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Peter Camilleri
Martin Ryan

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EDITORIAL

"Engaging the Community, engaging students and contributing to social capital"

Ronnie Egan's article focuses on the key theme, for many of the 'new-generation' Universities, of engaging the community. The recognition by Universities of the value of engagement has allowed social work and welfare programs to offer protocols for this engagement. Engagement is more than 'community service', it is a two way process in which the University learns as much as it gives back to the community. Field education has been the site for social work and welfare programs in which the community is engaged. This article provides analysis of this relationship and what Universities can learn from this experience.

Genevieve Kelly and Peri O'Shea continue the theme of engagement. Their article provides a very interesting case study of introducing first year students to social policy. Their argument is that social policy is more than the context for practice it is a practice itself. They link it to community activism and engage the student in understanding policy through activity. Susan Gair, Jane Thomson and Dorothy Savage provide an analysis of why Indigenous students are not engaged in our Universities' programs in social work and welfare. This is an important article for all educators. It outlines the barriers that Indigenous students continue to experience. It is imperative that Universities support Indigenous students to complete their studies in social work and welfare. This article offers strategic ways to reduce and overcome structural barriers.

John McCormack provides a very brief and concise article on employment outcomes for undergraduate and post-graduate social work courses. The article highlights data from the Graduate Careers Council of Australia survey and provides a valuable contribution to our knowledge of graduates. Mario Debattista provides a personal account of working in Africa and the learning from that experience. He puts into a social work frame and how that can be drawn upon for working cross-culturally in Australia.

The article by Healy provides a very detailed analysis of students' experience of learning in their first practicum. This is the 'black box' of social work and welfare education. It is seen as essential to educating professionals and consumes much debate in Universities as well as a fair proportion of the curriculum. But the question posed by the researcher was how do students experience this process. It is an engaging article, which demonstrates the research skills of our students and their breath of understanding. These two articles by Healy and Debattista show how our students are engaging the profession.

Carolyn Noble, Karen Heycox, Justine O'Sullivan and Brenda Bartlett provide an important article on work-based practica (WBP). It is a growing area of importance as more of our students are currently employed in the human service sector. It has grown in importance yet let little is know of the phenomenon concerning its extent, what criteria is used to allow students to undertake WBP, what are the advantages and importantly what the disadvantages. This article makes an important contribution to this debate.

Natalie Bolzan's article encapsulates the general theme of this edition - engaging communities and students building social capital. The notion of social capital as a 'good' is deconstructed in this article. We have accepted that 'social capital' is a good yet without a critical analysis of what it is and what it means in context. Natalie also points out that social capital is often assumed to be associated with social justice. She asks the question is social capital goals about achieving socially just outcomes? This is an article that makes you think more critically about social capital. As Natalie points out "social capital is a resources, a process or mechanism ... it is inherently neither good nor bad". This article I am sure will trigger considerable debate and continue to build our understanding of key terms such as social capital and social justice.

Many readers will be aware that Professors Edna Chamberlain and Norman Smith both recently passed away. As educators they both contributed enormously to the development of social work in Australia. Edna was a remarkable person with a fierce intelligence and genuine commitment to values of social justice. Norm was a very gentle man who was always courteous and supportive of those around him. His work in promoting research in social work is an important legacy.

They will be both missed by their friends and colleagues.

Professor Peter Camilleri
November 2005

SOCIALLY JUST SOCIAL CAPITAL: DO WE ASSUME TOO MUCH?

Natalie Bolzan

Introduction

The concept of social capital is enjoying wide international usage in a variety of settings and is posited as delivering benefits ranging from improved individual health outcomes (Kawachi et al. 1999) to economic benefits to whole communities (Putnam 1995). However a certain degree of ambiguity seems to adhere to the concept of social capital

Most articles concerned with social capital begin by discussing the confusion surrounding the concept and the lack of clarity that exists in its nature. A diversity of understandings of social capital is presented in the literature, often associated with varying claims about its lineage. Sociologists and psychologists claim to be able to trace a history of social capital thinking in their own traditions. Sociologists point to the work of Durkheim as emphasising the importance of social integration, whilst social psychologists remind us of the work on norms and the influence of social factors on individual well being. Economists and educationalists also contribute to understandings of social capital. Not surprisingly any understanding of social capital is informed by the theoretical position of those doing the defining resulting in often contradictory definitions.

There is also some confusion about the causal relationships associated with social capital: does high associational activity produce high social capital or does high social capital encourage associational activity. As Portes (1998, P.19) argues '(I)t leads to positive outcomes such as economic development and less crime, and its existence is inferred from the same outcomes'. The enthusiasm with which the concept has been taken up has led to what Winter calls the 'measurement rush' in which social capital as a resource to action has become confused with the outcomes of that resource (for a full discussion of this, see Winter, 2000). Furthermore definitions of social capital appear to have changed over time.

Defining Social Capital

Bordieu in 1986 (p. 249) defined social capital as 'the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to ... membership in a group - which provides each of its

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***Natalie Bolzan** is a Senior Lecturer and Head of Program for Social Work in the School of Applied Social and Human Sciences and a member of the Social Justice Social Change Research Centre at the University of Western Sydney, Australia. Her research is concerned exploring the ways in which marginalised groups such as the young or those with mental illness are able to resist or alter their marginalised status and achieve agency. She is particularly interested in methodologies which seek to engage young people in research which concerns them.*

members with the backing of the collectively owned capital'. Writing around the same time, Coleman (1988, S101)) defined social capital in terms of its function '(T)he function identified by the concept of 'social capital' is the value of these aspects of social structure to actors as resources that they can use to achieve their interests' .

These two authors provide a definition of social capital which encompasses benefits to the individual: social capital in their view is a means of increasing individuals resources. Bourdieu was explicit in his regard of social capital as divisive with the benefits flowing clearly to the elites. This understanding shifts with later work by Putnam where he defines social capital as 'the trust, norms and networks that facilitate co-operation for mutual benefit' (1993, p.167).

The latter definition, which includes the purpose of social capital, is picked up by other commentators such as Eva Cox who states that: 'Social capital refers to the processes between people which establish networks, norms, social trust and facilitate co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefit. These processes are also known as social fabric or glue' (Cox 1995, p.15).

More recent definitions move away from linking social capital to a purpose and offer a more descriptive definition. Bullen and Onyx suggest:

> Social capital is the raw material of civil society. It is created from the myriad of everyday interactions between people. It is not located within the individual person or within the social structure, but in the space between people. It is not the property of the organisation, the market or the state, though all can engage in its production. Social capital is a 'bottom-up' phenomenon. It originates with people forming social connections and networks based on principles of trust, mutual reciprocity and norms of action. (Bullen & Onyx 1999, p.2)

Current definitions appear to assert a purpose for social capital around outcomes of 'mutual benefit'. For example, Winter (2000) defines social capital as the shared norms and social relationships which provide a resource to collective action, and others articulate benefits to whole communities (Putnam 1995). Everingham notes a transformation in social capital ' from a resource possessed by individuals to explain their position of privilege, to a resource possessed by groups of benefit to society as a whole' (2001, p.113)

What tends to be consistent across the literature is a general consensus that high social capital is a good thing for individuals and communities to have. Many studies have linked high social capital with improved health and longevity (Kawachi et al. 1997), better educational achievement (Coleman 1988), economic growth (Temple 1998), reduced crime rates (Saegert et al. 2002; Putnam 2000), enhanced economic achievement (Fukuyama 1995) and that those with high social capital are more likely to be 'housed, healthy, hired and happy' (Woolcock 2001 p.12). Hall (2002 p.55) goes so far as to say, 'the very term "social capital" draws our attention to those respects in which social networks provide a collective resource to benefit all in society'.

Social capital has emerged as associated with outcomes of benefit to whole societies, rather than a resource providing mutual benefit to members of communities, as in earlier definitions. Whilst it is rarely specifically articulated that high social capital leads to socially just outcomes various connections have been made that imply this is the case.

Social Justice

Social justice is also a contested term. At its most fundamental social justice is concerned to achieve what is good for all members of society around the equitable bearing of burdens and reaping of benefits. Difficulties however arise with the concept of social justice firstly around identifying what might be considered the 'best' for a society and secondly around mechanisms by which this 'best' can be achieved.

Complex societies contain many competing conceptions of what might be considered 'best'. Culture, gender, social positioning and other differences mean that notions of what is best for society come into conflict, with some of these differences being irreconcilable. Habermas offers a way through this dilemma by describing a dynamic social justice which meets 'with the consent of all affected in their role as participants in practical discourse' (1990 p.197).

Even where there is an agreement over what might be a fair understanding of the sharing of burdens and rewards within a society, the political implications of a commitment to social justice create a further level of debate. Whilst redistribution of material and non-material goods is seen as fundamental to a fair allocation of burdens and benefits, conflict exists over the mechanisms by which this redistribution can occur.

Hayek argues against State involvement in redistribution because such intervention prevents individuals from achieving all of which they are capable. He argues that justice will only occur when people are able to compete unfettered in the market place. Market justice is that justice in which 'people are entitled only to those valued ends such as status, income, happiness, etc, that they have acquired by fair rules of entitlement (eg, by their own individual efforts, actions or abilities)' (quoted in Beauchamp, 1986, pp.568-567). This is consistent with a belief that social justice flows from individual rights. This understanding is challenged by those who believe that social justice is not able to be achieved by the effects which flow from relations in the market place or market justice, and that social justice inherently critiques market justice. Young points to underlying processes of oppression and domination which mean some groups consistently experience inequality preventing them from ever competing as equals in the market. Such a position is evident in understandings of social justice which have a clear role for the State,...'at its most basic, ([social justice] can be seen as) policy settings with the aim of creating a just society aimed at maximizing the opportunities for all individuals to benefit' (Willis quoted in Waddell & Petersen 1994, p.233).

Despite the ongoing debate which adheres to the concept of social justice, there is agreement that social justice is about benefits accruing to all in society.

When social capital is framed as for the benefit of 'all in society' it mirrors the goals of social justice in such a way as to intimate that the outcomes of social capital will be socially just. The stated commitment of the profession of social work to social justice outcomes (IFSW definition) requires that we be alert to shifts in the discourse which constructs it. The conflation of social justice with social capital is a development we need to be give careful attention to.

The Relationship Between Social Capital and Social Justice.

The shift in the imputed benefits of social capital from the localised outcome of individual and/or mutual benefit of members of networks, to the larger outcome of the benefit of whole societies, moves understandings of social capital in the direction of social justice. The emergence of social capital as a mechanism for achieving aims traditionally aligned with social justice outcomes is evident in a range of spheres. The World Bank claims that 'increasing evidence shows that social cohesion – social capital- is critical for poverty alleviation and sustainable human and economic development' (cited in Dolfsma and Dannreuther 2003, p.406). Public health literature argues social capital is not only a determinant of health, but as a mediator of socio-economic status and health provides an opportunity for community interventions to 'diminish or eliminate disparities of all kinds' (Drevdahl et al. 2001, p.26).

Literature in the field of education discusses the possibilities of the social capital of teachers providing access to resources which will enable students in 'rust-belt' regions, to overcome disadvantage (Smyth 2004). The Education Departments of the Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania specifically talk about the development of social capital leading to socially just outcomes (Departmental websites accessed in 2002). The Social Planning Network of Ontario in its model of social planning sees social capital as part of the process of social change and development leading to social outcomes including Equity, Justice, Inclusion and Cohesion, which in turn feeds into social capital. Margaret Alston (2002) in her work on rural Australia examines the manner in which social capital is seen as a pathway to rural regeneration capable of overcoming the multiple disadvantage experienced by people in rural Australia around income, health, education, social problems and housing.

Whilst social capital has never been articulated as designed to work for socially just outcomes per se, the association between the two concepts has become part of the wider meaning of social capital, such that one wonders whether social capital is in fact acting as a surrogate term for social justice. In this way the creation of high social capital becomes an end in itself rather than a social attribute which may or may be associated with socially just outcomes.

It has been acknowledged that not all high social capital is linked to outcomes which are socially beneficial. It has a dark side. Lang and Homburg (1998) identify the social capital of organised crime that involves social networks with shared norms, but do not constitute a societal good.

Similarly Fletcher presented an argument that black students in Ohio fared less well than their white counterparts because of the pressure to avoid success that labelled them as 'trying to be white' (Fletcher 1998). Even here in discussions of the dark side of social

capital the assumption that social capital should be associated with societal good is apparent. Where social capital does not lead to socially sanctioned outcomes, it is identified as the wrong sort of social capital, rather than as legitimate social capital producing different outcomes. Bourdieu (1986) describes this process in the symbolic capital available to elites to construct what is legitimate or valued.

Social capital has become value laden and normatively based. The differentiation between good social capital and its dark side obfuscates the point that social capital is a resource, a process or mechanism for achieving certain outcomes for those who possess it. It is inherently neither good nor bad. This point is lost when the mutual benefit defined in social capital comes to be understood as a societal good.

Social capital may provide benefits to its members, but this is not necessarily the same as a social good. Three features of social capital prevent it from automatically resulting in socially just outcomes:

- There are multiple sites of social capital in a social context,
- Social capital is fluid, and
- Social capital can exacerbate power differentials in society.

In this next section I draw on data from an Australian survey of community attitudes to young people, conducted by the author. It was commissioned by the National Youth Affairs Scheme (NYARS) formed of representative from the government youth bureaus in each Australian State and Territory. The data reported here comes from interviews conducted with 100 people, between the ages of 14 and 24 years from across Australia, recruited through a variety of youth organisations, and informal networks. (For the full research please see Bolzan 2003). The interviews were conducted by young people and the quotes appearing are direct quotes from the transcribed interviews.

1. Within any one Society there are Different Social Capitals;

In any one society there can be multiple sites of social capital providing unequal benefits or resources to their members. Coleman described social capital as 'not a single entity but a variety of entities' (Coleman 1988, p.S98). Rose and Weller (2001) found that in Russia high social capital was associated with linkages into networks of privilege, which advantaged only those who were able to access it. Social capital is clearly not a resource that exists uniformly amongst members of a society. The networks or sets of relationships in which one is embedded define the social capital one is able to access and also determines the benefits one may expect to flow from such capital.

Networks and network membership are not a given within one society. The social capital literature addresses this in part by describing the social capital of communities rather than of the whole society. Communities described in the literature include those such as inner city communities who experience poverty related to lack of a social capital (Putnam 1995), immigrant communities who have created ethnic enclaves through high social

capital (Waldinger 1986) and marginalised communities who create parallel forms of social capital with a set of norms and reciprocity which may put them at odds with the norms and expectations of the mainstream society (Bolzan, et al., forthcoming). Such sites of social capital sit side by side in any one society and may share little in terms of the norms or trust and reciprocity that distinguish them. Putnam views communities as coherent wholes, with varying degrees of connectedness to each other or to a larger context, such as 'society'.

De Filippis (2001) makes the point that social capital must serve to privilege some and not others, otherwise the benefits of having social capital cease to exist. He goes on to stress that individuals use networking as a way of 'getting ahead', the benefits of which will be diminished if the networks are shared too broadly. De Fillipis invokes Weber to argue that the opportunity for everyone in a society to be able to access shared networks erodes the economic advantage of such networks. The benefits which accrue to members of a social capital network are therefore not standard, nor shared. Consequently these sites do not necessarily act to provide a 'social good'. Social capital as a differential resource or possession of certain groups within society restricts its ability to work for the benefit of all.

Young people spoke repeatedly about the social capital which adults identified for them such as school, the labour market and social security services, as disadvantaging them rather than providing a connection to the larger society. Whilst not articulating it in as many words, young people did not appear to identify these formal networks as of benefit to them, or therefore as part of their social capital:

> *I was in year 8 and the (school) principal told me I belong in the gutter.*
>
> *She (prospective employer) asked me a lot of personal questions...I answered them all and she hired me. The only reason she hired me they got $4,000 subsidy if they kept me on for three months. Three months and then they fired me. Aboriginals are perceived as really bad, they go out and do all these bad things - sniff... whatever. But...a lot of them try to get work, but because they're Aboriginals, no one will employ them. And I feel really sorry for them.'*

Examples were given of places assumed to be part of young people's social capital, such as the social security (Centrelink) offices, being experienced as exclusionary by young people who feel humiliated by having to justify their need for assistance. This was heightened by the physical intimidation experienced by indigenous young people who found the offices and procedures of Centrelink particularly forbidding. Young people spoke of their sometimes limited literacy levels as a real barrier to resource access particularly in terms of the perceived staff attitude when they could not understand the forms. Young people spoke of being so embarrassed and powerless in the face of Centrelink that they preferred to miss out on entitlements rather than endure the humiliation. These expected sites of social capital for young people were not of benefit to them.

Assumptions about certain sorts of social capital such as the norms created by networks of young people created problems rather than benefits for young people:

> *It's hard for your parents as well, because if everybody else thinks that teenagers are on drugs, when you get home you get accused of doing things you don't do.*

> *Walk into David Jones or Grace Brothers (Department Stores) any time and you're bound to have somebody (security) on your tail within two minutes of walking in the door.*

Young people's social capital was often outside the mainstream networks and consisted of peers, friends and occasionally adults who they felt offered them respect:

> *Like I suppose some teachers would think good things about young people. Yeah, they're the only real adults, besides parents and some nice adults, we get any compliments from.*

> *Like probably the best place I've worked is KFC, because the managers treat you like we're their age. They treat you like they need you as well, I mean they drop people off home if they have no way to get home.*

The multiple sites of social capital that exist in any one society are by their very nature associated with different types of resource and benefits:

> *I'm not saying that no rich kids get into drugs, but not many rich kids go through the hardships that poor kids do, because they've got the money to support the habit, whereas poor kids have to go and steal and so there's just a lot of disadvantages and that.*

The literature acknowledges the multiple sites of social capital that exist in one society. While Hall (2002, p.5) argues for the benefits of social capital to all society he acknowledges that social capital is not only a public good, it can also be a club good, that is one of most benefit to participants in the networks that constitute it. However Hall frames this as a disadvantage of social capital rather than an intrinsic feature of it. Such normative assessments of differential social capital(s) miss the point that social capital serves to act as a resource or benefit to its members. The social capital described by the young people in a car theft network (Bolzan et al. forthcoming) has norms of trust and reciprocity which lead to collective action and which they describe as beneficial to the members, in the same way that the social capital of the privileged may be mutually beneficial to its members, but not otherwise contributing to the social good. The overlay of a value judgement that defines some social capital as 'the right stuff' and others as part of the 'dark side' is more about who has the power to define than about the nature of social capital. This departs from earlier understandings of social capital, such as those of Coleman (1988), which saw it as normatively and morally neutral. Normative judgements

aside, social capital is about benefiting those who are part of its network, whether this then is seen as benefiting the larger society depends on who is doing the defining.

The differential sites of social capital that exist in any one society are a well known feature of social capital. That the possession of social capital is seen to offer advantages to its members is the undisputed reason from promoting social capital. It is therefore surprising that social capital has come to be associated with outcomes that benefit all in a society which includes those who are seen as excluded form networks or marginalised from the mainstream sites of social capital. As Putnam (2002, P.514) acknowledges 'social capital is accumulated most among those who need it least'.

2. Fluid Nature of Social Capital

Social capital does not describe a fixed set of relations or arrangements that are institutionalised, but rather a changing set of connections, the nature and purpose of which changes over time and with membership. Coleman (1990) emphasises that social capital networks are situation specific; the networks most useful for getting a job may not be the ones most useful for childcare or protection against crime. Beyond the plurality of sites of social capital is a temporal dimension where the social capital one is able to access changes over time. Changes in social positioning related to age, socio-economic status, employment and geography all impact on access to the sites of social capital. Moving from being unemployed to employed brings with it a new set of relationships and networks, as may moving from being employed to unemployed. Portes (1998) posits that the more ambitious people in a society are able to escape the sites of social capital in which they are disadvantaged, but that most are unable to. Some young people interviewed spoke of needing to sever ties with networks that they felt would prevent them 'staying clean'. Such young people spoke of working very hard to fit into new networks and to learn the norms associated with these networks, norms around suitable language, work ethic, dress code and humour. Young people spoke of how hard it was to break into such networks and cited impediments to entry such as their address (a low socio-economic community with a high crime rate), their ethnicity, hair colour and confidence level. These young people were often unable to alter the circumstances that would enable movement to sites of social capital with greater resources or benefits. Other young people spoke of not even trying to move out of their current networks:

> *You get lower self esteem, you don't want to participate and you lose confidence in the community.*
>
> *People look at me and judge me when I have nothing to do with anything, I'm just a person who wants ... to go far. I'm one of those people who try really hard and yet I still get people coming looking at me, 'Oh you're bad because you dress like this...or you look Asian - you must be in a gang'.*
>
> *I might as well do that, you know, because that's what everybody thinks I'm doing.*

There is some opportunity for movement into sites of privileged social capital but it is not equally available to all in a society. The literature identifies limits to the movement between sites of social capital when it defines three types of social capital; bonding, concerned with the ties that occur within communities; bridging which links heterogeneous communities; and linking which describes vertical connections such as those between political elites and the public, or between social classes (Kearns 2003). These three types of social capital are not mutually exclusive but neither are they necessarily equally present.

Movement between sites of social capital is dependent on the degree to which bridging and linking social capital is a feature of the networks of which one is a member. If the social capital site to which one is connected has no links across social classes the opportunity for social mobility is diminished. Even where linking capital does exist there is a limit to the degree to which movement is possible, thus preserving the exclusivity and benefits associated with the social capital of the elite.

Hall (2002) reviewed several research papers exploring political participation and various measures of social involvement. He found that certain sectors of the community were able to use their networks and associations for constructive political engagement but that this pattern did not hold for two groups: the young and the working class. Whilst these two groups demonstrated similar levels of mistrust of political processes, neither group reported rates of political participation or engagement similar to that of the middle classes. They were not linked into the sites of social capital that could alter their social position or political decisions affecting them. These two populations, by virtue of their non-engagement with political processes demonstrated a lack of bridging capital which would provide access to sites of power and the resources it controls.

The relationship between social capital and power is rarely addressed in the social capital literature. In fact social capital is usually described in consensual terms limiting its capacity to address issues of competing interests and power. This issue is taken up in the next section but it is worth noting here that the functionalism described by the fluid nature of social capital allows certain, possibly more successful members, to move into networks of greater privilege suggesting a degree of social mobility and opportunities to access resources, but acts against structural change aimed at socially just outcomes.

The reading of social capital as 'the glue that holds society together' is at odds with structuralist notions of social justice in which conflict exists between groups leading to structural change. Social capital per se is not concerned with structural change and socially just redistribution. Its very nature as a fluid set of relations providing opportunity for social mobility (albeit limited and selective) undercuts the apparent need for structural change that can ensure the benefit of all. This fluid or porous aspect of social capital may create an overall equilibrium in which no real structural change occurs.

3 Power Differentials in Society

My final point is concerned with the cultural and political context of the society in which sites of social capital are situated.

One criticism of social capital centres on its failure to deal with power differentials which exist in society. DeFilippis (2001) writes of the failure of forms of social capital that ignore power and the capital that partially constitutes that power. He challenges Putnam's understanding of the term as 'stripped of power relations, and imbued with the assumption that social networks are win-win relationships and that individual gains, interests and profits are synonymous with group gains, interests and profits.' (2001, P.800). Increasingly power is being acknowledged as a feature of relations between sites of social capital. This is more consistent with pluralist and conflictual understandings of society than the more consensual relations generally described in social capital.

