be noted that two of these eight schools taught qualitative research at an application level.)

4) Minimalist approach - five Australian schools were placed in this category as basic research methods were taught at a moderate level (scores of 1-2 on areas) and they provided minimal exposure to basic statistics and single-subject designs. There was no exposure to advanced statistics. These schools scores ranged from 27-40.

In addition to these four approaches, there was found to be a fifth approach amongst Australian schools which could be characterised as *Traditional/Progressive approach*. Whilst this may appear to be a contradiction in terms, the three schools who were included in this category clearly met the criteria for being included in the traditionalist approach (in that they taught basic research methods for application with modest

attention to basic statistics, but minimal attention to single-subject and advanced research design and statistics) and had scores of 51, 52 and 53 respectively. But at the same time, they taught three areas (qualitative research, feminist research and the politics of research) for application which would lie outside the confines of a traditionalist approach as postulated by Fraser and Lewis (1993).

Subjects were taught in the majority by a mixture of lectures, tutorials and seminars and computer laboratory sessions. Five courses used guest speakers; two required students to undertake a piece of group research. Overwhelmingly, students were required to prepare a research proposal as the assessment for the research subject. This assessment may have taken different forms; however the main aim was for students to be able to prepare a proposal. Five courses required students to complete other assessment tasks. One required the development of a research instrument and the completion of an actual piece of research. Another required students to complete a computer assignment as well as developing a research proposal, whilst another required analysis of a research article. Another two had a combination of assignments and examinations.

In two-thirds of the respondent schools, only one staff member was responsible for coordinating and teaching the research subject, although others may have been involved. One school which taught research across the four years of the BSW involved seven members of staff. Most schools' staff (16) teaching the research subject in the BSW course had qualifications recognised by the AASW. In the four other schools, the subject was taught by those with psychology and sociology backgrounds.

Fifteen of the respondent schools granted exemptions to students where they could demonstrate they have completed another tertiary course with complementary subject content. The number of exemptions granted varied widely across the schools. One school reported 45% of students apply for exemptions. However, generally the numbers exempted ranged from between 10% of the enrolled students to a handful of students.

In nine schools, more than one social work subject with a research component was offered. These were subjects such as computing skills, evaluation, community work, and social planning, as well as an additional research subject.

The majority of courses (13 respondent schools) did not require students to undertake research in the field as part of their research subject requirements, with only three making this compulsory. However, eight schools reported that, whilst it was not required, students often undertake a research project as part of one of their placements.

The integration of the research subject into the BSW course varied across the schools. Eleven schools reported that there was good to excellent integration of the subject into the BSW course, three reported little integration and four regarded the integration as poor.

Generally schools were confident their subjects offered students an adequate introduction to research to students. They reported that the integration of research into social work

theory and practice in the field was an area they would like to improve. The costs incurred in teaching the unit were a restraint on this subject development. Nearly all respondent schools referred to problems experienced in the development of the research subject. These include: 1) the great variability of student knowledge about research and about computers and 2) what two respondents refer to as 'quantitative phobia'. 3) Time and resource consumption are also noted as is 4) the challenge to base the subject content on social work research. One respondent also commented on staff division over the type of research which was taught in the subject as a problem in subject development.

Specific gaps in the teaching of the research subject were identified as the need for more time and resources to offer a broader research subject. Three of the schools which offered a one semester subject would have preferred a two semester curriculum. One school noted the need for more computer teaching in the subject. Another noted the need for exposure to more qualitative material.

Decisions about subject content were generally decided by the lecturer and by staff consultation, with oversight from a school or faculty committee. Three schools referred to the role of a curriculum committee in this decision making. One school noted that student evaluation informed decisions about curriculum content. One school also referred to practitioners in the field about the research subject course content.

The texts used in the teaching of research also varied widely. There still tended to be a reliance on texts from the USA and to a lesser extent on the UK. There were a number of Australian texts used (eg. Sarantakos, Bouma, Kellehear, Francis and Wadsworth), but usually they were not social work-specific texts and tended to be in the minority on reading lists.

Discussion

Research curricula in Australian Bachelor of Social Work courses did vary. Whilst widespread diversity was not evident, there was variation across schools. Like Fraser and Lewis (1993) in the US, there were found to be proponents to their four different approaches to research curricula: the 'de rigeuer' approach; the single-subject plus approach; the traditionalist approach and the minimalist approach. Whilst the 'de-rigeuer'and single-subject plus approach had relatively few adherents (with just two and one respectively), the minimalist (five schools) and the traditionalist (seven schools) had more adherents. It was also found that there was a fifth approach in Australian schools, which was labelled traditionalist/progressive with three adherents. These three schools adopted a traditionalist view of teaching social work research, yet taught qualitative research, feminist methods and the politics of research.

It would appear from these results that the 'de-rigeuer' and single-subject plus approaches have little support as approaches to teaching social work research in Australian schools, with the minimalist and traditionalist approaches having a much firmer foothold.

Whilst there was found to be at least some adherence to each of Fraser and Lewis's (1993) four approaches, the findings indicated that there was far greater diversity beyond these four approaches in Australian schools than in US ones. For example, all Australian schools taught qualitative research with nearly half at an application level. There was no coverage at all of qualitative methods indicated in Fraser and Lewis's survey. This may be simply indicative of the burgeoning of interest in qualitative research in social work circles since Fraser and his colleagues conducted their survey 11 years ago (in 1987). Since then, there has been the publication of books like Sherman and Reid (1994), Reissman (1994) and Fook (1996), which canvass and advocate for the adoption of qualitative, reflective approaches in social work research.

