ADVANCES

IN | SOCIAL | WORK

& | WELFARE | EDUCATION

CONTENTS

Aims and Scope

The journal aims to showcase material which is of particular relevance to social work, welfare and community development educators in Australia and New Zealand. Papers which present innovative or challenging approaches to current educational philosophy and methodology are particularly encouraged. The material should be original and professionally presented. However, a diversity of styles is welcomed, and reports on research from a variety of perspectives and research designs are particularly sought.

Editorial

I am pleased to write my first editorial for ADVANCES in Social Work and Welfare Education for a special themed issue on critical reflection in social work education. In many ways this issue demonstrates some of the many understandings attached to the concept of reflection as a practice within social work. Kilminster, Zukas, Bradbury & Frost (2010, p.2) write that reflective practice has moved from the margins to mainstream and on its journey has been de-radicalised. There are many useful and expansive discussions of the variations of 'reflection', 'critical reflection' and 'reflective' and 'reflexive' practice (White, Fook & Gardner, 2006; Fook & Askeland, 2007). What they all have in common is the belief that effective practice has at its core some self-awareness and conscious stance in relation to the socio-political environment. Whether one is attuned to one's assumptions and emotional responses in different situations or acutely aware of structural, social, spatial inequalities and power dynamics, an effective, responsive practitioner can hold steady by listening and questioning self and others. Speaking to power sometimes means an internal dialogue. In a Western paradigm it may be comforting to rationally approach abuse and violence in structural terms when it is between people but not fully understand the emotional and spiritual harm caused to individuals and collectives by racism, inequality, exclusion and the suppression of spiritual, cultural and social practices.

Perhaps notions of reflection and critical reflection need to be sufficiently open to support nuanced and holistic expression? Perhaps prescription
of what is critical reflection is a paradox? This special issue contains seven papers, each with a unique linkage of reflection, reflexivity and teaching and learning.

Christine Morley explores one example from a larger project to examine critical reflection in practice and demonstrates a process of deconstruction and reconstruction with improvement in understanding. Carole Adamson's paper presents an argument for resilience, critical reflection and reflexivity to be embedded as a core developmental process in social work education. Patricia Fronek, Jane Fowler and Julie Clark address two current and important topics for social work education, namely leadership and reflection, in a specific context. Sarah Fraser's article focuses on the role of educator in social work, where facilitation skills are harnessed to counterbalance disempowering perspectives. Gai Harrison, Deborah Walsh and Karen Healy provide an overview of a the production of peer-based learning materials and consider the significance of involving students rather than 'experts' in developing these teaching and learning resources in terms of expanding traditional understandings of student-centred instruction. Following on in the theme of promoting critical reflection through the development of learning materials, Margaret Pack

discusses how community expertise, clinician and service-user experience provided the raw materials for the development of resources to promote reflective supervision. Finally Shirley-Ann Chinnery and Liz Beddoe report on the teaching of mindfulness skills as a pre-placement intervention designed to augment student capacity for reflective practice and competent 'use of self' in the field.

I hope you enjoy this edition of ADVANCES and that you will consider contributing to the journal in 2011. Thank-you for your continuing support of the journal.

Liz Beddoe
Co-Editor

Critical Reflection as an Educational Process: A Practice Example

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ABSTRACT

Numerous social workers discuss the importance of critical reflection and refer to its capacity as an educational tool to improve practice, yet there is relatively little evidence to support the claims made about the benefits of critical reflection by its proponents. This paper contributes to addressing this gap by reporting on the critically reflective educational process undertaken by one practitioner. The transformative learning gained by this practitioner provides a concrete example of how critical reflection improved her thinking about practice by increasing congruence between her espoused theoretical framework and her actual practice, and by creating opportunities for emancipatory practice within a context where she felt constrained to achieve critical practice aims. The paper suggests critical reflection is an important component of social work education.

INTRODUCTION

Critical reflection is accepted by many practitioners, educators and researchers around the world as an essential ingredient of critical and progressive social work (see for example, Allan, Briskman and Pease, 2009; Davies and Leonard, 2004; Fook, 2002; Morley, 2004, 2008b, 2009; Napier and Fook, 2000; Pockett and Giles, 2008; Taylor and White, 2000). Claims about the benefits of critical reflection in social work are widespread and extensive (Fook and Gardner, 2007, pp. 139-40). For example, it has been suggested that critical reflection has the capacity to enable practitioners to improve practice by building congruence between their espoused theoretical framework and their actual practice (Fook, 1996). It has also been contended that critical reflection can create opportunities for emancipatory practice within contexts where practitioners feel limited to practice in critical ways (Fook, 2004). However, little has been documented in a systematic way about what this might look like in practice. This paper specifically presents the educational experience and subsequent transformative learning that one social work practitioner engaged in by virtue of participating in a research project that used critical reflection as the methodology. The outcomes of her learning suggest that critical reflection is an important part of social work education.

DEFINING CRITICAL REFLECTION

Critical reflection can be defined in a multitude of ways. For the purposes of the research, I used Fook's (1996; 2002) model of critical reflection. This model isolates "the ways in which we might unwittingly affirm discourses that work against us, and the people we are working with" (Fook, 2000, p.133). It adapts the reflective approach first developed by Argyris and Schön (1976; see also Schön, 1983, 1987) to critical social work by incorporating critical postmodern ideas (Allan et al., 2009; Healy, 2000; Hick et al., 2005; Fook, 2002; Mullaly, 2007; Pease and Fook, 1999). Critical postmodernism, which is the underpinning theoretical framework of Fook's (2002) model of critical reflection, offers broad contextual understandings of social issues by combining structural and gendered analyses with interpretive frameworks to formulate democratic, socially just responses and strategies for progressive social change. This enables the links between the individual and the social context to become explicit through an analysis of how language and social practices produce and construct meaning. Fook (2002, pp. 40-1) suggests:

… a postmodern and critical social work practice is primarily committed to practising in ways which further a society without domination, exploitation or oppression… [and] … focus[es] on how structures dominate, but also on how people construct and are constructed by changing social structures and relations, recognising that there may be multiple and diverse constructions of ostensibly similar situations. Such an understanding of social relations and structures can be used to disrupt dominant power relations and structures.

Adding critical postmodern theoretical dimensions to earlier understandings of the reflective approach contributes "a broader framework for understanding what critical reflection can and should help achieve" (Fook, 2004, p.20), particularly in the context of professional learning in social work.

In the example presented in this paper, critical reflection was used to help Barbara, a social work practitioner, scrutinise the implicit assumptions and values embedded in her practice in order to learn from it. As part of a larger research project, (described elsewhere (Morley, 2008a)), I asked Barbara to talk about a particular incident that occurred in the context of her practice. Critical reflection on incidents has been widely used in education (Flanagan, 1954; Killen and McKee, 1983 cited in Brookfield, 1990; Wilson- Pessano, 1988 cited in Brookfield, 1990; Benner, 1984; Fook 1996; Fook, Ryan and Hawkins, 2000). When using critical incident analysis to facilitate a critically reflective learning, "the incident and its 'telling' become the 'story' of the person which is deconstructed or reflected on" and later reconstructed (Fook, 2002, p. 99; Fook, 1999). This paper will now outline the transformative learning process undertaken by Barbara through critical reflection on her practice. Transformative learning is profound learning, where deep level assumptions are identified, confronted and changed (Mezirow, 1990; Brookfield, 1990).

Barbara's Story

Barbara is an Australian woman who had worked as an after hours counsellor/advocate at a regional Centre Against Sexual Assault in Australia for almost three years. It was in this capacity of providing an after hours crisis response to people who have recently been sexually assaulted that the incident Barbara chose to critically reflect on occurred. Barbara chose this incident because even though it had occurred more than twelve months before we met, she was still thinking about it and wondering how her practice might have been different and how she may have produced a more satisfactory outcome.

Barbara described a situation where a man with an intellectual disability was referred to the after hours service after being sexually assaulted by an older male who lived in the vicinity of the residential care institution in which he, the victim/survivor, lived. Barbara's primary concerns at the time were that the police seemed to respond with hostility towards the victim/survivor and attempted to undermine the crisis care unit process by hurrying the victim/survivor and complaining about his decision to have a forensic examination. She explained: *"The police wanted me to move things along… They even got more frustrated with the fact that he wanted to have a forensic examination."* She believed that *"because this person… had an intellectual disability:* [the police insinuated] *'what's the point?'"* Barbara couldn't understand the lack of patience exhibited by the police or the level of aggression directed towards the victim/survivor by them. She indicated that she felt conflicted about managing the needs of the victim/survivor, whilst resisting the pressure of the police. As she explains: *"I felt like I wanted to spend the time with him, [the victim/survivor] but I also felt quite pressured by the police to actually move things along. Therefore I felt in conflict."*

The personal distress that this incident caused for Barbara was evident throughout her account. As she states:

It wasn't very pleasant…I just felt awkward at times. Like I got off on the back foot and that made me feel a bit flustered… Talking to the police, it just made me feel uncomfortable. I couldn't understand why they were being so awful to him. Then I was sort of questioning myself… It just made me feel probably a bit vulnerable and a bit confused.

The failure of the police to deliver just responses to victims/survivors can be extremely distressing for the practitioners who are charged with the responsibility of supporting them (Jarvis and McIlwaine, 1997). However, perhaps more significant is the devastating impact the legal response can have on victims/survivors (see for example, Heath, 2007; Jarvis and McIlwaine, 1997; Maier, 2008). It was clear from Barbara's account that the victim/survivor did not feel validated, supported or heard by the police. As she explained:

He [the victim/survivor] *actually said to me at one stage that he felt the police didn't want him to speak to them… And he said to me at the end, 'I don't think the police will want to listen to me.' I said 'How come?' And he said 'Oh, I don't think they like me.'*

Despite the experiences of this victim/survivor, complainants of sexual assault have a right to expect that police responses will not do further harm to them. Barbara's role was to ensure that the rights of the victim/survivor to be heard, to be treated with respect and integrity, and to feel safe when making a complaint to police, were upheld. She expressed:

…regardless of everything else, this person has presented to us. He is in need of our service. We need to do the right thing by him: provide him with that service as equal to everybody else. No questions about it. And that's our philosophy and it should be theirs [the police] as well.

However, Barbara indicated that she felt powerless to challenge the police when she witnessed them act in hostile, invalidating and dismissive ways towards the victim/survivor. The issues embedded in the scenario she described clearly resonate with feminist analyses that highlight the often inappropriate and insensitive responses by the police (see for example, Maier, 2008; Victorian Law Reform Commission (VLRF), 2008). Also consistent with the literature, Barbara's commentary highlights the increased difficulty for victims/survivors with an intellectual disability to exercise their rights in the criminal justice system (see for example, Phillips, 1996).

This exclusive focus on structural and external factors however, arguably diverted Barbara's attention away from the internal aspects of her own practice, which should, from a critical perspective, have more effectively supported the victim/survivor in the process of him engaging with the police. Whilst Barbara's commentary indicated a keen awareness of the negative consequences that the police response was having on the victim/survivor, her original narrative expressed a firm belief that she would not have been able to challenge them about their inappropriate conduct. As she states, *"The way they [the police] interacted with him was not appropriate, but there was nothing I could do about it."*

In addition, though Barbara's stated position was that she would routinely challenge people in authority to correct perceived injustices (in her other role as a school social worker), her practice did not match her espoused theory in this situation as she did not challenge the police about their behaviour in this instance. She stated: *"I was annoyed with myself that I didn't do that* [challenge the police] *because ordinarily I would have."*

As with most of the practitioners who participated in the study, critical reflection highlighted a disparity between Barbara's espoused intentions and her actual practice;

a phenomenon well documented in reflective approaches to learning (Argyris and Schön, 1976; Schön, 1983; Schön, 1987) and practice (Fook, 1996; 2002; Fook et al., 2006). Incongruity between theory and practice in this sense was probably first identified by educationalists Argyris and Schön (1976) and later developed further by Schön (1983; 1987) who proposed a reflective process for uncovering implicit assumptions, particularly in relation to professional learning. Some authors also credit the earlier work of Dewey (1916; 1933) as being formative in the development of our current understanding of uses of reflective practice (Mezirow and Associates, 1990, 2000; Redmond, 2004; Fook, White and Gardner, 2006).

In acknowledging the gap between Barbara's espoused intention to support and advocate for her service user, and her practice which acquiesced to preserve dominant power relations with the police, Barbara cited a number of reasons that prevented her from challenging the police at the time. She explains:

So I suppose not feeling like I could challenge them was a combination of their manner and how we started things off [regarding a mix-up about the initial meeting place with the police]. Then as things went on, I just didn't feel confident enough. Plus the confusion about [my role]... We've never really discussed challenging the police and all of that in our meetings or training. I just know that [the co-ordinator] advocates for us if we have issues, but we've never really discussed what we can actually do in the situation… And that left me, in an unknown area… You know, and I suppose I was worried about… that the negatives of it would be fragmenting that relationship that we have with the police…. I suppose I was worried about the consequences. I thought, oh, I don't want to be seen as the sort of person that causes a bit of an issue… What happens afterwards? What are the repercussions for me?... I just thought, oh, there could be some repercussions of that for me personally, but also for the [sexual assault service]."

In addition, Barbara indicated that she believed that advocating for the victim/survivor with the police might hold negative consequences for him. As she comments: *"I think, I wouldn't want to put that* [conflict with the police] *on him* [the victim/survivor], *and distress him even more; he's got enough on his plate, if that makes sense."*

Therefore, in summary Barbara's explanations for not being able to advocate effectively with the police for the victim/survivor at the time included:

• A mix-up about the meeting place that occurred at the beginning of the crisis care unit, which Barbara felt responsible for, therefore inhibiting her willingness to challenge the police;

• A lack of confidence to challenge the police, and feeling confused or uncertain about doing this, given that it had not previously been discussed at staff meetings and training;

• A belief that it was not necessary to challenge the police during the crisis care unit because the after hours co-ordinator formally raises issues after an incident;

- A sense that there would be both personal consequences for herself and the service user, and a detrimental impact for the service if she challenged the police;

- A lack of sufficient knowledge of police processes and philosophies, and a lack of opportunity to learn about these; and

- A fear of the 'unknown' consequences of challenging the police

Theorising Barbara's Practice Response

From a positivist or realist perspective, Barbara's initial account carries the authority of 'the truth' which is assumed to be singular, fixed and unquestionable. This end result is that the final (dominant) story is understood as a situation of hopelessness and lack of agency for Barbara, and powerlessness and injustice for the service user.

However, critical reflection reveals how various layers of assumptions were operating in tandem to support a dominant narrative that rendered Barbara's capacity to exercise power and agency invisible. (The details of the critical reflection process will be discussed next in the following section). From a critical postmodern perspective, Barbara's initial narrative is not the only or final account, but the beginning of a process where meaning is constructed, renegotiated and changed along potentially more emancipatory lines. In this way, Barbara's initial story is positioned as one construction among a multitude of possible interpretations. This enables the possibility of other constructions that are more empowering and enabling for practitioners and service users to surface and contribute to renewed understandings (Fook, 2002). For Barbara, the aim of the critical reflection process was to uncover narratives of agency and resistance that would enable her to challenge the police, and more effectively support the victim/survivor.

CRITICAL REFLECTION AS AN EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

Fook (2002, p.91) contends that critical reflection involves deconstruction, resistance, challenge and change/reconstruction. Following initial description of the incident, those participating in critical reflection can begin to deconstruct their accounts of their practice. This involves reflective questioning to identify and challenge dominant discourses, uncover how different discourses are implicated in supporting the dominant interests, and develop alternative perspectives (Fook, 2004; Rossiter, 2005). Critical reflection questions aim to elucidate dominant discourses that promote the interests of the most powerful groups in society, often to the detriment of our service users and our emancipatory aims as critical practitioners. They expose the ways these discourses often infiltrate our thinking as practitioners, manifesting as common sense, or taken-for-granted beliefs (Fook, 2002). Exposing the roles and implications of these 'unquestionable' beliefs, assumptions and values, destabilises and resists the restrictive or unhelpful elements of our thinking that limit our practice options (Ellermann, 1998; Fook, 2002; Taylor and White, 2000). Used in this way, critical reflection questions created a dialogue between myself and Barbara in which I aimed to assist her to uncover unarticulated assumptions she was holding about power, identity, binary oppositional constructions universal narratives, and so on. While the questions I used were tailored to Barbara's individual story, they were largely based on

Fook's (2002, pp. 92-3) model of critical reflection. I included questions such as: what are your assumptions about power? Who has it? How do you know? What are the implications for your practice of you constructing yourself in powerless terms in relation to the police? These deconstruction questions sought to expose Barbara's participation in discourses that acted contrary to her espoused theory and to the detriment of the victim/survivor.

Following deconstruction, the next stage of the critically reflective educational process focuses on reconstructing participants' critical incident analyses in ways that open up different possibilities for practice. Reconstruction is "the process of making a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience, which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation and action" (Mezirow, 1990, p. 1). Some of the questions I used to assist Barbara to reconstruct her experience, which were also largely based on Fook's (2002, p.101) questions included: How do your actions compare with how you assumed you were acting? Now that you understand power can be exercised as well as structurally defined, how does that free you to think differently about how you may have responded to the police? What needs to change for you to bring your practice more in line with your espoused intentions?

These processes of deconstruction and reconstruction facilitated significant changes in Barbara's thinking, enabling her to improve her thinking about practice by building congruence between her espoused theoretical framework and her actual practice, and, to create opportunities for emancipatory practice by supporting and advocating for the victim/survivor despite the intimidating behaviour of the police. Whilst there are no set rules about how deconstruction and reconstruction should happen, in working with Barbara, we met on two separate occasions: the first meeting was to hear the telling of her narrative and begin deconstruction; the second meeting was to revisit learning gained from the first interview and focus on reconstructing her narrative to develop alternative understandings and opportunities for practice. Some of the outcomes of the educational processes that Barbara engaged in as part of the deconstruction and reconstruction or her critical incident analysis are presented next.

CRITICAL REFLECTION ON BARBARA'S ACCOUNT

In the deconstruction of Barbara's story, she began to realise that her initial account of the situation was not an independent, factual representation, but a series of socially constructed interpretations that had been influenced by her own social biography and positioning (Fook, 1999). For example, I asked how her sense of feeling *'flustered' or 'confused'* may have influenced her initial construction of the situation. She recognised that her emotional response had led her to privilege the uncertainty she felt about challenging the police. As she stated: *"I suppose because I did see myself on the back foot. . .I've emphasised the confusion that I felt about raising the issues with them. I think I've emphasised that because that's how I felt then from the start."*

Barbara also recognised that she has foregrounded a particular version of the story that marginalised other possible interpretations. As she acknowledged:

I suppose what we have talked about is actually my interpretation of the situation more so than actually what was happening. You know, how initially I probably interpreted the situation led to my demise I suppose, or just sort of set me into a bit of spin, or on a particular path…So maybe if I had of interpreted things differently, internally, it probably would have made me react differently.

Similarly, using critical reflection, Barbara began to understand the impact of (her) self on the construction of her initial incident which enabled her to unravel the ways that her interpretations had distorted aspects of her recollection. For example, given that Barbara's initial account conveyed a sense that she was responsible for off-siding the police because they were waiting in a different area of the hospital with the victim/survivor, her espoused theory was one of self blame: *"I even instantly felt like: are they just going to think I'm an absolute idiot? I felt a bit disorganised and I just felt that maybe they were thinking that too."* This cycle of thinking was consistent with her actions that then took steps to locate the police and move to where they were waiting in order to rectify the problem.

However, deconstructing these 'facts', which were recognised as socially constructed pieces of history, Barbara began to acknowledge that her actions had complied with an interpretation of the situation which benefited the police. When she recognised this, she stated: *"That's interesting. I'm trying to make everything better* [laughter]. *That's right. I'm actually trying to fix things up and I've taken responsibility and assumed that it was all my fault because I was downstairs…I automatically started to go into justification mode, even though they* [the police] *were equally responsible for the mix-up."*

Barbara's initial belief that the 'mix-up' was her responsibility was significant because it was formative in undermining her sense of confidence and agency. This contributed to her ultimate decision not to challenge the police about their inappropriate conduct, resulting in the initial gap between her espoused theory and actual practice.

In exploring other interpretations, Barbara began to reject the terms of reference created by the police to develop a more enabling interpretation which valued her role in the situation. As she states, *"Actually, I was on time, and I was meeting the criteria that we're supposed to meet basically. I don't actually need to own as much as what I did in relation to them."*

In expanding her rejection of the dominant discourses that were unhelpful for her practice, critical reflection highlighted the ways Barbara had unconsciously taken on and reproduced the language embedded in the discourses propagated by the police. For example, in assisting Barbara to deconstruct her use of language, I asked Barbara whether she realised that she had referred to forensic examination as "all that rigmarole that adds another hour onto the whole thing". This dominant discourse is often perpetuated by the police, but not by counsellor/advocates. Barbara's recognition that she had been complicit in embracing police discourses shocked her: "Far out! I'm sounding like them. I may as well go and get my uniform now, and put my badge on. I don't need to go through the exams. I am them!"

Barbara also interrogated the implications of her choice of words when she discussed about being "allowed" to speak with the victim/survivor. As she acknowledged: "It's almost like I felt that I needed permission from the police to speak to him."

In reconstructing options to resist her internalisation of dominant discourses, Barbara indicated she found it useful to draw on practice experiences where she had managed to resist some undermining comments by the police. She also talked about overtly naming problematic behaviours in more actively taking control of the discourse. As she explained, *"… if it* [the poor conduct of the police] *becomes really obvious, then in future I wouldn't have an issue to say, 'I don't think that's appropriate' or whatever."*

Reclaiming control over the discourse and reconstructing possibilities for critical practice in this way assisted Barbara to reject the self blame that was initially limiting her practice. It de-centred her emphasis on appeasing the police, appropriately repositioning the victim/ survivor to a more dominant/ central position within the situation. Therefore, critical reflection created the opportunity for Barbara to close the gap between her espoused theory and practice, ultimately improving her practice response. As she stated:

That for me, just reframing those things, would have been very powerful… I would have just focused on the victim/survivor, and what I was really there to do, which was to find out his story, and to support him, and to advocate on his behalf, really. And I probably wouldn't have even engaged in much conversation with the police beforehand. I probably would have just introduced myself and concentrated my energies on supporting the victim/survivor.

Taking control of the discourse was also an important factor in challenging Barbara's perceived lack of agency and confidence. For example, an assumption that seemed to compound Barbara's sense of intimidation and perpetuate the notion that the police were in control was the number of police present at the crisis care unit. Given that there is always more than one police member who attends a crisis care unit, yet only ever one counsellor/ advocate, Barbara stated: *"For me, there's another issue too; you know, like it's a numbers thing. Here's little old me, and my head and my brain, and there's those two."*

In acknowledging that the police often do out-number counsellor/advocates, Barbara began to question the usefulness of a construction that greater police representation equates with the disempowerment of counsellor/ advocates. Barbara appeared to recognise that this had been another implicit assumption that was operating to benefit the police, and to her detriment: *"That's not helpful. That leads us to feel powerless."* She also moved to reconstruct this assumption: *"Regardless of the numbers, I can still use humour to deflect and some other things that might balance out the power…Regardless of how many of them there are."*

Creating permission to challenge the police

Barbara also revisited her initial assumption about challenging the police being fraught with consequences: either for herself; the victim/survivor; or for the relationship between the agency and the police. At the time, her practice response was to remain silently disappointed, maintaining the status quo. Deconstruction of her practice highlighted that her response emerged from an implicit binary oppositional construction (Fook, 2002) that presented her options in dichotomous terms: either challenge the police with *"all guns blazing"* in a way that would inevitably involve conflict and confrontation, or, not challenge the police at all. Reconstructing her thinking about power and her positioning in relation to the police, Barbara gave herself permission to challenge them by exploring alternative

interpretations which transcended this dichotomy. Reminding the police about appropriate conduct was reinterpreted as sharing her knowledge and expectations, thus creating a learning opportunity for the police. As she explains:

So I've thought about that and perhaps it's not fair to them to not give them [the police] the opportunity to actually have that information…If I turn my thoughts over to that sort of thinking, I could actually be assisting them, and then ultimately it impacts on all the victims/ survivors we have in the unit, and all the other workers. So why wouldn't that be a good thing to do?