Bourdieu (1985) sees social capital in terms of the production of classes and class divisions and identifies its contribution to shaping and perpetuating patterns of economic inequality and disadvantage. He ties economic capital to social networks and relationships and argues for the power associated with such arrangements. A power analysis leads to questions about the role of the state. The state has been described as necessary for providing the framework in which social capital can operate. Eva Cox in her Boyer lectures of 1995 very clearly argues that the State needs to be an active participant in social capital and that the state is necessary to provide the framework and the stimulus for access and opportunities for participation and involvement (Cox 2002). Hall's work suggests that the policies of successive governments in the spheres of education and social service delivery seem to have been central to sustaining levels of social capital in Britain (2002). He argues that the State can have substantial impacts on social capital, and calls for closer scrutiny of the way in which policies of various types build or erode social networks of various types, and at the impact of governments more generally on the generation or degeneration of social capital (2002, P.55).

Wuthnow (2002) writing of the situation in the United States argues that attention needs to be devoted to creating social capital that does a better job of creating a bridge between the privileged and the marginalised. Putnam in reviewing an international collection of papers commented on the common finding that the welfare state had helped sustain social capital rather than erode it, by encouraging solidarity both symbolically and practically (2002, P.414). Along a similar vein, Offe and Fuchs (2002) believe social capital helps make democracy work.

Further empirical evidence from research into rural Australia argues that linkages between government and community networks are 'essential to creating the vertical social capital so necessary to the support of the horizontal social capital at community levels' (Alston 2002, P.8). Narayan writing from the Poverty Group of the World Bank in 1999 provides a framework for understanding the relationship between types of social capital and the state. He argues that while primary groups and networks afford benefit to those who are part of them, they none-the-less also serve to reinforce pre-existing social stratification, prevent

mobility of excluded groups, minorities and the poor and can become the bases of corruption and co-option of power by dominant social groups.

Narayan (1999) gives centrality to the interaction between the state and social capital in terms of the capacity to deliver the outcomes often associated with high social capital and social justice. He also identifies a particular type of social capital, cross-cutting ties described elsewhere in the literature as linking social capital, as fundamental to positive outcomes. Narayan describes this cross-cutting as about the opportunity for groups with differential power to connect. In the absence of such connections pre-existing social stratification is reinforced and social exclusion of those who are marginalised or poor is perpetuated.

Some have commented that economic growth can only be tied to enhanced population health, in places where a constitutional provision to a redistributive state practising subsidiarity exists (Szreter, 2003). Narayan (1999) does not go so far as to explicate a role for the State in redistribution but he does argue that governments dominated by elites with few cross-cutting ties will foster marginalisation and exclusion. In the absence of constitutional requirements for redistribution, it is apparent that ideological drivers for social capital formation can foster social capital that inhibits redistribution and maintains the status quo.

Young people in the Australian national survey, comment on the hypocrisy of a State that provides mechanisms for inclusion but then ignores them and of the importance of an ideological commitment to enable real access to power. They spoke of attending 'Youth Parliaments' where the agenda was determined by the government and given to the participants just before the meeting, allowing no preparation time or opportunity to discuss what was important to young people; and of State Youth Forums where politicians turned up for the photo sessions and then left:

> *(We need) politicians and young people doing things together. You need to lift the profile of young people through government.*
>
> *Who's planting this shit? Pollies! They don't want to change so they can get money, ratings, votes etc.*

Whittaker and Banwell (2002) argue that social capital fits the current conservative Australian Government's agenda for small government and economic rationalism and is being used as a technology of governance shaping how individuals and groups conduct themselves. Alston (2002) clearly articulates a Right dominated ideology in Australia committed to diminished welfare spending as providing the context in which Australian social capital formation is being encouraged. In this society social capital is seen as providing an alternative to State provision, because communities that work together, in the words of the Prime Minister, 'respond constructively to the challenges of change' (quoted in Alston 2002, P.97). The promotion of social capital is used to justify government reduction in welfare spending in the name of self-reliance, rather than redistribution for the benefit of all.

The Age, a national Australian daily newspaper, argued that:

> the natural home of social capital...is on the conservative side of politics because of its emphasis on bottom up, empowerment and taking responsibility for having needs met in ways that best suit people's particular circumstances rather than relying on big government bureaucracies and unions deciding what is in people's best interests (*The Age*, August 25 2003).

Flint and Rowland (2003) in discussing the 'problems' of public housing tenants in the UK note a similar process whereby the State constructs a problem as a lack of social capital within a community rather than as a structural problem around economic capacity.

In such contexts social capital is seen as individuals or small groups organising and acting in ways that meet their needs, for their mutual benefit.

The need to have linking social capital is increasingly seen as important in achieving what might be considered social justice outcomes. It would seem clear that State involvement or engagement is necessary to produce the types of social capital outcomes associated with social justice, but that the State must offer the opportunity for social capital to cuts across sites of power and privilege. Without such provision there can be no institutional process to address issues of structural inequality necessary for the achievement of social justice. Such social capital relies on a state committed ideologically and constitutionally, to redistribution and the establishment of a framework in which cross-cutting or linking social capital is promoted. Without such a context for social capital there can be no expectation that social capital will lead to socially just outcomes.

Conclusion

The confusion which accompanies the definition, meaning and measurement of social capital does not appear to have affected the enthusiasm with which it has been taken up by scholars, policy makers and social commentators. Part of this confusion concerns the purpose of social capital, which is being described in terms consistent with social justice outcomes. Clarification and articulation of the differences in the 'mutual benefit' offered in social capital and the 'social good' defined by social justice is needed. These two may not be mutually exclusive, but they are certainly not synonymous.

For social capital to be able to produce socially just outcomes it must, first and foremost be a resource available to all in society, including those at the bottom of the power hierarchy. It can not vest unequally across groups, as by definition this would mean that some people will be excluded from the benefits accruing to 'all in society'. A socially just social capital needs to enable structural change that redistributes resources across society and does not act to reinforce the status quo or existing power relations. Finally a socially just social capital must involve a role for the state that encourages political engagement of all sections of the society and which is committed to redistributive policies. What is described by such a set of conditions is simply not consistent with current conceptualisations of social capital. Social capital in itself is clearly not about the 'good of

all in society'. We assume too much when we assume that social capital is necessarily socially just.

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A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF CROSS-CULTURAL PRACTICE

Mario J. Debattista

From 1992 to 2000, in my capacity as a member of the religious order of the Franciscan Friars, I worked in East Africa in the training of young African men who desired to become Franciscans, as well as in a helping capacity with the local people. What follows is a limited reflection on part of my practice in the sense that Fook (1996) speaks of "reflection upon practice." I take the object of my reflection to be my experience of entering a new culture and beginning to work with local people in a helping and formative capacity. In so doing, my reflection takes on features of a personal narrative, for it is through reflection on my own story that I have been able to further my understanding of some of the theory presented in my social work education. My hope is that this reflective process may also offer some insights for those engaged in cross-cultural work in Australia.

Firstly though, it is worth noting that cross-cultural practice can be taken as primarily referring to work with indigenous people or with any of the diverse ethnic groups that increasingly constitute multicultural nations such as Australia (Lynn 2001; Midgley 1990). However, acquiring culturally relevant skills also applies to working with the many sub-cultures that constitute our society. By these, I include people from socio-economic groups different to one's own, those having a markedly different level of education or those raised within specific geographical locations, which in cities so increasingly diverse as our own, may almost be considered as coming from different countries (Macken 1996). In other words, the term "culture" needs to be used carefully, lest we restrict it to its more commonly held association with "race" or ethnicity. Understood as the way in which people create a world of meaning or world view, culture becomes a relative phenomenon (van Krieken et al. 2000). So it is that a social worker may have more in common with a highly western-educated Torres Strait Islander than an Anglo-Australian who left school at the age of fourteen and rarely mixed with people outside the public housing estate in which he or she was born.

***Mario Debattista** is a member of the Franciscan Order and a Catholic priest. From 1992 to 2000, he worked in East Africa, mainly Tanzania, among the local people and in the education and training of young African men who were candidates to the Franciscans. On his return to Australia, he completed a Bachelor of Social Work (Hons) at the University of Sydney and for the past year has worked with Centacare in Sydney. His responsibilities are primarily the case management of clients experiencing significant social, economic and psychological barriers, many of whom are from culturally diverse backgrounds.*

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Culture Shock - Beginning to Work with the New

Several years on, it is difficult for me to fully appreciate the novelty of what I did in going to live and work in East Africa for an extended period. Personally, I was very conscious of going into uncharted territory, but on reflection, it perhaps bears similarities to the situation of any social worker or helping professional who never quite knows who will next walk through the door, having what issue. One prepares oneself as best one can and then deals with issues as they arise.

This is what I tried to do prior to my departure for Tanzania. I regularly contacted a friend who had been working in East Africa for several years, trying to gain a clearer picture of the life awaiting me; I attended a weekly course in mission studies; I completed a basic First Aid Course and a one-week intensive course in Tropical Medicine at Sydney University; I listened to tapes of the Kiswahili language. As well, I collected material on such issues as AIDS, sustainable technology, and anything else possibly relevant for work in Africa. I read on the history and culture of Tanzania.

To what extent did my preparations assist me to deal with the impact of the new? Several authors have written on the phenomenon of Culture Shock (Furnham & Bochner 1986; Pedersen 1995; Guanipa 1998; Ward et al. 2001; UKCOSA 2004), and I was to learn personally that no amount of preparation would enable me to somehow escape it. Initially, there was the pain of separation from family, friends and the familiarity of one's past life and activity. I discovered that before I could navigate the shock of the new, I had to allow myself to grieve the loss of the old, to mourn what was no longer within my immediate experience but which nonetheless remained integral to my personal story (Wingard 1998). What followed were the first tangible experiences of the novel, but also the disturbingly unfamiliar: the changing faces and languages I encountered in airports and aircraft as I travelled westwards and the powerful impact of a day's stopover in Bombay where every one of my senses was seemingly bombarded.

On arrival in Nairobi, I was warmly welcomed and found myself in a house unexpectedly very "Western." For a moment, it seemed that perhaps Africa would not be so strange after all. Prior to turning in for the night, my attention was caught by an article in the periodical Review for Religious. The article's title has escaped me, but not its opening statement: "The only convert that any missionary will ever have to make in Africa is himself." Was there a more fitting introduction to what God would be asking of me in this continent? For in various guises, those words and their message would come back to me at so many times in the years ahead. From the very start, I was being told that mission is always a two-way street and in terminology familiar to social work, that I would have to be a critically reflective practitioner ie. one engaged in an ongoing process of allowing experience and practice to shape my knowledge, values and perceptions of self and others, challenge my assumptions and ultimately re-shape my practice (Payne 1998; Fook 1999; Napier & Fook 2000).

My experience of the new was to gather pace. After a few weeks in Nairobi and rural Kenya, living in relatively comfortable residences where I felt at ease about being in

Africa, I left by road for western Uganda. It was then, as I witnessed the poverty of the towns through which we passed, that I began experiencing my first real sense of dread. "Yes," I thought, "this really is Africa!" Prior to this, the relative cleanliness, higher living standard and many Eucalypt trees of Kenya had led me to feel that the only real difference between Australia and Africa was the colour of people's skin. But now, I began to see much more.

The experience of culture shock became more personal on arriving at our residence in Mbarara. First off, there were the unfamiliar squat toilet facilities! Then there was the necessity of sleeping under a mosquito net (unlike Nairobi), due to the definite risk of malaria. The honeymoon phase of being in a new culture began to erode as the reality around me could no longer be kept at a distance but began to impact on me in practical ways. Furthermore, I found myself living with people from unfamiliar countries such as Brazil and Bosnia. While this too had its initial novelty, differences in communication styles were to create tensions that added to the shock of no longer being at home.

This early phase of culture shock was significant enough, but on moving to my first stable location in Tanzania two months later, I began experiencing the disenchantment phase of culture shock (Guanipa 1998; Blanchard 2002; UKCOSA 2004). For example, now began having to contend with illness and infections I had never before suffered, with not knowing the local Kiswahili language, with poor public transport that sometimes necessitated waiting for hours at the roadside, with very simple living conditions, and with the absence of people (except for one Australian) who shared my culture or history. The signs of culture shock became evident in my fluctuating mood. I sometimes displayed irritation over minor matters, felt an exaggerated concern with my health, and sensed a loss of self-esteem and control due to my inability to understand what was being said to me and around me (Rakoczy 1991; Guanipa 1998; Blanchard 2002). Whereas in Australia I had felt competent in my work, I now felt frustrated and inept. Local customs that initially seemed quaint and heart-warming such as people's frequent greetings, could become aggravating to the point that on some days I wanted to avoid meeting people on the road. These signs fluctuated from day to day, but they were more intense prior to my gaining some proficiency in the local language. It was not until then that I was able to cross some of the barriers imposed by cultural difference and people became individuals with whom I could relate on some basis of equality. Language offered me my real passport to residence in the local culture although my status as a "stranger" would never be fully overcome.

"Culture" – Which Culture?

As mentioned earlier, 'culture' is a relative phenomenon. Prior to going to East Africa, I had read up on such topics as Bantu culture (the dominant one of East Africa), the history of Tanzania and on how colonialism may have influenced people's attitudes, so that on arrival, I had some initial impressions (call them assumptions) of what I might find in terms of the people's worldview. As authors such as Ivey et al. (2000), Vicary & Andrews (2000) and Bar-on (1999) suggest, I expected to find people whose values were more

communal, consensual, spiritual and ecologically sensitive than our Western ones, which are typically portrayed as highly individualistic, consumerist, secular and conflictual both with the natural and human world.

But what in reality did I find, at least as far as my perceptions can be relied upon? Firstly, I did meet examples of those classic traditional worldview values listed above. For example, among the local candidates to our Franciscan Order for whom I was responsible, I noticed a strong collective mindset such that an injury done to one could be taken as done to the whole group and differences in treatment towards individuals were keenly noted. Within our local neighbourhood, people were concerned not to take a strong individual stand on an issue, even if that issue affected many, lest one be seen as engaging in open conflict with another person of higher status in the community. Also, I encountered moving examples of how the local people had adapted (some would say had been obliged) to live with few material goods and in a degree of harmony with their natural environment that is unheard of in our society. And certainly, I could not help feel that the local people placed an almost instinctive value in matters spiritual or religious (Bar-on 1999).

However, and this is my point, such values in no way constituted the totality of the culture of the people with whom I lived and worked. Increasingly, I realised that one could not assume a homogenous, let alone static "African culture" among the candidates who presented themselves to our Order, nor among the general population. In fact, to do so invariably led to misunderstanding and resentment. For example, as one of our educated Kenyan friars pointed out to me, even using the term "African" potentially ignored the diversity of people living in such a vast continent. For a non-African such as myself, it was tempting to use "African culture" as a short cut by which to attribute my stereotypical (albeit well-meaning) views on others. True, one can hold with some confidence that "Africans" have much in common, but the picture becomes very complex once one begins taking into account the varying degree of influence that colonialism has had in different countries, the increasing influence of Western culture on all segments of the population particularly the young, and the peculiarities of distinct tribal groups (Bar-on 1999).

So it was that I began to notice how the local people, both young and old, could be just as intent on acquiring material goods and enhancing their comfort as anyone from my own culture, how the value of a simple lifestyle in harmony with nature and in solidarity with the poor was not so appealing to those intent on being "upwardly mobile" and escaping a life of unchosen poverty into which they had been born, how families could be torn by violence and disharmony in ways as bad as anything in the West, how respect for traditional authority and the "wise and aged elders" was not automatic, how conflict could be feared or avoided among one's own group but be present often enough elsewhere, and how the sense of the spiritual could sometimes be based in nothing more than fear and superstition. I heard too parents complaining that their children were unappreciative of and disinterested in traditional values and customs, a theme echoed often enough in our own society. My conclusion from all this was that though it can be said with confidence that African culture remains sufficiently distinct from the Western European (Bar-on 1999), it is nevertheless in a state of flux.

"Culture" – To what purpose?

The relativity and dynamic nature of any culture, its constant evolution in space, time and within a specific group of people is surely one of the challenges of culturally appropriate work. In the study and practice of social work or any helping profession, this aspect of culture must be borne in mind. But my experience in East Africa alerted me to another dimension of cross-cultural practice, namely the capacity of individuals and groups to think or behave as if their culture was unchanging, especially when it suited their purposes.

So it was that when I asked our candidates to do something they found challenging or unattractive such as offering what they considered to be a menial act of service, a response I sometimes received was that the request was 'against their culture,' with the added implication that as a non-African, I did not understand their culture. That not all our candidates consistently made this response suggested that certain individuals used it for their own purposes. From this I learnt that regarding cultural sensitivity, one needs to be aware of what Kabanguka (1997) terms "the cultural shield" ie. the use of culture as a mechanism for self-protection or avoidance. In social work practice, this insight is relevant to both understanding and responding to resistance from culturally diverse clients who may be drawn to use their "cultural shield" to avoid legitimate confrontation for change.

"Culture" – Whose Culture?

Another aspect arising from my African experience and applicable to cross-cultural social work practice is recognising that what issue a client may regard as a priority may not necessarily harmonise with that of the helper. Though this clearly applies to working with all individuals (O'Connor et al. 1995; Fook 1992), it is particularly relevant in cross-cultural work (Ivey et al. 2000; Corey 1996). For example, one of my first experiences with Tanzanians was to visit a man dying of AIDS in our local village. It so happened that I also had several other people to visit that day. When I arrived at his home, I found he had already died. I wondered then whether it was better to remain at his home or to stay only a while, continue visiting the other people on my schedule and then return in a few hours. I chose the latter, believing this to be a more practical way to proceed considering my limited time. After all, could I not please everyone?

On my return to the dead man's home however, I found to my astonishment that the funeral had already been conducted; I had missed a valuable opportunity to accompany the family in their time of grief. I realised then I had misjudged the urgency of the situation in this people's culture, namely that funerals were not things that could simply wait while other matters were attended to. I learnt that my priorities and the values that underpinned them (no matter how well meaning) were not necessarily those of this people for whom care and respect for the dead was of vital importance. I learnt that in prioritising my activity in regard to people of another culture, I needed to consult them and not simply presume on the basis of my own cultural heritage, which in this case valued efficiency and maximising the use of available time (Rees 1999).

"Culture" – To whose advantage?

Another important dimension of cross-cultural practice is recognising the power imbalance that can exist between worker and client. Authors in social work frequently refer to this aspect of practice, especially in regard to anti-oppressive practice (Banks 1995; Dalrymple & Burke 1995; Shardlow 1995; O'Connor et al. 1995; Payne 1997; Corey et al. 1998; Burke & Harrison 1998; Bar-on 2002) Not surprisingly then, power and the way I experienced and exercised it was perhaps one of the most pervasive issues of my life and work in Africa. Examples of a power imbalance began with the self-evident fact that I, being a non-African who had come to Tanzania, clearly had material resources at my disposable that the vast majority of local people could never hope to acquire. The imbalance also lay in my educational level, my social status as a priest and member of a religious order, as well as in less tangible aspects such as the symbolic power of being a white, male, English-speaking Westerner, characteristics all associated with the former colonial power (Jamrozik 1995).

So it was that even before opening my mouth or doing anything, I was likely perceived as somehow more powerful, more influential, more resourced, more knowledgeable (at least in certain matters) and so on. Now while as Bar-on (2002) seems to suggest, this imbalance could have appropriately been used to the advantage of the local people with whom I worked, I would also add that it created a distance or barrier with them. The power imbalance, in and of itself, could make it far harder for local people to feel understood or accepted by me, let alone to believe that I could possibly want and be able to stand "on their side" and promote their interests. Collaborative social work practice can become so much more challenging when such an inherent structured power imbalance exists (Thompson 1997).

An awareness of this imbalance and its possible effects on the helping relationship is crucial to any social work practice in a culture as heterogeneous as ours in Australia. A possible response to it could be to search for ways to assist clients to understand themselves as being less disadvantaged than they think, to recognise and value their own particular strengths and resources and to give them a more realistic, balanced appreciation of the worker's culture and resources. Bar-on (1999) further stresses the need for professionals to be reflective learners so as to avoid believing that their knowledge is superior to that of their clients, especially when the latter are poor. But additionally, what may be required is for the worker to step out of his or her own societal norms and assumptions and realise that what he or she has up till now regarded as a powerful advantage may not be that at all.

In my case, this was easier to do in Africa than in my home culture, for although as mentioned earlier I clearly had several advantages in the eyes of the local people, it was also clear to me that I had some significant disadvantages. For example, even after several years, I continued feeling the frustration and sense of uselessness that comes from being unable to communicate in ways that felt most meaningful to me. I experienced being "voiceless" in ways that seemed to be a type of personal purification – a stripping down of my own ego, as well as an introduction to how others "without a voice" might

feel. Feeling "voiceless" meant having to depend on others more than I usually would, while at the same time having to deal with never being sure that they represented me accurately. In this, there was not only an experience of poverty, but also a precious opportunity, namely to develop some understanding of the plight of those who even in culturally diverse societies like Australia, are regarded as the "other" by those of the dominant culture and thereby rendered voiceless (Hage 1998; Lynn 2001).

What this example shows is that if the worker can recognise that his or her so-called advantages are also disadvantages, namely that they act as barriers to forming relationships in which the client, not the worker, has the primacy and sets the standard, then the worker may come to learn experientially some aspect of the client's lived experience. The power imbalance can now operate more to create an empathic working relationship since the worker has come to not only "stand in the shoes" of the client theoretically, but in reality. The worker has come to know him or herself as actually disadvantaged, as truly poor, as somehow "oppressed," all likely elements of the client's experience. As mentioned earlier, coming to this awareness may be more difficult when the worker is operating in his or her own culture and it is the client who is the foreigner. In such a situation, the tendency is to assume without question that all of one's culturally recognised advantages are in fact just that – advantages (Bar-on 1999). But, the question that a reflective practitioner could ponder is: "In relation to this unique client before me, are my so-called advantages necessarily so?

"Culture" – How to help?

The influence of culture becomes especially important when any helping professional sets about engaging the client and establishing a "working alliance." (Goldstein 1984) This was perhaps my first lesson from my African experience when it comes to "helping." For culture, both that of the worker and of the client, can heavily influence what is even meant by a working alliance, how it is formed and maintained, and to what purpose it is used. For example, while authors writing in a predominantly Euro-centric tradition may stress the importance of distinguishing the "real relationship" between worker and client and their professional working alliance (Goldstein 1984), such a distinction may be neither as clear nor as helpful in certain cultures. In my experience of those I lived and worked with, Africans place a high priority on relationship not within some professional therapeutic context, but within common everyday experience. It is this realistic relationship, valuing characteristics like friendliness and informality (Lynn 2001), which becomes the foundation for trust, self-disclosure and commitment, elements all crucial to establishing and maintaining the so-called working alliance. The worker must therefore pay close attention to what can enhance or potentially harm this everyday relationship and ought be wary of assuming that the client will somehow make an intellectual distinction between what the worker said or did in this relationship and what the worker was like in the more restricted professional "working relationship."

It follows from the importance of the totality of relationship with clients that workers must be conscious of their communication style and use of language. For example, a style in which workers ask many questions, probe strongly, or want to quickly "get to the point"

perhaps because of time constraints, can harm the relationship and thereby jeopardise the establishment of a working alliance. With Africans, a less formal style of helping (eg. talking while walking) in which they can feel more relaxed and able to interact seemed to work best (Lynn 2001). For its part, language ought to be concrete and rooted in daily experiences. The worker ought remain sensitive not only to differing levels of language proficiency, but also to the different ways that identical English words and phrases can be used across cultures. Unless both worker and client are attuned to this, they may think they are speaking about the same thing, whilst in reality, they are missing one another on the level of meaning (Keats 2000).