The less hidebound adoption of a purely quantitative approach to social work research in Australia has no doubt been aided by the more flexible and open-ended AASW guidelines on teaching research in social work compared to the US CSWE guidelines. Even the more specific Competency Standards (1994) are more open-ended, refusing to specify that particular approaches be taught (eg. it specifies that a beginning practitioner be able to '...analyse qualitative and quantitative information' (p.21)).

Fraser and Lewis (1993) concluded, amongst other things, that:

> Based on our findings, there appears to be a common base of knowledge that characterizes social work research training in many schools. But this common base is rudimentary, characteristic of introductory research course work in undergraduate programs in nursing, psychology, and sociology. On balance, the faculties of schools with Minimalist and, to a lesser degree, Traditionalist curricula do not appear to be involved in rigorous research training for practice (p.87).

The authors would echo the sentiments in this quote in relation to the present study word for word. As can be seen in the findings, the content areas that the majority of schools taught at application level were all topics that would be taught in undergraduate social sciences research courses. The pressure on schools to equip students with basic research knowledge and skills was evident in the respondents' comments. The emphasis is on recognition and comprehension rather than application. The majority of schools acknowledged this in their comments about the lack of time to do this, which did seem to be less of an issue in the four-year BSW courses.

There does not seem to be agreement as to what constitutes an adequate level of research knowledge and skills for practice, but there is agreement amongst those who teach research on the subject areas that are important to teach and that an appropriate assessment is undertaking a research proposal. But at the same time, there were moves to go beyond the basics as illustrated by the coverage of both quantitative and qualitative methods, as well as postmodernism and feminist research and their application to social work practice which appears to have just begun to happen.

Overall there appears to be an emphasis on doing research rather than critiquing it, despite the AASW's requirements for the latter. This is reflected in the aims of the units, the topics covered and the forms of assessment (most often the completion of research proposal) they adopt. But, at the same time, eight schools taught the assessment and critiquing of research at an application level.

It is encouraging to see that in the majority of schools these research subjects are all taught by staff with social work qualifications recognised by the AASW. It was common for these staff to have PhDs in social work. In only four schools were these subjects taught by those from other disciplines. Locally written textbooks would assist considerably in 'Australianising' social work research (Brown 1988) and by the end of 1998 there will be two such books written by Australian social work academics (Kumar 1996; Alston and Bowles 1998).

There is a sense that research is a two-part process ie., basic research knowledge and skills and then how this is operationalised in practice. This point does raise the whole question of what is unique about social work research. McDermott (1996) has attempted to provide us with some answers on this point.

The immense variability in students' competence and preparatory knowledge in relation to research poses real problems and often harks back to student reluctance and fears about research in general and statistics in particular (Epstein 1987; Taylor 1990; Wainstock 1994).

In relation to decisions about subject content, this often comes down to a single person which does raise the issue of accountability and the capacity of one person to embrace the breadth of social work research. Obviously, individual educators will couch the teaching of their subjects in terms of their own areas of competence, priorities and biases.

It is pleasing to note that there tends to be at least a basic coverage of both quantitative and qualitative skills plus professional issues such as ethics and the political realities of research. There is also an attempt to acknowledge the reality of practice eg. by teaching program evaluation and direct practice research.

Whilst there is coverage of both quantitative and qualitative skills, in a small number of schools there is a preponderance of quantitative skills taught and, in virtually all schools, it seems that there is relatively less attention given to imparting qualitative skills and knowledge, particularly when it comes to postmodernist research.

The AASW in its Competency Standards document (1994) states that entry-level social workers should have competence in both quantitative and qualitative skills. The document also states social workers should to conduct research and critically assess it. Are all these demands realistic? No, not if graduates are expected to have highly developed skills on graduation. If they are to be given exposure to a range of approaches and knowledge areas, they can only be expected to have relatively basic knowledge and skills.

Students need to be exposed to key debates around social work research which has most clearly been embodied in the Australian context by the two sharply contrasting addresses by James Barber and Jan Fook at the 1995 AASW Conference in Launceston. Barber (1996) advocated strongly for the use of the scientific method in social work research, and Fook proposed a more reflective, feminist, qualitative-oriented approach to research. (Both of these positions, under the titles of evidence-based and emancipatory evaluation were contrasted and discussed in a recent paper by Shaw (1997). He proposed a greater attempt at synthesis of the two positions.) Clearly, such debates illustrate how contentious and highly contested the whole area of social work research approaches is. This is most vividly illustrated in published form by Hudson and Nurius's 1994 book *Controversial Issues in Social Work Research.*

One point that all these various contestants would agree on is that research is important for social work and that it should guide and inform practice. This is the core goal; one that there is consensus on from all parties - both the profession and educators. The difficulty is agreeing on the means of reaching that goal.

Beyond that, there are a number of challenges that face Australian social work educators who teach research. First, there needs to be a re-examination of expectations with regard to social work research content and clearer specification of what skills and knowledge needs to be taught in all Australian schools of social work. This applies particularly in relation to statistics where there is a lack of agreement. (The only consensus amongst schools was that for application to practice the calculation of measures of central tendency should be taught. Beyond that there was virtually no agreement.)

Second, the next challenge is to respond to the question: how can the research input taught in schools of social work be made relevant and useful to practitioners and future practitioners so that they will utilise and engage in it? As Fraser and Lewis (1993) recommended, there needs to be '...teaching techniques, practicum-based research projects, and courseload articulated to strengthen the development of skills-focused research curricula' (pp.87-88). The other specific development that could take place is the integration of research, practice and practicum/field education by teaching 'practice-focused' research in practice classes (Richey, Blythe and Berlin 1987).

The Victorian branch of the AASW through its Practice Research Special Interest Group has conducted workshops on practice research with the goal of getting practitioners to engage in their own small scale research projects. The lesson from these workshops is that practitioners are interested in research, want to do it and will do it if they are provided with the opportunity and appropriate, relevant educational input to enable them to do so. It is up to those teaching in schools of social work to imbue their students with the same enthusiasm through interesting, challenging research curricula delivered within a realistic time frame.