This enabled Barbara to conceptualise the possibility of challenging inappropriate conduct by the police and so more effectively support and advocate for the service user, rather than blaming the police for her sense of disempowerment.

Reconstructing this interpretation appeared to free Barbara considerably to feel like she could engage in a dialogue with the police, and challenge them about their response to the victim/survivor, without this being fraught with the negative consequences she had originally assumed. As she states, in liberating herself from her own self regulatory thinking: *"I can see it totally clearly, and how much all of that was in my head, you know, and how I was constructing that for myself, without them doing that for me. Do you know what I mean? It was all me I suppose."*

Such learning created several other practice possibilities for Barbara. For example, she revisited the assumption that advocating with the police on behalf of the victim/survivor in front of him may be harmful. In recognising that this assumption might have limited her opportunities to effectively support the victim/survivor she developed an alternative discourse. As she states,

It might have been powerful for him [the victim/survivor] to see that [her advocacy with the police] and show him how supportive I was of him…it would have also given him some information about his rights…. In a way, it could be seen as educating the client at the same time.

Liberating Barbara to privilege an account that highlights the potential benefits of the victim/survivor witnessing her advocacy with the police, rather than the potential problems, further operates to dismantle the barriers that Barbara had previously constructed about challenging the police. Therefore, this created additional opportunities for more emancipatory practice that is consistent with her espoused intention.

Paralleling this, Barbara deconstructed a number of, what Fook (2002) describes as artificially constructed dichotomies, which were embedded within her original account and appeared to limit her thinking and practice options. For example, she reviewed her assumption that formal processes aimed at addressing breaches of the police code of practice happen at the expense of informal interactions. This assumption was expressed in Barbara's narrative when she contended that there was no need to challenge the police during a crisis care unit, because the after hours co-ordinator would action a complaint to the

police hierarchy through formal processes after an incident. This understanding embodies the dichotomous assumption that one course of action precludes others. As she initially commented:

I'm a bit of a person about process, so if I wanted to make an issue about it: well, I would report it to my team leader and …follow the process from there, rather than taking it into your own hands.

In questioning the usefulness of this construction which restricts Barbara's options for action, she commented:

Yes, and that's the thing I've reflected on too. Regardless of whether I did challenge them [the police] or not at the time, if I did, I could still follow it up at the other end [through formal processes] too. It still needs to be followed up on that [management] level as well as, in addition to me challenging them [the police] at the time. Just shows you sort of mean business too.

Another dichotomous construction that Barbara deconstructed concerned the relationship between herself and the police. Barbara consistently described herself in mutually exclusive terms from the police throughout her commentary. For example she initially stated:

Our philosophies of how we treat and work with victim/survivors I think at times are totally opposite to theirs really. Like I said earlier: my empowerment versus their control of the situation at all times… So they're totally at different ends of the spectrum to us. I see [the differences in] real black and white [terms], and yet we're trying to work together.

Deconstruction enabled Barbara to recognise that her participation in these dichotomous power relations could operate to reinforce her sense of powerlessness. When I asked Barbara what the implications may be for her of participating in this binary oppositional relationship, and where this left her, she stated: *"Nowhere. Powerless".*

In exploring other constructions, Barbara posited another discourse that reconstructed the dichotomy that had been created between the agency and the police. She suggested that *"seeing ourselves as multi-disciplinary team members"* might be one alternative. The notion of valuing, rather than polarising, difference, enabled Barbara to locate her relationships with the police in a discourse about teamwork and commonality (Morley, 2005). Her reconstruction involved a notion of working together, in that even though she was offering different things to the police, they were all potentially working towards similar goals, albeit coming at it from different perspectives. She further explains: *"In a sense we offer different things, but none is actually more or less important than the other; they are just different."*

Significantly, this construction allows differences between the police and counsellor/advocates to be acknowledged without being constructed as what Fook (2002, pp.82-5) refers to as a threat to equity. The assumption that the police would need to have the same philosophy as counsellor/advocates in order to work together was also rejected as Barbara was able to emphasise points of commonality between the police and the role of a practitioner: *"… even just the basic: that we're there for the victim/survivor."*

An additional factor which prevented Barbara from enacting her espoused commitment to challenging the police and advocating for the victim/survivor was her construction of the after hours crisis role in terms of the 'unknown'. As she states, *"You don't know what client you're going to get. You don't know the circumstances really about what's happened. It's all unknown really."*

By way of contrast, Barbara initially constructed her other social work role at a school in familiar terms. However, deconstructing this assumption allowed her to develop a more holistic account: *"I am in here [at the school] some days, and you just never know what's going to happen… Even though I do know kids and parents and stuff, I don't know what's going to walk through that door"*. Recognising the uncertainty that exists in both roles and acknowledging that Barbara is quite adept at responding to new or unpredictable situations at the school role, enabled her to question her previous notion of the 'unknown' in her sexual assault counsellor/advocate role as problematic. Barbara formed a new understanding which enabled her to let go of the expectation that she needs to know every detail about everything, or to have to absolute control, in order to be an effective practitioner.

Another reason that Barbara provided for not practicing in a manner consistent with her espoused approach was her sense that she did not have sufficient knowledge about police processes and philosophies, and that there was a lack of opportunity to learn more about these. As she initially stated: *"If I had more knowledge about what their role was, I could challenge them a lot more about that, and be more aware about what they're up to, and what they're supposed to be doing."*

Highlighting this narrative hid the related assumption about needing more knowledge of the unknown. Barbara was therefore able to reconstruct her perception to create a more helpful discourse. As she stated, "Afterwards, I didn't feel like I needed to know the ins and outs of their role anymore. I realise I don't need necessarily all that knowledge to challenge the police and I'll handle that because I can."

In addition, Barbara revisited the assumption that once you've lost control, it can never be regained. During the first interview Barbara deconstructed her interpretations about being "on the back foot." Examining the usefulness of this assumption for her practice, she rejected it and posited an alternative discourse that highlighted where she was able to resist the police and therefore regain control. As she explains in reconstructing her account *"I suppose just having a different assumption about that [her construction of being on the 'back foot'] would be useful: if something happens, you don't have to think, oh that's it; that you can't ever not make it different."*

Barbara also discussed her capacity to recreate meaning in relation to identity. Understanding identity as multiple, fluid and changing (Sands, 1996), she recognised that just because she had felt *'flustered', 'vulnerable'* and so on, at one point in time, that this does not have to constitute a permanent state. She reconstructed that at another point in time she might have been able to subjectively relocate herself in the discourse as someone who is empowered and articulate. As she explains: *"you're not static, so you can just change that. It doesn't have to be that way at all."*

CONCLUSION

Overall, this paper has offered some practice evidence to support the claims made about the benefits of critical reflection. In order to demonstrate this, the paper has presented the experience and subsequent transformative learning processes of Barbara, a social work practitioner, who participated in a research project that used critical reflection as the methodology.

The educational process that Barbara engaged in suggests that critical reflection is an important component of social work education because it highlights gaps between practitioner's espoused theoretical position and their actual practice, thereby enabling them to devise strategies to improve their practice by promoting consistency between the two. Critical reflection on Barbara's practice also suggests that it can be used to create opportunities for practitioners to envision critical practice options within scenarios where they feel constrained to facilitate emancipatory outcomes.

In summarising the major changes in Barbara's thinking, critical reflection enabled her to firstly resist the discourses of self blame that she had internalised, based on how she interpreted the police response towards her. Deconstruction created opportunities for Barbara to rethink her original construction of her critical incident and reject dominant discourses which were limiting for her practice. Deconstructing Barbara's account revealed a number of implicit assumptions that were operating contrary to her espoused use of theory, her practice, and the interests of the service user. Identifying these assumptions and recognising the detrimental implications of them for her practice, enabled Barbara to change them, and ultimately reconstruct her practice in a way that gave her permission to challenge the police, thereby bringing her actual practice in line with her espoused theoretical intentions.

Reconstruction facilitated Barbara's capacity to exercise power through taking control of the discourse, particularly by creating opportunities to more effectively support the victim/survivor. In addition, Barbara reconstructed a number of dichotomies in her thinking to create more complex and holistic understandings of for example, formal processes versus informal processes, Barbara versus the police, and her school social work role versus her after hours sexual assault role. Additional assumptions that Barbara reconstructed to connect with her sense of agency included: that the 'unknown,' is necessarily dangerous; that knowledge equates with power; and, the assumption that once control is lost, it cannot be regained. Ultimately, developing correspondence between Barbara's espoused feminist framework and her actual practice, created change possibilities in the form of challenging the police, which had previously seemed inconceivable because of the way she had initially constructed the situation. This holds important implications for social work education, particularly critical social work education, which is committed to finding ways to support practitioners to challenge and change dominant power relations and structures that produce social injustices and inequities. Finally, Barbara's experience of critical reflection as an educational process suggests that it can be empowering and liberating for practitioners' sense of professional development and learning, even whilst subjecting their practice to scrutiny and interrogation. As Barbara stated:

This process has been good. I've loved it… It's been great because it's prompted some things in my mind about why I might have done things in a particular way and how things could be done differently to improve.

AUTHOR NOTES:

Barbara is a pseudonym chosen by the practitioner to protect her anonymity.

Crisis care unit is the terminology used to refer to the process that occurs when counsellor/advocates meet with the victim/survivor to discuss and co-ordinate medical and legal options following a sexual assault

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Getting the balance right: critical reflection, knowledge and the social work curriculum

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ABSTRACT:

Social work education in Australia and New Zealand is predominantly embedded within tertiary education systems modelled on university pedagogy. Consolidated by the demand for professionalisation, this location has shaped the social work curriculum into traditional, discipline-based academic courses and delivery. Calls for graduates and practitioners to be robust, resilient and critically reflective have come from employers, the social work profession and educators. This paper acknowledges the impact of external stressors on social work and, within the context of debates over the nature of the social work profession, conceptualises these pressures as a demand on the resilience and reflective capacity of practitioners. Identifying core issues of the need for skills in critical reflection, the lens turns to the construction of the social work curriculum itself. Three models of programme design and curriculum delivery are presented and, using a recently implemented example, questions are raised about the potential for structural change to the curriculum that may enable a central focus upon integrative processes and critical reflection.

THE CHALLENGE OF PEDAGOGICAL DESIGN IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

This paper arises out of the author's recent experience of exploring the challenges of programme and curriculum design for social work education during a period of tenure at the University of Plymouth in the south west of England. Plymouth's traditional modular system of knowledge delivery, similar to many social work education models in Australasia, underwent a philosophical, conceptual and structural re-organisation in response to the challenges and tensions facing social work identity and practice, some of which are described in this paper. Whilst many social work educators are committed to embedding notions of reflective and/or reflexive practice within the curriculum, discussion regarding the case study of the 'Plymouth model' illustrates a structural approach to programme design that may offer a pathway towards honouring the demands from the social work profession, from employers and from recipients of social work services for critically reflective practitioners to be able to respond creatively to stressful situations of complexity and risk.

SOCIAL WORK IN A CONTEXT OF RISK, UNCERTAINTY, CONFLICT AND CONTRADICTION

A critical reflection process starts with an awareness process, but is not fulfilled without a commitment to changes for the benefit of people. Askeland and Fook (2009, p.287)

Central to social work curriculum design is the concern that both the content and the process of the curriculum be responsive to the needs of the profession, employers and to the public. The social work profession practises within the sites of tension constructed by the opposition of public and private, individual and society, and care and control. Awareness of the public and professional demands on social workers is captured within descriptions of risk and vulnerability (Beddoe 2010) and in the necessity for the dev-elopment and maintenance of resilience and robust practice in the face of considerable stressors (Collins 2007).

Stressors in social work practice are well documented. There is considerable literature that attests to the impact of workplace stress on social worker morale, sustainability of best practice, job satisfaction, retention and recruitment (for instance, Coffey, Dugdill and Tattersall 2004; Collins, Coffey and Morris 2010; Huxley et al. 2005; Occupational Safety and Health Service 2003; Russ, Lonne and Darlington 2009; Storey and Billingham 2001). Occupational safety and health issues for social work take on a unique flavour, shared only by a few other occupations under the public lens. As a profession, social work can receive external disapprobation and sometimes vilification for its activities and performance. Laming's report after the death of 'Baby P' deftly summarised the state of the English Children's workforce:

Frontline social workers and social work managers are under an immense amount of pressure. Low staff morale, poor supervision, high case-loads, under-resourcing and inadequate training each contribute to high levels of stress and recruitment and retention difficulties. […] Public vilification of social workers has a negative effect on staff and has serious implications for the effectiveness, status and morale of the children's workforce as a whole. Laming (2009, p. 47)

Such pressures impact upon social work practice. In relation to child deaths in New Zealand, Connolly and Doolan (2007) suggest that one effect of public and media scrutiny is a reduction in social workers' willingness to work with ambiguity. People do not want to take risks in a 'risk society'. Such conservatism in practice is not, they argue, what complex situations need. Managing risks such as maintaining a child's position within a family in turmoil requires what Laming (2009, p. 55) acknowledges as emotional resilience and what Russ et al (2009) suggest are skills in working autonomously. Laming's comments echo those of the organisation responsible for oversight of social work education in England, the General Social Care Council, which states that social work graduates need to demonstrate 'independent critical judgement' alongside the facility to work in much more innovative ways: for example, through 'a fully developed capacity to take responsibility for the use of reflection and critical analysis' and through the ability 'to work creatively and effectively … in a context of risk, uncertainty, conflict and contradiction' (GSCC 2005, pp. 19–20).

Social work and the educational processes that support the profession are therefore challenged to respond to the demands of working with complexity, of holding uncert-ainty and of responding with creative and effective options in a complex world (Bellinger 2010a). At the core of these challenges lie the concepts of resilience and of critical reflection and reflexivity: concepts that this paper argues are intertwined and embedded as a core developmental process within social work and its education.

CRITICAL REFLECTION AND THE PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY OF SOCIAL WORK

The Laming Report (2007) and the subsequent Social Work Taskforce (Gibb 2009) are United Kingdom examples of the use of client death inquiries as a platform for debate over the nature of social work, its performance, relationships and its training. These inquiries formed the backdrop to the conceptual and structural changes in the Plymouth programme. Such inquiries all too frequently also occur in Australasia (for instance, Kiro 2003; NSW Ombudsman 2009) and are informing curriculum development and programme re-design. What is crucial in many recent reports is the recognition of not only the complexities of the world in which we practise, but of the skills and assets that the profession requires in order to creatively respond to the uncertainties of what Butler, Ford and Tregaskis (2007, p. 285) term 'the messy complexities of practice'. The challenge to practitioners is to build a repertoire of values, knowledge and skills that can then be applied within unpredictable and often highly stressful environments (Eadie and Lymbery 2007).

Critical here are the conceptual notions of resilience and of critical reflection and reflexivity, intertwined concepts repeatedly underscored within documents that explore the identity and nature of social work (for instance, Russ et al 2009). With reference to the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) Practice Standards and Code of Ethics, for example, complex practice situations are responded to by attention to reflective and reflexive practice, structural analysis, critical thinking and ethical professional behaviour (AASW 2010). Common to all of these processes is an ability to construct a relationship between the practitioner and the situation that is characterised by consideration of factors outside of the immediate demands of the moment; the ability to consider and implement measured and informed responses; and to envisage a bigger picture of patterns and explanation that

(inductively or deductively) links the specific to the general. In relation to child deaths and abuse in statutory child protection, Connolly and Doolan (2007) link reflective abilities engendered through supervision, practice leadership and the use of practice frameworks (Connolly 2007) to good practice and safer families. The desired outcomes of these reflective processes thus connect the individual social worker to their professional value systems, the individual concern to pathways of social justice, and practice to bodies of knowledge, theory and research.

Social work identity is placed within a site of tension characterised by pressures of employer and managerial demands for efficiency and effectiveness (Collins 2007; Napier and George 2001) stacked against social arguments of process, method and purpose. Collins argues that a managerial focus on economy and best value neglects the relational nature of social work practice, whilst Brookfield (2009) argues that critical reflection (not emphasised within the compliance that Hugman (2009) would say may exist within agency-based social work) is essential in order to reveal sources of inequality and power.

Underscoring these demands of practice, and underpinning this article, is the premise that the social work identity rests on the ability not only to reflect on a dynamic ecological scoping of issues – structural inequalities interacting with family dynamics, for instance – but also to incorporate into this a reflective process that recognises the unique perspectives of consumers and social workers. Within this construct, critical reflection is enabled and potentially effective in practice through ecological analysis and the ability to link the bigger picture to individual circumstances. It is further suggested that resilience within the social work profession spans a similar arc between constructions of resilience as internal process and a perception of robust coping as being intimately dependent upon a critical, structural analysis of forces affecting our practice.

Common to the concepts of resilience and critical reflection and reflexivity is a philosophical developmental shift from an emphasis on the individual to that of a relational consideration of the person in their environment, with a value-added consideration of the impact of the construction of meaning, mediated by emotions and perceptions, within this context. Thus Bottrell (2009), in charting the evolution of notions of resilience from an early emphasis on individual characteristics to interpersonal, community and societal interactions, suggests that optimum resilience results from an engagement with both individual and environmental resources and capacities. Resilience in social workers, similarly, can be defined as an emotionally-informed construction of the interaction between the individual and the systems and structures in their working environment.

Whilst the definitions of critical reflection, reflectivity and reflexivity continue to be defined, re-defined and synthesised and whilst there is ongoing blurring and overlap between the meaning of these terms (see, for instance, D'Cruz, Gillingham and Melendez 2007), the working principle for this paper is that social work practice (and the curriculum that helps to shape it) requires a focus upon the impact of the work on the self; the impact of the self on the work; and a 'bigger picture' integration of this meaning and impact upon a reflection on past actions and an intentional consideration of future actions based upon this learning.

The argument that the skills of critical reflection and reflexivity are core to social work effectiveness and identity can be mounted on several levels. There is considerable evidence to suggest that the individual practitioner's ability to reflect is a core contribution to their resilience through, for instance, supervision processes (Connolly and Doolan 2007; Mor Barak et al. 2009). Our theoretical understanding of resilience suggests that the ability to cope with adversity over time will have demonstrable benefits to wellbeing and performance (for instance, Luthar and Cicchetti 2000; Russ et al 2009; Ungar 2008). Current resiliency theories also stress the relational and cultural nature of robust coping in the face of adaptation and adversity (Collins 2007; Russ et al 2009). Connolly and Doolan (2007) stress the importance of practice leadership. Maintenance of a social work identity within multi-disciplinary settings can assist resilience and effective practice (Brown, Crawford and Darongkamas 2000; Carpenter et al. 2003). There is emerging evidence that a strong social work identity (with a commitment to its ecological and post-modern knowledge base, its supervision practices, and its ethics and commitment to social justice) assists sustainable individual resilience and Connolly's implementation of practice frameworks within child protection was underpinned by the rationale of connecting individual practice to the bigger picture of evidence-based research (Connolly 2007).

The reverberation of these debates within social work education is crucial in our consideration of critical reflection and its place within the curriculum.

CRITICAL REFLECTION AND SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

Social work education, alongside other applied programmes within tertiary education, is under pressure from the providers of social services to produce competent practitioners. Agencies and governments expect to employ fully-competent, able graduates following social work education (Gibb 2009). The measurement of competence through mechanisms of learning outcomes, specific competencies and skills is appealing to funders and providers alike and forms part of the backdrop to social work education along with the impact of professionalisation, registration and the accreditation of social work courses by professional and state bodies.

Defining competency in terms of technical skills is in contrast to the social work profession's definition of competence as creative and reflexive response to complexity (Eadie and Lymbery 2007; Gibbons and Gray 2002; Lymbery 2003). This notion of creativity is echoed in Gibbons and Gray's account of critical reflection and curriculum development in Newcastle, Australia (2002), and echoed in the curriculum debates and designs of many Australasian schools of social work. These tensions emerge in the debates between competency-based social work courses (for instance, Social Services Industry Training Organisation 2010) and university-style academic-based programmes in what Eadie and Lymbery (2007, p. 671) term 'the balance between competence and creativity' or between 'technicality' and 'indeterminancy'. A review of the needs of newly qualified social workers in England highlights the difficulties that new graduates face when an overt emphasis on content and competencies ignores the person of the social worker and the processes in which they are engaged (Jack and Donnellan 2010).

A key challenge for social work programmes is therefore to graduate professionals who are both competent and who have the potential for emotional intelligence, innovation and resilient response to dynamic and challenging social conditions (Clare 2007; Eadie and Lymbery 2007). A further issue developed in the following discussion is whether existing university-style curriculum delivery enables optimal development of reflexive capacity, or whether other models of programme and delivery can be constructed. The following discussion constructs three working models of curriculum and programme delivery and considers each in the light of the previous discussion regarding critical reflection and the development of resilient practitioners.

REFLECTING ON CURRICULUM CONSTRUCTION: IS IT ALL 'ACADEMIC'?

How best is critical reflection served up in a social work degree? Burgess (2004) highlights the tensions between conceptualising the curriculum as content (traditional and discipline-focused); as a set of learning outcomes (perhaps competency-based such as the 'Skills for Wellbeing' discussion (Social Services ITO 2010); or in terms of process (which can include reflection, personal relevance and experiential elements, which Burgess (p. 166) terms the 'creative or imaginative' curriculum). This paper locates most social work education in Australasia, and certainly in Aotearoa New Zealand (where the author currently works) as having been shaped by the formal legacy of traditional university pedagogy, teaching and assessment, thus reflecting Burgess' notion of 'content'. The third model, developed by Plymouth educators, is an example of a model structured around 'process'.

Model 1: the traditional, discipline-based approach

Social work education in Aotearoa New Zealand has developed as tertiary-level degree programmes with a balance between university (four year) and other tertiary providers (three year) programmes, and structured in 'traditional' or discipline-based academic formats. Challenges from Indigenous or Pasifika models of pedagogy have yet to effect significant structural change outside of Wananga (Maori tertiary providers), although content has expanded to include Maori and, to some extent Pasifika, knowledge bases and models of practice (e.g. Passells and Ackroyd 2006). Australian social work qualifications are attained through a four year university degree. England, with over eighty providers of social work education, has only seven courses based outside of a university, in community colleges and the equivalent, whose higher education courses are linked to an accredited university degree.

Shaped by centuries of British university tradition, social work students enrol in specific courses geared at exploring (for example) the sociological imagination; human development and psychological knowledge; social policy; and social work skills.

Model 1: A traditionally structured academic curriculum

| Theory and Method |
| Communication Skills |
| Sociology, Policy and Law |
| Culture and Identity |
| Psychology and Human Development |
| Practice learning |

This traditional model is very much a legacy of a scholarship model of tertiary education where content is imparted to the student body from academics possessing knowledge, in a top-down manner with very little lateral or bottom-to-top communication expected or enabled. Separate lecturers teach separate streams of courses. Assessment is modular and hierarchical and knowledge streams in this model often progress through the year levels of the qualification. An outstanding challenge for all students, both in pre- and post-qualifying environments, is to integrate and contextualise this potentially siloed knowledge into a meaningful personal and professional practice framework that will enable competence and the application of knowledge to specific practice situations. A challenge for assessment is to be able to gain a sense of a student's overall ability to integrate knowledge into practice through critical reflection.

In many ways, this traditional and hierarchical model reflects the construction of education as a one-way process from teacher to student; the conceptualisation of the student as a blank slate; and the designation of bodies of knowledge as 'expert' and 'academic'. Within a post-modern environment where student and service user knowledge is recognised and incorporated within models of adult learning (for instance, Kolb and Fry 1975, and the use of Kolb's learning cycle with the last generation of social work students), such rigid models of instruction are recognised as limitations on student and practitioner development and ultimately not compatible with critical models of education and practice that seek to establish a relationship between the self and the professional activity of social work.