Also important is sensitivity in attending behaviour (Egan 1998). Here, the worker as the professional has the double responsibility of not only observing the client in ways that avoid stereotypical thinking, generalisation and reductionism, but also of assisting the client to correctly interpret the worker and avoid regarding him or her in terms of stereotypes as well. In my dealings with our African students, I am now conscious of all too many occasions when we may have been interpreting each other's facial expressions, silences and responses as 'typical of all Africans' or as 'typical of all Westerners.'

The use of questions is particularly important with all cultural groups. In the case of our African students, a common enough experience was having them answer with what has been described as a 'comply without co-operating' attitude (Ruwa'ichi undated). According to Western cultural norms, it was easy to judge this behaviour as being at best polite or at worst, less than honest (Keats 2000). In fact however, the issue at work was the Africans' need for prudence in answering an individual who was not sufficiently known. In African culture, there are clear limits as to what information is divulged to someone who is still a stranger and therefore more of an intruder, even though he or she may officially be a 'helper.' Ruwa'ichi (undated) cites Kuper (1965, p.543) thus: "They see you as an umlungu (European) until you prove yourself to be an umuntfu (person)." Self-disclosure is seen as risky because information can be used against you, so the underlying issue is of trust. Unless workers are aware of this, they may be misled by the answers received to open-ended questions, or in expecting greater self-disclosure than is appropriate, they may come across to clients as intrusive, thereby engendering resistance in them.

In the case of social work practice in our own highly heterogeneous Australian culture, this dynamic may also be at work, perhaps more often than realised. Due to the popularity of self-help groups, especially those based on twelve-step programs, we of a more Western mindset may have become accustomed to thinking that the ability to self-disclose is "healthy" and "necessary" and that refusal to do so somehow indicates a deficiency in the person (Egan 1998). A lesson to draw from people of other cultures may be that workers need to spend more time creating a trusting relationship with clients through a broad based listening which, in addition to the content and feelings of the client's immediate problem, also listens to his or her relational life, values, symbols, hopes and aspirations, fears and joys (Ivey et al. 2000; Lynn 2001; Ruwa'ichi undated). Considerably more time than is usually given (or available) may be needed to discuss matters that appear to have no direct bearing on the client's main issue. What is happening in this process is that the client is being given the opportunity to "test" the

worker, to gauge his or her trustworthiness. Having said this, a question that begs asking is how possible it is to take such an approach in a human services system so increasingly affected by bureaucracy and a "managerialism" which stresses efficiency in the use of time and personnel, that workers are almost compelled to "get down to business" as quickly as possible (Rees 1999; Lynn 2001).

Bringing the Lessons of Africa Home

I lived and worked in East Africa for nearly nine years. In this short reflection on some of my practice, I have restricted myself largely to issues around the theme of culture, something highly significant during those years. There are however some other themes that I would like to briefly consider which have influenced my practice of social work since my return.

Firstly, my cross-cultural experience has left me with a firm conviction in the value and necessity of taking risks. By this I do not mean foolhardy, unnecessary risks, but rather those risks judged under the circumstances and according to the available knowledge to be worthwhile in terms of furthering well-founded values and outcomes. Personally, even deciding to go to Africa felt like a huge risk, as it must have seemed for my family judging by their initial reaction. Once there, I was periodically reminded of the risks it entailed: the frequent bouts of malaria and occasionally other illnesses, the danger of using long distance public transport, the risk of being essentially a stranger in a foreign land. At times, I seriously doubted the wisdom of having taken such risks. But, at the same time, those doubts seemed to rarely dominate me for long. For as well as an awareness of the risks, I had an awareness of the fundamental value of my presence and work, an awareness bolstered by my fellow Franciscans and the response I sometimes received from the local people.

Studying social work on my return to Australia also entailed some risks for me. Certainly, they were not physically life threatening (thankfully!), but they were potentially threatening to me psychologically, emotionally, vocationally. For many, being a mature age student can initially feel very awkward. For me, being a Franciscan religious and a Catholic priest seemed to add to the awkwardness. I could not help asking myself questions like: Should I tell the other students and staff who I was? If I did, how would I be regarded? Might I not become labelled? Could I be regarded as "odd" and so make it difficult for myself to fit in and relate to others?

I did not seriously consider hiding my identity for long though. To do so would not only have been dishonest, even cowardly I thought, it would have also left me in the terrible predicament of having to deny who I was, something I could not nor would not want to sustain for long. To hide my identity would also have deprived me of the opportunity of drawing upon and integrating my life experience so far, not least of all my years in Africa. It would have stifled my "use of self" (O'Connor et al. 1995) in the very work I hoped to do after my social work studies. For as O'Connor et al. (1995) say, it is essentially our selves that we bring to any helping encounter; selves, I would add, that have been shaped not simply by academic study and learned skills, but equally by our life experiences,

evolvingvalues, and past and present relationships. Essential qualities in social work practice are congruence and genuineness (Egan 1998), qualities that encapsulate being true to oneself and being consistent in the way one relates to a client such that the values outwardly espoused truly reflect those inwardly held. Such qualities of the self which we use to help others cannot appear overnight or purely as a result of a training course, but as we know, emerge out of who we are and who we have formed ourselves to be over a lifetime.

Another dimension I have drawn from my African experience has been the value of striving to work with people alongside them, to find ways to meet them on their own territory. In the case of a missionary in a foreign land, it may appear that one automatically does this by the very fact of leaving one's home country and going to live with the people one hopes to serve. And to some extent this is true. But looks can be deceiving!

I say this because having physically arrived in Tanzania, I realised that a lot more was required before I could even begin working alongside the local people. In addition to learning the local language, there was the need to live a material lifestyle that was not so patently Western and separate from the local people that one may as well have been a member of an Earth colony on Mars! Clearly, expatriates in developing countries have different needs and capacities and one ought to suspend judgement. But to my mind, one result of extreme differences in standard of living was to not only separate workers physically from the very people they sought to serve, but worse, it potentially widened any pre-existing psychological and emotional separation between them. It is unfortunate enough that our world is so starkly divided between the "haves" and "have nots," but to perpetuate this division by living it out in the physical presence of the "have-nots" seems only to accentuate it in my opinion. It also potentially fuels resentment and unreal expectations among the local people.

In addition to negotiating this divide in material standard of living, there was also the cultural divide, something to which I have already referred. This could only be crossed by patient observation, listening, discussion, a willingness to be corrected and taught, making mistakes and seeking reconciliation. And in the end, one most likely still had to accept that one would always be "a stranger," though hopefully a more humble and understanding one.

In the case of social work practice, this value of 'crossing the divide' finds expression in numerous ways. In large part, it is striven for through 'empathy,' by which the helper seeks to enter into and understand deeply the experience and perception of the other and to communicate that understanding to him or her without losing oneself in the process (Lishman 1994; O'Connor 1995; Egan 1998; Trevithick 2000). Now even with clients of one's own culture, there will always be a divide, for as O'Connor et al. note:

> "To use ourselves effectively, we must also accept that we cannot fully know another, even if the other is willing to fully share him or herself with a stranger." (O'Connor et al. 1995, p.82)

In the light of my African experience though, it seems to me that this divide must also be recognised in the sometimes clearly differing socio-economic status of the professional social worker and client.

For depending on the work context of social workers, it is quite possible that they do not live or shop or recreate in the same locales as their clients, especially if the latter are significantly materially disadvantaged. While this may understandably be by choice for professional or personal reasons, it is also precisely due to their differing social and economic power. The social worker is a professional with marketable skills, likely having relatively stable employment, secure housing, developed social networks, and social status. On the other hand (though of course not necessarily), the client may be unemployed with few skills, be living under housing stress, have limited or disintegrating social networks and be regarded as having little social status. This difference in 'social capital' (Cattell 2001) is a hugely significant divide, just as much as anything existing between people of the developed and developing world. In my view, unless the worker can find practical ways to negotiate it, I suspect that at some level, the effectiveness of his or her helping efforts will be compromised.

The response to this divide is neither straightforward nor even possible for every would-be helper. One cannot prescribe solutions to which all are expected to subscribe, especially since everyone has the clear right to differentiate their private and working lives. But that this divide does have an impact on social work practice ought to be acknowledged in my opinion. By so doing, there may be a more overt encouragement of the tradition of workers living alongside the people they seek to assist.

Certainly, as is required by ethical practice, every precaution needs to be taken to avoid boundary violations with one's actual clients (Shardlow 1995; Corey 1996). But from my experience of living alongside people in Africa, I find myself wondering what positive difference it might make to the style and effectiveness of helping professionals were they to access the same health services and retail outlets, or travel by the same public transport, or utilise the same recreational facilities as their clients? What difference might it make if both worker and client looked out onto similar suburban scenes from their kitchen windows, experienced the same levels of security and cleanliness in their streets, rubbed shoulders with the same sorts of neighbours? Could this not enhance the worker's capacity to understand his or her clients, their worldview, and their issues? Would not clients feel that at least in some way, the helper whom they have approached better understands the environment in which they are required to work out solutions to their issues?

In making this suggestion, in no way am I saying that workers must necessarily experience identical issues to their clients before they can be of service to them. Rather, reflecting on my experience in East Africa, I am asking how might we practitioners in a culturally and socio-economically diverse nation like Australia find practical strategies to navigate both potential and actual divisions with our clients. By so doing, might we not communicate more forcefully to them that they are not victims to be pitied and avoided, nor simply 'recipients of a service,' but brothers and sisters of equal dignity and value.

Conclusion

This reflection on aspects of cross-cultural practice has been offered from my perspective of being a Franciscan Friar, and consequently, out of the values I strive for in this commitment. Now social work practice requires that workers be aware of their values and use them to enhance their work while avoiding any exploitation of their clients (Corey et al., 1998). My hope is that in offering this reflection on aspects of my experience in East Africa, I have been able to not only communicate some of my values, but indicate a few areas of challenge in using them particularly, though not only, in a cross-cultural context.

On this point, perhaps one of the most challenging values that I have had to apply, one common to my Franciscan commitment, my life and work in Africa, and my practice of social work upon my return, is that of trying to live a socially just life, aware of and sensitive to the condition and needs of the more disadvantaged and marginalised people of our world. Personally, this value arises from my religious belief in the specifically God-given dignity and worth of every human being, and a spirituality which holds that God has adopted a special solidarity with the poor and marginalised through the person of Jesus Christ who made their concerns his very own. I accept that some may be uncomfortable with such a religious underpinning to a value so dear to social work as social justice. But from the perspective of cross-cultural practice with people who clearly value their spiritual beliefs, and as Lynn (2001) also seems to suggest, might not the time have come for a more open exploration of the specific contribution of spiritual and religious values to social work practice as a whole.

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FIELD EDUCATION AS A CATALYST FOR COMMUNITY STRENGTHENING STRATEGIES: THE TIME IS RIGHT

Ronnie Egan

There is a growing academic legitimacy attached to Universities Community engagement strategies. Community engagement in this context refers to the development of "engagement capabilities of staff and universities by developing expertise, fostering collaboration and building partnerships between universities and their communities" (AUCEA, 2005). The community in this article refers to the range of human services groups and organizations in the Western metropolitan region of Melbourne. There is increased interest by Universities in building external community engagement and to advocate publicly for recognition of engagement as a key civic function of the university. This article will detail the history of community engagement and relationship within the Western Region between that community and the Human Service courses at Victoria University. It will use the Field education component of these courses to demonstrate an established means of developing a dynamic model, the efficacy of which is not only acknowledged by both sectors but demonstrable. It will also examine why such University-Community partnerships are important and what field education programmes can offer this process. At a recent national conference of the Australian Universities Community Engagement Alliance in Melbourne it became increasingly clear that if Universities were to continue a role in generating knowledge for the public good their relationships with communities had to be demonstrated. It is critical that these relationships are genuine rather than opportunistic because the current fiscal crisis facing Universities requires urgent attention to the relevance of the institution to the community.

The link between the community and university demonstrates the learning, teaching and research undertaken in Universities remains central to the role of University contributing to it's civic duty. Victoria University, like all Universities sits within and engages with a diverse range of communities. These communities can be identified as students, staff, residential, industrial, professional and the private and public sectors and engagement with these communities, especially those located in the Western region of Melbourne, forms a vital foundation for the development of the University's mission, objectives and activities (Wiseman and White, 2005, p. 1). In fact community engagement is emerging as a key university priority where VU sees its future as an engaged university and at the same time seeing its particular strength as a leader in this area of engagement (VU Engagement Plan 2004-2005, VU Strategic Plan 2004-2008).

The BSW course and other human service courses at Victoria University were established in response to agitation from the Western Region Community rather than initiated by the University (West, 2005). Victoria University was the first institution to offer an accredited social work course in the Western Metropolitan Region of Melbourne. Much of the

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Ronnie Egan is a Lecturer in the Social Work Unit, Victoria University, Melbourne.

incentive to develop a social work course within the western region came from regional human service organisations. Concerns had been raised by the Western Suburbs Regional Consultative Council that human service organisations within the region were experiencing difficulties recruiting social workers (Western Institute, Faculty of Humanities, 1990). In 1987 the Regional Consultative Council and Western Region of Community Services Victoria sought co-operation from the Footscray Institute of Technology to undertake a needs analysis for the development of a social work course in the region. With funding provided by Community Services Victoria (known in 2005 as the Department of Human Services), the needs analysis was conducted. The consultants' report identified a number of obstacles to recruiting social workers in the western region, concluding that there was a need to develop a social work course in the region. In 1989 the report was submitted to the Victorian Post Secondary Commission (VPSC). Discussions and negotiations took place between directors of the VPSC and the heads of the Humanities Departments of Victoria University's forerunner institutions, the Footscray Institute of Technology and the Western Institute of Technology, and the latter institution assumed responsibility for the development of the social work course. A community based advisory committee, made up of representatives of major agencies in the region, was subsequently established to assist in the development of the social work course.

This course and other human service courses strongly reflect industry needs as well as enhancing the economic and social development of the region. The philosophy of the Social Work Unit reflects the humanitarian and social justice orientations of the Faculty of Arts, Education and Human Development and the larger University. The course takes an anti-oppressive approach to social work in recognition that the causes of many of our social problems are rooted in a social order that is based on inequality and are intrinsic to the existing dominant-subordinate social relations. Students undertaking the BSW reflect the diversity of communities in the Western region with more than half coming from non-English-speaking backgrounds. Victoria University is committed to offering relevant tertiary education for people in the Western region. As such the course is underpinned and integrally engaged in this community. This illustrates the dynamic and continuing relationship between the University and the community. There are many dimensions to community engagement which are demonstrable across all levels of the course, including teaching, research, policies and practices.

The teaching of BSW subjects is informed by the local context of the Western Region. Many teaching materials include a service perspective from organizations in the West to illustrate conceptional ideas. For example some assessment tasks require students to present their field education experience and develop their arguments by linking theory from the classroom with their experience of practice. Students may be required to visit local community agencies and interview staff to gain an understanding of the current context in which social workers practice.Students may use a local organisational model or template to demonstrate their understanding of concepts taught. The use of practitioners in the region in the teaching of the course exposes students to current practice opportunities and tensions.The integration of local service resources makes teaching live, relevant and meaningful. It is the field education component of the course which demonstrates in an ongoing way the explicit exchange that occurs between the Community and the University. Field education is

facilitated, resourced and recognised as the vehicle for both developing and maintaining community engagement with the university. As such the processes developed for field education programmes provide existing procedural templates for protocols, procedures and conceptual frameworks for external engagement by staff and students.

Field Education in human service courses refers to the arrangement through which students learn in work-place rather than classroom. settings. It is a well established example of work integrated learning (Boud and Syme 2001 and Cooper and Briggs 2000). Field educators are identified as part of the teaching team and is a central part of curriculum in all human service courses. There is increasing interest in workplace project learning and work-based learning has been linked to several developments in the Higher Education sector (Brukhardt, Holland, Perry and Zimpher 2004). In particular there is a growing recognition for continuous or life-long learning to maintain and develop vocational practice throughout the individual's working life (Hartley, Woods & Pell 2005; Billett 2001; Symes & McIntryre 2000; Symes 2000). There is a pedagogical recognition of work place as a significant and relevant learning environment. As Hudson (1997) suggests, practice wisdom and procedural knowledge are valued sites of knowledge generation with growing support for university and community partnerships in the educational process. Students' educational experiences are broadened through improved local access to community, industry and the professions. There is a recognition that knowledge is transferable across settings and enterprises.

Field education is an integral requirement of the Australian Association of Social Work for accreditation of all BSW courses. There is a link between the professional association and the curriculum content. As a result both students and staff in the course have an active involvement with the Australian Association of Social Work. Field education is integral to the development of relevant values, skills and knowledge for social work practice. It enhances learning and community and it is both experiential and reflective (Victoria University, Field Education Manual 2005). Field Education continues to be acknowledged by students as the site most beneficial in developing practical techniques, developing networks and having the opportunity to put theory into practice. Further there continue to be VU human service graduates working and heading up human service organisations across the Western Metropolitan Region of Melbourne (Grace and Davies 2000). Many of these employment opportunities came from student field education experience.

In Victoria alone, approximately 800 Social Work student placements are required and secured annually for the six Schools of Social Work across the state. These numbers do not include other human service courses which also require work based learning experiences. Generating enough field education placements relies on the voluntary participation of industry to accept students for field education and provide educational resources. They are not remunerated for this task and students pay HECS as with any other subject in higher education. The field education placement is 140 days over two years in the BSW course. Many of the organisations providing Victoria University field education placements have been doing so for years, decades in some cases. Such relationships do not continue unless there is some genuine commitment and reciprocity from both the organisation and the University. Without the community, field education opportunities cease to exist.

This history and the resultant trust developed between academic staff and organisations does not magically happen. Much effort and investment is demonstrated from both the community and the university. For example, academic staff may provide specific professional development opportunities for organisational staff. This may include providing expertise in professional supervision, serving on management committees, undertaking professional development workshops, acting as consultants in programme evaluations, conflict resolution, providing research advice, being part of local action campaigns, taking the lead in auspicing research projects which may be of a sensitive nature or assisting organisations in developing conference abstracts or articles to document their practice. More formal research opportunities also result from such long term community/university relationships which have been developed and nurtured since the course's inception. Similarly these relationships also generate interest from the community in becoming students at Victoria University either in TAFE, undergraduate or postgraduate streams of the course. Historically the informal and formal cross sectorial work across Human Service courses at Victoria University demonstrates the commitment from these courses to respond in genuine ways to the changing needs of the human service community in the West. The Victoria University Field Education Group comprised staff from both the TAFE and Higher Education sectors, members being drawn from TAFE Welfare and Community development diploma courses as well as Higher Education Social Work and Community Development undergraduate courses. This group had worked together since the inception of many of these courses (Hoatson, Leser, Egan, Ferguson and Moorehead 1994), its brief snowballing in response to the needs of human service providers in the West. Some of the initiatives included:

- Accessing field education placements by using a joint annual field questionnaire across human services courses for recruiting placements rather than individual courses making multiple requests of organisation's time and resources.
- Provision of training and support for field educators which in the past also meant giving field educators access to library and meeting room facilities
- Provision of professional development opportunities, in response to requests from service providers in the West . This may have included for example developing funding submissiosn, highlighting the implications of government policy change on particular field of practice, developing gender specific services

increased difficulty in securing placement opportunities for students and limited provision of professional development opportunities for workers in the Community. As Brukhardt, Holland, Percy and Zimpher (2004) suggest higher education needs to be ready to commit to community engagement. This time is now coming and there is an increasing recognition that students' educational experiences are broadened through improved local access to community, industry and the professions. Perhaps the model of the Victoria University Field Education Group can offer insights about the importance of engaging with the community.

There is no ONE model to engage the community

There is no one size fits all model for engaging the community. There needs to be an identification and response to the particular needs of communities. Processes can then be

put in place for the University to respond to the needs of the community and to share resources. The mandate between Community and University is transparent. Field education provides a strong basis for developing this because the relationship is ongoing. In field education there is a clear conceptual framework for external engagement and this often sets the culture of ongoing engagement with the University.

Nature of ongoing resources needs to be clear

The nature of resources available for new partnerships need to be clear from the start. The Field Education programmes rely on "in kind" rather than monetary exchanges from the organisations. Such an arrangement builds over time. The field education process provides time, whilst working together, to explore the potential for other relationships or projects. There is a danger in the "rush" to engage with the community that the commitment to the long haul isn't realistic. As in any relationship the development of trust is central to its future outcome. There needs to be " a perception of mutuality" with social and economic benefits for both parties (Brukardt et al, 2004).

In many ways the objectives of the Victoria University Engagment Plan, (Victoria University, 2005) provide strategies and, more importantly, legitimacy to the time academics spend working with the community and acknowledging its value. As such, it is critical to harness the historical lessons of success in community engagement in the West. The relationship, history and contact with an organisation is central to the success of any partnership. The lessons learnt from the Victoria University field education group provide insights and community strengthening strategies and resources for successful partnerships. The following highlight this:

- the processes of engagement which have built successful relationships between the community and university take these relationships to different levels, for example training, research, staff teaching exchanges, evaluation, workplace project learning

Organisations in established field education relationships seek out the University for assistance with a range of requests in professional development. The arrangements generated are mutually beneficial. For example a field educator may request current literature or a staff professional development on anti-oppressive practice in exchange for a field education placement.

- the processes of engagement which have damaged relationships between the community and university

Equally if a University exploits an organisation for field education opportunities the organisation will be reluctant to respond to further requests from that University. Stories of hostile relationships between organisations and universities abound where an organisation may take a student in "good faith" and is left to manage a challenging student alone when no support is available from the University.

- how the formalisation of partnership may change the nature of relationship between the community and university

The formalisation of relationships should not be taken for granted even when resources are promised. Formalised or not, these relationships require ongoing attention and monitoring to counter opportunistic relationships. A realistic exchange of resources between the community and university require mutual strategies if community engagement is productive for both the community and university.The negative impact of transient community relationships with Universities can leave the community feeling used, bitter and reluctant to reconnect with the institution. The exploitation of community to satisfy university priorities damages potential and future community engagement.

In 2000 the Human Services Field Education Group at Victoria University developed a proposal to research the processes that led to successful relationships with organisations across the West. The starting point of this project was to use those community relationships initially developed through involvement in field education programmes.The proposal built on the work, described earlier, already being undertaken in the West by this group. This project was not funded in 2000 because the University remained sufficiently uncertain of the value of seeing field education as a catalyst for community engagement. There was limited discussion about the value of University engagement with the community in 2000. However now there is increasing academic legitimacy for community engagement within Universities. It is important to note that recently a collaborative grant application was developed across both the TAFE and Higher Education human service courses at Victoria University. This research will explore and understand the processes and motivation behind successful collaborations between the university and the human service community in the Western metropolitan region of Melbourne. In 2005 this grant was successful. The success of this grant is indicative of the timeliness of universities participating in community engagement. For social work academics and those working in the TAFE sectors the issues canvassed in this article are not new or original. Rather the time is right for revisiting the lessons of field education processes to be applied to universities involved in the pursuit of community engagement.

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EDUCATION FOR GLOBAL SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE: EXPLORING AUSTRALIAN PRACTITIONERS' VIEWS.

