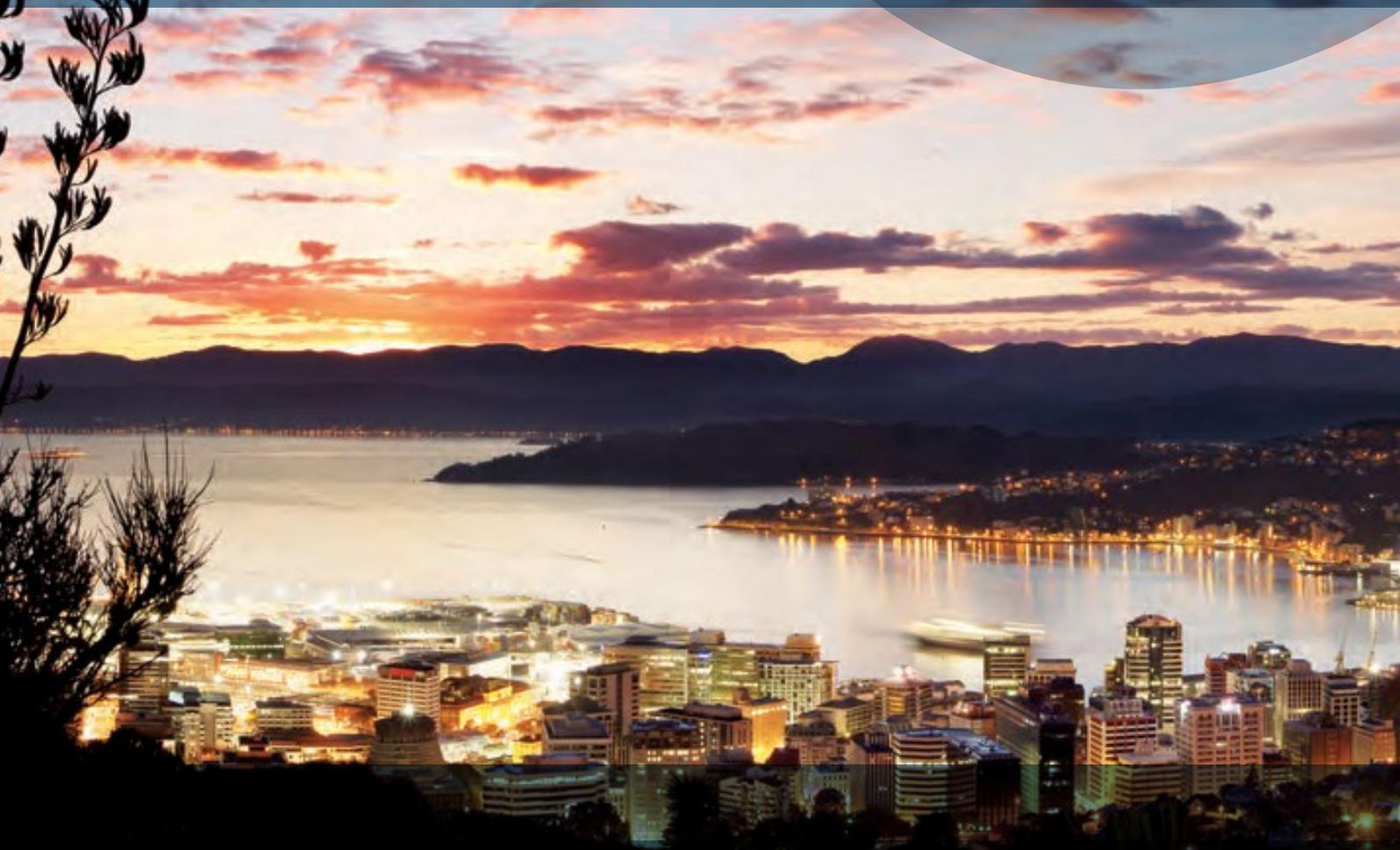


Protecting the Public – Enhancing the Profession



E tiaki ana i te Hapori –
E manaaki ana i nga mahi

Edited proceedings from the Social Workers
Registration Board Conference 2013



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Editorial

The Social Workers Registration Act was passed in 2003 after many years of debate and consultation. In November 2013 the Social Workers Registration Board held a conference, *Protecting the Public – Enhancing the Profession*, to provide an opportunity for those attending to work collectively to create a vision for social work and the social service sector in Aotearoa New Zealand as the profession moves into the next decade. The two-day conference, attended by over 200 social workers and social service organisation managers, was also a celebration of 10 years of the registration of social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand. There are, at this writing, 4,500 registered social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand, which we believe is something to celebrate indeed.

The PPEP conference was planned to provide an opportunity both for experienced presenters as well as first-time presenters to share their practice and research experiences of social work in Aotearoa New Zealand. Papers submitted for the workshops and concurrent sessions were peer reviewed before acceptance. A total of 51 papers and three workshops were chosen for presentation from the abstracts presented. These were presented in themes: registration, practice, education and a special session on Māori models of education.

The conference opened with a speech by the Hon Paula Bennett, Minister for Social Development, followed by Toni Hocquard, chair of the Social Workers Registration Board, who outlined the history of social work registration in New Zealand. Keynote speakers included Dame Moira Gibb, former chair of the English Social Work Reform Board, who spoke on the reform of the social work profession in England, and Professor Vishanthie Sewpaul from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, in Durban, South Africa, who provided an overview of registration, regulation and the professionalisation of social work. The conference concluded with a workshop on the contribution from Aotearoa New Zealand and the Asia-Pacific region to the review and revision of the agreed international definition of social work.

All paper and workshop presenters were invited to submit a full article for publication in the edited conference proceedings. These submissions were further blind peer-reviewed by at least two reviewers.

These proceedings are divided into two sections. The first section has a focus on social work practice; the second on education.

In the practice section, Jenny Aimers and Peter Walker challenge practice education and regulation to ensure that community development is considered an integral part of social work practice. Continuing with a community theme, Antonia Hendrick and Sue Young explore community approaches to protecting vulnerable children; Michelle Derrett looks beyond beginning social work practice and presents a framework for specialist health social work competence; in separate contributions, Judy Wivell and Gaylene Little, Geoffrey Nauer and Penny Ehrhardt report on putting research into practice with service users of a violence prevention organisation; Zoey Henley proposes a bicultural framework to support social work supervision; Helen Simmons, Wheturangi Walsh-Tapiata, Litea Meo-Sewabu, and Antoinette Umugwaneza also consider the bicultural necessity of social work practice in Aotearoa New Zealand and propose a bicultural framework, particularly for social workers from outside New Zealand, as a pathway to competent practice; and Mike Webster looks at the concept of, and a vision for, social work leadership.

The five education papers in this collection come from the range of tertiary education institutions teaching social work programmes: Wānanga, institutes of technology and polytechnics, and universities. Selina Akhter and Rose Leonard discuss research on the experiences of Bachelor of Social Work students on the programme offered by Te Wānanga o Aotearoa; Peter Boyd, Catherine Dickey and Shirley Ikkala discuss a whakapapa-based framework at Manukau Institute of Technology that sets out the processes involved with ensuring students are prepared to work with diversity; Lesley Pitt from Western Institute of Technology at

Taranaki outlines a module developed and delivered for rural social work; and Raema Merchant at Eastern Institute of Technology outlines how concepts of social responsibility and social change are introduced to students and the transformative learning that can take place. The collection finishes with a paper by Cherie Appleton and her colleagues from the University of Auckland on the process of ensuring social work students are fit and proper to join the profession.

The registration of social workers has brought about significant changes in social work practice, research and education, and these papers are a sampling of the range and scope of the kinds of social work going on around the country today. While the Board, educators, and practitioners all continue to work for improvement and enhanced professional practice, professional social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand can be proud as we consider the journey we have made in a relatively short period of time. This is also a time for us to remember both why we became social workers, and how we will continue to develop our professional practice and identity in the coming years.

The editors wish to thank the editorial reviewers: Tiffany Apaitia-Vague , Shirley-Ann Chinnery, Lareen Cooper, Irene De Haan, Lynsey Ellis, Christa Fouché, Jane Maidment, Jean Mitaera, Kesnija Napan, Hong Jae Park, Gavin Rennie, Matt Shepherd, Brian Stout, Annabel Taylor, Peter Walker, Shayne Walker, Wheturangi Walsh-Tapiata, and Susan Young.

Editors:

JAN DUKE

MARK HENRICKSON

LIZ BEDDOE

1 Community development work in practice: a challenge for Aotearoa New Zealand social work?

JENNY AIMERS (Otago Polytechnic)

PETER WALKER Registered Social Worker (University of Otago)

Abstract

Community development is recognised as a skilled practice within, and a primary component of, social work education (Forde & Lynch, 2013; Mendes & Binns, 2012; Aimers & Walker, 2011). Despite this, social work increasingly focuses on a narrow range of government-supported objectives thus marginalising the role of community work in social work practice.

Previous research into the practice of community development workers in Aotearoa New Zealand (Aimers & Walker, 2013) revealed that only one of 14 interviewed had any education in community development before entering practice.. Further, previously untrained workers sought to develop theoretical knowledge and skills through practise; this was sometimes through a social work education programme, not specific training in community development. We thus explore the extent to which community development is taught in these programmes and enquire into the role of community development in practice and the concurrent caretaking responsibilities of social work educators and regulators.

Keywords: community development, education, power, social work

Introduction

Community development is one of the methods used by social workers working in community settings and it is recognised as a skilled practice within social work education (Aimers & Walker, 2011; Forde & Lynch 2013; Mendes & Binns, 2012). Community development is also practised in settings outside of social work. However, in Aotearoa New Zealand there is very little opportunity to engage in community development education outside of social work programmes. Recent research into the practice of 14 community development workers in the Otago and Southland region in Aotearoa New Zealand (Aimers & Walker, 2013) found that only one respondent had studied community development prior to starting work as a community development practitioner and that was via a social work qualification. Exploring the opportunities available for community development education in Aotearoa New Zealand led us to consider: the relationship between community development and social work education, including the status of community development within social work practice and education here and abroad; and the differences between vocational requirements and educational opportunities for community development workers, and social workers and the tensions that can occur when community development is utilised as part of social work practice.

We conclude this paper by raising questions of social work educators, associations of social workers, and regulatory bodies regarding the place of community development in social work practice and education and we highlight new opportunities for supporting community development worker education alongside social work professional programmes.

The position of community development in social work education

A desktop survey of social work programmes in Aotearoa New Zealand undertaken in October 2013 found that, of the 16 Bachelor programmes at five universities and 11 polytechnics and private training establishments, 10 taught community development papers within their programmes. Of these, Unitec Institute of Technology in Auckland had the most comprehensive teaching community development in all three years of their social work programme. In addition, Unitec offered a specialty in Community Development as part of a Bachelor of Social Services; this programme is recognised by the Social Work Registration Board (SWRB) for registration and is the only dedicated community development programme in Aotearoa New Zealand. Unitec also offers a skills-based Certificate in Community Skills aimed at volunteer workers.

The connection between community development and social work is also evident in Aotearoa New Zealand-oriented literature: of the two local seminal texts in community development work, Chile's (2007) *Community Development Practice in New Zealand: Exploring Good Practice* and Munford and Walsh-Tapiata's (2001) *Strategies for Change: Community Development in Aotearoa/New Zealand*, the former was edited by an academic in the area of social practice and public policy and the latter was written by social work academics. While community development can also be taught in other disciplines such as Recreation and Leisure, Sociology, Geography, Occupational Therapy, and Health Promotion, our desktop survey could not find evidence of these as dedicated courses in Aotearoa New Zealand universities except in the area of Health Promotion (two papers). It could be argued therefore that, in Aotearoa New Zealand, social work schools have captured the market for community development education as part of social work training with 56% of the social work courses registered with the SWRB offering specific community development papers.

Despite being included in many social work programmes in Aotearoa New Zealand, community development within social work education can be viewed as an adjunct rather than as a core capability. For example, in a recent (2011) internal curriculum review of the social work degree at the University of Otago in Dunedin, it was recommended that community development be excluded as a core component of social work education. This review noted that the:

current emphasis on Community Development is a valuable field of research and study, and can potentially be maintained as an area in adjunct disciplines like Sociology, however, the panel considers that it is just one of many themes that could possibly inform the wider context of social work practice and thus lies largely outside the core business of professionally trained social workers in New Zealand (University of Otago, 2011, pp. 1–2)

This report went on to recommend a refocusing and strengthening of the “core elements of the undergraduate programme to ensure that the qualification meets the needs of the profession within New Zealand while at the same time ensuring that qualifications are transportable internationally” (University of Otago, 2011, p. 3). The resulting recommendation was to rename the Bachelor of Social and Community Work, the Bachelor of Social Work, and to redesign the social work programme to minimise the community development component. This resulted in a radical repositioning of the components of social work taught at the University of Otago by excluding community development from the title of the degree. Community development is still taught at Otago at third and fourth year, but only within combined papers with organisational studies.

At the regulatory level, the SWRB also seems to marginalise community development by omission: none of the SWRB competency standards focus on community development as a discipline. The Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW) is slightly more inclusive of community development work, noting in their competency assessment questionnaire that, "Social work practitioner is considered here in its widest sense and includes clients (individuals, family/whanau communities)..."(ANZASW, 2013).

This is in contrast to comparable international contexts. For example, in the USA, community practice or 'macro' social work practice is offered as a social work specialisation. The definition of macro social work is the same as that taught within Aotearoa New Zealand social work programmes focusing on practice that changes larger systems such as communities and organisations encompassing a broad spectrum of practice (Weil, 2005). It appears that this definition of macro practice has much in common with the principles of community development, where community development is defined as a process of working with communities to achieve shared goals with the aim of transferring power. Rather than holding a marginalised relationship with social work, this form of practice is considered an essential part of social work and education programmes offer specialisations in macro social work (Hardcastle, Powers, & Wenecour, 2004). In addition, community practitioners are supported by the Association for Community Organization and Social Administration (ACOSA), which publishes the *Journal of Community Practice* and holds annual national symposia. ACOSA members share information on teaching materials, theory and research via networks with other professional associations at local, regional, national and international levels providing a high profile for such an approach (see <http://www.acosa.org/joomla/>).

In Australia the social work profession also recognises and supports community development as a valid form of practice within a social work context. However, unlike macro social work in the USA, it appears that here community development retains an identity as a specific discipline (Mendes, 2009). Mendes comments that, while a social and community services industry has developed separately from social work, historically many of Australia's community development practitioners were graduates of social work or social welfare courses. In addition, the majority of community development textbooks in Australia are authored by social work academics (Mendes, 2009). Perhaps as a result of this close connection, the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) positions community development as a core component of social work practice (Mendes & Binns, 2012).

Vocational requirements for community development workers

To fully understand the vocational requirements for community development workers we looked at various career guides such as the Aotearoa New Zealand Careersnz website that advises on qualifications for entry into this work. It was not clear, however, whether the focus was for welfare support in residential settings or community development work with communities. In any case they offered no specific qualifications for entry into community development work commenting that training in tikanga¹ Maori and community development is usually provided by employers. Careersnz advise that related careers that may lead into community development are: Minister of Religion, Youth Worker, Social Worker or Counsellor. Appropriate qualifications were listed as social work or social services, youth work, and community recreation. This is in contrast to Australia where the Australian Government Job Guide advises that community development workers need an entry-level qualification in community services or community development or in the allied fields of social work or youth work. The Australian Community Workers Association consequently has an educational requirement for members of at least two years in an approved course.

The USA government-sponsored Career One Stop website does not specify community development as a separate profession, referring to Community and Social Service Specialists or Social Work. Although they advise that no specific qualifications are needed to enter the field of Community and Social Service work, a bachelor's degree in Behavioral Sciences, Community Organization and Advocacy, Developmental Services or Human Services would be useful.

While we do not claim to have undertaken an extensive analysis of the nature of community development or community work education internationally, this brief overview suggests that this is a difficult vocational area to categorise in terms of professional requirements.

Community development in Aotearoa New Zealand

While some social work academics argue that community development is solely an intervention tool of social work, we agree with Mendes (2009) who maintains it should be viewed as a discipline in its own right.

While community development as a specific practice did not feature prominently in Aotearoa New Zealand prior to the 1950s, it has a strong tradition. During the 1950s and 1960s a new focus on communities came about due to the rapidly changing social environment including a growing youth population resulting in a proliferation of youth and leisure clubs throughout the country in the postwar years (Church, 1990) and to the new social challenges felt by communities that influenced counter-culture movements (Johns, 1993). Rapid urbanisation, particularly of Māori, also brought new issues relating to "...housing, health and cultural alienation" (Chile, 2006, p. 413). However, it was not until the 1970s that community development and, more specifically, community work became recognised as a defined practice (Aimers & Walker, 2013). The notion of the 'community development worker' inferred a strong sense of purpose and conviction and even achieved status as a facilitator of improved quality of life. Much of the community development work of this time was rights-based in response to social grass-roots movements such as the second wave of feminism, the Māori 'renaissance' and the development of 'youth culture'. During the 1970s and 1980s, territorial local authorities (TLAs) were encouraged to recognise the diversity of their communities and develop community development units under the Local Government Act 1974 (Aimers & Walker, 2013).

Currently in Aotearoa New Zealand, community development is practised in a wide variety of settings from geographic communities to communities of interest. These communities utilise a wide variety of community development styles and practices including neighbourhood development, structural analysis, social capital building, 'third way', asset-based community development, sustainable development, social entrepreneurship and community-led development (Aimers & Walker, 2013).

In addition to the styles listed above, Anaru Eketone (2013) explains that, for Māori, there are at least four different forms of community development: Māori, Iwi, Marae, and positive Māori development. These variously have a mixture of priorities and may also operate in either a hierarchical or collective manner according to leadership structures and local tikanga. Eketone explains that, while they all have a vision for Māori advancement, they all have different ways of getting there.

Similarly Pacific cultures impact on community development practice in Pacific communities. Patrick Vakaoti (2013) asserts that Aotearoa New Zealand's Pacific communities also have their own style of working. Those engaging in community development work must hold appropriate status such as that of an elder, church pastor or other leader. This results in the community worker performing multiple roles (sometimes in opposition to what might be perceived as their professional role), thereby creating multiple responsibilities that can conflict or may cross professional boundaries. This illustrates that community development practice is a pluralistic concept and the style of practice must fit the community in which it is utilised.

How does community development differ from social work?

Mendes (2009) defines the difference between community development and social work. Social work is "...professional intervention to address situations of personal distress and crisis by shaping and changing the social environment in which people live" (Mendes 2009, p. 250). Community development in contrast is defined as "...the employment of community structures to address social needs and empower groups of people" (p. 250).

As mentioned earlier, we view community development as a process that is different from social work practice. We have created the following schema to illustrate these differences within the context of Aotearoa New Zealand.

	Social Work	Community Development
General goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-being. • Social justice and human rights. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-being, social justice and human rights. • Sustainability. • Social enterprise. • Community led. • Cultural identity.
Work Practice²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly micro, sometimes meso or macro. • Contractual. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meso or macro, only occasionally micro¹. • Contractual. • Self funded. • Grants.
Professional guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SWRB. • ANZASW. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No specific professional guidelines (but some exist in other countries, for example, the Australian Community Workers Association).
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registered social work qualification. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None required.
Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expert role through mandatory degree pathways, registration and legislation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transferral of power to communities. • Building social capital.
Paid or unpaid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always paid. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be paid or unpaid.

Key points of difference between the discursive positions of social work and community development concern the consideration of power and the position of the expert. While social work is rapidly moving to a situation of claiming the expert role through mandatory degree pathways and registration, community development focuses on the transfer of power to the community and engaging the expertise already within the community to meet local needs. This closely aligns community development with the overt power/political focus of the original formulation of social and cultural capital by the French theorist Bourdieu (1986), who contended that capital in all its senses (economic, social, and cultural) was a power resource for class conflict and could be used by communities to gain self-determination and enhance participatory governance (Shannon & Walker, 2011).

The tensions between social work and community development in Aotearoa New Zealand

In previous research (Aimers & Walker, 2011) we began to explore the interface between social work and community development in Aotearoa New Zealand. We found that, despite being taught suitable practices for effecting change at an organisational or community level by social work educators, outside the classroom many social service organisations were constrained from practising community development

work, primarily by government funding priorities and the competitive contracting environment. We suggested that social service organisations could overcome this by looking for ways to incorporate community development practice within a restricted framework. Some suggestions were: to ensure that the client voice is represented wherever possible in programme design and policies; to create alliances with smaller, localised activist groups to support community activism; and seeking 'untagged' funding for the initiation of community development projects to work alongside contractual obligations. We concluded that, for community development to continue to have traction in Aotearoa New Zealand, we needed to find ways of allowing groups and communities to respond to local needs in a wide range of ways and that social workers and social service agencies had an important role in exploring ways to incorporate community development in their work in order to facilitate sustainable and long-term change for their clients and for their communities.

The respondents in our recent study (Aimers & Walker, 2013) believed that the practitioner must come with a beginners' (not a knowers') mind and rejected the role of professional or expert in favour of a facilitation role to support the development of a shared community vision.

Some argue that, while there are inherent conflicts between community development and social work that separate them as disciplines, they are still linked by a shared interest in social justice (Beddoe & Maidment, 2009; Mendes, 2009). The conflicts include: an interpersonal focus versus an organisational or issue-based focus; planned intervention versus collective action; and the power relations that exist between the professional paid worker versus local (often volunteer) leadership.

The Aotearoa New Zealand Government has prioritised social work to deliver "...intensive ongoing work needed with complex and dysfunctional families and better support [for] foster parents" (Hon Paula Bennett³ quoted by Trevett, in the New Zealand Herald, 2011) thereby cementing their roles as professional experts whose planned interventions improve families' lives. Therefore, the social worker may also be constrained by their funding and contractual obligations focused on expert advice and resources to individuals and families with the goal of increasing interpersonal skills and self-reliance at the expense of wider community development work. We believe that social workers and community development workers are aiming for similar goals. They do, however, tend to approach need from different perspectives and positions.

In order for community development to be nurtured within social work there needs to be an acknowledgment that community development practice can be oppositional to social work practice, especially as state-based social work can be perceived as being disempowering to communities' needs and desires (Aimers & Walker, 2011). In addition, it must be recognised that social service agencies have an important role in exploring ways to incorporate community development in their work in order to facilitate sustainable and long-term change for their clients and for their communities.

Community development in other disciplines

In our research of community development workers (Aimers & Walker, 2013) we asked the respondents, "how did you come to this work and what inspired you?" Of the 14 respondents only one had training in community development prior to engaging in community development practice and that was within a social work education programme. Two more respondents had undertaken social work training to obtain community development education. Others came from various educational backgrounds, including graduate and postgraduate studies in disciplines as diverse as anthropology, education, psychology, classical studies, and tourism. Several others of our research respondents had sought short courses in community development training at various times in order to expand their knowledge of theoretical perspectives regarding communities as well as providing an opportunity to reflect on their experiential practice. The theoretical perspectives they had sought came from a wide range of disciplines, including social work.

It must also be remembered that community development is practised and taught in a range of professions including recreation and leisure management, occupational therapy, health promotion, or by others in a community setting. Community development, therefore, cannot be exclusively 'owned' by the social work profession as a discrete component of social work practice. "Rather, community development can refer to various methods, approaches and philosophies that underpin a range of activities, and can be practised by various professions and non-professionals beyond social work practice" (Kenny, 2011 in Mendes & Binns, 2012, p. 2). Community development's usefulness to a wide range of professions is described by Chenoweth as a "...generalist practice, whereby taking a 'wide-angled lens view' helps workers to understand the complexities of the various systems" (Mendes & Binns, 2012, p. 3). This 'wide-angled lens' and participatory method allows a community development approach to "...empower communities' collective voice by connecting people's personal circumstances with structural disadvantage" (Mendes & Binns, 2012, p. 4).

What are the challenges for social work educators and professional bodies?

We believe that community development should be a core subject in social work education. Mendes (2009) argues that social work discourse often places community development at its margins and this has been evidenced in the University of Otago example outlined earlier. By contrast, the USA approach appears to incorporate community development as a defined social work discipline and, as such, it is given prominence as a defined intervention tool of social work rather than a discipline in its own right. Alternatively, the social work profession in Australia appears to have supported the growth of community development as a separate discipline. Their approach also strengthened the use of community development in social work by recognising its principles and values. However, this has not been without issues, as Mendes (2009) notes that community development courses taught in social work programmes are often taught by inexperienced sessional teachers without the benefit of experienced academic staff (Mendes, 2009). The inference Mendes makes is that there are very few social work academics who have a practice background in community development. While it appears from the most recent writing of Mendes and Binns (2012) that the recognition of community development within social work in Australia has progressed over the past few years, we in Aotearoa New Zealand can learn much from their journey.

We can see a number of parallels between the Australian experience and social work programmes in Aotearoa New Zealand where community development is marginalised by its omission from the SWRB's core competencies. Our work (Aimers & Walker, 2011, 2013) supports that of Kenny (2011) who states that community development is a specific practice in its own right, with various methods, approaches and philosophies that underpin it. We do, however, agree with Mendes (2009) that both professions can benefit from a close relationship that shares knowledge to facilitate personal empowerment and community development. The issue becomes how social work incorporates community development as a core competency within social work, while also providing education opportunities for community development practitioners outside of social work.

We found that for practising community workers, community development education was most useful after they have had experience in the field (sometimes considerable, covering many years) (Aimers & Walker, 2013). In addition, some appeared more interested in seeking skills-based short courses rather than committing to a longer-term professional qualification. This perhaps reflects the fairly widespread view that community development as a discipline has issues for professionalism and volunteerism with many community development positions being voluntary or with minimal salaries and limited advancement opportunities. As Kenny (2011) notes, community development critiques what some see as social work's reliance on a professional discourse incorporating specialist knowledge, preferring a more democratic transference or a reassertion of power back to communities and avoiding or rejecting the terms 'expert' or 'professional'. This provides a challenge for the social work profession that has an emphasis on gaining qualifications and registration in order to practise. The international models discussed earlier provide some

guidance where there has been support (for social workers wishing to specialise in macro or community practice and support) for developing a separate community development practitioners' association. This has been provided by sister social work professional associations that can create community development competencies and standards. These are ideas that the ANZASW could explore. Alternatively the SWRB could consider developing a set of competencies for social workers wishing to focus on macro or community development practice.

Appropriate standards to reflect the inclusion of community development practice and competencies could include:

- Competence to work with or engage with communities; and/or
- Competence to work with a range of social and community agencies.

Whilst it is possible to focus the SWRB practice study and their self-reflection documents on community development practice, community development as a discipline is not specifically required to complete either of these registration requirements. Thus, currently, community development seems to be treated by the SWRB as an add-on to the core focus of social work, namely micro-focused activities.

Educating for community development within a social work curriculum

Social work educators can facilitate community development education by offering a stand-alone community development qualification such as Unitec's Bachelor of Social Services (Community Development) or a specialisation or endorsement in community development practice within existing social work degrees. This would include community development placements for social work students. Such specialised endorsements would require the creation of SWRB core competencies in community development knowledge.

In developing their curriculum, educators can draw on local texts. Up until now we have two of note: Munford and Walsh-Tapiata's (2001) *Strategies for Change: Community Development in Aotearoa/New Zealand*, (currently in its 3rd edition) and Chile's (2007) *Community Development Practice in New Zealand: Exploring Good Practice*. We aim to add to these resources with our publication, *Community development: Insights for Practice in Aotearoa New Zealand*. We challenge new authors to add to this library of community development theory and practice in this country, especially highlighting and analysing local case studies and practice situations so that those interested in pursuing community development practice can draw upon local examples and analysis rather than relying on bland international, solely theoretical explanations of such work. We see a particular need for literature to record the historical milestones of community development in Aotearoa New Zealand and continued work in the areas of Māori and immigrant community development, including the diasporas that have been creating new communities in Aotearoa New Zealand for a number of generations.

From our research (Aimers & Walker, 2013) we have developed a community development toolbox that brings together skills and techniques used by community workers in the field. Our toolbox provides a basis from which to design community development/community work papers. The toolbox contains the following activities.

- Engaging your community; cultivating a shared vision and building trust.
- Keeping things going; communication and facilitation.
- Ways of getting stuff done; community planning, community action, or identity development.
- Succession planning; empowerment and withdrawal.

Whilst these activities can be manipulated to fit into the social work 'planned change process' of assessment, intervention and evaluation/termination, there is an obvious difference in ethos in that community development is more process-focused to build trust and develop a collaborative plan by facilitating group processes.

In their survey of social workers employing community development processes in rural practice, Mendes and Binns (2012, p. 18) found that community development processes used by their respondents:

...included assessing need, facilitating community cooperation, strategic long-term planning, and education, prevention and promotion. Four themes evident in the needs assessment practiced were; review of demographic trends and service user feedback, research, community consultation and ad hoc assessment within practice. Four facilitation themes evident in the data were networking, engagement and social animation, collaboration, and leadership and lobbying.

Conclusion

In this paper we set out to reflect on the place of community development in social work practice and education. We have shown that, in Aotearoa New Zealand, community development as a profession is not well defined, and for the most part is separate yet aligned to social work as a discipline. Furthermore, while community development is predominantly taught in social work programmes, it is not recognised as a core competency by the SWRB, yet it is captured in social work professional programmes. We are supportive of community development being a part of social work education and strongly believe that social workers should include community development in their practice, but from our findings (Aimers & Walker, 2013) we are not convinced that social work education is required in order to train a competent and effective community development worker. We note, however, that there are inherent tensions between community development practice and social work, caused in part by funding priorities and the contracting environment that does not favour the long-term goals and organic nature of community development, and also by a possible lack of understanding between community development workers and social workers. As community development practitioners and social work educators ourselves, we would like to see a closer supportive professional relationship that allows social workers to specialise in community practice with community development as a core capability. Unitec's commitment to community development education, within and outside of social work, offers an excellent model for this. In addition, social work educators could provide access to community development papers for those outside of the social work professional programme for practitioners from other disciplines as well as offering skills-based courses such as Unitec's Certificate in Community Skills for volunteers. The SWRB could include community development competencies to broaden social work practice. Additionally, the ANZASW could nurture the development of a professional body for community development workers, encompassing the range of human-service areas such as health promotion, community recreation, and for Māori, Pacific and community organisations.

We hope this paper illustrates the discursive location of social work as a profession interested in asserting power within expert understandings of individual and family needs rather than a discipline that focuses on a redistribution of power to local communities to meet locally-identified needs. Such a discursive location exposes social work to some fundamental rethinking over how it regards community development. If social work wishes to maintain its dominant position in relation to community development education it needs to be nurtured and supported in a more robust manner. To this end, we have offered a number of challenges that will hopefully provoke and promote discussion as to the ongoing relationship between social work and community development.

Notes

- ¹ "...general behaviour guidelines for daily life and interaction in Māori culture..." Retrieved from <http://www.korero.maori.nz/forlearners/protocols>
- ² The social ecological model uses the terms 'micro', 'meso' and 'macro' to distinguish between interpersonal, group/organisational, and broader community work. These terms are widely used in social work education in Aotearoa New Zealand (McMillan, 1991).
- ³ Currently Minister of Social Development.

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Corresponding Author

JENNY AIMERS

Jenny.Aimers@op.ac.nz

2 It takes a village to protect a child

ANTONIA HENDRICK (Curtin University)

SUE YOUNG (University of Western Australia)

Abstract

This article presents a case for taking a concerted community approach to protecting children. It does this through acknowledging that: child protection is indeed 'everyone's business' (Landgren, 2005) and extending this into promoting a collective response rather than relying solely on child protection authorities to work with individual families; revisiting the 'best interests' criterion of child rights in protecting children; reiterating the argument (Young, McKenzie, Omre, Schjelderup, & Walker, 2014) for a much more nuanced understanding of, and response to, keeping children safe; and presenting some descriptions and analyses of community approaches to protecting children.

Keywords: community child protection, child rights, community development, developmental child protection

Introduction

In this paper we argue that taking a community perspective is essential for protecting children. In this we are not alone. Others (Hudson, 1999; Jack & Gill, 2010; Wright, 2004) have argued similarly, providing various frameworks and strategies. We aim to add to this body of knowledge for use in practice. As social work educators in Western Australia with practice backgrounds in community development we have observed and participated in some community-based activities and programmes for children which we believe can contribute to the protection of children. These protective aspects of community development work are embodied in the collective and relational work of providing supportive environments in which people in vulnerable situations have a sense of safety. Leading child protection advocate, Dorothy Scott (O'Donnell, Scott, & Stanley, 2008; Scott, 1992) has long argued for the use of a public health model for dealing with child abuse and neglect, the primary prevention focus of which encompasses collective and relational aspects.

While still modest, the Australian literature contains some significant examples such as those reported in Beilharz (2002), Mondy and Mondy (2004) and Pathways to Prevention (O'Donnell et al., 2008) which provide positive illustrations of the success of programmes predominantly operating at the primary end of the prevention continuum. The emphasis is on universal and collective approaches to providing services and engaging in building supportive local relationships a fundamental principle of developmental community practice. This differs significantly from the typical Australian system "which functions on a risk-dominated, forensic approach to notifications of suspected abuse and neglect" (Kojan & Lonne, 2012, p. 98). Taking this view of the potential for a primary prevention approach (which nevertheless can operate to address the potential for harm as demonstrated in the examples referred to above), we suggest that it may be in the informal, rather than the formal or mandated, relationships that the protection of children may be effected. It is our argument that the 'best interest' criterion often cited as the rationale for statutory intervention as the strategy of choice may well be improved by taking a community approach to child protection.

In this paper we outline our approach by describing the principles of a community development (CD) approach to child protection, arguing that it ill-serves children and families to keep these two practice domains separate and in opposition. A brief examination of the connection between a child rights approach and child protection sets the scene for illustrating opportunities presented and taken which could be further enhanced by adopting a framework (Young et al., 2014) for practice based on CD principles. Central to this approach is the inter-weaving of a child rights approach with community development. Examining the most recent policy practice direction in Western Australia, the use of the Signs of Safety (SoS) framework, and other examples we apply the framework for practice developed by Young et al. (2014) to demonstrate the potential this framework has to enhance child protection practice.

Child rights and child protection

Most child rights for child protection (Farrell, 2004) arguments raise the 'best interests' criterion (Article 3) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC)(United Nations General Assembly, 1989). While other rights are cited, such as the right to identity, participatory rights are the least promoted (Holland, 2001) for children as well as parents. The legal framework for rights-based work focuses mainly on the first-generation rights which are protective (Young et al., 2014), contrasting with 'third generation', or participatory rights, which are least employed in child protection work. While children's participation in WA is authorised by the Children and Community Services Act 2004 (CCSA) (CCSA, 2004) it remains a largely insoluble undertaking to have children participate in a way that is not mediated by adults in some way. All information emanates from the adult environment and there is the additional problem of adults assessing what age and maturity level constitutes a child's ability to fully participate (CCSA, 2004 [S.10(a) (b)]). Other salient rights (UNCROC Articles 18 and 19) concern the state's responsibility to provide adequate support for parents whose children are in its care. In western countries, resources, policy directions, public sentiment and, often, practitioner attention to risk rather than prevention dictate a 'risk-averse' response as the first option (Gillingham & Bromfield, 2008; Price-Robertson & Bromfield, 2011). This is supported by the interpretation of 'best interests' where the child is removed from harm or the potential for harm. This is undoubtedly necessary in some cases. We agree with Young et al. (2014) when they argue for a much more nuanced approach to child protection, both in predicting risk and when constructing strategies to respond to concerns of child harm and safety. We suggest that child-protection workers could be assisted to extend their options when working with protective demands by considering the strategies offered by a combination of child-rights Articles and particularly focusing on participatory or collective third-generation rights. Applying a 'best interests' approach, we maintain, requires more than the assessment of risk and taking protective action. It requires using participatory measures in addition to the provision strategies (second-generation rights in Young et al., 2014) by attending to a combination of the Articles in the Convention. These authors identify key elements to assist in this work which are drawn from community development principles. We discuss the application of community approaches to child protection next.