Whilst engaged in pre-qualifying study in this traditional model, the site for critically reflective practice is primarily the practice learning ('fieldwork' or 'practicum') experience, whilst some programmes also maintain a final integrative assignment that aims at drawing knowledge from the students' diverse learning experiences. In practice learning, students are actively required to make a theory to practice link through the use of supervision and field visits by academic staff members, with a common requirement being a form of practice portfolio in which they intellectually and reflectively integrate practice, theory and personal experience.

Using practice learning courses as the focal point for reflection and integration has some structural and systemic consequences. It potentially creates an artificial divide between formal 'academic' learning in other subjects (which is addressed and graded according to demonstrated intellectual ability) and practice learning, which is considered experiential, personal and non-intellectual and which is often assessed with pass-fail criteria. This two-tier process of learning and assessment contributes to a hierarchy of learning, which when assessed within tertiary environments dominated by a focus on scholarship, research outputs and the acquisition of government funding, results in practice learning (and the reflective qualities of student integration of experience) being seen as the poor relation of the academic programmes in which they are also enrolled. Academics within research-output

environments such as the Performance-Based Research Fund in New Zealand (TEC 2010) are obliged to focus upon knowledge-based research, or more specifically, upon certain constructions of knowledge (Napier and George 2001). Even more rigidly, academics in the United Kingdom, through the requirements of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), are required to focus upon the acquisition of externally-funded research contracts in order to fund and justify research endeavours, a structural manoeuvre that can further erode the centrality of academic focus upon practice learning and the reflective abilities of students.

As a structural result of this process, practice learning education and educators are often marginalised within tertiary education structures whilst discipline-specific papers are not required to engage students as active learners (Bellinger 2010a). Many academic programmes will recognise the case of the 'A' student who can't relate to people, who presents the challenge of assessing values and emotional intelligence alongside academic ability. The professional integrity of programmes may be challenged by these structures: students who struggle with the professional requirements of practice learning (in particular, the instrumental learners who are challenged by the demands of reflective and reflexive practice) may not always be the students who fail academically. The location of practice learning towards the latter part of degree programmes can result in 'naming the issues' of fitness to practice often very late - and ethically, perhaps too late - in a student's education.

These tensions are, of course, the frequent site of debate both within Schools of Social Work and in the academic literature (e.g. Burgess 2004; Eadie and Lymbery 2007; Napier and George 2001) and many social work programmes have evolved creative solutions and integrative processes within the assessment of particular courses. Nash (1993), for instance, writes about the creation of assessment around students' personal identities and location within families of origin. These initiatives are located, however, within individual papers or streams of subjects. In addition, the question of 'what' should be taught in the curriculum (rather than the 'how') has often resulted in issues of 'curriculum creep', 'moving the tables on the deck of the Titanic' and other metaphors for cramming the curriculum full of things that students need to know, without necessarily improving overall outcome. The alternative argument is to focus on curriculum processes that create opportunity for critical reflection and integration across a range of subjects (Napier and George 2001).

Model 2: Integrating theory and practice

The challenge within social work education has been to incorporate learning space within the curriculum so that reflection and integration of discretely taught knowledge can occur. Envisaging the curriculum as a process of critical reflection requires a considerable conceptual re-alignment of emphasis.

Beginnings of this process can be identified as the creation of frameworks such as the integrated practice model, whereby social work students are encouraged to incorporate an understanding of the worldview of themselves and others in the application of theory and practice skills to social work process. In New Zealand, this was conceptualised by Prasad (1988), developed as a teaching tool within social work programmes at Massey University and utilised in research-informed practice (for example, Keen 2005). Similar models have been used in social work practice education (Maidment and Egan 2004).

Model 2: The integrated practice model
(adapted from Nash, Munford and O'Donoghue, 2005)

The integrated practice model, whilst naming a relationship of critical reflection between theory and practice, perpetuates a potential distance between knowledge and its application: critical reflection, after all, is a process that can be applied anywhere, or not at all. Similarly Trevithick (2008), in a comprehensive review of knowledge for social work, identified important core features of a social work knowledge base, leaving the structure of curriculum delivery unexplored. By retaining the structure of discipline-specific delivery, these approaches do not specifically locate practice learning or any other process as a site of reflection and learning, and thereby leave knowledge and reflection to be as integrated or as discrete as the integrity of the academic programme allows.

Various models of reflective and reflexive practice, critical thinking and integration are current in social work texts and learning opportunities within the curriculum. Burgess and Laurance (2007) offer a solid review of different options for promoting creativity within social work curriculum and practice. Fook's writings, for example, are rich in examples of structured approaches to reflective practice such as critical incident analysis (Fook and Gardner 2007; Fook, Ryan and Hawkins 2000). Small group work is advocated as a means of exploring critical awareness and use of self in Napier and George (2001). Eadie and Lymbery (2007) suggest specific approaches to learning practice that will enhance a student's ability to reflect, especially for those who are instrumental learners. They suggest scenarios from practice, action learning sets, problem-based learning, small group work, role play, self-directed learning, working with service users, and so on. Reflective skills are also utilised in the growing use of pre-and post-qualifying professional development portfolios and in the uptake in professional supervision courses. In Aotearoa New Zealand the challenge of integrating knowledge and experience through a culturally created process has only been taken up by a few courses, predominantly in areas where student and staff represent Maori and Pasifika perspectives (Passells and Ackroyd 2006).

Model 3: The case for structural change in the social work curriculum
The previously described models of social work programmes have clearly proved to be able to produce students who can thrive and survive in complex and demanding settings. A critical question here is the degree to which the programme design itself can optimise student potential to make links and integrate the personal, professional and academic learning that is required. Bellinger (2010a and b) argues that teaching and assessment should be fundamentally geared towards reflective and integrative functions. Resilience theories suggest that we need to assess resilience and coping by not only an expected developmental level but also by the structural or relational barriers that may exist to impede progress (Bottrell 2009; Brown and Bourne 1996). The third curriculum model for consideration reflects a more structural approach to constructing and optimising student learning and reflection opportunities. What follows is a description of an experiment in

programme design that recently made the transition from a traditional, modular structure to one structured around reflective practice.

The degree programme at the University of Plymouth, in the south west of England, came up for re-accreditation by the GSCC in 2008. Staff members opted for wholesale structural change rather than adaptation of the existing traditional delivery format which had incorporated critical reflection into particular courses and assessments (as do most university programmes in Australasia) but where other courses modelled traditional disciplinary-focused subjects that left the integration of material into social work professional contexts to individual student initiative. The effect of this mixed approach had been to restrict reflective practice to the inter-relationship of self and practice and to limit the opportunities for critical attention to be paid to integrating the bigger picture of, for instance, policy and the law.

Bellinger (2010b), one of the architects of the new programme, argues that practice learning (the site of much reflexive development) can be a site of regeneration. In the Plymouth model, practice learning now drives and informs the process of knowledge acquisition. Unlike many degrees in Australasia, Plymouth had the structural advantage that students were exposed to practice situations from the first few weeks of the programme and had, as a consequence, a highly developed and comparatively well-resourced practice learning team. In the new degree, a structure was developed that centralised practice learning and put all other knowledge acquisition in relationship to students' practice experience. A developmental process of student learning and reflection was conceptualised, with the location of curriculum content (for instance, social policy, skills development, ethics and values) timed to be delivered in relation to what the students were experiencing in practice. Design of teaching content was driven by practice experience and relevance rather than discipline continuity. The curriculum was envisaged as a staged rather than a modular or subject-specific structure. Assessment is now integrative and has requirements for reflection built into the four assessments per academic year. Design of the assessment required constructive alignment, reflexive and sequential linking to promote skills, knowledge, values and critical reflective development.

The structural changes in the curriculum occurred within an intellectual environment of debate over the nature of social work and the demands upon the profession. Proponents of the practice-led model could engage with Gibbons and Gray's view that:

… [c]ritical thinking is crucial to the process of moving students from merely acquiring and displaying knowledge to critically examining and engaging with the issues of social work as a discipline and a profession. Gibbons and Gray 2002, p. 21

Opponents of the structural changes voiced concern over the shift of focus away from academic knowledge-based disciplines and by extrapolation, a risk of losing the emphasis on academic rigour and evidence-based practice (for instance, Howard, McMillen and Pollio 2003). Resistance to change, too, came with an acknowledgement that within the academic institution, the balance of power traditionally lies within academic disciplines and not amongst those with an applied focus. Those with a research base in formal
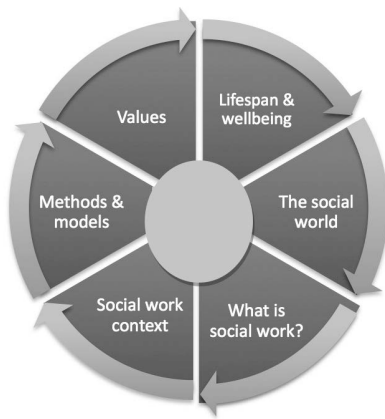
Model 3: Plymouth's practice-led

academic traditions queried potential loss of knowledge, with a critique that this was too akin to problem based learning and would not equip the student with sufficient knowledge bases for competent generic social work practice or for employment in specialised fields such as child protection. There is evidence that other academic programmes have considered and responded successfully to these concerns (for instance, Gibbons and Gray 2005); the Plymouth model is still being rolled out, and its success, in terms of producing a cohort of social workers more equipped to robustly take on a world of complexity and completing demands, is still under evaluation.

Conceptually, the 'Plymouth model' is appealing to a profession such as social work, located as it is in the forefront of challenges from employers, consumers and from the profession itself. Structural change is in itself an espoused component of our knowledge base and professional identity. The model's key characteristic, focusing academic content around student process in practice learning, is perhaps not a transferable method for educational programmes with fieldwork sited late in their programme delivery; the focus upon integrative assessment based upon where students should be in practice development is contentious, and resistance from traditional academic programme design may dominate; and the need for students to develop specialised and in-depth knowledge pertaining to specific fields of practice may not be sufficiently considered for employers to have confidence in this approach. The model does, however, suggest that structural approaches to programme and curriculum design can be designed and implemented from a pedagogical and professional approach informed by concepts of resilience and critical reflection.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

Whilst there remain systemic issues to address within the practice-led curriculum described above, it can serve to illustrate the process of structural change aimed at furthering the skills of critical reflection in social work students and practitioners. As Burgess (2004) argues, curriculum design should be a key focus for social work educators. Not all social work programmes within tertiary settings will have the challenge or the opportunity to look at large-scale structural change, but as this paper illustrates, the Plymouth experience rests within a larger professional and pedagogical debate in which it is worth engaging. Social work educators, through a critical structural analysis of curriculum structure and delivery, can assess their own models of delivery for the development of critically reflective practitioners. The Plymouth opportunity serves as an example of critically reflective practice in itself, as structural change and educational practice has been brought to bear upon the key questions of how best a curriculum can develop reflexive and resilient practitioners and whether knowledge-driven or practice-led models best serve the needs of social work practitioners engaging in complex situations.

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Reflecting on reflection, leadership and social work: Social work students as developing leaders

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ABSTRACT

A strong case for including leadership in social work programs has been articulated since the 1980s. Yet specific leadership courses are not commonly included in Australian social work curriculums. It is argued that there is a difference between 'teaching' leadership and 'teaching about' leadership. Using a critically reflective approach to social work leadership assists students to develop a professional identity that includes future possibilities for leadership in a way that is personally meaningful. This paper reflects on leadership from the perspectives of social work students and educators. A thematic analysis conducted on student reflections completed over one semester and teacher reflections on the findings are presented. A postmodern narrative approach informed the analysis from which three themes, *self-transformation, caring for self, and value-based leadership*, are discussed. The paper concludes that a critically reflective approach to leadership education in the human services is important to the integration of theoretical knowledge, skill development and individualised contexts.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is on the agenda both in the broader body politic and in the human services. A case for including leadership in social work programs has been articulated since the 1980s, though the body of literature concerning social work leadership has really only gained momentum in the last decade (Brilliant 1986; Hart 1988; Healy, L., Havens and Pine 1995; Klingbeil 1987; Lawler 2007; Rank and Hutchison 2000; Teare and Sheafor 1995). Yet leadership does not always have a strong focus in undergraduate or postgraduate social work curriculums despite general recognition of its importance (Rank and Hutchison 2000). Social workers need a wide repertoire of skills and knowledge for building services that are informed by social work values and ethics to meet individual and community needs (McDonald and Chenoweth 2009). Leadership is particularly important to social work practice given the economic and political influences on how services in health and welfare are actually delivered (Healy 2002, 2010; Mizrahi and Berger 2005; Rank and Hutchison 2000). It can be argued that in recent decades, social workers have had little effective influence over changes to the welfare state in Australia, indicating a greater need for social work leadership within increasingly market driven and politicised environments.

Though the health and welfare of the overall Australian population is improving, disparities between the most disadvantaged in the population and other Australians is increasing (AIHW 2010; Wilkinson and Pickett 2009). As the ethical and moral positioning of social work is towards the inclusion of those people most disadvantaged in society, social workers are obliged to exercise leadership in the arenas where struggles occur. Within organisational contexts, social workers are expected to resolve the tensions between the technical and operational aspects of management and the transformational aspects of leadership (Hughes and Wearing 2007; Mizrahi and Berger 2001) such as using data obtained from management information systems developmentally rather than simply as performance indicators. Pluralistic leadership; collaborative skills that can engage disparate policy makers, service users and other professionals; and critiques of ideological assumptions have been identified as critical to professional influence in the literature (Bailey 1995; Nixon and Spearmon 1991; Rank and Hutchison 2000).

This paper reflects on leadership from the perspectives of social work students with a burgeoning awareness of their own leadership potential and educators. The formulation of a future leadership identity is a lofty expectation on students who have yet to emerge as practising, independent and competent social work practitioners. How students respond to these expectations and how educators can teach leadership in meaningful ways are notions central to this paper. The human services leadership course completed by students at Griffith University is briefly described. A thematic analysis conducted on student reflections completed over one semester and teacher reflections on the findings are presented. A postmodern narrative approach informed the analysis.

CRITICAL REFLECTION AND LEADERSHIP

Leadership and management are clearly differentiated in the literature (Bennis and Nanus

1985; Hughes and Wearing 2007). Management is essentially considered task focused, procedural and maintains the status quo. Leadership on the other hand is considered visionary and involves inspiring, motivating, and empowering others. Management and leadership are theorised as distinct yet the reality of human services management is that, in practice, the concepts are not as clearly delineated. Both skill sets are required to get the job done. Organisational requirements must be met while people within organisations require support and resources to work effectively in dynamic and demanding environments. According to Hughes and Wearing (2007, p. 78) leadership can be a 'messy, unpredictable and chaotic' affair. Leadership is often but not necessarily associated with holding a formally sanctioned management position. Anyone can exercise leadership regardless of designated roles in organisations or in society. This is particularly notable when grass-roots community leadership is considered (Ingamells et al. 2010; Taylor, Wilkinson and Cheers 2008). These are important distinctions for students as they challenge commonly held beliefs concerning leadership.

The earliest theoretical model of leadership was the trait approach which implies leadership is an innate characteristic of particularly dynamic and charismatic people (Bryman 1992). In the 1940s, attention began to shift from innate characteristics to leadership training and by the 1960s leadership theories were extended to include the influence of specific contexts on leadership style (Hughes and Wearing 2007). Transactional leadership and transformational leadership came to the fore by the 1980s, focusing on values, the collective good, and fostering individual and organisational improvement through relationships (Bryman 1992; Hughes and Wearing 2007; Manz and Sims 1989). Transactional leadership attends to the immediate needs of employees ensuring organisational cohesion, while transformational leadership develops individual potential in climates of change, a style said to be preferred by women (Bass, 1999). Bass (1999) linked transformational leadership to job satisfaction in increasingly complex environments. Dunoon (2002) argued that management and leadership are distinct and have opposing values yet a balance between the two is desirable. He went on to say that a leadership style that focuses on collective capacity building is more valuable to the public sector while a transformational approach that fosters a learning culture is useful for reasons such as ensuring succession capabilities. Emergent models seek to balance progress and change in complex environments (Attwood et al, 2003). So, contemporary understandings of leadership have moved far from the trait approach. It is now generally accepted that leadership can be taught and has become increasingly important across professional groups.

While there is an emerging focus on leadership within social work, there is no agreement on its definition and whose interests are served by the social work leader (Fook 2002). Fook (2002) identified managerialism, changed funding mechanisms and decreased delineation between professional groups, as contributors to the devaluation of professional knowledge, skills and autonomy. Divergent pressures, dependence on the state and a desire to maintain power have meant a compromise in practice for many social workers (Fook 2002). These pressures are intensified when social workers move into management roles where multiple perspectives and influences are indeed a reality. Social workers and other human services leaders are in unique positions in that their responsibilities often straddle the concurrent and competing demands of managerial and organisational contexts and the 'non-rational

component of the human condition and the process of caring' (Harlow 2003, p. 29). As well as meeting organisational requirements, leaders, in order to lead, must meet the needs of front line workers at risk of burnout and compassion fatigue, while at the same time promote socially inclusive environments (Curtis, Moriarty and Netten 2009). These tensions require students to develop an acute sense of self awareness; to understand how leadership skills can be developed in self and others; and to begin to think strategically in response to the multiple demands of local and broader structural contexts.

The capacity to critically reflect on theoretical positioning, current and future skills, self-assessment and professional development, is important, if not central, to the leadership learning process. For students, learning about leadership also involves confronting its difficult aspects such as dealing with interpersonal conflict and decision making. Such potentially difficult interactions are critical or meaningful in some way. Critical (positive or negative) interactions are usually the starting point for reflective exercises. Oterholm (2009, p. 363) described critical reflection as the examination of 'power relations and hegemonic assumptions guiding one's actions' that includes searching for alternative understandings. Tensions can exist between organisational goals and organisational survival and the needs of staff and service users in a climate of managerialism. Negotiating these tensions requires a critical approach and an understanding of both social work and leadership theories, necessary to meet multiple and conflicting obligations. A repertoire of skill sets including critical reflection are necessary to understand complexity, multiple perspectives, dynamics operating within and between organisations and the capacity to deal with the people within them at a range of levels (Tilbury, Osmond and Scott 2010). Brookfield (2009) distinguished between a reflective process where key assumptions are clarified and questioned and a critical approach where embedded ideologies that lead social workers to unquestioningly further the interests of others are challenged. Embedded ideologies are expressed as practical, that is, by particular behaviours or practices, the expected cultural norms in a particular group; *theoretical*, by rationalisations and conceptualisations underpinning behaviours and practices such as professional versus non professional identities; and institutional, the systematic organisation of particular rationalisations and conceptualisations (Albury 1976; Fook 2002, p. 57). A critically reflective process that encompasses these concepts is relevant to future leaders. Reflecting on leadership requires the exercise of a high degree of self awareness that includes identifying and challenging: one's own assumptions about self; the attribution of privilege to the professional position; and the underlying schema of the institutions for whom one works.

Critical reflection as practiced in the *Developing Practice and Leadership* course utilised a four stage process of reflection and integration: 1) a critical reflection on the leadership literature, its relevance to human service organisations and the student as a developing leader; 2) contradictions and alternate views elucidated in case scenarios and multimedia activities conducted in workshops; 3) the development of strategies for the transfer of alternative views generated in these workshops into practice situations; and 4) an ongoing self-evaluation of leadership actuality and potential that included the formulation of a reflexive, personalised, professional development plan for leadership growth along the professional lifespan.

THE LEADERSHIP COURSE

The aim of the *Developing Practice and Leadership* course was to develop strategic and critical leadership capacities in emerging social work leaders in the policy, organisational and practice domains of human services work. The course was redesigned based on student feedback to incorporate a stronger practical focus. It used a critically reflective approach to leadership education. Students were required to engage in four written reflection exercises during the semester and to incorporate their learning and a personalised professional development plan in a final assessment piece. There were a number of challenges relating to creating learning environments conducive to the development of knowledge and skills that could be delivered in a blended learning format for on-campus students and in distance mode. A critical approach that focused on personal leadership development in a way that was meaningful for students from diverse backgrounds and experience was considered essential to student learning.

The course content was delivered in five modules containing a range of topics that included leadership and management theory; power, authority and responsibility; strategic thinking; initiating and working with change; the nature of organisations; organisational climate and culture; teams; community leadership; problem solving; conflict resolution; decision making; performance management; professional development; mentoring; self-awareness; and self-care. The same course content was delivered via two learning modes. The course for on-campus students was in a blended learning format that included a series of on-line lectures, readings and five half day workshops throughout the semester. The on-line lectures, recorded by colleagues in the faculty, had the dual purpose of utilising particular areas of expertise while providing variety to the students. Workshop activities focused on integrating information from lectures and the literature through practical learning activities and use of multimedia such as web-based clips.

A development team assisted in the design of the on-line course in recognition of the importance of expertise and technical support for effective, visually attractive and user-friendly web based material (Freddolino and Knaggs 2005). As stressed by Maidment (2006) the design of web based material is much more than the transfer of hard copy material to an on-line format. Tools such as on-line lectures, 'coffee shop' for private student discussions, asynchronistic online discussions, multimedia and other interactive exercises and resource materials were utilised. Teacher involvement in stimulating student engagement and online activities considered important occurred throughout the semester. Additional student support was available via email and telephone as required. In this particular course, students were relatively technically 'savvy' though both on-line and on campus students experienced a number of difficulties with their home based computers during the semester. Previous studies have highlighted the need for student access to technical support (Oterholm 2009) and this support was available through the university help desk. It should be noted that the focus of this paper is not on the course evaluation, but rather on the experience of student reflection on their present and future leadership capacities.

METHOD

Consultation with Griffith University Human Research Ethics and Governance determined

that the material collected was for teaching and learning purposes and formal ethics approval was not required. However, consensual participation was considered important. A formal request was sent to students requesting their participation. Students consented in writing and reforwarded their assessment material (which had already been marked and course evaluations completed) as part of that consent. It was made explicit that the focus was not on student marks, rather on their experience of leadership development. Out of sixty-one Masters of Social Work (qualifying) and fourth (final year) undergraduate social work students, seventeen students consented for their work, conducted over one semester, to be analysed and used for this paper. All work and any references to particular organisations or persons were de-identified. Of the seventeen students, eight were external students who completed the course on-line and nine were on-campus students from two campuses. No formal demographic data was taken. However, it was known that one student was male and there was a small cohort of international students and students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Participating students ranged from those who commenced university from school to older students aged in their fifties. The external students were geographically dispersed. Most students were working in some capacity and many had multiple demands such as family responsibilities. Some had past or current experience in human services fields of practice, some held qualifications in other disciplines such as nursing or education, while others had only their field practicum experiences to draw on.

The data corpus was in total five written pieces of work provided by each of the seventeen participating students: four critical reflections on particular aspects of leadership covered during the course and selected as personally meaningful by the student; and an essay that included a self-analysis of the student's leadership potential and a personalised plan for development as a practice leader. The material was first read and ideas written down. All data was then entered into a QSR Nvivo Program used to facilitate coding and identify systematic relationships in the coding. Reflection on the data occurred during the first reading, data entry, re-reading and line by line coding maintaining a constant relationship with the data. Themes were categorised under nodes until saturation was reached.

A thematic inductive analysis utilising a postmodern narrative approach (Reissman 1993) was conducted on the coded material. The focus was on the narratives students told about themselves in their writing to construct their subjective, present and future leadership selves, and the multiple perspectives and contradictions they came to understand in the reflection process. Reissman (1993) highlighted the importance of subjective realities, the interpretation of past events, and the meaningful connections created between past, present and future truths, that link the personal and political in a re-imagined self. The identification of themes and the analysis were influenced by the motivations of the authors (and teachers of this course) to understand the student experience of learning and an emerging leadership identity. The stories told by students described critical incidents. Critical reflections on these incidents enabled students to transit from past to future identities, connect theory to practice and describe how they came to understand their own personal and professional capacity as leaders. These processes were of particular interest in the analysis and were compared to the literature on critically reflective practice and leadership in the final stages of analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The diversity of student experiences and backgrounds was reflected in their stories. No discernable differences were noted in the work provided by external and on campus students, rather variations were related to specific work and life experiences. Despite differences in experience and perspectives and the small sample size, several themes did emerge. Three of these themes are discussed: *self-transformation; caring for self; and value based leadership.*

SELF-TRANSFORMATION

The first theme, *self-transformation*, describes transformational shifts from student self-identities of relative powerlessness where power is possessed by 'someone else' and leadership skills and qualities are attributed to others in organisations, to self identities where enacting power or influence differently was a real possibility. Fook (2002) also described the uncomfortable relationship social workers haves with power. There is tendency for social workers to construct themselves as powerless and subject to power that is held by others such as supervisors and bureaucracies. This discomfort was present and posed challenges for students developing a leadership self-identity. The following excerpts describe the starting positions and future possibilities of leadership self identity of two students.