Marina Findlay & John McCormack

Introduction

Interest in the global dimensions of social work practice has been renewed in the literature recently, with discussions regarding both the positive benefits of cross-national collaboration between social workers as well as the often negative effect globalisation processes can have on people's health and welfare. (Phillips 2004; Healy 2001; Hokenstad & Midgley 1997; Kondrat & Ramanathan 1996). Some of the recent inequitous global welfare issues which social work might be involved in include the globalisation of children's rights, especially in relation to child abuse and pornography. Similarly, the social impact of global viruses such as HIV/AIDS and the respiratory syndrome SARS, the job impact of multi-country Free Trade Agreements, and the precarious welfare of international refugees and asylum seekers, are other important areas where social workers might be involved in dealing with the local consequences of global changes. The underlying process affecting these pervasive changes is typically referred to as 'globalisation' and in simple terms means the increasing interaction and interdependence of world society (Giddens 1993). That is, there is a more rapid flow of money, ideas, technology, and practices between nations. A major driver of this advance is the development of sophisticated global technology, such as the computer based internet, and users ranging from large trans-national corporations through to individuals are utilising this technology to participate in global activities. The changes brought about by this rapid flow of technology, ideas and practices can have a direct effect on the well-being of local citizens in those countries, and in this respect is of direct interest to social workers.

Some argue that if social workers are to practice effectively in the twenty-first century then social work practice itself needs to be conceptualised beyond the confines of the nation-state, as influences located outside this realm are increasingly being acknowledged as having some influence on local issues (Healy 2001; Ife 2000; Midgley 2001; Hare 2004; Abram, Slosar & Walls 2005). Thus, practitioners operating in local, national or international contexts should be fully trained to understand these interactive effects to be able to practice effectively and make a difference (Asamoah, Healy & Mayadas 1997; Midgley 2000). Since research indicates that educational content on the global dimensions of social work is limited in social work curricula (Johnson 1996; Boulet 2001; Healy

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Marina Findlay is a social worker at Moreland Community Health Service, Melbourne. She was at the time of submission of this article, an Honours Bachelor of Social Work student at La Trobe University, Melbourne.

John McCormack is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Social Work & Social Policy, La Trobe University, Melbourne.

2001), and since this globalisation topic is growing rapidly in public awareness, it is timely to investigate the degree to which social workers in Australia are aware of global influences on their practice, and whether they believe they are appropriately trained to deal with this global phenomenon. This paper reports on a survey of social workers in Australia regarding their self-reported awareness of globalisation and their educational preparedness for global social work, and what further global practice educational needs they may have.

Globalisation and Social Work Education:

While 'globalisation' generally is a burgeoning topic, only three studies specifically on social workers' practice perceptions of globalisation were found, and only one of these specifically addressed education for practice in a comprehensive manner. One study surveyed social workers (n=25) affiliated with the International Federation of Social Work (IFSW) (Rowe, Hanley, Moreno & Mould 2000). This qualitative study primarily explored what globalisation meant to social workers and how they saw it affecting their practice. The sample however was derived from an international social work organisation database, and therefore respondents were likely to be more familiar with international issues. The results were predominantly substantive descriptions of day-to-day practice with high-risk groups such as asylum seekers and dislocated low income and HIV clients, often from developing economies, and the practitioners were effusive in their analysis of the link between global changes and their clients' problems (Rowe et al. 2000). The respondents were adamant that the globalised experiences for their clients were mostly negative, and that globalisation failed to address the consequences of the resultant imbalance in power and resources. They suggested social work needs to look beyond the traditional micro/macro dichotomy and work to address the negative impacts of globalisation.

Compared to this study where the social workers were already well informed on international issues, the other two studies found that the social workers interviewed had a limited understanding of the implications of the relationship between local and global issues. Dominelli's (2001) study of 179 social workers in Britain via a postal questionnaire, found that social workers had limited insight regarding the broader structural influences of globalisation processes on social work practice at the local level. While she found social workers were pessimistic about the shifts in practice toward commercialisation and contracting out, she argues there can also be some positives to globalisation as well, such as the greater cross-cultural exposure of British social workers, and their enhanced understanding and skills to deal with international social problems. Kondrat & Ramanathan's (1996) study of 130 American social workers also found a strong interest in global matters among social workers and a desire to learn more about it. However, they say more research on the topic is needed because their study was the first in the literature to empirically investigate social workers' practice perceptions and educational needs in relation to globalisation.

Despite the high interest in the topic, Kondrat & Ramanathan (1996) found social workers' awareness of the perceived global dimension of their practice was only low to moderate. The social worker's understanding of the impact of globalisation on their

practice was related to a range of variables such as the frequency of working with people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, especially immigrants and refugees. Their study also included qualitative data which indicated that practice setting and beliefs about the focus of social work affected their perceptions of the relevance of globalisation to social work. For example, practitioners indicated that their work settings constrained their macro-level understandings as they were often too busy dealing with the day-to-day issues of clients to worry about global policies. This point has also been made in relation to practice in Australia (Hil 2001). The authors concluded that overall the majority of respondents in this exploratory study reported little awareness of how global issues impact domestic practice, and they suggested more training needs to be offered to workers in all fields of practice to increase their sensitivity to the link between local and global issues.

The Research Question:

Australia currently has no empirical data on the state of this practitioner knowledge and thus the aim of this research follows on directly from the above studies by investigating Australian social workers' perceptions of globalisation, with a particular focus on how that perception has been affected by social work education. That is, are Australian social work practitioners able to see the links between local and global issues in their day-to-day practice, and how is this ability influenced by previous education. Thus the key research questions were: (1) What are social workers' perceptions of their awareness of globalisation? (2) Has social work education assisted that global understanding? and (3) what future learning needs might be identified in relation to this topic? Similar to Kondrat & Ramanathan's study, this is the first known empirical study of this topic with social workers in Australia. The study has considerable limitations, as outlined below, and so these findings cannot be generalised to the Australian social work population, however the results are significant in that they contribute to a beginning Australian knowledge in this area.

Sample Selection and Data

A convenience sampling method was used for this exploratory study whereby, despite targeting a few agencies such as migration centres, where international clients might be, overall distribution was to a general range of local welfare agencies. A questionnaire, pilot-tested and developed from the previous studies using the same type of Likert-response format, was distributed via two methods. First, senior social workers from varying fields of practice in Victoria kindly distributed questionnaires to fellow social workers within their organisation. Second, questionnaires were also distributed at the Australian Association of Social Work's (AASW) 2003 national conference in order to gather views of practitioners who worked in other localities. A total of 205 questionnaires were distributed and 66 completed and usable questionnaires were returned. Considering the moderate response rate (32%), and that most respondents (80-90%) indicated they had a personal interest in international and global issues, it is possible that people with such interests are over represented in this exploratory study.

As stated above, respondents selected a number from a five-point Likert-style level of agreement with a number of statements concerning globalisation where the number 1 indicated low level of agreement and 5 was a very high level of agreement. Some respondents had pointed out in pilot testing that, for example, the response category 'Agree' conveyed the sense that they agreed all the time whereas this was the case most of the time but not all the time. This category was then changed to 'Partly Agree' and other category names were also changed in a similar manner to reflect this difference in respondents' meanings. This change applied only to the awareness questions (Tables 2 & 3). The resultant ordinal level data were analysed using SPSS Version 10 to produce mainly descriptive statistics as shown below. Some variables were cross tabulated to draw out differences in respondents and Spearman's non-parametric correlation analysis was undertaken when looking for associations and overlap between variables.

Profile of Respondents

A range of socio-demographic characteristics of respondents were collected as well as a number of practice-related indicators. As shown in Table 1, 86 percent of the sample was female, with nearly three quarters born in Australia. The median age was 44 years (Mean: 43 years, SD: 10.6 years), and the number of years these respondents had been practising ranged between 1 and 40 years (Mean: 15, SD: 10.5).

Table 1 : Social Worker Sample Characteristics (n = 66)

Demographic Variable	Respondents (%)
Gender	
Female	86
Country of Birth	
Australia	73
Age Group (Years)	
21-30	15
31-40	30
41-50	23
51-60	30
61 and over	3
Years as Social Worker	
1-10	45
11-20	27
21-30	20
31 years and over	8

These basic demographic characteristics are somewhat similar to the Australian Social Work population as reported by McCormack (2001), although this sample is a little older, with more years or experience. The social workers came from a variety of fields of practice, although as part of the small component of purposive sampling, there were slightly more social workers working in income support and migration. However, only one

in five of the social workers had a client base where the clear majority of their service users were from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. Two thirds worked in the urban / metropolitan region and the remainder in rural or other areas, and half were employed by government with another quarter employed in the Health sector. Again, just over a half worked in direct individualised practice, and a quarter were in management or policy. In terms of international exposure, a large ninety two percent of the social workers had travelled overseas, and half of those had lived abroad for six months or more. Generally speaking then this sample of social workers is a mature and experienced group of workers.

Results

(1) Social Work Awareness of Globalisation

Three questions measured social workers' perceptions of their awareness of 'globalisation', as detailed in Table 2. The first asked respondents with what ease they were able to identify a relationship between global issues and local practice, and the second asked the same in respect to global policies and Australia's national policies. The third question aimed to find out with what ease respondents were able to see the impact of Australia's national policies on some people from other countries. Results of the first question indicated that about 86% partly or totally agreed with the statement, indicating a high level of awareness. However, only about four in ten (37.9%) could state definitively that this relationship was always clearly observable. That is, about six in ten of the respondents (62.1%) believed they experienced some difficulty making this link in all situations.

Table 2: Respondent's level of agreement with statements about their own perceptions of the link between local and global issues % (n = 66)

Variables	Totally Disagree	Partly Disagree	Unsure	Partly Agree	Totally Agree	Total
Easy to see impact global issues have on local practice and local issues	Nil	12.1	1.5	48.5	37.9	100
Easy to identify relationship between global policies and Australia's national policies	Nil	12.1	6.1	45.5	36.4	100
Easy to see how Australia's national policies influence the lives of some people in other countries	Nil	7.6	7.6	47	37.9	100

This proportional response pattern of high levels of awareness but not at all times was fairly consistent across the three questions, although on questions two and three, the percent who were unsure was slightly higher.

The next important practice-related question, shown in Table 3, that is that globalisation had an impact on the people the social workers work with, again resulted in a very high positive response of part or total agreement. However, as in the previous questions, only about four in ten of the social workers (39.7%) totally agreed with the statement. Nil respondents indicated that globalisation processes had no impact on the clients and community they work with, and five percent of respondents were unsure of the impact globalisation has on their clients and community.

Table 3: Respondent's level of agreement with statements about impact of globalisation on their clients % (n = 65)

Variables	Totally Disagree	Partly Disagree	Unsure	Partly Agree	Totally Agree	Total
Belief that globalisation has an impact on the clients or community they worked with.	Nil	Nil	4.8	55.6	39.7	100

Respondents were able to add some qualitative comments to the above four practice-related questions but unfortunately only a small number of the respondents provided examples of globalisation. The most common example given in relation to the whether respondents' were able to identify how Australia's national policies affect some people in other countries were Australia's immigration policies. Some also mentioned Australia's trade related policies, in particular international trade policies, as having an effect on people living in Australia. A couple of social workers also referred to the globalisation of culture in relation to the negative influence they saw it having on some people's mental health, however no other details were provided. Some of the respondents also saw and commented on the positive side of globalisation. They commented on improved international collaboration between colleagues as being facilitated by globalisation, and also transnational sharing of knowledge and information. Overall, from questions one to four above, social workers self-reported awareness of globalisation appears fairly high at a general level, however that awareness is much lower in terms of articulated and easily observable specific policy impacts.

(2) Educational Content and Preparedness for Global Social Work Practice

In line with the major focus of this paper, we were interested in whether the basic social work training in Australia, i.e., the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree, educated social workers so that they were prepared and able to understand this globalisation phenomenon. One fifth of the sample rated other degrees they had completed so only those who rated the BSW are reported here. Table 4 illustrates the spread of responses,

with sixty percent agreeing that the BSW had a positive impact on their globalisation preparedness. Conversely, approximately thirty seven percent did not think the BSW had prepared them to understand globalisation. A small number of respondents provided some narrative comments, predominantly from those who positively rated the BSW, and these comments indicated that some BSW subjects (not named) specifically raised global and international social work issues, and that sociology subjects contributed to the respondents understanding of global interdependence as well.

Table 4: Level of agreement that BSW Educational preparation assisted globalisation understanding, and importance of Global content %

Variables	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
BSW degree prepared me to understand local – global links in my practice	5.8	30.8	3.8	48.1	11.5	100
Global Content important in under-grad BSW	Nil	3.0	10.6	43.9	42.9	100
Global content important in post-grad Education	Nil	4.6	15.4	43.1	36.9	100

In relation to global content in the under-graduate BSW and at the post–graduate level as well, the responses in Table 4 are fairly positive that it is important and should be included. There were however small numbers who disagreed and slightly more who were unsure. Slightly more emphasis was placed on its importance for undergraduate education.

Teasing out what the content of that global education should be is a task for further work, however theoretical perspectives are currently taught in all BSW courses and respondents were asked which perspective they preferred and was more relevant to global social work practice. Respondents could nominate up to three preferences, and Table 5 reports the findings

Table 5: Preferred Practice Theory or Perspective for Globalisation

Global Interdependence Theories	First Preference	Total of top 3 Responses
Systems theory	12	24
Feminist theories	6	16
Structural social work theory	5	12
Ecological systems theory	2	3
Critical theory	2	3
Total	27 (n=61)	58 (n=155)

Sixty-one respondents indicated at least one theory or perspective, and it is clear that Systems theory was by far the most preferred. This Systems preference result holds when all preferences were accumulated. Other theories, particularly feminist and structural, were also well represented, and, like Systems theory, these two are easily applied to a macro perspective. There was no prompting in this question and those theories listed above were the only ones identified.

Other Educational Sources for Globalisation

Social workers were also asked whether they had participated in other educational activities which assisted understanding of globalisation, and if so, were asked to rate these out of ten, with one being equal to the educational activity making a negligible contribution to their global understanding, and 10 being equal to a great contribution. The findings are detailed in Table 6. Overall, ninety-four percent of respondents indicated that they had participated in one or more other educational activities that had prepared them to understand the relationship between local and global issues.

Table 6: Level of Contribution Various Other Educational Mediums Made to Respondents' Understandings of the Effects of Globalisation on Social Work Practice

Education Medium	Mean	Std Deviation	Low to Moderate Contribution (1-5)	Moderate to High Contribution (6-10)	Minimum rating	Maximum rating
Journals (n=55)	6	2.75	47	53	1	10
Conferences (n=52)	6	2.59	40	60	1	10
Workshops (n=46)	6	2.8	43	57	1	10
Media (n=15)	7	2.16	27	73	3	10
Other (n=24)	7	2	8	92	2	10

The single categories that were rated by the largest number of respondents were journals, conferences, and workshops. However, the educational mediums that were rated as making the highest contribution to the respondent's globalisation understanding were 'other' and 'media'. Unfortunately only a couple of respondents commented on the category 'other', saying for example, that working with refugees had made a strong contribution to their understandings of the local-global nexus. One person stated that certain international organisations, such as the Red Cross, or Amnesty International or Greenpeace did this, and another respondent referred to travelling and private reading. Some people chose to identify specific types of media in this section with references to various internet sites, documentaries, and certain radio programs.

(3) Practitioners' Interest in Learning More about Global Issues Relevant to their Field of Practice

Looking to the future, respondents were asked whether they were interested in learning more about global issues for their field of practice. Respondents were indeed interested in learning more about how global issues are relevant to their field of practice as Table 7 shows. A total of near 80 % are interested in further learning, with half (51%) indicating that they were very interested, and a quarter (27%) extremely interested.

Table 7: Practitioners' Interest in Learning More about Global Issues %

Variable	Not at all interested	Not very interested	Unsure	Very interested	Extremely interested
Want to learn more about global issues	1.5	4.5	15.2	51.5	27.3

On the other hand, fifteen percent were unsure and the remaining 6% were not at all interested. A small number of respondents indicated in the comments section that they would only be interested if such education was relevant to their practice, and should count for CPE (Continuing Professional Education) points.

Discussion

This exploratory study, which is the first empirical investigation of globalisation and social work practice and education in Australia, shows a small selected group of Australian social workers overall to be highly aware of the process of globalisation and its impact on their clients. At a more detailed level however, about half the sample was equivocal as to their ability to consistently observe the global links in their practice. Similarly, in terms of social work education, practitioners expressed a wide range of preparedness from their BSW in terms of assisting them to understand and work with global issues. This is consistent with previous research findings that social work curricular has a limited focus on how global issues affect local issues and what the social work response to such issues should be (Boulet 2001; Healy 2001). This investigation revealed that these social workers gathered information on the effect of globalisation processes on local practice from a range of other sources, especially the media. If understanding the local-global nexus is necessary for effective social work practice, these results suggest that additional education in this area may need to be reviewed in formal social work courses, and as part of ongoing professional development.

In terms of educational content relevant to global social work, other research points out that macro social work theory facilitates conceptualisation of the link between local and global issues (Ramanthan & Link 1999). Almost half of the respondents in the sample here (40%) indicated that their preferred approaches to practice included one or more of the more macro oriented theories. The theories identified by the social workers in this sample included: systems theory, feminist theories, and structural social work. While

many respondents preferred one or more of these theories, the results indicated that many practitioners still experienced some difficulty identifying the link between local and global issues. Further education using for example Gidden's (1993) World Systems Theory, as well as reviewing how existing social work theory applies in a global context, might be appropriate. Similarly, social policy subjects may be an ideal student forum where 'global social policy' could be highlighted through a focus on for example international poverty reduction programs that have a common goal but recognise cultural differences. That is, curriculum would be aimed at enhancing ethno-relativism as distinct from assuming the dominant culture and its values are the ethnocentric single standard against which the merits of other groups or countries are made.

Despite current social work curricula being somewhat deficient in global practice, this does not appear to equate with lack of interest in the topic. Nearly 80% of the respondents indicated that they were interested in further participating in globally oriented CPE. These results were similar to Kondrat & Ramanathan (1996) in that 85.4% of respondents, who were social work field educators, indicated that they would attend CPE on global issues. Current students' interest in these aspects of social work is relevant to global curriculum development but unfortunately is unknown at this stage of research and could be an area for further investigation. Similarly, as this study cannot be generalised to the broader social work population, it is unknown whether the views of other social workers are similar to those surveyed in this research. This study also did not investigate what educational content these social workers might consider relevant to their field of practice. Such issues would be worth researching if education is to be designed in response to such interest.

If institutions that provide social work education wish to cater to future social worker students' interests, perhaps social work programs could supply education in accordance with student demand. If it is not possible to include international content in every social work program, perhaps one or a group of institutions could create a distance education course, delivered via the Internet. This could avoid some of the barriers to including such education in the already crowded curriculum. Students could gain access to such knowledge without having to attend the institution physically, and even cross-institutional enrolment could be an educational partnership model worth considering.

If globalisation processes do affect social work practice in domestic contexts, it is reasonable to suggest that some integration of content on the local-global nexus be included in social work curricula. Furthermore, if education for the global dimensions of social work is considered necessary for effective practice locally perhaps the AASW could consider such content when reviewing course accreditation policies as Asamoah et al, (1997), and Cox, (2000) suggest. Also, perhaps the global standards for social work education (IASSW 2002) devised by the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and IFSW could inform the AASW's approach to this. As Ife said, 'No longer can we think globally and act locally, but rather it has become necessary to think and act at both local and global levels, and to link the two (Ife 2000 p. 62). This study has established an exploratory baseline to assess whether Australian social workers are able to link local with global issues and, if educational opportunities as outlined above are

developed, this study will also enable us to see the progress Australian social work as a profession is making in this important area.

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WHAT'S STOPPING THEM? EXPLORING BARRIERS HINDERING INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS FROM COMPLETING A SOCIAL WORK DEGREE AT A REGIONAL QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY.

Susan Gair, Jane Thomson & Dorothy Savage

Introduction

Indigenous Australians continue to be seriously under-represented in our public university system. There is a wide range of factors that contribute to this, including racism in universities, inappropriate curriculum, a lack of Indigenous staff, and high levels of poverty (NTEU 2005, p. 2).

Indigenous Australians continue to face enormous social and economic disadvantage and exclusion. It has been asserted that participation in higher education is one area that can contribute to upward mobility for Indigenous Australians. Nevertheless, recent evidence reveals that at a national level there has been decreased engagement of Indigenous Australians in higher education. Wright (2005) reveals that nationally the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous participation in higher education has widened since the year 2000. The numbers of Indigenous students studying within our School, the School of Social Work and Community Welfare, James Cook University (JCU), are well below population percentages of Indigenous people in North Queensland (School of Social Work and Community Welfare 2000).

The study described in this paper builds on previous work undertaken by members of the project team and other colleagues within our School (Gair, Thomson and Miles 2005, Lynn, et al 1998). The study was funded by an Australian Association of Social Work and Welfare Educators (AASWWE) Small Grant (2003). The primary aim of the study was to identify barriers inhibiting Indigenous Australians from completing a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) at James Cook University (JCU). The study was considered to be timely and necessary not the least because from 1994 to 2003 Indigenous student numbers had decreased by over 50% in our School. The research team consisted of two permanent, non-Indigenous staff members of the School, and a graduate of our School; a local Indigenous elder and consultant to this project.

***Susan Gair** is a Senior Lecturer, School of Social Work and Community Welfare, James Cook University, Townsville.*

***Jane Thomson** is a Senior Lecturer and Head of School, School of Social Work and Community Welfare, James Cook University, Townsville.*

***Dorothy Savage** who was the Indigenous mentor/ consultant to the project described in this paper. She is a Birrigubba and Kalkadoon traditional owner. Without Dorothy's guidance, the project would not have been possible*

Background

Australia is a multicultural nation of more than 20 million people, 2.4% of whom are Indigenous (Trewin & Madden 2003). Since British colonization in 1788, Australian history has been characterised by violence and dispossession from land for Indigenous Australians (Atkinson 2002; Pearson 2001; Reynolds 1989, 1996). These experiences parallel the experiences of First Nations people worldwide (Neegan 2005; Ruwhui 1999; Youngblood Henderson 2000) and currently Indigenous Australians continue to face enormous social and economic disadvantage and exclusion.

Participation in higher education is one area that can contribute to increased mobility for Indigenous Australians (Bunda 1999; McConville 2002; NTEU. 2000). However, the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training (2002) reports that while previously low levels of Indigenous participation in tertiary education increased in the last decade, more could be done to increase graduation levels. Other writers state more explicitly that serious problems seem apparent "with respect to retention and completions" of Indigenous Australian students (National Tertiary Education Union (2000, 9). Further, growing evidence now suggests that at a national level there has been a reversal in engagement of Indigenous Australians with higher education, with decreasing enrolments, and stalled progress in retention and performance success (Brabham, et al. 2002, pp. 12,13; Gair, Thomson and Miles 2005; Wright 2005). Wright (2005) argues that the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous participation in higher education has widened since the year 2000. Wright (2005) asserts that while improved changes to ABSTUDY funding are significant, a broader range of factors are considered to contribute to the widening gap including "racism in universities, inappropriate curriculum, a lack of Indigenous staff and high levels of poverty (Wright 2005; NTEU 2005, p.2).

Other key hurdles include flawed policy formation, exclusion from decision-making, lack of commitment to 'Indigenisation' of the curriculum and inadequate student support (Bourke & Bourke 1999, p.54; Bunda 1999). Some authors specifically argue that one factor influencing student dissatisfaction may be the inadequate nature of euro-centric education for Indigenous peoples. Indeed, it has been stated widely that such education lacks meaning and cultural application at primary, secondary and tertiary levels (Christensen and Lilley 1997; Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training 2002; Herbert 2000; Gair, Thomson, Miles 2005; Lampert and Lilley 1996; McConville 2002; Nakata and Muspratt 1994; Neegan 2005; Ruwhui 1999; Taylor 2004).

Euro-centric curriculum that does not reflect accurate, culturally inclusive knowledge can be foreign to, excluding of, and can discriminate against Indigenous students. Such curriculum may well be one significant barrier to completion (Christensen and Lilley 1997; Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training 2002, Lampert and Lilley 1996; McConville 2002; Nakata and Muspratt 1994; Ruwhui 1999).