Community approaches to child protection

A useful framework to start considering child protection through a community development lens is reproduced below from the adaptation in Young, McKenzie, Schjelderup, & Omre (2012). One well-known example in Australia of a programme intended to contribute to child well-being is the Community for Children (CfC) initiative under the umbrella Stronger Families and Communities Strategy (Department of Family and Community Services, 2002). This programme was designed to be implemented by local organisations in collaboration with their local communities and was expected to include standard activities which were considered by government to be beneficial, such as playgroups. While it was anticipated by the CfC organisers that local community people would become involved and active in ensuring the activities became sustainable through sourcing local funding when the government funds concluded, the overall

design of the strategy allowed for little deviation. That is, if local people thought a community garden would be more to their liking than a playgroup, this was not likely to be supported financially within CfC.

As can be seen from the table below (adapted from Muirhead, 2002), a programmatic approach serves an overall agenda designed by government, albeit with the best possible motives of achieving positive outcomes. In the CfC example, the aim was to assist in creating communities which would contribute to overcoming some of the negative social indicators known to affect children's life chances. This in itself recognises the importance of community and social connections in a child's life. The CfC had many successes and was and still is recognised for significant improvements in certain families' and children's circumstances (Muir et al., 2010). The overall control, however, of the programme remains firmly in the hands of government and does not extend into what is known in community development circles as a 'developmental' approach.

A developmental approach starts from the ideas, wishes, and experiences of local people who identify what they want to do and, although they might seek assistance in implementation, the activities remain theirs. Community people and agency representatives may work together to achieve the goals set but as equal partners in cooperative relationships.

Table 1: Programme and developmental approaches

Programme Approach	Developmental Approach
Focus on the programme	Focus on the citizens, children, and adults
Agenda set by programme designers, driven centrally	Agenda set by citizens, children, and adults and driven by them
Aim: programme objectives (for example, better parenting, improved health, and so on)	Aim: self-reliance and self-sustainability
Starts where programme designers think the people should be	Starts from where the children and adults are at
Grand overall plan	Small steps, by step
Time: determined by the programme funding, usually time and resource limited	Time: long term and ongoing
Agency workers coordinate activities	Genuine cooperative partnerships with agency workers
Outcome oriented	Process oriented
Targeted, selective involvement	Public, expansive involvement

Adapted from Young et al. (2012)

Contained in these characteristics are elements for practice. In order to be able to work alongside the people in these communities workers need: to be able to understand how the communities work; to listen carefully to what is being told them without judgement but with openness; to see the possibilities that exist in the hopes people have for themselves and their children, even though there may be considerable challenges; to demonstrate that they can be trusted to do what they say they will and to treat people respectfully and with dignity; to honour cultural traditions without falling victim to erroneous cultural claims, such as 'violence is accepted in our culture'; to form working and workable relationships with people in the community who have strengths and skills to contribute and to support them as they do so; and there are many others

(Young, 2013). Other abilities that workers need are to be a resource to the people, to know how to access resources, to provide skills development training (for example, in conflict resolution or group meeting management), and so on. All of these attributes are part of the social worker's stock in trade and while they are named here as relevant to community or developmental practice, they are also relevant to individual work with families and children. The common skill and attribute set between workers working with individuals and with groups or communities reinforces the authors' belief and those expressed by Young et al. (2012) that this work is 'just good social work' and that what could be encouraged is fewer new skills but different application. The difference is in the context and it is here that workers may need additional exposure or education.

A well-known saying associated with community development is 'act local, think global', embodying the connection between the two very different contexts in which CD operates. Contexts here refer to the local, as in place and its people, and also may refer to communities of interest which range over geography. They also refer to considerations of the broader setting, to actions and decisions made elsewhere which affect people in local places. While the work to be done is with people, mainly as face-to-face, or the interpersonal, the activities engaged in are affected by and hopefully will also influence those decision-makers far away. Context, then includes both the local and the 'global', and all the intricacies of political, environmental, social, economic, cultural, and often spiritual life. The difference in context, then, between working individually with a family or person, and a community or group, lies in what aspects of the context are most relevant and pertinent to that setting and/or issue. Social workers need good understandings of these aspects in whatever work they are doing, but for community development with child protection we maintain that, for many social workers, there is a need to revise what constitutes the context for the work.

Developmental approaches have at their core the notion of public work. That is, it is expected that the agreements about what to do, who with and how are readily inclusive of any of the potential participants. There is the underpinning of trusting relationships which accept that the information about activities is publicly known and discussed. An illustrative and comparative perspective is to consider work conducted in a counselling relationship, which treats the discussions and tasks to be completed as essentially private, between the people as clients and the professional worker, the counsellor. Not only are the other aspects of developmental work of equal and collaborative partnerships important in the work to be done, but the element of publicly available agreements of work to be conducted is foundational and in direct contrast to the private nature of counselling work. While counselling models may include client-directed work, equally they may not, while community practice relies on the direction decided by the people involved. Developmental work incorporates all these components, and distinguishes the nature and process of the work.

An additional complexity should be introduced here. Community development work, as individual or counselling work does, embodies different models for practice. There are some forms of community development which focus on expert-led, planned activities, for example. The Community Organising approaches commonly found in the USA have a lengthy history of such work. Similarly, some counselling models use strengths-informed practices in work with individual clients. The labels 'Programmatic' and 'Developmental' approaches, therefore, must be taken as starting points and not as binaries or absolutes. Some work with community-based activities will be able to be identified as conforming more to a programme approach, just as some work with individuals can be considered to meet developmental principles. We explore this complexity a little more, particularly in relation to child protection work, in the next section.

Programmatic work with child protection

Much child protection work in Western countries, and particularly in Western Australia, is performed under the statutory auspices of government departments. It is therefore located at the tertiary end of the prevention spectrum. It is what Waldegrave (2006, p. 58) has identified as the “traditional child protection model common to the Anglo-American world” and thereby consists of an adversarial, investigatory process which tends to antagonise and alienate parents who are less likely to recover their abilities to parent successfully. This is in contrast to a cooperative, consensual approach which seeks to provide parents with the supports necessary to assist them to change their behaviour and hopefully preserve the family unit. This is ‘back-end’ work focusing on rehabilitation rather than just concentrating on ‘front end’ (Waldegrave, 2006, p. 73) work which focuses predominantly on investigations and gathering sufficient evidence for convictions. It could be argued that the latest policy direction adopted by the state government department responsible for child protection in WA seeks to align ‘back-end’ and ‘front-end’ work more closely, a move which recalls previous policy positions which clearly identified community and its structures as a key partner in child protection. The Signs of Safety (SoS) framework was implemented throughout the Department from 2008 (DCPFS, 2013a) and remains the primary practice approach for the Department, whose title was augmented by the addition of ‘and Family Support’ in 2013. The current Department for Child Protection and Family Support (DCPFS) retains its primary focus “on risk, [and] emphasises putting families in the centre of assessment, planning and responsibility for the safety of their children, and working collaboratively with families even if children have to be removed” (DCPFS, 2013a, p. 1). In this definition, family support appears to be constructed at the tertiary end of prevention in which risk and relevant families have already been identified (DCPFS, 2013b, p. 2).

Staff using both the Signs of Safety (SoS) framework and the policy previously in use, employing the four pillars of capacity building, inclusion, engagement, and collaboration could (and did) justifiably argue for taking a strengths-based approach in their work. There are criticisms of the use of a strengths-based approach in child protection (Saleebey, 1996). SoS’s lack of evaluative properties also attracts criticism (Price-Robertson & Bromfield, 2011, p. 4). Whether SoS can be called a strengths approach is arguable. Some members of the DCPFS Executive prefer to consider SoS as incorporating a risk assessment tool (personal communication). There is no doubt, however, that some practitioners frame SoS as a strengths practice.

Significantly, a programme was implemented prior to the adoption of SoS, and running alongside it, in remote WA which located Remote Community Child Protection Workers (RCCPW) in Aboriginal communities to undertake child protection using community development as the main work strategy. An outcome of concern identified in the Inquiry into Violence in Aboriginal Communities (Gordon, Hallahan, & Henry, 2002) was to work with communities to assist them in addressing child protection matters.

Taking a family support or family service approach to child protection provides the opportunity for a community approach using programmatic strategies. In this approach, a family has already been identified as one of risk, and tertiary or secondary prevention (Tomison & Poole, 2000) is required. It is here that the SoS used by the DCPFS in WA could qualify as a programmatic approach. For example, given the SoS model below, the family is recognised as important in developing working relationships, which is one of the three principles outlined by the SoS framework (DCPFS, 2011). The emphasis here is on “constructive working relationships between professionals and family members, and between professionals themselves” (DCPFS, 2011, p. 4). In community work, relationships are key features in change work yet there is a distinction to be made between relationships established in community work and those under statutory arrangements. Statutory work requires workers, under this model, to assess risk first and strengths later. It is a model that still situates the problem in a deficits framework rather than one that is strengths based – building on what is already working in the family. Decision-making is most often left in the domain of the professionals rather than the family. This is not to suggest a reverse arrangement is preferred. Rather it highlights that constructive relationships within community work stem from the premise that each community member has something to contribute, including the professional with his or her resources and connections to other

organisations. When community members, here conceptualised as the mums, dads and significant others caring for children (valued as experts in their lives), are engaged, alternative intervention strategies may be built. These can address needs identified by both authorities and family members and can move the typical programmatic response into the developmental domain.

Figure 1 Signs of safety, Department for Child Protection and Family Support 2011, p13



(©2008 Andrew Turnell,
aturnell@signsofsafety.net
in DCPFS, 2011, p. 13)

To conceptualise child protection from a community development perspective, where alternative interventions and strategies are arrived at collaboratively, requires child protection workers to rethink practices which have relied largely on expert decision-making. Here the second principle of SoS; “thinking critically, [and] fostering a stance of inquiry” (DCPFS, 2011, p. 5) offers workers some guidance. This principle of the SoS framework highlights the “paternalistic impulse” (DCPFS, 2011, p. 5) and challenges workers to refrain from deciding to intervene based on their ‘truth’ and enjoins them to seek a fuller understanding of the complexities alongside family members. When people see that their input matters and professionals are seen as enablers rather than experts, relationships and outcomes may be sustained (Frank & Smith, 2006). In community development work, expertise is believed to be held with community members who themselves contribute valuable skills, knowledge, and practices to issues that impact upon them. The following example illustrates how, within a programmatic approach, there is capacity for developmental processes that achieve constructive working relationships, critical thinking and sustainable change, while enacting the four pillars of engagement, capacity building, inclusion and collaboration which were central to, and in keeping with, the previous DCD’s approach.

The CfC is a programmatic response which also has developmental possibilities. Although not having statutory responsibilities, it was designed as a preventive mechanism, by investing early in children’s lives to avoid long-term support costs and from children (potentially) living a life of crime. An example illustrating how a standard policy-driven programme was changed to include developmental aspects was that of the Aboriginal Community Researchers. This group comprised members of the local Aboriginal community and was established to work alongside the CfC worker to devise a research instrument that would capture the child-care needs of Aboriginal people in the area. The Community Researchers, with their knowledge of family, kinship groupings, language and place, implemented a door-to-door survey with a highly successful response rate. From this information the Community Researchers and the CfC worker prepared a submission for the development of an Aboriginal child-care centre in the region. The Community Researchers went on, beyond CfC, to advocate on many other issues facing their community.

The original CfC strategy was to implement child-care for Aboriginal families; the programme which developed included several activities that the local Aboriginal people wanted and which enabled them to

support and protect their children in culturally relevant ways. Targeting low socio-economic communities, as the CfC did, often highlights the shortfalls of such groups rather than their capacities. In this example, the strengths, wisdom, cultural capital, and skills of people themselves were realised. Through processes of engagement the CfC worker invited people to decide how best to use the resources available to them, within the constraints of CfC's vision and aims. When led by community members, projects are more likely to be effective with a higher take-up rate and greater participation than when projects are imposed from outside a community (Blitz, Kida, Gresham, & Bronstein, 2013). The process of re-shaping activities to include community members as equal partners, through listening to and acting on their views, can be very powerful.

Another example illustrates how developmental processes are possible given a programmatic response to child protection. In another CfC site, parenting programmes targeted parents deemed in need of up-skilling and who were mostly known to the DCPFS; these parents are often framed as 'bad' parents in need of 'fixing' (Hendrick, 2011). Schools were approached by CfC to identify parents who would benefit from the programme. Known for its focus on community organising principles of working in collaboration and recognising that families 'love and are concerned for their children', the Families and Schools Together (FAST) programme (McDonald, Billingham, Conrad, & Morgan, 1997) brought its resources (funding, school staff, and personnel from community organisations) together with those strengths and capacities identified in parents and caregivers. Over an eight-week programme aimed at building lasting relationships between children and parents (as well as between families and the community more broadly), parents, staff, and community members progressed through collaboratively agreed-upon activities that led to developed relationships and links with services in the community. Previous FAST participants (parents) led some activities and shared their experiences. In this way learning was reciprocal and multifaceted coming from school staff, community organisational workers, parents, and other caregivers in the community. Lifelong friends and supports are often the result. In the CfC site, the principal of one school involved noted the success of the programme with his telling of one father who was not involved in the school before engaging in FAST. Following his involvement he went on to lead other parents through the programme and actively take on other unrelated projects within the school. Both these examples illustrate the potential of programmatic approaches being able to use developmental principles, which in turn strengthens the contribution in primary protection strategies to child safety.

Developmental work with child protection

As noted above, 'back end' work involves rehabilitative work with families identified at risk, and as such is more likely to involve programmatic responses. There is a focus on developing human capital through the provision of a range of family services. While potentially taking a strengths approach (that is one which is inclusive, collaborative and emphasises equal partnerships), this does not necessarily meet the requirements of a developmental community approach, but remains on an individual level. That is, the element of public work is not present. This is not a drawback. Indeed, much good child protection work may be conducted from this perspective, as recommended by Waldegrave (2006) and many others (for example: Bell, 2004; Jack & Gill, 2010; Tomison & Wise, 1999).

The term 'developmental child protection' was adopted by Senior Community Child Protection Workers (SCCPW)¹ for the (then) Department for Child Protection (Young, 2013) in conceptualising their work as moving between working publicly with community members and privately with family members to protect children. Developmental work involves working *alongside* and *together*, not *for* or *on* as is often the case with much child protection work and reinforces the principles of equal partnerships in a collaborative relationship. It is these aspects of developmental work which present some challenges, particularly in systems which have traditions of constructing the work as adversarial and investigatory. How much is it possible to provide an equal platform for decision making, for example, when there exists the suspicion and, at least preliminary, evidence of risk to a child's safety? These were considerations for the SCCPW in

performing their roles which had been described to them on starting employment as having 'community development' as well as 'child protection' functions. Because there was little in the way of specific training or models for practice in these newly created roles and workers were selected for their community experience, they tended to enquire as to how to fit child protection into community approaches rather than the other way round. Some creative and imaginative work resulted.

The following example describes, and is illustrative of, the focus – keeping children safe – while enabling the identification of other needs – provision of services – through a joint and collaborative process – starting with mother, then father, then family and community members to identify and work towards solutions. The first example reports on a domestic violence incident witnessed by young children resulting from alcohol being brought into the community.

Firstly the SCCPW sat with the mother to discuss a safety plan which included the mother removing her partner out of the house while he is drinking and under the influence. She also needed to have some way to communicate with police if she was feeling unsafe and to arrange a plan for the family to leave the community when the roads opened up.

The SCCPW had also spoken to the father with the police over the course of the day for him to be part of the safety plan. Between the police and SCCPW we were able to touch base with all family members in a manner that was not intrusive but also allowed us to monitor the family and maintain the children's safety.

This incident highlighted key issues for the community when responding to Domestic Violence. There is no safe house or place for community to go in this situation, nor are there adequate communications, such as phones. This has started broader discussion within the community and with agencies as a safe place is needed for community members as well as communication facilities. The community identified the community centre as a potential safe place and the DCP provided walkie talkies for communication.

Another example which demonstrates the importance of keeping a child safe through helping relationships to stay intact is given below.

The conflict between a teenage mother and her mother affected how the child could be cared for resulting in the baby being at risk. An innovative caring solution was implemented whereby a 'night' carer would take care of feeding and looking after the baby at night and the mother and grandmother during the day. Family members were instrumental in this arrangement to ensure keeping the mother and grandmother involved. Tensions between the mother and grandmother reduced and the child had additional carers, thereby strengthening the safety and stability of the environment. (Young, 2013)

These examples move beyond the 'best interests' argument of child rights (which rely solely on removing children from harm), to incorporating other rights requirements, such as state resources, family care, and parental participation in decision making. They also illustrate some of the key elements identified by Young et al. (2014). This will be discussed next.

Examining the key elements

We have found the framework (Young et al., 2014) describing child protection practice using Child Rights and Community Development principles and practices to be a useful starting point to examine how child protection may be conceptualised and translated into practice from this perspective. These elements have been drawn from practice and theorising across three countries, Aotearoa New Zealand, Norway and Western Australia² and they are named (inter alia) as: *collective action*, *contextual*, *family capital*, *reciprocity*, and *child-centred*. The next stages for developing these elements is for the authors to seek feedback from practitioners to obtain their views about the extent to which the elements above are already used in practice. If they are not used, the authors would like to determine how the elements might better be operationalised in order to facilitate a more complex and nuanced engagement with child protection.

Additionally, we, as educators, are interested to extend the theorising about the described approach to better prepare our students for this complex rights-based work. What is important for our purpose is to be able to examine the nature of child protection work as developmental work in and of the community: that is, how members of the community may contribute to our understanding of the importance of a collective approach to keeping children safe. This is not to deny the importance of individual work, especially that performed from a developmental perspective. But, as discussed above, the default for child protection workers in many Western jurisdictions is often to work only with the family whilst sometimes placing the child with carers, rather than seeing this work in all its albeit messy practicalities as ‘everyone’s business’. It is acknowledged that a family’s right to privacy should not be infringed upon, but the family’s right to supportive and potentially long-term mechanisms involve assisting families to engage in collective reciprocal arrangements. Here we make the case for the collective nature of protection practice joining our voices to those referred to above who also call for more child protection to be conceptualised as a *community practice*.

The element immediately evident from the Young et al. (2014) framework as applied to these current examples is that of *collective action*. In the examples given earlier, the work undertaken involved multiple interested people ranging from other agency personnel to extended family, all of whom contributed to the solution in productive ways. While it might be expected that the different people could have had different ways of going about the work, they all had the ultimate aim of the safety of children. From a risk-averse perspective, statutory workers may have considered removal as the most obvious step in two of the case examples discussed earlier. In the case of the community researchers, it is doubtful if this strategy would have been used by statutory workers, yet, involving Aboriginal elders and through them, community members, enables greater engagement and trust by the very people who would be sought by statutory workers to place children outside their immediate families. Although current practice for placing Aboriginal children in need of alternate to home care with kin is already established, enhancing a wider community engagement in providing supportive structures, as was done with the Young (2013) example, can lead to greater protective measures within the community.

In each of these settings, *context* and the situatedness of the families with their histories, culture, and experiences all played a large part in the circumstances that arose for people in relation to resources. Another critical factor for the success of this approach was the connectedness people had to each other which was garnered by the remote workers to build safety without removal into care. This indeed is a contributor to determining the ‘best interest’ of the child. *Family capital*, that is accepting that families have their own ways of understanding and explaining situations as well as having resources with which to address them, was also present in all these examples. Without family input, outcomes may well have been a return to the default position of child removal. Many strengths-based approaches seek the input of families to both explain what is happening as well as to articulate what could/should be done. It is this aspect that convinces some practitioners that SoS is a strengths-based practice. *Reciprocity*, or shared responsibility and trusting the efforts of other people involved, was also crucial to enabling agency workers in particular, but also different community members to see that each had an important and valued part to play.

The only element of the framework which is not in evidence in these examples is that of child participation. While there is a clear focus on *child-centredness*, it remains the case that for much of the work in child protection, children are the silent objects of others’ decisions and actions. This is the element which causes the most difficulty, yet for child protection work from a community development perspective, children are part of the collective not separate from it. From a rights-based perspective, children have a right to participate, making it even more important that workers find ways to enable children’s wishes to be heard. While the SoS tool of engaging children in drawing and other activities has promise and there may be some degree of preparedness by practitioners to consider developmental approaches in their work, including children as equal participants is likely to be the main barrier to achieving a purely collective approach to the work. The village remains largely that comprising adults, not children.

Conclusion

Child protection is everyone's business and certainly there are indications that child protection workers are seeking to engage in preventive work. In this paper, the type of 'business', advocated is that of collective and participatory engagement by community people, families, and children to work alongside agency authorities. It is in the informal rather than the formal or mandated relationships that children's 'best interests' may be better served. We have presented an argument to extend protective work into preventive work by using an understanding of the multi-faceted interaction of child rights provisions in combination with the principles of community approaches. If we could see policy and practice include these principles, then the 'village' may be the entity best placed to protect children.

Notes

- ¹ Previously known as Remote Community Child Protection Workers (RCCPW)
- ² While WA is not an autonomous country it has State responsibility for Child Protection and so, for the purposes of this work can be considered to be of similar status as the other two countries.

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Corresponding Author
ANTONIA HENDRICK
A.Hendrick@curtin.edu.au

3 A health social work competency framework

MICHELLE DERRETT Registered Social Worker
(Social Work Professional Leader for the Southern District Health Board)

Abstract

Competencies within social work can be described as multidimensional dynamic concepts that require social workers to have the appropriate knowledge, attitudes and observable technical skills to perform their role effectively and efficiently. Competencies are determined by the quality of service, training, education and practice assessment. The overall aim of this article is to introduce a single national competency framework that would be relevant across, and applicable to, all domains of health social work practice throughout New Zealand. It was thought that such a framework would assist health social workers to demonstrate their competency and accountability.

Keywords: medical, health social work, competency

Introduction

Health social workers have been working in hospitals for well over a hundred years. Early health social workers were known as medical social workers and their practice was grounded in British and American philanthropy and charitable aid traditions, which were influenced by Victorian Poor Laws. These early social workers were responsible for ensuring the 'deserving poor' received the right assistance based on the underlying values of self-reliance and benevolence (Schofield, 2001). During the early years of medical social work there were various attempts to describe their role. In 1912 an early description of social work was as an expert in diagnosis and treatment of character in difficulties (Gehlert, 2006).

Over the past century social work has evolved from a charity-based profession to one that requires recognised tertiary qualifications. It also has a professional association and a registration board. The name that identifies the specialities of social work is also in the process of changing from medical social worker or mental health social worker to a more generic title of health social worker. Although social work practice has undergone many changes over the past century, the core social work values and tasks have remained the same.

Health social workers work with patients from all age groups and with the most vulnerable members of society. Defining competent and professional practice for health social work is both crucial and essential for accountability. Increased professionalism has brought a corresponding expectation of social workers' personal and professional accountability in their day-to-day practice. However, what constitutes competent health social work practice in New Zealand has been debated long and hard.

While the New Zealand health sector is one of the largest social work employers, its social workers are a minority among other health professionals. Compared with nursing, they generally enjoy a high degree of autonomy, and until relatively recently, health social workers could decide their own work methods and how they rationed their time (McDonald, Harris, & Wintersteen, 2003). Increasingly, the health sector demands

that all professionals are competent and accountable. Therefore, health social workers are required to be very clear and specific about their role and tasks.

What is competence in health social work?

Demand for social work services has increased as the health system comes under increasing pressure from government and clients to improve efficiency (costs) and effectiveness (quality) of health service delivery. Thus, health social workers are required to define their role clearly and provide evidence of what value the profession adds to the health sector. Davies, Baldry, Milosevic, and Walsh (2004) note how vital it is for health social workers to increase their visibility, and to prove their worth and the appropriateness of their work with clients within the health system. The increased pressure, both internally and externally, to provide such evidence has identified an urgent need to establish a competency framework for health social workers. Such a framework would ensure that practice is quantifiable and definable, and therefore accountable.

The increased requirement for accountability is driven by a number of sources, including professional associations' codes of ethics, registration boards' codes of conduct, organisational internal policies, government legislative and regulatory requirements, and client expectations (Osman & Shueman, 1988). Within the health sector the Health Practitioner Competency Assurance Act 2003 has also had a significant impact on accountability requirements. Although health social work is not explicitly mentioned in the Act, there are implied accountabilities for health social workers.

Activities related to accountability include being able to clearly articulate health social work processes. This involves describing intervention goals and plans, with evaluation methods supporting obtainable outcome measures. Health social workers are obligated to demonstrate logical reasoning for assessing and intervening in a client's life, supported by critical self-reflective practice. They also need to articulate and evidence their work in clinical files and client clinical records (Osman & Shueman, 1988).

Prior to 1990, accountability was associated with effective use of time and resources. It involved throughput and productivity. In the 1990s, accountability meant outcome measures and results (Ell, 1996). In the current health setting, accountability has evolved to mean measurable, achievable outcomes with the effective and efficient use of available resources. This type of accountability does not fit easily with the health social work paradigm of care. Outcomes are not necessarily an indicator of how well formulated an intervention is or whether it is supported by evidence-based practice. Harkness and Mulinski (1988) argue that measuring the quality of a social work intervention outcome is difficult because the outcome may not be an appropriate indicator of the social worker's performance or the quality of the social work process. In social work, the intervention process is equally as important as the outcome, particularly when some social work interventions involve sensitive use of time and space. This type of intervention is difficult to define and categorise.

Discussions about defining social work practice standards and competency within social work are a relatively recent development (Hoge et al., 2005). Internationally, professional associations of social workers and social work registration boards provide standards and guidelines, all of which reflect the knowledge, skills, and judgments required for safe ethical practice. These standards and guidelines are in various forms, such as codes of ethics, codes of conduct, standards of practice and core competencies. As such, these standards and guidelines express the essential elements of responsibilities or competencies required of social workers, and form the foundation for a social work practice framework (Verma et al., 2009).

In general, competencies within social work can be defined as having sufficient knowledge and skill to perform the social work role effectively and efficiently. Competence can be determined by quality of service, training, education, and practice assessment; it is the ability to perform the professional tasks and responsibilities that are defined within social work scopes of practice (Daniels, 1989). Competent practice is also described as a multidimensional and dynamic concept, and refers to having appropriate knowledge and attitudes as well as observable technical skills (Bogo, Power, Regehr, & Globerman, 2002; Verma et al.,

2009); that is, being able to demonstrate the knowledge, appropriate attitudes, values and observable essential technical skills that are required to successfully perform the social work role (Hogston, 1993; O'Hagan, Burdett, & Briscoe, 2001). As a concept, competent social work practice embodies qualities related to personal effectiveness.

A competency framework cannot include an exhaustive list of practice elements because social work practice continually evolves. Also, social workers tend to thrive on ambiguity, uncertainty, and complexity, and are likely to resist a competency framework that looks like a cookbook (Silverman, 2008). Thus, social work competencies need to reflect best practice while remaining flexible enough for application in different settings. As such, they define effective performance and state-of-practice fitness (Daniels, 1989).

Why is a competency framework needed for health social workers?

Social work, currently a minority profession within the overall health sector with the main focus being on the client in their context rather than the client's illness (Verma et al., 2009), is in a transition phase as it moves to a regulated profession. The autonomy that social workers experience comes from their ability to choose how they work and ration their time with clients as well as undertaking other related activities (McDonald et al., 2003). In contrast to this autonomy, without a clearly defined competency framework, social workers are susceptible to the pressure of having their practice defined by other health professionals (Abramson, 1993).

Health social workers often feel invisible and vulnerable, especially as other professionals at times profess to undertake the social work role. Carpenter, Schneider, Brandon, and Wooff (2003) note that a blurring of roles with other health professionals can occur due to a perception of social workers' marginal position within multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary teams. Thus, social workers constantly feel the need to legitimise their existence within the health sector, especially in nurse- and doctor-dominated teams (Hoge et al., 2005).

A clash of values and beliefs occurs between medical approaches and the social work approach, and social workers tend to resist the dominant hierarchy models that exist in the health sector (Carpenter & Barnes, 2001). When the power and status differences between social workers and other members of multidisciplinary teams are overcome, there is great potential to enhance client quality of care (Briggs & Cromie, 2001).

Social workers' relatively low status compared with medical professionals, in conjunction with the lack of specific health training in their first professional qualifications, has a significant impact on them. The key to enhancing social workers' status within multidisciplinary teams is for them to understand clearly their role. This includes an emphasis on evidence-based practice as well as social work skills, including collaboration, coordination and ensuring the client's perspective is heard within the team. However, many social workers lack the confidence to challenge established models and paradigms of care within the health sector (Briggs & Cromie, 2001).

It is critical to have a competency framework that accounts for all social work activities. Many textbooks and journal articles about social work practice give the impression that the majority of health social work involves direct contact with clients and their families to undertake assessments and counselling. Many courses place emphasis on the skills associated with direct social work with clients (Johnson, 1999). There is limited research about direct and indirect social work, which suggests an inaccurate portrayal of day-to-day practice. There is a belief that once students master direct social work practices, other skills, including indirect social work, will follow.

As Bosma et al. (2010) argue, information from a competency framework would be helpful to articulate both direct and indirect health social work activities. Identification of the exclusive jurisdiction of health social work, and defining the domains and elements of a competency framework, would protect the profession from encroachment by other health professionals (Roach, 1992). When it is clear what is exclusive to the health social workers' jurisdiction, the challenge is to examine where blurring of boundaries with other

health professions would be acceptable; where boundary merging exists, there could be an opportunity to improve holistic care.

Silverman (2008) suggests that the health system is not a natural ecosystem for social workers. However, as hospital stays for clients become shorter and more convalescence occurs in the community, there is an increased need for health social workers to ensure that clients are discharged with appropriate supports. The role of the health social worker is highlighted as services in the community struggle to provide resources in a financially pressured and resource-constrained environment.

Competency frameworks and practice standards from professional and regulatory bodies in New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada have developed various generic social work competency frameworks and practice standards. All these competency frameworks and practice standards have common themes. Specialist social work groups have developed standards of practice and competency frameworks, examples of which include mental health and palliative care social work. However, none of the competency frameworks provides comprehensive statements for social workers working across all health settings.

In response to the increased demand for health social workers to be competent, accountable, clear, and specific about their roles and tasks, it is critical for a competency framework to be developed that applies to all health social workers. It is the health social workers' responsibility and obligation to the profession to develop and embrace a competency framework to establish professional standards.

Developing the health social work competency framework

In response to the increased demand for health social workers to be competent, accountable, clear, and specific about their roles and tasks, it was seen as important for a competency framework to be developed that applies to all health social workers. The need for such a competency framework precipitated research into what health social workers consider are relevant elements for the framework. An extensive literature search was conducted to identify possible elements of the framework. The relevant literature is summarised below.

Literature review

Indirect client-related social work makes up between 75% and 80% of social workers' work. Johnson (1999) argues that indirect social work is where the social worker works within the client's environment and social networks. Furthermore, as Johnson's (1999) research into social work day-to-day practice has established, social workers spend between 20% and 25% of their time undertaking direct work with clients.

Johnson (1999) categorised three ways in which social workers work with the client's environment and social networks.

- Facilitating resources and supports that exist in a client's environment that would benefit the client.
- Working with the client's social relationships to facilitate the use of resources and support.
- Collaborating with other professionals and working together to access appropriate resources and interventions.

Cavet (2000) and Powell (2002) describe the role of health social work as being to reduce barriers brought about by economic and cultural systems which can result in exploitation of the most vulnerable people in society. Health social workers have a responsibility to actively work to support the exploited and marginalised, and ensure health services are aware of, and responsive to, their needs.

Daniels (1989) notes that social workers assist clients to reduce dependency on services and become self-sufficient. More specifically, the social work role within health is to assist with the personal and social effects

of illness and disabilities. The tasks of health social workers have been reported as:

- undertaking assessment of clients' and their families' needs
- assisting clients and their families to find and utilise resources and services in the community
- providing counselling and therapeutic interventions with clients' families and groups
- assisting with re-admission and discharge planning
- facilitating practical services (for example income assistance, domestic assistance and housing assistance)
- health education including parenting groups, stress management, drug and alcohol.

Daniels (1989) also reports that health social workers are involved in activities that relate to clients indirectly. These activities include developing resources within the community such as self-help initiatives, support groups, and formal and informal community support networks. Other activities social workers engage in that relate to clients indirectly include supervision, teaching, research, evaluation of practice, policy formulation, programme planning, and general administration (Simpson, Williams, & Segall, 2007). The central elements of social work are identifying strengths within individuals and their environments (Harly, Donnell, & Rainey, 2003). Social work's basic value is promoting individuals' and communities' capabilities to enhance independence and promote full participation in their environment.

Thompson (2010) reported that the recurring themes within social work practice definitions include the importance of understanding social work clients—individuals, families, and groups—and their functioning in the wider society. Another common theme is to enhance the clients' psychosocial functioning. Thompson further emphasises the importance of defining social work practice in terms of social functioning at personal, cultural, and structural levels, and understanding a person in their social context. Any competency framework for health social work needs to take into account these common social work practice themes.

The relationship between client and social worker as a tool in its own right is what distinguishes social workers from other health professionals. This relationship is about assisting the client to understand their own subjective realities and respond to their own internal struggles in an empowering way. The end goal would be for the client to enhance their internal strengths and access external resources for improving their health and well-being (Simpson et al., 2007). One of the challenges in developing a competency framework is to identify the elements of competency that express the core values of health social work.

McCormack (2008) investigated the social work tasks and skills required to work with older people and reported that the most time-consuming work involved addressing client anxiety and depression. Social workers provide support for clients and their families related to grief and loss as a result of major life changes. The most frequent tasks in McCormack's study were organising and facilitating case conferences and family meetings, psychosocial assessment, advocating, and administrative services-related tasks.

Beresford's (2007) research into clients' perception of social work found that the most important aspect of social work is the supportive role. This relates to the social worker's role in negotiating complex social systems, helping clients cope with life changes and problem solving. Beresford also notes that from a client's perspective, they value social input related to:

- advocacy and advice
- negotiation with social service providers such as for financial assistance, housing, and other assistance
- counselling and other therapeutic support
- problem solving
- referring to appropriate services.

Social workers are also seen as agents of social control; they can be gatekeepers to funding and are associated with enhancing client compliance with social norms (Beresford, 2007). This is reinforced by legislation such as the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989 and the Protection of Personal and Property Rights Act 1988, in the New Zealand setting. This extends to social workers having the power to influence restrictions of people's rights and freedom, and is usually linked with social work practice in the areas of Child Protection, Mental Health, Justice, and Older People's Health. The control of rights within the

Mental Health and Older People's Health areas is associated with restricting a person's right to safeguard against harm to themselves or others. When developing a competency framework, the control aspect of social work practice needs to be acknowledged and be a part of the framework.

From the literature review competencies statements were identified that related to health social work practice. Eighteen of the most common competencies statements were used to develop the present study.

Research project method and results

A mixed method two-phase method was used for this study. A questionnaire was developed drawing on the literature review and five competency frameworks from Australian Association of Social Workers Auckland Region, Canterbury, Otago and Taranaki District Health Boards (Australian Association of Social Workers, 2008; Canterbury District Health Board Mental Health Social Workers, 2004; McNabb, Nes, & Sharpe, 2006; Otago District Health Board Social Workers, 2002; Taranaki District Health Board, n.d.). The questionnaire had 18 competency statements, which were further subdivided into a number of elements.