I did not consider myself as a leader until I reflected on the journey...

Developing leadership in my practice is a new concept for me. I have never considered the possibility, until now. The shift has been somewhat exciting and yet full of anxiety and doubt.

Many students did not attribute power to their self concept, as described below.

I am a person who doesn't always feel comfortable with my power…I have tended to stay out of the way…I don't feel I have ever been comfortable in the leadership role…

Shifting an ingrained self perception involved challenging practical ideologies and reconstructing a new understanding that leadership was not necessarily dependent on positional authority. This is described in the following excerpt from another student.

I have never been a leader, mostly I am quite happy to be a follower, and have often shirked the responsibility that leading entails...However, [reflecting on these issues], I believe that we are all leaders at certain times.

The transformative process for many students was initialised by reflecting on critical events such as conflict situations. Their transformation involved the deconstruction and reconstruction of power interrelationships and the acceptance of new and multiple realities. Dichotomous binaries of the perpetrator/ victim in conflict shifted during a critically reflective process. Conflict situations were described by students as the most difficult to manage, and for some lowered self-esteem and diminished confidence were attributed to unresolved, ongoing conflict situations. Yet it is these critical incidents that initialised a

critically reflective process and the emergence of alternative perspectives. Two examples are illustrated below.

This [reflecting on conflict] *was very important to me, as I have often seen conflict as only negative, and never using it to help turn the next conflict into a positive by examining it later on…Although I understand what the level of conflict is to me, I have never really thought about what it was to the other person involved. The person I had conflict with…while we were discussing it, I commented that I found the conflict to be of discomfort, but she found it to be a misunderstanding* [referring to levels of conflict as defined by Elder (1994)]. *I started to think about this in my future practice, as I find conflict to be at a different level than the other person involved…*

I believe I was very self-aware when dealing with this person and also made sure I managed the relationship between myself and her, however this took a number of months and several learning curves to be able to do this effectively…I believe that is an on-going experience as your identity changes with the more learning you have…It takes time to get to know somebody and understand what is going on for them, especially when they don't tell you.. I can see what I need to do to manage my relationship with my boss more effectively and allow for this to support the development of my leadership skills however; it is difficult to just change! It is almost as if the leadership skills I asserted with the previous boss need to be re-defined and fine tuned…Through the process of self-awareness I am slowly getting there and I am pulling myself up when I think within the old framework of the previous management and use this time to take a step back and reflect so that I can see what I am doing, what I need to do and implement the changes.

One concerning issue noted in the above excerpts was identified as a common experience during the analysis. With few exceptions, students identified one or a series of negative relationships with supervisors in paid employment, usually in the human services or related fields. Students described how they and/ or their teams at times felt bullied, misunderstood and misrepresented and linked these experiences to burnout. Though students were able to reconstruct the scenarios by ascribing shared power and responsibility in interactions and the realisation of multiple truths, the frequency of these reports in the data was alarming. On reflection, an interpersonal analysis of conflict that focuses on the lack of leadership skills in individual managers and lack of leadership education would explain this phenomenon. An alternative or perhaps concurrent explanation, however, explores the impact of managerialism and the changing and uncertain contexts within which health and welfare is practised. Since the 1980s, reforms in Australian state and federal public sectors known as 'new public management', has increased emphases on privatisation, performance and cost cutting measures resulting in initiatives such as salary negotiation, performance-based pay, outsourcing services and downsizing (Di Francesco, 2001; O'Donnell et al, 1999) placing new pressures on managers in both government and non government sectors. In addition to leadership skills, a critically reflective approach that includes a focus on embedded ideologies as described by Brookfield (2009) and Fook (2002) would enable those in management and leadership positions to approach practice differently. Acquiring leadership skills alone is insufficient. It must be combined with a reflexive stance that is critical. It is these student experiences of conflict and the relationship to their own leadership development that leads to the second theme, *caring for self.*

CARING FOR SELF

Conflict with superiors was directly linked to psychological and biological stress responses.

The word 'painfully' is certainly the feeling I can identify with …recently these effects worsened for me and I realised where the conflict was coming from. The conflict was happening between my boss and myself. The situation worsened so much I had a panic attack…

Other students described the stressful consequences of work based conflict and multiple demands and its relationship to their leadership capacities.

I find working as a community worker very rewarding as I really enjoy helping people yet I have experienced times when I have felt burnt out. The stress I have experienced as a service provider has impacted on my leadership ability. When stressed I struggle to make clear decisions and have not got the energy to be supportive or proactive let alone inspiring.

Although, I was quite conscious of the amount of stress I was putting on myself by trying to do much more than was expected, the pie exercise really opened my eyes as to amount of time I was spending at work to satisfy my clients and the organizational needs…I soon realized how much I was wearing myself down from the high work and study caseload which not always brought the desired outcomes and hence dissatisfaction which rose my stress level. I was slowly starting to lose enthusiasm and that started to reflect on my work environment and in my social and family environment.

Students utilising reflection were able to identify and describe their experiences of stress, ascribe the importance of self-care to leadership, identify concrete strategies that could address their self-care needs in the short and long term, and reported an increased sense of mastery over their situations as a result. These negative experiences also provided a yardstick against which they could measure their future approaches to conflict resolution. The experiences of these students are consistent with those described in the literature in relation to organisational contexts, feeling valued, the quality and type of supervisory support and the impact on other aspects of their lives (Beddoe 2010; Lloyd and Chenoweth 2002; McLean and Andrew 2000; Reid et al. 1999). On the other hand, the relationship between stress and social work leadership, in terms of relationship conflict as well as the impact of stress on leaders themselves, has received less attention. Two exceptions are a UK study by Mclean and Andrew (2000) that found a high incidence of reported stress by managers and a study by Beddoe (2009) conducted in New Zealand, that reported managers of human services organisations felt the negative effects of bureaucratic processes as much as front line practitioners. Students in contemporary Australia pay fees for tertiary education, are often working, and have multiple family and other responsibilities. In addition, international students, those from diverse backgrounds and those students with young families or elderly parents experience a range of additional pressures. It is concerning that participating students did report high levels of stress. This means graduates may already be experiencing stress or life pressures prior to the commencement of a social work career. How student development plans that included stress management strategies will translate to the reality of organisational contexts and be integrated into self concepts as aspiring leaders in the field is yet to be determined.

Sources of stress for social workers have been attributed to conflicts between values, role expectations and administrators (Lloyd and Chenoweth 2002; McLean and Andrew 2000; Reid et al. 1999). Yet, it is social work values and skills that students conceptualised as appropriate for their future leader-selves despite reported incongruence between core values, organisational constraints on practitioner actions (Gardner 2009), previous negative experiences and uneasy relationships with power.

VALUE BASED LEADERSHIP

Students overwhelmingly identified with and aspired to transformational leadership as described by Hughes and Wearing (2007). As shown in the excerpts below, transformational leadership provided a familiar point of reference that was consistent with student self perception and values found in social work such as social justice, egalitarianism and respect.

A transformational approach appeals to [me] *as it places a strong emphasis on morals and values and emphasises the importance of others…it is further anticipated that the adoption, maintenance and ongoing review of this plan will ultimately facilitate positive changes in line with social work ethics, values and principles to the culture of the organisations and the lives of service users and communities that I work with in the future.*

I consider my strong interest in forming relationships and preference to be inclusive within those relationships are innate characteristics I possess. Therefore I am strongly attracted to the transformational leadership process…Cementing my appeal to transactional leadership is that both leader and follower prosper and form strong connections…I am generally more interested in understanding the complexities of people's roles and how they manage them. I prefer to discuss with people their values, strengths and goals... My style reflects my ease with shared transformational leadership.

Not all students could identify as leaders at this stage of their careers but could identify with certain skills required to lead others. Students understood the practice of transformational leadership as one that involves the utilisation of skills taught in social work programs such as communication, decision making and problem solving. The synergy between social work and transformational leadership was an area where students felt they had achieved certain competence and represented practices they could envisage.

…communication skills are an important part of successful leadership. I'd like to think that I have well developed communication skills, however, there is lots of room for improvement. I have developed skills in being tactful, as well as explaining and teaching something new. I am good at encouraging others as well as motivating them.

Transformational leaders focus on developing positive relationships with others. I believe that I am effective at working with others and have developed the ability to build trust and rapport with a wide range of people… In addition, I have developed a considerable degree of empathy as a result of the ten years of working… I have also learned the importance of acknowledging the feelings of others… My practice experience has taught me that people need support and want to be recognised for their achievements…

The strong preference for this type of leadership, that is, leadership that is empowering and relational, is not necessarily an idealised view of future self as many students had been employed in the health and welfare sectors and had experienced the pressures of frontline work and different leadership styles first hand. Gellis (2001) found that social workers were more satisfied with and motivated by leaders who displayed transformational leadership behaviours. However, expectations regarding the style of leadership managers should or are expected to exhibit compared to the realities of day to day practice may contribute to the dissatisfaction experienced by workers and conflict situations previously described. However, shifts in the *self-transformation* domain indicate that some students were able to progress their understanding of difficult working relationships and the power interplays enacted within them differently. In general, students were able to describe a balanced self-analysis, achievable long term plans for their professional development and realistic assessments of the pros and cons of leadership as described in the following excerpt.

Placing value on people rather than treating them as objects fits well with my personal values and leadership style, however this can be a difficult thing to do in practice as there is a need to balance people's desires and opinion with that of the organisational goals. This is an important skill to keep at the forefront of my mind and I think it will take practice for me to fully implement this skill.

For some, a leadership role was beyond what an inexperienced student could envisage, but it was no longer a proposition that was true or false rather one that might be possible in their future professional lives.

I have learnt…that I am a leader who is willing to fight for this profession we call social work. I now see and understand why this course has been made part of this degree and perhaps despite my inability at present to see myself in a leadership role, after completing this course, my thinking may be different.

The themes of *self-transformation, caring for self* and *value based leadership* were not surprising given the learning process was inclusive of literature concerning leadership and social work leadership. What was interesting was the construction of self as a potential leader and how shifts in one domain, such as understanding how a lack of assertiveness may contribute to a difficult situation, triggered a shift within another domain such as self care. What was surprising was the degree of workplace stress reported by students and the importance of sociocultural context and structural conditions within which the narratives were told. It can be inferred that leadership cannot be taught without addressing self care issues. Workload, work relationships and professional development were issues at the forefront and have implications for the learning needs of students and the development of leadership courses. Using critical reflection to develop leadership skills enabled students through narrative to deconstruct ideologies and assumptions and to reconstruct their developing professional identities and leadership potential. Positive experiences of role models and mentors, not discussed in this paper, balanced challenging and at times negative experiences. Students' understandings of notions of power, interpersonal differences, appreciation of others' perspectives, and one's own contributions to difficult interactions

expanded. The importance of professional supervision as a component of personal development plans was important to all participating students.

The aim of the paper was to analyse and present the issues self-selected by students as significant and meaningful and for the authors (and teachers of this course) to understand the student experience of learning and developing an emerging leadership identity. The reflection process and shifts in *self-transformation and caring for self* domains became clear during the analysis. Personal meaning and an integration into student self identities were apparent in narratives. In contrast, the reflective process was less in depth in relation to the wholesale attraction to transformational leadership. Certainly, transformational leadership is preferred by women and shares many similarities with a social work approach (Mary 2005). It fits snugly but does this easy fit make its adoption a comfortable process thereby diminishing a critical approach? Other leadership approaches may have value and be useful in practice depending on context while examining conceptual weaknesses of all theoretical perspectives remains important in the reflection process (Yukl 1999). A preference for transformational leadership may still have been the outcome for students following a critical process that can recognise and challenge how power is also enacted in transformational leadership styles and the contested nature of social work itself (Brookfield 2009). The emphasis is on *after* a critical process.

In our own reflective process as teachers, it is important to consider the possibility that concepts that fit easily into existing ideology may inhibit a reflective process and lead to a 'confirmation bias' (Kee and Bickle 2004, p.610; Tilbury, Osmond and Scott 2010, p.44). How do we identify what these issues are and how can we address them differently to ensure reflexivity? Perhaps, by exercising our own reflections as teachers, we raise our awareness of which concepts students might simply adopt because it is easy to do so. In terms of teaching leadership approaches, a greater critical emphasis on *theoretical ideology* (ideas, rationalisations or conceptualisations (Fook 2002)) may be indicated, remembering that 'social work' is *not* identical to 'leadership'. It may not simply be a matter of examining ingrained rationalisations, understanding them and making links to perspectives that fit easily. Rather, assisting students in their struggle with less palatable theoretical approaches and examining the aspects that are not congruent with social work may maintain attention on the critical process and better prepare students for future leadership. The deconstruction of leadership approaches, their reassembling and integration into a changed leadership self-identity may have occurred but this process was not clearly identifiable during the analysis of the students' work. In fact the self-concept was not changed in this domain, rather it stayed the same or at best attracted 'add-ons'.

Additional insights into students' experiences may have been enhanced by approaching the issue as a formal research project, collecting data from other sources such as interviews with students, using evaluation instruments or measurement tools such as the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) (Bass and Avolio 2000). Research is perhaps the next step to extending understandings about how students incorporate leadership into their professional identities. It could be argued that the material provided by students was constrained by the limits of assignment writing and expectations of the markers. The inclusion of additional data sources such as surveys may have addressed this issue. However,

the thinking and writing process is in itself a reflective exercise (Fook 2002) that can be reflected on.

CONCLUSION

From an educator's perspective, there is a difference between teaching leadership and teaching 'about' leadership. A critical approach promoted the former. The most significant challenge was to assist students to see themselves as actual or potential leaders. The integration of practical activities in face-to-face workshops and in distance mode with the literature and personal experiences assisted the student learning and reflection process. The material became meaningful to students as they began to recognise nuances and unpack the processes that contributed to their experiences.

Given the volatile political and changing milieu in which social workers practice, further research on the preparation of social work students for leadership roles in the Australian context is needed. Likewise, a focus on the health of our future social work leaders and practitioners may be an important element to extending the working lifespan of social workers estimated at eight years in the United Kingdom (Curtis, Moriarty and Netten 2009). The challenges of providing learning environments that support emerging professional identities; are conducive to the development of knowledge and skills; and relevant to students from diverse backgrounds and experiences and their future roles; are highlighted. This is of particular importance when delivered in multiple and flexible learning modes. Critical reflection that focuses on personal leadership development in a meaningful way was considered essential to the integration of theoretical knowledge, skill development, and the individualised contexts of the students described in this paper. Likewise, critically reflecting on how education was delivered and students' experiences enabled a fresh perspective on the conflation of leadership theory, professional identities and future practices while highlighting the importance of developing leadership capacity within the profession.

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What do we see when we look in the mirror? A critical reflection on the missing role of the social worker as an educator in everyday practice.

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ABSTRACT

Critical reflection on the roles and tasks of social workers is undertaken continually as part of the process of defining and redefining the profession's mission and purpose. As part of this ongoing process a number of internationally significant reports examining the future shape and direction of social work have been released in recent years. None of these reports include a specific role for social workers as educators in the context of every day direct client work across a wide range of fields of practice. It is argued that the educator role in social work is fundamental to achieving the profession's goals of empowerment, social justice and anti oppressive practice. However until this role is given the recognition it deserves, the theory, practice knowledge and skills required to carry it out successfully will not be given the weight they deserve in social work curricula both in Aotearoa New Zealand and on the international stage. A New Zealand wide research project is planned for 2011 to further explore the argument developed in this article that the essential role of the social worker as educator in every day practice requires a fresh appraisal and due recognition in curricula and standards of best practice.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SOCIAL WORKER'S WARDROBE

Over half a century ago C. Wright Mills (1959) developed the concept of the sociological imagination to describe the way in which personal problems could be understood in the context of public issues. The linking of personal stories and social, historical, political and geographical forces through the sociological imagination is fundamental to the way in which social work defines its unique contribution to global society today. Over the course of social work's history, however, debates have inevitably arisen around how best to achieve the profession's primary goals of empowerment, social justice and anti-oppressive practice (International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) (2004). Furthermore, while it is acknowledged that social work's core values remain largely consistent, it is also considered that characteristics of the profession are contested and will change over time. (Cree, 2003; Blewett, Lewis and Tunstill, 2007). Gibelman (2004) describes this as a fluid process through which the profession is defined and defines itself as a result of both external forces and contexts and internal forces such as the stage of professional development at which it currently functions.

There are many potential frameworks for examining the nature and purpose of social work at any particular time. Coulshed (as cited in Connolly and Harms 2009) has identified a number of possible organising constructs around which such exploration and discussion can be conducted. Intervention methods, contexts and fields of practice, client groups, problem types, and practice roles and tasks are examples of these ways of organizing our understandings of social work. The purpose of this paper is to consider the organising construct of the various practice roles or collection of 'suits' in the social worker's wardrobe. Of particular interest is the widespread lack of recognition of the need for a suit tailored for the everyday social work role as educator in the context of everyday direct client work across the full range of fields of practice.

THERE ARE MANY SUITS IN THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL WORKER'S WARDROBE – BUT IS THERE ONE MISSING?

Over the years much reflection on the roles and tasks of social work has been undertaken as part of the process of defining and redefining the profession's mission and purpose. For example, a series of empirical studies was undertaken from the 1960s through to the late 1990s (Teare and Sheafor 1995). Through these major pieces of work a framework for classifying and grouping social work roles and tasks as perceived by social work practitioners from across the United States was developed and refined. Clusters relating to direct service included interpersonal helping, group work, individual/family treatment, risk assessment/ transition, protective services, case planning and management, service connection and tangible service provision. Education, as a cluster of tasks, was not amongst them. Tasks that could be considered educative, such as coaching and training and guiding/advising consumers, were included in the role of counselling whilst other educative tasks came under headings relating to indirect service provision.

By 2000, the IFSW had reviewed the developing range of understandings of social work from around the globe and published an internationally agreed definition tailored to meet the needs and demands of the early 21st century:

The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work (IFSW 2000).

In refining this definition the federation stated that social work might take the form of counselling and clinical services with individuals and families, group work, social pedagogical work, community development, social policy planning and development, administration, and direct social action. The reflection in the IFSW mirror thus shows that the social worker's wardrobe at the beginning of the 21st century held an extensive variety of everyday suits fit for a wide range of roles. It also shows that several of these suits contained threads that could be seen as aspects of an educator role - but should there have been a special and unique suit for the social worker as educator?

As the profession moved on through the first decade of the century, critical reflection on social work's roles and futures continued on the international stage through a succession of significant reports. In 2001 Canada's Association of Social Workers hosted an intersectoral forum that led to the production of three papers examining social work practice and education in that country (MacDonald and Adachi 2001; MacDougall 2001; Rondea, 2001). In 2006 the Scottish Government released its influential report *Changing Lives: Report of the 21st Century Social Work Review.* This was followed in 2008 by the English General *Social Care Council's Social Work at its Best: A Statement of Social Work Roles and Tasks for the 21st Century.* In each of the reports a primary objective was to determine the key responsibilities for social workers in their rapidly changing societies Their findings showed a social work wardrobe filled with everyday suits for the roles of counsellors, advocates, assessors of risk and need, care managers and agents of social control- but not for the social worker as educator. The International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) added their contribution to the development of the social work wardrobe in 2004 with everyday suits tailored for roles in advocacy, capacity building, empowerment and problem solving. Once more there was no suit specifically tailored for the social worker as educator.

Today the IFSW is again engaged in the process of reviewing the nature and purpose of social work. Debate is taking place around the globe with multiple new voices joining and challenging the traditionally strong American and British perspectives. Whilst the notion of social work as a force for social change remains, there is a growing understanding that social work is also a positive force for social stability and the development of social connectedness and social capital (Howe 2008). Thompson (2009, p. 22) states that:

Working towards social change ... does not mean that social stability is not important. Trying to make a contribution to developing a more humane, compassionate society in which discrimination and oppression are not tolerated does not preclude working to maintain and safeguard many aspects of the social order. Social work can, then, legitimately claim to contribute to social stability without reinforcing inequalities or social injustices. That is, social work can work towards social change and social stability- it is an oversimplification to see the two as mutually exclusive.

The Scottish Government's report on the role of the social worker in the 21st century (2006) also brings to the fore the notion of social work as an integrating force. It acknowledges that this concept has for many years informed the social integration function of European models of social work and social pedagogy. According to the authors of the report, without such an integrative function social work would not continue to have at its heart the twin goals of support and care for vulnerable groups and advocacy for those groups to have the right to be included in society.

THE EVERYDAY SOCIAL WORK WARDROBE IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

It is within the context of these changing global perspectives and reflections that social work in Aotearoa New Zealand has evolved and matured. A large scale quantitative study exploring the nature of the suits made for social workers in the New Zealand context was undertaken in 1982. Led by Brad Sheafor, Visiting Fulbright Scholar for Social Work at Massey University, this extensive study was developed for the New Zealand context from Sheafor and Teare's earlier work in the United States discussed above. Its findings showed that the most well worn suits for social workers at that time across a variety of fields of practice were counselling and problem solving (Sheafor 1982). A lesser suit tailored for a role as teacher was identified in the study and a number of threads which potentially could be considered part of an educator's role were found to be of statistical significance. Professor Sheafor's findings provide a unique snapshot of social work in New Zealand in the 1980s. Whilst not reflecting either the growing Maori and Pasifika influence on current day social work practice and theory or the changing nature of the demands on social work in the 21st century, the research remains the most comprehensive of its type undertaken in the New Zealand context.

In the time since the Sheafor study was undertaken, social work in Aotearoa New Zealand has continued to develop in a way that blends internationally accepted definitions, standards and methods with practice that has evolved through the country's position as a South Pacific island nation (Connolly 2001). Social work in New Zealand, along with Australia, has been reshaped by the forces of neo-liberal economic theory resulting in the overturning of the 'traditional welfare state role of the social worker' (Shannon and Young 2004, p. 9).

In addition, a significant influence has come from Maori, the tangata whenua of Aotearoa (Ruwhiu 2001). Te Tiriti o Waitangi, signed in the 1800s, codified the rights and responsibilities of both the Crown and the Maori peoples. It stands as a living text and shapes local social work practice today through documents such as the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers' (2008) Bi-cultural Code of Practice, now incorporated into a bilingual Code of Ethics. Within this context Maori social workers have continued to develop and expand their own practice knowledge and theory (Payne 2007).

… indigenous peoples, especially in post-colonial societies like Australia and New Zealand, have rejected all… orthodoxies and are now demanding that their knowledges be taken seriously, accepted as valid and practice be based around them. (Shannon and Young 2004, p.9).

The first decade of the 21st century has seen major shifts in the development of New

Zealand social work as a result of forces such as those described above. Over and above these the much heralded arrival of the professional registration era in 2003 focused social workers' attention on their reflection in the mirror as never before. In 2008 the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Work Educators, the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers, the Tertiary Education Commission, the Ministry of Social Development, Te Kaiawhina Ahumahi (the Industry Training Organisation for the Social Services) and the Social Work Registration Board undertook a series of meetings to discuss the future direction and shape of social work in this country (Tertiary Education Commission, 2008). Connolly and Harms (2009, p. 453) suggested that the future lies in the continuing development of a distinct social work perspective based in Aotearoa New Zealand's unique view of the world and 'a rich depth of cultural and professional knowledge'. A framework for this development lies within the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (2007) statement of the broad tasks of social work:

Social work is about working with people to enhance their problem-solving and coping skills so as to put them in better control of their lives - to provide them with voice, choice and hope... Social work is about working to influence the development and improvement of policies that shape social services to ensure they are effective and humane.