In conclusion, whilst there was certainly diversity across the schools, yet there are also similarities as well. It is healthy to have diversity as it is a '...reflection of regional

differences in the nature of practice and philosophical differences in practice theory' (Fraser and Lewis, 1993 p.86). Yet there are many commonalities and similarities; more so than we had anticipated. The development of a common core of knowledge should be developed from this and one that is directly linked to social work practice. Once this has been done, there remains the great challenge for social work educators teaching research - how to make it relevant to practice so that future practitioners and practitioners will utilise it.

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Field Education in a Market-Place World

Lis Starbuck and Ronnie Egan

Introduction

Field education operates as a key component of Australian social work courses yet support for it is marked by considerable ambivalence. The origins of this paper lie in an internal review of the first four years of the field education program within the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) course at Victoria University of Technology (VUT), Melbourne (Starbuck and Egan 1995). Exploration of the themes generated by the review challenged us to delve beyond this individual program to explore contemporary issues for field education, particularly those arising from the impacts of economic rationalist policies.

Ambivalence in Social Work for Field Education

Nearly 20 years ago, on examining social work field education in Australia, Healy (1980) argued that the profession's continuing commitment to field education constituted retention of a form of professional training based on apprenticeship models which was no longer necessary within university, academic-based education. Although field education (field placements, field practicum) has continued as a key component for accreditation of social work degrees in Australia (AASW 1990), doubts about its role in BSW courses have continued.

Following a survey of Australian agency field educators, Slocombe (1993) recognised significant diversity in commitments to field education amongst agencies and universities causing her to ask the question, 'If field education is so vital why isn't everyone doing it?' An examination of social work and social welfare courses across Australia led Fook (1994) to conclude that 'the argument that our practice does not match our rhetoric is born out glaringly' (p.10) in that field education is marginal in many university curricula, the status of field education staff is relatively low and, compared to other areas, production of literature and research about field education is minimal.

In contrast, other research has judged field education to be both a significant and widespread component of professional social work education (Sarri 1989; Goldstein 1993; Beddoe and Worrall 1996). In an international review of social work field instruction Raskin, Skolnik and Wayne (1991) concluded that '(t)he universality of field instruction as an integral part of educational programs (of social work) is apparent.' (p.258).

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Organisational Constraints

Compounding this educational ambivalence were the impacts on human services of Victoria undergoing the turmoil of a newly elected neo-conservative government in 1992 and encroaching market-place technologies, such as multiple organisational re-structures, unit-costing, outsourcing of organisational functions and privatisation of public utilities and services.

The impacts of fiscal, political and managerial reforms have exacerbated existing and long-standing shortages of placements and increased competition between schools of social work for agency resources. Across the state of Victoria, offers of placements from many agencies were considerably reduced as their own managements responded to funding threats and service agreements which required paring of organisations down to their perceived core functions'. In many agencies, reductions or loss of social work placements became the price of management and ideological techniques such as unit-costings, case-mix funding, tangible service outcomes and contracting of services.

In university settings, too, economic rationalism has a telling impact. Field education is a labour-intensive, high cost activity. At VUT, for example, negotiation and establishment of each placement is estimated to require, on average, nine hours of staff time (in addition to costs associated with liaison and assessment during the course of the placement). As such, and given the contradictory commitments within social work education, field education programs are visible targets for cost containment measures. Several schools of social work have responded to the tightening of placement opportunities and parallel cuts to university budgets by reducing the variety of field education requirements and opportunities for students, along with reductions in liaison and support activities.

It was in the above context, of educational, organisational and fiscal challenges, that the review of the field education program at VUT was undertaken.

Review of One Field Education Program

The review was undertaken after the initial four years of the BSW course at VUT to inform ongoing development of its field education program.

This course was established in response to long-standing lobbying by agencies and residents of the western metropolitan region of Melbourne. That pressure reflected ongoing difficulties in recruiting social workers who understood, and were committed to addressing, the issues of social justice and social change in the diverse and often disadvantaged communities of the region. Consequently, the field education program is part of a BSW course which is shaped not only by professional accreditation requirements, but also by major commitments to strengthening local communities and to enhancing practice which is based on critical and structural analyses of issues. It is predicated on the concept of reciprocity between the BSW program and its supporting local communities.

The review examined perceptions about the strengths and weaknesses of the BSW program in terms of preparing students for field education placements, and in terms of identifying links between field education and preparation for professional practice. All people who had been involved with the field education program in its first four years - past and current students, agency field educators and university staff - were invited to comment on effectiveness and operation of the program.

The review was a means of reflecting on and further developing this program. Whilst the response rate of 18% (of 293 participants) did not allow for statistically significant analysis, the consistency across comments did provide two valuable themes. One affirms past research on field education as an important process in developing social work skills and knowledge. The second has been much less explored. This theme focuses on field education in a market-place context.

Field education as a process of developing social work practice for students

Responses of students and educators (from agencies and from the university) in this review were consistent with concepts of acquiring professional knowledge and complex skills which hold that development of consolidated professional knowledge and competence requires a variety of experiences interconnected with reflection and formal cognitive learning (Schon 1983; Kolb 1984).

Some field educators highlighted the importance of field education as a way of students adapting to the realities of practice '(the) field education program provides them with the opportunities to 'do some reality testing' (field educator). Such realities were described as encompassing agency conditions (pressures, constraints and tensions) as well as client situations. They extended such learning to the subtle and elusive skills of working with competing priorities and deadlines, and of learning to respond to unpredicted demands and to client situations that are not immediately resolvable. They also nominated student experience of the operational culture of professional practice and of agency dynamics as further dimensions in the importance of placements as a learning vehicle. As one field educator stated, '(the) field education program introduces students to the work culture, often for the first time.'