The questionnaire combined a 1 to 7 Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagreed and 7 = strongly agreed) along with a free-response comments box for each of the competency statements. Participants were asked to rate how much they agreed or disagreed with the competency statements related to core aspects of health social work practice. The information collected from the free-response comments box (qualitative data) provided contextual information about the statistical information (quantitative data) collected from the Likert-type scale.

The questionnaire was sent out to all ANZASW members who self-identified as health social workers. One hundred and sixty seven members (a response rate of 16%) returned completed questionnaires. From the demographic information supplied by the participants it appeared they were representative of the general population of health social workers in New Zealand (Allied Health Workforce Strategy Group, 2007).

The quantitative data from the Likert-type scale was analysed using SPSS. The participants also made a total of 1,093 comments, which were coded thematically. The themes were then transferred into quantitative variables and further analysed using SPSS. The results were further refined into eight themes that reflected what participants felt were day-to-day best practices.

The second stage of the project was to present the results of the analysis and the eight themes to the National DHB Social Workers Leaders Council 2011 annual meeting. The National DHB Social Workers Leaders Council consists of approximately 40 members representing the social work leadership within the District Health Boards throughout New Zealand. As experts in health social work, the DHB social work leaders were asked to develop competency statements and their subsets that reflect the themes identified in the research project. These statements became the final competency framework, shown as Table 1 (on the following pages).

Table 1: Competency Framework

Competency	Competency Statement	Indicators
<p>1 Understand the health context</p>	<p>Health Social Workers require knowledge and skills to address the effects of illness and/or disability faced by clients/patients, including inequalities in the social determinants of health. Health Social Workers work towards improving access to health services for their clients/patients.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of the biopsychosocial context of Physical and Mental Health including trauma and disease. • Knowledge of the sociology and social history of disease, disability and illness. • Understanding of clients/patients' and carer issues, including the sociology of disability, history of mutual support, empowerment process, cultural experience of illness, hospitalisation, and treatment interventions. • Understanding and interpreting Aotearoa/New Zealand Health policies and statutory processes.
<p>2 Bicultural practice</p>	<p>Health Social Workers demonstrate an ability to apply the principles (partnership, participation, protection) of the Treaty of Waitangi to practice. Health Social Workers use the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi/Te Tiriti o Waitangi to address the effects of inequalities in the health sector for their clients/patients and their whānau/family.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the Treaty of Waitangi/Te Tiriti o Waitangi and its relevance to the health of Māori in Aotearoa/New Zealand. • Incorporates the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi/Te Tiriti o Waitangi (partnership, participation, protection) and Tikanga/Tikaha best practice into social work practice. • Committed to bicultural development in social work practice Aotearoa/New Zealand at individual, whānau, hapu, iwi and institutional levels.
<p>3 Cultural responsiveness</p>	<p>Health Social Workers demonstrate an understanding of cultural diversity, in particular how it relates to clients/patients' interactions with health services. Health Social Workers practice in a culturally-sensitive manner that reflects their awareness of cultural diversity among clients/patients.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates respect for clients' cultural background and sensitive to the individual and family/whānau belief systems that might influence the working relationship with the client/patient. • Evaluates own cultural value base and understands how their beliefs influence the working relationship with clients whilst respecting differing cultural and belief systems. • Demonstrates awareness of the diversity within culture, ethnicity, class, age, and gender, and integrates this knowledge into social work practice.
<p>4 Clinical and professional practice</p>	<p>Health Social Workers establish respectful, purposeful and collaborative relationships with clients/patients, families/whānau, multi/interdisciplinary teams and service providers to address the biopsychosocial needs of clients/patients. Health Social Workers undertake a range of assessments, interventions, and discharge planning to improve the health outcomes of clients/patients.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to establish an appropriate and purposeful working relationship with clients. • Understands and keeps clients/patients informed of the practical limitations of confidentiality of information. • Works with client/patients to gather information to develop a comprehensive assessment of clients' concerns, strengths, and support within their social context. • Identifies risk indicators and implements risk mitigation plans appropriately. • Able to effectively use specific assessment tools that are relevant and appropriate for clients/patients and the services within which the social worker practices. • Completes comprehensive discharge plans with input from the client/patient, family/whānau, significant others, and the inter/multidisciplinary teams to ensure effective discharge from the social work service. • Facilitates collaboration between inter/multidisciplinary teams, service providers, and clients and their families to provide efficient and appropriate services to address clients' biopsychosocial needs. • Able to articulate the scope of social work practice, including skills, values, and knowledge within the health system.

Competency	Competency Statement	Indicators
5 Organisational requirements	Health Social Workers have responsibilities to the organisation in which they work. They contribute to, and comply with, organisational policies, procedures and guidelines. Health Social Workers work towards making organisations and systems responsive to clients/patients.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintains social work documentation that reflects social work interaction with clients, including assessments, intervention plans, goals, and discharge plans in accordance with organisation policies and guidelines. Maintains a workload that allows effective, efficient, and quality social work service delivery. Demonstrates knowledge of legislation and policies that impact on Health Social Work practice. Demonstrates working knowledge of current social work methods of practice, social policies, and community resources, and integrates such information into practice.
6 Professional development	Health Social Workers have adequate qualifications to undertake their role in health care. Health Social Workers actively participate in professional development and contribute to the advancement of social work knowledge and evidence-based practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognises own learning needs, and participates in career development strategies, continuing education and profession activities. Contributes to the advancement of the social work profession through participating and delivering in-service education of social work students, writing papers for peer-reviewed publications, participating in research, and presenting at conferences. Maintains and enhances the current social work knowledge base through reading professional journals and web articles, and attending workshops, seminars, and conferences. Maintains and enhances a critical reflective approach to individual social work practice through supervision, peer review and self-evaluation.
7 Advocacy, networking and social action	Health Social Workers are involved in advocacy and networking activities to improve service delivery to clients/patients. Health Social Workers work collaboratively with other health professionals, and community and government agencies and service providers to improve outcomes for clients/patients.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applies advocacy skills to improve service delivery and health outcomes for clients/patients and promotes client/patient self-advocacy to access services within the available resources. Maintains a working knowledge of available resources, service providers, and community agencies that provide benefits to clients/patients and their family/whānau. Applies networking and collaborative skills to ensure robust intervention plans for clients/patients and their families/whānau are implemented in coordination with other professionals, community agencies, and service providers. Identifies gaps in service provision and resources, and works to address these gaps through social action, advocacy, and networking.
8 Leadership and professionalism	Health Social Workers adhere to professional ethics, Standards of Practice, and Codes of Conduct as set out by their professional bodies and registration board. Health Social Workers have a responsibility to demonstrate leadership skills to improve access to health care services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates knowledge of, and practises within, the guidelines established by social work professional and regulatory bodies' Codes of Ethics, Standards of Practice, and Codes of Conduct. Engages in social work critical reflective practice within supervision processes to ensure a high quality of service delivery to include the identification of practice that needs improvement, and the development and achievement of identified and agreed supervision goals. Applies critical reflective skills as part of ongoing formal and informal evaluation of social work practice to assess quality and appropriateness of social work practice to ensure ongoing competency.

This framework is proposed as a useful and relevant health competency framework because it not only establishes a standard of practice competency that can be objectively assessed, but because it is informed by the real-world practice experience of health social workers.

Conclusion

Health social work is ideological in nature and based as much on values and beliefs as on theoretical knowledge (Daniels, 1989). Health social workers need to be skilled and have a sound knowledge base because they often deal with incomplete information and have to make instantaneous decisions that affect clients' lives. The very nature of social work makes it extremely difficult to identify the content of a competency framework. The realities of social workers' practice make it difficult to determine the concrete concepts that apply to the social work process. Therefore, the ideological and abstract nature of social work leading to accountability issues needs to be further questioned and challenged.

The intent of competency standards is to provide clear objective statements about what constitutes social work practice. Objectivity is difficult to achieve because uncertainty and unpredictability predominate in social work practice. There is a risk of overemphasising performance criteria when setting competency standards. This can result in inhibiting creative problem-solving, leading to shallow and unimaginative practice (Burt & Worsley, 2008). As Lawler and Bilson (2010) suggest, a competency framework does not give the whole story of social work practice. It cannot stand alone; it must be used in conjunction with a range of theories and practice wisdom.

The eight competency statements that form the Health Social Work Competency Framework are designed to enhance the knowledge, values and skills that health social workers require to deliver effective social work services to individuals, families, whānau and the community. However, the competency framework alone cannot enhance the quality of health social work practice; it needs to be disseminated, embraced and implemented at the practice level in partnership with educational institutions, the Social Work Registration Board, and the ANZASW.

The Health Social Work Competency Framework is a powerful tool to guide health social workers' employers and educators. It can assist in building workforce capacity. The support for, and of, key people within the health social work workforce will strengthen health social work as a speciality, contribute to its advancement, and ultimately improve the quality of practice, education, training, and research.

This is the first time a national Health Social Work Competency Framework has been developed in New Zealand. Although the competency framework does not give the whole picture about social work practice, it sets out the expectation of practice standards for social workers working in the specialist area of health. The intent of the competency framework is to provide clear, objective statements about what social work practice is. The competency statements can be used to set practice standards and performance criteria for job descriptions and performance reviews. However, it is necessary to be mindful that any framework is a work in progress and should be subject to constant review.

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Corresponding Author
MICHELLE DERRETT
michelle.derrett@southerndhb.govt.nz

4 Beyond violence: Signposts for practice

JUDY WIVELL Registered Social Worker (Eastern Institute of Technology)

Abstract

The Domestic Violence Education Project (DOVE Hawkes Bay) provides intervention and education services in the area of stopping violence, with a focus on maximising the safety of women and children. In 2012, a team of EIT researchers evaluated and reported on the effectiveness of DOVE services. The research included a narrative inquiry with DOVE service users in relation to their experiences of domestic violence. The emergent themes from the collected narratives are varied and include harsh and abusive experiences as well as those of despondency and regret. There are also themes that speak of poignant memories, spirituality, and transforming changes. These themes serve as signposts for transformative social work practice.

Keywords: narratives, research, family violence, practice

Introduction

This article considers the narratives of nine research participants who share stories about dealing with family violence. The article also explores signposts for social work practice and, in doing so, acknowledges that, in the area of family violence, victims and perpetrators oftentimes are inextricably connected.

The narratives are data rich, providing explicit material about the realities of family violence, and provide signposts for guiding social work practice. There are references to what worked well in the lives of the research participants as well insights into their experiences. I have written this article as a social worker and educator. It begins with the research context within which the narratives were situated. It goes on to outline the approach taken in collecting the stories and explores the themes that emerged from the narratives, together with some implications for practice.

Background to the narrative research

DOVE provides services to men, women, and youth and families. These services include both group programmes and work with individuals. In the period 2008 to 2010, DOVE worked with over 1,900 clients. The client population was made up of 60% male and 40% female, with referrals coming from the Community Probation Service and the Family Court as well as self-referrals. Male referrals were equally distributed over the three referral sources, while for women, 88% of the referrals were self-referrals. Referral sources for youth also included schools and agencies (Ehrhardt et al., 2013, p. 6).

The research investigated service provision and explored commonalities across the services that facilitated 'positive outcomes.' The purpose was to identify areas that could be further developed or changed to meet the needs of the client groups, their families, and communities. Unique features that emerged were also considered. The research report (Ehrhardt et al., 2013) notes that clients struggled with multiple issues

and dealing with these was part of the work done to address violence in their lives. Struggles that were frequently present included high levels of past trauma, and alcohol and other drug issues (p. 6).

Ethical approval for the research was granted prior to its commencement by the Eastern Institute of Technology Research Ethics and Approvals Committee. An Advisory Board comprising researchers and DOVE staff met regularly to monitor the research process and this contributed to a collaborative and effective process. The safety and rights of all participants were considered to be of paramount importance and all steps were taken to obtain informed consent and maintain privacy. The narratives were taken back to the participants for checking and comment until they were ready to give permission for their story to be published.

The participants for the narrative research had been part of a DOVE programme and were individually interviewed (Ehrhardt et al., 2013, p. 131). Some participants had been involved with DOVE in the recent past while others had used DOVE services up to ten years ago. They came from "... a range of ages, backgrounds and ethnicities" (Ehrhardt et al., 2013, p. 131). The researchers interviewed four women and five men. The three interviewers came from a range of backgrounds and included Pasifika, Māori, and Pakeha.

Among the participants were some who continued to live with family members who had been abusive, while some had moved away. All the participants talked about changes in their relationships. Some were now violence-free while for others domestic violence was still present.

Just as there is a range of referral sources, a variety of support systems was identified by participants, such as community social service agencies, police, Child Youth and Family Services, whānau (family), and church and friends. However, DOVE became a key support for these participants.

A narrative process was used to collect the stories. Participants were invited to share their experiences and the stories captured not only the events that had taken place in the participants' lives, but also provided a vehicle through which to "... express emotions, thoughts, and interpretations" (Chase, 2008, p. 65). The questions asked were used as a tool to facilitate the sharing of stories, enabling the stories to be told and evolve in ways that were unique to each participant. As Hsu and McCormack (2012) note, "The aim is for the influence of the interviewer to be minimal ... thus, the role of the interviewer is to actively listen and to facilitate the narrator in telling their story by supportive and encouraging questions" (p. 842). The researcher was the listener and facilitated space for the participant to share their story while holding to the overall objectives of the research project.

In discussing the analytic lenses used by narrative researchers, Chase (2008) suggests that narrative research allows for "meaning making" (p. 64) and an opportunity is afforded not only to make sense of events and experiences but also to gain insight and understanding into their impacts over time by both the participant and the researcher. Each narrative consists of a series of interrelated stories. As the participants made connections between different experiences, emotions and perceptions, new stories or elements of a story emerged. The complexity and the uniqueness of each of the narratives were apparent and over the nine narratives there are both common themes as well as individual threads that set each apart, one from another.

As part of the research process the spoken stories, which had been recorded and then transcribed, were then shaped into short narratives. French and Swain (2010) suggest this type of research encourages change of policies and practices through hearing research participants' voices. It is an empowering process and involves "taking seriously" (p. 412) what is said by the participants. The short written narratives were taken back to the participants for checking and comment. The intention was to ensure that the researcher had genuinely captured in the written narrative what the participant considered to be significant. This meant two or three conversations being held over time with changes being made. Reading their own stories involved considerable emotional energy and it was a moving experience for both the researcher and the participant. For most participants, this was the first time they had read their own stories.

Each participant shared generously. As one research participant said, “Everyone has a story” (Ehrhardt et al., 2013, p. 135) and another said “every story is different” (p. 140). From these narratives emerged some common themes that provide signposts for social work practice. They alert the researcher and reader to tensions and challenges, and to ideas and possibilities for social work practice.

Themes

While each narrator had their own distinctive story to tell there were nevertheless some themes that emerged from the multiple narratives. Some themes may be considered as predictable while others are less obvious. The stories contain substantial evocative imagery depicting the realities of domestic violence while also containing a sense of hopefulness about healing from the impacts of such violence. The themes cover harsh and abusive experiences, despondency and regret, poignant memories, spirituality, and transforming changes.

Harsh experiences

Harsh experiences, whether they were physical, emotional, social, and/or spiritual, were the basis of all the narratives. These experiences may have been about the participant’s behaviour towards others or the infliction of abusive actions by others on their lives. The consequences of these harsh experiences and how they impacted others’ lives and relationships are graphically described by the participants. The experiences are described not just as a one-off event taking place in a particular space and place. Connections are made and the narratives give voice to the impact of these experiences on not just their own lives but on the lives of others (for example, on the participants’ children) over time. The following two extracts demonstrate the harsh realities and their wider effects.

Having to run to Refuge for help that was pretty hard for me. Being brought up in a mob family, reaching out for help is called a nark. The altercations could be verbal or emotional, not just physical. It’s still abuse. I’d rather get a hiding than be yelled at: “you fucking useless fat bitch” because it stabs you. It sticks in your head and then you become it and you are it. Within myself, I wasn’t very safe. I used to do some dumb shit like putting the kids down, telling them “you’re dumb, you’re a little shit”; only because that’s how I was treated. (Female Research Participant)

Before I met my partner, I was violent anyway. ... I grew up with violence. I got a hiding all the time from my dad for no reason. So did my mates. If I got a hiding from my old man, I went around to my mates, and I realised he’d been beaten too, that made it alright. ... We were thinking everybody must get hidings. Even mums must get hidings, even though we don’t like it. It used to make it easier for us to use violence. I learnt everything by watching and I seen violence. (Male Research Participant)

Another common thread in the narratives was sadness, despondency, and regret. At times this sense of despondency was overwhelming and filled with a dark despair. For the participants there were times in their lives when there was no way out, nowhere to go to escape the darkness, whether it was because they were inflicting violence or whether it was because they were being abused by another. One woman participant vividly explained,

From the age of six I experienced abuse. By the time I was ten I was looking after my sister. Then around twelve I went on the streets in Wellington. I met my partner at thirteen and became involved in the gang scene. Once when I tried to tell my Mum about the people doing stuff to me, the Police got involved. The family got involved and the first thing they said to me was that I was looking for attention. After that I just shut up and didn’t say anything about anybody. If someone was going to touch me then they were just going to touch me. When I was in the gang scene I just became their mattress. It was either have four or five fellas or get a hiding. It was better than being at home. (Female Research Participant)

A succinct and graphic comment by one of the male participants describes the depth of despondency he experienced as he considered his life. He puts it in the following way:

I found it difficult to leave jail; ... My time was coming to an end. I said to one of the officers, I don't want to get out, cause I know I am coming back here for violence. (Male Research Participant)

Positive experiences

Sparingly interspersed through the stories were gentle poignant memories that provided relief in a landscape that was generally unforgiving. One participant made the simple statement:

I remember we always went on picnics to the river. (Male Research Participant)

These gentle and thoughtful moments coexisted with violence in the context of childhoods and adult lives plagued with struggles. Narrating these memories took participants down a path that allowed them to make connections with what was 'good' or had been 'good' in their lives and consideration of these was important. These memories, albeit they may have been the exception, were just as much a part of their lives as the violence. The following excerpt was an important memory for one of the male participants.

I asked my mum, "Can you please tell me what love is?" Mum says, "I don't know." Then, months or years later she tells me, "Love is when you care about a person, when you share with this person, when you worry about a person, when you lift them up. It's a lot of things to put into one word, all together." (Male Research Participant)

Wairua

Spirituality was a very strong theme for some of the participants. They talked about developing and getting in touch with their *wairua* (spiritual side) and the importance of this. The narratives referred to spirituality in relation to both the traditional expressions of Christian faith as well as to the broader sense of spirituality. Benson-Stott (2007), who describes herself as an 'Indigenous Australian' and a Christian, suggests that spirituality is, "... the part of us that provides reverence, prayer and hope, and is the part of us which connects with God" (p. 167). Hodge (2013) concurs with this and suggests that, "...spirituality can be seen as a fundamental human drive for transcendent meaning and purpose that involves connectedness with oneself, others, and ultimate reality" (p. 224).

To illustrate the importance of spirituality in the narratives, two excerpts are noted. Both refer to *wairua* which Durie (1998) suggests "... implies a capacity to have faith and to be able to understand the links between the human situation and the environment" (p. 70). Durie also suggests that spirituality is broader than a belief in God or the participation in organised religion. Rather, the earth and all that it is made up of is spiritually significant to Māori. It is interesting to note the importance of the role of language in awakening the spiritual capacity of the participant in the first excerpt that follows.

One very profound part of the DOVE course was that we had a Māori and European facilitator. I felt that for me the Māori facilitator had these very important connections to my wairua [spiritual side]. ... When you hear your language it does something to you, it pierces you to your heart and you feel like you can relax, you can let go whatever is on your shoulders. ... I really enjoyed it when we would do activities and were asked to pick a special object from a collection. The facilitator would chant a small karanga [ceremonial call]. It made me think of my mother who had passed on. I wanted to break down and cry – but I didn't because I feared I would not stop. I thought I had lost this part of me – the part that feels. The karanga [ceremonial call] and mihi [greeting] had woken my wairua [spirit] to feel again. (Female Research Participant)

I spoke with Whaea [mother, aunty] and that was the first time I had broken down. She helped me go back to the child, that little girl, and some words that she said to me have stayed with me, "You know, they have taken your mana [integrity] away and your wairua away. ... You get it back!" Those words were the beginning of my healing journey. I had to find myself, find the courage to face my hurts and where it came from, then give it back, let it go, it's not mine. (Female Research Participant)

Transformation

While all the narratives took many twists and turns, the endings are about transformative changes. DOVE was a pivotal influence in this process.

As one participant said:

I chose to go [to DOVE] and help myself because I hurt my partner one too many times. One time she was hurt, hurt real bad, someone had beaten her up, but I didn't know who'd done it. I accused everyone, asked the bros. It was me, eh! Too drunk! That had never happened to me before. I was already on probation for assaulting someone else, so you see my life was going around in merry-go-rounds. (Male Research Participant)

Experience of DOVE

Pain, frustration and insight motivated participants to seek help and make the most of the support offered. Each story talks about the transformation they had experienced through their involvement with DOVE. New insights were gained, optimism grew, and strategies for dealing with inappropriate behaviours developed. For one participant,

What was good about DOVE is it just makes you sit and think. Shows you the damage you are doing and that it is all about your own choices not about anybody else. It was bringing back a lot of things that I knew and I learnt a lot of new things as well. It really made me stop and think about the damage I was doing. (Male Research Participant)

For another participant:

The safe time out thing helped. Sometimes I'd be a little bit drunk and I'd go take the dog for a walk just to get away from the situation. The main thing I learned was questioning and voicing everything in my head that I was about to say and do in a conflict. Instead of going "fuck you," I'd think if I say that I'd start a fight so I might as well just get out for a while. It's just little things like that but it makes a big impact. (Male Research Participant)

Whilst not every narrative contained all the themes, most narratives had most of the themes. Spirituality was not as evident in some stories as in others. On the other hand, violence took centre stage in all the narratives, as did despondency and regret. A poignant memory or memories were clearly described in all the narratives. The participants' positive experiences with DOVE were evident in each story.

Seven signposts for practice

The themes emerging from the narratives highlight areas to attend to when working alongside clients. In essence, these themes act as a series of signposts for practice. They provide some clues or an indication about areas to be cognizant of in social work. Some of the signposts will be familiar to practitioners, some will provide challenges, and some may encourage further thought and dialogue resulting in new perspectives, and perhaps some shifts in practice.

Hidden clues

One of the signposts could be named 'hidden clues.' An example of this is the polarising of people into being either perpetrators or victims. The narratives illustrate that victims may be perpetrators and perpetrators are often victims. Working holistically and taking account of the range of complexities in clients' lives will contribute to effective practice. White (2011) suggests men who are perpetrators of violence, "... are not the originators of the techniques of power they employ" (p. 99). He also emphasises that ensuring women's and children's safety is paramount and it is paramount to have "... processes of accountability to the experiences of women" (p. 98). There can be no bystanders in the field of family violence. In promoting just social work practice, an examination of the labels applied to people and who are considered to be 'other', is a social work mandate.

Woven through the narratives are the ramifications of domestic violence for the wider family and community. The stories narrated are raw and at times chilling and the importance for practitioners to have an understanding of the dynamics and impacts domestic violence is reinforced and is a signpost in the narratives. Crichton-Hill (2013) draws our attention to family violence in New Zealand and says, "Work in the area of family violence is set amidst debates about what forms of violence can be considered family violence and questions about what is the best way to reduce levels of family violence in society" (p. 88). The final report on the effectiveness of services delivered by DOVE Hawkes Bay Inc (Ehrhardt et al., 2013) offers a clear picture of the impact of domestic violence in Hawkes Bay. The challenge is how we use this knowledge in practice.

Feeling heard

Another signpost for practice emerges from participants feeling heard while being in a place of despair. The importance of empathic practice and acknowledging the pain and anguish supports clients as they deal with the struggles confronting them.

As one research participant said,

For me, my parents died in a violent situation. They were shot. That was the most horrific violence that I know that has happened really close to me. I was just a little kid. I didn't see it happen. Even to this day, it still bums me out that no one has actually sat down and told me about it; how they died, and who done it and stuff like that. (Female Research Participant, cited in Ehrhardt et al., 2013, p. 141)

Empathy involves the capacity to "... sense clients' feelings *as if* they were his or her own without becoming lost in those feelings" (Corey, 2005, p. 173). It enables those who we work with to begin the journey of making sense of the narratives informing their lives.

Holding hope

Alongside empathic practice is the practitioner's facility to hold hope. Saleebey (2013) makes the point, "... your clients, be they individuals or communities, want to know that you really believe they can meet the challenges before them and begin the climb to positive transformation" (p. 18). Holding hope supports clients to grow dreams and then to make them into a reality. The process may be time consuming with a sense that for every step forward there may be a step back. As one research participant so eloquently said,

I'm building this pyramid, like in Egypt, and that takes time. (Male Research Participant)

The facility to hold hope involves recognising and bringing to the fore clients' capacities to deal with their struggles and the strengths and resourcefulness they demonstrate in their lives, including asking for help and participating in DOVE programmes. In sharing about his experience of a DOVE programme, one research participant shared his dream about wanting

... to be a good father I want to give my children everything I can, absolutely everything. (Male Research Participant)

The same participant also shared how he chose to undertake the DOVE programme so that he could become more of the person he wanted to be despite having a chequered life that included being abused and being abusive. Saleebey (2013) suggests that practitioners should not underestimate, "... the upper limits of the capacity to grow and change ..." (p. 18). The narratives reflect this concept and, as one participant said about the DOVE programme facilitators:

They believe lives can be changed. People build from there, follow that lead. (Male Research Participant)

Poignant memories

Poignant, gentle memories can become a building-block for hope and the foundation for what might become a journey of change and transformation. They are a signpost to listen carefully for the detail of clients' narratives. Gentle, thoughtful memories were only sparsely sprinkled through the narratives making it easy to marginalise them. However, these memories, when shared in the context of social work practice, provide a window of opportunity to dwell on what may have been or what is special, worthwhile, and exceptional in the lives of clients. The work done around these memories may be crucial for the client. For example one research participant explains how when he was an adult he made contact with his father and that,

... he [father] still looks after me, helps me. If I could be half what my father is towards me I'd be definitely happy. (Male Research Participant)

This moment of optimism contains within it a dream, a possibility, and a reality.

Realistic empathy

Corey (2005), in explaining the concept of empathy, talks about not drowning in our feelings. Being empathic and respecting clients' stories while retaining a sense of objectivity may be challenging, as in the narratives collected for the DOVE research project. The narratives are reminders or signposts pointing to the importance of reflective practice which may be developed through supervision. Davys and Beddoe (2010) capture the essence of supervision by suggesting that it is a dialogue which professional practitioners will be involved in throughout their careers. Supervision provides a place and space to: reflect critically on current practice; support professional staff development and practice competence; ensure adherence to social work (or relevant) ethics; and provide a context for continued clarification of values. When considering the intense complexities of people's lives and the descriptions of violence that are, at times, assaulting in their impact and where there is the potential for vicarious trauma, using supervision plays a pivotal role in the development of safe and effective social work practice.

Wairua

Spirituality is another dimension to consider in practice. Thompson (2009) suggests that social workers need to appreciate the place and role of spirituality in people's lives and to be prepared to develop their knowledge and understanding of this area. He also suggests that there is "... now a growing literature base ... and increasing awareness of the subject's importance" (Thompson, 2009, p. 64). For some of the research participants, tapping into their spirituality gave them a clarity about their lives and helped facilitate change. For some, they had carried throughout their lives a sense of 'God' in both good times and in times of despair. As one participant said,

Another thread running through my whole life which has helped me a huge amount is just my belief in the Lord. From a young age, I knew there was a God. (Male Research Participant)

Coholic (2007) notes that in her "... clinical work spirituality and spiritually influenced issues were increasingly becoming more of a focus for discussion ..." (p. 142). Practitioners may be reluctant to engage and work with spirituality for a range of reasons. However, the narratives point to the importance of practitioners being comfortable and experienced in being spiritually sensitive and working with our own reluctance may be a starting point (Coholic, 2007). Gale and Dudley (2013) suggest, "[l]ocating ourselves in our cultural context in matters to do with religion and spirituality ... ensures that we properly appreciate the other person's world-view" (p. 71). They also suggest social work practice in Aotearoa New Zealand has been influenced by "... Māori values and spiritual beliefs ..." (Gale & Dudley, 2013, p. 71).

Transformative practice

The signposts for practice collectively contribute to transformative practice. Each narrative referred to the changes occurring in the narrator's life. Transformation occurred in the lives of the clients for a variety of reasons and each participant noted the transforming impact of the practice of the DOVE workers.

My wife and I, we have not had one argument since (participating in a DOVE programme). We've had disagreements and I've learnt not to take things personally. One of the big things was realising that we are all different. My dream for the future is being the best dad I can and being violence free. (Male Research Participant)

Other participants noted both the role of education, their participation in a group programme, and the positive impact these had:

I gained so much from this course information: education, understanding, knowing that we can actually make a change and a difference and there is a better way to do it. I totally believe there is a better way to have a relationship, a better way to do things. (Male Research Participant)

For some participants there were compelling revelations along the way and as one research participant said,

People change themselves I don't think it's the courses that change people. It's the person realising it. That's why it's taken me so long. (Male Research Participant)

Another explained,

My children would say, "Why you are going on a DOVE course? You don't need to go on a DOVE course." I said, "I need to learn more about what is okay and what is not okay so I can teach you." (Female Research Participant)

Transformative social work practice influences the outcomes for clients, family whānau, and communities. Transforming practice is not just about the client changing. It is a dynamic process and takes on a synergy for all involved. Weld (2012), in discussing transformative practice within the context of supervision, suggests that transformative practice, "... doesn't just create a pause whereby normal function later resumes, it breaks the normal and creates a fundamental shift in ways of working" (p. 18). Everyone who has some contact with the lives of the participants and their narratives has the potential to experience transformation.

Concluding comments

This paper explored themes that emerged from the narratives and has also considered how those themes might be viewed as signposts for social work practice. Each time I, as the writer of this paper and a social work educator, re-read the narratives there are more insights and learning to be had and, as a consequence, more 'grist for the mill' of social work practice. The narratives, along with some reflective questions, are

being published as an online booklet (Wivell & Pentecost, 2014) so that the stories may continue to teach and draw our attention to the various themes and signposts. In any one narrative there are poignant memories, as well as the pervading influence of violence, despondency, and despair. Hopes and dreams are given voice. The stories shared were generous, colourful, and challenging. Despite the harshness that is embedded in each of the research participants' lives, the stories, told in their own words, have the power to encourage a sense of optimism and hopefulness.

I wake up in the morning and say, "I love you." I get involved in how their day was. Before they used to come home and go to their room or go out roaming. Now we actually have whānau [family] time; we sit down at the dinner table and talk. There is light at the end of the tunnel. (Research Participant)

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More information about this project can be found at <http://www.eit.ac.nz/itdoesnthavetocontinue>

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Corresponding Author

JUDY WIVELL

jwivell@eit.ac.nz

5 Themes for family violence intervention practice: Manaakitanga, whakawhanaungatanga, professional integrity, and authenticity

GAYLENE LITTLE Registered Social Worker

GEOFFREY NAUER Registered Social Worker (Te Rangihaeata Oranga Trust)

PENNY EHRHARDT (Ehrhardt Advisors)

Abstract

Family violence intervention presents specific challenges for practitioners, whether they are working specifically in this area or in general social work practice. The authors draw on the findings of a research project in which they were involved to suggest for themes that, together, form a vision of practice for family violence intervention in New Zealand: manaakitanga, whakawhanaungatanga, professional integrity, and authenticity. The project investigated the effectiveness of services delivered by a regional family violence intervention service, DOVE Hawke's Bay. The themes identified encompass relational, humanistic, knowledge, and experiential bases for practice with Māori and non-Māori clients. Warmth and connectivity is tempered with avoidance of collusion and accountability. Gentle persistence and 'keeping it real' are important, as are professional skills, knowledge, and integrity.

Keywords: manaakitanga, whakawhanaungatanga, professional integrity, authenticity, family violence

Introduction

The authors were members on a team researching the effectiveness of family violence intervention services delivered by DOVE Hawke's Bay Inc (DOVE). In New Zealand, one in three women is estimated to be a victim of family violence (Fenrich & Contesse, 2009). The Eastern Police District, which includes Hawke's Bay, has a higher rate of family violence call-outs than New Zealand as a whole (New Zealand Police, 2011).

The DOVE Research Project aimed to inform DOVE about who registered for its programmes, programme outcomes, and programme efficacy factors; to enhance DOVE's design and delivery of programmes; and provide evidence of programme efficacy to funders. It resulted in a 176-page report to the DOVE Board (Ehrhardt et al., 2013).

In addition, the DOVE Research Project aimed to provide evidence of programme efficacy factors to others delivering family violence intervention programmes throughout New Zealand, particularly those with a large proportion of Māori service users; and to increase the pool of evidence about family violence intervention programme effectiveness available to social work, counselling, and family violence intervention trainers, educators, and researchers (Ehrhardt et al., 2013). Particular aspects of the research have therefore been developed further for dissemination through academic and professional channels, including this one.

In this article, we address four themes that emerged as critical to effective family violence intervention practice in New Zealand. We suggest these themes have relevance for social worker practice in family violence intervention agencies and when responding to clients' issues with family violence in more general roles. The themes identified are *manaakitanga*, *whakawhanaungatanga*, professional integrity, and authenticity.

The use of two te reo Māori and two English terms reflects the bicultural nature of DOVE service users and staff. The terminology emerged from the voices of research participants. The Māori terms encapsulate two of the concepts better than any English terms we can think of. Similarly the two English terms were chosen for the meaning they encompass. We argue that competence in all four of these dimensions is necessary for social workers and agencies to work effectively with people struggling with violence in their families. All four must be employed simultaneously when working with all service users, regardless of cultural background. Of course, practitioners may wish to vary the degree of emphasis on each of the dimensions, or the terms used to suit their own practice and environments.

We then discuss the content and significance of each theme, utilising quotes from the DOVE Research Project participants to illustrate their meanings. As context for our subsequent discussion, we begin by describing the DOVE Research Project and DOVE's services. Given space constraints, this is necessarily brief. Readers wishing to know more about the research method, limitation, ethics, and quantitative findings are referred to the original research report, from which the participant quotations below are also taken. (Ehrhardt et al., 2013).

The research

The research was carried out by the Eastern Institute of Technology (EIT) in partnership with DOVE, and funded by the Lottery Community Sector Research (New Zealand Lotteries Commission). A team of seven researchers collaborated on the project, guided by an Advisory Group. Ethical approval was received from the Research Ethics and Approvals Committee of EIT prior to its commencement (Ref 06/12).

We used a mixed-method approach, with layers of quantitative and qualitative data collection, to gain both deep understandings of service effectiveness, and achieve robust triangulation of data. The method was underpinned by a Research Framework that incorporated the principles of *Te Rito – New Zealand Family Violence Prevention Strategy* such as the fundamental right to be safe and to live free from violence; recognition of customary structures and practices; holding perpetrators to account; emphasising prevention, early intervention and the needs of children and young people; recognition of the diverse needs of specific populations; and holism, collaboration, and community involvement (Ministry of Social Development, 2002). DOVE values of congruency; safety; leadership; the right to choose; compassion; trustworthiness; respect; doing no harm; fulfilling potential; and separating behaviours from people to recognise that all have the potential for goodness were also incorporated into the research framework, as were EIT research values relating to ethics; original investigation; and contribution to knowledge (DOVE, 2009).

The overarching research questions were: do DOVE's services make differences for participants (protagonists and their whānau); and, if so, what differences, and for whom? Data was collected from: 35 DOVE service users via 26 semi-structured interviews and nine in-depth narrative inquiries; 14 stakeholders, including social workers via semi-structured interviews; 11 DOVE staff via questionnaires and semi-structured interviews; DOVE records including statistical data, evaluation forms, and assessment records; and a literature review.