While these task statements do not fit neatly within the organizing construct of practice roles, they can be seen to provide a framework within which a role for the social worker as educator in Aotearoa New Zealand might emerge. In a similar manner Connolly and Harms (2009) do not include educator in their examples of three key roles for the social worker in Australasia (they identify these as advocate, service provider and protector of at risk populations and individuals) but they do describe education as one of the many threads woven into the suits in the social worker's wardrobe.

UNTANGLING THE THREADS - THE MISSING EVERYDAY SUIT FOR THE SOCIAL WORKER AS EDUCATOR.

Whilst it is generally accepted that social work practitioners such as supervisors, trainers and lecturers do have educative roles, the same level of recognition has not been accorded to social workers engaged in everyday practice in a wide range of social work settings. It is considered here that social workers' skills as educators are critical to excellent practice with the full range of client groups and service users encountered - individuals at all stages of life, families, wh nau and communities. In addition, a role for the social worker as educator fits well within the developing global understanding of social work as a force for social stability as well as social change.

Thompson (2009, p.74), supported the argument that education is an important aspect of social work.

In thinking of the social worker as a person who is engaged in problem solving activities, one aspect that comes to mind is the significant role of education... Playing an educational role can ... be an important part of being a professional problem solver and can be a significant source

of empowerment by helping people gain greater depth and breadth of understanding of the challenges they face and thereby being better equipped to tackle them.

BUT IS A WHOLE NEW SUIT NEEDED? COULD THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL PEDAGOGUE'S SUIT ALREADY BE A PERFECT FIT FOR THE SOCIAL WORKER AS EDUCATOR IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND?

It might be considered that a direct link between social work and an educative role is already made through the concept of 'social pedagogy', referred to in the IFSW definition of social work given above. Pedagogy is a term used most often in English-speaking countries to describe the science of education (including theories of teaching and learning). In Germany and other predominantly non-English-speaking central and eastern European countries, however it has a different connotation (Children in Scotland, 2008) and a rich heritage of educational theory underpins its practice. Durkheim, Rousseau, Montessori, Tönnies, Weber (Lorenz 2008), Friere, Bandura and Bourdieu (Stephens 2009) are writers and theorists associated with its development. Stephens (2009, p.344) states that the 'primary social pedagogic goal here [in Norway] is to nurture healthy cognitive and social development in every day settings'. He goes on to define social pedagogy as:

The study and practice of deliberative care, education and upbringing, viewed holistically rather than as separate entities, and with an emphasis on finding pedagogical ways of nurturing and supporting positive social development (Stephens 2009, p. 347).

The Scottish Government report (2005) argues that the educative element of social pedagogy is found in that profession's primary philosophical position that people can be enabled to deal with their individual social situations through acquiring relevant skills and knowledge. The social pedagogue's role is thus to educate the client or service user in developing those skills and that knowledge.

According to Lorenz (2008, p.636) the most significant difference between social pedagogy and social work is that social pedagogy is not 'deficit –oriented'.

It regards all children, and indeed all human beings, as, on the one hand, in need of educational guidance for the full development of their potential, more explicitly obviously in youth and in crisis situations, and, on the other hand, as capable of always developing themselves further, provided the requisite resources are available.

Pedagogues are found throughout Europe in diverse settings primarily, but not only, concerned with the care of children. They are not confined to working with those 'in need' or 'at risk' as social workers generally are, but may be nursery or pre-school staff, or workers in out-of-school educational services or residential settings (Petrie, Boddy, Cameron, Wigfall and Simon 2006)

Whilst the suit of the European social pedagogue has many threads in common with those of the social worker in a global context, it is not considered by academics to fit neatly within the wardrobes of any existing occupation or profession in many English-speaking countries

because of the fundamentally different structural and political arrangements underpinning its development (Lorenz 2008; Stephens 2009).

WHAT DOES THE NEED FOR A NEW SUIT MEAN FOR THE SCHOOLS OF SOCIAL WORK AS TAILORS FOR THE SOCIAL WORKER'S WARDROBE?

The existing suits in the social work wardrobe have been woven from threads comprised of:

- Practice skills in, and knowledge of, assessment, relationship building and helping processes … for the purposes of social support, and developmental, protective, preventive and/or therapeutic intervention…

- The application of social work values, ethical principles, knowledge and skills to confront inequality and social, political and economic injustices.

- Knowledge of social work research and skills in the use of research methods, including ethical use of relevant research paradigms, and critical appreciation of the use of research and different sources of knowledge about social work practice.

- The application of social work values, ethical principles, knowledge and skills to promote care, mutual respect and mutual responsibility amongst members of a society.

International Federation of Social Workers (2004).

O'Hagan (2000) argues that the knowledge base for social work referred to by the IASSW and IFSW comes from the academic fields of sociology, philosophy, the law, social policy and the theory of organisations, overlaid with a range of social work theories and methods such as behaviourism, psychodynamics and family therapy. Trevithick (2007) adds psychology, economics, history and anthropology to the mix. Napier and George (2001) place the knowledge base for social work in Australia squarely on the foundation disciplines of sociology and psychology with the addition of applied knowledge and skills in social policy and practice, research and ethics while Beddoe and Palmer (2008, p.1) state that social work practice in Aotearoa New Zealand today makes use of 'social science discipline based knowledge in sociology, psychology, human development, social policy, law, Treaty of Waitangi, cultural studies and communication skills'. These perspectives on the knowledge base for social work fit neatly with the New Zealand Social Workers Registration Board (SWRB) requirements for graduates from recognised social work programmes to 'integrate disciplinary understandings from biological, psychological, sociological, legal, ecological and cultural contexts to social work practice' (SWRB 2009). Whilst the Registration Board's graduate profile includes the expectation that social workers will be prepared to undertake some of the tasks that could be considered to belong to the role of educator such as 'assisting and educating people to obtain services and resources' and 'mobilis(ing) individuals, families groups, organisations and communities to enhance their well being and their problem solving capacities' (SWRB 2009), none of the sources - the Board, the IASSW, O'Hagan, Trevithick or Beddoe and Palmer - make reference to or acknowledge the potentially valuable knowledge store for social workers to be found within the discipline of education and, potentially, the theoretical frameworks of social pedagogy.

The implication for schools of social work is that if the role of the social worker as educator is not recognised in practice as being of equal value to the more widely acknowledged social work roles such as counsellor, problem solver or advocate, social work regulatory bodies and schools will not place importance on the theory and skills required to successfully meet the demands the role places on them.

Given the argument put forward here that the social worker does act as educator within every day practice and that this role incorporates a wide range of associated tasks that are both complex and demanding, it follows that the discipline of education will potentially hold a vast and complementary body of knowledge about effective practice for teaching and learning that should be adapted and woven through the largely sociological perspectives of social work academic programmes.

DESIGNING A SUIT FIT FOR THE SOCIAL WORKER AS EDUCATOR.

Weaving the cloth fit for a new suit for the social worker as educator will be an exciting mix of discovering and refining new threads from the field of education and rediscovering and reshaping educative threads that already exist within the suits hanging in the social worker's wardrobe. The outcome will be a suit that blends the traditional and the innovative to create a fresh new look that has depth and texture.

Sutherland and Crowther (2008), for example, are educational writers and theorists who argue that learning is both a cognitive and an emotional process which creates the possibility of change through a creative, critical and transformative process they term the "lifelong learning imagination". This is most simply understood as a process of facilitating people's understandings of their circumstances and developing their unique blend of skills, knowledge and ways of thinking so that they can successfully deal with their changing life situations and rapidly changing social environments (Jarvis 2005; West 2008). Their concept of the lifelong learning imagination is rooted in the tradition of educational theorists such as Gramsci, Habermas, Freire and Mezirow (Darder 2002; Morrow and Torres 2002). The work of these internationally renowned educationalists is already well threaded into social work's wardrobe principally through the use of language and ideas incorporated into the writing and thinking of those who see social workers' primary role as agents of social change. These writers generally come from transformational and critical practice perspectives (Dominelli 2002; Thompson 2009).

Freire has been particularly influential on education and social work through his argument that the purpose of education is to 'create spaces of inclusion' using dialogue based on critical thinking (Rossatto 2005, p. 21). Through such a process he considered that ordinary people can develop awareness of their individual agency and thus be empowered to make choices about their lives rather than be passive observers or objects of circumstance. He promoted the role of education with all oppressed groups in the hope of achieving truly democratic and socially just societies (Brooks 2000). Dominelli (2002, p.4) incorporates Freire's ideas for social work in her discussion on the profession's 'emancipatory' mission. This she places within the context of the social work goals of social justice, empowerment and anti oppressive practice. Thompson (2009, p.26) describes this mission of social

work as a process of 'supporting people in their struggles to break free from disadvantage, discrimination and oppression they experience as a result of their social location'.

A report produced in 1991 for the Maori caucus of the New Zealand Council for Education and Training in the Social Services reframes the notion of the transformative nature of social work into the language of the educational context:

The first task of social education is to enable the educated to empower the powerless; to give Tamaterangi the cloak that will enable him to speak. An educated social services worker should be both able and willing to free the minds of the oppressed, to enable them to see beyond the limitations of their misfortunes, to become actors taking back control in their own lives, instead of passively accepting their status as victims. (Benton, Benton, Croft and Waaka 1991).

Another social theorist, Jurgen Habermas, has also profoundly influenced not only social work but also social pedagogical perspectives over the years through his concept of communicative learning (Murphy and Fleming 2008). This involves acquiring an understanding of the many layers of communication so that through discourse or dia-lectical enquiry shared understandings of human experience can be achieved, challenged and developed.

Along with Freire, Habermas' ideas in turn influenced one educational theorist, Mezirow. His theory of transformative learning can also be considered to underpin many aspects of current social work practice, although it is arguable whether many social workers in day to day practice would be aware of his writing. Mezirow (2008) argued that when individuals encounter a significantly disorientating experience, they are forced to reconsider their most fundamental beliefs about the world and transform these to incorporate their new understandings. In essence transformative learning can be defined as a process through which assumptions, expectations, habitual ways of thinking and attributing meaning are transformed, making them more open, reflective and accessible to change (Fenwick, 2003). In recent years Jarvis (2005) and Illeris (2008) have expanded this notion further by linking life-long learning with a sense of identity, life stories and future possibilities.

Of all the transformational education theorists, Schön and Kolb are perhaps the most well known to the social work profession (Kolb, Baker and Jensen 2002; Thompson 2009). Their experiential learning theories, which in Kolb's case developed from the work of Piaget (Harrison 2007), are used widely in the teaching of new social workers (Vere-Jones 2005) and in social work supervision in the form of action-reflection models promoting sound professional practice.

It can thus be seen that the critical and transformational schools of thought in social work already weave through their cloth the ideas of a range of educational theorists. In the same way it can be seen that the writers and practitioners that give emphasis to the goals of social inclusion, social connectedness and the development of social capital also make use of educational theory. Coulshed and Orme (2006, p.176), for example, argue that learning theory is a 'vast well researched field' that offers much to social work.

Several branches of learning psychology applied in educational theory can also be seen to have significant influence on 'integrative' social work practice in Aotearoa New Zealand. For example behavioural theory is considered particularly useful for service users and learners of all ages through the use of clearly defined tasks, objectives and feedback structures in intervention (Joyce, Calhoun and Hopkins 1997).

Cognitive theory, focusing on the organisation of knowledge and memory, information processing, problem solving and decision making (Sheldon 1998), is also widely used in social work practice in areas such as family violence. For social workers as educators this means developing an understanding of different learning styles and ways of dealing with information that service users bring which may be affecting their capacity to deal effectively and positively with their social worlds.

Integrative social work and educational theorists also find a common base in the philosophy of the Humanists such as Maslow and Rodgers. At the core of this philosophy lies the notion of the human potential for growth (Howe 2008). For educationalists this means that the purpose of learning is the achievement of self awareness and a sense of self worth through development as unique individuals.

It can thus be seen that not only is integrative social work in Aotearoa New Zealand influenced in the wider sense by the various learning theories, but that a number of well known models and techniques of social work intervention, including the task centred approach (Payne 2006), are rooted in these perspectives.

Barker (1999), and Sheafor and Horejsi (2003) in their introductory texts for social work identify a specific role, or suit, for the social worker as teacher. They use a narrower frame than the concept of educator explored here – one that is concerned with a more tightly defined group of tasks, but all of which are based on the premises of learning theory. Sheafor and Horejsi identify these tasks as providing information, giving advice, identifying alternative solutions to issues and teaching techniques for solving problems. They also suggest that there is a macro level application for the teaching role in 'educating the public about the availability and quality of needed human services and the adequacy of social policies and programmes for meeting client needs' (p. 58).

PULLING THE THREADS TOGETHER TO CREATE THE FINAL GARMENT: THE DETAIL OF THE SOCIAL WORKER'S NEW SUIT EMERGES.

From the literature of the educational and social work theorists and writers discussed above the threads of a suit for the social worker as educator in everyday practice begin to emerge.

For example, from the traditions of educational theorists Freire (Darder 2002) and Monk (2004) it can be seen that the new suit will have a thread woven through it that will lead the social worker to create spaces in which service users can set aside their limitations and obstacles to learning so that they are able to reflect on their experiences and plan for change. From the work of Habermas (as cited in Mezirow 2008) a second thread will be woven through and around the first, leading the social worker to provide service users with

opportunities to examine distorting perceptions of themselves and overcome disabling anxiety that might prevent them learning new ways of successfully dealing with their changing life situations and rapidly changing social environments. This particular thread will also lead the social worker to recognise the vital importance of providing service users with access to accurate and full information and with the support essential for developing awareness of contexts, openness to alternative points of view and the skills to assess such views objectively. The writing of Mezirow (2008) and Sutherland and Crowther (2008) will lead the social worker to assist service users to take action on their transformed perspectives by facilitating the development of each individual's unique blend of skills, knowledge and ways of thinking.

Sheafor and Horejsi (2003) and Thompson (2009) weave rich and vibrant threads into the social worker's new suit as educator that come from an understanding of the profession's potential as a force for developing social stability, social connectedness and social capital (Howe 2008). Threads from this perspective will lead the social worker to work with service users to identify alternative solutions to issues, to teach techniques for solving problems, educate the public, fund holders and decision makers about the availability and quality of needed social services and about the adequacy or otherwise of social policies and programmes for meeting client needs.

Thompson (2009) contributes the understanding that the suit for the social worker as educator must be based on the notion of partnership. By this he means working together to develop learning rather than just 'transferring information' (Thompson 2009, p. 77). He sees that, as empowering facilitators, social workers will cultivate the process of learning in all clients and service users regardless of their backgrounds and beginning capacities. Thompson's threads will thus lead the social worker to share knowledge specific to their field of practice (such as the understanding of how social service organisations and policies work) to help clients and service users gain greater control over their lives. Wearing the suit of the educator, the social worker's professional knowledge and skills will be harnessed to counterbalance perspectives that traditionally have had the effect of 'pathologising and disempowering individuals' (Thompson 2009, p. 82).

The discussion in this section shows that the threads to be woven into the fabric for the new suit for the social worker as educator are only just beginning to emerge. Many of those that will eventually be incorporated into the final cloth are still waiting to be discovered and chosen. It is considered that deeper exploration of the theory and practice of education and learning will bring forward exciting new possibilities that will further enhance the social worker's reflection in the mirror.

CONCLUSION- WHERE SHOULD THE NEW SUIT FIT IN THE SOCIAL WORKER'S WARDROBE?

To achieve its internationally shared goals of empowerment, social justice and anti-oppressive practice (IFSW 2004) social work must continue to critically reflect on its understanding of what best practice entails and how best to achieve it. In Aotearoa New

Zealand social work is a dynamic profession that thrives on developing and responding to the challenges of the social world in which it exists (Nash 1998).

It is argued that the development of an educator role for social work that harnesses what has been termed 'the lifelong learning imagination' (Sutherland and Crowther 2008, p.3) will be a vital step in achieving local and international social work goals in relation to both social change and social stability. In future decades it is envisaged that the suit of educator will proudly hang in the social work wardrobe with equal standing alongside existing well established and acknowledged suits. Ultimately education is about changing people's lives (Merriam and Brockett 2007; Dowie and Gibson 2008). Until the role is accorded the recognition it deserves however, the theory, practice knowledge and skills required to fulfil it successfully will not be given the weight they deserve in social work curricula both in Aotearoa New Zealand and on the international stage.

A New Zealand wide research project is planned for 2011 to further explore the theme of this article and contribute to a fresh approach to our understanding of social work, its practice and theoretical foundations.

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Shifting the focus from expert-centred to student-centred learning resources: Creating student-centred learning resources for direct practice

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ABSTRACT

There is a lack of suitable multimedia resources for student learning in the three core methods of social work and human services practice: case work, group work, and community practice. In particular, there are very few audiovisual resources on direct practice that do justice to the particular contexts and complexities of social work practice. Existing audiovisual resources tend to focus on generic communication skills, or alternatively assume contexts such as clinical counselling that are not directly applicable to social work or the human services. In this article we provide an overview of a project that aimed to produce peer-based audiovisual learning materials for students in direct practice courses in social work and human services programs. In addition to describing this project, we consider the significance and benefits of involving students rather than 'experts' in developing these teaching and learning resources in terms of expanding traditional understandings of student-centred instruction.

Keywords: *Direct practice; teaching; student-generated content; audiovisual resources*

INTRODUCTION

The successful acquisition of skills in direct practice is one of the preconditions for students going on professional field placements. In order for students to learn and effectively apply the core methods of practice, they need to be able to directly observe the skills being demonstrated in context, practise their application, and receive feedback on their performance. In this sense, it has been suggested that students 'learn by doing' (Schön, 1987, p. 17), which is also one of the key tenets of student-centred learning (O'Neill and McMahon, 2005). Observation of others demonstrating practice skills in contexts relevant to the application of those skills is an important part of skills acquisition (Koprowska, 2003; Trevithick, Richards, Ruch and Moss, 2004; Gillingham, 2008). In this regard, the use of audiovisual materials has become an integral and important part of teaching direct practice (Chan, 1993). It is the use of such audiovisual materials that are the focus of this paper, which describes a project which sought to develop a set of peer-based audiovisual resources for teaching direct practice. In doing so, we consider how this project expands on traditional understandings of student-centred instruction to incorporate the use of student-generated content for teaching and learning purposes.

The structure of the paper is as follows. First, we survey the small but growing body of literature on the use of student-generated content in higher education before considering how it may complement a student-centred approach to teaching direct practice. Following on from this discussion, we critically examine the suitability of a range of existing audiovisual materials on offer for teaching direct practice. Next, we describe an Australian based project funded through a teaching and learning grant which aimed to produce a set of student-centred audiovisual resources for teaching direct practice. In the final section of the paper, we reflect on the pedagogical potential of moving beyond traditional understandings of student-centred instruction to incorporate the active involvement of students in actually developing teaching and learning resources.

STUDENTS AS PRODUCERS RATHER THAN CONSUMERS OF CONTENT

In contrast to traditional teacher-centred instruction, student-centred instruction positions students as active participants in both learning and teaching (Felder and Brent, 1996; Weimer, 2002). Adopting such an approach entails a move away from a teacher-centred model of knowledge transfer and recognising the role of both 'student and tutor alike in the revision and making of knowledge' (Martin, 2009, p. 302). As a broad based approach to teaching, student-centred instruction encompasses a range of methods and strategies such as cooperative learning, peer tutoring, inquiry-based learning, group work, and the use of role plays and simulations (Felder and Brent, 1996). Advocates of student-centred instruction claim that it increases students' motivation to learn and allows for a great identification with the course material being taught (Barraket, 2005; Felder and Bent, 1996; Weimer, 2002). Constructivist theories of learning underpin student-centred approaches to teaching, and in this sense students are recognised for their role in creating knowledge rather than just being on the receiver end of predetermined content (Yuen and Hau, 2006).

The use of student-generated content for the purposes of teaching is consistent with the notion of student-centred instruction, where students have the opportunity to learn from their peers. However, while a substantial body of literature exists on student-centred pedagogies, the idea of generating student-created content for learning and teaching purposes has not been widely canvassed (Boettcher, 2006; Chang, Kennedy and Petrovic, 2008; Collis, 2005; Lee, Chan and McLoughlin, 2006; Sener, 2007; Wheeler, Yeomans and Wheeler, 2008). Collis (2005) termed this the 'contributing student approach', where the goal is to have students develop learning materials and share them with peers in other learning settings. However, it is still the case that most educators tend to rely on 'pre-packaged learning materials' developed by experts (McLoughlin and Lee, 2008). As Sener (2007, p. 1) pointed out:

Contemporary education at all levels tends to cast students in the role of content consumers; they are presented material which has been developed by others – teachers, vendors, instructional designers or other professional developers – and are expected to demonstrate that they have observed that material in some way.

Senner (2007, p. 1) further contended that although students are constantly generating content throughout their studies in the form of essays, reports or presentations, such content usually has a limited audience – the marker and the student – and is not seen as having value for instructional purposes. Here, this material is seen more as 'a vehicle for student expression than a body of knowledge to be consumed' (Senner, 2007, p. 1). There is, however, a growing body of evidence that suggests that student-generated content is useful in engaging students and improving learning (Dale and Povey, 2009; Senner, 2007; Lee, McLoughlin and Chan, 2008). Moreover, Collis (2005) went so far as to claim that students potentially take away more learning from peer-generated than professionally generated learning materials. While this claim remains untested, what is apparent is that there is a growing recognition that 'students are no longer passive consumers of knowledge but also producers', in turn signalling a more active approach on the part of students to knowledge creation (Lee and McLoughlin, 2007).

A growing interest in student-generated content has partly come about through the promotion of Web 2.0 technologies such as Youtube and Facebook in teaching and learning in higher education (Chang et al. 2008; Dale and Povey, 2009; Lee and McLoughlin, 2007; Wheeler, Yeomans and Wheeler, 2008). For example, Lee et al. (2006) instigated a project where a group of second year students produced a series of educational podcasts for first year students enrolled in an information technology subject. The idea behind the project was to try to address the first year students' preconceptions and anxieties about the subject material by engaging their peers as teachers. On a pedagogical level, Lee et al (2006) suggest that such a model of instruction is consistent with peer tutoring where both tutors and tutees can potentially benefit from the experience.

In a similar vein, the project that is the subject of this paper is premised on the understanding that student-generated content can potentially be a valuable resource for teaching direct practice. In the following section, we briefly outline some of the core tenets underlying the teaching of direct practice while also highlighting some of the limitations of

using expert-centred content for instructional purposes. This discussion precedes a critique of some of the existing audiovisual resources on offer for teaching direct practice that feature expert practitioners.

TEACHING DIRECT PRACTICE USING A STUDENT-CENTRED APPROACH

Skills-based courses that focus on the core methods of casework, group work, and community practice are an integral part of social work education and require students to be actively involved in their own learning. In this sense, they necessitate a student-centred approach to teaching and learning. Student-centred learning has been defined as 'ways of thinking and learning that emphasize student responsibility and activity in learning rather than what the teachers are doing' (Cannon and Newble, 2000, p. 16 cited in Lea, Stephenson and Troy, 2003, p. 321). Students are positioned as pivotal agents in their own learning, and learning is viewed as an interactive process (O'Neill and McMahon, 2005). Such an approach to learning is endorsed in most courses on direct practice which also incorporate experiential learning (Diggins, 2004). The idea here is that learning takes place through concrete experience, which is usually a simulated experience such as a role play (Maidment, 2009). Students are usually required to role play their skills so that educators and peers can provide feedback on their performance. Afterwards, they are encouraged to critically reflect on their performance and modify their actions in accordance with their own self reflection and this feedback (Koprowska, 2003).