Australian literature on the 'Indigenisation' of social work and welfare curriculum is still conspicuous by its relative absence. With reference to social work and welfare education, Dominelli (1997) writes that academic disciplines, including social work, are based on

anglo-centric models that take white British culture, history and achievements as the norm. Others identify that changes in course offerings often have been tokenistic and limited (Briskman 2003; Lynn et al. 1998; Ruwhiu 1999). A lack of recognition of prior learning also may be a barrier to timely completion rates of Indigenous students (Woods 1996). In this study, while the literature alerted us to many possible barriers, we sought to identify the specific range of barriers impacting on Indigenous Australians completing a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) at JCU.

Methodology

The study was undertaken in 2004. The research design combined a post positivist paradigm with qualitative techniques (Strauss and Corbin 1990; Guba and Lincoln 1994; Matthews et al. 2002; Neuman 2003). Guba and Lincoln (1994, p.110) consider that a post-positivist position, particularly in the social sciences, can be useful in capturing the respondents' point of view and "to assist in determining the meanings and purposes that people ascribe to their actions as well as to contribute to 'grounded theory'". A survey approach was chosen, because it can be useful in understanding what people know, believe or expect and how they behave (Grinnell 2001). A mail-out questionnaire was a means of reaching the population of respondents given their disparate locations across the state and our limited resources. We had determined that such an approach was a worthwhile first step to understanding the barriers.

A short print questionnaire (see Appendix One for a copy) with a majority of open questions was forwarded, with reply-paid postage, to the total population of Indigenous students (self-identified at the time of enrolment) of the past ten years (last known address) and all current Indigenous students (n=131). The questionnaire contained only 10 questions, seven of which were open questions seeking detailed qualitative information on the nature of barriers inhibiting Indigenous Australians from completing a BSW. A total of 19 completed questionnaires were returned. Twenty-six questionnaires were returned to sender stamped 'address unknown'.

At the direction of the Indigenous consultant, we also met with a group of eight Indigenous community education counsellors. Because the survey sought to gain insight into barriers to undertaking and completing a social work degree, the consultant advised that these counsellors had experiences which could inform this study. After discussion with the group about the study and its purposes, 5 attendees completed and returned the same survey questionnaire sent to core respondents. The combined postal and group surveys represented overall a 23% (n=24) response rate. The response rate from the postal survey (18%, n=19 when the 26 questionnaires that were returned as "address unknown' were subtracted from the total mailout of 131) was disappointing, but confirmed what is known about the limitations of such surveys (Neuman 2003).

A qualitative focus permeated the design and analysis phases of the research. Beginning with a list of the themes from current literature and examining the data for common threads, a thematic analysis of the comprehensive responses to the open questions was

undertaken. Surveys were read and reread by the authors and key themes were identified and categorised into clusters.

After a brief discussion below outlining the responses from school-leaver respondents, the remaining findings are presented in progression from personal difficulties, to the perceived privileging of white ways of working and what counts as accredited knowledge, through to identification of a lack of the support necessary for Indigenous success in the current Australian context. The postal surveys and surveys completed in the group context are combined in the presentation of findings. The Indigenous consultant to the project provided advice at all phases of the research.

What we Found

Respondents could be divided broadly into two age groups at the point of commencement of their studies. These were school leavers and mature age students. There were similarities and differences between the groups in relation to their experiences of barriers. School leaver-students (17% of respondents, n=4) of respondents) identified the costs of studying, difficulties in combining study with employment and living away from family were barriers. Additionally, a lack of effective pathways to completion meant "four years of uni straight up is a big commitment". Further, it was identified that the lack of information about support available to Indigenous students posed problems and when such information could have enhanced success. However, while school leaver respondents identified some similar barriers to those identified by mature age students (83% of respondents, n=20), the latter group detailed overwhelming barriers not described by school-leaver students. Reflecting their majority status, the remainder of the paper focuses primarily on those mature age student responses.

The first three questions in the questionnaire related to enrolment status, completion status and age. The findings from the remaining questions suggest four distinct but related barrier clusters. These were profound difficulties, privileged knowledge, prior learning and current knowledge, and perceived lack of support. We discuss each barrier cluster in turn below.

Profound Difficulties

In answer to question four (see Appendix One): What are the barriers to progress that you experienced in your studies? Indigenous students identified profound and long-standing personal and family ill-health and as a result, tertiary study could not be given priority in their lives. For example, in the words of one respondent:

I would like to upgrade to a social work degree but due to family commitments at present, (I am) not able to commit ...son is on life support at home who needs 24 hour care.

Others reported that:

Cultural obligation to family and community, traditional owner, work, family stopped further studies

My three children needed to have open-heart surgery. The daughter had three young children. I cared for them.

I discovered I had diabetes...the year I deferred I suffered a stroke...I continued a year later...one of my sons died.

Further, the consequences of the poverty trap in relation to successful participation in tertiary study for this former student are evident:

No computer, no transport, no computer rooms, could not afford text books

However the findings illustrate that some respondents still maintained study in their life plans, as revealed here:

Working full time and studying with school age children and a widow, I did these studies in the early hours of the morning.

Australian colonist history of disease, dispossession from land, and marginalisation resulting in the poverty and ill health of the Indigenous peoples appeared to be manifest in the above comments.

Privileged Knowledge: "Only the white way"

Compounding the extreme personal barriers was the identified lack of an appropriate educational experience when respondents were able to study. In answer to both question four (noted above) and question eight (see appendix), Did your studies give sufficient recognition to Indigenous history, knowledge, values and ways of working? respondents' comments describe a striving to incorporate prescribed white western welfare approaches within their own cultural understandings. Three students identified that:

It was very very hard to write white and live black

When doing the "cultural" all had to be referenced.

I am finding it extremely difficult to fit my practice into a (white) ideology

Further, respondents identified deficits in the curriculum including a lack of a meaningful inclusion of Indigenous Australian cultural knowledges and the privileging of white theories.

I feel that they never recognised Indigenous culture and ways of working

Cultural knowledge was valued by individual lecturers but was generally not considered as valued for the course

Your theories mean nothing to Murris

Teaching (in an Anthropology subject) about the Zandi people, it's not relevant

Prior Learning and Current Knowledge

Lack of recognition of prior learning and current knowledge levels were identified by a number of respondents, in answer to question five (see appendix), which dealt with this issue. Their responses identified extensive professional work experience over many years that held no status within the Social Work course. For example these comments:

One is considered a learner with no experience

Worked in the welfare field for 23 years but no recognition of this

Look at employment history. They taught me nothing I didn't already know

Lack of recognition of life, work, community

Conversely, their knowledge was sought during field placement as the following comment illustrates:

The time ... is spent in teaching supervisors, we are used as resource people, our brains are picked and our cultural knowledge tapped at our expense.

The majority of those respondents who answered question nine (see Appendix One), *how could students demonstrate and we could measure prior learning and current knowledge*, suggested that elders, employers and the community should be consulted.

Perceived Lack of Support

A lack of support for Indigenous learners was problematic and was attributed to a wide range of areas including a lack of academic, social and peer support, and employer and workplace support. Failure to actively confront racism in the classroom, including challenging the totalising of Indigenous identity in a negative way, also was represented as a lack of support.

More support in understanding the University jargon and literaturel made comments that core subjects (Indigenous) and Aboriginal support was needed but it fell on deaf ears

Everyone has a (negative) black story ... everyone was an expert on Indigenous culture

As a new student I wasn't given any info about Indigenous units, support groups.

Mentors need to be in place to take students through

Racism, structural and from fellow students not challenged by staff

In a broader context, barriers to students completing their qualifications were identified as originating from employers, including Indigenous organisations.

For example, one student commented simply that one barrier was a *lack of support from employer*

Another stated that *my current workplace has denied me leave without pay for my 15 week field placement*

A third respondent asserted that *black organizations don't appreciate student qualifications*

Discussion

The tenacity and commitment needed by students to succeed in higher education is evident from the study findings. Our key findings corroborate first, the profound traumas and struggles in the lives of Indigenous Australians as discussed in contemporary literature (Perkins 1990; Langton 1992; Bunda 1999; Pearson 2000; Trewin and Madden 2003).

Second, the findings demonstrated a replication of the broader society's lack of awareness of the significant support necessary given the above named barriers. Third, the lack of recognition of prior learning hampered degree completions. Finally, the invisibility of Indigenous knowledges and the prescription of white ways of knowing were borne out in the findings (Rich 1986; Nakata and Muspratt 1994; McConville 2002). As reported earlier, it has been stated widely by Indigenous and non Indigenous authors that anglo-centric education lacks meaning and cultural application for Indigenous students (Christensen and Lilley 1997; Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training 2002). The above identified barriers, or structures, illuminate historical, personal, societal and educational structures that contribute to the immobilization of all but the exceptional student, and contribute to a diminished relationship between Indigenous peoples and the academy

Literature debating possibilities for recognition of, and measurement of prior learning and current knowledge for accreditation purposes within social work curricula, particularly with reference to Indigenous students, seems scarce. The findings indicate that the scarcity of debate and policy options is problematic and may be a significant barrier to timely completion rates of Indigenous students (Woods 1996).

Paradoxically as noted above in the findings section, it was identified that Indigenous students' knowledge sometimes can be recognized and tapped as a resource for non Indigenous students and staff. While this notion was not a recurring theme, it seemed

worthy of note. Further, it seems reminiscent of the words of Dominelli (1989, p.394, p.401) who describes the plight of Indigenous professionals employed in social work practice, academics and students who are the victims of a process she calls 'dumping'. This is discussed as action to pass "the responsibility for the elimination of racism on to 'black people's' shoulders" and, pass on work that legitimately is within the role and duties of non-Indigenous staff, to Indigenous workers and academics. 'Dumping' victims are said to include students who are called on "as 'race experts' and place(d) ... in positions of doing the teaching on 'race'"

Victor Turner (1982, p.51) used the term 'structurally damned' to identify marginalised people who lack space and a voice within existing societal structures but who might strive to inform new structures. The concept seems to aptly describe the situation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and for students seeking to complete studies in a BSW in our School. Indigenous peoples in this research study describe circumstances that portray extreme struggles, as a result of historical positioning and resultant lived experiences, that encapsulate this concept of the 'structurally damned'. Of course this awareness is nothing new. However, the situation may be set to continue unless decisive action is taken. Overall, the findings of this study direct us to act in strategic ways to reduce structural barriers as identified by Indigenous people in this study. These are to:

- Actively challenge racism, privileged knowledge and deficits in curricula in a determined, critically reflective and ongoing way
- Develop and teach curricula that is relevant and meaningful for all Australian students, and that reflects acknowledgement of Indigenous ways of working and affirmation of the professional practice of Indigenous social workers
- Recognise that Indigenous students face severe structural barriers that impact on their success as a result of historical legacies and ongoing disadvantage, including profound personal and family health problems, and poverty
- Significantly increase academic support for Indigenous students
- Create a mentor chain of support throughout tertiary studies to graduation, with the graduates working in the community linked back into the chain
- Be aware of 'dumping' within the university and on placement without the corresponding recognition of knowledge and prior learning
- Acknowledge the high levels of prior cultural and professional knowledge of many mature age Indigenous students and develop a mechanism through wide consultation, that could measure prior learning and current knowledge for graded exemption, particularly in relation to the current BSW field education policy requirements,
- Identify and create financial assistance (workplace cadetships, bursaries,) when placement is required.

The findings from this study identify barriers that are stopping Indigenous people from acquiring a social work degree and entering the profession. Understanding the structural basis of many of the barriers and addressing them seems crucial to reversing the negative trend of low student participation. Increased Indigenous graduate numbers in social work could contribute significantly in attempting to redress historical and contemporary social issues for Indigenous Australians. In turn this will strengthen the social work profession and make it more reflective of the North Queensland and Australian population profile.

Conclusion

Indigenous Australians continue to face social and economic disadvantage and exclusion. Participation in higher education can facilitate upward mobility however, recent evidence points to a widening gap between Indigneous and non-Indigenous participation in tertiary education. Recent research undertaken within our School sought to explore factors inhibiting Indigenous Australians from completing a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW). Findings reveal significant barriers exist for Aboriginal and Islander presented here as profound difficulties, privileged knowledge, prior learning and current knowledge, and perceived lack of support. These structures appear to contribute to the immobilization of some students. Recommendations are drawn from the data to identify action for change to increase graduate numbers.

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Appendix One:
Survey Questions

We want more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to graduate from the School of Social Work and Community Welfare. Your feedback will help us to make this happen. If you would be willing to talk further about these issues, please include your contact details here:

Or please contact us at:
Susan Gair (07) 4781 4892 or Susan.Gair@jcu.edu.au
Jane Thomson (07) 4781 5172 or Jane.Thomson@jcu.edu.au
Dorothy Savage (07) 47756055 or Dorothy.Savage@qed.qld.gov.au

1. Did you begin a Certificate ☐ Diploma ☐
   Associate Diploma ☐ Degree ☐

   within the School of Social Work and Community Welfare at JCU?
   Year of enrolment _____ Qualification _____
   What way did you study? Distance Education | Internal | Mackay
   Townsville | Cairns | A cominbation

2. Did you complete a Certificate ☐ Diploma ☐
   Associate Diploma ☐ Degree ☐

   within the School of Social Work and Community Welfare at JCU?
   Year of enrolment _____ Qualification _____
   What way did you study? Distance Education | Internal | Mackay
   Townsville | Cairns | A cominbation

3. Did you begin study as a mature age student?

4. What are barriers to progress that you experienced in your studies within the School of Social Work and Community Welfare at JCU? Tick all boxes that are relevant.

   Combining work and study ☐
   Costs ☐
   Length of course ☐
   Lack of recognition of prior learning ☐

Anything else?

_____
_____
_____
_____

5. Is/Was a lack of recognition of your current levels of skills and knowledge (including cultural knowledge) a barrier to studying? Yes ☐ No ☐

Can you explain this further?

6. How did you overcome any barriers you faced during your studies?

7. If you are not currently enrolled in a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW), have you considered studying for one at JCU? Yes ☐ No ☐

Please elaborate

8. Did your studies give sufficient recognition of Indigenous history, knowledge, values and ways of working?

9. How do you think students could demonstrate (and we could measure) prior learning and current knowledge in order to provide students with exemption from placement requirements of the Social Work course (eg selection criteria)

10. What are ways we could improve numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students graduating with Social Work or Community Welfare degrees from JCU?

We would welcome any further comments from you.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire, we appreciate your input.

'WHAT GOES ON THE ROAD, STAYS ON THE ROAD': STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE OF LEARNING ON THEIR FIRST PRACTICUM

John Healy

Introduction

'...the assumption that what is taught is what is learned; what is presented is what is assimilated. I know of no assumption so obviously untrue. One does not need research to provide evidence that this is false. One only needs to talk with a few students' (Carl Rogers 1969, p.104).

'Learning about how to do social work usually requires that students spend a period of time on placement in a social work agency' (Shardlow and Doel 1996, p.3). The practicum, although a very personal experience, is also something that all social workers and many other professions share (Maidment 2003, p.50). Historically the practicum has been the place where theory and practice come together (Lager 2004). This study explores the question of how do the students experience the process of learning during the first practicum? The first practicum learning experience was chosen considering 'the student experience' has been neglected in social work research (Patford 2000, p.21; Csiernik, Gordon and Vitali, 2002, p.1).

The primary objective of this study is to inform the social work curriculum and add to the growing literature in the area of the practicum from the perspective of the student. A secondary objective is to compare the experiences of the University of New South Wales Australia students' to those of the University of Stockholm Sweden. Through its qualitative framework this study attempts to understand and build knowledge around:

1. The students' experience of learning during placement, and its relationship to University based learning.
2. The translating of theory into practice.
3. The comparative experiences of the Australian and Swedish students.

Literature

Field education is a critical aspect of social work education; it helps the student to transform their theoretical grounding in social work into something concrete that will enable them to become social work professionals (Fortune, McCarthy, and Abrahamson 2001; Regehr, C., Regehr, G., Leeson and Fusco 2002; Fernandez 2003; Lager 2004;

John Healy is a Ph.D. candidate, School of Social Work, University of New South Wales, Sydney

Armour, Bain and Rubio 2004). Field teachers and organisations also benefit from instructing students in the field. Globerman and Marion's (2003) qualitative in-depth study on social workers' motivation to be field instructors has found that students stimulate professional reflection and bring new ideas.

Clare (2001, p.53) asserts that '...social work education internationally has a well established commitment to fieldwork education'; furthermore, the recognition of work place learning is growing in many disciplines (Maidment 2003). However, there appears to be no cross-cultural studies exploring student's experience of practicum. This study will attempt to address that gap in the literature.

Even though field education is critical to social work education, and takes up 20-30% of the total social work course (Lager 2004), proportionately less attention is paid to the practicum in the University curriculum since much of the learning that takes place in the field is presumed to be the responsibility of the field teachers outside of the University (Rogers, Benson, Bouey, Clark, Langevin, Mamchur, and Sawa 2003). However, Knight's (2001) survey on the skills of teaching social work practice reported that social work students found class room teachers an important model for the social work profession. Bandura (1977, p.39) makes us aware that 'much social learning occurs on the basis of casual or direct observation of behaviour as it is performed by others in everyday situations'. Modelling, although not explicitly a focus of Knight's (2001) study is one area to explore in students' experience of field instruction.

Many past students remember their first supervisor, and this shows just how important this experience can be to social work students (Lager 2004). However, supervisors are also gatekeepers to the profession (Bogo, Regehr, Hughes, Power and Globerman 2002; Tam 2003) and this sometimes-intense personal and intimate relationship between student and supervisor is a difficult process to navigate by both parties (Pepper 1996; Itzhaky and Ribner 1998; Maidment and Cooper 2002) and may need an element of trust (Bogo, Globerman and Sussman 2004). Maidment (2002, p.19) '...found both students and educators were part of an evolving process of redefining their identities through the activity of field education'. The practicum can become an anxiety provoking experience, especially for those who may not usually speak up in a classroom setting. Furthermore, students have a lot to prove to themselves, and others while they are at placement (Shardlow and Dole 1996; Tam 2003).

The practicum is an opportunity for students to attempt to integrate their theory into practice (Berg-Weger and Birkenmaier 2000; Lager 2004), yet students often experience a separation between what is learnt at University and what is learnt on placement (Thompson and Craft 2001; Goldstein 2001). Goldstein (2001, pp.51-52) asserts 'there are inherent flaws in the current educational model...' the separation between the field and the University is like...'the difference between the poet in the ivory tower and the labourer in the field'. It is not surprising therefore that Fernandez (1997) found students needed more help from the University with integrating theory into practice. The literature points to the opportunity students have to apply theory to practice, however does not give solid examples of the process. These aspects of the practicum experience of learning will be explored in this study in relation to theories of Adult Education such as Rogers (1969)

Experiential Learning and Knowles (1976, 1984) Andragogy. Schön's (1995) theoretical perspective on the 'Reflective Practitioner', the work of Fook, Ryan and Hawkins (2000) and others, could also assist in exploring this area, however there is not the scope in this paper to do all theoretical perspectives justice. However, it must be acknowledged that the field versus the University 'split' has been evident in the United States since '1897, [when] Mary Richmond sent out a clarion call for the creation of what she called a "training School in applied philanthropy"'(Shoemaker, 1998, p.183). Therefore, in time, researchers will consider many theoretical perspectives on field learning.

Patford (2000, p.21) notes 'the lack of research in regard to students' experiences and views is surprising and concerning'. Patford's qualitative research on students' perception of significant learning incidents during practica, highlighted tension in the supervisory relationship. However, she noted that 'unfortunately, little is known about the way students cope with interpersonal tensions...' (Patford, 2000, p.27). Patford also found that some students gained new knowledge or skills around their practicum tasks. However'...a number of students struggled to put core social work precepts into action' (Patford 2000, p.23).

Marshal's (1982) study of students' perception of their practicum would be the closest in scope and design to this present study. Marshal's qualitative study found that the student's relationship with their supervisor was the most dominant theme. However in relation to learning Marshal found students had difficulty articulating the nature of learning during the practicum. Furthermore, they lacked the skill or opportunity to reflect on their practicum experience. All of Marshal's students stated they had changed in some way, however they could not be more specific. Although this is an old study it was similar in design to the present study.

Fortune, Feathers, Rook, Scrimenti, Smollen, Stemerman, and Tucker (1985) found relevant learning experiences and supervision during practicum were important factors in relation to student satisfaction. In a further study Fortune et al (2001) found that overall students respond positively to learning activities involving professionals as role models for the context of practice. Considering Fortune et al's (2001) study utilising questionnaires, which gave the students the opportunity to self-report, this method of inquiry leads the way to pursue these issues around role models more deeply through in-depth qualitative interviews.

For students there are many aspects to their first practicum that can increase their sense of stress. The difficulties placed on students in the real life situation of the placement stem from abusive clients as well as conflicts with the agency (Beddoe 2000). Fifty one percent of the students surveyed in Gelman's (2004) study found that mandated clients, or those with complex problems, or a simply a lack of motivation, can increase the sense of stress students feel entering the field. Furthermore, these students have a fear that these anxieties may become a barrier to helping clients. Further stressors relate to the economic pressures of unpaid or un-subsidised placement time that has some students feeling impoverished (Maidment 2003).

It can be determined from field placement studies that learning and the integration of theory and practice are relevant issues to pursue in social work research (Patford 2000; Cooper and Maidment 2001; Regehr et al. 2002; Fernadez 2003; Lager 2004; Armour et al. 2004). Furthermore, current recognition of work place learning in many disciplines (Maidment 2003, p.50) emphasises the need to explore the student experience, as they are the consumers of this field based learning (Fernandez 1997, p.68; School of Social Work 2003, p.13; Lager 2004, p.7). The excellent and often un-credited work of field educators and their intrinsic part in social work education are not the focus of this study. Instead, building up the world of the practicum from the reported experience of the students, and offering a unique and lacking perspective to social work literature.

Methods

This study uses qualitative methods. Babbie (2001, p.298) notes '...the chief strength of this method lies in the depth of understanding it permits'. Qualitative research is about '...getting out into the field and finding out what people are thinking and doing' (Strauss and Corbin 1998, p.11). To guide the qualitative research, concepts from grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967) have informed the inquiry.

Considering students are adult learners, theories and principles of adult education are highlighted as informing this study. 'The central proposition on which the entire adult-education movement is based is that adults can learn' (Knowles 1976, p.49). 'Adult education gives special attention to individual difference in life experience, personal style, time, place, and pace of learning' (Goldstein 2001, p.77).

Sampling

In the sample there are four female students from the University of Stockholm, and seven students from the University of New South Wales (five female, two male). All were social work students who had completed their first placement and at the time of the interviews enrolled in their corresponding Schools of Social Work Bachelor Programs.

The opportunity to interview the Stockholm students came about through my final social work practicum in Sweden and through my Swedish supervisor invitation to discuss the experience of being an exchange student at a School seminar. At the seminar I gave out my contact information for students to contact me.

Recruiting the University of New South was in two parts. First a letter of invitation with participation sheet was sent to all students who had completed their first practicum. Second method involved attending a core subject for these students giving a brief overview of the research and leaving contact details. Considering the effort to recruit students to this study, the participation was low at eleven students.

Due to the nature of the sample this study is not a representation of the full social work student body of the University of New South Wales or the University of Stockholm. However, a discussion of theory and the results of other studies perhaps add weight to the claims made in this study (Alston and Bowles 1998, p.272). For 'in qualitative research, generalisability often relies on theoretical argument...' (Alston and Bowles 1998, p.272).