DOVE

DOVE has been providing family violence intervention programmes and services across Hawke's Bay, New Zealand since 1993 (Ehrhardt et al., 2013). Some staff members are social workers.

The research focused on the second half of 2011, at which time DOVE provided psycho-educational group and individual services for men as perpetrators of family violence; group and individual education and support services for women who had been victims; group and individual 'Managing Anger without Violence' programmes for women as perpetrators; and services for young people as perpetrators and victims of both family violence and anger issues. In addition to individual sessions, a 'Safe Mates' programme was delivered in high schools. DOVE also nurtured a 'Pacific Family Violence Prevention Service', and was involved in extensive interagency collaboration.

Our findings indicated that, of DOVE service users:

- 46.8% were Pākehā/NZ Europeans, and 31.3% were Māori
- a disproportionate number lived in areas of high socio-economic deprivation, with a clear spike in enrolments from people living in the most deprived areas
- male clients were referred from Community Corrections (part of the Department of Corrections), referred from the Family Court, and self-referred in roughly equal numbers
- of the women clients, 88% self-referred, 9% were referred by the Family Court and 3% by Community Corrections
- 41% of youth clients came from school and agency referrals, 18% from Child Youth and Family (CYF, which is part of the Ministry of Social Development), 17% self-referred, 14% from family referrals, 7% from friends' referrals, and 3% from the health system, many were dealing with multiple issues that complicated attempts to live free of family violence, such as high levels of past trauma, socio-economic stress, and alcohol and other drug problems.

Triangulation of data from the multiple quantitative and qualitative sources revealed that DOVE services helped address the frequency and severity of family violence. Participation in DOVE services was associated with a cessation of family violence for many service users. For practitioners and agencies, it is beneficial to consider which aspects of family violence intervention services support service users to achieve this. Stakeholders and service users valued the holistic, personalised, and flexible approaches DOVE took. Some perpetrators benefitted from attending multiple DOVE programmes, indicating that the transformation of a life free from violence could take multiple attempts. Provision of individual services was perceived to offer the greatest potential for transformation for participants who were dealing with multiple issues.

Manaakitanga

Manaakitanga emerged as a significant theme for practice. According to Shirres (1997), manaakitanga has a spiritual connotation which traces back to Io, in Maori mythology acknowledged as the Supreme Being (Māori genesis story) and the creation, with the capacity to give which enhances the mana of all involved. The point of contact for victims and perpetrators accessing DOVE at the initial stage was critical in determining the successful development of the ongoing relationship necessary for the therapeutic alliance to take shape. The women attending DOVE for the first time shared a commonality of positive experiences regarding the initial contact:

People made me feel welcomed and acknowledged.

For a woman attending for herself and in support of her son, the experience was:

Like a whānau member greeting us. This lady accepted my son with open arms.

Contrast this response to the situation the victims may have come from. A woman speaking about her experience of being abused related:

Dad brought abuser back into the house and had a beer with him. Dad's a wanker.

Manaakitanga provides the respect that is seen to enhance the mana of the individual (Shirres, 1997).

For the men, being warmly greeted, having the process explained, and meeting the person they would be

working with all contributed to fostering that positive experience. One explained,

I definitely felt they were there for me.

With the youth, a number commented on the empathetic and the non-judgemental approach of the workers. The youth connected with that approach and the shared experiences of the facilitators' childhood years where violence was present. As one youth commented,

I'm not the only person [to have experienced family violence]. There's more people out there.

The exercise of manaakitanga by DOVE staff assisted clients to develop an awareness of the wider ramifications of issues relating to violence other than those experienced by the individual. Manaakitanga was experienced as empowering. One participant said,

I didn't know what to do. I was overwhelmed, lost, scared. They supported me to take control over decisions. They didn't make decisions for me, which was really nice. They were like a safety net. If I couldn't have made the decisions they would have made them for me.

A number of barriers were highlighted during the research where attendance at the programmes proved difficult. These included timing of the programmes, transport, geography, and childcare to name a few. For the mandated clients there was also the real possibility of breaching conditions due to non-attendance. To help overcome these complications there were practical solutions offered by DOVE which went some way to alleviate tensions involved with navigating these difficulties. DOVE provided transport in many cases, as well as individual sessions and home visits with time frames that were compatible with the client's needs (Ehrhardt et al., 2013).

The cultural and spiritual dimensions of manaakitanga relied on the skills of individual facilitators/ counsellors and social workers. A particular facilitator from overseas had taken time to develop and deliver his pepeha in Te Reo Māori, drawing praise from one client steeped in Tikanga. The growing Pacific Island community in Hawke's Bay was catered for by Pacific Island facilitators. Their knowledge, connection to Pasifika communities, and the ability to converse in Tongan and Samoan, made the pathway for Pasifika peoples less intimidating (Ehrhardt et al., 2013). Shirres (1997) points out that manaakitanga is not only about sharing the resources you are able to access but cultivating resources you lack to enhance the mana of others. Staff at DOVE acknowledged that manaakitanga requires a flexibility to attend to the needs presented by clients. This goes a long way to providing a bridge between practice and delivery (Ehrhardt et al., 2013). It creates a situation where manaakitanga is seen to be caring for everyone involved, no matter what their situation.

Whakawhanaungatanga

Whakawhanaungatanga is a process of establishing relationships, and relating well to others (Moorfield, 2014). Within the word is captured an array of possibilities and relationships and how the individual is situated in terms of context and relevance. Whakawhanaungatanga allows for the building of connections through the discovery of identity. The process sets in motion the vehicle that enables a sourcing of a wide range of support and/or information. It then becomes the binding force in its various settings to collaborate and gain consensus or stimulate discussion on a particular problem (Durie-Hall & Metge, 2002). One man commented on how he related to his child,

I used to say, "You just like your mother: Thick, dumb and stupid". Words you are not meant to say to kids. Back then it was like that... Everything that came out of my mouth was not very nice.

This was one man's world and how he viewed relationships and family prior to doing the programme with DOVE.

Addressing family violence, as the DOVE research found, relies on a multitude of networks for positive

engagement and on-going therapy to be sustainable. Building rapport and connection with others in the group programmes facilitated participants' navigation of the rocky waters of the unknown. Comments included:

Initially I didn't want to tell people that I had bi-polar, but when I did I felt supported. They weren't judgemental, that's what I liked about the group.

And:

The first couple of sessions I felt out of my comfort zone then after that I started to feel better about being in the group.

Mason Durie (2003) explains one meaning of whānau as "a group who share not a common heritage but a common mission" (p. 13).

The DOVE research showed that practitioner and community relationships were forged with agencies such as Child Youth and Family, the Police, schools, Department of Corrections, other NGOs, and lawyers. Practitioners utilised these for the benefit of the client (Ehrhardt et al., 2013). This collaborative relationship is an expression of whakawhanaungatanga. Building ongoing sustainable relationships at an organisational level also assists organisations to navigate the challenge when a practitioner leaves and their knowledge and skill sets depart with them. In a regional area, practitioners may move between related organisations, and this can enhance collaboration through cross-fertilisation of ideas. For a new practitioner, strong network relationships in existence within the organisation lay a foundation for a smoother transition.

Collaboration is not a new concept in the social services, but a shared understanding of what this means, might be. Collaboration in the social work context often refers to formal relationships between state agencies (such as the Police, Ministry of Social Development, and the Department of Corrections) and NGOs (iwi and Māori organisations, service providers like DOVE Hawke's Bay and Women's Refuge) (Majumdar, 2006). Collaboration at the coalface also refers to social workers working together to meet client needs as required, even if the person seeking assistance is not formally engaged with the service that a single social worker is employed by.

This partnership is evidenced by other agencies contacting DOVE for advice on situations relating to family violence, and for DOVE workers contacting other agencies to access knowledge around drug and alcohol, mental health and other issues (DOVE, 2009). Workers at DOVE stated that effective collaboration allowed them "to open doors, making it easy to practice" (Ehrhardt et al., 2013, p. 104). In other words, it had whakawhanaungatanga at its base.

Several men spoke about social workers or programme facilitators who were known to them (prior to working for DOVE), who inspired change or offered professional advice at times when the timing was right. In practice, social service collaboration is a structured arrangement between social service agencies with a defined purpose (Majumdar, 2006). DOVE clients were often working with multiple agencies (Ehrhardt et al., 2013). Collaboration has the meaning assigned to it by the user. Therefore a client may see a social worker employed by an agency other than that assigned to them as working collaboratively when in essence there is an informal sharing or networking alliance.

Collaboration was important when working with families. Whakawhanaungatanga supported individuals in the group programmes to connect through the sharing of stories. One participant commented:

We'd talk about our childhood and I'd say something like "being starved because I'd been naughty" and people would go "bro that's not right"; for someone else who's had a bad childhood to say that's bad, made me feel that, yeah that's not normal.

Another stated,

The best thing was letting it out and telling others about what had happened, reaching out and getting some help.

One stakeholder suggested that a multi-disciplinary team approach for Māori mental health clients may be useful prior to referral in situations where violence is just one of many issues to be faced (Ehrhardt et al., 2013). Briggs and Cromie (2009, p. 227) discuss the role of the multidisciplinary team in relation to a collective response when responding to complex issues as providing a “process for joint decision-making with regard to issues related to the provision of care.” Whakawhanaungatanga therefore provides the opportunity for a complexity of engagements to develop relationships that are necessary for an organisation such as DOVE to fully utilise their resources and skills in response to family violence. Whakawhanaungatanga can be viewed on a broad canvas where the pieces of a jigsaw are gathered together to create a whole picture.

Professional integrity

Professional integrity must underlie practice in the domestic violence intervention context to enable the other themes of manaakitanga, whakawhanaungatanga, and authenticity to be expressed safely. Male perpetrators of violence identified aspects of professional integrity demonstrated by programme facilitators, including the provision of information that assisted them to understand the impact of their choices and actions on others. These, along with process information, providing the meaning of protection orders, and offering alternative ways to address anger were seen as professional expectations and desires. Having male programme facilitators model ways of being male that were different from their own was said to assist the journey to transformation by providing options for self-modelling to partners and children. For example, once aware of the diversity of options, one man spoke about how he saw his adult daughter in a relationship with an aggressive man and expressed a desire for her not to accept the behaviour (Ehrhardt et al., 2013).

Teaching and demonstrating strategies for behaviour management with male perpetrators was seen as professional integrity. Some men spoke about having the opportunity to learn new behaviours to deal with anger and challenges. Strategies included walking away, thinking about the impact of outbursts on their children, taking time out, and acknowledging the warning signs as highlights of their learning. Some men were able to identify they wanted to change their behaviours and were better able to, once exposed to the education provided at DOVE (Ehrhardt et al., 2013).

Men who witnessed practitioners behaving with professional integrity expressed respect for them which appears to have enhanced the learning of new behaviour patterns. Being knowledgeable and committed was an aspect of professional integrity. For example, one male client noted some practitioners,

wanted to be part of change. They wanted to be part of our re-awakening... You come across people like that – they stand out... He reminded me of the possibilities, not only within DOVE, but within the country.

In particular, one practitioner, who was an immigrant, was nevertheless able to do his mihi and pepeha:

He was particularly savvy in terms of Māori–Pākehā dynamics of this country and was able to use examples... As soon as I see this Pākehā talking ... about things of that sort of nature my ears prick up.

This contrasted favourably with,

Most other Pākehā tutors [who] could barely pronounce my name, let alone have a conversation with you about disparities of power sharing between Pākehā and Māori, between Crown and tangata whenua....

When ... there's two Pākehā in the group and a dozen Māori, it speaks volumes to me when those Pākehā kaiako [facilitators] cannot relate to us, cannot pronounce our names, cannot identify with our viewpoint.

Avoidance of collusion is a crucial and challenging element of professional integrity when working with perpetrators of family violence. Although some men came to DOVE with a desire to learn new strategies, many minimised their behaviour. For example, assessment records recorded one man as stating:

Sometimes ... I might grab her by the bra and bring her back, [and say], "hey, hey, hey behave yourself", but she never came out with black eyes or anything like that.

An interview participant explained,

In retrospect I can look back and ... see that ... I was abusive and violent most of my life, but going into that first DOVE course, I didn't have that awareness.

Another stated he lost control with his stepson:

I lost the plot that night... Shouldn't have happened but it did happen. I just stuck my hand around his throat... That was a big wake-up call for both of us.

An important aspect of professional integrity is recognising that change is not instant and sometimes people have to come back again, and/or need to work with others at the same time. This evidence emerged throughout the research and has important implications for practice.

Manaakitanga, whakawhanaungatanga, and authenticity create personal connectedness which must be used to hold perpetrators to account while simultaneously instilling a belief in the possibility of change. Some men involved in domestic violence intervention had an expectation that the DOVE programme delivery would be "like the cops". The implication for practice is professional integrity demonstrated through having programme facilitators who believed in DOVE programmes. The following example is how one male perpetrator saw professional integrity in his DOVE group facilitator.

Now the value I saw in him, others found quite challenging because he does not hesitate to challenge you about your belief systems surrounding the values of women. I could appreciate this because he demonstrated his appreciation and respect from a certain masculine standpoint. He did that from a strong position. ... it didn't seem uncool when he spoke about women in a positive light.

This man went on to say it was a combination of beginning therapy and doing the DOVE programme a second time that helped.

Skilled facilitation of discussions of men's triggers and the impacts of the abuse some had suffered in childhood assisted some men to move beyond old patterns of behaviour. One man stated:

[An] anger management course has an energy about it: you've got to face it, take responsibility for it, and adapt to live with your issues or feelings. Emotions, you harness in a manner that is serving, not destructive.

One man attributed his change process directly to the session at DOVE that addressed punishment and discipline. He mentioned the stigma of being a family violence perpetrator and said:

The hardest part was recognizing that I was something I didn't recognize myself as.

Women victims spoke of professional integrity being observed through things like: being supported at court; being provided with assistance concerning Protection Orders; being offered access to the alarms programme; and having the opportunity to also attend the 'Women Living Without Anger' programme as well as the 'Support and Education' programme.

Youth clients recognised the professional integrity of facilitators who were knowledgeable, skilful, and spoke at their level without lecturing.

Authenticity

Change requires honesty over past behaviours, the acknowledgement of unfavourable behaviour, and a willingness to change. DOVE clients revealed the benefits for themselves through the authentic belief in the DOVE programmes, the need for changing attitudes, and the belief in cultural and personal value.

Men valued cultural awareness, positive role modelling, behaviour strategies, and honesty about violent behaviours in general, in society, and the stories shared by programme facilitators.

Women perpetrators described expressing their anger in a variety of ways including yelling, throwing things, and less frequently, as physical violence. They also valued working with practitioners who were 'real' in their approach, and to whom they could relate.

Many participants reported abuse in their childhoods, including witnessing family violence, being neglected, sexual abuse, and beatings. Some spoke about trauma caused by CYF, parents bringing known abusers into the home, and the influence of overly religious parenting. Some spoke of the challenges of blended families, gay partnerships, and a lack of support.

Authentic engagement was marred for some women whose partners would not engage. One woman said her husband, whom she said she has since found out was violent to his first wife too, had not been involved with DOVE because:

He doesn't think there's anything wrong with him.

Another explained her husband's unwillingness to engage with DOVE as:

He's one of those males that think he doesn't need help. It's a male thing. They're too staunch. I can deal with my problems; I don't need help.

One woman victim of domestic violence said, relating to authenticity:

I was contacted by a lot of providers for support. The reason I spoke to DOVE people was it was all very overwhelming and there was no pressure, no push that they needed to come and see me. It was all about when I was ready to take those steps. And that's why I originally had DOVE support me. ... When the DOVE lady rang she was just about "what can I do to help you, where can we go, is everyone, including my husband, ok?" She gave me options but with no pressure, I had to go with DOVE.

Authentic engagement helped women and men to become more authentic themselves. Some women reported change in their parenting styles following DOVE programmes, with more focus on family time, less alcohol, and better communication mentioned.

DOVE recognised the challenges of men on arrival especially if they had been mandated to attend. Attention was devoted to building authentic engagement and buy-in and this was evidenced in some of the feedback reviewed in DOVE records. This also demonstrated the other themes of manaakitanga, whakawhanungatanga, and professional integrity. The combination of these attributes resulted in clients "feeling secure and comfortable" and believing practitioners "were there when you needed them".

A number of DOVE practitioners brought experiential knowledge of violent family life to their work. Youth clients, as well as men and women stressed the significance of this in providing them with models of people who had been able to change violent situations and create more positive relationships. This experiential knowledge, brought to the therapeutic/educational relationship, when used wisely, can provide the empathetic grounding on which to build change.

Regardless of the experiential background of the practitioner, authentically modelling alternative ways to behave and showing a genuine belief in the capacity for change, assisted service users to identify and modify negative behaviours and situations.

Conclusion

The DOVE Research Project revealed the importance of authenticity and professional integrity alongside whakawhanaungatanga and manaakitanga in providing an effective model for family violence intervention practitioners. Although aspects of the four themes operate in tension with each other, together they create

the checks and balances needed for effective, safe and humanistic practice. The maintenance of all four themes is beneficial for safe and effective practice. This has important implications for social work practice.

In conclusion, the four themes (manaakitanga, whakawhanaungatanga, professional integrity, and authenticity) are all necessary engagement tools for positive service delivery. They operate as a vision of family violence intervention practice for all involved in the area, including victims, perpetrators, staff working directly with family violence prevention, and stakeholders such as funders, policy and law makers at the macro-level, as well as communities, NGOs, and agencies.

The vision for practice suggested in this paper also offers directions for future exploration in relation to a number of issues including: multi-agency approaches and roles; the tension between programme processes and flexible responsiveness; the respective values of experiential and academic education for facilitators and social workers in the area of family violence intervention; and the possible benefits of long-term individual and family engagement in services rather than a limited-tenure intervention.

The vision for violence-free families must remain at the heart of practice. As one participant in the Women's Support and Education programme said,

Doing these courses made me realise I was okay and there wasn't anything wrong with me. It's believing in yourself. Knowing you deserve better.

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Corresponding Author
GAYLENE LITTLE
magrlittle@xtra.co.nz

6 Te papare: A critical discussion on developing a bicultural social work supervision framework

ZOEY HENLEY Registered Social Worker

Abstract

This paper takes a reflective look at the importance of biculturalism in Aotearoa/New Zealand and considers how a bicultural social work supervision framework can support social work supervisory relationships and reinforce bicultural practice. The paper considers Aotearoa/New Zealand's bicultural commitments arising from the Treaty of Waitangi through to the professional responsibilities of Aotearoa/New Zealand's governing social work bodies, ANZASW and SWRB. The author uses a bicultural lens to develop a supervision framework from a 'tauiwi' (non-indigenous) perspective. The paper uses the 'tuakana/teina' sibling relationship from te ao Māori as a framework to underpin supervisory relationships and describes a symbolic environment, Te Papare (The Sanctuary) as a space for supervision to take place. This paper is intended to provoke critical discussion encouraging social work supervisors and supervisees to consider how supervision supports their bicultural practice.

Keywords: bicultural, supervision, social work, Aotearoa/New Zealand

Note: The author used the online Māori dictionary for translations in this paper; this can be accessed at www.maoridictionary.co.nz. Translations can be found in a glossary at the end of this paper.

Introduction

Whether it be written, sung, carved, danced, drawn or chanted, it is hoped that globally, indigenous peoples are encouraged to celebrate their traditional beliefs, knowledge and approaches as the unique gift they have to offer the world (Thomas & Davis, 2005, p. 196)

Supervision is a key element of successful social work practice. In Aotearoa/New Zealand, professional social work memberships require social workers to participate in regular supervision within the discipline. In order for supervision to be an effective tool, there needs to be a positive and constructive relationship between the supervisor and supervisee (Simmonds, 2010). Supervision should enable social workers a space to reflect on what works and to consider new ways of practising to enhance outcomes for client and social worker alike (Carroll, 2007).

In Aotearoa/New Zealand, indigenous families are over-represented in negative socio-economic statistics involving hardship or neglect. So while approximately 14% of the total population is Māori (Statistics New Zealand, 2006), approximately 23% live in significant hardship or poverty (Ministry of Social Development [MSD], 2007). In a study into the neglect of children in New Zealand it was noted that Māori children are 4.5 times more likely to require further action by a social service agency than other children (Mardani, 2010), and are over-represented in referral statistics in other areas of concern (Wynd, 2013). Therefore, using a bicultural

approach supported by bicultural supervision strengthens the work that social workers do with indigenous families and ensures that Aotearoa/New Zealand social workers practise from a bicultural perspective. This influences how we view clients, our peers, and how our social work relationships and how models of learning are implemented (Eruera, 2007; Hair & O'Donoghue, 2009).

This paper considers how the 'tuakana/teina' relationship, that between an older and younger sibling in 'te ao Māori' (a Māori worldview), can be used as a framework to support and understand relationships for social work supervision. Here it is generally assumed that the supervisor is the *tuakana* and the supervisee the *teina*. This paper suggests the use of 'te papare' (the sanctuary) as a framework for where supervision takes place and outlines the synergies between te ao Māori, social work values and this bicultural supervision framework. Te papare has been chosen as it is central to the author's vision of the importance of supervision.

Defining key concepts

A cultural worldview

In order to consider whether the tuakana/teina relationship fits social work supervision, it is important to understand the concepts that support this relationship and how they fit into te ao Māori. As culture is not a straightforward phenomenon, developing a clear understanding of these concepts and how culture and practice are intertwined are important considerations to assist in making sense of a culture different to our own (Munford & Sanders, 2010). Using a bicultural framework has been shown to strengthen and support social work practice and supervision in Aotearoa/New Zealand, helping social workers to support positive outcomes for their clients and supports practice delivery (Munford & Sanders, 2010). Once we have developed a clearer understanding of a culture we can consider how to develop a bicultural framework.

Whānaungatanga

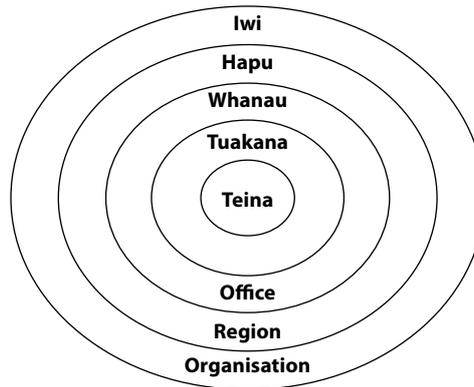
In traditional times, it would have been accepted that children and young people learnt about the world from people around them, and that their elders, especially siblings, would provide knowledge and guidance on how to behave in an acceptable way (Naumann & Winiata, 1990). This way of learning was encouraged and supported by 'whānau' (family). The concept of guided learning from older siblings can be reflected in the way that supervisors guide their supervisees. Having a wide range of role models can help to give the *teina* a range of experiences and understandings of different communication styles (Bishop & Glynn, 1999).

Indigenous social systems

In te ao Māori, 'tamariki' (children) are considered in the context of their wider or extended 'whānau', 'hapū' (sub-tribe), and 'iwi' (tribe). In traditional times *tamariki* would have grown up within a large group of up to four generations. All the members of their *whānau*, *hapū* and *iwi* would have helped shape their understanding of morals, values and customs, which in turn helped to shape who they were and how they fitted into the wider social system (Edwards, McCreanor, & Moewaka-Barnes, 2007). Tamariki learnt about themselves and how they fitted into the land, gods, and practices of their iwi (Naumann & Winiata, 1990).

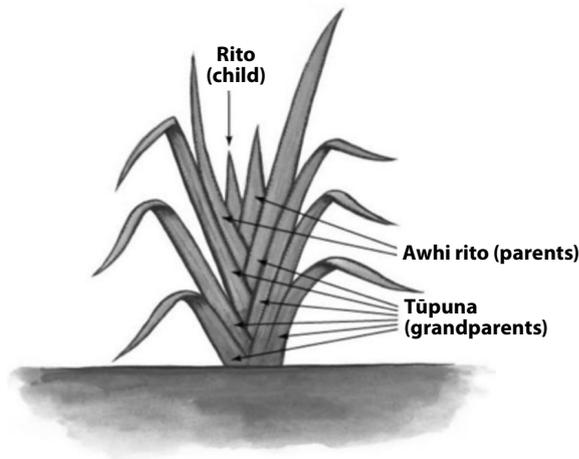
In the social work supervisory framework, this paper aligns the supervisee's supervisor, and the supervisee's social work colleagues, with roles similar to that of a whānau. In a larger office, the regional or area office or department acts in the role of *hapū*; and the whole of the organisation, on a national level, acts in the role of *iwi* (see Figure 1). This is important because, in *te ao Māori*, individuals are interdependent and always considered as part of an integrated social system. "The extended family envelops all its members in a protective and supportive way, advocating historically evolved social norms and customs which preserve kotahitanga [unity]" (Kent & Besley, 1990, p. 23). This is also true of social work organisations as they develop policies, procedures, and hierarchies that support the social worker, including supervision, to develop and grow and deliver respectful and proactive support to their clients.

Figure 1: Supervisory framework representation



Another way of representing the social structure is to liken relationships to the ‘pā harakeke’ (flax bushes) and the concept of ‘manākihia te pā harakeke’ (nurturing the family) shown in Figure 2. For the purpose of the supervisory framework, the centre frond represents the social worker. This frond is supported and protected by the next layer of fronds, the supervisor and colleagues, and so on. In the analogy of the pā harakeke model, the strength of the individual is reliant on the collective strength of all the individuals. Therefore, we need to develop organisational systems that are supportive, recognising that supervision happens between all layers of both models.

Figure 2:



Artwork by: Bruce Mahalski; *Te Ara, the Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*

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Within the wider social system, te ao Māori also recognises ‘kaumātua’ (elders) and ‘tohunga’ (experts) as others that support the development and learning of younger or developing members of these social systems. Similarly, supervisors, practice advisors and managers, all provide guidance to social workers to support their practice delivery. The way that tamariki were taught about the world is similar to the educational journey of a social worker. Walsh-Tapiata and Webster (2004) discuss the road a supervisee travels, which mirrors the journey of social workers within organisations.

At the beginning they may be the ākongā (student), then they may progress to pia (learner) and onward to tauira (apprentice), before attaining the status of pūkenga (graduate). [They will be supported by] someone who builds up their confidence, while gently reminding them of the importance of self and their work for their whānau, hapū and iwi. (2004, p. 18)

Values

Māori have a set of key cultural values and principles, as do all cultures. Some of these have been identified as aroha (love), wairua (life essence), whānaukatanga (kinship), mana (status), motuhake (distinct) and te reo (language). They represent but a small sample only of what are often referred to as the conceptual fabric of Māori theoretical frameworks. (Bradley, Jacob & Bradley, , 1999, p. 4) There were important values and principles that underpinned the tuakana/teina relationship. This includes reciprocal support for the collective group and expecting the tuakana to provide leadership, protection and guidance (Edwards, McCreanor, & Moewaka-Barnes, 2007). The reciprocal elements of the relationship are one of the key factors in linking these cultural roles to a useful framework for social work supervisory relationships.

To practise social work well, social workers need to have a comprehensive understanding of how values and principles underpin social work (Munford & Sanders, 2010). This is true of te ao Māori as well, and a clear understanding of these core values and principles is what shapes learning for children in te ao Māori (Thomas & Davis, 2005). All of this is guided by support for the child from their tuakana – just as regular, comprehensive supervision supports the social worker.

While social work uses a variety of theories and models to shape its interventions, the common threads of values and ethics shape the work that social workers do (Northern, 1995). These are generally outlined by professional social work bodies. Aotearoa/New Zealand's social work value base sits alongside global social work values and ethics. Social Workers' professional organisations, Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW) and the Social Workers Registration Board (SWRB), subscribe to the International Federation of Social Workers ethics and principles. There is also a bicultural code of practice that underpins this international framework (ANZASW, 2011; SWRB, 2011).

The importance of relationships in social work supervision

ANZASW and the SWRB require social workers to participate in regular supervision within their discipline. Supervision enables social workers a space to reflect on what works and to consider new ways of practising to enhance outcomes for the clients they work with. Social work can be a challenging job, but with the right skills and support it can also be highly rewarding. Social workers can receive this support through regular professional supervision where they can develop their professional knowledge, skills, and values (Simmonds, 2010). However, in order for supervision to be an effective tool it needs to be delivered through sound principles and a solid understanding of the 'theory', the 'relationship', and 'best practice' (O'Donoghue, 2003). Many argue that it is the quality of the relationship between the supervisor and supervisee in particular which determines the success of supervision (Cerinus, 2005; Pack, 2012). As Caspi and Reid (2002, p. 96) note, "the supervisory relationship has a tremendous impact on the development of the supervisee and the effectiveness of supervision."

There are many important elements of the supervisory relationship that help to create a safe space including developing trust and openness by providing opportunities for continuous feedback in a transparent way that helps to develop the relationship (Cerinus, 2005; Pack, 2009). Relationships here are based on the interactions between two people – one person is not solely responsible for ensuring it functions well. To develop a strong relationship, it is important that transparency involves understanding the philosophy, and underpinning values and principles of each role and the personal value base of the participants.

It is important not to see supervision as an isolated task. Supervision is an important element in the social systems and construction of social work. However, the way we practise is also impacted by who we work for, the type of training we have had and the client we are discussing. Supervision often mirrors the relationship the supervisee has within these systems (Goldstein, Miehl, & Ringel, 2009). Relationships shape how we discuss the 'case' – by our own values, ethics, and principles. Awareness of these values, ethics, and principles means that the social worker can effectively use supervision to improve outcomes (Ronen & Rosebaum, 1998).

The success of the relationship between a supervisor and their supervisee can be a key factor in the success of problem solving, including our ability to learn and reflect (Bishop & Berryman, 2006). Having a clear framework to support our supervisory relationship means we have a better understanding of the relationship and are able to address any concerns or difficulties that arise (McMahon, 2004).

Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi)

The Treaty of Waitangi was signed in 1840 and recognises Māori as the indigenous people of Aotearoa/New Zealand and describes their relationship with tauiwi. It provides a framework for the protection of the customs and culture of Māori; and provides a basis for tauiwi, in collaboration with Māori, to develop legislation. It includes a platform for developing bicultural frameworks and practices to support all New Zealanders and recognises 'tikanga' (customs) as 'taonga' (treasure) that must be protected (Munford & Walsh-Tapiata, 2006). While there has been contention over the years regarding the meaning and value of the Treaty, it remains a founding document of Aotearoa/New Zealand and provides a statutory basis for biculturalism. Māori still value the Treaty and remain convinced of its cultural and legislative relevance as much now as it was when it was signed (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Durie, 2011).

The Treaty is often referred to as having three core principles: partnership, participation, and protection (Royal Commission on Social Policy, 1988). With this in mind, the Treaty not only gives us permission to practise biculturally (because it creates a statutory framework to do so) but it also shows that it makes good sense to practise and deliver services, including supervision, in a bicultural way. Recognising and valuing the contribution of te ao Māori and the support it can provide in social service supervision has been a focus for many organisations and the Treaty continues to provide us with the frameworks to achieve this (Munford & Sanders, 2010).

How the tuakana/teina relationship can be used as a framework for social work supervision

The tuakana/teina model refers to a system of relationships. It identifies the importance of establishing rapport, trust, respect, and the enormous amount of work associated with keeping these relationships intact. (Thomas & Davis, 2005, p. 201)

Reciprocal learning and mentorship

While the tuakana/teina relationship describes the connection between two people, as already discussed, the principles of te ao Māori mean that this relationship cannot be seen in isolation. The relationship demonstrates the principles of 'whānau' (kinship) and also teaches the importance of caring for others, belonging, and reciprocity. These are principles the teina can apply in other situations (Munford & Sanders, 2010). Reciprocity is important because as the tuakana teaches, they also learn by assisting the teina, as do supervisors in social work supervision. Implicit is the understanding that the tuakana increases their awareness of the needs of the teina and how best to meet these. It is also important for the tuakana to be open to learning from the teina about areas in which the teina may have more experience, knowledge, or practice experience (Smith, 2007). In this way, the cultural underpinnings of this supervision relationship framework shape protocols and guidelines for how supervision can progress.

Structure

Social workers are obligated by their professional body and registration body to practise, including supervision, in ethically sound and bicultural ways to strengthen and support their work. They also commit to the guidelines, policies, and practices set out by their employer in the same way that a tuakana and teina are guided by tikanga and kawa (protocol) in fulfilling their responsibilities to their wider whānau, hapū, and iwi (Caspi & Reid, 2002).

Why Aotearoa/New Zealand social workers can use the tuakana/teina model for supervision

Indigenous social work is about building frameworks that have relevance for indigenous peoples and requires practitioners to begin in a different place, to be open to seeing the world differently, and to think thoughtfully about solutions that may have previously been ignored or misinterpreted (Munford & Sanders, 2010, p. 65).

Aotearoa/New Zealand's commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi

This nation has made a statutory commitment to uphold the Treaty. This means that there is a legislative basis for Māori and tauwi to work together. This provides us with a unique opportunity to deliver social work within a bicultural framework (Durie, 2011). Bicultural frameworks provide this country with an authentic social construct that means that social work, including supervision, can be delivered in a way that is acceptable to both Māori and tauwi (Penetito, 2010). The more we use bicultural frameworks the easier they become assimilated into the fabric of society, and all New Zealanders start to see these models as the right and only way of practising (Penetito, 2010).

Commitment to a bicultural framework

The general presumption of current day Aotearoa/New Zealand is that Māori must be proficient in Western models and culture. A truly bicultural Aotearoa/New Zealand would mean that tauwi would also be proficient in Māori cultural models (Kent & Besley, 1990). The use of bicultural frameworks has had positive results for social workers in Aotearoa/New Zealand. When they develop bicultural constructs it ensures that their practice scope has been widened to improve and shape practice. This is also along the lines of other international communities where indigenous models are helping to improve practice and connect social workers to the fabric of indigenous societies (Munford & Sanders, 2010).

“The [social work] profession has been challenged to develop models of supervision relevant and effective for Māori practitioners both in the established mainstream social services and the newer rōpū [group] and iwi structures” (Kane, 2001, p. 49). The use of the tuakana/teina model as a framework to support supervisory relationships will ensure that social workers are able to improve the delivery of supervision in line with cultural traditions (Munford & Sanders, 2010). It is also in keeping with social work training and organisational practice which seeks to place social work in Aotearoa/New Zealand within a bicultural framework that actively promotes all things Māori and ensures that supervision is based on strong values and principles that promote cultural understanding and diversity (Mataira, 1985).

A bicultural supervision framework – te papare

From 2009 to 2013 the author worked at the Office of the Children's Commissioner as part of the team that monitored the work of Child, Youth and Family. In that role the author had the opportunity to speak to a number of social workers and supervisors about their experiences of supervision and anecdotally found that many of their views mirrored studies completed within Aotearoa/New Zealand that sought social workers' views of supervision (O'Donoghue, 2012; Pack, 2012). Reflecting on the views of the social workers it appeared that they felt that their supervision focused on case work and management of tasks rather than supportive development processes that nurtured reflective practice. Social workers commented that those who felt comfortable practising with Māori were able to use their understanding of te ao Māori to support the work they did with all of their clients and they wanted their supervision to reflect this.

Social workers and supervisors who typically focused on the theory, relationship, and practice of supervision developed successful supervision relationships (O'Donoghue, 2003). Social workers commented that positive supervision enabled them to have courageous conversations that supported their development as well as the development of the clients they work with. Courageous conversations include positive challenges and meaningful co-construction of effective and relevant social work practice to reduce inequality (Singh & Salazer, 2010).