For students, the acknowledgment and affirmation of their own development, values and skills through placement experiences was also important. They listed elements such as enhanced professional confidence as they apply their skills, overcoming their sense of powerlessness and developing strategies for dealing with real problems, issues and dynamics. Placement experiences were perceived as time for 'realising my confidence and ability' (student).

This theme reinforces the critical importance of field education as a key link between learning within the academic institution and in the field. Students and field educators emphasised that field placements required integration of class-based learning within practice as experienced. As one student stated 'practice often clarifies theory for students.' Students acknowledged and affirmed this integration with the development of individual

understandings of their own values and skills that enhanced their professional practice and enabled them to critically appraise formal theories.

Field education in a 'market-place' context

Economic rationalism and managerialism can be viewed as parallel ideologies, sharing an acceptance of objectively measured performance as the dominant indicator of success (Hughes 1994; Rees and Rodley 1995; Dominelli and Hoogveldt 1996). Their basic assumption *is* 'the main route to social progress lies through the achievement of continuing increases in economically defined productivity.' (Pollitt 1993, p.8).

Market-place technologies of economic rationalism now dominate contemporary management and practice of most of our human service organisations (Jones and May 1992; Hughes 1994; Alford and O'Neill 1995). These are often construed as obstacles for field education in that many agencies have limited their offers of placements, perceiving supervision of students as lying well outside their recognised core functions. 'Outputs' of student placements are not seen to be readily or simply measured; nor are placements 'cost-effective'.

Nevertheless, responses from students and from field educators within this review suggest field education can be reframed within the dynamics of the 'the market place'. Placements have the potential to offer marketable attributes in addition to their educational value. They can be viewed as channels of employment and staff recruitment, as sources of benefits to agencies and as avenues of benefits to agencies.

- *Placements as channels of employment and staff recruitment*

  Potential employment was referred to by students and field educators as an anticipated outcome of field education either through students' development of networks amongst relevant agencies or from direct offers of employment from their placement agencies:

  > The community services network is relatively small in (the region) and students who come recommended by their placement agency and/or can access networks developed through their placement experience, have a significant employment advantage (field educator).

  Field educators extended their comments by noting that students from this university are 'more employable because of these types of placements'.

  From the other side of the potential employment relationship, students noted that placements provide opportunities for them to experience different organisations: "The program gave me an awareness of what areas that I may want to or not to pursue in future employment' (student). Aspects of this view included student experience of particular agencies, a variety of practice experiences and insight into specific areas of social work (eg. policy making and organisational dynamics).

- *Benefits of placements to agencies*

  Competent completion of needed projects was listed by some field educators as a significant contribution by students, eg. the student 'enabled us to carry out a...project that had been on the back burner for some time ' (field educator). Thus the availability of student resources (time, knowledge and skills) contributed to agencies fulfilling responsibilities that otherwise might have remained uncompleted.

- *Enhanced practice in agencies*

  Field educators indicated benefits for themselves also. They designated supervision of students as a source of contemporary professional knowledge. Student placements required them to review and develop their own understandings of their theory and their practice, and also exposed them to current debates and research. One field educator put it as '...keeping in touch with developing methods of practice'.

  Other aspects of their practice listed by field educators included opportunities to enhance their supervision skills and to strengthen their networks through participating in workshops associated with the field education program.

  Briefly put, experiences of students and field educators reflected in this review indicate that field placements can be re-framed within market-place constructions as:

  - demonstrating explicit outcomes for agencies in terms of enhanced supervision skills and contemporary knowledge for agency staff;
  - operating as a channel for linking organisations with one form of required resources - competent practitioners;
  - providing a process by which resources are exchanged - experience, knowledge and legitimacy in return for completion of some of the organisation's functions; and
  - acting as a quality assurance mechanism through preliminary gauging of skills and values by organisations of potential employees and, reciprocally, by students of potential employers.

Implications of Re-Framing Field Education to Market-Place Dynamics

Such re-framing offers some arguments for agencies to continue their participation in field education at a time when they and governments are focusing on 'value-for dollar' and provision of sharply-defined, 'core-services only. But such re-framing is preliminary and requires close examination. What might be the implications of this market-driven emphasis for social work as a profession committed to social justice and equity, and its associated educational programs?

Examination of market-place ideology raises initial warning signs. From its valuing of competition, segmenting of people's experiences and reducing public responsibility for services (Meutzelfeldt 1994; Scott 1997; Davis 1997) market discourse has been presented as a derivative of classic liberalism and public choice theory. In turn, these are predicated on a social theory in which individuals are perceived to be born flawed and in which social and economic progress is driven only by the operation of individual self-interest (Marginson 1992; Leach 1993; Mills 1996). Significant assumptions of this paradigm are that:

- individual freedom (defined in terms of the absence of coercion) is synonymous with economic growth and the progress of civilisation;
- society and notions of common good beyond individual self-interest are an illusion;
- inequity is natural, desirable and necessary to productivity and evolutionary progress (a form of economic and social Darwinism) (Marginson 1992).