Video recording and reviewing role plays are recognised as valuable learning experiences for students, who are able to identify what worked well and, perhaps more importantly, what they could do differently next time to improve their practice (Cheung, 1997; Maidment, 2009). However, being observed and in some cases filmed while learning the core methods of practice can be an anxiety provoking experience for learners (Fisher and Koprowska, 1999; Diggins, 2004; Moss, Dunkerly, Price, Sullivan, Reynolds and Yates, 2007). For some students, the prospect of being put 'under the gaze' may actually compromise their learning; they are so conscious of being filmed that the camera becomes their sole focus rather than the client they are meant to be 'joining' with or the group 'icebreaker' they are introducing. Alternatively, they may measure their performance against that of the 'expert practitioner' demonstrating the skills, which in turn may fuel their insecurities rather than encouraging a sense of competence.

In recognition of these factors, several authors stress the importance of providing a safe environment for students where they can try out new skills and risk making mistakes without fear of ridicule or judgement (Koprowska, 2003; Diggins, 2004; Moss et al. 2007; Maidment, 2009). At the same time, Moss et al (2007) highlight the importance of injecting a degree of realism into the learning experience by drawing on situations and issues which students are likely to encounter in practice. While these authors espouse the value of bringing service users into the classroom to conduct role plays with students, they also note the costs and practical difficulties associated with doing this (Moss et al. 2007). For many educators involved in teaching direct practice, DVDs featuring filmed role plays or even movie sequences are the next best thing. However, Chan (1993) contends that most of the audiovisual materials on offer focus predominantly on psychotherapy and are

not suitable for teaching practice in its local context. In particular, he is critical of 'brand-name linked' approaches which make great claims for their particular brand of therapy and lead students to believe that 'first this particular theory worked, and second that particular utterances were responsible for the effects seen' (Chan, 1993, p. 76).

Although Chan made this claim over fifteen years ago, we would suggest that it is still the case that most of the audiovisual resources on the market are therapeutic in nature, do not do justice to the three core methods of social work and fail to consider the different contexts in which social workers operate. Alternatively, they focus on generic communication skills which, while useful, do not in themselves demonstrate actual practice methods. Moreover, many of these films depict 'expert' practitioners whose advanced level of skills may be far removed from that of the student practitioner. It is also questionable whether the use of such films sits comfortably with student-centred instructional methods which are pedagogically opposed to the expert instructor model (O'Neill and McMahon, 2005). In the following section, we outline in more detail some of the limitations of these audiovisual resources and put forward an argument as to why films depicting expert practitioners may not be the best teaching tools for students learning direct practice.

THE LIMITATIONS OF EXISTING AUDIOVISUAL MATERIALS FOR TEACHING DIRECT PRACTICE

Social work is a complex activity that encompasses a range of methods, notably casework, group work, and community practice, which in turn are shaped by the particular organisational context in which these methods are enacted. Ferguson (2008, p. 561) identified 'the home visit, the car journey and the office/organization' as the three primary sites of social work practice. He contends that social work practice can equally be 'mobile', where practice may take place in the car and continue in the office or home. There are very few audiovisual resources on offer that capture this mobility. One notable exception to this is a BBC documentary that tracked a number of social workers employed by Bristol Social Services as they conducted home visits, looked for children who had absconded from out of home care and conversed with them in cars while they drove them to their foster placements (BBC, 2004). However, most audiovisual resources that have been produced for the sole purpose of teaching direct practice tend to assume that social workers are in fact counsellors who operate predominantly in therapeutic or clinical contexts. Social work, however, is not just counselling or therapy and in this sense such films fail to capture the complexities of practice.

There appears to be an under-development of audio-visual material on direct practice with involuntary clients, such as mandated clients and service users who are in some other way compelled to attend services. There are some exceptions to this, such as Trotter and Mumford's (2000) video recording which depicts a child protection worker interviewing a parent. The dominance of audio-visual material on direct practice with voluntary service users implies that work with involuntary clients is a special or rare field of practice. Yet, many social work and human service professionals, particularly newly qualified workers, practise with involuntary service users (author, 2010). While on placement, social work students are likely to encounter involuntary clients in settings such as mental health, prisons

or child protection, or alternatively clients who may express some ambivalence about seeing a social worker. When students are not exposed to these types of scenarios when learning about direct practice, it can be a jarring experience to encounter an ambivalent or even hostile client for the first time on placement or as a new graduate.

Turning to group work, we would suggest that there are very few audiovisual resources available that capture the different kinds of group work conducted by social workers. In particular, very few films portray the more informal groups that social workers facilitate such as support groups or drop in groups. In our experience, most of the group work resources on offer are of the therapeutic kind and commonly portray 'group therapists' who are recognised as experts in their field. One such film, 'Groups in Action: Evolution and Challenges' (Corey et al. 2006), features an intensive three day group program that attempts to portray the stage theory of groups and, while useful in this regard, again assumes a therapeutic context for practice that many practitioners may not be able to identify with. In community services contexts, groups can be chaotic, prone to interruptions, and often do not go according to plan, especially if they involve parents with young children or participants with unpredictable behaviour. However, these aspects of groups are often 'missing' from film portrayals of group work.

There are similarly few teaching and learning resources on community development or other forms of community work that actually demonstrate the skills used in this type of practice. Mendes (2009) made mention of some useful videos on community issues and campaigns that are suitable to show students, but to our knowledge there are very few audiovisual resources available for students on the skills and processes associated with actually *doing* community work, such as facilitating a community meeting.

Seeking an alternative to the educational audiovisual resources on offer, some social work educators have turned to the movies. The movie 'Precious', for example, deals with the themes of poverty, sexual abuse and teenage parenthood, and some educators have suggested that it may be a useful teaching tool for social work (Wright, 2010). The film features the pop singer Mariah Carey who 'dresses down' to play the role of a social worker who works with a young woman with a history of long term abuse. However, in a recent review of the film, Richard Sullivan from the University of British Columbia School of Social Work claimed that 'media representations seem to never get either the work or the circumstances of social work quite right' (Sullivan, 2010). This viewpoint mirrors the findings of a study conducted by Freeman and Valentine (2004), who examined forty-four movies depicting social workers and observed that most of these films focus on the 'micro level of practice', portray social workers as being white, middle class, able-bodied and pretty, and depict child welfare as the most common practice setting. They go on to suggest that the omissions in these films are just as important as what is portrayed:

What is missing in terms of social work representations in these movies is as informative as what is present. Mostly missing from these movie narratives of social work are attention to social injustice, engagement in social action and social change, macro social work interventions, social workers of color, gay and lesbian social workers, and social workers with disabilities.
(Freeman and Valentine, 2004, p. 160)

In other words, they suggested that the dominant construction of social workers in these movies does not do justice to the diversity of practitioners and the different forms of practice that they engage in. In particular, these authors suggest that attention to the macro level of practice is missing in these films. Accordingly, while movies may be of some use in demonstrating micro practice skills for students in the classroom (or alternatively demonstrating elements of bad practice that students can then critique), they equally risk perpetuating stereotypes of social workers while marginalising two of the three core methods of social work.

In summary then, we would suggest that there are significant limitations to many of the existing audiovisual resources on offer for teaching direct practice because of their lack of engagement with the complexities of practice and their failure to portray the full range of methods used in social work. In addition, many of these depictions of direct practice feature expert practitioners which, while not problematic in itself, may not resonate with 'beginning learners' who need to normalise the experience of making mistakes and learning from them. Our intention is not to devalue such teaching resources, as we recognise that there is a place for expert-centred audiovisual resources and similarly those that depict therapeutic or clinical work, especially in courses of an advanced nature. However, there is equally a need to develop student-centred resources that will assist students to learn and practise all the core methods of social work in a way that does not make them feel that they need to perform like the experts. As Koprowska (2003, p. 301) pointed out, student anxiety about learning new skills can be reduced if educators can show that 'putting skills into practice is a process rather than a performance'. In the following section we describe a project that sought to develop a student-centred audiovisual resource for teaching and learning direct practice.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

Earlier in this article we suggested that the act of being observed coupled with the knowledge that their performance will then be assessed can be anxiety provoking for many students. In recognition of this, we envisaged that involving students rather than 'expert' practitioners in the production of audiovisual training resources would assuage some of this anxiety and possibly enhance student learning outcomes. The rationale for using students in the filmed scenarios was underpinned by the idea that seeing other students practise their newly acquired skills would help normalise the experience, especially if these student actors risked making mistakes in front of an audience. In this sense we envisaged that producing a set of peer-based audiovisual learning materials would fit more comfortably with a student-centred approach to learning direct practice. We further anticipated that the films would stimulate student interest in direct practice and ensure that learning is directly relevant to the field.

The aim of the project was to design and produce three multimedia learning packages, each comprising a DVD and workbook focused on skills underpinning the three core methods of direct practice: casework; group work; and community practice. In addition, we wanted to record a panel discussion among students about their use of the specific method in their placement context. The aim of filming the panel discussion was to provide students

with authentic material about how students use these methods and skills in local practice contexts. It was anticipated that these learning packages could then be trialled for use for classroom teaching and as a self-directed learning resource for students.

We invited social work students enrolled in the final two years of the four year bachelor of social work program to participate in the project. Our criteria for inclusion in the project were that, first, students had successfully completed their second year direct practice courses and, second, that they had some experience in deploying the specific methods on placement. We also sought to recruit students from a broad range of practice contexts in order to demonstrate the variety of settings in which the method is used. All participation was voluntary and prior to filming written informed consent was obtained from the fourteen students who elected to be involved in the project. Each student who participated in the films was given a $50 book voucher in recognition of their time, which included not only the filming but attendance at several prior planning meetings.

It should be noted that in planning the project, our intention was not to focus on the actual learning of the students involved in the production of the films. These students had already completed their direct practice courses as well as their first field placement. However, what is noteworthy here is that these students were able to reflect back on their own experiences of learning direct practice and use these insights to generate a student-centred perspective on the development of the filmed scenarios for the project.

Although we, as educators, initially developed the ideas for the scenarios drawing on our practice experiences and knowledge of students' placements, the students were involved in workshopping and further fleshing out the scenarios to be used in the audio-visual materials. For the casework DVD, two role plays were developed that focused on practice in a statutory and voluntary setting. The statutory scenario focused on a child protection service setting and the voluntary setting focused on casework with a young woman seeking support in decision-making about an unplanned pregnancy. The students involved in filming these scenarios met initially with the project team to develop their ideas in relation to filming the role plays, but then met independently of the team to further refine their roles. However, the role plays were not scripted as the goal was not to portray 'perfect practice' but rather to convey the reality of students 'practising' skills for direct practice.

A young mothers' group was chosen for the group work scenario as we knew that a number of students on placement had been involved in participating in such groups. A decision was made to focus on the first meeting of the group, as this requires practitioners to utilise a wide range of skills such as making participants feel welcome and comfortable, attending to practical concerns, clarifying issues around confidentiality, establishing group rules and starting to instil a sense of ownership of the group. In addition, we decided to portray two different group meetings, the first one dealing with a 'not so good start' and the second one portraying 'a better start'. The rationale for this was that it would provide an opportunity for students viewing the DVD to think about what the facilitator could do differently to improve the group's functioning. Similar to the casework scenarios, dialogue was not scripted.

The scenario for community work was based on a true event where an inner city community was challenged to confront negative publicity about their community and increasing tensions within that community. Newspaper articles about the tensions as well as some of the students' own experiences of the community or similar communities where they had placement experiences were used as the basis for developing the scenario. The student practitioners involved in this role play facilitated a community meeting where they brought together different stakeholders within the community to discuss the issue and identify how they could work with the community to bring about positive change.

Each filmed role play was no longer than twenty minutes, with the majority being around ten minutes. Our intention was to ensure that the excerpts could be played in classes to stim-ulate discussion. From our experiences in the classroom, we were concerned that longer scenarios may not facilitate the sort of student engagement with the material that we were seeking.

In addition to the role plays presented in the DVDs, each DVD also features a panel discussion with the participants in the role plays about their practice experience in using the specific methods. The panel discussions provided an opportunity for students to discuss their placement experience and to share with the audience their reflections on the strengths and limits of the skills as well as the kinds of challenges they may encounter in using these skills. Our intention was to provide students with an opportunity to hear from peers a realistic appraisal about how the methods being taught in the classroom applied to the placement experience, which is also consistent with a peer learning approach (Boud, 2001). We envisage that these insights might help to provide students with a realistic understanding of the range of skills they may use on placement and the contexts in which these skills will be used. We anticipate that this may also further motivate students in learning a range of practice skills.

The end product of the project was three DVDs that feature students applying the skills that they had been taught in case work, group work, and community practice, and later reflecting on their use of these skills on placement in a panel discussion. Rather than aiming to portray 'perfect practice', these DVDs demonstrate what is closer to 'real life practice', where student practitioners do not always get it right, and then reflect on what they could do differently next time. As a teaching resource, the DVDs demonstrate 'skills practice' rather than 'perfect practice', and in this respect their purpose is to also stimulate critical reflection on practice.

The intention of the project team is to now evaluate these multimedia learning packages for teaching and learning purposes. In this regard, some preliminary work has commenced. Second year social work students enrolled in a direct practice methods and skills course were asked to rate the quality and learning value of the DVD on casework with voluntary clients after viewing it in class. Out of sixty-nine responses, sixty-one (88%) respondents rated the DVD as of being very good or good quality. The remaining eight students (12%) rated it as being of average quality. When asked how helpful the DVD was for learning social casework, sixty-eight respondents (99%) rated it as being very helpful or helpful.

Students were also asked if there were any other comments that they wished to make about the DVD. Some described how watching the film had contributed to their own learning about casework, particularly in terms of being able to discern the skills that were used by the student practitioners. For example:

The social worker played a great listening role, and I was able to identify her tracking skills.

The DVD showed a lot of interviewing skills in casework such as paraphrasing, summarising, and probing.

Several students took this a step further, using the DVD to reflect on their own learning and to identify the skills that they believed they needed to develop:

I learnt a few things about skills needed to engage a client.

Good clear communication from social worker on a very complex case; it taught me ways to communicate about sensitive topics.

[It] made me able to relate and understand skills I need to gain or improve on.

Two participants used the opportunity to provide critical feedback on the practice of the student practitioner, inferring what could have been done differently to improve the interaction:

Would have been good to see more paraphrasing demonstrated.

Some parts were a little stilted.

Nonetheless, the realistic portrayal of practice situations was viewed as a positive aspect of the filmed scenario by other students:

It's really helpful to have this resource that demonstrates communication skills in a 'real-life' setting.

Very realistic. Good to have access to these sorts of resources to really feel comfortable with this field of work.

I liked it. They were both good actors. It was believable.

In contrast, another student picked up on where the film departed from real life practice.

It was edited. Perhaps in real life situations we don't get to edit out 'unperfect practice'. Maybe better to have filmed all in one go even if it is not always great.

Interestingly enough, this student picks up on an idea that we hoped to convey through the project, which is that real life practice –unlike that commonly portrayed in films

depicting expert practitioners - is often imperfect. What this student alludes to is the need to normalise imperfect practice in learning situations, and we would endorse this view.

While we anticipated that the DVDs and accompanying workbooks would enhance the learning experiences of students enrolled in direct practice courses, it is noteworthy that there were some unanticipated outcomes from the project for the students involved in actually filming the project. Several of these students used the DVDs to showcase their own practice skills to potential employers once they had graduated. Others wrote up their experience of being involved in the production of the DVDs and included it in their resumes as an example of team work, and as demonstrating their ability to work cooperatively with others on a common project. Lee and McLoughlin (2007) similarly observe that student-generated learning resources can potentially benefit not only future students, but also the 'student producers' actually involved in making the resources.

When the resources were officially launched, students also commented on how much they enjoyed doing the project. Several students, however, disclosed a level of self-consciousness about seeing themselves on film, especially knowing that a wider audience would be watching and reviewing their performance. In hindsight, it would have been useful to spend more time preparing students for this outcome. Nonetheless, these same students indicated that making the films had built their self confidence. In a similar vein, Hamer (2007) suggested that involving students in the production of learning resources affirms their existing expertise and skills.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Earlier in this paper we highlighted some of the perceived limitations of existing audiovisual materials for teaching direct practice in social work and the human services. In our experience, if such audiovisual resources are used to demonstrate practice skills, they often have to be presented with a caveat such as 'this is a counsellor working in a clinical context and not necessarily the kind of work that you will be doing on placement'. Their lack of authenticity coupled with their predominant focus on counselling or communication skills separate from the diverse contexts of social work practice means that students often do not gain an overview of the full range of methods used in direct practice, or the clients they are likely to encounter on placement. The project described above represents an attempt to fill this gap in teaching and learning resources for direct practice; it aimed to involve students in producing a more credible set of audiovisual resources that demonstrate the three core methods used in direct practice.

It is commonly assumed that in order to learn direct practice, students need to first observe expert or experienced practitioners demonstrating the practice skills associated with each method. However, we would contend that students can equally learn from the practice of other students and, moreover, that there are particular benefits associated with this style of learning. In particular, we concur with other proponents of student-centred instruction that the utilisation of peer-based rather than 'expert-based' learning resources allows students to more readily identify with this material and may assist in facilitating a more engaged approach to learning (Dale and Povey, 2009; Lee and McLoughin, 2007; Lee et al. 2008;

Sener, 2007). Watching their peers demonstrate practice normalises the learning context while also potentially reducing students' anxiety about being observed in practice, especially when they see their peers risking being 'imperfect' in front of the camera. This in turn signals to learners that part of the learning process is about reflecting on what did not go so well, and identifying what could be done differently next time. In other words, imperfect practice is normalised rather than pathologised.

Such a model of learning fits comfortably with a student-centred instructional approach which recognises students as both active learners while also affirming their role in the production of knowledge (Chang et al. 2008; Lee et al. 2006; Wheeler et al. 2008). Senner (2007, p. 7) claimed that 'in an educational system that was truly learning-centred, student-generated content would play a prominent role'. Arguably, the pedagogical potential of utilising student-generated content for teaching and learning purposes is still under-recognised in social work and will possibly challenge both lecturers' and students' traditional reliance on 'authoritative, "text-book" or teacher-created content' (Chang et al. 2008, p. 165). However, we would suggest that the project described in this paper does represent a step in this direction in that it represents a shift in focus from expert-centred to more student-centred teaching and learning resources. In this sense, we recognise the potential for student-generated content to enhance the learning experiences of other students while also acknowledging the need for further evaluation of such resources.

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The design and development of teaching resources for the purpose of demonstrating aspects of clinical supervision: Developing the on-line community of learners

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ABSTRACT

This article describes the production of an on-line teaching resource depicting four phases of clinical supervision designed for a national post graduate programme for allied health professionals. Realistic audio visual depictions of clinical supervision introduce students to the relational aspects of clinical supervision as a learning forum. One of the difficulties of introducing students to the process of clinical supervision is that there is a tension between producing a 'one size fits all' approach for a group of students of diverse cultures and backgrounds. In the Aotearoa New Zealand context, this tension is evident when Maori and Pacific Island students ask questions about practice in a predominantly European (Pakeha) health system. To respond to these challenges, a more realistic depiction of the process of supervision and the ambiguities inherent in the relationship is needed. However, the tertiary educator in producing social work takes place risks portraying a stereotype rather than an authentic scenario that is true in the individual student's experience.

One solution to resolve this dilemma is to adopt a design based on Anderson's (2004) online 'community of inquiry' model and McLoughlin's (1999) 'culturally responsive technology use'. Adapting these models to on-line delivery involves the integration of culturally specific values and styles into the design and delivery of on-line resources. Consultation with community, clinicians and service-users provides the raw materials for establishing the development of resources to meet the learning needs of the wider student group which includes Maori, Pacific Island students and mature aged students who practice in a range of diverse settings. The use of such resources encourages critical reflection on the process of clinical supervision by accurately modelling central aspects of the supervisory process, the interpersonal dynamics of the relationship as well as aspects of the practice environment.

INTRODUCTION

As clinical supervision is an integral part of the social work process that is learned by doing, how learning experiences are constructed to produce the necessary 'scaffolding' for students to use their own clinical supervision effectively, needs to be carefully planned for and strategically approached. Whilst there are many resources that discuss abstract theories of clinical supervision, what an effective clinical supervisory relationship actually looks like in practice remains elusive for the majority of students who have yet to experience the relationship for themselves.

In an attempt to capture a glimpse of the beginning social worker's experience of clinical supervision, as co-ordinator of a post graduate programme for mental health professionals, I designed and produced four audio-visual resources portraying an intern social worker working with clinical and cultural supervisors in a health setting with colleagues and advisors. The intention was to produce a realistic depiction of different stages of the development of the relationship between supervisor and supervisee in clinical supervision whilst the students were also entering their first clinical supervisory relationships in their workplaces. During the year when the students were studying in mixed mode (by distance and through intensive face to face workshops), these resources were embedded in the week by week on-line context based learning modules designed around four clinical dilemmas. The roles, scripts and props were carefully chosen to emulate the workplaces of the students to mirror their wider learning in their own clinical and cultural safety supervision.

RATIONALE AND INITIAL AIMS

Students in their evaluations of the post graduate programme for allied mental health professionals in Aotearoa New Zealand, a national, vocationally-based programme, discuss the importance of clinical supervision in their learning and adjustment to the health context as a new field of work (Pack, 2009a and 2009b). Twenty funded sessions of clinical supervision are available to students to complete their practicum paper on the post graduate certificate over the academic year, as the emphasis is supporting new graduates to adjust successfully to the workplace in their first two years of practice in mental health. As students are often employed in supernumerary positions for the first two years as 'interns', the success of these years determines their 'work readiness' in the eyes of their employers. Completion

of the post graduate certificate along with successful on the job practice during the super-numerary period increases their chances of being offered a permanent position as a social worker within their workplaces.

As students indicate in their evaluations that clinical supervision is their main 'method' of learning in the practicum paper, the clinical supervisory relationship itself evokes a wealth of opportunities for 'deep' or conceptual learning. Ramsden (2003) used the concept of 'deep' in contrast to 'surface' learning to explain how tasks and activities are structured strategically so that students begin to approach and identify patterns more conceptually and then to relate these concepts to what they do in practice. The underlying philosophy of the allied health programme is that critical reflection on practice provides opportunities for strengthening confidence in clinical reasoning and decision making.

CRITICAL-REFLECTION THROUGH THE PHASES OF RELATIONSHIP IN CLINICAL SUPERVISION

Critical reflection in clinical supervision has been shaped by the seminal work of Schön (1983). Schön (1983) building on Argyris and Schön (1976), provides a framework for evaluating the effectiveness of what one does in practice by a focus on the development of one's own 'theory in action'. This framework highlights tension points between the theory that develops out of an extended reflection of one's practice or one's 'theory of action', and 'espoused theory' or the theory which the practitioner says relates to their practice. Greater awareness of what one does in one's practice is made available in the critical-reflective process that is evoked in clinical supervision.

The Reflective Learning Model of clinical supervision developed in Aotearoa New Zealand by Davys (2001) and further developed in Davys and Beddoe (2010) emphasises the beginning and ending of the supervisory relationship. These phases of contact are considered pivotal to the development of the relationship that then facilitates the wider learning in clinical supervision. This 'structuring' of the relationship involves specific cultural rituals such as introductions, welcoming, the offer of refreshments and an agenda setting phase at the start of each clinical supervisory session. Ideally these rituals complement the formation of relationship within which a supervisory contract is negotiated. This contract then sets the structure and pattern of each session. Similarly cultural rituals of planning for closure and closure at the end of the supervisory relationship are recommended to prepare for a 'letting go' phase (Davys and Beddoe, 2010, p. 93).

Once the 'culture and relationship' is established in clinical supervision, the reflective process is enabled by creating a safe space for reflection including free discussion of less than ideal instances of practice. The need to separate line management and performance appraisal roles from the clinical supervisory relationship is essential to enable the supervisee to freely disclose their central concerns and values about practice (Davys and Beddoe, 2010; Pack, 2009a). A theme in the multidisciplinary research on clinical supervision is that a matching of cultural backgrounds of supervisee and supervisor is useful to constructing a shared frame of reference in clinical supervision (Pack, 2009b). Demonstrating how difference of background between supervisor and supervisee can be helpful in the clinical

supervisory relationship is less frequently mentioned in this literature (Pack, 2009b). Newer supervisees who are unfamiliar with the supervisory process can also experience shame at not knowing how to navigate the complex interpersonal nature of the supervisory relationship and due to the power differences between supervisor and supervisee (Pack, 2009c)

In an attempt to model the phases of the clinical supervisory relationship and to explore differences between supervisor and supervisee backgrounds and world view, I designed four audiovisual resources. As a way of making it safe to make comments about the experience of clinical supervision in an on-line discussion forum, I asked students to consider their own experiences of clinical supervision in response to the podcast of a beginning social work student meeting with her clinical and cultural safety supervisors. These experiences were then discussed in small groups that had been established earlier at an intensive face to face workshop. Thus each group had been introduced to one another in face to face mode prior to moving discussion to the on-line environment, which is recommended as an effective strategy in forging group process in blended education (Greig and Skehill, 2008).