In this model the symbolism of te papare' has been used to help set the scene for supervision. Creating the right environment is essential for ensuring relationships and best practice models are well supported (O'Donoghue, 1998). Supervision should be in a place where social workers can step away from the pressures of work, living and daily activities, and retreat to te papare where they can receive sustenance and support to sustain the implementation of quality social work practice. The room should be made welcoming and warm. Having taonga in the room such as pictures, 'kohatu' (stones), harakeke (flax), and music can help to create a comfortable and peaceful environment. A 'kawa' (a process for how the supervision will be conducted) should be agreed between the supervisor and supervisee. The kawa should include how supervision will be opened and closed, perhaps with a thought, prayer, or reflection, and what the terms of engagement and roles and responsibilities are for the supervisor and the supervisee. Agreeing a supervision contract is a requirement of most organisations and professional bodies.

Along the same lines as the tuakana/teina relationship and te papare, this supervision model is based on three principles.

- **Reciprocity:** In te ao Māori it is clear that even though the older sibling is responsible for guiding their younger sibling, there is much for the tuakana to learn from their engagement with their teina about respect, tolerance, and patience. The teina is also likely to question and challenge the tuakana, and it is important for the teina to be able to do this safely. The tuakana/teina model requires a two-way relationship where there is much to be gained for both participants (Naumann & Winiata, 1990).
- **Obligation:** Alongside reciprocity, there should be a sense of obligation. Providing sound supervision is something the tuakana has been tasked to do and they have an obligation to support and develop the teina. In the same way, the teina has an obligation to actively participate in the supervision.
- **Roles:** A supervision contract will provide an avenue for the tuakana and teina to have an open and transparent understanding of each other's roles, including the boundaries of confidentiality. This helps to set the scene for an open and transparent working relationship underpinned by 'ko wai koe?'; 'ko wai au?' (who are you?; who am I?).

Ultimately the aim of this supervision model is to provide a safe bicultural space in which to have challenging conversations about practice and professional development; and to raise the quality of social work practice with tamariki Māori and their whānau. A rise in practice quality, particularly for Māori, will help to raise the practice standards for all clients (Munford & Sanders, 2010). The outcome will be biculturally strong social work practitioners who have a strong set of resources in their 'kete' (basket), and who know where to seek help and support in their community if they don't have all the answers.

Conclusion

Founded in a Māori worldview and intricately woven together by whakapapa, tangata whenua (indigenous) supervision identifies the importance of establishing, developing, and maintaining complex systems of human relationships (Thomas & Davis, 2005, p. 202).

Regular supervision, which is delivered by a person the supervisee trusts, plays an important role in the way social work is practised. The importance of a strong trusted relationship between a supervisor and supervisee that share values, ethics, and principles is essential for effective supervision. It is also helpful for supervision to be culturally relevant and sit within a bicultural framework.

There are useful Māori philosophies and principles that guide learning models, which can be helpful tools within supervision (Eruera, 2007; Thomas & Davis, 2005). It is important for a tauwi supervisor to learn and understand the underpinning principles of any of these models, so that when they are used, they are not simply a tokenistic tool, but a model of working that aligns with their own values, ethics and principles and sense of self as a supervisor (Eruera, 2007).

Because Aotearoa/New Zealand social work is based on a bicultural code of ethics (ANZASW, 2011) it makes sense that supervision should also be engaged in this way. The Treaty of Waitangi outlines not only social workers' responsibility to work in partnership with 'tangata whenua' (people of the land), but also recognises the importance of Māori tikanga. The tuakana/teina model provides social workers with a clear framework for social work supervision, ensuring that social workers uphold Aotearoa/New Zealand's commitment to the Treaty, their responsibilities to practise biculturally, and ensures that social work and its supervision, is delivered in a culturally competent manner.

This paper has encouraged the use of a bicultural framework, including using a tuakana/teina relationship to frame relationship and te papare to explain where and how supervision takes place, to support social work supervision. The author hopes it prompts social workers and supervisors alike to consider their own supervisory frameworks. It is hoped that future research is undertaken to test the validity and success of a bicultural supervision framework and the impact it has on social work practice.

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Glossary

Ākongā – student, pupil, learner, disciple, protégé
Aroha – affection, sympathy, charity, compassion, love, empathy
Hapū – kinship group, clan, tribe, sub-tribe
Harakeke – flax
Iwi – extended kinship group, tribe, nation, people, nationality, race
Kaumātua – adult, elder, elderly man, elderly woman, old man
Kawa – marae protocol
Kete – basket
Kohatu – rocks, stones
Kotahitanga – unity
Mana – prestige, authority, control, power, influence, status, spiritual power, charisma
Manākihia te pā harakeke – nurturing the family
Motuhake – be separate, special, distinct
Pia – learner
Pākehā – foreigner
Pūkenga – graduate
Rōpū – group, party of people, company, gang, association, entourage
Tamariki – children
Tangata whenua – local people, hosts, indigenous people of the land
Taonga – treasure, anything prized
Tauira – student, pupil, apprentice
Tauwi – foreign people, non-Māori, foreigners, immigrants
Te ao Māori – the Māori worldview

Teina – younger sibling
Te papare – the sanctuary
Te reo – language, dialect, tongue, speech
Tikanga – correct procedure, custom, habit, method, convention
Te Tiriti o Waitangi – The Treaty of Waitangi 1840, founding contract between the indigenous people and the British Crown.
Tohunga – skilled person or chosen expert
Tuakana – older sibling
Wairua – spirit, soul, quintessence
Whānau – family
Whānaungatanga – relationship, kinship, sense of family connection

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Corresponding Author
ZOEY HENLEY
zoeyhenley@yahoo.com)

7 'Cultural encounter': A framework of ethical practice for transnational social workers in Aotearoa

HELEN SIMMONS Registered Social Worker (Massey University)

WHETURANGI WALSH-TAPIATA Registered Social Worker (Te Wananga o Aotearoa)

LITEA MEO-SEWABU (Massey University)

ANTOINETTE UMUGWANEZA (Red Cross Refugee Services)

Abstract

Aotearoa New Zealand is increasingly diverse and multi-ethnic. Consequently, social workers are now emerging from diverse communities to become practitioners in Aotearoa. Research indicates that programmes and frameworks for the induction of transnational social workers are either of variable quality or are non-existent. What is our collective responsibility to ensure that we support transnational social workers to work competently with tangata whenua (indigenous people of the land), and other ethnic groups? This paper proposes a bicultural framework inclusive of a ritual of cultural exchange. It is inspired by the notion of 'cultural encounter' as an ethical pathway to securing competent practice grounded in Aotearoa.

Keywords: transnational social workers, cultural competence, ethical practice, powhiri

Introduction

Professional social workers are now a mobile international workforce. The New Zealand Government has been actively recruiting qualified social workers under its 'Long Term Skills Shortage List' (New Zealand Immigration Service, 2013), for some time in response to an inability to meet the demand for supply of local graduates (Bartley, Beddoe, Duke, Fouché, Harington, & Shah, 2011). The School of Counselling, Human Services and Social Work, University of Auckland, has been involved in a major study developing a profile of migrant social workers and the key issues they experience. These findings have been reported across a series of published articles and form an important source of information for this paper (Bartley et al., 2011; Bartley, Beddoe, Fouché, & Harington, 2012; Beddoe, Fouché, Bartley, & Harington, 2012; Fouché, C., Beddoe, L., Bartley, A., & De Haan, 2013). The research over three stages considers the key characteristics of 234 registered social workers who hold a social work qualification gained in a country other than New Zealand (Bartley et al., 2011), 18 key informant group interviewees and a survey of 294 overseas-qualified social workers (Bartley et al., 2012).

Social work registration is not mandatory in Aotearoa so potentially this sample is a fraction of the total number of migrant social workers employed. The study found participants were ill-prepared for the local context and over 50% did not experience any induction or orientation on commencing employment (Fouché, Beddoe, Bartley, & Brenton, 2013). This paper discusses some of the critical issues raised from their ongoing research project, proposes an ethical framework to assist a way forward using case study examples, and concludes with a summary and recommendations.

Locating ourselves

The authors came together as a group of social work educators around a mutual concern of transnational social workers being employed in Aotearoa without adequate preparation for the cultural context. The research from the University of Auckland reinforced our concerns from different standpoints. Helen Simmons is a Pākehā (New Zealander of European descent) and is employed at Massey University as a Professional Clinician. She has worked alongside her co-authors and other colleagues over a number of years developing and delivering programmes to enhance cultural competence. Helen also facilitates training for Treaty of Waitangi (the founding document of New Zealand between the British Crown and Maori tribes) education.

Wheturangi Walsh-Tapiata as Tangata Whenua (indigenous people of the land), hails from the tribes of Ngaa Rauru, Ngati Ruanui, Te Ati Awa, Ngati Rangī, Te Atihaunui a Paparangi and Ngati Raukawa. She has taught in the area of social work for many years and is currently the Kaiarahi (national programme manager) for the Social Work programmes at Te Wananga o Aotearoa.

Litea Meo-Sewabu, a transnational professional, is from Fiji and has lived in New Zealand for the last seven years. She is employed by Massey University as the Coordinator for the Pacific Research & Policy Centre and is in the final stages of her PhD looking at the cultural constructs of health and well-being amongst indigenous Fijian women.

Antoinette Umugwaneza provides a client perspective in this article and is from Rwanda. She came to New Zealand in 1996 as a refugee. She has a Bachelor in Economics and Social Sciences from National University of Rwanda and a Diploma in Counselling from UCOL, New Zealand. She currently works as a case worker for Red Cross Refugee Services in Manawatu.

Community development process

We adopted a community development process to explore our possible responsibilities to support transnational social workers to work competently with Māori and other ethnic groups, and to consider how transnational social workers are equipped for dealing with the cultural considerations peculiar to this context. As writers we considered the relevant literature and our positioning which enabled an action–reflection process to occur. This led to the proposed ethical framework, using powhiri (greeting ceremony), as a means of considering transnational social workers understanding and having the competency to practise within Aotearoa. We asked ourselves: what then are the critical issues when working cross-culturally in Aotearoa?

Critical issues

Research suggests that the transferability of social work practice skills is less straightforward than other professions in a foreign context (Crisp, 2009; Simpson, 2009; White, 2006). Any professional training is culturally encased and therefore transferring practice from one cultural context to another is not a straightforward transaction. This is particularly so in Aotearoa where a Treaty-based bicultural framework underpins social work practice. The Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW) *Code of Ethics* charges practitioners, managers, educators, and professional bodies with promoting understanding and practice based on Te Tiriti o Waitangi amongst all colleagues (ANZASW, 2008). It is the Treaty framework that mandates our bicultural and subsequent multicultural working relationships.

Findings from the major study (Fouché et al., 2013) conducted by the University of Auckland indicated that nearly 60% of respondents had no, or minimal, knowledge of the cultural and socio-political context in Aotearoa/New Zealand before they arrived. Fifty-two percent (52.7%) did not experience any induction or orientation on commencing employment (Fouché et al., 2013). Induction and orientation is a professional responsibility belonging to us all. This challenge is what we wish to respond to in this paper.

Current professional position on cultural competence

Currently social work registration is not mandatory in Aotearoa and membership of ANZASW and Tangata Whenua Association of Social Workers (TWASW) is voluntary. However, it is argued that, through their very existence, these entities propose both a minimum and an ideal vision for social work in Aotearoa to inspire social workers. The vision includes the expectation to demonstrate and maintain competence to practise social work with Māori and with different ethnic and cultural groups (ANZASW, 2008b). Cultural competence and the critique thereof has become a part of health and human service thinking, writing, and funding over the past two decades as organisations seek to grapple with increasing diversity in practice (Furlong & Wight, 2011). What is meant by cultural competence, the importance of it to social work, and how it is determined varies from ethical, socio-political, and clinical perspectives (Furlong & Wight, 2011; Lee, 2011; Parrott, 2009; Walker, 2012).

Frequently professional standards on cultural competence emphasise cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, and cultural skills (SWRB, 2012a; SWRB, 2012b; National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2007). Some authors highlight the importance of critical reflexivity on individual and political levels, and dialogue where those involved mutually subject their cultures to creative scrutiny (Furlong & Wight, 2011; Parrott, 2009). To be avoided is any sense that cultural competence can be commodified and ticked-off in a box (Furlong & Wight, 2011) but rather that a partnership opportunity is provided at practice (micro) and organisational (macro) levels.

Lee (2011), in investigating the clinical significance of cultural competencies highlighted that existing empirical process and outcome research has consistently reported that workers who are deemed culturally competent tend to show improved treatment processes and outcomes with culturally-diverse clients when it comes to clients' perceptions of the worker, outcomes, attrition, self-disclosure, and the working alliance. Lee (2011) refers to cross-cultural competencies as the capacity to attune to the clients' culturally-embedded lived experience and to create shared moments which are dynamically formative and relational.

The importance of the 'up close and personal' transformational aspect of acquiring cultural competence led us to the research of Campinha-Bacote (2011) who emphasises cultural encounter as the pivotal and key construct in the process of becoming culturally competent. Through continuous encounters one can develop awareness, knowledge, skill, and the desire to keep encountering.

Walker (2012) concurs that the more practitioners are exposed to, and develop strong relationships with, the cultural and ethnic 'other', the more competent they are likely to become and the less risk there is of cultural voyeurism. We asked ourselves what might best describe these facets in our context. The powhiri came to mind as a possible local ethical framework which focuses on cultural encounter.

A tangata whenua perspective

Tangata whenua, as indigenous people of Aotearoa, believe it is important to greet manuhiri (visitors) as a critical position in establishing the nature of their mutual relationship, when they come into the country. The process of greeting (powhiri) enables the respective parties to clearly understand the roles of tangata whenua and of manuhiri.

Relationships between people need to be guided by a set of rules or ethical behaviours (Mead, 2003). The powhiri ceremony generally happens on the marae (meeting place of whanau) although it can now also happen in a number of other settings.

Manuhiri tūārangi refers to visitors who come from afar. They are generally acknowledged as important visitors to the marae. The powhiri provides the cultural context of an encounter between two peoples. Powhiri as an ethical framework has been adapted from the work of Mead (2003, pp. 117–132).

Powhiri: an ethical framework

Principles evident in powhiri

Tapu and noa: The powhiri is a formal event and is seen as tapu (sacred). The ritual enables a progression of being tapu to a state where human relationships are balanced and where people can then meet more informally. This balanced state is called noa.

Ea: This state is achieved when all the requirements of the powhiri have been addressed in an appropriate manner. A series of obligations, roles and responsibilities exist on both sides. New arrivals will need to be made aware of their respective roles. Tangata whenua will also need to prepare themselves and have a clear understanding about who the visitors are and why have they have come to this place. Not all powhiri are the same and so appropriate adjustments will need to be made dependent on the situation. Both sides, therefore, contribute to ensuring that ea occurs. At the end of the powhiri, the hosts should be able to say "Kua ea" (it is done) (Mead, 2003, p. 118).

Ihi: When the two groups come together, a ritual of encounter occurs. This contributes to the ihi (the excitement) of the occasion. A range of emotions occur during a powhiri. Initially there may be confrontation or a process of checking each other out, but the relationship gradually changes as the powhiri progresses. Ihi is achieved when you can feel it, sense it, and when the hair stands up on the back of your neck. Some powhiri have all of these emotions, while many others are low-key and friendly occasions. The ceremony is flexible and can occur outside or inside the whare (meeting house), or in a variety of different places (Mead, 2003, p. 119). The tone is generally set by the tangata whenua and is again dependent on the importance of the occasion.

Manaakitanga: Hospitality is an important principle whereby tangata whenua will ensure that, as the hosts, they look after the manuhiri (visitors). This is a part of the ritual of encounter. Manaakitanga by the hosts is an important practice that has to be maintained. It is a critical reflection of the marae if they are known for their manaakitanga.

Kaitiakitanga: Being a good kaitiaki (steward) ensures that the mana (prestige) of the marae and its people is maintained. This is an important awareness that occurs as a result of powhiri. Being good kaitiaki is important for tangata whenua.

Powhiri is a complex set of practices whereby the hosts and visitors engage in a series of rituals of encounter leading to the parties' ability to then socialise in a more informal manner. Powhiri allows a transformation of the encounter to occur.

The transformation process of powhiri

Preparation: Both parties need to equally prepare themselves for the powhiri or the whakaeke (embarking on to the marae). You need to be aware of the role that you play and the connections that you have to the marae and to the group as you proceed on to the marae.

For transnational social workers this could occur at two points, initially when they come into the country, and/or when they start in their role as a social worker.

Wero: The wero is a challenge laid out by the hosts to the guests in order to ascertain the purpose of their visit (are they friend or foe?). This does not occur at all powhiri but may happen on important occasions.

For transnational social workers, their initial challenge will be in choosing to come and live in Aotearoa and then further challenges will be in contextualising themselves into working as social workers.

Karanga: A series of karanga (calls) occur from women from both tangata whenua and manuhiri as they come on to the marae. The karanga cover a range of topics including acknowledging the ancestors of the marae, those that have passed on, the group that are coming on to the marae, and the purpose for which they are coming.

For transnational social workers this may include the way in which they enter the country (as refugees or immigrants) – all have arrived as visitors. This, therefore, is a moment of discovery where each party acknowledges who they are, their past, and their connections. This stage also requires a level of analysis by each party in their roles as Treaty partners. This can be challenging for transnational social workers who, as the University of Auckland research indicated, may not even be aware that this analysis, understanding and subsequent practice is a critical part of social work practice in Aotearoa. They may not even know where to start.

Whakaeke: This is the practice of embarking on to the marae. Generally the women will be at the front and the men at the back (although there are tribal variations). The group will need to be conscious of their surroundings: environment, the people involved in the powhiri, and their respective roles. The wero and karanga are a part of the whakaeke.

The whakaeke is a literal decision by both parties to participate in a relationship or encounter. It is the moment when you embark on a new adventure. However, this must occur with some caution, with the use of all of our external senses. You become aware of the place, the people, and the roles and rituals in this new place just as astutely as those who are of this place and who are watching you. For transnational social workers this could be a phase when they are orienting themselves into the country and into their specific area of social work.

Tangi ki nga mate: As the group embarks onto the marae they will stop in front of the wharenuī (ancestral meeting house) and acknowledge those who have passed on both sides. It is a spiritual moment where all connect to their ancestors, where there is a mutual merging of our spirituality. This is a critical moment in the ritual of encounter as the two parties merge and share a wairua (spirit, soul).

This ritual of encounter is where the merging of the two groups occurs and where there is a mutual acknowledgment of those who have passed. For transnational social workers this is about remembering the people they have left behind, the trauma and crises that they may have come from. This is a moment to acknowledge all of this 'spiritually'. It is a very emotive time but the shared understanding also enables some collective healing to occur.

Whaikorero: Whaikorero (speech) is led by the men from both sides and again enables the two parties to acknowledge each other, their past, their present, their future, and the reason which has drawn them to be a part of the powhiri.

While there is formality in the way in which they address each other, the whaikorero offers opportunities to tell stories, to laugh and to cry, to share, and to acknowledge their differences and their similarities.

Waiata: Each whaikorero is followed by a waiata (song). The waiata is a way in which the group acknowledges and embellishes the speaker, and at times it may also be an opportunity to remind the speaker that they are a collective group. What is sung should complement the speaker and his speech, as well as linking the home people to the visitors and vice versa, and the event which has brought them together.

Hohou te rongō: Literally this means the sharing of two breaths. This is another moment where the two groups acknowledge each other as a form of ritual. This is the moment where, on a one-to-one basis the tangata whenua acknowledge and invite those who are manuhiri into their place and space. They merge into one group.

The process of powhiri allows transnational social workers to consider appropriate cultural rituals of encounter within their work. The process of sharing breaths ensures that people become 'up close and personal'.

Hakari: The formal part of the powhiri finishes when a hakari (feast) occurs. This is a noa agent and is a time when the hosts show their manaakitanga (hospitality) and kaitiakitanga (stewardship) to the guests. The sharing of food is a key cultural marker which enables both formality and informality to merge.

Within the hui (gathering) at the marae, there are two other practices that cement the relationship established through the powhiri process.

Mihimihi: The whare of Rongo (the house of peace), enables everyone to introduce themselves, and to acknowledge where they come from, including their mountain, their river, their land, their tribe, and their family.

For transnational social workers this provides them all with an opportunity to talk about the place that they have come from, their connections to their places as well as the journey which brought them to Aotearoa. These narratives are a form of connection with others.

Poroporoaki: When the hui or gathering is finished, generally the visitors will get up to acknowledge the hosts, both those in the kitchen who have fed them and those who have facilitated the hui.

In the context of this article, powhiri is a framework that can be used in welcoming and orientating transnational immigrants into Aotearoa, into the practice of social work and as a potential model of practice based on a Māori theoretical worldview.

The following narrative is a case study discussing how the cultural encounter may occur at an organisational (macro) level using the powhiri framework. The encounter signifies what occurs when this process is honoured. The exchange occurs with another indigenous culture, that of Fiji.

Narrative 1

Yaqona is known to be the traditional drink of Fiji and is used in almost every Fijian cultural protocol such as entry to a land, asking for a girl's hand in marriage, and funerals, just to name a few. The drink is used to formalise processes and seal agreements. Yaqona is also used as a medium for reconciliation and used as an entry point to a land (whenua) or a village, a community or a home, through what is called the sevusevu. When a sevusevu is done it means that we are honouring the land or the whenua that is being entered (Nabobo-Baba, 2006; Ravuvu, 1983).

The yaqona ceremonies are significant for building harmony and maintaining relationships. Informally, it is a way of bringing people together to talanoa or talk and discuss issues that relate to their everyday living. The sitting format is a circular pattern, where planning, discussions, and other important matters are discussed.

Similar to the powhiri process, the yaqona ceremony through the sevusevu is a form of cultural encounter. It signifies the sharing of our ancestors. When we do this within the land we are lifting the tapu, giving us the right to be in a place, achieving the balance or noa.

Cultural encounters within a transnational population group can only occur if the person is ethically grounded into the culture they have become part of. An example of this exchange occurred at Massey University in 2010.

In the 50-plus years that students from Fiji have been attending Massey University, the 'sevusevu' had never been performed or conducted by Fijians entering the university. In 2010, the Fijian student association, led by one of our PhD students, conducted a cultural encounter process with Rangitane iwi (local tribe). The powhiri process allowed for the sevusevu, sealed by the yaqona ceremony, to occur. The encounter signified that Fijian students at Massey University were honouring the land of Rangitane and paying respect to their ancestors by first asking for forgiveness for not performing this ceremony the first time they entered the land and then asking for their blessing to stay and be part of the land.

This was accepted through the powhiri process. The ceremony signifies that Fijians are coming to tangata whenua in anticipation that they will be well looked after, protected, and kept safe until they return to Fiji. It means that the relationship between the tangata whenua and litaukei (indigenous Fijians) is being strengthened by the formalisation of the exchange.

In participating in the yaqona ceremony, tangata whenua are sealing the agreement that while our people are in the whenua they will be honoured and protected just as much or more than they have been within a Fijian community or when they return to Fiji. The cultural encounter, we felt, gave Fijians within Massey University the right to be in the whenua. Balance was reached at the end of the cultural encounter process, the ea, or feeling and sensing that balance had been achieved.

This is an example of the processes that can be done as part of the cultural encounter within transnational communities in Aotearoa. This example is on a broader, macro level. The next case study provides practical examples of what can occur if the immersion process within the cultural encounter of the powhiri is not fully embraced or acknowledged.

A client perspective

From a client perspective three key values are highlighted as important in order to get support from social workers. These key values are: being able to harness a safe space and validating identity; being able to connect and work alongside the client; and building trust in order that a genuine encounter may occur.

Narrative 2

I will start by telling you briefly about my background. I came to New Zealand 17 years ago, with my husband, my five children, my mother-in-law and my niece. I came as a refugee after the genocide and war which took place in Rwanda in 1994, when more than one million people were killed.

I had never heard of New Zealand and I could not even locate it on a map but I had no other choice. As a refugee I could not be happier. Despite being among the luckiest people in the world, my life in New Zealand in the early days was like a rollercoaster. It is during that period that for the first time I had the chance to have support from a social worker.

I had the privilege of having two to three social workers as a mother of a special needs child. I had three-five social workers as a full-time caregiver of my mother-in-law who was critically ill; I had three more social workers as a mother of five who was extremely stressed and depressed. Finally, I had at least three other social workers as a refugee wife who was extremely isolated with very little English. I really have to admit that I would not have survived without the support of the wonderful social workers I had. In saying this though, sometimes my family and I were irritated, frustrated, and even annoyed by so many home visits. At some stages we had six to ten different social workers a week. There was a lot of confusion in our minds.

I was exhausted with so many, and all sorts, of responsibilities, and I needed a lot of support but it was really confusing and hard to open up to the social workers as they were like strangers to us.

I was still confused about my own identity as an African woman and a wife in a completely different environment. I needed first to be valued as who I am and I needed time to trust them and feel safe to talk about my problems. I needed a space and someone to validate my identity as a person, not as another case to work on.

Sometimes we felt that some support was not culturally appropriate. For instance, several social workers suggested that we took our mother-in-law to a rest home. Although now I believe the social workers meant well, but in our culture this was not an option. We thank God we did not have to do it. I remember some moments when our young daughters would refuse to open the door for some social workers, as they were afraid they may come and take their GrandMa away. She died at home at the age of 92.

Another time when I believed the support I received was not culturally suitable was when I was extremely homesick, stressed, and depressed. I was so aggressive and everybody in the family was so intense. My social worker recommended me to see my GP and he prescribed me anti-depressants and referred me to mental health services. My social worker booked me into stay at a women's refuge. I didn't take

the medication and refused to go to mental health services as I had a stigma about this service, but I was excited about going to Women's Refuge, away from my family to rest and relax. The social worker from Women's Refuge rang me and told me that she was coming to pick me up and I told her that my husband was dropping me off. The social worker could not believe it; she said that I should not have told my husband. But there was no way I could have gone anywhere at all without telling my husband.

So the Women's Refuge place was not an option for me. In my culture, even if you have been beaten up by your husband, the women are not able to hide. In my culture, you hide only if you want to end your relationship.

In terms of the values I highlighted at the beginning, when I heard about the powhiri process, I thought that would have helped me to feel safe and connect with the social workers before then talking openly about my issues. I found that your coming to my home, introducing yourself and your role were not enough for me to feel safe. Due to that, I realised that I was not listening or allowing the social worker to help me.

Later on, I had the chance to visit a marae where a powhiri took place. I found that welcome process made me feel good and confident about my own identity and proud about my own values. If I had experienced that powhiri process when I first entered the country, it could have helped me in two ways: first as a migrant, to feel more welcome and know that I had a 'green card' to be in this land. Secondly, it was also a way to value my own culture and my identity rather than trying to fit in someone else's culture. This powhiri process can also apply when a social worker comes to visit you for the first time. As a client, I believed that welcoming social workers in my home and in my way would allow me to connect with them, establish fair relationships and then allow them to help me more efficiently.

In my culture, it takes time to trust people and I believe the powhiri could have helped me to create a safe space to share, have an equal respect, and build positive and genuine relationships. I wish I could have had this opportunity in my early days.

The case studies within the two narratives enable us to see the potential of powhiri as an ethical framework and to enhance the competencies of all parties involved in the cultural encounter.

A social work model of practice

The powhiri establishes the fundamental relationship between two parties, tangata whenua and manuhiri. It is also a model of practice that could be included as a part of transnational social workers' training, alongside other models that are unique to Aotearoa.

The table on the following pages provides suggestions of how the cultural encounter may occur at macro and micro levels.

Table 1: Powhiri as a model of practice

Phases of powhiri	Macro	Micro
<i>Preparation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding out about the culture and the context that you are walking in to. • Narrative 1 provided an example of what may occur for tangata whenua and indigenous Fijians when entering the marae, land, space, or place. • Narrative 2 provided examples of what occurs when there is a lack of understanding when entering into a home of someone from a different culture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find out about the culture of the family you will be visiting. • What protocols may be required. • What processes may need to occur in order to build trust. • Should refreshments or koha be taken? • Is a translator needed in order to understand the client and family?
<i>Wero</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gauging what needs to be done. The example provided two ceremonies from the Fiji side that needed to occur. • The apology was asking for forgiveness for not acknowledging the land when students first entered the university. • The second example asked for permission to be present in the land, for now and the future. • In terms of different cultures we may need to consider how we relate to the Treaty and the historical context of Aotearoa. • We will also need to understand the journeys that have enabled other cultures to be here in Aotearoa. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are cultural values respected and harnessed? • How can you ensure that a safe space is created with the client? • How does a wider understanding of the cultural context of the client help you understand your relationship with the client?
<i>Karanga</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the role of your culture in relation to the Treaty and how to address these. • Understanding relationships and the role of tangata whenua and the role of manuhiri. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding that all stereotypical ideas about a culture need to be put aside. • Be prepared to have your own worldview ruptured so you can encounter the client's worldview. For example, misconception about caring for the elderly in Narrative 2 resulted because the social worker was imposing their own worldview.
<i>Whakaeke</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being aware of what is expected mentally, physically, and spiritually when entering the place of encounter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commit to genuine relationship for a real encounter to take place. • Acknowledging those present in a manner that is respectful to avoid any misunderstanding. • Being aware of the environment where the encounter will occur, what is respectful ranging from mannerism, clothing, what to take with you that ensures encounter occurs in a safe space.

Phases of powhiri	Macro	Micro
<i>Tangi ki nga mate</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding that from various cultural perspectives that spirituality is pivotal to their well-being. Ensuring therefore that spaces are provided within the workplace in which spirituality can be acknowledged if needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When working with the client this may involve having to say a prayer or share some words of wisdom. In addition, an understanding of silence may be needed.
<i>Whaikoreo</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring that policies are conducive to creating an environment in which the past, present, and future is acknowledged. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledging the purpose of the visit and attempting to form a genuine relationship with the client and family. Being open to spiritual understandings.
<i>Waiata</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How can the organisations ensure that Māori values are embellished and embraced? What other ways of effective communication can occur? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clients may wish to serve you food or sing or perform a practice from their culture to honour you. This should be welcomed and not judged.
<i>Houhou te rongo</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accepting of different cultures, their differences, and their possible similarities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflecting the essence of genuinely trying to help the client – that you are there to work alongside them rather than tell them what to do.
<i>Hakari</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agencies must allow spaces in which cultural encounters can occur, gifts exchanged, and reciprocity to be acknowledged. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is when sharing takes place and clients are able to gauge who you are, how you express yourself and ensuring that you are not judgmental in this process.
<i>Mihimihī</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledging that as a responsible service in Aotearoa, you are accepting the role of kaitiaki to induct transnational social workers to practice competently in Aotearoa. As transnational social workers, accepting that you come with knowledge and skills but also have the ability to learn from this place about this space. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring that introductions take place where you allow the client to discuss their culture and who they are. This may allow you to take your professional hat off and be personable. This is an important stage as not achieving this makes it difficult to work with the client.
<i>Poroporoaki</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring that the cultural processes are reciprocated. Ensuring that the ending is as important as everything else from a cultural perspective. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once trust is built and the client can sense genuineness in your approach, you will be able to address the issues and ensure self-determination is achieved.

Through the powhiri, transnational social workers can become aware of the role of tangata whenua and manuhiri and of the importance of recognising the roles of all parties who now live in Aotearoa. Tangata whenua will always remain tangata whenua but powhiri allows a critical relationship, a relationship of encounter to occur. It makes the relationship meaningful and therefore hopefully allows transnational social workers to have an initial understanding of Māori culture and the new place that they are now living in.

Orientating transnational social workers into the practice of social work in Aotearoa

It cannot be assumed that because one is a qualified social worker in another country that one necessarily knows how to practise social work in Aotearoa. Orientating (which includes competency and registration of these workers), could use a powhiri process to contextualise their position, their role, and their relationship within Aotearoa and with tangata whenua in Aotearoa. This could form a part of their pathway to competency. We believe this should be a priority when professionals come from another country, otherwise there is the potential for tangata whenua to be further oppressed through a lack of understanding by transnational social workers of the situation and context under a Treaty relationship in Aotearoa. Using a powhiri framework should therefore become a necessary component for all transnational social workers who are seeking social work registration. This should include a powhiri as well as a deconstruction and analysis of it as part of their practice here.

Framework discussion and summary

Our community development journey together has highlighted that powhiri is both a process and a tool that provides an ethical framework for transnational social worker engagement in Aotearoa. It is grounded in the principles and practices of tangata whenua and honours the need for practice based on Te Tiriti o Waitangi (ANZASW, 2008a). Antoinette has shared how the powhiri confirmed her in her own identity and values, and as a process would enable her as a client to welcome, connect, and ultimately develop trust to build a genuine working relationship with a social worker. While Litea as Fijian, represents an ethnic minority in Aotearoa, most transnational social workers who enter New Zealand under the government's 'Long Term Skills Shortage List' join the ranks of our white ethnic majority (Bartley et al., 2012). Irrespective of this, powhiri enables who they are and what they bring to be ethically grounded in this place. Welcoming is not just a matter of providing transnational social workers with training and opportunities to meet the local challenges of working in Aotearoa but also providing them with opportunities to contribute. Kjellberg and French (2011) in their study involving service users in the training of Swedish social work students, found that developing a process based on reciprocity enhanced a sense of mutual respect. The research project referred to earlier would suggest we have not been managing this process well and Litea's example of the importance of apology is worthy of note.

Explicit and implicit in the powhiri is the role of the kaitiaki (steward). As explained, the role of the kaitiaki is formed in the relational encounter between two groups. As practitioners, managers, educators, professional bodies, and SWRB, we all share in the reciprocal responsibility of ensuring that our manuhiri (visitors) have ample opportunity to seek out cultural encounters on the path to ethically ground their practice.

We contend that cultural competency is an ongoing journey of cultural encounters that can create meaningful reciprocal relationships to build a desire of *wanting* to, rather than *having* to, become competent ethical practitioners.

Visioning

In creating a vision for social work and the social service sector in Aotearoa and beyond we have had a taste of what powhiri offers as an ethical framework for practice.

We thus recommend for the SWRB:

- 1 That a policy for transnational social workers is created using powhiri as an ethical framework, to ensure that Treaty-based relationships remain paramount.
- 2 That as tangata Tiriti (people of the Treaty), we commit to this process in order that transnational social workers, and indeed all social workers, will encounter and understand the uniqueness of social work practice in Aotearoa.

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Corresponding Author

HELEN SIMMONS

h.simmons@massey.ac.nz

8 A vision for social work leadership: Critical conceptual elements

MIKE WEBSTER Registered Social Worker (University of Auckland)

Abstract

This conceptual paper proposes that social justice and ecological systems thinking offers unique perspectives to frame a vision for social work leadership. The author argues that leadership is underpinned by the profession's values in its ethical codes: social justice; authenticity; spirituality; servant leadership; personal and professional integrity. An indigenous leadership perspective derived from the bicultural code of ethics connects with organic perceptions of leadership and whole systems and complex adaptive approaches. Tensions between ethics, organisational imperatives, and pervasive new public management requiring future attention are identified.

Keywords: social justice, managerialism, indigenous, leadership

Introduction

The 'critical conceptual elements' for social work leadership set out in this paper represent the early steps for the author in a doctoral journey of a thousand miles (to adapt a frequently quoted Chinese proverb). The aim of the project is to develop a New Zealand model of social work leadership in an organisational context. Because purposeful research connects with the professional community to which the research is directed (Patton, 2002), the project draws from the recognition in 2004 by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) of management as a core purpose of the profession (Sewpaul & Jones, 2005). Study objectives are to explore how registered social workers (RSWs) in Aotearoa New Zealand conceptualise and describe organisational leadership.