In contrast to these are the assumptions on which much social work is predicated, that:

- people are valued as whole individuals who have rights to be protected and to be participants,
- services are interactions which offer many subtle and diverse outcomes,
- communities and the state carry some responsibility for disadvantaged and marginalised people. (see, for example, Howe 1987; Coulshed 1991; AASW 1993; O'Connor, Wilson and Setterlund 1995)

Processes of tendering and funding add a further dimension to ways in which social work practice might be re-configured by market dynamics. There is a danger that the ongoing survival of agencies becomes dependent on meeting numerical outputs as specified in their service contracts. Consequently, they come to define their services only in terms of those outputs, such as numbers of employment placements, of counselling sessions or families supported and discharged in a given period (Hough 1995). This emphasis without critical reflection, may convey to students that '(the) social work task is moved away from relationship building and focused on the discrete delivery of specified highly technocratised skills' (Dominelli 1997, p.172). In this context, analyses of structural dynamics of exclusion and marginalisation of people, or action that challenges the status quo, becomes superfluous to measures of sound practice. What happens then to integration of services, advocacy and anti-discriminatory practice?

Thus, students are likely to be entering political and workplace environments which increasingly operate from ideologies that are inconsistent with social work objectives of social justice, equity and social change (Parton 1994; Novak 1996; Dominelli 1996). Unless prepared with critical understandings and vision (in addition to skills and knowledge) for locating themselves as potential agents for social change, students may become bound by the lowest common denominators of contracted and segmented technical competencies.

In such a context, multiple and structured field education experiences become even more significant educational formats by which students prepare for reflective and critical practice which can deal with the inherent contradictions and tensions of human services:

> one learns, not through accumulating tested propositions about the objective world, but through participation in social practices, by assuming social roles, by becoming familiar with exemplary narratives and typical characters who illustrate a variety of patterns of behaviour. One does not feel like an autonomous subject learning facts about an objective world out there. One becomes what one knows. (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler and Tipton 1991, p.158, quoted in Goldstein 1993, p.173)

Conclusion

The rise of economic rationalism and market dynamics for human services has contributed to the re-emergence in many agencies and universities of earlier debates about the role and format of field education in Australia. Insights from this review of one field education program support arguments for the maintenance of field education, despite the considerable pressures on agencies and universities to curtail it.

Not only is field education seen to continue as a significant process by which students develop skills and knowledge for complex professional practice, comments of participants in this review indicate to the authors that some benefits of the program could be re-framed within the paradigm of the market-place. In so doing they recognise that it may be possible to address the reluctance of some agencies to provide placements. But they also suggest that such re-framing threatens the framework of social justice and social change which underpins social work practice. Such threats heighten the importance of field education programs that are integrated within critical frameworks and which have the capacity to prepare students more fully and realistically to critique the values and tensions embodied in market-place practice.

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Teaching Family Work – Integrating Teaching, Practice and Evaluation

Chris Trotter

Introduction

A number of studies have suggested that social workers and students have difficulty making links between theory, research and practice (Carew 1979; Ryan, Fook and Hawkins 1995). It is suggested that social workers often do not consciously use theory or research in their practice. It has been suggested also that often social workers find their courses inadequate preparation for social work practice (O'Connor and Dalgleish 1986). A lot has been written about the gap between the teaching of direct practice skills in universities and the application of those skills in the field (Barbour 1984; Kirk 1990; Graziano, Caroff and Mailick 1993).

This article reports on an attempt to develop a teaching strategy which makes direct links between social work teaching, practice and evaluation. The project involved teaching a family work practice model to a group of final year social work students. Those students then applied the model in a series of family counselling sessions with families in a local family work agency. Data was then collected from the students and the families in order to evaluate the effectiveness of their intervention.

The project had several objectives. It aimed to provide a practice experience for students which provided for the direct use of a specific intervention model, family problem solving. It aimed to consider the extent to which students were able to learn the model in seven two-hour classes over one semester. It aimed to consider how effective the family counselling interventions were, both from the point of view of the students and the family members involved. The project aimed to answer the question – can relatively inexperienced students develop sufficient skills, in one semester's teaching, in the use of a specific family counselling model in order to conduct a series of family counselling sessions with real clients, and how successful is that counselling likely to be?

The answer to this question is likely to be of particular interest to lecturers in social work and welfare studies departments who teach family work and other skill-based subjects. It is also likely to be of interest to employers who employ new graduates in positions where they may be asked to undertake family counselling.

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The Model - Family Problem-Solving

Family problem-solving models have been developed by a number of writers (Epstein and Bishop 1981; Forgatch and Patterson 1989; Reid 1985; 1992). There is, however, a plethora of alternative models for work with families. Horne and Passmore, in their book on family counselling and therapy (1991) refer to seventeen different approaches. Family problem solving was chosen for this project for a number of reasons.

Why Family Problem Solving?

Family problem solving was chosen, first and foremost, because it is consistent with the general principles of effective casework practice. A wide range of studies with a wide range of different client groups have suggested that effective casework is characterised by certain factors. These include: open clarification of and discussion of the worker's role, clear identification and definition of problems in client's terms, the setting of goals which are specific and modest, mutual development of strategies to achieve goals, the use of contracts, a focus on the environment and a willingness to view client issues in contextual terms, and the appropriate use of the relationship. (For examples of reviews of casework effectiveness see Wood 1978; Edmund 1990; Reid 1992; Rooney 1992; Shulman 1991; Ivanoff, Blythe and Tripodi 1994. For details of these approaches see a number of social work texts such as O'Connor, Wilson and Thomas 1991; Compton and Galaway 1995; Trotter 1999.) The family problem-solving model which was presented to students, and which is outlined below, incorporates each of the approaches which the research suggests are related to effective outcomes.

Family problem solving, as an approach which integrates these effective practice principles, has considerable research support for its effectiveness. It has been used and tested in work with a range of clients in settings including child protection, juvenile justice, mental health and youth work (Reid 1985; 1992). Reid argues that Family Problem Solving has been developed and tested in welfare settings, by social workers, for use with social work clients (1985; 1992). The research support for family problem solving presents a contrast to the lack of such support for many family therapy approaches (Wynne 1988; Horne and Passmore 1991).