ESTABLISHING A COMMUNITY OF LEARNING ON-LINE

Anderson (2004, p. 276) wrote that the lecturer in the on-line context who is responsible for maintaining on-line materials and instructional design can become a virtual "lone ranger" in contrast to teachers guided by the teaching of others in more traditional modes of delivery. As a means of illustrating content issues, Anderson (2004) advocated using examples drawn directly from practice such as stories, reflections, anecdotes that resonate with the student's experience. This, Anderson concluded, 'helps the learner identify in a personalised way with the teacher' (Anderson, 2004, p. 277). In this process the teacher becomes a facilitator of learning by encouraging students to introduce themselves to one another and to share experiences to form the group process on-line.

Facilitating discussions through focused activities on-line allows students to demonstrate their understanding of the course content and the approaches used in the teaching (Anderson, 2004, p. 277). This philosophy of teaching and learning mirrors the use of discussion boards in social work education where students are encouraged to participate in modules involving on-line discussions. Greig and Skehill (2008), for example, found that that through facilitating student interactions in a discussion board, a blended approach of face to face and on-line activities provided coherence between learning in a practice environment with the theoretical teaching of social work principles in the lecture theatre (Grieg and Skehill, 2008, p. 638). When students are studying at a distance whilst having 'real life' experiences in the workplace, it is a learning opportunity missed if students are not required to process these experiences. In the allied health programme the practice paper asked students to consider their practice reflectively for their practice journals and on-line blogs, supported by clinical supervision.

The geographic distance from the university and the students' work commitments made it impractical to expect students to travel large distances to weekly or fortnightly classes. As clinical supervisors and work peers constitute part of the 'teaching team' for students, like Greig and Skehill (2008, p. 641), I have found the allied health students studying at

distance used discussion forums to support their clinical practice experiences with clients in tandem with their critical reflection with work mentors and clinical supervisors. By including advisors, clinical supervisors and mentors within the teaching endeavour we created a community of learning with stakeholder input to produce authentic learning opportunities congruent with practice.

THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

Aotearoa New Zealand has a relatively small population-base in relation to the size of the country and funding constraints impact on the practice of social work across the organisational contexts in which social workers practice. Child protection, income support, health services and the not for profit community agencies are among those who employ social workers nation-wide. Many social workers work in agencies with years of accumulated practice wisdom but are formally unregistered without completion of the Aotearoa New Zealand Social Worker's Association's (ANZASW) competency process. This trend is changing as more social workers are coming forward to become registered with the assistance of the larger employers of social workers nationally, to fund the costs incurred in the process of professional registration. The ANZASW requires that social workers be supervised clinically during the whole of their careers to support their practice. Opportunities exist for members to participate in an ongoing series of professional development workshops towards the goal of life-long professional development (ANZASW 2008).

Cultural diversity is a feature of social work in Aotearoa with a high concentration of Pacific and Maori in the North Island. As part of the Code of Ethics (2008) for Aotearoa New Zealand social workers, the social worker is required to demonstrate a commitment to working within the Association's Bicultural Code of Practice (2008). Within this Code (2008), an understanding of the Treaty of Waitangi is required to be demonstrated within one's practice. Cultural safety supervision is a specialised kind of supervision used to ensure safe practice across cultures which includes awareness of one's own cultural background and the impact of one's gender, ethnicity and life experience on practice. One of the requirements of the bicultural practice guidelines is that social workers are required to recognise and to uphold the rights of Maori as Tangata Whenua or the 'People of the Land.' These rights and responsibilities are enshrined within the Treaty of Waitangi.

The Treaty of Waitangi is an historical and living document which establishes the relationships between Maori and Pakeha or European in New Zealand. In the 1840s Maori chiefs and the Pakeha settler government of the day on behalf of the Queen, signed the document, foreshadowing all future relationships between the two people. By the terms of the Treaty of Waitangi, Maori are recognised as the indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand with the rights associated with the sovereignty of their people, and ownership of land, forests and fisheries. The right of Maori to self-determination and autonomy as one people are central concepts enshrined within the Treaty. All social workers are required to work towards supporting Maori towards realisation of these emancipatory goals in their day to day practice (ANZASW 2008).

Major issues in social work in Aotearoa New Zealand relate to a need to provide specialised services in rural and remote areas and to provide adequate peer support, consultation and clinical/cultural safety supervision in diverse practice environments and geographic locations. Within the professional social work community, the numbers of social work educators are relatively few nationally. Therefore, interdisciplinary team-based education tends to be the norm as social work educators are rarely large enough to sustain a separate budget. Consequently the approach to social work practice and education is multi-disciplinary of necessity. Social work's educatory role happens of necessity within a wider 'learning community' approach that conceptualises social work as a holistic endeavour undertaken as part of a multi-disciplinary effort.

HOW DOES AUTHENTIC LEARNING FIT WITH THE 'LEARNING COMMUNITY'?

In a pedagogical sense, the 'learning community' approach translates to a partnership between the communities and agencies in which the students are working with their clients, mentors, peers and their clinical supervisors in a diversity of contexts. As students are working on 'real life' issues in their workplaces, in a supervised and supported environment at distance from the university, authentic learning experiences occur daily, stimulated but not confined by the formal content of on-line learning. The benefits of embedding authentic learning resources about clinical supervision at various points in the on-line context-based learning are that these kinds of resources demonstrate 'reflection in action' and 'reflection on action' (Schön, 1983). When students see realistic depictions of social work practice and process, this encourages self disclosure about one's own experience. Consultation with a range of mentors in the workplace stimulates discussion about the value of clinical supervision and the value of ongoing professional development.

Cultural safety supervision to ensure that bicultural issues are addressed is often an integrated part of clinical supervision for social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand to support safe and ethical practice under the ANZASW Bicultural Code of Ethics (2008). Therefore, this was another facet of clinical supervision that I wished to model for students.

The Learning Community Approach

The goal of the learning community established within the allied health programme at Victoria University aims to support beginning practitioners to make ethical clinical decisions in the expectation that they will take up full time employment once their intern year is completed.

In the Northern Territories context ,which has comparable issues with working in partnership with indigenous and migrant populations, the community learning approach in the teaching of an undergraduate social work programme has proved to have a good 'fit' with the local social workers and community (West and Heath 2009). The goal of establishing and working with a learning community at Charles Darwin University in Northern Territory is to develop a programme that is sustainable by having practitioners, service users, organisations and the local community advising and contributing to the curriculum (West and Heath 2009).

At Victoria University, the allied health programme was part of a post graduate school of nursing, midwifery and health so it was already multi-disciplinary in its location and operation. An advisory group of practitioners and service users met regularly to review the developments in each of the programmes and to evaluate and advise on how the programmes were supporting graduates on the job and in their studies.

Members of the advisory group were involved in developing the initiative of four filmed video depictions illustrating four phases of the clinical supervisory relationship and cultural safety supervision. One of the advisory group members representing Maori or Tangata Whenua interests on the advisory group was involved in the acting of the scenario modelling the cultural safety supervision relationship. Our administrator, who was female and a similar age to our student profile (aged in her early thirties) played the student in all the scenarios to provide a central point of reference for students. The clinical supervisors in the other three scenarios were psychotherapists and academics on the advisory group, who had an interest in the programme and in the relationship in clinical supervision.

The aim of the series was to illustrate the diverse ways in which clinical supervision supports practitioners in differing work contexts and client presentations, including working biculturally. The scenarios depicted focused on: the contract phase of the clinical supervisory relationship, negotiating the boundaries of the clinical/cultural safety supervision interface, and seeking specialist consultation to work with children and their families.

THE PROCESS OF CREATING THE RESOURCE

As an educator, I was unfamiliar with the technical side of the production but had an image of how I wished for the resource to look in its final format. Working with an audio-visual technician and actors, we designed the set (an office) with different props for each of the scenarios, to suit the context of each of the clinical supervisors. Some props were brought in by the 'actors' in the scenarios.

Memorising the script was difficult for colleagues who were all untrained actors, so in places I encouraged them to improvise and ad lib where this improvisation seemed to produce the desired end product. The process of acting and filming with my directing was experimental and involved many cuts and restarts that the technician and I edited extensively in the editing suite. Out of twenty minutes of taping, we distilled the scenarios to be around five to ten minutes in length which had been the suggested size to attach to the on-line learning platform we were using ('Blackboard').

 As production of this kind of learning resource had never been attempted before at Victoria University where face to face delivery by attendance at lectures remains the norm, it was difficult to know how successful the finished product would be once we translated the filming into Windows Media Player. The technician had ways of condensing the format of the film into a podcast which meant it would download more easily for students. As a backup for those students still on 'dial up' methods of accessing the internet, we produced a CD Rom with the audio-visual clips in named files.

Contextualising the Resource

Alfes (2008) developed an introductory video for undergraduate nurses with teaching staff portraying patients and members of the multidisciplinary team in an actual hospital setting. This resource received enthusiastic feedback from both academic staff and students partly due to the depiction of practice scenarios realistically in a hospital. Students recognised that this resource immersed them in an environment in which the clinical experience actually took place (Alfes, 2008, p. 66).

By using colleagues rather than trained actors, filmed in the audiovisual studio on campus, there was a risk that students who attended two four day workshops on campus, would meet the 'actors' in the scenarios and this may mean the resources were seen as less authentic by the students. Due to budgetary constraints, it was not possible to use actors recruited through a production company which would have been four times the production costs of production of the current resource.

However, students either did not comment or notice or, if they did, they were amused when they recognised that the administrator was the 'supervisee' and one associate professor was the clinical supervisor in the audio-visual clips. The person depicting the cultural safety supervisor, who worked off campus as a community worker, was acknowledged for her valuable contribution as part of the advisory group. Her guest lecturing on Maori models of health during intensive workshops was seen by students as being congruent with her role as the cultural safety supervisor in the audio-visual clips.

Evaluation

Whilst the primary aim of this paper is to focus on the process of embedding authentic resources modelling different phases of the clinical supervisory relationship, a brief overview of existing evaluation methods will be provided in this section. As the university establishes a community of learning around its programmes, feedback comes informally and formally from a number of sources. The formal student experience of teaching and course evaluations at the end of the academic year provided one measure of the student experience. The advisory group meetings with key stakeholders yielded another source of feedback. The teaching associates and service users, who we were working alongside, yielded yet another source of comment and peer review. Triangulating the various sources of feedback provided a 'snapshot' of how seamlessly the podcasts had been integrated into the existing on-line context-based learning modules.

Feedback from Students

The students were enthusiastic about the multimedia approach used in the on-line learning using text, audiovisual and interactive discussion board. The resource resonated with their practice experiences in the use of differing forms of clinical consultation and clinical/cultural safety supervision. In their practice portfolios, one set assignment for the practicum paper, most students referred to the video clips in their assignments in relation to how they had experienced their own clinical and cultural safety supervision in the early stages of development. For example, students said that they liked the offer of tea by the clinical supervisor in two of the scenarios as it was what happened in their clinical supervision. One comment critiqued the clinical supervisor as being 'too informal' as their supervision

did not occur across a desk. As the hospital context was never directly filmed, the office set design representing a clinical supervisor's office was easier context to reproduce in set design using office furniture.

Some students remarked on the cultural supervisor as being welcoming to both Pakeha and Maori culture in her use of both Maori and Pakeha languages to describe key concepts important to wellbeing and health. The activities for that week asked students to research the concepts described by the cultural safety supervisor in the podcast.

Other students critiqued that the supervisee carried a bag (a flax *kete* or carry bag) that two thought was 'stereotypic 'of social workers. I found these comments fascinating as I had not envisaged that the props were likely to have so much of an impact on the learning.

One student's comments revealed her experiential learning after viewing the family therapist's supervision podcast. Through following the activity attached to drawing a genogram that was filmed, she noticed that she did not know her mother's side of the family as she did her father's through the process of drawing her genogram. The separation of her parents when she was a young age was why she thought she had lost contact with one side of her family of origin. This realisation prompted her to consider the impact of her personal biography on her practice as a social worker and led her to take to clinical supervision for further exploration.

Feedback from Colleagues

University colleagues were surprised that the technology worked on the internet platform we were using and were encouraged to produce similar resources for their own courses. I applied for further funding to produce another series of resources and was shortlisted for an innovation in teaching award from a national workforce development agency.

When I presented the resources at an international conference, the audience thought that the scenarios need to reflect the cultural differences between clinical supervision in New Zealand as compared with other countries and cultures. However, there was scope for using the same principles for the development of multi-media resources for the teaching of other practice-based subjects by utilising aspects of the community of learning models described by Anderson (2004) and McLoughlin (1999) for developing resources alongside advisory groups to reflect the local community.

THE IMPLICATIONS FOR CRITICAL REFLECTIVE APPROACHES

In social work and counselling education, clinical supervision is one of the main methods of becoming more aware of one's own value base. Developing an awareness of one's own value base is a resource to continuing to practise effectively in increasingly complex and uncertain environments. (Gardner 2009). The extended reflection on practice enabled through clinical supervision however, requires a relationship of mutual trust and respect to be developed (Gardner 2009; Pack 2009a, 2009b and 2009c). Napier and Fook (2001) discovered in their research with social work practitioners that clinical supervision has implications for how positively or negatively supervisees view their practice. When defining

moments in practice were explored that were identified as most difficult practice scenarios, in an extended reflection in clinical supervision with the researchers, the social workers who participated in the research came to view their practice more positively than previously (Napier and Fook 2001). Clinical supervision, mentoring and professional development, therefore, can be seen as being directly related to workforce retention and the forging of professional identity.

The series of podcasts produced in partnership with the learning community established with technicians and academic/practice colleagues aimed to model how students might drive and shape their own relationships with clinical supervisors. It enabled them to reflect on what was good about their current supervisory relationship, what worked and what did not, and so needed revision. It also aimed to illustrate how the supervisee could use supervision for grappling with difficult practice scenarios in which the supervisee lacked an awareness of what to do next. In this process, I hoped to engage the student's imagination by safely exploring, albeit hypothetically, what they would do when the practice situations they encountered went beyond their professional comfort zone.

From the students' and colleagues' feedback, and from the number of comments on the discussion board, the production and use of locally sourced podcasts was a useful experiment in making a hitherto invisible activity (clinical supervision) visible. By making the relationship itself available for comment and critique, students felt able to offer insights about their own experience of clinical supervision from within a critical reflective paradigm.

CONCLUSION: LESSONS LEARNED

Although the overall process worked well with the existing problem based learning modules, the audiovisual resources were strategically designed with the intention of embedding them in the existing case studies at the outset. Therefore, forward planning is critical to determining how the resources will be introduced and contextualised to ensure relevance for students. The four podcasts were time consuming to produce, both in the initial scripting and editing processes and in terms of colleagues' time to provide consultation in the planning stages and to act the scenarios realistically. The production of the resources also required considerable input from the audiovisual technicians and e-learning support staff to ensure that the technology was compatible with the internet platform: 'Blackboard'. Ensuring the resource was available in software that most students had on their home and work personal computers needed to be discussed before the resources were attached to Blackboard.

It is therefore, important to acknowledge that working within communities of learning takes time to develop at first, but this investment is richly rewarded later on. This experiment is a work in progress, offered so that others may be encouraged to develop authentic learning resources with genuine stakeholder input.

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Taking active steps towards the competent use of self in social work

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ABSTRACT

Good preparation for reflective practice is a challenge for social work educators. Opportunities for facilitated reflection in the placement are often compromised due to field educator focus on 'doing' in the practice context. Equipping students with a tangible set of awareness skills that engages them with a 'being' mode of mind augments their capacity for reflective practice and competent 'use of self' in the field. We report the use of mindfulness as a pre-placement teaching intervention designed to facilitate acquisition of awareness skills in a Bachelor of Social Work programme in a New Zealand university. The teaching interventions developed are described, enriched by excerpts from reflective writing undertaken by participating students who consented to inclusion in the study. Notable shifts in student awareness accompanied the method trialled. In arriving at this point, students progressed from a simple noticing to taking steps toward the initiation of critical consciousness. An emergent model of mindful reflexivity concludes the paper.

INTRODUCTION: THE CONTEXT

Organisational constraints contribute to the patchy character of professional support available to students in the placement in New Zealand (Hay, O'Donoghue and Blagdon 2006) as noted elsewhere (Bower 2005; Urdang 2010). The supervisory relationship is intended to provide the reflective space in which students are helped to develop professional skills (Davys and Beddoe 2009) but student placement reports denote perennial difficulties in securing regular reflective supervision. Field educators confront barriers in trying to meet the educational needs of students on placement, including workload, staff recruitment and retention challenges and the crisis-driven environment. Under these conditions, reflective supervision is often displaced by task focused instruction. Such supervisory oversight severely limits a student's opportunity to integrate their use of professional knowledge in practice. This is particularly so in work environments that privilege technicist procedure over professional practice (Ruch 2007; 2009).

We aimed to preserve a space for critical reflection in the field by teaching pre-placement students a range of mindful awareness practices (MAPS) that actively guided, engaged and encouraged them in the mindful use of attention. We sought to embed the contemplative skills taught through serial assignments in the expectation that repeated exposure to the skills learnt would foster their use in the field. These skills were subsequently reinforced in the practicum by Faculty liaison visits and supported by a reflective practice tool currently under trial. The teaching intervention's rationale is outlined below.

Our interest in mindfulness was stimulated by a number of factors. Firstly, it is an experiential process which requires active engagement of its practitioners. Experience is a known powerful constituent of the learning process (Kolb 1984; Mezirow 1991; Maudsley and Strivens 2000). Learning to use MAPs in the field requires both method and process and an environment facilitative of such learning (Yip 2006; Ruch 2007). Urdang (2010) instructs educators to incorporate identifiable methods and processes to guide students in learning how to integrate the use of awareness as an essential tool toward becoming a holistic practitioner. Mindfulness was thus compatible with our goal to support students to develop an internalised framework for self-aware critical reflection capable of being generalised to the field.

Our aim in adopting mindfulness as a teaching intervention was twofold. Firstly, we hoped to engage student interest in reflective practice through potent experience and in so doing enhance their sense of responsibility toward their own learning (Allard et al 2007). Secondly, we sought to provide a method and process for reflective practice that would teach them to pay attention to their experience across the fields of sensation (Baer and Krietemeyer 2006; Turner 2009). Becoming accomplished at attuning to interconnections between diverse elements of experience, through deep learning, is considered to be a cornerstone of effective professional practice (Clare 2007). In developing this form of awareness students learn to bring both rational and non-rational knowledge to practice (Bower 2003; Munro 2008; Urdang 2010). It was also thought that increased awareness might stimulate autobiographical reflection which is a necessary precondition to active and *critical* use of self in practice (Mezirow 1991; Siegel 2007, 2009).

It is generally accepted that learning for social work practice involves the exploration of a complex web of factors: personal, relational, cultural, political, and organisational. Learners access and utilise knowledge, emotion, behaviour and prior experience in the learning context. Such learning may be described as 'holistic' and represents a departure from more positivist approaches in which the self is distanced from knowledge (Ruch 2000). Use of self is considered an essential component of reflective practice, the conscious bringing to the surface of different forms of knowledge, while attending to the thoughts and emotions present in the practitioner, both in situ and after the experience (Kondrat 1999).

For students, developing the habit of reflective practice generally requires the ability to name and explore the experiences that emerge in both classroom and practice learning. Yip (2006, p.782) suggests that the use of self happens across a number of dimensions in which 'self-recall, self-evaluation, self-observation and self-analysis take place within the social worker's mind'; and highlights the need for social workers to make ' inner space' available to deal with disconcerting experience. Thus critical reflection requires attention be paid to processes which 'unsettle the fundamental (and dominant) thinking implicit in professional practice, in order to see other ways of practising' (Fook and Gardner 2007, p.51). Reflective practices are now generally regarded as central in the maintenance of competent practice within helping professions (Ixer 1999; Eraut 2004). The promotion of reflective practice has not gone unchallenged in the literature, and Eraut (2004, p.47) considers that the term may be so commonly used that 'there is a considerable danger of it being taken for granted'. Ixer (1999, p.514), raising similar concerns, had earlier queried whether assessing students on vague notions of reflective practice might 'oppress vulnerable learners who do not happen to fit into the assessors' own ideas' of reflective learning. An introduction to the skills of mindfulness before social work students go into the field placement experience, offers a named and conscious self- monitoring process for students to maximize their opportunities for reflection. The following section briefly explains the history of mindfulness and its use in the helping professions.

MINDFULNESS: HISTORY AND TRADITION

Mindfulness is a consciousness discipline that originates from the Eastern philosophic tradition of Buddhism, dating back some 2,500 years. Meditative practice is a key element in its practice (Nhat Hahn 1987). Expansion of awareness, equanimity and clarity in thinking are some of its known benefits (Kabat-Zinn 2004; Baer and Krietemeyer 2006). Mindfulness has been adopted by western populations as both a spiritual practice and way of life. Interest in its applicability to professional contexts has proliferated over time because of its ability to reduce emotional, psychological and physical distress (Brown and Ryan 2003; Carmody and Baer 2008).

Mental health professionals have been instrumental in conceptualising mindfulness practices into discrete teachable skills amenable for secular use (Baer and Krietemeyer 2006). These skills have since been taught and applied in a variety of clinical and non-clinical populations to beneficial effect (Kabat-Zinn 1982; Linehan 1993; Ma and Teasdale 2004). Mindfulness has more recently been adopted as a professional development practice

for an interdisciplinary group across the human service sector, mainly focused on its use as an antidote against stress (Christopher 2006; Salmon, Lush, Jablonski, and Sephton 2009).

The applicability of mindfulness to social work education is in its infancy (Berceli and Napoli 2006; Birnbaum 2005, 2007; Birnbaum and Birnbaum 2008; Lynn 2009). So too is it in social work practice (Hick and Furlotte 2009; Turner 2009 Shier and Graham 2010). However its use in professional education of students has a much longer history (Schwartz, and Bonner 1998; Epstein 1999). Its use in education was of particular interest to the authors.

The development of an intentional use of awareness can assist social work students to recognise that non-rational knowledge (i.e. tacit, experiential and intuitive ways of knowing) is as essential to the helping process as is conceptual, and empirical knowledge (Miehls and Moffat, 2000; Munro 2008; Urdang 2010). Effective use of self involves students learning to consciously bring to the surface and come to understand the way in which their social location, personal history and the assumptive world may influence the perceptions held about self, others and the world (Dewane 2006; Harrison and Ruch 2007; Mandell 2008; Ward 2008;Reupert 2009).

Along with raising understanding of how students use different kinds of knowledge, intentional use of awareness also supports critical reflection: by supporting students to subject their conceptualisations about self and others to vigorous standpoint inquiry, i.e. of position, social location and personal biases as relevant to the specific practice relationship under scrutiny (Sakamoto and Pitner 2005; Fook, White and Gardner 2006). Becoming attuned to shifts in focus enables the observer, with curiosity and non-judgment, to explore their experience through self-questioning e.g. 'at what point in that transaction did I become distracted, how might that distraction impede me from hearing the perspective of the service user, what internal or external signals of discomfort manifest before I changed the direction of the conversation'? Learning to capture these focal moments enhances awareness about how one positions one's self in practice.