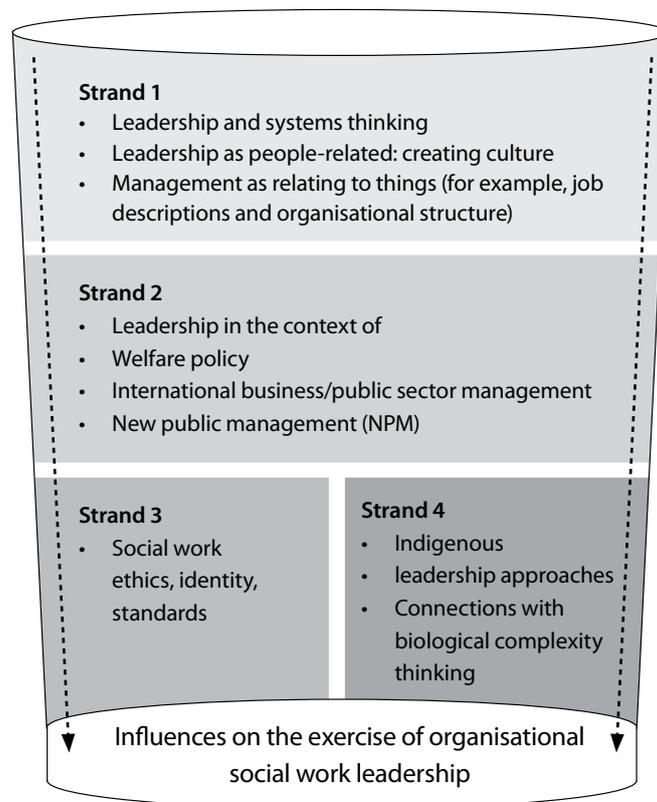
Mapping a pathway: content of the paper

The study is informed by purposefully-selected leadership literature strands, canvassing leadership in four diverse contexts. The first strand investigates leadership in the context of systems thinking (Attwood, Pedler, Pritchard, & Wilkinson, 2003). It defines the parameters of management and leadership and proposes that management deals with 'things': essentially the familiar functions, *inter alia*, of planning, organising, and controlling. Leadership by contrast relates to people who create the culture of the organisation (Mackenzie, 1969, cited in Bass & Bass, 2008). The second strand explores leadership in the context of the fourth Labour government's neoliberal reforms in the 1980s (Scott, 2001) and their continuation for the first three years (1990–1993) of the Bolger National government. It notes the influences on social work leadership of international business and public sector management thinking (Boston, Martin, Pallot, & Walsh, 1996); and explores the influence on leadership of new public management (NPM), and the organisational application of the neoliberal revolution (Healy, 2009; Heffernan, 2006). Strand three addresses leadership as informed by social work ethics and identity where social justice is located (Bisman, 2004; Marsh, 2005). Finally, the fourth

strand explores indigenous leadership approaches (Goldsbury, 2004) and their connection with biological complexity thinking (Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007).

The selection of these strands is underpinned by a clear rationale. Social work organisational leadership is exercised in the contexts represented by each strand. Strand 1 is conceptually located at the widest, top end of an imaginary funnel (Figure 1). I propose that each strand exercises increasingly specific influences on the exercise of social work leadership. The unique *configuration* of these strands constitutes the researcher's thinking which underpins the entire project and from which new knowledge will emerge. The rationale for—and importance of—the project derives from the current gap in New Zealand social work leadership literature of an overarching model of organisational leadership.

Figure 1: Influence of literature strands on organisational social work leadership



This paper focuses on a critical review of the literature informing the project by discussing the key issues in social work leadership identified in Figure 1. I will argue that leadership for the profession is framed in ecological systems thinking (Attwood et al., 2003; Bronfenbrenner, 2005) and social work's ethical codes expressed through authenticity (Luthans & Avolio, 2003); spirituality (Crisp, 2011; Fawcett, S. E., Brau, Rhoads, Whitlark, & Fawcett, A. M., 2008); servant leadership (Freeman, 2011; Greenleaf, 1977); and personal and professional integrity (Appleton, 2010). I will also propose that New Zealand's unique bicultural code of social work ethics (Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers, [ANZASW] 2008) and the notion of workplace spirituality obligates consideration of indigenous ideas of organisation—better expressed as 'organism'—and leadership. The paper will suggest that critical reflection on the issues identified and the literature selected provide a pathway for subsequent social work leadership research.

As noted, the placement of the funnel's strands is purposeful. The structure of this paper could follow a sequential pathway considering each strand and its components in descending order—and indeed, strand 1 will be explored first. However, I have chosen an alternative schema based on the conceptual connections

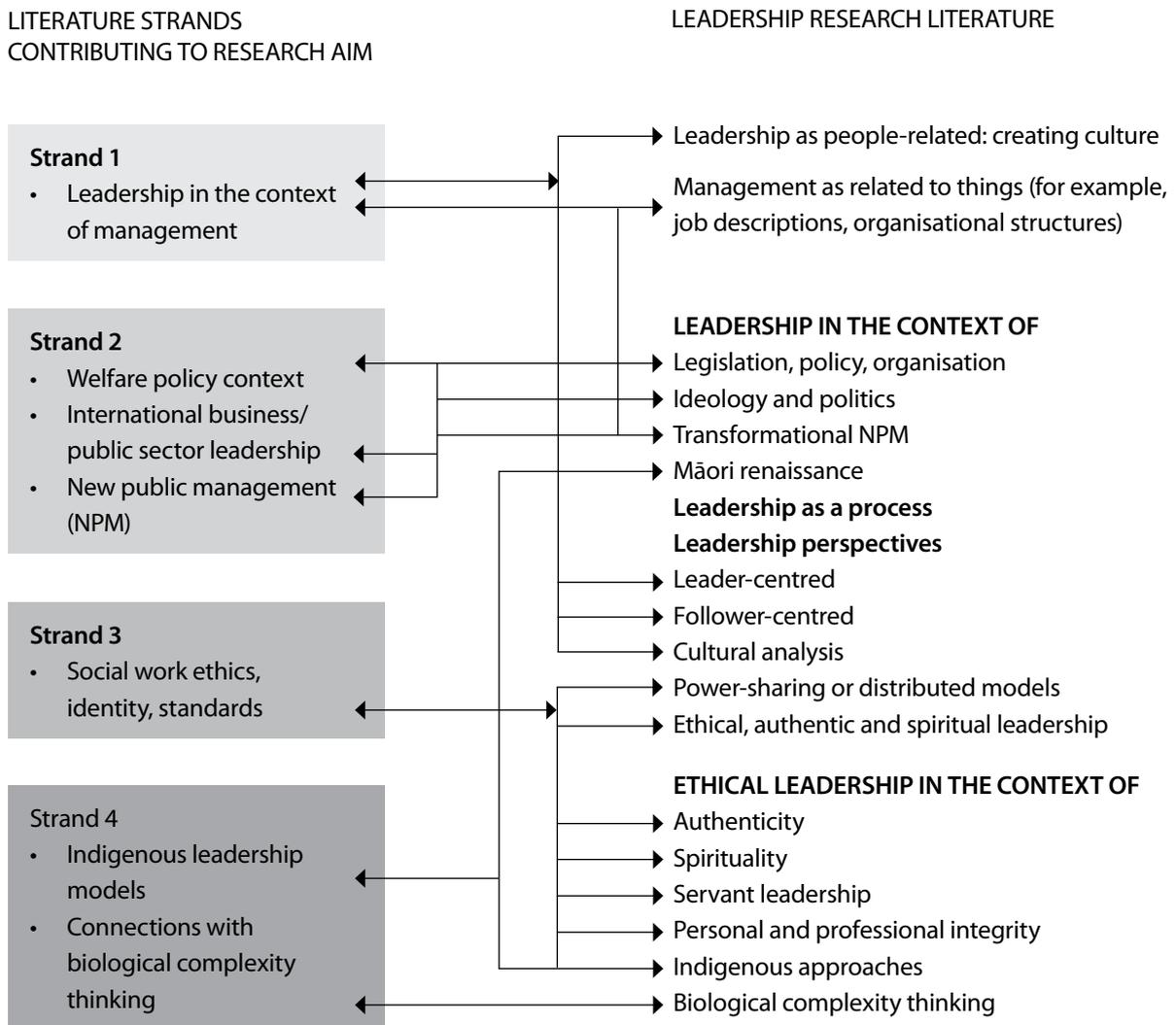
between the literature strands as conceived by the author and the extant research literature (Figure 2). It readily becomes apparent that the research literature is not neatly located in each strand. Consistent with qualitative research's characteristic iterative approach to the task (Crotty, 2003), organic connections between the strands and current literature will act as the overarching design of this review. As conceptual associations are made, discussion will follow. Four thesis chapters addressing current and historical literature cannot be compressed into a single paper. It follows that this critical review will perforce be selective. The reader will be the judge as to the priorities assigned to that selection.

Leadership, management and systems thinking (strand 1)

A starting point for the review is located in systems thinking which has long been integral to social work theory and practice (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Jarvis, 2009). It has also been applied to organisational leadership by Attwood et al. (2003) who propose 'whole systems development' (2003, p. xv) as giving rise to 'systemic questions' defining how leadership is exercised. They suggest that asking the right questions is critical, a position also taken by Grint (2005) in identifying 'wicked problems' as the domain of leadership. Attwood et al. formulate questions in a collective vein of thought, evidenced by the collegiality implicit in certain key words emphasised in the text:

- 1 How can I best use my position...to assist **us** all to make sense of what is going on, so that **together we** can contribute to sustainable change?
- 2 How do I lead this organisation so that **we** can make the best possible contribution to the **improvement and well-being of those we serve**?
- 3 How can I **share** my ideas and emerging goals in ways that do not **stultify debate** but assist learning about the '**bigger picture**'?
- 4 How do I ensure that **we** implement plans that **we have agreed with partners**? (Attwood et al., 2003, pp. 31, 32, emphasis added).

Figure 2: Conceptualising social work leadership literature



Lines indicate conceptual connections between the strands and the research literature.

Leadership, which seeks to genuinely empower frontline practitioners, will use questions as set out by Attwood et al. (2003). The enquiry-mode questions posed offer striking systemic or ecologically-based thinking applied to leadership in the profession. Open-ended questions signal an agenda characterised by Follett’s ‘power-with’ as distinct from ‘power-over’ thinking and practice (Follett, 1995). An invitation to share power is implicit in their wording. Instead of imposed solutions, ‘power-with’ leadership acknowledges its need of the insights from diverse levels in the organisation in decision-making processes (Oshagbemi & Gill, 2004). This acknowledges, first, that people create the culture of the organisation in which they work in a ‘bottom-up’ rather than ‘top-down’ manner (Hunt, Osborn, & Boal, 2009). Second, it is congruent with Senge’s (1992) organisational learning core discipline of building a shared vision. Senge argues that when there is a shared vision—as opposed to the familiar ‘vision statement’—people excel and learn because they want to. Third, as workers feel a sense of achievement, recognition, responsibility and challenge in creating a workplace organisational culture Herzberg’s classic motivators are activated, acting as a reinforcing loop for more innovation (Fisher, 2009; Smith & Shields, 2012). Senge (1992, p. 13) notes that a learning organisation enables people to both craft and modify the circumstances in which they work, citing the ancient Greek mathematician Archimedes: “Give me a lever long enough...and I can move the world.” Social work practice and leadership as exercising a change agent function is graphically illustrated in that lever.

These considerations fit social work's empowerment value (Leonard, 2009). They apply to Attwood et al.'s (2003) collegial questions by designated leaders to workers to 'make sense' of events and processes; an acknowledgment that the plural 'we' and 'us' are needed for 'sustainable change' and 'best possible contribution' to others. 'Partnership' is in view—partnership between organisational players at different levels and with stakeholders outside the organisation. I propose that the values expressed in those lines constitute shared or distributed leadership (Stewart, Courtright, & Manz, 2011).

Distributed leadership develops the capacity of others to take on leadership responsibilities: in other words, *leading others to lead themselves*. Stewart et al. (2011, pp. 185–186) advance the notion that, instead of focusing on how leaders influence followers, distributed leadership explores how people internalise their capacity to lead. External influence by a leader will frequently support leadership behaviours, but internalised capacity is ultimately the decisive factor. Benefits accruing from this approach include genuine empowerment. Additionally, distributed leadership shifts the locus of motivation from the designated leader or manager to the staff member and is therefore less draining on the appointed leadership person. On the other side of that coin, followers in a distributed leadership organisation will soon find out that they are challenged to move out of their comfort zones as increasing responsibility comes their way (Wood & Alterio, 1995). The human tendency to negatively evaluate appointed leaders is likely to diminish as followers begin to appreciate the complex demands that are inherent in the task of influencing people and the culture that those people have created. Changing attitudes is not to be equated with issuing emails and holding team meetings with a business agenda.

Distributed leadership carries affinities to servant leadership as indicated by the reference to 'the improvement and well-being of those *we serve*' (Attwood et al., 2003, p. 31, emphasis added). Indeed, Attwood and her colleagues subsequently refer to 'humanising servant leadership' (2003, p. 58). This paper suggests that qualities of authenticity, spirituality, and servant leadership constitute ethical social work leadership flagged for discussion under strand 3, social work ethics and identity.

The notion that leadership is exercised collegially for the well-being of others—which, I argue, applies equally to service recipients and organisational workers—indicates that social work is positioned towards the collectivist end of the collectivist-individual continuum (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 2004). Systems or ecological thinking is also illustrated by the telling phrase 'bigger picture,' whereby leaders scan the environment or what Heifetz and Lawrie (2001, p. 132) describe as "getting on the balcony." These influences suggest that the trait approach to leadership, colloquially known as the 'great man' (sic) model which dominated much of the leadership literature until the 1940s, carries little synergy with social work's underpinning identity or ethos.

A collectivist identity brings strands 3 (social work ethics, identity, standards) and 4 (indigenous leadership approaches and connections with biological complexity thinking) into the discussion.

Leadership, collectivism, indigenous leadership, ethics, and social justice (strands 3 and 4)

The qualities associated with a collectivist culture—equal rights, circumspect exertion of power, systemic location of problems, redistribution of power as a change-management strategy, and a group consensus for decision-making—find common ground with social work's commitment to human rights and social justice (see, for example, Androff, 2010; Bisman, 2004; Chu, Tsui, & Yan, 2009; Leonard, 2009; and Marsh, 2005.) The literature suggests that an underpinning social justice worldview is social work's most distinctive identifying characteristic. Marsh (2005) proposes that social and economic justice is *the* organising value for social work (emphasis added.) Bisman (2004) similarly suggests that if the profession loses its social justice focus, it loses its identity. Organisational social work leadership must at least be exercised in harmony with, or preferably express, that social justice value.

Lfe's (2010) discourse on social justice places it in the context of human rights. He defines human rights as referring to the essential rights and freedoms to which humans are entitled, and specifically to goods and services needed to "develop human potential and well-being" (2010, p. 148). Lfe makes the insightful point that human rights function in specific contexts, including agencies and bureaucracies (2010, p. 158). He adds that, more recently, the exploration of human rights in social work practice has been "marginalized by managerialism" with its focus on outcomes, evidence and predictability (p. 158)—a tension to be explored as this project unfolds.

Following Lfe, social justice is therefore seen as an expression of human rights. In the context of Aotearoa New Zealand, the author proposes that social justice is defined by the Code of Ethics (ANZASW, 2008). Social work's ethical mandate is not confined to empowering individuals, families, groups, and communities to solving their problems (ANZASW, 2008, p. 4); it is also required to "learn from specific instances of need, to inform society at large about the injustices in its midst, and to engage in action to *change the structure of society that create and perpetuate injustice*" (2008, p. 4, emphasis added). Bisman (2004) argues that the profession must return to the "moral imperative" to care for society's most disadvantaged (2004, p. 109), equating that imperative with 'human dignity and social justice' in a reference to the 1948 United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. Marsh (2005) asserts that social work is the sole profession to place social justice as its 'central organising value' (2005, p. 293).

Lfe's further proposal (2010) that human rights, and *ipso facto*, social justice, takes place in the contexts of agencies and bureaucracies places the profession's 'central organising value' of social justice at the heart of organisational structures. Social justice is integral to the call by the ANZASW's (2008) Code of Ethics to change structures that create injustice. Organisational leadership should arguably, therefore, be exercised from a social justice premise (Aronson & Smith 2011). Such a premise assumes that, even in social work organisations, structures exist that marginalise individuals or groups in the workforce, volunteer and paid alike. What would socially-just leadership look like in practice? I see this issue as so important that a separate section of this paper is given to its consideration.

The role of leadership in facilitating organisational social justice

Lfe (2010) places Marsh's 'central organising value' (2005, p.293) of social justice in the heart of organisational structures: precisely the context in which social work leadership is exercised. Since the ANZASW Code requires the profession to engage in actions designed to challenge injustice, and management as one of the 'core purposes' of social work as defined by the IFSW (Sewpaul & Jones, 2005) is located in organisations, I suggest that the profession's leadership is political in nature. The potential implications of this position are wide ranging, not the least of which is the arguable proposition that social work leadership is ethically obligated to address policies perceived to be organisationally unjust. Two questions emerge from that statement: [1] perceived by whom?; [2] how are policies evaluated as 'unjust?'

The first of those questions may be addressed by research participants. The second may at least be explored through the 12 core purposes of social work (other than management), but which management, as a core professional activity, is required to facilitate. I propose, consistent with Banks (2008), that ethical considerations require that organisational activities including leadership actions must be integrated with professional practice ideals. In brief, ethical integrity applies equally to leadership, management, and direct service delivery. To suggest that in some way organisational leadership occupies a unique and different ethical position to the other 12 domains is to create an artificial divide in the profession. In addition, the "domain of the social worker" as defined by the IFSW (Sewpaul & Jones, 2005, p. 221) integrates leadership with the "critically self-reflective practitioner who *shares responsibility with the employer* for their well-being and professional development, including the avoidance of 'burn-out'" (emphasis added). The 'power-with' leadership thinking of Follett (1995) could not be more clearly stated.

To examine leadership as facilitating each of the 12 core purposes is beyond the scope of this paper, although for future research such an examination offers a fertile sphere for investigation. I argue, however, that in the light of neoliberalism which has influenced the organisational expression of social work services so significantly since 1987, leadership of the profession is ethically bound to address those core purposes. Table 1 presents my initial thinking on the potential implications of such an exercise with five selected purposes.

Table 1: Leadership actions and organisational social justice

Selected core purposes	Implications for organisational leadership
Facilitate the inclusion of marginalised, socially excluded, dispossessed, vulnerable, and at-risk groups of people.	Identify employees in these groups with a view to enabling their voice to be heard and integrated into policies and organisational practices, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contract workers • casual workers • workers with disabilities.
Address and challenge barriers, inequalities, and injustices that exist in society.	Exercise authentic leadership ('walking the talk') in order to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • influence organisational culture to change unexamined assumptions which feed into such barriers • set demanding managerial requirements to proactively address cultural and policy barriers in conjunction with authentic leadership actions.
Form short- and longer-term relationships with and mobilise individuals, families, groups, organisations, and communities to enhance their well-being and their problem-solving capacities.	Create and engage in project teams comprising diverse hierarchical levels and members external to the organisation to design and mobilise strategies for problem-solving.
Assist and educate people to obtain services and resources in their communities.	Mentor self-selected employees with a view to empowering access to organisational resources (for example, to advance career pathways).
Encourage people to engage in advocacy with regard to pertinent local, national, regional, and/or international concerns.	Ensure that training for advocacy skills are provided to enable workers to influence organisational policy and practice.

Codes of ethics and leadership

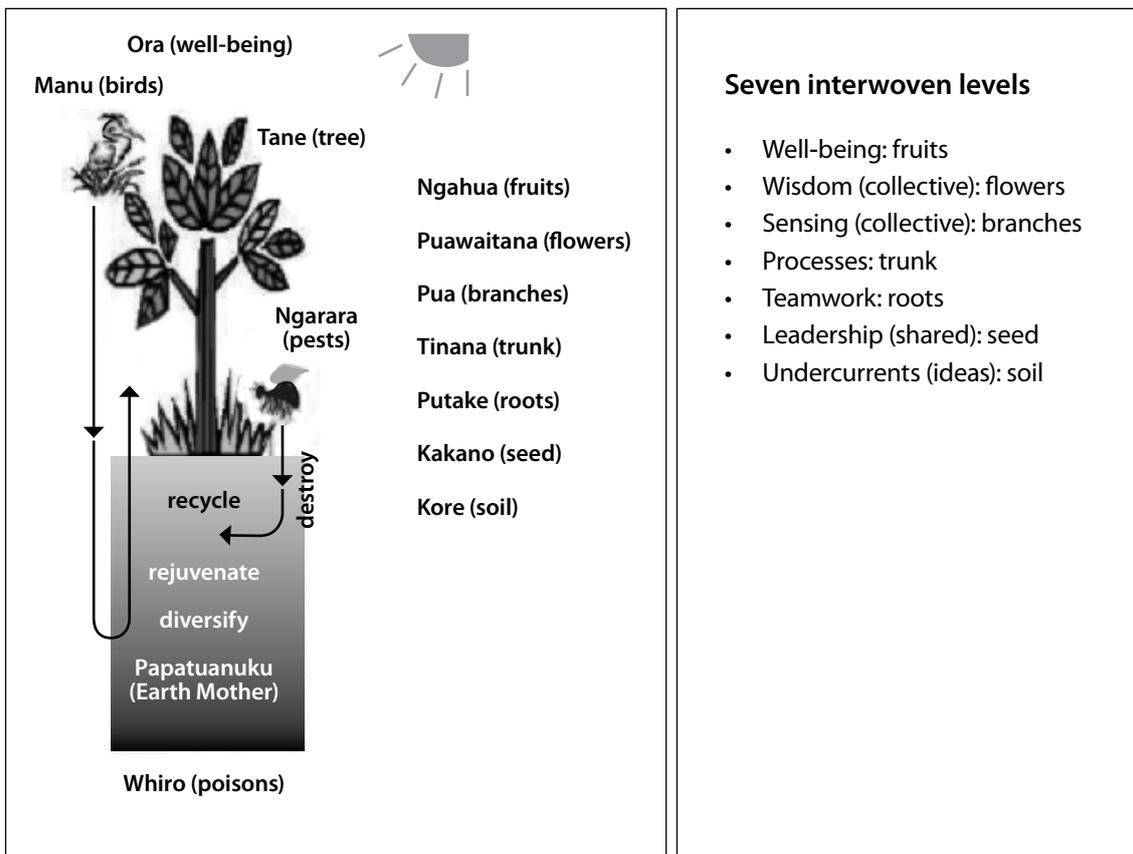
In terms of leadership actions, codes of ethics implicitly require that organisational activities are integrated with professional practice ideals. Banks (2008) argues that individual ethical decisions by practitioners are sometimes decontextualised “both from the character and motives of the individual people involved and from the organization, policy, political and social context” (2008, pp. 1244, 1245). This statement draws attention to ethics and practitioner integrity. Personal character attributes of the social worker need to be congruent with the ethical values of social work practice. Davies (1994) and Reupert (2007) suggest that the use of self informs professional practice. In an unpublished thesis, Appleton (2010, p. 105) articulates the connections between “personal integrity, professional integrity and the integrity of helping professions”. Social work ethics enshrine notions of integrity as, for example, “honesty, reliability, openness and impartiality” (British Association of Social Workers, 2002, p. 5). The literature thus suggests that ethical considerations are inseparable from leadership, that qualities such as authenticity, ethical values, and servant leadership express ethical leadership (Greenleaf, 1977; Liden, Wayne, Zhao, & Henderson, 2008; Luthans & Avolio, 2003).

Ethics, human and indigenous rights: organic perspectives

The IFSW (2012) Statement of Ethical Principles connects United Nations human rights declarations and conventions to social work practice and action. In this context, the rights of indigenous populations are validated by the IFSW through the International Labour Organisation’s (ILO) Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (ILO, 1989). Approaches to indigenous social work practice are increasingly emerging in the literature, for example, Briskman (2007); Gray, Yellow Bird & Coates (2008). In the New Zealand context, indigenous Māori perspectives of ‘living’ organisations (Goldsbury, 2004) connect with organic, or emergent, complex adaptive systems theory (Hannah, Lord, & Pearce, 2011), to be addressed shortly. In this way, the third and fourth ‘strands’ of the literature are essentially two sides of one coin: New Zealand bicultural social work ethics require an indigenous expression if authentic social work leadership actions are to be consistent with professional values. Further, Māori notions of organisations as living beings connect with organic, complex adaptive thinking in Western leadership and management theory (Lewin & Regine, 2001). These synergies have been applied to social work organisational thinking and practice (see, for example, Lawler & Bilson, 2010).

Indigenous leadership literature from North America, Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand share several common themes. Indigenous leadership is essentially seen as collective, organic, holistic, and spiritual (Calliou, 2005; Durie, 1998; Ivory, 2008). Following Schein (2004), I adopt the notion that, to understand the values, beliefs, and observable artefacts of a community of any size or nature the observer must equally understand the worldview that informs the values and artefacts of that community. With that approach in mind, I suggest that recognition of cultural assumptions from the Māori renaissance (Walker, 1990)—coinciding with political and professional social work recognition of institutional racism in the 1986 Puaotē-Ata-Tu report—created an indigenous perspective to social work organisational policy and practice with profound cultural implications for leadership actions. Not least of these implications was leadership exercised from a collective, or shared, distributed perspective, quite distinct from individualistic Western thinking (Sveiby, 2011); spirituality and servant leadership (Barker & Floersch, 2010; Freeman, 2011), and leadership authenticity (Leonard, 2009; Luthans & Avolio, 2003). In the New Zealand context, Tipu Ake brings a Māori perspective by depicting organisational leadership as exercised biologically through the metaphor of a living tree (Te Whaiti Nui-a-Toi, 2001) (Figure 3). In recent years, Western complexity leadership and metaphorical organisational thinking has embraced biological models (Morgan, 1997; Uhl-Bien et al., 2007).

Figure 3: Tipu Ake



(Source: Te Whaiti-Nui-A-Toi, 2001)

Arguably, the most striking leadership aspect of Tipu Ake is its location and its composition. Māori see leadership as collective—many individuals can contribute to it—yet possessing the courage that germinates the seed of a new entrepreneurial idea and moves it up out of the undercurrents from where it is defined, recognized, and nurtured by those who support it (Goldsbury, 2004; Te Whaiti-Nui-A-Toi, 2001). Leadership also functions as a filter for toxic ideas: ‘whiro.’ Teamwork—the roots—is where a new style of leadership based on a shared vision of wellness is gathered to sustain growth above the ground. Processes metaphorically located in the trunk of the tree represent the group, or work-based team, collectively structuring the idea to enable its practical application.

The influence of ethical codes on authentic, spiritual, and servant leadership has already been identified in this paper. The space limitations of this article preclude analysis of these diverse perspectives, which lend themselves to future, separate, treatment. Ethics, authenticity, professional and personal integrity, servant leadership and *ipso facto*, the author suggests, spirituality as meaningful work are well expressed by Pauline Leonard (2008), pointing the way for further work on the nature of social work leadership:

As a servant leader I can continue to reflect on my personal and professional identities and the potential impact of my services in this community. Becoming authentic is a process, a journey, not an end in itself; it is an inner and outer journey. (2008, pp. 252–255, emphasis in original)

As flagged earlier, the ‘living organism’ metaphor introduced into this discussion has developed into a major stream in Western management leadership literature. Arguably, the first allusion to such thinking is found in von Bertalanffy’s (1950) biological approach to open-systems thinking. Von Bertalanffy proposed that organisations as social systems have survival and adaptability needs that transcend efficiency, effectiveness,

and goal-setting. His thinking led to the formulation of complexity, or chaos theory (Gleick, 1988), popularised by the New York Times as the 'Butterfly Effect,' whereby a butterfly flapping its wings in India causes a series of air movements that eventually result in a thunderstorm over Chicago (Ozanne & Rose, 2013, pp. 26, 27). What became known as emergent thinking about organisations (Lissack, 1999) developed into complex adaptive systems (CAS) (Attwood et al. 2003, p. 23) which apply a biological rather than a "mechanistic process" (Lewin & Regine, 2001, p. 24). Complexity theory explores leadership actions and workforce diversity by focusing on interactions between individual 'agents' in a CAS (Lewin & Regine, 2001, p. 27). In describing complex systems, Morgan (1997, p. 34) evokes biological images of "relations among *molecules, cells, complex organisms, species, and ecology* [as paralleling] *individuals, groups, organisations, populations (species) of organisations, and their social ecology*" (emphases in original).

This paper could be entirely given over to complex adaptive systems thinking. Suffice to observe that the concepts embodied in a CAS approach (Olson & Eoyang, 2001) challenge 'top-down' change leadership ideas and actions, arguing *inter alia* that innumerable variables determine outcomes and that the direction of the change is determined by emergence and the participation of many people. It is readily apparent that collective, indigenous notions of how leadership is exercised are evident in such thinking.

To this point, the paper has explored strands 1, 3 and 4. Themes canvassed include leadership exercised in the contexts of systems thinking, indigenous and biological approaches, social justice and the ethics of the profession. In fact, I argue that 'in the contexts of' is better rendered 'as integral to' which proposes that social work leadership cannot be seen as unique unless it is exercised with those perspectives and values sitting centre stage as intrinsic to its makeup. With that espoused position established, but one which may well be challenged or modified as data is analysed, I now turn to strand 2. The scenario changes quite significantly.

Social work leadership as influenced by international business and public sector leadership and new public management (NPM) (strand 2)

If the underpinning values and perspectives of systems thinking, indigenous and biological thinking, and ethics-based social justice influences—or even determines—the nature and quality of social work leadership, the organisational context also needs to be considered. The paper now considers the influences on social work leadership exerted by Western ideas of organisation and its leadership.

A growing body of literature suggests that NPM's overriding focus on measuring outputs and outcomes has become the default model for social work organisational thinking. Chu et al. (2009, p. 288) go so far as to argue that the profession has been captured by the "plague" of NPM. To understand these terms introduced by the post-1987 public-sector management revolution, Boston et al. (1996) describe outputs, for example, as policy advice, administering legislation, and direct service delivery such as providing child safety services. Outcomes are those results in society, sought by government, to which outputs contribute. An example might be the reduction of child abuse. Boston et al. (1996) suggest that the reforms intended that government would select desired outcomes, use policy advice to prioritise those outcomes, and opt for appropriate outputs.

These reforms were not confined to public sector social work agencies. By virtue of state funding of non-governmental social work agencies, principal-agent relationships (Lane, 2005) set out expected outputs for the NGO sector. In her history of New Zealand welfare, Tennant (2007, p. 193) characterises the late 1980s and beyond as the "contract crunch," reminiscent of Boston's edited book title "the state under contract" (Boston, 1995). In short, NPM began to exercise enormous influence on social work organisations post-1987 (Boston et al., 1996; Scott, 2001).

The social work literature sets out the implications of an output orientation by social work agencies as carrying profound consequences for organisational leadership. If adopted, quantitative measures of

social work activities—for example, how many assessments were carried out over a given time period—potentially marginalises professional leadership’s focus on the quality of practitioner–client interactions. Writing in the British context, Carey (2008, p. 919) for example asserts that a market philosophy has ‘colonised’ state sector social workers. Burton and van den Broek (2009) report on the shift in Australia from professional social work values to organisationally-based accountabilities made increasingly possible by the ability to measure outputs by information communication technology (ICT). Statistical reporting has invaded social work moving the emphasis on *process* accountability—*how* practitioners interact with clients—to accountability for *results*: a quantitative approach (Boston et al., 1996, p. 26.). Such results-oriented managerial leadership may manifest itself on “checking data on computer monitors at the cost of maintaining social capital with practitioners” (Webster, 2010, p. 51). The author proposes that because of its focus on results, quantitative thinking will bring significant tension to social work organisational leadership informed by a commitment to social justice processes.

Boston et al. (1996, p. 6) describe the NPM’s impact on public sector management as transformational. A ‘new language of discourse’ replaced ‘administration’ with ‘management’—terminology that created a seismic cultural shift for social workers, their managers, and leaders (Heffernan, 2006).

Professionals were made accountable to managers who rationalised their market solutions approach by the need for economy, efficiency, and effectiveness (Burton & van den Broek, 2009; Kemshall, 1995). The ethics and culture of social work were challenged by NPM’s domination and the subordination of social work values such as respect for, and trust in, clients’ self-determination and equality of opportunity to the economic base of NPM. Writing in the Australian context, Healy (2009) unequivocally sees NPM as exercising a ‘corrosive’ effect on social workers’ identity and influence.

The literature surveyed generally projects a negative perception of the NPM phenomenon. Empirical considerations relating to accountability for public resources in the field must be part of the story (Scott, 2001). Equally, NPM’s challenge to professional and organisational (Schein, 2004) produces visceral reactions as well as cognitive evaluations. The cognitive approach is illustrated for example in Kirkpatrick, Ackroyd, and Walker’s (2005) survey of how managerialism affected health, social services, and housing in the UK. Gregory’s (2010) examination of frontline practitioners experience used the more visceral descriptor, ‘punitive’ managerialism. Whether these tensions will be evident as participants contribute to the project remains to be seen.

Conclusion

The strands selected for this survey set out an eclectic mix. They encompass leadership literature, NPM managerialism, organic indigenous approaches, biological complexity and systems, or ecological thinking, and social work ethics and social justice. Data analysis promises to be a fascinating exercise as participants from diverse cultures, ethnicities, public and NGO sectors, and organisational hierarchy levels express their viewpoints.

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Corresponding Author

MIKE WEBSTER

m.webster@auckland.ac.nz

9 Takepu-principled approach: A new vision for teaching social work practice in Aotearoa

SELINA AKHTER Registered Social Worker (Te Wānanga o Aotearoa)

ROSE LEONARD Registered Social Worker (Te Wānanga o Aotearoa)

Abstract

The purpose of the research reported here was to gather reflections of the learning experience of taura (students) of Te Tohu Paetahi Ngā Poutoko Whakarara Oranga, Bachelor of Social Work : Biculturalism in Practice (BSW (BIP)) at Te Wānanga o Aotearoa (TWOA). A total of nine taura (students) interviews were analysed by using kaupapa Māori methods, takepu principles and qualitative research design. The findings revealed that the students felt fulfilled throughout their journeys as ngā takepu (Māori principles, values, and beliefs) principled approach of BSW have awakened (mauri oho) their consciousness of who they are and made them challenge their hegemonic thinking. The findings were discussed in the light of the BSW framework and social work education and practice of Aotearoa.

Keywords: biculturalism, social work, social work education, Māori worldviews

Introduction

Biculturalism has been a major focus in the social work education curriculum in Aotearoa. Education providers' utmost priority is to ensure that students develop knowledge of Māori worldviews and their epistemological basis (Pappa, 2005). However, "Māori have had very limited opportunities to choose, construct and implement social work education options, integrating Māori worldviews and ways of life" (Pohatu, 2010, p. 11). Generally, teaching and learning are taking place in mainstream sectors from outsiders' perspectives which contextualise Māori bodies of knowledge within the zone of a dominant worldview. It is still questionable whether outsiders can claim legitimate ownership of the knowledge by translation and contextualisation of indigenous knowledge. To achieve competence in one cultural perspective one must own it, and ownership comes from ontological positioning as to who s/he is. Tangata whenua (people of the land) in Aotearoa are insiders in that culture as s/he can feel and act from the heart by inheriting both the seen and unseen (wairua/spirituality) truth of tangata whenua (Māori) worldviews. Māori 'as insiders' to the kaupapa (topic) are at the margin of the social work education (Pohatu, 2003). There has been a dearth of initiatives to bring them to the centre. Te Tohu Paetahi Ngā Poutoko Whakarara Oranga (Bachelor of Social Work [Biculturalism in practice]) programme at Te Wānanga o Aotearoa challenges the marginalisation and creates a safe space for Māori to navigate the social work kaupapa from an insiders' perspective. The biculturalism embraces both Māori and non-Māori bodies of knowledge, worldviews, and epistemology. The vehicle for this is ngā takepu principles that explore alternative methodologies informed by Kaupapa Māori (KM) philosophies. The programme began in 2005 but there had been no research to track graduates' experience and to see whether the programme was in line with its original intent, rigour, and integrity.