Nevertheless, problem-solving models are not without their critics. In fact, some have suggested that they are negative, labelling and carry overtones of guilt (Locke et al. 1988). However, given the arguments presented above, I would argue that this model is appropriate for teaching in a social work course.

The Family Problem-Solving Model

The model, as it was presented to the students, involves eight steps. These were taken, in large part, from Reid's (1985; 1992) work on Family Problem Solving, although some adaptations have been made to the model on the basis on my own research on the use of

problem solving methods and on the basis of the research material about 'what works' (Trotter 1999).

The steps in the model involve:

- ***Problem survey***
  The family members are each asked to describe issues of concern to them or things about themselves, or the family, they would like to change. The worker then lists the problems of each family member, as well as problems common to all family members, on a whiteboard or in a file.

- ***Problem ranking***
  The next stage of the process involves attempting to reach agreement with the client as to which problems are to be worked on in the short and longer terms – sometimes referred to as problem ranking.

- ***Problem exploration***
  The next stage involves a detailed exploration of the problem with the family. What is the history of the problem? When does it occur? How did it begin? What has the family done to address the problem previously? Have these things helped or hindered? What is the client getting out of it? Are there occasions when the problem is not present?

- ***Goal setting***
  Clear and specific goals which are agreed on by the worker and the clients, and are directly related to the problems, are then spelled out.

- ***Contract***
  The worker and the family then develop a contract which contains an agreement between the family members about the problems to be addressed, goals to be pursued and conditions of the agreement.

- ***Strategies/tasks***
  Strategies or tasks are then developed by the worker and family members to address the goals. Examples of tasks include: roleplay, helping family members to acknowledge what other family members are saying, brainstorming solutions, expressing problems in a non-blaming way, spending specified time together, etcetera.

- ***Ongoing review***
  The final step in the problem solving process relates to ongoing review which recognises that it is necessary to continually review progress through the stages in the problem solving process. Whilst the steps are straightforward, it is necessary to use the structure flexibly.

- ***Clarification of role***
  In addition to working through these steps, the workers were also asked to discuss the role of the family counsellor in some detail, both at the beginning of the intervention and as the counselling sessions progressed. This includes discussions about the worker's authority and method of working. As mentioned above, students were also asked to encourage positive and pro-social comments and actions by family members.

Methodology

Teaching the model

Family work was offered as an option for final year students in the Monash University Bachelor of Social Work program. Students were invited to undertake the family work option over two semesters. In the first semester (two hour seminars for seven weeks), the students were taught the model. Maximum use was made of roleplays and class presentations. The main text used was Reid's *Family Problem Solving* (1985).

In semester two, students worked with families for periods of between six and 12 weeks. During this period, a weekly supervision session was held at the university for all students. An agency representative, an experienced social worker, also attended these sessions.

These sessions provided an opportunity to discuss what students were doing with the families and what they would do next. In addition, they provided an opportunity to address some of the value and power-based issues which arose as students worked with the families. For example: to what extent should the worker challenge a dominating father on the basis of his/her (the worker's) own values; to what extent should the worker encourage family members to work on issues which the worker sees as priority; what is the point of dealing with family related issues with families experiencing chronic poverty and disadvantage, etc.

The students

This was an optional subject for students and classes were limited to 12 students in each year (the option was offered on two occasions). In all, 24 students participated in the project. More students applied to undertake the option than there were places available and the students were subsequently selected for the option in a random manner. The students represented the usual range of final-year social work students with ages ranging from 21 to 60 years. More than half the students were young (under 23 years) and did not have professional work experience in the welfare field. All students in the option were female.

The agency

The Atherton Family Centre is a relatively small agency (about ten staff) which provides a number of services to families, including family counselling. It is auspiced by the Anglican Church. Referrals come from a variety of sources including child protection, corrections, schools, welfare agencies and self-referrals. For the most part, referrals are voluntary. In a proportion of cases, clients were referred by child protection or corrections and in those instances, clients may have faced negative consequences if they failed to complete a certain number of counselling sessions. In other words, they were involuntary clients.

Procedure

After completion of the semester one classes, students were asked to select a co-worker from the student group. This process was left to students with students generally choosing to work with students of similar age to themselves.

Atherton Family Centre staff then asked the next family who presented at the agency if they were agreeable to being supervised by social work students. In most cases the families were agreeable, although in a proportion of instances (less than 25%), families expressed a preference for a full-time family worker. Families were screened out in a small number of instances in Atherton Family Centre staff felt that the family should be seen by an experienced worker because of the complexity of the presenting problems. Again, this happened infrequently.

The students then conducted between four and 12 family counselling sessions with the family groups. In all, 13 families were referred. One family withdrew after one session and the students were allocated another family. Each of the other families completed at least four sessions. In each instance, there was more than one family member involved in the counselling sessions. On some occasions, there were as many as five family members present.

At the beginning of the sessions, consistent with ethics committee requirements, informed consent to participate in the project was sought. All families agreed. At the conclusion of the sessions, families completed an evaluation questionnaire with the students.

The families

Whilst the families involved were, to some extent, screened, they did present with a complex array of problems. These included predominantly relationship problems between family members. One young offender and his family were referred by the local juvenile justice centre because of relationship problems. Two families were referred by the local child protection service because it was felt that the protection issues related to family interaction patterns. The remaining families were self-referred and presented with a variety of problems, mostly children's behaviour problems including throwing tantrums,

stealing, fighting, running away from home and so on. One couple presented with marital problems. One family was subsequently referred to child protection because of information which was revealed about a sexual assault perpetrated by a father on one of his children.

Results

The families

At the conclusion of the counselling sessions, the students completed a questionnaire with the family members. In most instances, family members who participated in the counselling sessions, jointly scored the questionnaire. In three instances, different family members chose to score the questionnaires separately.