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection entailed audio-recorded in-depth semi-structured interviews. These semi-structured interviews lasted approximately one hour. Students were made aware that the interviews would be recorded for the purpose of transcribing; but that names would be changed to ensure anonymity when finally reported in the study.

Analysis was informed by a grounded theory approach, (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Main themes were developed through the coding of the interview transcripts. Miles and Huberman (1994, p.53) assert 'coding is analysis'. In grounded theory, data collection, coding and analysis become an interrelated process. While initial coding was taking place, so did initial analysis through the writing of memos around segments of text. In a further attempt to gain rigor throughout, this study adopted techniques from Padgett (1998) including peer debriefing, support from another researcher, member checking and keeping an accurate account and documentation of the research process. Further rigor throughout this study has been gained through constant interaction with the data flow. Data was managed via the qualitative computer-based program 'AnSWR', distributed freely by The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) USA, Divisions of HIV/AIDS Prevention http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/software/answr.htm . 'The process of qualitative data analysis has become far more manageable with the appearance of qualitative data analysis software' (Alston and Bowles 1998, p.205).

Students have an important voice in the area of practicum, and indeed a lot is at stake for them as they travel along the road to becoming a social work professional. Even so, due to the lack of research, much of what social work students are experiencing in the field, positive or negative, may stay in the field, resembling that old maxim of the 'rock n roll' tour, *'what goes on the road, stays on the road'*.

Findings

In an attempt to put in context the conversations with these students, some of the discussion is summarised. Furthermore, to highlight the country of origin of the students, the symbol (S) is put after the Swedish students' names and similarly the symbol (A) is put after the Australian students. The conversation around integrating theory with their practice came out of the literature review for this study; however the general focus on learning came from the students and their excitement and pride around what they had accomplished during their placement. Conversations around learning at the first placement are separated into four themes, theory to practice, watch and learn, learning on the job and

bringing it all back home. The findings are followed by a discussion of the themes, a summary of the findings and finally implications and further research.

Theory to Practice

The integration of theory with social work practice has been an emphasis of social work education since the beginning of formalised social work education (Berg-Weger and Birkenmair 2000, p.17).

> *James (A) '...to be honest, when you are doing those courses, like you know you've got to empathise and paraphrase and your like... well that sounds like a wank, but when you do it, it kind of works...People will start to talk a lot more if you're paraphrasing and stuff...Yeah but I was quite surprised how that actually worked'*

James found that theoretical techniques he had learnt at University could be applied to his placement. James utilised these techniques as he worked with the families needing supported accommodation. Eva (S) also found her classroom theory was not only useful in her practice but also of interest to other members of her team. One older member of Eva's team often asked Eva to bring in new literature for her to read. When I asked Eva did she see a big difference between how things are taught at School compared to the work place? She said:

> *'Some differences, like you don't have as much time in the real life as they say that you do in books... you don't have time to do all of those things when you are out in the real life'*

Eva went on to say that some aspects of University theory were really helpful for her work and also interesting to discuss with her colleagues. It seems a student may bring new or updated skills into the workplace. When I asked Liana (A) was her organisation interested in her knowledge, she replied

> *'Oh yes. I mean obviously, cause they used us to help, help them like do research for their programmes, and that sort of thing'*

Liana and her friend were able to put their theoretical research skills to practice while also doing what the other staff in the organisation couldn't do, and didn't have the time to do.

Petra (S) found that although she was quite familiar with the method of practice at her host agency (environmental therapy) that it wasn't always successful

> *Petra '...even if it didn't work with the parents... it kind of worked with the children, every once in a while at least'.*

Petra was of course very conscious of applying theory to practice, however, sometimes a student will use theoretical knowledge in their practice and may only recognise it retrospectively when queried.

During Elizabeth's (A) research into children in care, Elizabeth had to ask children why they thought they were in care without eliciting too much of an emotional response. Elizabeth knew the process could elicit emotional responses, and cause conflict around her ability to differentiate her research role from a therapeutic one. I asked Elizabeth how she knew how to keep these two processes separate.

> *Elizabeth 'Oh, ok. I don't know really, um (pause) I guess there's such a whole thing about confidentiality in social work, um, on a need to know basis. Um, I suppose case work ... I mean when we speak about professional ethics... that's what it's all about isn't it'*

Elizabeth could eventually recognize the theoretical basis to her practice and even the course that she had learned it in. Finally, Megan (A) expressed her application of classroom knowledge to her practicum as a kind of test.

> *Megan 'Think, the good thing about doing, is putting what you are learning and what you are thinking into a... almost a test. So you get to go out to prac and go this is how it really operates, opposed to how they say it operates. So you might go yeah, what we are learning is accurate, yet they are kind of missing this, or what we are learning is inaccurate. Whereas, obviously I think there is a high level of accuracy to what we are learning to what actually goes on'*

Students in this study seem to recognize, and have experimented with applying classroom theories to their placements as part of their learning experience. Now I turn to another process of learning observed in this study, 'watch and learn'.

Watch and Learn

'Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally through modelling:' (Bandura 1977, p.22).

> *Megan 'So I used to go in with my supervisor and watch her do the counselling, so that then I could do it. Like it was more, because it was in a maternity hospital, it's a shorter contact with your client kind of thing, so there is a high turn over, they're only in the hospital for two to five days, generally speaking, so there's more about going in there doing assessments, you know than like, finding out what their priorities are and helping them achieve that'*

Megan was able to watch her supervisor and model some of her own behaviour on her supervisor's, however, as well as modelling Megan also used literature and her previous experience to guide her practice.

Megan 'Yeah so, I got to, to watch my supervisor, I also read through different sorts of social work counselling kind of things, and then I've had other experience doing counselling'

Caterina (S) found her self in a similar position to Megan at her practicum; her job seemed to have a specific format to it that Caterina could initially follow.

Caterina 'First I just repeated what my supervisors did, I didn't really ask any questions, but then you think about, so why, why do I need to know this, why am I asking these questions, and not those ...'

Eventually Caterina began to understand how important the information was that she was collecting from her clients could be, it would end up before the courts and could be quite influential in the client's criminal trial. Caterina seemed to model her supervisor, followed by questioning and analysing, as part of her learning process.

Cindy's (A) supervisor wanted Cindy to take over one of her clients, however, instead of throwing Cindy straight into her own casework, her supervisor began by having Cindy sit in her own client's sessions.

Cindy '...because she wanted me to sort of get an idea as to who, what type of clients she had, what she covers and things like that, and she offered for me to be able sit in on her sessions, so I could look at her... her case working skills and how she used them'

After this initial process Cindy was given three clients of her own.

Eva (S) like some of the other students in this study seemed to learn some skills by observing and modelling her supervisor's behaviours. Of course this does not seem to be a method used in isolation.

Eva 'mm, mostly by observing other case workers and by reading a lot, in the beginning there's a lot about reading, reading files, reading assessment records, talking to people asking them questions and then I started going on visits with my supervisor. I wasn't too, I really liked my supervisor but I also spent a lot of time with the other case workers, to see how their, to see how different people worked'

Liana (A), as part of her practicum had to organise and run a group for young women, when she told me this I explored with her the source of her knowledge and skills.

John. 'And how did you know how to run a group or'
Liana. 'Well cause basically I have watched, I watched, I was, basically my days were spent in groups, so um, I basically learnt from watching, also, um, we were doing a subject that coincided with prac, it was group work'
John. 'Ok'

Liana. 'So that helped as well'
John. 'Yeah'
Liana. 'That helped as well. Um, also the fact that the programmes were written up, so I mean you didn't invent the programmes yourself, you did have some room, then you ran a programme, but it did help that the fact there were written agendas for each week'

Liana was able to watch other members of her team run groups before she had to run one on her own. It can be seen that in part she modelled behaviour from her team members. Modelling as it has been stated is not a method these students seem to use in isolation, there is also an element of using classroom theory, and as it is focused on in the next theme, learning on the job.

Learning on the Job

During my first interview with Ann (S), she was explaining her tasks during the placement. Ann's tasks involved developing materials and subsequently teaching teenagers in schools issues around sexuality. I wondered how she knew how to teach or where she had learned what to teach. Ann told me she learnt on the job. The placement gave her and the other students the training that enabled them to facilitate these classes. This conversation got me interested in what students learn specific to the practicum, and how valuable they find this learning.

James (A). 'Ah, ah, I reckon it was the best, up until that point I think it was the best part of the course. Like the learning curve was just amazing, compared to, you compare that six months to what you learned ...before that...for me there is just no comparison'
John. 'And what do you think does that'
James. 'Just, it's just um, just realizing...just realizing um, the practicalities of social work, like you know the, actually how it all works ...a lot of the theories are very like um, clear cut, when your, when your in practice you realize that those, those distinctions are a lot more blurred, and that when your talking to someone or working with someone in case work setting or in a group work setting, you realize all those theories are really nice little theories, trying to actually implement them is like a whole different story, and like you know, whether they actually practically work is just another matter'

James seemed to learn a lot about the practical side of social work and felt the learning on the job was far superior to the classroom. Ann (S) as I have already mentioned spent much of her practicum time teaching in schools and learnt specific skills for her task.

Ann. 'So, so it was a really good experience, and em we spent the first week preparing for the, how to hold these lessons, these information lessons, for the students...'

I said to Ann that a week preparing their lessons didn't seem very long, so did she have anything that was relevant from her course to help her, Ann just laughed and said 'no'.

Vanessa (A) seemed to also learn something specific to her practicum, something she could only learn on the job.

> *Vanessa. '...even though I had a bad experience, it's, ultimately it was still a good prac because, it taught me how to deal with the real world, like in reality your not going to get everything running smoothly...this is what I got out of it...that yeah, I rose to the occasion, kept the right attitude...'*

Finally I asked Fernando (A) what did he think stood out for him from his placement and he replied:

> *'What stands out from my placement um, I'd have to say definitely the people that I worked with, the fact that I learnt that I can work with myself, and that you will slightly go into it with a negative attitude thinking that you might not be able to do it, but being open minded and allowing yourself to absorb all of that, um, information, um, can really open up a lot of doors*
> *John. 'mm'*
> *Fernando. 'I think other than the people standing out, I think that fact that I did what I did and I achieved what I achieved was quite exciting, because you know I came away from it and sort of went wow'*

It seems Fernando during his practicum discovered that he could work well alone and like many of the students in this study was excited about that which he had achieved. These students seem to have discovered and learned many things during their practicum about themselves and social work. However, sometimes students in this study recognized their learning at practicum more clearly when they return to full time study, as will be related in the following theme, 'bringing it all back home'.

Bringing it all Back Home
(Students bringing practicum learning back into the classroom)

Near the end of my first interview with Ann (S) I asked her what it was like coming back to University full time, a question I continued asking students throughout this study.

> *Ann '...it was sad to come back, I thought I had a great time and would have liked to stay longer at the placement and do more and learn more about it. So it's, but it's also nice to come back and talk to everybody else, and you can feel that you have developed, and that everybody has developed, cause the conversations and the things you talk about, everybody has more experience. So I think the discussions and the climate is good after the placement, cause everybody has a bit more experience they can say that this happened at my placement and that happened during mine, and you can exchange experiences'*

James (A) found that when he came back to University after his placement he could engage more realistically with the subject material, especially a subject which related to his placement around child and family welfare.

> *James. '...definitely, it was like, some of the some of the dilemmas were a lot more real. Like when you got a child that is being abused, you know trying to make that judgment call, as to, whether it would be more beneficial that the child would you know like, some extreme action should be taken or whether it be more beneficial just to try and work on the family and remedy the situation, cause just dislocating that child would just like cause even more trouble in his life, you know, those dilemmas in that course became a lot more real... it integrates those kinda things you discuss in class, kinda puts them in a better perspective, something you can really relate to'*

For Liana (A), after her practicum, and coming back to University she could see more clearly her goal of becoming a social worker.

> *Liana'...since I started Uni that, always knew that I was going to be a social worker, but, it's sort of more tangible...'*

As well as Liana experiencing social work being more tangible she could also use her new learning to enlighten her University course work.

> *Liana 'I guess sometimes when you use examples from prac in subjects, like this semester, (she names a subject), ah, at sort of our first tut (tutorial) today, we were asked to you know draw examples of management from our pracs' and, um, in that way it is good, you've got some examples that you can link back to as well'.*

As for Fernando (A), being a practical person he found it was much easier for him to relate to theoretical aspect to the University course material after he had some experience in the field, especially if the lecturers at University could help facilitate this relationship.

> *Fernando. 'Um so having the prac was defiantly um a learning curve in the sense of then going back to university and learning about theories and then, um, because often we'd be in a tutorial, lecture, and ah, because they know we just come from prac, they would, you know, often say you know this theory is this, um you know, how can you sort of relate it to what you did in your prac. So they asked the questions, which was really good, if they didn't, um, it would have been a little bit harder'*

Next we turn to a discussion of these themes around students' experience of learning during the practicum process.

Discussion

Each student, whether they were from Stockholm or Sydney, had their own personal style of navigating the social work practicum, yet the shared experience of learning between the two countries seemed evident. From the very first interview with Anna in Stockholm, there was recognition that we were speaking the same language. Therefore, in discussing the findings I have attempted to integrate all the participants experience together and discuss them in relation to the theory and literature, then finally, comment on the implication of this shared experience.

James's (A) first comment about empathy, as well as being quite funny, expresses plainly his use of theory in practice. James used his theoretical knowledge because it worked for him, even though in general he wondered how practical these theories would be on the job. James experience of learning reflects a concept of Andragogy put forth by Knowles (1976) in the way his University theory made sense to him when it became immediately valuable. Elizabeth (A) and Petra (S) too could connect a theoretical aspect of the social work course to their placement. Liana (A), Megan (A), and Eva (S) also found theory from their social work course applicable to their placement. These findings reaffirm the literature around students' opportunity to apply their University theory to the practicum (Regehr et al. 2002; Fernandez 2003; Lager 2004; Armour et al. 2004) and give solid examples of this process. However they, like Caterina (S), Vanessa (A) and Cindy (A) also seemed to learn how to apply themselves to their placement through modelling their supervisors or other workers' behaviours, a learning theory put forth by Bandura (1977) as Social Learning Theory.

Modelling behaviour seems to be a common way for some of these students to learn at the placement, consistent with the findings of Fortune et al. (2001). Furthermore consistent with Knowles (1976, p.41) assertion, that 'the behaviour of the teacher probably influences the character of the learning climate more than any other single factor...' However, what is important in this study is that modelling is not a method used in isolation. Students during their practicum in this study have integrated elements of classroom theory to practice, modelling, learning on the job and reflecting on learning after the practicum when returning to University with the help of their lecturers.

An interesting finding in this study is that some students perceive learning at their placements as more relevant to their needs as social workers, compared to their learning at University. This perception of learning can be related to aspects of adult education that '...are based on the adult learner's needs and objectives' (Goldstein 2001, p.77). The students at practicum seem to assess what it is they need to learn for the job they are doing. Knowles (1976, p.40) asserts adults increasingly see themselves as '...producers or doers'. Goldstein (2001, p.77) emphasises that '...the immediacy of the problem or task at hand is the major impetus of adult learning'. Consequently, students in this study especially those who have learnt a specific skill for a particular job, including those who learnt through modelling or learning on the job, seemed to have been capable of adequately working in their host organisation, highlighting aspects of adult learning. It seems, considering the variety of settings that these students have been allocated to and

the generic nature of social work education, it is not surprising that they have to be trained by their organisations and its particular context. Of course it can be seen that when these students brought their new found skills back to the University context they are more able to incorporate what they have learnt into their University course work and reflect on their practicum when new University learning occurs. Some students in this study expressed this experience as making social work more 'real'.

Liana (A) is possibly the exemplar of balance, and my devil's advocate. Liana is very conscious of the first practicum being a step towards her final goal, and has also helped me contain some of my ideas around the first practicum experience that these students are experiencing. It has to be acknowledged that these students' experiences and learning may develop further through advanced courses in the social work curriculum, and their final practicum. Furthermore this study only represents a snapshot of 11 students at an early stage in their education. However, this study, like Patford's (2000) study, found students had the opportunity to work independently and gained new learning or skills from their practicum. And contrary to Marshal's (1982) study, students in this study were able to, articulate learning during practicum, reflect on their experience, and have been specific in the way the experience has changed them, or their experience of social work. However, it was found that during the interview process that students' experience had to be fully explored to uncover relationships around learning and social work.

Finally, the expression of shared experience between the students from Sydney and Stockholm, and the relevance they have made concerning practicum learning, potentially points to the centrality of the practicum educational experience in social work education Internationally. The practicum experience for both groups was a significant and important learning experience, which seemed to present consistent themes around learning from both cultures. It seems when it comes to practicum education; if we are not sisters and brothers, we are at least cousins.

Summary of Findings

Modelling behaviour seems to be a common way for some of these students to learn at the placement, consistent with the findings of Fortune et al. (2001). However, what is important in this study is that modelling was not a method used in isolation. Even Bandura (1977, p.28) recognises that 'skills are not perfected through observation alone...' Students during their practicum have attempted to:

- Integrate theory with their practice. (Learning by testing theory)
- Model their supervisors and other workers. (Learning by imitating)
- Learn specific skills on the job. (Learning by doing)
- Reflect on learning after the practicum, with the help of their lecturers, when returning to University. (Learning by reflecting)

Some students in this study perceived the learning at their placements as being more relevant to their needs as social workers (reflecting aspects of Andragogy and Experiential learning), than that which they acquired at University. Students, especially those who have learnt a specific skill for a particular job, seemed to have been capable of adequately working in their host organisation, even though the content was unrelated to what they had learnt in University up to that point.

Also to be noted, when students bring their new practicum learning back to the University context they are more able to incorporate what they have learned into their University course work. Furthermore, students reflect on their practicum when new University learning occurs.

Student's experience of learning while at practicum highlights the importance of the practicum in student learning. Further, the shared experience and consistent themes expressed by the Sydney and Stockholm students, possibly reveals similarities in practice learning Internationally.

Implications and further Research

Revisiting the maxim of 'what goes on the road, stays on the road', the student Liana (A) has informed this study that the first practicum is not a destination in itself. Therefore as a student travels along the road to becoming a social worker, the University may be able to further help students to bring learning and experience back to the classroom.

This limited study into the students' experience of practicum highlights the rich experience and insight students can offer social work education, however, further research is needed considering this study has only begun to explore this important area. An increased sample size and a further exploration of cross-cultural experience could also assist in informing this area.

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ACTIVISM IN THE SOCIAL POLICY CLASSROOM

Genevieve Kelly and Peri O'Shea

Introduction

Understanding the processes for social change is a key element to understanding the development of social policy. Likewise the ability to participate with fellow citizens around issues of concern is an important element in the generation of social capital in our communities (Putnam and Feldstein 2003). The social capital generated through activism adds to the diversity and strength of Australia's social fabric.

Activism is perceived by many as a fundamental aspect of democracy – citizens must be able to participate in decisions affecting their lives. A vibrant democratic society, it is argued, depends not only on elections every so often, but involves a continuing process of consultation between government and citizenry (Maddison, Deniss et al. 2004) Non Government Organisations (NGOs) are an essential part of a healthy and robust democracy. When working actively on policy change, they provide a voice for community members and an opportunity to interact with government on issues of concern.Yet many in our society report a total alienation from the processes and political decision making that affects their lives. Young people, in particular, express the futility of political involvement and cynicism about the ability of citizens to affect government and corporate decision making (White, Bruce et al. 2000)

Developing an understanding of social change processes is an essential part of student learning about social policy development. At the University of Western Sydney Social Policy 1 is a foundation unit in the social work, community welfare, and social science courses. The aim of the unit is to familiarise students with the institutions and ideas underlying and informing social policy development in contemporary Australia. It is intended to prepare students for further study of specific social and economic institutions and policy.

An assessment task was developed in this unit to allow students to experience activism using electronic resources around a policy issue chosen by the student.

We hope this would assist a large group of first level university students to gain some practical understanding of social policy processes.

The teaching objectives were to increase students' understanding of the policy process, to encourage students to gain experience in taking action on an issue of concern to them, and

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Genevieve Kelly is a Senior Lecturer, School of Social Sciences, University of Western Sydney.

Peri O'Shea is a Lecturer and PhD candidate, School of Social Sciences, University of Western Sydney.

to increase their sense of agency at an early stage of their professional degree. For the assessment task students were presented with easy access to a selected range of websites from Non Government Organisations (NGOs) who were requesting the public to take action on issues of concern. Students were required to review these sites and then to actively engage in one or more aspects of a campaign of their choosing.

The assessment task was evaluated and the results are reported here with some preliminary conclusions drawn.

Engaging Students

The project aimed to explore and test the value of electronic resources (new media) in teaching about the links between social policy and community activism and to develop teaching resources to assist lecturers in teaching social policy and community development units. Our hypothesis was that new media could assist in bringing the policy process to life for students. While engaging with activist web sites students can work through the stages of community problem definition, questioning, lobbying, activism and policy change.

Ife (2001) argues that we need to move more toward a 'Participatory Democracy' and recommends 'Electronic Democracy' as one example of how to increase participation. The internet is a relatively inexpensive way of reaching and informing vast numbers of people compared to traditional forms of organising using mass mail-outs, mainstream media, posters etc.

The teaching of social policy in social work and welfare courses in Australia has often been based on the British tradition, which is very much geared to development of the oretical analysis of rational planning processes. Teaching community work and community development on on the other hand, is often centred in case studies and the experiences of workers and activists in seeking change but not necessarily linked to policy outcomes.

These different approaches are reflected in the literature which reflects a commonly held belief that much socio-political change comes from the challenges put by social movements, that political parties are often forced to incorporate movement demands into their platforms and that often the actions of social movements result in policy changes (Kowalewski 1995, P. 50). However, the effects of policy and social movement activity upon each other, has not been studied or theorised in detail (Meyer 2001; Agnone 2004). In challenging students to link social actions and policy outcomes, we want to develop a social policy curriculum that is alive and grounded in the experience of democratic involvement in modern communities.

The development of social policy can be understood as a dynamic discourse about human rights and citizenship on the one hand, and corporate and government decision making processes on the other. The use of new media to enhance participation in current activism makes both contemporary discourses, and an understanding of barriers to policy change,

more accessible to students, given that most students use and can relate to these more contemporary forms of communication.

The study of social policy through public policy analysis can appear very technical to students. Studies of social movements often provide a more accessible way for students to understand policy developments. The history of particular movements, however, can also appear remote from students' experience.

The hypothesis was, that by using new media to bring the experience of current practitioners into the classroom, students would be more engaged in the subject and achieve more understanding of the variety of social policy processes. The object was to develop a best practice framework for the teaching of social policy which starts with community activism at the core and policy change as an end point.

The project sought to assist students to link community development practice to social policy outcomes using the interactive tools that are now available as well as more traditional forms of organising. There is a developing literature on internet activism and social policy issues (Goodman 1999). Studies of the development of social and public policies and of social movements and particular campaigns are plentiful. There is, however, less literature that reports on attempts to relate the dynamics of community campaigns with policy outcomes.

Meyer (2001) reflects this gap in the following statement:

> *"The content and process of making policy serve as both stimuli and outcomes of social movements. Understanding of these relationships, that is how policy and citizen movements affect each other, is essential to understanding the functioning of contemporary democratic politics and indeed, the democratic process more broadly. Although scholars of both social movements and of public policy have acknowledged the importance of the others' work, they have not gone much beyond acknowledgment. Unfortunately, this leaves fundamental issues in the study of political participation and influence underdeveloped theoretically and understudied empirically."*

Academic Rationale for Activism in the Classroom

Why should students become involved in social activism?