The focus of this research was to invite graduates to share their stories and reflections on their learning experience before, during, and after their journey with the BSW programme.

Bachelor of Social Work : Biculturalism in Practice (BSW (BIP))

The BSW (BIP) is a three-year, full-time social work degree programme of 360 credits consisting of 21 kōnae ako (papers) accredited by New Zealand Qualification Authority (NZQA) (Pohatu, 2010). The bicultural notion of BSW recognises the historical foundation of the nation Aotearoa and consciously created equal space for Māori bodies of knowledge to be constructed alongside non-Māori bodies of knowledge (Te Wānanga o Aotearoa, 2004). This mirrors Apirana Ngata's vision: "Māori philosophic utterances may exist in parallel columns alongside those of any other races" (Ta Apirana Turupa Ngata, 1929, cited in Te Wānanga o Aotearoa, 2013, p. 34). Dr Rongo Wetere, initiator and prime mover of TOWA, signalled the significance of this organic philosophy and "set its direction when he required that a Bachelor of Social Work be established and that would have a bi-cultural framework" (Pohatu, 2010, p. 11). Taina Pohatu, the designer of the programme named the degree.

According to Pohatu (2010), best practice always includes takepu-applied principles which inform practice and are more relevant than abstract theories. The conception of takepu includes Māori wisdom, culture, applied principles, ethical positions, and ways of life to convey ways of humanness to guide te ao Māori. They are all about supporting people in their relationships, kaupapa, and environment in the pursuit of mauri ora. According to Pohatu (2008a), "Takepu as applied principles signpost to generations how to live, to behave, then engage with people as they pursue the quest of their aspirations and needs" (p. 2). Takepu is fundamental to every BSW (BIP) class, to the content, assessments, and the delivery methods. The six selected takepu of the degree are: āhurutanga (safe space), te whakakoharangatiratanga (respectful relationship), kaitiakitanga (responsible trusteeship and guardianship), tinorangatiratanga (absolute integrity), tau kumekume (positive and negative tensions), and mauri ora (well-being) (Pohatu, 2003).

Takepu āhurutanga is the heart of BSW (BIP) which creates and maintains a safe and quality space for study. In this learning environment, mauri or the life force can be felt. Teaching has a humane feeling to it. This humaneness allows students to open up irrespective of their differences. It is crucial to be humble in BSW about knowing others' perspectives. According to Clark (2006), this is epistemological humility reflecting a stance of the 'humble knower'. Humble knowers honour and value others' perspectives. They do not interfere with others' valuable construction of reality. The students and teachers of BSW constantly ask themselves "Are we imposing anything that does not fit others' worldviews"? This approach of humility in knowing in the BSW (BIP) not only represents āhurutanga (safe space) but also te whakakoharangatiratanga (respectful relationships) which, along with other takepu, interact in a holistic manner and invite students to position strongly in the centre of the social work content and papers.

Kōnae ako (papers) of BSW are unique in that each paper is named using Te Reo Māori with English translations. There is a historical/revolutionary or simple but phenomenological intent in naming these kōnae ako which creates spaces for claiming Māori bodies of knowledge. For example, names of some of the kōnae ako are: Ngā Ao-Ngā Tirohanga (worldviews, significance, and consequences), He Tikanga Tukutuku A Te Tangata Whenua (indigenous social work systems and legacies), Tou Ao: Tōku Ao (uniqueness and diversity), Kia Tū Rangatira Ai (struggle for cultural equity), and Te Tango Mana: Te Whakamana (oppression & empowerment). (Te Wānanga o Aotearoa, 2014).

The takepu-principled approach: a transformation Takepu principles utilise core transformational elements for both teachers and students including uniqueness (who they are), contextualisation, story-telling, and conscientisation (Pohatu, 2010).

Uniqueness: who they are

This question is explored by asking students an ontological question: 'what is their purpose of being or reasons for being or why they exist in this world?' This existential question allows them to explore their worldviews, belief systems, principles, values, orientations, and so on. Thus students go back to their cultural principles and values and find that they have already been defined by their ancestors. When they know their own values and orientations they become closer to themselves.

Contextualisation

The BSW utilises a contextualisation process by which students share their stories, old knowing, and lived experience. It is not only sharing, listening, and being empathetic to each other but also engaging in a dialogue to make sense of what was told. While the story is clear to the teller, the listeners try to make it alright and useful for them. In other words they want to know how much of the stories/experience from other contexts can be utilised in the present context of Aotearoa social work. Students struggle and sit for ages. They try to unlock their door of experience (Pohatu, 2010). It gives them a chance to reflect on another time and space so that they can find another layer of meaning for their beliefs in new contexts and time with a new meaning. As they make meaning, they ask "how do I understand another person's frame of reference?" (Fred, 2009).

Personal stories and conscientisation

When students share stories of lived experiences, they become critically aware because they hear each other's sufferings, loss, and oppression. They come to realise how one's own experience and background affects understandings and actions in the world. They become conscientised and question traditions. The stories give a time and space to heal as they deconstruct by being critically aware of not knowing the effects of their own perspective (Fred, 2009). This is an educational process that develops a greater ability to think critically, that is the ability to read one's world more deeply and ask meaningful 'why' questions – the central theme of Paulo Freire's framework of conscientisation (Freire, 1972). This promotes transformation (Fred, 2009). The intent of the paper is to see how the gathered stories and reflections are in line with the framework of transformation. In the following section the research methodology highlights the methods of collecting and analysing the stories.

Methodology/methods

The study is of an exploratory nature concerning the essence of graduates' experience of their BSW learning journey. Kaupapa Māori research methodology, ngā takepu principles, and qualitative research methods were utilised for the purpose.

Kaupapa Māori research has been grounded on the concept of power relation in the research arena (Smith, 2005). It is a counter-hegemonic approach to Western forms of research where Māori has been seen on the margin of the research paradigm. According to the KM framework, Māori should guide and control the process of research (Bishop, 1996). Similarly, ngā takepu ensure participants' full engagement in all aspects of research by giving them a space to 'voice' and take ownership of research knowledge (Pohatu, 2008b).

The present research utilised KM principles and takepu in a number of forms. Karakia or prayer was an integral part of each hui (gathering, meeting), interviews, and presentations conducted for the research. Most of the members of the team were Māori and fluent in Te Reo (Māori language) with subject expertise. They were involved at all stages – from the initial stages of identifying research area to disseminating findings. The hui process was used in every step of the research. The present research incorporates the whanau (family) and whakawhanaungatanga (process of establishing relationship), koha (gift), kai (food), manaaki (hospitality), and tiaki (to care for). Takepu te whakakoharangatiranga refers to respect, honour, and acknowledgement of the participant's contribution to the research. Takepu kaitiakitanga (guardianship

and trusteeship) refers to the notion of “he kaitiaki katoa tatou” (we are all responsible) which makes both researchers and participants responsible for the research. This notion of kaitiakitanga was used to guide, care, support, and protect the research processes including Māori tikanga (ethics) and information.

Participants

Participants were selected from year three of the BSW (BIP). Some of them completed years one and two of the BSW and some obtained Diploma qualifications from other tertiary institutions. Researchers (the authors being Kaiako as well as the members of the research committee) obtained a list from Te Wānanga students’ database (tekete). A total of 17 names were selected from the list to reflect a balance of ethnicity and gender. Initial emails and telephone contacts brought 13 responses. An invitation with a cover letter, information sheet, and consent form was sent to them. Out of 13, nine attended the hui or group discussion prior to the individual interviews. The purpose of the hui was to create an atmosphere of whakawhanaungatanga to warm up the relationships. All the processes and information of research was explained in the hui. Nine graduates, of whom four (two males,) were of Māori descent, two (males) from European, two from India (one male) and one (female) from a Samoan ethnic background. All interviews were carried out in English.

Data-collection method

Data was collected in three stages: (i) takitini, that is, group discussion setting for an initial korero; (ii) takitahi, individual interviews; and (iii) whai maramatanga, which is to reconduct hui or interviews to clarify some points (if needed after interviews) (Pohatu & Pohatu, 2009). The primary data were gathered through the personal stories shared by the participants in kanohi-ki-te-kanohi (face-to-face) with kairangahau (researchers). The interviews were guided by a questionnaire which was developed by three wā (time) categories of before, during, and after (Pohatu, 2010, p. 22). Some example questions were: What had been your tertiary education experience before starting the degree? What was your experience of the degree during the programme? How useful was the learning from the degree after the programme?

Each interview lasted for approximately 60 minutes. The questions were checked for interpretation, appropriateness, and time in a pilot interview. A committee consisting of five members was formed to check and confirm the questionnaire. The committee members included two kaiarahi (kaupapa lead), kaiako matua (programme lead), the programme developer and one kaiako (non-Māori indigenous, lecturer). Approval of the TWOA Ethics Committee was obtained. The research was funded by internal contestable fund (ICF) of Te Wānanga o Aotearoa. Permission was taken to record the interviews. All audio tapes were translated and video tapes were kept to provide evidential records whenever needed. The transcribed stories were sent to the participants for verification.

Data analysis

Nine stories were analysed and discussed by the members of the research committee. Care was taken to capture general themes first and then individual secondary themes were brought under each main theme (Richmond, 2002).

Each transcript was coded by three coders and five major areas of codes were identified. The coders were chosen from the research committee and the BSW team. Cross-checking was done on the themes to see if any inconsistencies had emerged between different interpreters. The next section describes the research findings.

Findings

The structure of this section derives from three research questions. These are graduates’ reflections on their academic journey before, during, and after the course. Within each stage of their learning journey graduates’ reflections identified a number of subthemes. Each section provides a summary of these.

Graduates' reflections before the course

The findings revealed that specific aspects that influenced students to choose the course were: where they were brought up; influences of significant persons or environment; professional background; academic background; migration and other relevant factors. Some of them are presented below:

Hegemonic environment and perceived institutional racism

A number of participants stated that they came from a hegemonic, white, and racist background that included the community environment in which they were brought up, the educational institution they studied in, and the statutory work environment they worked in. They thought that they would be challenged by the programme. Four of their reflections:

I was quite racist before coming here..., I didn't have a clue what biculturalism was because obviously it didn't mean anything to me being down South it didn't really apply because I was surrounded by white people.

I could have gone to M.I.T, but I found M.I.T. to be hegemonic if you like, they were too structured which suited me probably but – I wanted to challenge my practice which is why I chose the Wānanga.

I did Certificate in Social Work at Invercargill. European white-centred, the class was full of white, had Māori in the community but did not talk with them. Did a bit of work on the Treaty of Waitangi, not a great deal.

I came into the programme very conscious of the fact that I'd come from a... that I knew would be challenged not necessarily by others but certainly by myself, that meant that I had to be prepared to look at myself and invite others to reflect their own observations.

Struggle for cultural equity in a mainstream educational institution

Some students came with a quest to reclaim and establish their cultural identities. In particular, some reflections include a diverse range of realities such as: feeling abused in the mainstream social work education environment; were caught up with two confusing identities in two cultures; being Māori, never validated as a thinking, educated person; or did not want to be awakened to a Māori worldview because of past injustices and sufferings. These taurira came to the course to find a safe space to validate their own essence. Two stated:

[I]t was a struggle and that was a challenge because there were 250 Māori students, we would do karakia in the morning, we had a small area of grass and when we did karakia we used to have things thrown at us... sometimes verbal abuse from social sciences but we held on and continued, the pain of going through that and the learning got me into there was another way.

I went to Auckland College, the only course they had available for me was social work, so I put myself in thinking, I am in trouble because I don't know what that is, having to be grounded in the certificate, I got lost...but I couldn't see myself surviving in the mainstream, so I came to Te Wānanga... asking for help. I think that very night that I joined, it really opens me...the Bachelor of Social Work here in Te Wānanga will allow me to explore more of myself and be accept[ing] of who I am.

Being Māori, never validated as a thinking, educated person

Prior to entering the programme I had been exposed to Biculturalism in Practice in its infancy, usually it meant that a bit of tangata whenua thinking, language, or readings was inserted into an educational system as a tokenistic gesture to refashion and soften the harshness of western framework, methodology and intent.

Being Māori was neither validated nor aligned with being a thinking educated person. I was positioned by educators as the subject of need. Western principled practiced is taught today as a validated positioning, ngā tikangā me ngā reo is silenced in most institutions.

These taurira came from a wide range of academic backgrounds with more than one qualifications: Psychology; Certificate in Mental Health; Nursing; Certificate of Teaching People With Disability; Bachelor of Arts; Diploma of Social Work (ACE, Wintec Polytechnic); Te Tari Mātauranga Māori Certificate of Social Work at MIT; Diploma in Social Work (MIT); IBT Social Work from Wānanga; Wintec Certificate in Social Services; and Diploma from UNITEC.

Reflection of learning experience during the course

Several subthemes emerged from the stories within this stage of reflection. Some of the key themes were: students felt fulfilled and satisfied throughout the journey; perceived that the degree challenged and shifted hegemonic thinking and approaches to Māori and other cultures; they felt that they were more confident as to who they were and their worldviews were validated by the programme.

Felt fulfilled throughout the journey

As reflected:

My experience at the Wānanga if I have to give it a score out of say one to ten, I would say ten: I thoroughly enjoyed, although initially had some reservations but I did thoroughly enjoy my learning there, I really did, I am looking at coming to do some more studying I'm not quite sure when but the Wānanga will be my first choice and I've actually told people to come here because I found it to be sort of like a family setting.

Sense of gratitude and indebtedness

One student felt that he had a sense of gratitude, an indebtedness to Wānanga. He felt he was very fortunate to be accepted into the course and it was a real opportunity and its influence would stay for the rest of his life. Another found Wānanga was very forgiving and non-judgemental. Wānanga do not judge people from their past. A senior member felt very respectful. As he reflected:

[S]ometimes I think being the older person you can feel some vulnerability to whether you'll be accepted into a group of younger people, whether your views will be heard or whether they'll even be relevant, but at no point did I ever have a sense of being rejected, I always felt that there was a sense of being welcomed. I was heard, I was listened to, I was responded to appropriately and treated with huge respect.

A shift of thinking

A student came from a white background and had very little understanding of Māori and other cultures. He came to the course to challenge his hegemonic thinking. Now he felt more cultured, more enriched in cultural understandings. Previously when he was with people from other cultures he got annoyed easily but now it did not worry him. Now he was more open to talk about Māori cultural tattoos and whakapapa. As he stated:

Still hegemonic stuff happening, I think it's getting better, I'm certainly more easy-going, I'm not so racist now...I spent a long time living the white man culture but I think it's getting better...I still get annoyed when I go into [a] shop and someone speaks in another language, that annoys me, I find that quite rude, but it doesn't worry me as much as it used to, I used to get quite brassed off actually, but now I'm more accepting of other cultures.

The course challenged taurira hegemonic and Pakeha thinking

Taurira came to the course with an idea that their hegemonic and white-centred thinking would be challenged by the course and by themselves. Now they felt that the course did challenge their thinking. One student said:

the most profound effect was the impact of biculturalism on me in my life, and I guess reflecting back over the many years of how ineffective I had been as a pakeha male, and how I had to challenge much of my own thinking and much of my own values and beliefs in that time last year and that at times was not easy, at times it was painful, but I believe I am continuing that the journey.

Much greater depth in practice

One student said that if such a learning opportunity had come much earlier in his career as a social worker it would have given him a much greater depth, but it was not lost. It gave a confidence to stop seeking ideas from others but from within.

Shifted approach in thinking

A tauira reflected that during the course now she tended to think more and put more thought in her work whereas she was quite reluctant before. Now she thought about legislation, Mauri ora, positioning, and where she had come from. Similarly, one said that it had given her a place to make sense of where her own thinking came from.

Singing waiata did not mean anything, but now...

A student said singing waiata had not meant anything to him before the course. As years went by, he found it was quite enlightening because he now knew the history behind the song. That history made sense to him. Now he sang with others and felt that he was giving something back to the culture.

Group activities

Some students who had an individualistic-based worldview did not like group work before, but during the course they deconstructed the idea. As reflected:

As a hegemonic I did not like being in a group because I believed that I could do by myself. But I quite enjoyed it. It was quite dynamic, quite brain storming. They brought their cultures and customs. Sometimes they cry. A kaiako cannot bring all those.

Looking at the books, no expression on the face, but expression on the face told the whole story.

Contents

The contents were reawakening and strengthening. One reflected that when she was going through real human development stories of class members she realised how much she had missed in her childhood. As she reflected:

That was such an awakening for me and I guess the thing I felt was the blatant racism that people had to grow up with and coped with and the alienation that they must have felt in terms of being Māori, and having to become a white New Zealander. And how they struggled with that and maintained and of course some of them were in fact reflecting on what the programme was offering them here, in terms of a reawakening and the strengthening of their own identity. I think the content was so powerful and meaningful.

Who I am

One student's understanding of 'who she is' was very powerful. She said:

[[I]f I know who I am genuinely, I will be very comfortable with myself but when I want to be somebody else other than what I am that is when the conflict begins and it was the impact of urbanisation and colonisation on Māori.

The BSW helped restore her identity. In this programme teachers dealt with students through their personal journeys and helped them understand genuinely who they are. One said:

I do not think I could have got that (personal stories) from any reading or books and that for me was the best part of doing the study here.

Awakening to Māori worldview and no longer walking in ignorance

One Māori student, reflected how awakening the impact of the programme was on her attitude. She had not wanted to be awakened to a Māori worldview before she joined the course but during the journey she thought she could no longer walk in ignorance.

Religion and culture

As a non-Māori, a student said that she was able to reflect her culture within the programme. Another said “the programme [had] accepted his religion and it was a gift – more than an academic learning”.

Different points of view and others’ perspectives

One reflection revealed that difference stood out and that the programme developed a tolerance to accept differences and to see different people speak from their levels. She stated that students saw how other taurira were talking from their perspectives which were totally different from her own. The programme provided a foundation for understanding ‘What I am exposing to you and to the others and how to listen to others’ point of view’.

Takepu

A number of reflections revealed that students knew takepu before but did not know the names. They had never articulated them but heard them while they were growing up in marae. Most of the reflections revealed that takepu provided safety and respect and most importantly Te Whakakoharangatiranga (respectful relationships). As one says:

takepu respect is very important because it was hard one for me. I have to respect point of view of another culture. Now I know I cannot change their culture. I can learn about it.

Contextualisation helps understanding of takepu. One student said “we can contextualise non-Māori knowledge to our situation, not to take them as they are, but to contextualise to my age, gender, ethnicity and how much it applies and how much I can draw from them”. Another student said, “these values help[ed] you work outside yourself, helped you find your own self and you need those values to create safe space for others.”

Reflection of learning experience after the course

The findings revealed that students applied the knowledge of takepu both in their personal and professional lives.

Personal life

Having been exposed to Māori worldviews, the European participants said they now understood colonisation and that how it was imposed was not right. They respected Māori culture now and one of them said:

[In his family he has a Pakeha partner and three Māori children.] I got racist around the culture before, now I talk about whakapapa [genealogy]. My son is going to [a] Māori school; before, no way he could go.

Professional life

The reflections revealed how students deconstructed their thinking and were applying the concepts of whanau, spirituality, Māori models, and the Treaty of Waitangi in mental health and prison sectors. Students realised that the medical model without whanau deals with only a part of a person. Some non-Māori students developed more confidence to say who they are to their service users. Students are in closer relationships with gang members, and support their Treaty rights.

One reflection revealed:

Now I use te whare tapa wha but before I did not. I start off with strength based then incorporate te Whare tapa wha. And spiritual part[s] as well. Applied in my personal practice. Organisation is very hegemonic, no chance to talk about even biculturalism. Very corporate.

Now no fear of saying that I am a Pakeha when you see a client from Māori background.

For prison clients, I engage them with whanau now but before I did not. I invite whanau, hapu, iwi now. I feel more enriched, my understanding of culture and Māori culture. Now in mental health, for recovery – families are coming and taking back to the families, holistic approach not only just mental stuff. Because I learned whanau is very important for social in transferring in interviews, developed relationships with the agency.

It's like you're mentally unwell so let's just work on your mental health stuff, don't worry about your social stuff but I think you need to. You need to work on the whole package it's a one-deal you know. I think I've spent too many years dealing with part of a person and not wanting to deal with it because you know your family problems have nothing to do with me.

Concerns and Issues

Some reflections included a number of concerns about using Māori language in class. When Kaiako switched into te reo Māori without translation of Māori words, it was felt that they needed to learn basic Māori words and phrases. As one reflected:

I struggle a lot with te reo Māori because I didn't get a lot of it but I'm a person that I always try. So I started my own little dictionary.

Another reflection:

I struggled during those times, but the good thing about it was that the body language was there to sort of tell you that this is, what they have been talking about, and what I felt was that there was a spirit within the room that allowed me to sense that. I think a lot of my learning happened in that perspective.

Another concern was that there were a few Europeans in class which was not enough to create a balance of perspectives. As one said:

My culture was challenged, my belief was challenged but there were not many in the class who could challenge other cultures. I went on with [a] hegemonic approach and a lot of people did not like that. But they need to be challenged too.

There were other concerns about administrative aspects such as that the noho classes were too long, about weekend noho and travelling issues, sometimes the class group was quite large, and so on.

Discussion

The purpose of this paper was to see how the BSW programme was reflected by the graduates and to explore whether the reflections are in line with the rigour and philosophy of the programme. The study explored students' experiences of their learning journey before and during the course and application of their learning after the course.

The 'before-course' reflections revealed that a number of students came from hegemonic environments characterised by dominant cultural worldviews and institutional and racial ideologies. As noted above, many students had been seeking a safe place where they could be challenged to address their hegemonic thinking. They came from a diverse range of realities including: unhappy engagement in the mainstream social work education environment; grappling with two confusing identities in two cultures; experiences of Māori knowledges and learning not being valued; and a reluctance to be awakened to Māori worldviews because of past injustices and sufferings. These taurira came to the course to find a safe place to validate the crux of their knowing their identity.

The 'during-course' reflections revealed that students felt fulfilled and satisfied throughout the course. They had a sense of gratitude and a debt to the Wānanga for their acceptance and to its enduring influence. Reflections also revealed that Wānanga was very forgiving and non-judgemental.

The students who came with expectations that the programme would challenge them, found that it did challenge their hegemonic thinking and they became more aware of Māori as well as other cultures. Those who came to reclaim their identity felt more awakened, more rounded, more cultured. Māori students perceived themselves as more confident about themselves and perceived that their worldviews were validated by the programme. The programme developed tolerance to accept differences and provided a foundation of understanding for what they were exposing to others and how to listen to others' point of view. It gave much greater depth in practice in terms of using more thinking on positioning, reflection, etc. The contents were reawakening and strengthening. Ngā takepu provided safety and taught them how to be supportive. Takepu te whakakoharangatiratanga worked with principle positioning and contextualisation which, in turn, allowed students to identify strengths, offer automatic respect to others, allowing them to work with opposites. Students liked the Tikanga Māori way of delivery, such as waiata (song), powhiri (welcome ceremony on a marae), and noho (to stay). Although some did not understand the Māori waiata and powhiri in the beginning, during the course they were able to contextualise and make sense of them.

Their experience after the course revealed that graduates were applying takepu-based learning experience in both their personal and professional lives. They were applying the concepts of whanau, spirituality, Māori models, and the Treaty of Waitangi in mental health and prison sectors. Students realised that the medical model without whanau deals with only a part of a person.

The findings, in particular, the during-course reflections, showed that students felt fulfilled throughout the journey, had more of a sense of who they are, of spirituality, transformation, and shift. These are consistent with findings of other studies conducted in similar fields. Phillips (2010), in her Master's project, interviewed students (non-Māori students of BSW) to see how they gained spiritual experience in the programme. The students expressed that they had felt a sense of acceptance and belonging and found people non-judgemental. That was the feeling of spirituality. It was where they were meant to be. Although not related by blood, participants were related to one another in a way that came from an open heart and spirit. It was also expressed that if they were not at the Wānanga they still would be seeking to reclaim spirituality and that they grew within their inner selves in the programme (Phillips, 2010).

In the same vein, Freeman (2011) narrated her journey of transformation with the BSW programme and reflected that Takepu te whakakoharangatiratanga was not only for building relations but also counteracted the isolation and social ostracism that many might have experienced within the mainstream tertiary environment. She also stated "with the embracement of the gift of six wonderful takepu-applied principles that have been given as companions for this learning journey, it is very rare occasion for a whanau member to be left behind" (Freeman, p.22, 2011). Anderson (2011) expressed how one of her students who was Māori but not brought up as Māori, reclaimed her identity. The student found ngā takepu to be a strength that gave her a position to speak out and she explained that ngā takepu invite Māori, Western, and other bodies of knowledge to be explored without one being prioritised above the other (Anderson, 2011, p. 72). In another study, Akhter (2013) critically reflected her experience as a teacher of the BSW and found that the principled approach had shifted her approach in teaching and her assumptions about spirituality and social work. She began a journey of emancipation, to deconstruct her hegemonic approach of teaching, and to reclaim her spiritual principles and values. Before she had never thought of using her spirituality in social work education and practice but the BSW opened an opportunity to contextualise and to make sense of her spirituality in the new context. All these studies support the findings of the present study.

Similar to this BSW study, a study was conducted to see how the certificate in Aboriginal Social Work Practice in the McGill University School of Social Work in Canada (Ives, Aitken, Loft, & Philips, 2007) was perceived by students. The project aim was to explore the curriculum and programme design as to cultural appropriateness. It was revealed that there was an urgent need for professionally-educated social work practitioners from native communities and needed to have native approaches to learning where both indigenous and non-indigenous can study together and learn from each other. The participants referred to "Mohawk", an indigenous framework in guiding social work practice. If we compare the components

of Wānanga's BSW programme with the findings of Ives et al. (2007) it is clear that the BSW programme is unique in that it is grounded on indigenous KM and a takepu-principled framework. Most of the instructors and facilitators are Māori and that the teaching and learning address the learning needs of Māori and students with other indigenous cultural backgrounds.

The present study indicates that BSW has an emancipatory influence on the students. This can be explained by the framework of transformation, BSW teaching and learning pedagogies, curriculum, and manner of delivery.

On the course students started a journey, a struggle over how to make sense of their own lived experiences and how to define and name them in the context of social work in Aotearoa. Although it is a struggle, it liberated them from the notion of banking education where students are passive learners and teachers are knowledge-givers. Students receive all knowledge from teachers without any questions and critique (Freire, 1972). Contrary to that, the BSW facilitates a process through which students become active and critically reflective learners. Hence transformation occurs.

The curriculum of the BSW (BIP) is not as highly structured as a typical modern curriculum. Instead, specific contents are open to emerge via critical reflections. The cultural and multiple truths/contents emerge through a number of core exercises such as how to take a strong cultural positioning to question tradition and how to use history and colonisation to dismantle a modernistic view of social work. By doing that students are not only transforming themselves but transforming the social work profession from a notion of 'one truth fits all' approach to a multiple perspectives approach. Regarding teaching, according to Pohatu (2010), the process of lectures, hui and reflections is a normal, yet a vital, part of learning. So students bring personal lived experience, construct their own ideas via dialogue, critique, and comparison with existing bodies of knowledge for validation. Students come out with a position. When they see and feel their experience is valued, they can think further. This process allows them to enter a journey which they enjoy to reclaim cultural truths.

Conclusion

This study will contribute to enhancing our knowledge of theoretical and practical implications of the takepu-principle-based BSW programme and give direction for further research. The evidence supports the notion that the transformative framework of BSW is powerful; it provides a safe space for students for reclaiming their identity, for deconstructing hegemonic thinking, and for constructing Māori and other indigenous bodies of knowledge in social work education. It also suggests that the takepu-based delivery method may be a useful tool to be considered for social work pedagogy in Aotearoa. The implications for the findings are limited as only nine stories were analysed and analysis was based on only perceptions and reflections. The representation from Pacific Island communities in this research is insufficient (being only one). In order to gain in-depth meaning of data, thick description of quotations were provided which can construct local contextual knowledge, but further research studies with a mixed method design and large sample size are needed in this field for increasing credibility and usefulness. In particular, studies are needed to understand the depth of transformation that happens within the minds and souls of BSW students as re-imaginings. Research is needed to trace the volume of mātauranga Māori and other knowledges that are being reclaimed and to ensure that taonga (mātauranga Māori knowledge) of social work in Aotearoa are connected with the land and its ancestors.

He kākano ahau i ruia mai i Rangiātea

I am a seed scattered from Rangiātea

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Corresponding Author

ROSE LEONARD

Rose.Leonard@twoa.ac.nz

10 Te tōrino paihere tangata: A relational approach to social work education

PETER BOYD Registered Social Worker (Te Whare Takiura o Manukau/Manukau Institute of Technology)

CATHERINE DICKEY Registered Social Worker (Te Whare Takiura o Manukau/Manukau Institute of Technology)

SHIRLEY IKKALA Registered Social Worker (Te Whare Takiura o Manukau/Manukau Institute of Technology)

Waitara/Abstract

During the first five-year review of the Manukau Institute of Technology Bachelor of Applied Social Work (Bicultural) (BASW) it became clear that, in order to educate social workers to work effectively with diversity, both tangible and intangible values and attributes were required to be embedded in the individual. To do this, the BASW programme has adopted a whakapapa-based framework, Te Tōrino Paihere Tāngata, which allows the articulation of a relational process involving connection, positioning, reciprocity, transformation, and holistic structuring when working with diverse peoples. This paper suggests that the essence of whakapapa, the life force, is a methodology, a philosophy, and a practice that can drive programme development that facilitates pathways for students towards their social consciousness.

Keywords: relational, whakapapa, intangible, competencies, social work education

Whakaatu/Introduction

As it spins, the world continues to unfold, bringing new kinds of being together... As a relationship develops over time (upward), space (outward) and event, the nature of the relationship continues to evolve and the past and present continue to shape the future. (Salmon, 1991, cited in Boyd, 2011, p. 230)

Manukau Institute of Technology/Te Whare Takiura o Manukau is situated in a city with the greatest concentration of Tangata Whenua (Māori) and Pacific peoples in New Zealand (Census, 2013). The Institute was established in 1970 with the specific objective: “to provide quality, accessible education...that the Institute’s community needs for the knowledge society” (Manukau Institute of Technology [MIT], 2007, p. 26). Within this objective was the recognition of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (1840), a partnership agreement enabling “Māori educational needs and aspirations, emphasizing participation, achievement and success” (MIT, 2007, p. 33) to be met. Similarly, because of its geographical positioning there is a particular responsibility for people from Pacific nations, to provide them with culturally appropriate and effective educational opportunities that lead to retention and educational success (Dickey, 2009). Beyond Māori and Pacific peoples there are a multiplicity of diverse, cultural and family realities in this catchment area where many are socio-economically challenged and educational opportunities, for many different reasons, are either limited or negative.

The Bachelor of Applied Social Work (BASW) was developed in direct response to, and in consultation with, tangata whenua (Māori) and tauwi (non-Māori) from the community the Institute serves. "This was a collaborative relationship to address the social environment that exists in the region and where issues like poverty, criminal activity, and abuse fail[ed] to be dealt with appropriately" (Dickey, 2009, p. 19). In addition, one of the main reasons for the ineffectiveness of some of the social work being undertaken in the region appeared to be that those who were responsible had limited understanding of worldviews different from their own.

By the end of 2006, the BASW had been written and approved by both the Social Worker Registration Board and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. It was linear in nature, passing from one year to the next with no elective courses. The first-year courses were focused on 'the Self', the second year on 'the Practitioner', and the third on 'the Professional'. However, there were four significant differences from other degrees offered in our region. Firstly, the degree was bicultural, integrating both tangata whenua and tauwi worldviews in all its aspects of the programme. Secondly, all courses had a greater proportion of class contact hours to cater for the many learning styles of the students. It was recognised that if we were to enrol students who met the community-identified requirement of social workers who understood their worldviews and who had had similar life experiences to them, then we would be enrolling individuals into the programme who did not meet necessarily the mainstream, traditional academic requirements for entry into undergraduate studies. The potential students in this programme would likely be older, may have had limited secondary education, but would have had many life experiences. Could these life experiences be used as a base from which to grow their formal social work education? In the teaching of this programme should we be considering the pedagogies to be used from an adult education or a lifelong learning perspective?

Stephen Brookfield's (2000) debate over the use of the terminology, 'adult education' versus 'lifelong learning' was reignited in this Aotearoa/New Zealand context, particularly his contention that "the adult dimension in lifelong learning could be generalised into four strands: the capacity to think dialectically, the capacity to employ practical logic, the capacity to know how we know what we know and the capacity for critical reflection" (p. 2). It was the last of these strands, the capacity for critical reflection, which has proved to be both imperative and pivotal in the move from a linear to a more relational-styled social work degree process that is 'Te Torino Paihere Tangata'.

Thirdly, 10 hours of academic contextualised up-skilling/honing was incorporated into all first-year courses because research (Dickey, 2009) undertaken in 2006 with prospective BASW students found that they worried about whether or not they firstly, were capable of the academic work involved in degree study and secondly, how they as students could "get their head around the fact that they were studying for a degree!" The majority did not feel they had any right to tertiary education. Over time hegemonic discourse had convinced them and their families that they did not have the intellect or attributes required, nor did they need a tertiary education. For these students, unequal power relationships in education (Bishop et al., 2003) had, for many, been their lived reality and this prevented them from "participating in the global community" (Durie, 2001). Adding the 10 hours for academic skills was easy. Addressing their lack of self-belief was much more difficult. Again Brookfield (2000) offered a way forward: if the programme changed his notions of 'impostorship', 'cultural suicide', 'incremental fluctuation', 'changing world', and 'community' from the individual to the educative system or process, we found we could use them to enhance and strengthen the identity of each individual as the concepts gave us a 'framework' to begin a conversation on how the students were managing their educational journey (Dickey, 2010).

Whilst Brookfield enabled us to look at different ways of thinking about these generally non-traditional tertiary students, now we envisaged that a whakapapa-driven approach to social work education and later practice provides the student with sequential energies as a way of thinking, connecting, positioning, and transforming themselves because whakapapa is about life in different states of being.

Fourthly and most importantly, the whole concept of the degree was premised on a tangata whenua whakatauaiki. This whakatauki, 'Iti rearea teitei Kahikatea ka taea' (even the smallest bird in Te Urewera forest could reach the lofty heights of the Kahikatea) suggested that the students could be selected for the degree by recognising their passion for change and their life experiences, as being sufficient 'academic qualifications' for entry into the programme (MIT, 2006).

Horopaki/Context: The Bachelor of Applied Social Work (Bicultural)

In 1954, Towle (in Manktelow & Lewis, 2005, p. 308) stated that a student selected for social work training should have "the strongest identification with the ideals of his [sic] profession...an unwavering conviction as to the worth of the ends of his work." While this may have been a clear-cut description suitable for that time, the five-year review of BASW in 2011 provided opportunity to reflect on what were the necessary attributes for a practitioner of bicultural and indigenous social work. In addition to the content and skills, one of the questions that arose during this reflection was, "Where was the conscious development of taura (student) attributes, competencies, ethics, and spirituality?" Research embarked on in 2006 (Dickey, 2009) suggested that taura need the capacity to construct their own knowledge, based on their experiences and skills. Using whakapapa allows the individual to start to develop his or her own pathway where cultural, psychological, and spiritual well-being can be addressed contemporaneously with content (Dickey, 2009).