Fourteen questionnaires were completed by 11 families. One family did not present for the final interview and did not, therefore, complete the questionnaire.

Families were asked a number of questions relating to their views about how they found the family counselling intervention. These questions were adapted from unpublished questionnaires developed by William Reid in evaluative work done on the model undertaken in the United States. The responses from the 14 family members are outlined below.

Table 1:

Consider the one problem you most wanted the counsellor to help you with. How is this problem now compared with how it was when you started treatment here?

It is no longer present	1	(7%)
It is a lot better	11	(79%)
It is a little better	2	(14%)
It is about the same	-	
It is worse	-	

Table 2:

On the whole, how are you getting along now compared to when you first began treatment here?

Much better	11	(79%)
A little better	1	(7%)
About the same	2	(14%)
Worse	-	

Table 3:

On the whole, how would you rate the helpfulness of the service?

I could not have got along without it	3	(21%)
I was considerably benefited	10	(72%)
I was slightly benefited	1	(7%)
I was neither helped nor harmed	-	
I would have been better off without it	-	

Families were also asked a number of questions about which aspects of the intervention they found most helpful. They indicated strongest support for 'the counsellor's attempts to help us concentrate on specific problems or goals for us to work on'.

Short-term interventions, such as family problem solving, are sometimes criticised for being too brief. The majority of families in the project did not find this with ten (71%) saying that it lasted about the right length of time, three finding it a little too brief and only one family member saying 'it was far too brief'.

The students' views about effectiveness

Students were also asked to comment on whether they felt the families with whom they worked were helped by the intervention. The questionnaires were distributed after the completion of the project and of the 24 students involved in the project, 18 (75%) returned the questionnaire.

Like the families, students felt that families were helped as illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4:

To what extent do you believe that your family was helped by your intervention?

Greatly helped	6	(37%)
Partially helped	11	(61%)
Not helped much at all	1	(5%)

It is apparent, however, that students were less inclined to believe that they had helped families in comparison to the families themselves, 93% of whom indicated that they were considerably helped by the intervention, or that they could not have got along without it. This perhaps reflects the often pessimistic attitudes of social workers towards their clients which has been reported elsewhere (Russell 1990).

Student response to the option

Students were also asked whether they felt that seven two-hour seminars was sufficient time in which to learn the model. Seventeen of the 18 students stated that they felt that the seven weeks, supplemented by their own reading and learning from the earlier parts of the course and the ongoing supervision sessions at the university, was sufficient time to learn enough about the model to successfully carry out the family counselling sessions. In addition to its other objectives, this project aimed to provide students with a valuable learning experience. Students certainly believed that it did this. The student evaluations about the course were exceptionally positive with 54% (13/24) suggesting that it was the most valuable learning experience they had been offered in the social work course.

The option ran over two semesters with seven classes in semester one and regular supervision sessions (about 12) in semester two. In the first year, the option operated it had 100% attendance by students – a testament to their good health, as well as they commitment to the subject.

Students were generally positive about the model, although three students suggested that it did not address the longer term and deeper problems facing their family. All students indicated that they did make use of the model in their work with the client family. They indicated that they made most use of problem survey, problem exploration, setting goals and tasks, in that order. The students' use of the model in practice was evident in the supervision sessions. The case presentations demonstrated, albeit anecdotally, that students did work through the steps as outlined. The link between theory and practice was very evident.

The lecturer's view

From my own perspective (again somewhat subjective), as a teacher of social work, this approach had several advantages. It facilitated a good working relationship with the voluntary agency. The members of the agency who participated in the classes provided a practical element to the class work and the classes provided some theoretical input for the staff involved. It helped to keep the teaching relevant. The students were very keen to learn the model as well as possible. Again, this is a subjective view, but it was apparent to me that the students' concern (in some cases, anxiety) about being able to use the model confidently before beginning work with a family, led to very high levels of motivation by students.

Conclusion

The aim of this project was to provide a learning experience for students which provided for the direct application of theory to practice and for some evaluation of the experience for students and families. It also aimed to consider whether students could develop sufficient skill in a particular family work model in order to carry out a series of family counselling sessions with a client family.

Some conclusions can be drawn from the study in relation to these questions. Students were able to learn the family problem-solving model in a short time. Following the seven first semester classes students were able, with supervision, to carry out a series of family problem solving sessions with families. They were able to apply the theory to a practice. They were also able to undertake some ongoing evaluation of their work with the client families. Families generally found the counselling helpful. Students were positive about the subject and felt that their families were helped by the experience.

This approach to teaching family work does, I believe, link teaching, practice and evaluation in a way more traditional approaches to teaching family work do not. Hopefully it represents a model for teaching family work that might be replicated elsewhere.

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COMING EVENTS

The next AASWWE Conference will be held in Perth, Western Australia in September, 2002 (To be hosted by the Western Australian Schools of Social Work). Further details will be available shortly

Other conferences of interest:

1) 3rd International Conference on Social Work on Health and Mental Health, Tampere, Finland , July 1-6, 2001

Conference Secretariat:
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Tel (358) 3 215 63 85, Office hours Wed 11-12
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Dead-line for abstract submission:15 December 2000

2) IFSW Asia Pacific Seminar - Millenium Challenges and Action for Social Work Education and Practice, Singapore, July 31-August 3, 2001

The Asia Pacific Conference of IFSW and APASWE (Asia and Pacific Association of Social Work Educators) will especially look at Social Work Across Borders, Information Technology and Social Work, Economic Imperatives and Social Work Practice, Socio-Cultural Transformation, Social Work and Peace, and New Partnerships, New Paradigms. Pre-Conference Training Workshops are scheduled to take place from July 30-31

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Email: aasw@icms.com.au
Website: www.icms.com.au/aasw

4) **Conference of the International Association of Schools of Social Work,** Montpellier, France, July 15-18, 2002

Conference Secretariat:
ACI 2002, Secrétariat du congrès, c/o AFORTS, 1 Cité Bergère, F-75009 Paris, France
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Website: www.onfts.com

5) **IFSW World Conference - Building Effective Strategies: Social Work Practice in a New Era,** Harare, Zimbabwe, July 28-August 2, 2002

Hosted by the National Association of Social Workers, Zimbabwe, the IFSW World Conference 2002 will take place in Africa for the first time since 1974.