THE TEACHING INTERVENTION: PARTNERING WITH THE STUDENTS

In this teaching intervention educators and students partnered to prepare for field placement, informed by a collaborative action research design (Carr and Kemmis 1983; Stringer 2007). Selecting a methodology involving the voice of student and educator alike was required, as the challenges confronted in field placement are a shared concern. Student learning is directly affected by the variable quality of supervision offered in the field. Engaging the student's voice in developing strategies to remediate the problem confronted ensures that any action for improvement is both useful and usable by the student for the purpose of furthering their learning. The partnership involved trialling a range of skills known to develop the intentional use of awareness (Baer 2009; Baer and Krietemeyer 2006; Carmody and Baer 2008). Mindful awareness fosters the capacity for open-mindedness and engaged-inquiry, and thus is critical in social work where willingness to explore both positive and negative experience is required (Kabat-Zinn 2004; Siegel 2009).

The teaching intervention was conducted in a pre-placement course that involved 75 students over two non-consecutive iterations of the course. All students in each course were required to participate fully in all aspects of the curriculum and 29 students chose to participate in the study, 15 from the first course and 14 from the second. Some minor variance in participant characteristics was noted as reported in Table 1.

Table 1: Profile of participants in studies 1 and 2

PARTICIPANT PROFILE	GROUP 1 (N=15)		GROUP 2 (N=14)	
AGE RANGE	22-52 YRS		21 – 53 YRS	
GENDER	F	M	F	M
	80%	20%	86%	14%
GENDER	HETEROGENEOUS		HETEROGENEOUS	
SOCIAL WORK EXPERIENCE	2		1	
MINDFULNESS PRACTICE EXPERIENCE	NIL		2	

The study focused on the mindfulness component of the course. Ethical approval was obtained for each study. A key dilemma in the design of this study was the power differential associated with class-based research inquiry i.e. the relationship between educator and student. We were concerned that students might feel that a decision to decline involvement in the project could negatively impact the assessable aspects of the course. Our resolution to this dilemma was to inform the students, from the outset, about our research interest and to make it clear that an invitation to participate in the study would only be issued once the course had concluded. Additionally, an independent moderator was appointed to review the assessable components of the work of interest to the study. Consent forms were also distributed and collected by an independent third party.

Table 2: Mindfulness teaching protocol

WEEKLY LECTURE	IN-CLASS MINDFUL AWARENESS PRACTICES (MAPS)	AT HOME MAPS
Introductory mindfulness lecture and establishing the group work process	**Raisin exercise** and **attitudes of non-judging, acceptance and curiosity** (delivered at lecture outset) (Baer and Krietemeyer, 2006) 3 minute **breath awareness** (delivered at conclusion of lecture) (Baer and Krietemeyer, 2006). **Stop, observe and return** (Siegel, 2009). Describing experience (In-class recording of experience completed at conclusion of inaugural breath awareness exercise) (Kabat-Zin, 2004). **Intention** – introduction to breath awareness and foundational attitudes of mindfulness	Notice and connect to the breath 5 minutes per day and describe experience in mindfulness log 1
Mindfulness lecture 2, critical reflection and group work skills	Introduction to skill of **decentering, noticing without distracting** and applying the skill of **equanimity** (hovering attention) (delivered mid-lecture) (Lau, et al., 2006; Wells, 2006). 5 minute breath awareness, focus on noticing the presence of thoughts, feelings and somatic experience **Intention** – support development of emotional regulation for practice with mindfulness skills of decentering and equanimity (Germer, et al., 2006).	Use breath as anchor and expand awareness to noticing the presence of thoughts, feelings and somatic experience for 10 minutes per day. Describe experience in mindfulness log 2 and complete mindfulness reading SUBMIT MAPS log 1
Mindfulness lecture 3, exploring self care and stress response	Expand awareness to somatic experience through engagement in the **body scan** (delivered at conclusion of lecture) **Intention** – initiate and enhance self care through body awareness (Baer and Krietemeyer, 2006; Berceli and Napoli, 2006; Kabat-Zinn , 2004).	Use breath as anchor and complete body scan 15 minutes per day. Record experience in mindfulness log 3 and complete mindfulness reading. SUBMIT MAPS log 2
Mindfulness lecture 4, family work, use of self and core beliefs	Experiment with MAPS attitudinal foundations **Intention** – Apply growing internal awareness to intersubjective interaction with others	Apply skills of mindfulness to group work process SUBMIT MAPS log 3
Mindfulness lecture 5, Applying presence to interviewing	Apply MAPS to interview simulation **Intention** – Apply moment to moment awareness (i.e. presence) in a simulated practice context Complete reflection on group work process	SUBMIT Group work project and reflection

Table 2 summarizes the mindfulness teaching protocol used in each course with exercise sources noted. Between-course modifications have been made to the teaching practice to better integrate the MAPs to social work practice, e.g. applying the skill of presence to a simulated interview, initiating a group-work process that actively encouraged the students to apply the awareness skills taught to interactions within the group and reflections on the process. As Table 2 shows, each exercise was introduced incrementally and practised in class. Students were then required to practise in their own time, as regular MAP is known to support the embedding of reflective capacities (Siegel 2009) and they were free to decide when, how, and under what conditions they practised.

Students elected the attitudinal foundations practised using self knowledge accrued from earlier practices. The selected practices are foundational components for growth in the practice of mindful awareness (Kabat-Zinn 2004; Baer 2009; Carmody and Baer 2008; Siegel 2007, 2009) chosen because of their known ability to cultivate open mindedness, stimulate curiosity, and support engagement with difficult experience, each being a pre-condition for reflective practice in social work (Redmond 2004, 2006; D'Cruz Gillingham, and Melendez 2007; Ward 2008; Ruch 2009).

While each week introduced a new attentional focus, it was expected that accrued learning from previous weeks might be integrated into new practices. By the conclusion of week two, students had started to tailor their practices to include individually relevant intentions. For example, some students quickly came to recognise the stress-preventive effect of mind-fulness (Brown and Ryan 2003). As a result they invoked the use of breath awareness to facilitate calmness and clarity in thinking. One participant illustrates that finding:

Today I was starting to panic over an unfinished essay that is due in a couple of weeks. So I decided that this would be a good time to belly breathe because the last time I did this it really helped me focus. (Tyra, yr 3)

A group learning activity was included to determine whether the students would translate their developing use of self from a space of introspection, to a more critically informed interaction with peers, in the inter-subjective space (Keenan and Miehls 2008). Group work has previously been identified as a powerful tool in the development of critical consciousness (Sakamoto and Pitner 2005). A reflective recording accompanied this activity. This exercise was included to help us ascertain whether the expected shift was taking place (i.e. generalising use of awareness from introspection to inception of critical consciousness in the intersubjective space). If so, it would suggest that the students were starting to embed an internalised framework of mindfully reflective practice capable of being generalised to the practice setting, a key goal of the project.

The discussion that follows highlights the developmental progression observed in the students' use of awareness as they became increasingly adept at employing the skills taught. A select range of student comments illustrates this growth. Figure 1 details an emergent model which depicts the students' development of awareness across the fields of sensation in preparation for use in practice.

Figure 1: Mindfulness, creating the space and embedding a process of critical reflexivity for practice

BEING
– Anchor awareness to the breath
– Shift to a state of non-doing
– Adopt a stance of curiosity & non-judgment
– Encourage holistic view of self by use of mindfulness
– With alertness, notice & observe emergent sensory experience

SENSING
– With sustained MAPS, cultivate the use of observing mind
– Discriminate self from temporality of experience
– Notice perceptual habits
– Use sensory feedback to enhance affective attunement to self & other
– Use inquiring mind to critically reflect on sensorial experience

DOING
– Bring awareness to action
– Enter the working relationship from a position of being 'with' vs. 'doing to'
– Integrate use of multiple knowledge sources to support effective practice
– Become practised at noticing moments of re-perception
– Sustain MAPS to deter automaticity & defensive practice

MINDFULNESS IN ACTION: FROM NOTICING TO THE INCEPTION OF CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Five distinct stages of development were observed in the analysed data denoting a shift from the rudiments of noticing to the inception of critical consciousness. These shifts are described briefly below:

• Noticing from a state of 'being'

• Immersion in the experience of awareness

• Learning to disentangle self from experience

• Constellation of observing mind

• Inception of critical consciousness demonstrated by recursive questioning of experience

Learning to notice from a place of 'being'

The comment below was recorded following the inaugural in-class three minute breath awareness exercise. Jane's comment is broadly representative of other students' experiences. The three interrelated skills taught in this exercise are: anchoring awareness to the breath, noticing without escaping, expanding awareness to include the body (refer Table 2).

I felt very restful and peaceful. I felt like it was a chance to almost 'let go' of everything and just relax and enjoy the moment. I felt like it gave me a 'breather' or a 'time out' that I could focus on myself. Towards the end I felt really refreshed. I noticed my mind being consumed by thoughts at times. This made me realise how easy it is to become distracted. I need to work on this, so that it doesn't affect my practice. (Jane, yr 3)

This was the student's first encounter with a facilitated mindful awareness exercise. Her opening comment connotes the shift in orientation required of reflection, i.e. moving from a place of activity in the external world to an internal connection with awareness. This developmental progression is set out in Figure 1. The calming and clarifying experiences associated with mindfulness are also evident in her dialogue. A practice-relevant moment of insight is signified by her reference to a distractible mind. While not fully articulated, an inductive link is starting to crystallise about the experience of distractible mind and its possible implication for her ability to be fully available and present in the context of practice. Her resolution to do something about this demonstrates both her internal motivation to learn and her intention to take ownership of her own learning by embarking on some form of action, as yet unspecified (Allard et al. 2007). The observation made is absent of self-deprecatory recriminations (e.g. I should have better control of my mind) or ruminations (e.g. I will make a terrible social worker if I let my mind wander like this). This suggests an attitude of non-judgement and a willingness to encounter new experiences from a place of curiosity and openness. She demonstrates active engagement in the reflective process and a dawning awareness about an aspect in use of self that requires ongoing development of professional identity (Clare 2007).

As indicated earlier, Jane's comment was broadly representative of comments made by other students in the participant group. It is possible that students in the study group were motivated differently from those not involved in the study. It is impossible to ignore the potential of a social desirability response in this study, given the extant power relationship between student and educator. But our teaching observations of course material from all students in this cohort would suggest that the majority of students experienced the mindfulness component of the course in a similar manner. The stress-preventative response associated with mindfulness practice may explain the teaching observation.

Immersion in the experience of awareness

Initial practices in mindful awareness are frequently characterised by a quality of immersion of self with the experience, i.e. an absence of reflection and a sense of being lost in the experience (Siegel 2009). Students in each study documented a similar experience. Their frustration in trying to achieve focus is illustrated below:

My mind always walks in front of me; I constantly have to try to catch up with it, which usually doesn't happen…I found it hard to just 'be present' (Kaia, yr 3)

I found this very difficult, I had a lot of thoughts running around about how I 'should' be breathing, how I 'should' be sitting and all the other things I 'should be doing' (Mei, yr 3)

The struggle denoted in the students' comments show that while MAP sounds exceedingly simple and easy to achieve, when described, it is in fact far more challenging to enact (Lynn 2009). Their comments show how easily present-moment awareness can be derailed by preoccupation with other matters e.g. concerns about 'doing 'and the desire for control. The invectives of censoring mind are evident in the comments of the last participant. While the students were encouraged to apply a non-judgmental attitude to all practices, their attention in early sessions was regularly directed toward striving for a specific outcome. Staying with the process, i.e. experience of being, was difficult.

Sustained practice was identified as instrumental in promoting familiarity with the process and in deepening shifts in the levels of awareness experienced, as indicated in the comments below.

Throughout the week it has become easier, with these practices, to be purposefully present with myself and my breathing (Asha, yr 3)

My brain seems to automatically start the process of checking in with the parts of the body now and how they are feeling (Jemai, yr 3)

The second comment suggests that the MAPs are beginning to embed through sustained practice.

Learning to disentangle self from experience
Decentering, as referred to in Table 2, involves the ability to notice the presence of specific feelings, thoughts or sensations without conceiving of them as fixed aspects of self (Lau et al. 2006). Students benefit from acquiring this skill because it is known to increase receptivity of mind; reduce episodes of emotional dysregulation (Block-Lerner, Adair, Plumb, Rhatigan, and Orsillo 2007; Linehan 1993; Siegel 2009; Turner 2009) and contributes to the capacity for affect regulation in social work practice (Howe 2008). Emotions of varying intensity are part of daily life in practice, and skills that enhances student capacity for responsiveness over reactivity serves their subsequent practice well.

A detectible shift in awareness is evident in the comment below where Mei describes a disquieting discovery made during her practices. Her narrative indicates that she was able to remain present to her experience despite the distress caused, i.e. to notice and label the experience without attempting to control, suppress or escape from the distress.

I noticed quite a few things about myself from my mindfulness practices this week. I have learnt that when I am quiet, not actively doing something (in a physical sense). I have a lot of negative self-talk going on. This actually became quite upsetting to me to realise how critical I am of myself. In my practice I acknowledged these feelings and then let them go. For a brief time I felt a wave of acceptance wash over me and with this came relief, that it was ok to feel these feelings and to realise that they don't define who I am and that I can change this (Mei, yr 3)

In using the awareness skill of decentering, the student is learning to discriminate experience as distinct from self, a critical aspect of safe practice. Her account also exem-

plifies how mindfulness has been applied to help her maintain emotional regulation in the face of an upsetting self discovery (Block-Lerner, et al. 2007). Students hone the skill of presence through this experience, i.e. being 'with' and available to their own emotional and cognitive experience and that of others (McCollum and Gehart 2010; Turner 2009) which contrasts sharply from the egoistic position of 'helper' as detached professional with their arsenal of 'expert' knowledge (Keenan and Miehls 2008).

Constellation of observing mind

Observing-mind is a pivotal mental process which surfaces a learner's awareness through sustained practice in purposeful self-regulated use of attention (Siegel 2007, 2009). The constellation of observing-mind is evidenced by the presence of observational distance. Observational distance appears when the learner starts to discriminate the difference between the focus of attention and the object of attention (Siegel 2009). A shift from immersion in experience to developing the capacity to review self in action, i.e. the ability to reflect, is the notable hallmark in the constellation of observing mind. The emergence of this ability is fundamental to reflective practice. Before learning can be made from experience (i.e. reflection on action), the learner needs to develop this observational capacity. This progression is demonstrated in the narrative below.

I noticed that when working in the group, I am someone who tends to take a back-seat, and if there are others who have a more dominant personality then I let them take the lead. After using mindfulness practice and this fact coming to the surface, with curiosity I attempted to discover where this trait came about, on looking back, from my understanding it is a cultural trait I carry. Growing up in a Samoan family and attending school in Samoa, I was not encouraged to voice my opinion, or contribute to family discussions. So taking quite a passive role is something that I have grown up with. On realizing this, I consciously decided to make more of an effort to contribute to the group discussions. I put my hand up to take on various roles within the group. Leading groups and making important contributions in group discussions is an important part of social work, and is an area I am now aware that I need to grow in (Ata, yr 3)

Autobiographical reflection has been stimulated for this student as a result of her engagement with group process (Siegel 2009). Ata begins to critically reflect on her subjective experience from this learning event. Seidel and Blythe's reflective practice schema is useful in demarcating the presence and use of observational distance (i.e. observing mind) in this student's exploration of use of self (1996 cited in Dempsey, Halton and Murphy 2001). Their schema is comprised of four phases: looking backward, inward, outward and forward.

Developmentally, the student has passed through the stages of simply noticing and being immersed in the experience. Her subjective world becomes the object of examination (looking inward and backward). As she queries her habitual way of responding in a collective context she identifies the presence of an embedded belief about self (i.e. a core belief) based on subjective history (looking inward). Finally, she settles on an action strategy of becoming a more proactive member in the group and in so doing revises and challenges old ways of behaving (looking outward and forward).

The student's use of observing mind is discernible throughout this practice. In processing her experience she consciously surfaces attributes of her subjective self (i.e. variables of social location, personal history and her assumptive world) which are known to influence the perceptions held about self, others and the world (Bower 2003; Dewane 2006; Harrison and Ruch 2007; Mandell 2008; Reupert 2009; Ruch 2002, 2009).

Emerging critical consciousness

Critical consciousness employs awareness of discomfort or tension to critically interrogate ones subjective position for prejudicial bias, structurally and internally (Sakamoto and Pitner 2005). This aspect of development was signified in the student group studied by the inception of critical questioning following interaction with peer colleagues in the group assignment. Diversity and difference were the principles applied to group composition, as reflected in the student's comments below:

My group consisted of very different members with different personalities, different ways of learning and communicating and also from different walks of life. (Mica, yr 3)

The dimensions of difference engaged with included: culture, age, class, language, disability, beliefs, values, gender, sexual orientation', and variation in academic literacy. The dialogic interaction created by the group-work assignment facilitated a further developmental shift in the students' reflective capacity, namely moving them from a space of internal self reflection (i.e. introspection) to intersubjective connection with others (Miehls and Moffatt 2000).

In working through some of the difficulties associated with group work process such as anti-group behaviours and issues of diversity (Hepworth 2010) students were faced with having to attend to both their own anxiety and distress and that of others. Much ambivalence and tension was associated with this learning process as the students struggled to find ways to relate across the tensions experienced.

We experienced a negative incident early in the group, which caused much tension. It was mainly between two group members but it affected us all. (Mica, yr 3)

Mindfulness skills were drawn on to support the students' maintenance of equanimity as they worked through the tension together, as indicated by Ata's comment below:

The use of mindfulness in this situation helped me and my group members to deal with this stressful situation and enabled us to maintain composure under stress. (Ata, yr 3)

Some students experienced this state of being as a transformational moment in their learning. This shift in awareness and position (i.e. from subjective to intersubjective) is illustrated in the accounts below:

[In reference to learning from a difficult group work experience] I need to consider my own values and beliefs. Based on this consideration, I also need to acknowledge others values, beliefs, ways of working and communicating. The easiest thing to do is to criticize others and the hardest

thing to do is critique self. When something [negative] happens, people usually blame others. My learning from this experience is that I need to use critical reflection to look at myself. (Mica, yr 3)

This transitional shift in awareness is akin to the reflective process, coined by Mezirow (1991) as 'perspective transformation'. The clarity and understanding that emerge from these moments of insight or re-perception enables the observer to see familiar things in new ways, from a changed standpoint, as the student's comment below demonstrates (Sakamoto and Pitney 2005).

*I became aware that I was conscious of the tension that had been occurring in the team…
I could have brought the issue up myself in the team meeting as opposed to waiting for the two main people who were not by this stage getting along. At the time, I saw it as none of my business. I have since realized I could have done so as a team member. Avoidance of the issue … was not a positive way to deal with the situation.* (Ata, yr 3)

Such perceptual shifts and the emergence of insight (Germer, Siegel, and Fulton 2006; Siegel 2009) signal students' expanded awareness of their interactions, an openness to the perspectives of others and the ability to think about different ways of acting (Keenan and Miehls 2008). Critical self questioning was a central aspect in this change and students experienced unsettling long held assumptions, dislodging rigid views and challenging formerly taken-for- granted ways of knowing and behaving. In so doing, it lessened the potential to contribute to perpetuating oppressive and discriminatory outcomes. Some of the questions posed by the students included:

• How does who I am and what I bring to this interaction with my peer colleagues impact our relationships?

• What position do I inhabit in relation to the tensions experienced?

• How does who I am and what I do perpetuate the status quo (i.e. confirm me in my position and others in theirs)?

• Whose interests are being served in this transaction, i.e. who benefits and who doesn't and why?

• What status might I hold in the relationship under exploration?

• How might my status affect/influence our relationship?

• How might what I think, believe, do or not do lead to the marginalisation of others?

Subsequent use of this knowledge to challenge relationships of power, no matter how small, is significant to the continued development of critical reflection for practice.

DISCUSSION

The responses of our student participants offer some evidence that mindfulness, as method

and process, was of value in enabling this group to use attention purposefully, flexibly, critically and practically. As described earlier, five stages of development were discriminated in their use of awareness.

Several benefits were accrued from sustained MAP, namely heightened self-awareness, cognitive clarity and focus, deepened self compassion, an enhanced sense of well-being, emotional regulation, and a pre-disposition for self responsibility (Allard, et al. 2007; Germer, et al. 2006; Siegel 2007).These aptitudes parallel those sought after in a professionally emergent practitioner (Clare 2006, 2007; Urdang 2010).

Mindfulness was selected as a pedagogical intervention because of its known ability to cultivate a moment to moment, non-judgmental purposeful use of attention crucial to the development of critical reflection in social work practice (Redmond 2006; Reupert 2009). Mindfulness offered the students an experiential process in the use of contemplative skills, engagement with embodied (intuitive) knowledge, and the use of multiple knowledge types including both rational and non-rational knowledge (Munro 2008).

In undertaking this project, we speculated that an embodied experience of awareness training may help the students construct an internalized schema for reflective practice capable of being generalized to the field. This outcome is important in our context as opportunities for facilitated reflection in the placement are often compromised due to the variable quality of available supervision.

Task-oriented practice activity frequently favours prescribed and ritualized ways of working (Dempsey, Murphy, and Halton 2008), while mindful practice by contrast stimulates the active use of conscious awareness (Siegel 2009). Mindfulness must be enacted by the participant and this is consistent with teaching and learning theory which identifies the utility of experience as a powerful constituent in the learning process (Kolb 1984). Reflection on experience is known to facilitate knowledge integration and consolidation (Maudsley and Strivens 2000), a significant objective of learning in field placement. Emergence of critical consciousness was noted in later practices, coupled with the group-work activity. Taken together, these experiences have coalesced to produce heightened levels of self-awareness in this novice group (Ruch 2009; Urdang 2010).

The philosophical foundations of mindfulness caused concern for a small number of students. They worried that by utilising MAPs they would be contravening their own belief systems. With further discussion, direction to course readings and research this matter was resolved. It was also signalled in the introductory lecture. Ata speaks to her resolution of the matter:

Although mindfulness derives from Buddhist practice I am comfortable using this practice as it is training me in the focused use of attention to inner dialogue which can uncover judgments, motives and things about self that I would not necessarily pay attention to. I acknowledge that there is no spiritual connection to my practice of mindfulness and this knowledge makes me feel secure when conducting the exercises. (Ata, yr 3)

There are acknowledged limitations to the reported study. For instance, the data collected emanates from a small subset of a larger group. It could be argued that those who consented to participate were those that derived particular benefit from the activity. Or that they developed a strong interest in the intervention because of a perceived link between mindfulness and what it means to be a good social worker. As reported earlier, teaching observations of student work from both cohorts indicates little difference in the way students experienced the intervention. However, systematic analysis of this content is not permitted given the ethical parameters of the study.

CONCLUSION

Creating and preserving the space for reflective practice in our student group can be conceived of as an act of resistance to the prevailing discourse of managerialism found in practice. 'We don't have time for this' is a frequently articulated catch cry in discussion about the space for reflective practice with field educators. In the absence of a protected space and articulated method for reflection, students have, in the past, mistakenly viewed technicist procedure: do much, think little, forgo feeling and review work for checklist compliance, as a hallmark of effective professional practice. Observing practitioners engage with practice in ritualized, prescriptive and task-focused ways confirms this view. Experience of task-based supervision simply adds to cementing this perception further. Learning to discriminate this difference is essential to the professional development of beginning practitioners.

The next challenge is to understand how student learning in a classroom can extend into the placement. Anecdotal reports from visiting faculty and students alike would suggest that knowledge transfer is in progress. Figure 1: Creating the space for mindful reflexivity provides an elementary map of the students' development of awareness across the fields of sensation in preparation for use in practice. Further research is under way supported by a 'use of self assignment' which aims explore the utility of this process in assisting students to generalise their use of mindful awareness from classroom to field.

The student voice concludes this paper. Their experience suggests that the practice of mindfulness has been instructionally useful and personally worthwhile.

This has really been a light bulb moment for me and something that I will hopefully continue with in the future in all areas of my life. It has made me more aware that if I am constantly casting judgment on myself then it is likely that I could do so with clients without even realizing what is happening. (Jemai, yr 3)

I think that these skills have definitely taken my use of awareness to another step because I have found that it is the perfect way to get centred and focused for any task at hand…. I think this will be an invaluable tool for me because I know it works. (Asha, yr 3)

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