There has been internal conflict in the Social, Community and Human Services Sector since its inception of whether the role of workers is to assist clients to adapt to the system or to change the system (Abramovitz 1998). Whilst both are important roles, effective community and social work can only be achieved through changing systems/policies that are inequitable, unjust or harmful to individuals or groups in society.

This view is supported in the Social Workers' Code of Ethics which 'expects' social workers "...to influence social policy, engage in social action, and advocate for disadvantaged groups" (p.528 cited in Swenson 1998). Swenson sees "Social Action for Social Justice" as a central component of Social work. "We seek to raise issues of socioeconomic status, race and gender in the agency and devise strategies of accountability from the more to the less powerful groups" (p. 527).

Ife (2001) also argues social workers are Human Rights Workers. He argues that part of a social worker's role is to empower clients to change systems that deny them their human rights and another part is to take political action of their own.

In incorporating 'activism' in a learning environment, students can learn through direct experience how they - as an individual and a future professional - can influence social policy decisions through action. Samuels (2001) suggests that 'political energy' is available to those without power. He argues that if this energy is tapped into and focused outwards by the powerless "they may find that they do indeed have the means to change some things some of the time" (p.147). One of the roles of social work education can be to assist students to experience and assess the effectiveness of action taken by the apparently powerless.

Shields found that if people are given "...an opportunity to be heard, many are willing to express their concerns and move into constructive action" (p.7). Finding out that other people were concerned about the same issues motivates people to take action (Shields 2000). In this project students were motivated both by access to the NGO websites of interest to them and by a web based discussion where they become aware of the interests and concerns of other students.

Also of importance is the action requirement of the assessment task and its role in enhancing learning. Whelan (2003) found that students learnt more and were more motivated to learn when the course included 'hands-on' action. He argues, "activist curriculum should connect in a real sense with contemporary social action"(p.7). The framing of the assessment task also assumed that students would gain more from studying activism if they did so around an issue they chose themselves.

Web Activism

Organisations and individuals seeking social change are using electronic resources in a variety of ways. NGOs typically develop web sites where they can give information about their activities and promote the causes they are working on. They may also develop lists of actions that they wish readers to take. Email lists and email access to those in power have created an avenue for development of networks and electronic lobbying. The campaign against the Multi Lateral Trade Agreement and the Anti-Globalisation movement's actions against World Trade Organisation meetings in Seattle and Melbourne are regarded as highly successful examples of the use of internet for activism (Goodman 1999). Other organisations report different levels of success in using the Internet in this manner.

Over one hundred web sites were explored in order to assess activist resources available on both generalist community action models, and around specific issues. Sites vary greatly in their reliability and accessibility and in the clarity of their presentation. Students were consulted informally about what resources they found useful for projects around specific policy issues. Eighty of the sites were reviewed and linked to a special purpose WebCT site for students in the social policy unit.

This provided a resource of web based community activism linked to WebCT to make it accessible to students. This type of resource has the potential to assist in developing tools for interactive practice in teaching community work and social policy, and in bringing the experience of current practitioners into the classroom.

Assignment

An assessment task based on Web site activism was developed that would assist students to begin an analysis of the impact of activism on social policy practice.

The WebCT site provided a range of resources that students could use to explore NGO activism on policy issues of concern to them. They discussed their reaction to these sites with other students on the E-Discussion board, which is part of the WebCT site.

From these sites they could choose a policy issue of interest and decide what they considered an appropriate form of action on the issue. Students' actions ranged from writing a letter to a minister, to attending rallies and organising on-campus protests on particular social issues. During their projects students were required to discuss what they were doing with others on the E-Discussion board and develop a clear rationale and analysis of the actions that were taken. In addition to the action itself they were required to reflect on and analyse both their own actions and those of the organisation. We surveyed students separately from their course evaluations on the value of the project to them.

Results

The survey asked students what they liked about the assignment, what they disliked and what they learnt from it. It also sought information on whether the assignment influenced them to take further social action and finally if they had any suggestions for improvements.

Overall, the students' responses to this assignment were very positive, with many comments like:

- It was very stimulating and enjoyable (S14)
- I liked getting involved in an issue that I was interested in (S32)
- [I liked] Linking the theory with an issue that is relevant to the individual. Theory + practice. (S2) (S45)
- Opening my eyes to wider issues in society (S33)

- We got to talk about current issues in Australia so it was a very contemporary subject – everyone could relate to it. (S42)
- [The assignment] helped me develop a passion for a cause. (S47)
- The most politically active I've ever been! (S15)

Students reported that they liked 'being involved' and 'making a difference'. A typical response that reflected this was; I liked putting theory into practice. Felt good to get involved (S45).

Many students also reported that they liked the WebCT site. The main reasons for liking the site were the access to and availability of the NGO sites and the discussion with other students, For example; The websites on WebCT made it much easier to research topics and get other people's opinions about issue(S63) and It was easier to learn from discussion with peers (S60).

Many students who indicated that they liked the E-Discussion affirmed that they felt freer and less intimidated to express their opinion than they may have in class and also that this allowed them greater access to the views of other students. For example: [I liked] the WebCt discussion, as people felt fairly confident to type how they feel about a particular issue (S7).

Conversely, participation in the E-Discussion also featured strongly in the 'dislike' category. Some students indicated that they disliked participating in the discussion due to time constraints and in a few instances, due to "everyone" reading your comments and/or your discussion being marked being "intimidating" (S10). After concerns about practical matters, the main reason students gave for disliking the E-Discussion were observations about lack of theoretical content. For example, People were not discussing, just stating what the knew, how much they knew, very 'glossified', when challenged they did not respond (S13).

A few students expressed concern about 'being forced' to engage in social action, eg; There is something unsettling about being made to take action (S79). Many of the students concerned about 'forced' action, also expressed strong stereotypes of who they think would engage in social action and who would not. For example; [Disliked] the fact that to make an impact you had to go and do something big against certain policies even if you're not that type of person (S55) and If you are a quiet person who doesn't like to get involved with stuff like that (S85).

Some students also reported that they disliked the workload and time constraints necessary to complete the assignment in a single semester and that it did not allow sufficient time to be involved in effective action. Students also suggested that the E-Discussion not be compulsory and that the number of websites available on the WebCT site be expanded.

In response to the question regarding what they learnt from the assignment, students reported that they learnt that you can be involved, how to be involved and that they enjoyed being involved. They also reported a greater awareness of social justice and a greater understanding of themselves. For example: It really opened my eyes to what is

happening around the world – without an assignment like this, I would still have no idea! (S85), [The assignment] really made you think about your position within society and what you value (S9) and I learnt what I believed and where I stand (S9).

Whilst many students reported that other university assessment and time constrains limited further involvement, most have continued to be involved in some way. They attribute this to their realisation that they can make a difference, to their increased awareness of social issues, and to their new knowledge on how to be involved. Almost all students indicated a desire to partake in further action which they mostly attributed to a realisation that they can 'make a difference' through social action. For example, [I Learnt] that social action can impact society (S67).

Conclusions

Students reported enough positive feedback to justify continuing with the assessment task and building on it for the future. Students at the start of their course are enthusiastic about practical involvement particularly welfare and social work students. The assignment gave them an opportunity to do something practical at a time when they may not have had practice experience.

Even when the is no clear link to a specific action and change, the action of 'doing' or seeming to have 'done' and/or 'doing' something with others who feel passionately about an issue, can be informative, enlightening and motivating. "If people sharpen their half-thought-out intuitive political ideas and commitments, then they will be able to take effective political action when they want to" and "their desire to do so will also increase" (Samuels 2001, p. 2).

There were two main issues coming out of the student response that the authors felt needed further exploration. One is whether or not the theoretical content is lessened through E-Discussion and the other was the question of the appropriateness of 'Forced' Social Action.

A few students raised the issue of the lack of theoretical content in the E-Discussion. Whelan (2003) reported that students in his study found the on-line course dialogue unsatisfactory. Whelan believes this was due to its failure to "delve into theoretical content to an adequate degree" (p.8). Face to face tutorials may also lack theoretical content at times, however the response of a tutor may be more direct and immediate in guiding students to draw theoretical conclusions. Nevertheless there is value in the E-Discussion site, in that it appears to give students more freedom to respond from their own position, which is a very useful starting point for both teacher and students to link to theoretical material.

Regarding the issue of 'forced' social action, the question that arises is: should universities require students to engage in social action as part of their course assessment? The interaction of practice with theory is a key element in developing an understanding of

social policy. Universities require students to demonstrate an understanding of bureaucratic practices and rational planning models. The practical impact of policies on communities and NGOs is a key and legitimate aspect of understanding social policy development.

Students' comments about 'forced' social action appeared to be underpinned by a strong stereotype of whom they think would engage in social action and who would not. Rundle (1999) talks about the limitations caused by the fact that many modern social movements are seen as a 'subculture' "the lifestyle is all of a piece" (p.167) which can limit access and general participation.

However, for most students, existing stereotypes of this kind were challenged in the process of being involved in an action and the interaction with NGOs and others participating in the same or similar actions. This included their own perceptions of what 'type of person' they saw themselves as.

While there are some concerns in the sector and within academia that activism makes social and human service work inappropriately political when it should be neutral, we agree with Abramovitz (1998), who argues that there is no such thing as political neutrality, that social work has always been political and that not acting "represents a political stance that favours the status quo by letting it stand unchallenged" (p.524).

This assignment led to new, hands-on and creative learning experiences for our future professionals. In many cases, it opened their eyes for the first time not just to the numerous injustices in society but, more importantly, what they can do to alleviate them. The educational objectives remain that of paving the way for students to become effective practitioners and individuals to be able to influence social policy, engage in social action, and advocate for disadvantaged groups (Social Workers Code of Ethics p.528).

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AUSTRALIAN SOCIAL WORK GRADUATE AND POST–GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES 2004

John McCormack and Patricia McNamara

Introduction

Discussion of labour and skill shortages is currently topical and bodes well for current undergraduate students in terms of future employment possibilities. However, students want, and need to be provided with, more specific factual information on their chosen employment field to facilitate these employment pursuits. Undergraduate students for example, might be interested in knowing the range of different comparative occupational salaries, the work patterns common to their chosen occupations, as well as information on whether further study following an initial degree is desirable for promotional opportunities, or expected as part of continuing professional development. One source of such information is the annual Graduate Careers Council of Australia (GCCA) survey. Each year the GCCA surveys all recently completed university graduates and postgraduates regarding their employment status, and various other employment related information. The 2004 Graduate (GDS) and Postgraduate (Postgrad) Destination Surveys results, with a response rate of 57%, are available from the GCCA Gradlink website or the more comprehensive GradsOnline web site (GCCA 2005). The occupation of social work is one of the many occupations listed on both websites, and employment outcome information on Bachelor of Social Work graduates as well as Master of Social Work (by Coursework and Research), and Social Work Doctoral graduates is provided. As an indicator of the educational activity of social workers in Australia, and the outcomes of that activity, some of this graduate, and the less often reported postgraduate, survey information, with brief comment, is provided below.

What are you worth?

The media usually report on these surveys when they are released each year, but their focus is often predominantly on comparative salaries for graduates from varying disciplines. The Melbourne Age newspaper for example reported on starting salaries for new graduates from the 2004 surveys under the heading 'What are you worth?' (Age 2005). As might be expected, Dentistry, at a starting salary of $60,000, and Medicine, at $45,300, are among the highest occupational starting salaries. The median social work starting salary, at $37,700, trails slightly behind many occupations in Education, Health,

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John McCormack is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Social Work & Social Policy, La Trobe University, Melbourne.

Patricia McNamara is a Lecturer in the School of Social Work & Social Policy, La Trobe University, Melbourne.

This salary 'slippage' by social work graduates contrasts somewhat with average weekly earnings (full-time, before tax) of all social workers where social workers' earnings are 'above average', and in the seventh decile of all occupational earnings. That is, 70% of workers on average earn less than social workers (DEST 2004). Also, the starting salaries in the GDS comprise income from all sources and thus include overtime and shift allowances which favour occupations such as medicine. Nevertheless, the gap in starting salaries for social work graduates compared to other graduates seems an area needing further investigation.

Survey Data

Turning to the survey data, the Bachelor of Social Work and Postgraduate educational activity and outcomes illustrate some interesting similarities as well as differences in employment status. Table 1 compares all BSW graduates and postgraduates on a range of employment-related factors. BSW graduates are divided between those aged 'less than 25 years', and 'all ages' BSW graduates. (The GCCA collects information on graduates under 25 years for all occupations to report on graduates who may be in their first full-time professional job.) Table 1 also separates MSW by coursework and research, with the latter being grouped with doctoral graduates. Table 1 also lists similar employment characteristics for Psychology graduates, for comparative purposes.

Table 1: Australian Social Work Graduate & Postgraduate Employment 2004

Employment Variable	BSW <25	BSW (All)	MSW Course-work	MSW Research, & PhD	Psychology Graduates*
No. of Graduates/Postgrads	686	1300	220	41	2766
% male	10.9	13.1	24.5	24.5	19
% female	89.1	87	75.5	75.6	81
Median starting Salary ($)	37000	38000	50000	54300	37000
Hourly rate ($)	18.72	19.23	24.04	26.10	18.72
Median male salary ($)	36300	38200	45000	61000	38000
Median Female salary ($)	37100	38000	50000	54000	36400
% in Full-time Employment	73.7	79.5	85.7	89.3	67
% studying after graduation	24	10	6	0	42
% employed in Health	48.3	57.7	47.6	36	19.4
% employed in Government	27.7	24.7	13.5	8	21
% employed in Education	4.1	3.9	19	52	13.9
% employed in Private	12.4	6.3	11.1	4	38.9
% employed in Other	7.4	7.4	8.7	0	6.1

*Source: Author derived from GCCA (2005); Round figures to 100%;*For comparison only.*

From Table 1, we can see:

- Quite a substantial number of students graduate with the BSW (1300) each year, and about half are under age 25 years. This age structure however varies by State, as shown below. On the other hand, compared to Psychology, social work graduate numbers are much smaller (about half).
- In terms of gender composition, social work education at all levels remains predominantly female (75% or more). The male proportion however increases with postgraduate education, and in the BSW the small proportion of males appears to be more mature age. A greater proportion of Psychology graduates are male, however like social work, that profession is also predominantly female (81%) at the under-graduate level.
- Starting salary increases substantially with higher level postgraduate courses. This is similarly reflected in the hourly rate. Salary by gender is a mixed bag with females showing high starting salaries from coursework programs but males earning more from research degrees.
- The proportion in full-time employment also increases with higher degree educational activity in social work. Psychology on the other hand has a much lower initial full time employment status, but this is offset by the substantially large number of psychology graduates who continue to study following graduation. Social workers under 25 years are also more likely to continue studying after graduation.
- In terms of industry sector employment, social work has a very high proportion starting in the Health sector, and particularly for more mature age BSW graduates. Around a quarter of BSWs are employed by government following graduation, whereas postgraduates are much less likely to be employed by government. The postgraduates with research degrees, compared to those with coursework degrees, are more likely to work in the education sector. The other outstanding figure in table 1, compared to social work, is the larger proportion of psychology graduates (almost 40%) who go to work in the private sector.

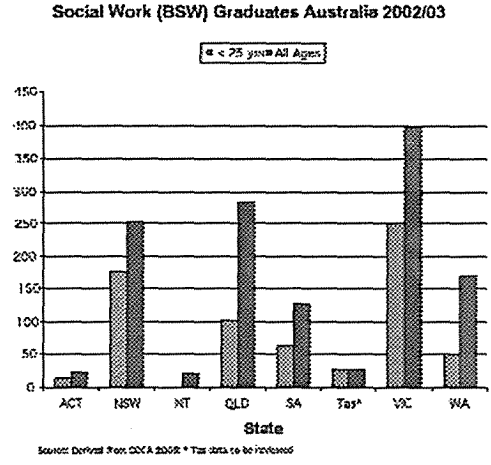
Overall, BSW social work graduates and postgraduates, while somewhat similar in certain labour market characteristics, such as gender composition and industry sector employed, also display considerable differences such as the greater financial payment associated with higher level educational activity, and different employment for those with research degrees. The relatively high employment rate (75% or more, and increasing with educational level) for all social work graduates however is consistent with previous local studies of social work graduate, and general, employment trends (Hawkins et al. 2000; McCormack 2001).

Regional Differences

The GradsOnline website also provides data on social work graduates by geographical State, however the current data on the website refers to an earlier period, so the numbers and State relativities may have changed somewhat for 2004. The chart below shows Victoria, with six schools of social work producing the largest number of BSW graduates, followed by Queensland for 2002/03. The chart also shows the age pattern differences in the graduates by State, with NSW having 70% of its BSW graduates aged less than 25

years at that time. The age structure of social work graduates is influenced considerably by course configuration (two year graduate or four year undergraduate entry) and, as more States introduce the four year undergraduate social work degrees, this will eventually increase the proportion of younger social work graduates.

Chart 1: Number of Social Work Graduates by State 2002/03



If we take the current distribution of under age 25 BSW graduates shown above in Table 1 as indicative of students' future educational pursuits, we can see that this group is more likely, similar to the psychology graduates, to enrol in further study following graduation. Further study is usually undertaken to gain a particular type or level of skill training for example. Making these younger students more aware of the substantial salary increases associated with higher social work education, as shown above, may be a useful additional marketing tool educational institutions could use to encourage higher level training in social work. This information could also be used to advise school students as to the possible future employment outcomes if they pursue a social work degree.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the GCCA's graduate and postgraduate surveys provide us with interesting and useful information on educational activity and outcomes in the profession of social work. We can see there is both similarity and difference between social work graduate employment conditions and postgraduate employment, as might be expected. This brief report, by putting numbers to the different levels of social work training provides a measure of the scale of difference which is large for some employment characteristics, and not so large on others. The lower rate of starting salary for graduate social workers appears as an issue to pursue, and the higher pay of postgraduate social work graduates supports the idea that all social workers should continue to enhance their educational standing not just for the skills and knowledge but they will also be rewarded financially for this pursuit. If labour and skill shortages persist in the future, occurring in conjunction

with an ageing workforce, the education and professional work life of social workers will need to be attractive to younger workers and those people retraining, to maintain a healthy supply of skilled social workers. The survey described above can help us identify some of the strengths and weaknesses of our current occupational experience.

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The Age Newspaper (2005), Melbourne Australia.

WORK-BASED PRACTICA: REAL LEARNING OR JUST YOUR USUAL JOB?

Carolyn Noble, Karen Heycox
Justine O'Sullivan, Brenda Bartlett

Background

There are mixed views within the professional organisations and amongst educators about the use, value and desirability of work-based practica (WBP) in social work and welfare education, where anecdotal evidence suggests an increase in demand and interest. In fact several social work programmes in different universities have been using work-based practica for some time. Driven by student demand and a shortage of suitable placement options, particularly in rural areas, anecdotally it was regarded with mixed success. While interest in WPB had been a topic of discussion amongst field educators at the New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory Combined Universities Field Education Group (NSW/ACT CUFEG) over the last few years there was little empirical evidence to inform our discussion. Although this group which has been meeting since early 1990's and consists of representatives from six social work and social welfare university based programs regards its primary purpose as sharing information and discussing policies and issues in relation to student practica there was general support for undertaking combined research projects to inform these discussions. Exploring the extent, context and value of WBP seemed an ideal first research project.

Before we embarked on the actual project we first needed to review the approach of the two professional organisations, the Australian Institute of Welfare and Community Work (AIWCW) and the Australian Association for Social Work (AASW). The AIWCW currently supports one placement in either the student's place of work or in a previous workplace but "in either case, the experience should be similar to a field education placement (and) a report by a supervisor should attest to this" (AIWCW Requirements for Field Education, 6.1, March 2003). Similarly the AASW allows for one practicum to be in the student's place of work if certain conditions are met. These conditions are:

> Before a student commences a workplace placement, special attention must be paid to clarifying the goals of the placement and to determining the learning

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__Carolyn Noble__ is Professor and Head of the Social Work Unit and the Institute for Community Engagement and Policy Alternatives, Victoria University, Melbourne.
__Karen Heycox__ is a Senior Lecturer, School of Social Work, University of New South Wales, Sydney.
__Justine O'Sullivan__ is a Lecturer, School of Applied Social and Human Sciences, University of Western Sydney.
__Brenda Bartlett__ is a Lecturer, School of Applied Social and Human Sciences, University of Western Sydney.

> opportunities that will be available, and the educational processes that will be used. The student must be allocated learning experiences not involving the individual's routine work responsibilities, and whilst undertaking placement should not carry any other workload. The field educator must be a worker who is not the usual supervisor (AASW 2000, p.9)

Given that the two professional organisations supported one placement in the work place; that most of the field educators were experiencing an increasing number of students seeking WBP and several programs were using WBP frequently we felt that research into WPB was both important and timely. We concentrated the research on the exploration of the advantages and disadvantages for student learning as well as exploring to what extent this was also common practice across Australia and other countries with informal links with NSW/ACT CUFEG.

Current Context

Over the last decade or so there has been a rapid increase in the number of social work and social welfare programs across the sector increasing the demand on the human services sector to provide practica opportunities for students. One of the consequences of this increased demand was a decrease in the actual number of agencies willing or able to undertake a partnership with universities to provide professional experience with appropriate educational opportunities. The lack of sufficient placement options was impacting equally on all universities represented in this group. Changes in students' circumstances were also placing greater demands on field educators. An increasing number of students were experiencing real difficulties to find time to undertake placements and manage work/life balance and this situation was further complicated for rural students with limited options in their local communities.

All members of NSW/ACT CUFEG needed to take these challenges seriously especially the need to retain mature aged students in their social work and social welfare programs and offer programs that adhere to equity concerns for all students mindful not to discriminate against students experiencing access issues because of structural barriers. Given the rise in costs for students many students have part and full time jobs to support their studies and attention to their needs is an increasing concern. This concern is somewhat tempered by the fact that many of the social work and welfare students have jobs in the human service field, providing them with accessible learning environments for the application of academic learning. Lister notes with regard to mature age students that they are "a valuable resource in social work education and we must ensure that the design of our programs and our teaching approaches attract them to social work education and support them throughout their education and training" (Lister 2000, p. 173).

Even though all members of NSW/ACT CUFEG spoke of increasing requests for WBP from students and some programs using WBP, as a matter of course, there was still some concern about taking what were perceived 'risks' in going down the WBP path. However, no one in the group had any empirical evidence on the viability of WBP or its potential, or

not, for providing real and challenging learning opportunities. There were perceptions, based in experiences, for and against. Those supporting this practice cited more pragmatic concerns such as those already identified - lack of placements, student demand, life/work balance and students needing to work thus making time available for "unpaid placements" difficult. It was also noted that the pressure on students to take significant time from work to do their placements could be alleviated by doing their practica in their place of work at the same time earning money to support their studies.

Those more cautious about WBP cited pedagogical concerns for not supporting work places for practica. Concerns were expressed that WBPs may restrict the type of learning opportunities available to the students and thereby limit their professional growth or may be peppered with potential conflicts of interest and ethical dilemmas between students, other employees; the agency; and the university. Pressure between the student/learner vis a vis paid worker/student role possibly creating unnecessary conflict and ethical dilemmas has also been explored in the literature (see Koroloff 1989; Martin 1991; Glassman 2000). Conflict of interests and ethical dilemmas could also exist for the colleague/supervisor as well as the employing organisation. Those educators advocating caution felt that all students needed to have a 'protected' learning environment while on placement as well as a 'breadth of placement opportunities' and this was considered difficult for a number of reasons if this learning was located in the student's workplace. Consequently there were many university-based field educators who have preferred to place students in a variety of settings and agencies for a broad professional experience, rather than within the perceived limitations of the students' workplace. WPB was emerging as a complex issue with competing perspectives and interests with an accompanying array of advantages and disadvantages.