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The following is a summary of the review and publication process of the Journal.

1. Once a paper is received, the editorial committee decides on which reviewers the paper will be sent to. This is not just a random choice. Reviewers are selected because of their knowledge and interest in the topic to be reviewed. The name of the author is not disclosed to the reviewers.

2. The article is returned to the editors with reviewers' comments attached. All reviewers review papers on a voluntary basis, as a service to their profession. Authors should allow three months from the time the article is received by ***Advances in Social Work and Welfare Education*** before expecting to receive reviewers' comments.

3. In a number of cases, both reviewers will recommend publication be considered after some revision or only minor changes. In others, both will recommend more major revision before publication could be considered. This may involve changing the length, clarifying expression, improving structure, changing some content or improving focus. This is quite a common occurrence and should not be seen as failure. In other cases, a paper will be rejected outright or major revisions recommended i.e. a total rewrite. Reviewers all follow guidelines drawn up by the editorial committee.

4. Occasionally, reviewers will disagree on the outcome, for example, one will recommend publication, the other a rewrite or revision, or one may recommend rejection. In this case, a third opinion is sought, in conjunction with the editors.

5. When an article is returned after revision, it is usually sent to one of the previous reviewers and one new reviewer for opinion. If only a small change in the article's length has been requested, the revised version is usually sent to one previous reviewer and also considered by a member of the editorial committee. If only minor changes were needed, for example insertion of headings or correction of referencing, a member of the editorial committee will check to see if they have been carried out. The final decision on publication rests with the editorial committee.

6. When an article is being revised, editorial committee members are available for consultation with the author. In fact, at any stage of an article's production, editorial committee members may be consulted. They are listed on the first page of the Journal.

7. Once an article is accepted for publication, the editorial committee has the job of proofreading, editing and deciding the appropriate journal edition for publication, position, layout, etc. The editors are also interested in improving the clarity of

8. unclear or woolly writing and may rewrite sentences and sections to improve clarity or expression.

8. Finally, the article is sent to the printer.

9. The time, from acceptance to publication, will vary according to the number of articles awaiting publication, length of article, topicality and publication of special theme issues.

10. Authors receive one complimentary copy of the journal in which their article appears.

INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS

Preparation of Copy

1. Contributors should submit **three** copies of a paper to the editors, one of which should be the original typescript. Copy should be double-spaced on A4 or quarto paper on one side of the page only. Articles should include:

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   (b) A detachable separate cover sheet to ensure anonymous reviews. This should contain the title of the article, word length, the author's name and address, sufficient information for a brief biographical note including the author's highest qualification, current position and email address (if applicable) and any personal acknowledgments.

   (c) Numbered pages (in the top right hand corner of each page).

   (d) Photographs and figures relevant to the article, on separate sheets. Only photographs with a high degree of definition will reproduce well, hence black and white photographs are preferred.

2. Copy should not normally exceed 6000 words, double-spaced and exclusive of references. Papers longer than 6000 words will be considered.

3. Contributors should use language which clearly includes both sexes when reference to both male and female is intended. Thus both gender words 'he or she', 'her or his' should be used, as well as neutral terms such as 'spokesperson' or 'representative', 'chairperson', 'staffed', 'you' and the plural forms of he/she. For further information refer to, Miller, D. and Swift, K. (1984) *The Handbook of Non-sexist Writing for Writers, Editors and Speakers*, The Women's Press, London.

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5.

   (a) The Journal uses the Author-Date (Harvard) System of referencing. The references should be included in the text.

   (b) References in the text give the author's surname and year of publication (with page number if necessary) in this style:

The major improvement concerns the structure of the interview (Ulrich and Trumbo 1965, p.112)...Later reports (Carlson, Thayer, Mayfield and Peterson 1971) record greatly increased interviewer reliability for structure interviews...

Note that surnames only are used. Initials are only added to the surname when they are required to distinguish between authors of the same surname.

(c) Where a reference contains the names of two or more authors, all names are given the first time the reference is cited; on subsequent occasions only, the first name followed by 'et al' is required, except where this may cause ambiguity.

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For books, the layout is:

Smith, N. and Jones, M. (1979), *A Companion Guide to Good Authorship*, Social Work Press, Sydney.

For journal articles, the layout is:

Wright, O. (1969), 'Summary of research on the selection interview since 1964', *Personal Psychology*, Vol.22, No.2, pp.391-413.

For a chapter or article within a book compiled or edited by others, the layout is:

Morris, J. (1986), 'The art of the review' in Warren, E., *Innovations in Editing*, Bromley Press, Sydney, p.8.

(e) Where reference is made to more than one article or book by the same author published in the same year, use letters (a, b, etc.) to distinguish one from another e.g. (Smith 1970a).

(f) Papers with more than one author are listed after any sole publications by the first author, and in alphabetical order of second authors.

For further information refer to *Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers*, (1994) Fifth edition, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.

6. Spelling should conform to the usage of the Macquarie Dictionary and abbreviations should be kept to a minimum. Where appropriate, spell all words with -ise, -isation, -ising (not -ize, etc.). The modern tendency to use single quotation marks rather than double is recommended. Frequent or lengthy quotations should be indented. No quotation marks are then necessary.

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