As the AASW accreditation process is currently undergoing a review it seemed timely that this research aimed at exploring what are the issues, problems and current practices and policies in undertaking WBP could inform the current debate and hopefully add some empirical evidence as to its desirability or not. This information is also important for future policy developments and to more fully inform those educators placed in the situation of having to support or refuse these requests.

Literature on Workbased Practica

A closer reading of the current literature identified that adult education, nursing and social sciences have been observing and writing about what and how people learn in all sorts of work and professional settings for some time and many higher educational institutions are introducing courses linked into workplaces to provide the educational experiences generating an array of models for practice (Hartley, Woods & Pill 2005; Boud & Symes 2000; Boud & Garrick 1999). Evidence-based practice is emerging in the social work literature and offers new tools for reflection and organisational change and action, thus using the workplace as a site for research and professional knowledge development (Baldwin 2004; Trinder & Reynolds 2000).

A more general move toward multi-skilling and competencies for practice that are flexible and transferable across work settings is also evident in the literature as professional organisations move toward supporting industry and organisations as a valuable site of learning. For example Martin's (1991) research found that work-based learning was suitable if the agency already had a commitment to professional skill development in its work culture. While others (Major 2005; Fook 2004; Boud & Symes 2000) are asking educators from all disciplines to reconsider and re-evaluate WBP as providing the much sought after linkages between the university and the 'field' in the exploration of a partnership of learning. This emphasis on mutual learning is especially beneficial when accompanied by a curricula that links adult learner methods with attention to critical reflection and self-reflection, evidence-based practice and holistic ways of knowing and doing embedded in clear pedagogical notions of how students learn, where they learn and under what conditions (Major 2005; Fook 2004, Gould & Baldwin 2004, Baldwin 2004; Trinder & Reynolds 2000; Noble 1999; Koroloff 1989). Our research is then set within this context.

The Study

A three stage research project was developed, supported by funding from Practical Experiences in Professional Education (PEPE Inc.) - a cross disciplinary educational organisation with a focus on practicum. The focus of this study was to explore key questions regarding the advantages and disadvantages for WBP from university-based educators, field-based educators (supervisors) and students and field educators who have participated in WBP. Overall the study involved both qualitative and quantitative questions regarding advantages and disadvantages as well as a more focused exploration of such issues as role confusion; conflicts of interest; and the nature of independent learning available to the student undertaking WBP. The first stage involved an e.based questionnaire with university-based field educators in Australia and New Zealand which was replicated with university-based field educators across Canada to scope the general issues (Bartlett, Heycox, Noble & O'Sullivan 2004). The second stage, reported here, consisted of focus group of university-based field educators from NSW/ACT CUFEG and international representatives for Schools of Social Work attending an executive meeting of the International Association of Schools of Social Work. The third stage will consist of interviews with field-based educators (supervisors) and students/graduates who undertook WPB during their study.

Results of Survey of University Educators

The first stage of the research (Bartlett, Heycox, Noble & O'Sullivan 2004) reported the findings from a written questionnaire, via email, conducted with university-based field educators in the social work and social welfare programmes in Australia, New Zealand and Canada as to the advantages and disadvantages of WBP. This survey elicited both quantitative and qualitative information. Generally most respondents reported that all placements, whether WBP or not, were expensive, labour intensive and difficult to secure

with the increase in competition from other institutions. All but one discouraged WBP, with most insisting on setting up the placement with clear guidelines to avoid things such as conflict of interests before approving the practicum. Even when strict conditions were met - such as having a different supervisor, meeting placement learning objectives, freeing the student/worker from regular duties and establishing the agency's commitment to student learning (see Bartlett et al. 2004) a number of advantages and disadvantages were identified.

Some of the perceived advantages were: provided a source for locating a practicum; students were more likely to complete the practicum; provided a flexible response to the students' multiple work and study stresses; and this flexibility also made social work and welfare an attractive option for mature aged students. These respondents also raised a number of disadvantages. While it may be easier to locate a practicum, there was an intensive amount of individualized work that must be undertaken in the preparation so that any of the potential challenges of conflict of interest and others mentioned above is anticipated and minimized. Further, our respondents saw potential compromises for the student/learner role where the current economic pressures on agencies could mean that "work" might take priority over learning. With the student having an existing role in the agency it was also felt that it would be more difficult than in other practicum situations to monitor the actual learning, separate from the paid work. Further, the educators argued that the expected 'comfortability' or lack of new challenges as well as the familiarity of the workplace could potentially limit students' openness to learning. Finally, there was considerable doubt about the opportunity for reflective time in the workplace for students to gain a critical perspective of their learning opportunities and a critical distance of agency's policy and practice (Bartlett et al. 2004).

Having undertaken this scoping survey the scene was set for the next stage of the project, which involved a more in-depth exploration of the university educators actual experience of the advantages and disadvantages of WBPs, using a focus group of NSW/ACT CUFEG members as the participants.

Results of CUFEG Focus Group

An external person was employed to facilitate the focus group of NSW/ACT CUFEG members. The focus group was held for approximately an hour of the group's usual meeting time and six participants, representing 6 universities self-selected to participate. The responses were written up on butcher's paper and the discussion was also audiotaped.

The questions that were put to the participants were:

- What are the advantages of WBPs for students, supervisors, agencies, universities? Please give examples from your experience.
- What are the disadvantages of WBPs for students, supervisors, agencies, universities? Please give examples from your experience.
- How is this experience of WBPs linked to field learning and what issues arise for Field Education as a result?

- Thinking back on your experiences what would you (or the university) have done differently to meet practicum learning goals?
- What vision of the future of pedagogy of Field Education is there if workplace practica become more common?

As with the survey responses, members of the focus group readily identified a number of advantages. For students they saw some relief to the economic costs of practicum leading to an increase in their ability to access social work and welfare courses. A WBP was also viewed as providing a familiar context in which students could build on existing knowledge and skills and further enrich their own practitioner knowledge. The flexibility of this arrangement also means that students might be able to complete their practica and not have to choose between paid employment and continuing their study, thus helping them complete their course and contribute to the overall growth of the profession.

There were a number of advantages identified for the agency as well. Agency employers would be seen as professional partners in the acquisition of knowledge and skills of their workers as well as a means to enhance university/agency partnerships. As one participant noted a WBP can 'value add' to the student/worker's organization. This is particularly relevant for many government and community organizations, for example the New South Wales Department of Community Services has been in dialogue with universities over the need to upgrade the formal qualifications of a few hundred of their current staff.

As well as advantages a number of disadvantages were articulated. Confirming earlier concerns participants commented on the lack of a separate time set aside from the work demands for the students to be able to critically reflect about their learning and professional growth. The issue of being unable to express a negative appraisal of the workplace and its policies and practices was also raised. The difficulty of monitoring learning was another important disadvantage as it could be difficult to separate out the student/worker role and performance. What university educators also grappled with was the assumption that because a student was a paid worker in that organization there was also an assumption that they were performing effectively in their paid role. For example one focus group participant noted an example where a student performed poorly on the WBP but was protected by the other workers leaving unanswered questions about this student's competence as a worker. In other words how were field educators able to separate out differing competencies between student as learner and worker as student?

All group participants reaffirmed the intensive workload involved in establishing an appropriate and effective WBP. Further issues were identified such as whether the WBP students are assessed on new knowledge and skill development or are assessed as a paid worker in a different role, a role they were not employed to do? Agency pressure on the student versus worker tension could result, as one participant identified, in "the pedagogy becom(ing) subordinated to the demands (of the workplace)". Another noted how her colleague had talked three students out of doing a WBP by warning the student "don't do it just because it's convenient". Another participant saw the need for field education coordinators and liaison visitors to "skill up" in order to effectively monitor performance. What is needed is a way to assess prior learning, both competencies in knowledge and

skills. In the United Kingdom there have been attempts to provide some guidance on the assessment of practice in the workplace (General Social Care Council 2002).

There were differing opinions in the group as to the way WBP might impact on the field education program if there was a more concerted move to accepting this practice. One participant commented that there may not be much increase in demand from the current situation. Others spoke of educators moving towards greater flexibility in response to pressure not only from students and agencies but also from universities, with options such as online courses and part time study, with WBP becoming a more accepted part of the field education program.

While the research thus far had explored views and experiences of NSW and ACT university educators and a comparison between countries via the e.survey with New Zealand and Canadian educators, it was felt by the authors that an international comparison, especially of a qualitative nature with a small and selective group of international field educators would add to the emerging empirical evidence being gathered. At a regional meeting of the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) individual interviews were undertaken with representatives from Hong Kong, West Indies, Germany, United Kingdom, and the United States. These individuals were Presidents or representatives of their National Associations of Schools of Social Work and Social Pedagogy and were all familiar with their country's various programs.

Questions to each representative included:

- Are the issues of work-based learning a topic for discussion? If not why?
- If yes, what are the issues? To what extent does it happen? How are practica organised? Are there any restrictions? What are they?
- What are the perceived advantages for the student, agency, supervisor, university? Please give examples.
- What are the perceived disadvantages for the student, agency, supervisor, university? Please give examples.
- What is your vision of the future of practicum if workplace practica become more common?

Results of IASSW Educators' Interviews

Most of the respondents gave general answers about their particular country's experiences but examples came for their respective schools where they had personal experience. Examining the responses it seems again there are a number of advantages as well as a number of disadvantages of WBPs. From the overall responses four key advantages were identified that supported findings from the focus group with the NSW/ACT educators. There was little doubt that WBPs provided financial benefits for the students as well as providing more flexibility and convenience for students undertaking social work courses. Along a similar perspective these participants agreed that WBPs allowed students to combine work and study more easily. As one interviewee noted "it is a luxury nowadays for students to be just students". Other advantages were the opportunity for students to

look at their place of work through the perspective of 'learner'; enable students to complete their assignments; and provide students with more choice for placements. However these advantages were measured against the assumed experience of another placement independent from their work, that is, if there was only one placement as in some postgraduate courses, it was not always deemed suitable, despite its common practice. Finally they questioned the idea that WBPs are always restrictive in terms of challenging learning opportunities and instead argued that in a WBP students could be forced to 'think outside the box' and become more innovative in developing learning opportunities.

While the IASSW representatives who were interviewed named a number of advantages described above they tended to identify more disadvantages. For example while they saw the opportunities for learning in a WBP they still acknowledged that there was the possibility that students could become "too comfortable" in a WBP and possibly lack the opportunities for critical reflection and critical practice essential to the student role in placements. Also mentioned were possible conflicts of interest and role confusion whereby the student's own work priorities could overtake the student learning agenda. These possible disadvantages were more likely, they thought, to occur in small agencies rather than in large agencies where a clear separation of work and learning opportunities could be made available. As a result it was suggested that smaller agencies might not be suitable for an effective WBP.

Additionally these interviewees noted that the priority of work over learning might not only be an issue for students. The supervisor in the agency may also pressure the student as well, thus compromising her/his role to protect the student learner's workload to allow for the learning to occur. These educators generally saw that the agency had more control in these situations than the university. Further they argued that the previous co-worker relationship between student and supervisor, whether this was a positive or negative relationship, could affect the current student/supervisor relationship to the detriment of the student and their learning needs. Using this scenario to her advantage one student had commented to one of the educators interviewed that she could, in her workplace, now "(do) what I can get away with". Moreover, several interviewees argued that a WBP could raise equity issues for those other students in the program who are not getting paid while doing their practicum. Finally it should be noted that those interviewed felt that a WBP could limit student choice; provide a different experience than the student thought or wanted; could result in preferential treatment over other colleagues; and in many cases could end up as a fail grade with possible consequences for their position in the workplace. Issues of power and supervision were a constant concern expressed by all the participants in this study.

Discussion

The educators - local and overseas – who were surveyed and interviewed in the second stage of the research project saw some value in offering students the opportunity of a work-based practicum especially emphasizing its value where many students are

experiencing financial hardship. Even for students not experiencing great hardship offering social work and social welfare students the option of a WBP, it was suggested, models the very principles of 'social justice' that are so often taught in these programs.

While there was concern by most educators of the possible low priority given to the student's needs as compared to their involvement in 'work' it can be argued that this lack of sufficient emphasis on learning is also an issue in non WBPs. It is the responsibility of university-based educators to make all parties to the practicum -students and supervisors/field teachers- aware of the complexity of the tasks, processes and issues involved in a practicum and to teach each party how to monitor the 'learning' by providing a comprehensive curricula that engages critical reflective learning strategies with adult learning principles. The issue is the partnership between the workplace and the university as a legitimate site for professional integration whether the student is paid or not.

As university field educators are working in an increasingly competitive market, it is almost inevitable that they will need to find flexible and innovative responses to the issue of locating sufficient and appropriate practicum learning experiences. Locally there have been examples of flexible responses such as distance education programs where contracts between the student, agency and university are developed and 'signed off on'. One focus group participant commented that this process "does not solve everything", but is an attempt to get the agency/supervisor and student to make a more formal commitment that this will be a "learning experience". Such contracts contain specific commitments of each party in relation to areas such as roles, tasks, and supervision arrangements. Sceneck (1991) says clear learning agreements "makes explicit a three - way negotiation" (p. 43). This process is important for all placements wherever they occur.

Another example of a flexible response is the use of an external supervisor to enhance a more objective approach to student learning and assessment and ensure that the work undertaken and the lines of accountability are significantly different from and separate to the worker/student's current position. Even where the agency is small, which may be the only option in a rural community, one focus group participant stated how there could still be strategies to enhance demarcation of roles and responsibilities such as the use of signs and the moving of desks.

But what is the impact on the overall pedagogical approach to field education more generally? While there was general concern that students in WBP may be limited in their ability to undertake reflective learning because of the many disadvantages there is a growing body of research that supports the idea that reflective learning can be found anywhere, anytime and in any setting (Gould & Baldwin 2004; Fook 2004). Pedagogical tools to enhance learning in the workplace can be found in the literature. Beard and Wilson's (2005, p.5) Learning Combination Lock (LCL) offers a range of clues and practical applications for the integration of theory and practice and the growing literature on critical reflection and critical self-reflection which views technical and professional skills as transferable skills across settings and workplaces is another example (Fook 2004; Noble 1999). Evidence-based learning can be used as a reflective tool for ongoing and life-long learning and can be used by the students for practice and theory integration

(Trinder & Reynolds 2000; Yelloly & Henkel 1995). Additionally Lister (2000) sees the need for educators to acknowledge and work with the impact of and 'unlearning' that mature aged students have to confront as they learn to transfer their "rich pool of past experience" (p. 173) to new situations. Further there is increasing support that reflective learning is as important for organisations as for the individual learners themselves (Fook 2004). This is particularly so if the learning organisations i.e. agencies are concerned about providing adequate professional development for both students and workers and where good supervisory practices are embedded in the culture of the organisation (Fook 2004; Jones 2004).

The current literature generally supports WBPs challenging the assumption that 'real' learning only occurs outside of the place of work. WBP, if supported by a critically reflective based curriculum can provide the student with opportunities to explore how transferable and generalisable knowledge and skills are from setting to setting and situation to situation. Symes (2000) sees 'learning' in the workplace as involving both identifying and creating opportunities which will entail new learning. He says:

This may involve the learner/worker volunteering or seeking out special projects or assignments in the workplace, being active in suggesting initiatives in which they may be involved, negotiating with supervisors for more varied tasks and responsibilities, or creating new ways of carrying out routine tasks (Symes 2000, p.127)

Letting go of proscribed rules or policies and moving towards the use and exploration of more reflective practica and curriculum provides a way forward. Especially if the field curriculum can provide ways to document the processes by which students can learn, reason, deliberate and develop practice wisdom through action, where ideas and solutions are explored together and mistakes are identified and lessons learnt from them. These processes would then elicit more learning opportunities than the actual place of learning itself (Fook 2004; Noble 1999).

Finally we would argue that if the underlying assumption of field education pedagogy is exposing students to the realities of practice situations, embedded in the context of their social, historical, economic and political context and they are equipped with course materials that support and encourage this reflection outside of the practice experience i.e. integration classes, reflective curricula, adult learning principles for self-directed learning, good supervisory practices then whether it is also their place of paid work becomes irrelevant (Jones 2004; Gould & Baldwin 2004; Fook, Ryan & Hawkins 2000; Noble 1999).

Conclusion

The research to date has provided some useful insights into the advantages and disadvantages of work-based practica from the university educators' perspective opening the debate for further research into this important area of practica research. In the main the literature is supportive of learning in the workplace if this learning is embedded in a

curricula that makes student learning explicit and links skills and theory as transferable across practice methods, agency settings and organisational practices, especially if this learning is supported by good supervisory practice and adult education models. However what is missing is the experience of the other two parties to the practicum, that is the field teachers (supervisors) and the students who have experienced a WBP. The authors are currently completing interviews with these parties in order to have a fuller picture of the complexities of WPB from all participants.

This cooperative research reported here with educators across institutions and across countries has highlighted the importance of research needed in this area. As one focus group participant noted, looking at WBPs has been important as one is forced to "acknowledge the complexity of the relationships and the roles and reality of everyday practice and (it) gets one to reflect on these issues". Providing empirical evidence about the advantages and disadvantages as well as exploring qualitative material about the nature and experience of WBP will position social work and social welfare in leading the debate about learning in the workplace.

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The following is a summary of the review and publication process of the Journal.

1. Once a paper is received, the editorial committee decides on which reviewers the paper will be sent to - this is not just a random choice. Reviewers are selected because of their knowledge and interest in the topic to be reviewed. The name of the author is not disclosed to the reviewers.
2. The article is returned to the editors with reviewers' comments attached. All reviewers review papers on a voluntary basis, as a service to their profession. Authors should allow three months from the time the article is received by **Advances in Social Work and Welfare Education** before expecting to receive reviewers' comments.
3. In a number of cases, both reviewers will recommend publication be considered after some revision or only minor changes. In others, both will recommend more major revision before publication could be considered. This may involve changing the length, clarifying expression, improving structure, changing some content or improving focus. This is quite a common occurrence and should not to be seen as failure. In other cases, a paper will be rejected outright or major revisions recommended i.e. a total rewrite. Reviewers all follow guidelines drawn up by the editorial committee.
4. Occasionally, reviewers will disagree on the outcome, for example, one will recommend publication, the other a rewrite or revision, or one may recommend rejection. In this case, a third opinion is sought, in conjunction with the editors.
5. When an article is returned after revision, it is usually sent to one of the previous reviewers and one new reviewer for opinion. If only a small change in the article's length has been requested the revised version is usually sent to one previous reviewer and also considered by a member of the editorial committee. If only minor changes were needed, for example insertion of headings, correction of referencing, a member of the editorial committee will check to see if they have been carried out. The final decision on publication rests with the editorial committee.
6. When an article is being revised, editorial committee members are available for consultation with the author. In fact, at any stage of an article's production, editorial committee members may be consulted. They are listed on the first page of the Journal.
7. Once an article is accepted for publication, the editorial committee has the job of proofreading, editing and deciding the appropriate journal edition for publication, position, layout, etc. The editors are also interested in improving the clarity of unclear or woolly writing and may rewrite sentences and sections to improve clarity or expression
8. Finally, the article is sent to the printer.
9. The time, from acceptance to publication, will vary according to the number of articles awaiting publication, length of article, topicality and publication of special theme issues.
10. Authors receive one complimentary copy of the journal in which their article appears.

INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS

Preparation of Copy

1. Contributors should submit three copies of a paper to the editors, one of which should be the original typescript. Copy should be double-spaced on A4 or quarto paper on one side of the page only. Articles should include:
   (a) An abstract. This is an informative summary of no more than 150 words, suitable for abstract journals without the need for rewording.
   (b) A detachable separate cover sheet to ensure anonymous reviews. This should contain the title of the article, word length, the author's name and address, sufficient information for a brief biographical note, which includes the author's highest qualification, current position and email address (if applicable) and any personal acknowledgements.
   (c) Numbered pages (in the top right hand corner of each page).
   (d) Photographs and figures relevant to the article, on separate sheets. Only photographs with a high degree of definition will reproduce well, hence black and white photographs are preferred.
2. Copy should not normally exceed 6000 words, double-spaced and exclusive of references. Papers longer than 6000 words will be considered.
3. Contributors should use language that clearly includes both sexes when reference to both male and female is intended. Thus both gender words 'he or she', 'her or his' should be used, as well as neutral terms such as 'spokesperson' or 'representative', 'chairperson', 'staffed', 'you' and the plural forms of he/she. For further information refer to, Miller, D. and Swift, K. (1984) *The Handbook of Non-sexist Writing for Writers, Editors and Speakers*, The Women's Press, London.
4. Notes should be kept to a minimum and combined with the text whenever possible. They should be numbered serially and placed at the end of the paper, as endnotes, before the references.
5. (a) The Journal uses the Author-Date (Harvard) System of referencing. The references should be included in the text.
   (b) References in the text give the author's surname and year of publication (with page number if necessary) in this style:
   The major improvement concerns the structure of the interview (Ulrich and Trumbo 1965, p.112)...Later reports (Carlson, Thayer, Mayfield and Peterson 1971) record greatly increased interviewer reliability for structured interviews...
   Note that surnames only are used. Initials are only added to the surname when they are required to distinguish between authors of the same surname.
   (c) Where a reference contains the names of two or more authors, all names are given the first time the reference is cited; on subsequent occasions only the first name followed by 'et al.' is required except where this may cause ambiguity.
   (d) At the end of the article references are arranged in alphabetical order of authors' surnames and chronologically for each author. The author's surname is placed first, followed by the year of publication in parentheses.

For books, the layout is:
Smith, N. and Jones, M. (1979) *A Companion Guide to Good Authorship*, Social Work Press, Sydney.
For Journal articles the layout is:
Wright, O. (1969) 'Summary of research on the selection interview since 1964', *Personal Psychology*, vol.22, no.2, pp.391-413.
For a chapter or article within a book compiled or edited by others, the layout is:
Morris, J. (1986) 'The art of the review' in Warren, E., *Innovations in Editing*, Bromley Press, Sydney, p.8.
For electronic media (e.g. Internet websites), the layout is:
Collins, S. & Ryan, M. (2003) 'How to put a social work education journal together'. Retrieved November 5, 2003 from the World Wide Web: http://www. socialworkjournals.com/doing it/

(e) Where reference is made to more than one article or book by the same author published in the same year, use letters (a, b, etc.) to distinguish one from another e.g.(Smith 1970a).
(f) Papers with more than one author are listed after any sole publications by the first author, and in alphabetical order of second authors.
For further information refer to Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers, (2002) 6th edition, (revised by Snooks & Co.), John Wiley & Sons, Milton, Qld.

6. Spelling should conform to the usage of the Macquarie Dictionary and abbreviations should be kept to a minimum. Where appropriate spell all words with -ise, -isation, -ising (not -ize, etc.). the modern tendency to use single quotation marks rather than double is recommended. Frequent or lengthy quotations should be indented. No quotation marks are then necessary.
7. Paragraphs should be separated by double spacing, without indentation.

For general style conventions such as capitalisations and abbreviations please consult the previously mentioned Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers.

Manuscripts that do not comply with style and format requirements, or which are not neat and legible, will be returned without review.

Authors seeking assistance with preparation of articles for submission to **Advances in Social Work & Welfare Education** are invited to contact any member of the editorial committee (listed on the front cover of the Journal).

Manuscripts must be the original work of the author(s) and will be received on the understanding that they have not been published, simultaneously submitted or accepted for publication elsewhere.

Please send 3 copies of all manuscripts to: Martin Ryan (Co-Editor), "Advances in Social Work & Welfare Education", School of Social Work and Social Policy, La Trobe University, Victoria, 3086, Australia.

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