Selpel, Johnston, and Walton (2011, p. 446), in their research on the selection of students entering Master of Social Work programmes, found that, while the ability to achieve academically was necessary, it was their personal qualities that "ultimately led to academic and professional success." They identified key attributes such as being ethical, empathetic, honest, a critical thinker, accountable, culturally sensitive, respectful, communicative, and genuine. Such attributes are also recognised in some of the key documents and policies of the Social Workers Registration Board of New Zealand, namely the Core Competence Standards (2003), the Code of Conduct (2008), and the Fit and Proper Policy (2012). Many of these attributes are difficult to quantify. For example, we can test a student's knowledge of a particular law quite easily, but what is harder to establish is their ability to use that law when they are in a relationship that requires it to be used.

Encompassing elements of all these qualities are the attribute of wellness, the interconnectedness of human attributes, the balance between the spiritual, mental/emotional, physical, and whanau (family). The authors believe that the 'best' social workers will be those who are grounded and will be able to manage and maintain their 'wellness'. So, how might this notion of wellness and those other attributes previously described, be identified, practised, and implemented in such a way as to graduate grounded, culturally appropriate, effective, and reflective social work practitioners?

Repositioning the BASW

Since its inception in 2007, the BASW has clearly identified itself as a Te Tiriti o Waitangi and biculturally-grounded degree programme. Reflection by the staff at the end of each year has centred on how they might more fully deliver a Te Tiriti o Waitangi and bicultural programme. Consequently, by the end of 2011, staff were engaging with new notions of both Te Tiriti o Waitangi and biculturalism, and also with the renewed energy pushing the development of Māori and Indigenous conceptions relevant to social work. The writing of Manulani Meyer's (2011, 2013) *Holographic Epistemology; Indigenous and authentic: Hawaiian epistemology and the triangulation of meaning*, Taina Pohatu's (2011) *Mauri – Rethinking Human Wellbeing*, Charles Royal's (2012) *Towards a Manifesto for Indigenous Development*, and Leland Ruwhiu's (2012) *Making Sense of Indigenous Issues in Aotearoa New Zealand* offered vital contributions to these conversations. In addition to this recent engagement with Te Tiriti/Indigenous conceptions, the BASW staff were now clearly aware of the need to articulate how they would know whether their graduates had the necessary attributes

and competencies to form and sustain the many relationships needed for social work practice with its multiplicity of contexts and participants.

At the very point that the BASW was redeveloping the delivery of the year-three courses in the light of these identified needs and the launching of a virtual social work office in support of this (June–July 2012), a BASW staff member, Peter Boyd, suggested that a whakapapa-based framework that had emerged from his doctoral studies might have the capacity to address the challenges of developing the BASW programme and as a base on which to formulate a different approach to transform social work education. Te Tōrino Paihere Tāngata was eventually adopted, and over the course of 2012–2013, elements of the Te Tōrino framework have been embedded in all courses in year three with a view that these elements would be woven down through the year-two and year-one courses of the BASW programme.

Genesis of Te Tōrino Paihere Tāngata

Te Tōrino Paihere Tāngata initially emerged out of investigations into the nature of Māori art practices. For thirty years, Boyd (2011) had been working with whakapapa without recognising its fundamental importance to an understanding of te ao Māori (the Māori world). The research question needed refocusing on to the nature of whakapapa. Some understandings of whakapapa then began to emerge from three bodies of Māori discourse. First, from tātairanga kōrero, a weaving together of all the kōrero concerning te ao Māori – inclusive of waiata (song), karakia (incantation), pūrākau (myth, story), whakatauaiki (proverb, saying), and Te Reo (language). These discourses suggested a cluster of relational ariā (concepts) underpinning whakapapa, such as hōnonga (connection) and tauutuutu (balance). A second body of understandings emerged from what commentators have said about whakapapa over time. These understandings acknowledged and added to the clusters of ariā which emerged from tātairanga kōrero. Third, an analysis of an extensive collection of kupu whakapapa (words concerning whakapapa) both confirmed the relational clusters and suggested another dimension – that these clusters might be considered to come together to form a sequential process. The sequence of relational clusters were understood to form a whakapapa principle framework originally designated as Ngā Mātāpono Whakapapa (Boyd, 2010). These mātāpono (principles) include:

Te Hononga: the imperative to **connect**, without which other principles could not function. The necessity to establish relationships and then to sustain and transform those relationships – whether physical, emotional, intellectual, or spiritual.

Pūtieke: the nature of the connection, locating, and **positioning** entities within different whakapapa frameworks.

Tauutuutu: **reciprocity** and the constant striving for balance in relationships.

Whakaahua: change and **transformation** are enabled by the interaction implicit in reciprocity, life cycle transformations, and changes in the nature of relationships.

Te Putitara: to **structure**, to reach a different holistic state, a new weaving together of relational structures into an interdependent whole.

The potential for Te Tōrino Paihere Tangata to engage within a social work context, following subsequent thinking, consultation and discussion, has moved the programme towards regarding the mātāpono more strongly as hiringa (energies), the life-force energies driving whakapapa and therefore driving Te Ao Māori. Thus, on an individual, course, and programme level, each delivery may be understood as haruru or a pulse of Te Tōrino Paihere Tangata hiringa constantly creating a transformational process involving content, attribute/competency building, and positioning.

Figure 1: Te Pūtītara Tōrino



Source: (Boyd, 2011, p. 230)

The term 'Te Tōrino' (three-dimensional spiral form) (Figure 1) suggests the spiral manner in which the relational structures are drawn together. In weaving, the aho (threads) shape a whariki (mat) or korowai (cloak), and potentially, the pattern on them. The aho therefore, in whakapapa, refers to the principal lines of descent. Thus the two or more aho or entities of a relationship (male–female, student–teacher, taina–teina, social worker–agency, social worker–client) are connected in the centre of the spiral and the outer rings lift continuously upward and outward. As the relationship develops over time (upward) and outward putieke (space) and tauutuutu (interaction), the nature of the relationship continues to whakaahua (evolve) and the past and present shape the future. A double spiral structure develops which continues to both structure and illuminate the evolving titaratanga (relationship). The 'blank' aho or 'space' between the two tangible aho references the intangible (including the spiritual dimension) and the constant balancing of the tangible and intangible realms. This 'presence,' or space, creates the capacity for aromatawai – the evaluation of those less tangible qualities of a person, but just as crucial as content. Infinite levels of complexity can be introduced to describe and explain specific and evolving relationships – person to person, person to whānau/hapū/iwi, iwi to iwi, tangata to environment, tangata to thought, culture to culture.

The above conception of whakapapa is supported by accounts from Tainui 'old men'. They understood the cosmic process to be "represented by the cosmic spiral, in carving and moko, swirling in and out of a primal centre. Each chevron etched into the spiral represented a key link in the unfolding of the cosmos... depicting life as a dynamic force, sometimes creative, sometimes destructive; as Patu Hohepa has put it: Time is a moving continuum...time swirls like koru patterns, three dimensional spirals" (P. Hohepa, personal communication).

As it spins, the world continues to unfold, bringing new kinds of being together. New experience is grasped, but at the same time, people try to control it in the interests of their kinsfolk. This leads to entanglement and struggle, often across cultural boundaries. (Salmond, 1991, p. 512)

Te Tōrino Paihere Tangata – Developments in year-three courses 2012/2013

Two aho (threads) are woven through year three, Te Tōrino, the tangible (content, skills) and intangible (attributes, competencies, ethics). Woven through both of these aho across the three years is the question, "Ko wai au?" The taurira's 'self/voice' is always developing in relation to an evolving matrix of relationships – social, economic, political, cultural and gender.

Hōnonga (Connection): identifies the imperative to connect and to establish sustainable relationships. Tuhono (the action of making connections) works on a range of levels – taura to BASW programme, kaiako to taura, taura to taura, taura to social work contexts.

The practice of huitahi (a gathering at the beginning of the work day) is one means of ensuring connection each day. Huitahi is initiated by taura, facilitated by the tutor, and returned to the tutor at its conclusion. Huitahi is basically a process of taura grounding themselves in the programme, in a matrix of relationships prior to specific work engagements.

Pūtieke (Positioning): Tuhono processes invariably also involve pūtieke (positioning) within relationships and the nature of that relationship – tutor/taura, class/BASW, tangible/intangible. What emerges from the tracing of connection and positioning is that the evolution of relationships is less linear and more of a spiraling conceptualisation. Meyer (2013, p. 9) has conceptualised her understanding of the relationship between body, mind, and spirit as a “holographic universe,” the Tainui ‘old men’ understood whakapapa as a ‘cosmic spiral’ and Bishop (1996) understood the research process in the Māori world to be a spiraling one.

A spiral conceptualisation enables the weaving together of the programme elements – tangible and intangible, content, and aromatawai – simultaneously, and over time and context. The number of courses in year three have been reduced from seven to three, in an effort to encourage students to recognise that each course is in a relationship with the other two and no course is to be seen as though it is in a silo. Rather, courses are delivered in conjunction with each other, with an increasing emphasis on aromatawai (to look carefully at the essence of a person) until balance with content is achieved. The taura ‘voice’ is now connected and positioned with a host of other voices.

Tauutuutu (Reciprocity/Balance): Connection and positioning create the conditions, opportunity and necessity for interaction and reciprocity. The spiraling enables the weaving together of the course aho (strands) and taura (students), towards transformation and growth. As the relationship evolves, repositioning takes place where ‘Ko wai au?’ enables the strengthening of the taura voice. Of course, interaction does not always automatically work in a positive direction, but it at least provides some understanding of tangata whaiora emerging from processes (towards wellness) which create difficulties for people’s lives.

Thus the tutor’s role in the year-three courses has become less one of lecturing but rather one of facilitation of the interaction, the weaving together of the aho and taura, of taura finding their own personal and professional voices, with increasing self-direction. Delivery is increasingly moving towards the interactive – collaboration of difficult conversations, the ‘on the couch’ critiquing, the aromatawai (evaluation) of all taura behaviour in a variety of course and practicum contexts. Out of these interactions, taura also develop personal metaphors which encapsulate the principles underpinning their developing practice. The drive for tauutuutu – reciprocity – is crucial because it creates the potential for transformation.

Whakaahua (Transformation): Understanding, repositioning, and the growth of personal attributes and competencies emerges out of the interweaving and interaction between tangible and intangible threads. ‘Ko wai au?’ threads transform in terms of both academic understandings and interaction across a range of activities and experiences. Enabled by the intangible thread and inseparable from the tangible thread, aromatawai (evaluation) reveals a growth in personal attributes, competencies, ethics and spirit.

Whakaahua processes can often be a painful struggle for tutor, taura, and their families because of challenges to deeply-held realities, understandings, and values. Some taura take time out, some withdraw from the programme altogether, but the majority struggle through and invariably the transformation occurs.

Pūtītara (Holistic structuring): The impetus of Te Tōrino hīringa (spiralling life energies) in relation to ‘Ko wai au?’ leads to new positionings, a weaving together of complex understandings and a new confidence of ‘voice’ both personal and professional. A more holistic weaving together of the tangible and intangible is potentially reached. The Te Tōrino hīringa could be considered to be directed towards the nurturing of

a 'social work consciousness', in the sense developed by Charles Royal in the nineties, with his 'whakapapa consciousness' and more currently (2012) 'indigenous consciousness' conceptualisations.

With the impending requirement to develop new, four-year programmes by 2017 some thinking has already been directed towards the possibilities of internships in year four. This would enable the demonstration over a substantial period of the full weaving together of the tangible and intangible (content, skills, attributes, competencies, and ethics), the full development of the tauira voice, 'Ko wai au?' and the presence of a 'social work consciousness' – in a working context.

I'm a third-year, male, Pacific student, so how am I feeling about Te Tōrino?

First time 'On the couch' using Te Tōrino was scary. Until entering Year Three when faced with a social work scenario on decisions that needed to be made, I immediately thought about only tangible things – one aho [strand] of Te Tōrino, that of the content, skills and theories that I had learnt or had physically demonstrated in some context. All of a sudden this type of solution to a given scenario was insufficient! We were 'facilitated into' delving into the reasons why we had chosen a particular solution, from a communication–emotional perspective, by interrogating our actions, ourselves, and the people in the scenario. I hated it, as did most of my classmates, this different way of teaching. I was very uncomfortable. The problem was that until we started the 'On the couch, professional conversations, huitahi or similar activities,' I hadn't really realized how important my awareness of my own behavior, emotions and thoughts [the intangible things] were in any relationship that I was part of. My biggest problem was that I, and others in the class, didn't have the vocabulary to describe these intangible things. Te Tōrino provides me with an 'awareness framework' that I can use to begin to reflect on, analyse and understand the different relationships I have. I also realized that even when one holds the power in a relationship (like being a statutory empowered social worker) their [sic] needs to be reciprocity if the relationship is to flourish. I can now visualize where I am at in a relationship in terms of connection, reciprocity, balance, transformation. I now know what the relationship looks like. I can now see that relationships are forever changing and that that is okay.

I think that Te Tōrino will be very useful when a relationship is heading down a negative pathway. I will be able to back track to see where we derailed and find a new way to resurrect the relationship. I'm beginning to recognize where the second strand (intangibles) fits with the first strand (the tangible) in Te Tōrino. I have watched really good academic students struggle with maintaining their relationships with each other and with the people they were working with. With my often, uncomfortable experiences this past six months, I suspect they haven't developed their intangible attributes which will help them sustain their relationship with others.

Mutunga/Conclusion

As educators, we need to acknowledge that both the tangible and intangible are intrinsic to social work education. Central to this is the need to consider relationships. Using Te Tōrino, inclusive of the life force processes of connection, positioning, reciprocity, transformation, and holistic restructuring we believe provides an effective framework for social work practice. This enables a real weaving together of all the knowledge, skills and more intangible personal qualities and attributes. This creates the potential for the emergence of what might be called a 'social work consciousness' by incorporating the process of aromatawai (evaluating the state and qualities of the individual, where they now position themselves and their consciousness) within social work education. If we look at this from a te ao Māori perspective, this could be extended in the current context to what Charles Royal (2012, p. 1) has referred to as an "indigenous consciousness".

We are encouraging the emergence of a particular type of consciousness that will continue to transform the student into a social worker. This process is ongoing in their education and work contexts. The implications for the use of Te Tōrino is its potential to also form the basis of a social work practice process when working

with others beyond the education context. Anecdotally, it is heard that there is constant turnover of social workers in agencies throughout New Zealand and beyond. Is it not time to stop and consider whether or not current social work education is producing social workers that are grounded, can maintain relationships, and so positively adapt to the ever-changing demands of people in need of support and the agencies that employ them? BASW students need the tools to enable them to get to the top of the kahikatea tree. For the BASW, this means exploring a relational approach to social work education, Te Tōrino Paihere Tāngata, to encourage the development of the tangible and intangible attributes (in 'social work speak,' competencies) of the student. Thus as people move into different relationships we hope that "the[ir] world continues to unfold, bringing new kinds of being together... As a relationship develops over time (upward), space (outward) and event, the nature of the relationship continues to evolve and the past and present continue to shape the future" (Salmon, 1991, p. 512, cited in Boyd, 2011, p. 230).

No reira, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

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Corresponding Author

CATHERINE DICKEY

Cath.Dickey@manukau.ac.nz

11 Teaching rural: Developing and delivering a rural social work module as part of a social work degree

LESLEY PITT Registered Social Worker (Western Institute of Technology at Taranaki)

Abstract

Rural social work is a significant area of social work practice and is different from urban social work. The dominant discourse in social work literature and education is urban (Maidment, 2012; Pugh & Cheers, 2010). This means the 'default position' is an urban focus in classroom discussions, assessments, and literature – the discourse is about urban dwellers but this is not made explicit. In order to counter this and to equip social work students in Taranaki, the Western Institute of Technology at Taranaki has been running a rural social work module for the past two years. Graduates of the programme who work locally may be rural practitioners and all, due to the nature of the area, will have some rural clients. This paper is an evaluation of this module using an action reflection process and concluding with potential improvements to the module. Students report the module is useful; this is in part due to the high level of involvement of practitioners in the local community and also the practical nature of the course material.

Keywords: rural, urban-centric, evaluation, education

Introduction

In 2012 and 2013 I delivered a third-year elective in the Bachelor of Applied Social Sciences (Social Work) called 'Rural Social Work' at the Western Institute of Technology at Taranaki (WITT) which is in New Plymouth. The Bachelor of Applied Social Sciences (Social Work) is the Waikato Institute of Technologies (WINTEC) degree delivered at the WITT site. The module will be run for another three years, including 2014, but following this, the future is unclear to date as the degree will become four years long rather than the current three. I believe this is the first time a rural social work module has been delivered in Aotearoa although it has been taught as a topic in other programmes. As a way of approaching the preparation for the module (and as there was no existing curriculum material in Aotearoa), I decided to approach the development and teaching of the course by consulting practitioners about content. I was also keen to get feedback from students during the delivery of the course and to make changes based on their feedback, input from practitioners and my own reflections.

Advice was sought from our local advisory group of social services representatives who meet regularly to provide advice and support to the social work teaching team. I also identified local practitioners who had experience in rural social work.

In order to make the conversations with practitioners purposeful, I had a list of open questions which I put to each practitioner. I used this data to inform my teaching of the course. I have since invited a number of these practitioners, and others, to talk to the class about their experience of rural social work.

Feedback from students about their experience of the module has been ongoing and changes have been made in response to their comments. This is part of the circular nature of the action/reflection/action cycle. This cycle is described by Harms and Connolly (2009) as praxis-oriented action whereby we enhance our practice by considering what we do by critically reflecting on our work and then making changes and improvements. Action/reflection/action cycles are discussed in the education literature. Reflecting on teaching practice is considered to be part of the scholarship of teaching, that is reflecting on teaching experiences with a view to improvement and incorporating into teaching planning and practice regular and effective review processes which include the student voice (Race, 2000; Trigwell, Martin, Benjamin, & Prosser, 2000).

During the delivery of the course Maidment and Bay's (2012) edited book, *Social Work in Rural Australia: Enabling Practice* was published; material from this book further informed the module as well as providing useful literature for students to use. Consideration was given to using it as a course text, however, I decided against this due to the significant differences between the Australian and Aotearoa rural contexts.

Context

As with all degrees, the Bachelor of Applied Social Sciences (Social Work) has an external monitor and she commented following a WITT site visit in 2011 that, "It is heartening to see that a new elective, Rural Social Work, is being offered next year. The different sites which deliver the degree have been encouraged to develop electives that respond to their own communities and this is a good example" (Foster, 2011, p. 2). The module is seen as relevant to our community, equipping students with the skills and knowledge they will require to work in Taranaki. While practitioners working in New Plymouth will work with predominantly urban clients, their practice will include work with rural dwellers. A significant number of our graduates work as rural practitioners based in Stratford and Hawera.

The question 'what is rural?' is the first thing students consider in the module. Statistics New Zealand (2008) does not have an absolute definition of rural but outlines a continuum from urban to rural. Within Taranaki we have what is defined as a 'main urban area', New Plymouth, and on the continuum of population density through to the other end of the spectrum which is 'highly rural/remote', which includes the north of the province and east of Stratford (Statistics New Zealand, 2009). Both these areas have steep hill-country which is partly farmed with sheep and beef and partly bush (Stratford District Council, 2008). It is noted that the geography of the province affects the way people live and work.

The map below shows New Plymouth on the north coast, Stratford in the centre of the province and Hawera in the south, the locations where social workers are based at present. Parihaka, a significant site in the province and where students from WITT visit, is on the coast north of Opunake.

Their course content demonstrates their “understanding of the importance of the rural social condition” (Alston, 2007, p. 113). They are teaching in a way that reflects the culture of rural Australians and they facilitate this learning using scenarios from rural situations which is what I have done in teaching this module.

It is important to note that to understand ‘rural’ in a Taranaki context means understanding the first settlers on the land, tangata whenua. Taranaki is diverse in terms of Iwi with eight Iwi identified within Taranaki, the largest (in population) being Te Atiawa. There are 50 hapū represented in Nāga Iwi O Taranaki and 42 marae (Te Whare Pūnanga Kōrero Trust/Taranaki District Health Board, 2009). This demographic results in complexities which need to be wrestled with, and multiple relationships which need to be formed, in order to practise social work in a way which incorporates the principles enshrined in Te Tiriti o Waitangi. There are ongoing tensions which stem from the times of early settlement when Taranaki was the site of war, injustice, and extensive land confiscations (Waitangi Tribunal, 1996). Taranaki is also home to Parihaka, the site of passive resistance towards the end of the nineteenth century. The result of the resistance was the arrest and removal to Otago of the men of the community. The impact of this event and the wars in the 1860s lives on (see <http://parihaka.com/>) and affects people’s everyday life and the way people relate to each other. Ensuring students are aware of this history is a starting place in the module, supported by other teaching on the degree including the students’ time on the noho marae at Parihaka.

Action reflection process

When it was established and the module was going ahead, I talked to rural social work practitioners about the content of the module. I was interested to find out what they thought graduates should know about rural social work clients and social work practice in a rural environment. I felt a need to do this, as Maidment (2012) asserts we need a counter-story to the ‘urban-centric’ view of social work. She argues that social work education has been an “urban phenomenon, taught predominantly from city campuses where urban-centric views of practice, policy and ethics prevail” (p. 4). As social work literature in Aotearoa is urban-centric, I was also limited in terms of local material although there is a significant body of work from Australia, Great Britain, and from the United States of America where there is a rural social work school in West Virginia (Lohmann & Lohmann, 2005).

While questions were used to inform the discussions with practitioners, the conversations were free-flowing with practitioners able to speak to the issues for their client group, and about their practice experience. Practitioners spoken to during the module-preparation phase included those working in non-government organisations and one social worker in a statutory role. The questions used during the consultation were:

- What does ‘rural’ mean to you?
- How do you see the difference between rural and urban?
- What are the issues for your clients?
- What are the issues for you as a practitioner?
- What social policies affect your clients?

From these conversations I established themes which formed the content of the course. The themes in relation to clients were isolation, lack of services, poverty, lack of housing or poor housing, mental illness (in our community this includes suicide among rural men) (Perry, 2008), and alcohol and drug problems. Some of the concerns for rural practice mirrored the client issues and included professional isolation, the need to be creative due to a lack of services, and personal – professional boundary challenges when living and working in small communities. These factors parallel the international literature about rural social work.

During the consultation, there was discussion about the need to understand challenges faced by rural clients through their cultural paradigm, which is discussed extensively by Smith (2013). She discusses roles being gendered, the importance of family and attending social events as a family group, the need to belong to and participate in the life of the local community, and the sharing of resources within local communities.

Smith (2013) goes on to identify the following qualities as being valued within rural culture: “resilience, parochialism, community spirit and self-determination” (p. 19). This idea of a unique, different rural culture provides a counter-narrative to urban-centric practice which is discussed in social work literature as a ‘normal’ way of being (Alston, 2007; Maidment, 2012) – so normalised it is not named as urban, but is ‘taken for granted’.

As rural suicide is identified as an issue of particular concern in Taranaki (Perry, 2008), the staff of the ‘Like Minds’ mental health campaign have been invited to speak to both year groups. These sessions complement a speaker who is a social worker in adult mental health employed by the Taranaki District Health Board. This year, the Like Minds presentation included a conversation with a mental health service user and his wife who are dairy-farming. For students this was a powerful and useful experience, to hear a couple’s journey with serious mental illness and their day-to-day resistance of suicide. It is hoped that this presentation could be repeated but it is dependent on the generosity and grace of this couple and of Like Minds Taranaki.

It was planned from the outset that the module would be reviewed at the end of each semester of teaching, a process advocated by Trigwell et al. (2000); the module is taught in the first semester. The review of the module has involved self-reflection and feedback from students, both from written, formal evaluation processes, and more informal feedback via discussions in the classroom.

The content of the module

This module is taught in year three of the social work degree delivered at WITT. The learning outcomes for the module are to:

- critique various sociological perspectives about what the concept ‘rural’ means
- critically analyse the day-to-day lived experience of people in rural contexts and contrast this with that of urban dwellers
- determine the impact of current social problems in/on rural communities in Aotearoa/New Zealand
- critique social policy in terms of its impact on rural communities
- understand and critique the skills required in rural social work practice
- analyse and describe in-depth a field of practice in the rural context, including all current challenges and the impact of social policy on the area of practice.

The assessments measure the learning outcomes and the content of the course is organised around the three assessments which include: an exploration of what ‘rural’ means and identification of rural issues; an interview with a person who identifies as rural; an in-depth written discussion about different fields of practice and social policy in relation to rural communities. These assessments are all carried out in the context of Taranaki history, including the stories of Iwi in this area, and our geography, much of which is determined by our maunga.

Students are provided with a book of readings, have access to an e-learning site and in 2013 two relevant texts were placed on reserve in the WITT library. One of these books is Maidment and Bay’s aforementioned edited book and the other a British text about rural social work, Pugh and Cheers’ (2010), *Rural Social Work: An International Perspective*.

Student feedback

Students in both classes come from a variety of backgrounds and have varying experiences of rural life, from minimal to extensive exposure. Some students in both year groups have identified themselves on the first day of the module as having had no experience of rural life and no interest in things agricultural. Students who experienced rural life included those who grew up on farms, those living on lifestyle blocks, and those

currently engaged in rural work such as milking cows. Overall, student feedback has been positive despite some students professing to have no interest in rural life at the beginning of the course. It appears that students with minimal exposure to the rural context had concerns about being marginalised because of their lack of experience. However, this has not occurred in their learning, and they have commented that they now feel better prepared to work with rural clients.

The negative feedback in 2012 related to difficulty in finding materials and a perception that the module did not require a full semester of teaching. By 2013 the WITT library had purchased more relevant literature and Maidment and Bay's edited book, *Social Work in Rural Australia: Enabling Practice*, was available. While some of the content is specific to Australia, students have made good use of relevant chapters, particularly in relation to fields of practice they are interested in. The amount of content in the course was increased from 2012 to 2013, particularly in relation to fields of practice, which resulted in the content matching the length of teaching time.

Students commented that they enjoyed learning about rural life. Being able to draw on existing knowledge and experiences (personal and from their year-two work placement) enabled integrated learning to occur. Students also commented they found the practical nature of the course a change from the more theoretical work in year three of their degree. The speakers appeared to be a highlight as they bring the 'real world' of social work practice to life, speak about their experiences, and share their stories and wisdom.

Students reported that they enjoyed interviewing a rural dweller for their second assessment. This assessment is an interview of a person, or in some instances students have interviewed couples, about their day-to-day life as a rural resident, and writing an accompanying narrative. The ethical considerations associated with this conversation are discussed extensively before the assessment is carried out. I have found students have found appropriate people to interview and have carried out these interviews sensibly keeping to the topic of daily life and 'staying away' from more sensitive issues. The conversations to date have been informative, thought-provoking, and often humorous.

The last assessment involves a field of practice of the student's choice and this has enabled students to follow their own interests, drawing on their placement experiences and other class work. This part of the course incorporates a wider body of social work and field-specific knowledge.

One student in 2013 commented that a field trip would be helpful in order to situate the learning. I have made assumptions about the extent of students' knowledge of Taranaki geography and a field trip may help with this as well as adding a physical context to our discussions.

Students stated the course would not have been as useful if I had not been the tutor. While I would like to flatter myself that this is about my ability as a tutor I believe it was more of a reflection of my background growing up on a sheep and beef farm in the hill-country east of Stratford, and my experience as a rural practitioner. In a sense I took this comment to be a reflection of my lived experience of the culture which enabled me to identify issues and speak as an insider (Barker, 2002). This insider perspective is helpful at times but my own experience may limit what I discuss. For example, I grew up at a time when farming was based around small family farms and it was possible to make a 'good living' sheep and beef farming. The context of farming is different now with a reduction in sheep and beef farming and an increase in dairying. Many dairy farms are now significant business holdings employing large numbers of staff.

Reflection phase: Where to from here?

As a reflective teacher it is good practice to listen to the student 'voice' and make changes accordingly while retaining the aspects of the learning students find helpful (Huba & Freed, 2000; Leach, Neutze, & Zepke, 2003; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). For 2014 I will be considering how to incorporate at least one field trip into the module. I have also considered including a requirement that students participate in rural activities, such as milking or shearing, but this may prove difficult for some students to access, or they may not be physically able to do so.

Poverty in rural areas is an issue which requires our attention as evidenced by recent research about child poverty. The Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty (2012, p. 8) identify “areas with significant concentrations of deprivation” as being rural Northland, East Cape, and parts of the central North Island. Including a comprehensive understanding of poverty as it presents in rural communities is an important part of any social work education about rural social work. This is an area I introduced to the module in 2013 and will continue to ‘grow’ in the years ahead.

In the future, the programme curriculum will have to change as the Bachelor of Applied Social Sciences (Social Work) will be replaced by a four-year degree as per the requirements of the Social Workers Registration Board (2013). What happens in relation to the ‘rural social work’ module will depend on the content and structure of the new degree. However, whatever the nature of the new degree, I will continue to advocate for rural social work to be included alongside other emerging fields of practice such as ‘green’ social work. There is an alignment between these two fields as they both emphasise the physical nature of the ‘person in environment’ principle inherent in social work (Alston, 2013; Coates, 2003; Dominelli, 2012).

The unexplored possibilities of this course are as a model for other fields of practice which relate to particular geographies and cultures. As I write this article I reflect on the potential use of this course for Pasifika educators and those working in economically deprived communities. This approach fits with Raymond Williams’ (1989) ideas about culture as ordinary and ‘drawing this out’ in order to understand communities which have unique features. With the move to four-year degrees for some social work education providers there is scope to look at incorporating and increasing the number of context-specific courses in Aotearoa, with students exploring cultural groups relevant to the specific context in which they will practise social work.

Conclusion

While I went into the development of this module planning with a rigorous evaluation process and a desire to use the action–reflection cycle, the actual practice of it was similar to other modules I teach which indicates that this course was a part of a wider practice in my teaching. What is different about the development of this module was the involvement of practitioners in its design. This involvement continued into the teaching of the module which enhanced the engagement of students, even those not interested in rural social work as a field of practice.

In post-modernity there is room for many voices and for rural social work getting room to ‘have a say’ and challenging urban-centric ideas is evidence of this. It can sit alongside ‘green’ social work in being, or becoming, part of new curricula and discourse within social work education in Aotearoa. The idea that students have to work in times of uncertainty and with high levels of complexity means social work education which incorporates working in rural communities and with/in the environment may have ‘come of age’.

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Corresponding Author
LESLEY PITT
L.Pitt@witt.ac.nz

12 Educating for our future: Instilling the concepts of social change

RAEMA MERCHANT Registered Social Worker (Eastern Institute of Technology)

Abstract

This paper will discuss, with practice examples, how concepts of social responsibility and social change are introduced to social work students. When beginning their journey towards a social work degree, each student brings with them experience, worldviews, and personal belief systems drawn from their culture, families, and communities. This knowledge is frequently held by the student with neither realisation nor question.

Social work educators can be catalysts for teaching emergent social workers ways in which to critically analyse their worldview and to develop cultural and social awareness through transformative learning arising from exposure to new experiences.

Keywords: transformative learning, social change, social work, equality

Introduction

When their social work journey begins, students look forward to learning about how to be a social worker. They are keen to develop and learn interpersonal skills, to be taught about theories and models of practice, and to learn about everything they will need to know when they start their new career. What they might not anticipate is that, during the course of their study, their entire worldview may be shaken to its core. They will be challenged to rethink their core beliefs and values.

This paper will discuss how we, as educators, are able to teach social work students ways in which to critically analyse their own belief systems and to build a practice framework. Our role is to act as catalysts to instil concepts of social change, together with challenges for overcoming oppression and discrimination, and the promotion of human welfare.

In order to ignite the flame of transformative change, there may need to be a specific event provided by the teacher that initiates and challenges the student to respond. As described below, this can be a class exercise or exposure to media such as documentaries that are watched, discussed, and reflected upon.

Worldviews, values, and beliefs: challenging and changing perceptions

One of the key elements of social work is the concept of social responsibility and awareness of different perspectives on current issues and challenges. This is recognised in the New Zealand Social Workers Registration Board Code of Conduct that states: "social workers are expected...to respect and uphold the civil, legal and human rights of clients" (SWRB, 2008, p. 10). It is only through self-examination and critique of one's own values and beliefs that we are able to fully become "reflective and reflexive practitioners" (Harms & Connolly, 2013, p. 10) who are able to practise in a culturally safe and socially aware way.

When a student begins the journey towards a social work degree, he or she brings with them a range of experiences, worldviews, and personal belief systems. These have been drawn from their culture, families, and communities. The knowledge held by the student is frequently inherent, and is not questioned. It may have been culturally constructed within that student's world. To put it simply, the person often does not know that they do not know that these beliefs are subjective.

In an average intake of new students, there may be some with prior experience of working in the social service arena; for others there may have been no contact with social services at all. As educators, we understand that there is a continuum in what experience of life and social work the students have when they arrive. Also, it is important to recognise that there are very differing worldviews and beliefs held within the student cohort.

At times, a student's understanding of social conditions and social problems might have been heavily influenced by the media, religious teachings, or cultural beliefs that may not necessarily align with policies or practices within the social services sector. The student's worldview might be biased. We need to be aware that the student's understanding of social conditions and social problems may be untested by experience or knowing.

Much of what a person believes has also been shaped by influences such as the media. The media has a tendency to reinforce and perpetuate biased social and racist perceptions about social issues such as poverty, family violence, and abuse (Merchant, 2010). It is important to realise that the relationship between media and society is a complex issue and that no one is immune from the power of the media to persuade and influence. O'Shaughnessy and Stadler (2008) describe the media-world relationship as being "permanently intertwined...and media images and reality often blur together" (p. 58). For our students it may be unthinkable that what they have read in the papers or watched on television may not be real or that it might be a biased or flawed version of reality.

By the time a student completes the social work degree and is ready to graduate, we, as educators and social workers, have an expectation that the emergent social worker is ready to practise according to prescribed Social Work Registration Board criteria. The requisites of this preparedness are for the student to have awareness of social change and of the diverse challenges in the world of social work. They should be culturally competent and to be able to work holistically in a wide range of social work settings.

Instilling the concepts of social change through transformative learning

There will be many challenges for each student over the years of study, not only in the way in which they perceive social work, but more importantly, in the ways that they perceive themselves. This transformative change is achievable in a two-step process. Firstly, the student is encouraged to critically identify, assess, and evaluate his or her fundamental understanding of both self and of their worldviews. This can be activated by being challenged or questioned, by encountering an alternative point of view, or through an experience that does not fit previously encountered experiences.

Secondly, the student is helped towards making meaning from the new learning they have encountered. Through critical reflection students are able to move from knowing what they know without questioning, to understanding what they know because it has now been consciously raised within themselves.

Transformative learning theory is a learning tool which helps students make meaning of what they know. The origins of this theoretical approach to adult learning are seen in the works of well-known adult educators such as Paulo Freire and Jack Mezirow (Dirkx, 1998). Freire had a strong emphasis on raising the critical consciousness of students to enable them to change their individual worldview through a process of analysing, questioning, and reflecting on their personal values and beliefs. Mezirow focused on critical reflection and "perspective transformation" (Dirkx, 1998, p. 4), where a student is encouraged and supported to analyse and reformulate perceptions that are held.

Through the use of transformative learning theory, the students are encouraged and challenged to examine and develop their individual beliefs, attitudes, and emotional reactions and responses to a range of social issues and situations they may encounter in their social work journey (Taylor, Cranton, & Associates, 2012). Multicultural educator James Banks (2006) advocates for the inclusion of the transformative approach in adult education, as it allows for a range of social concepts and issues to be viewed from diverse ethnic and cultural perspectives.

Within most social work degrees there is a mix of informative learning and transformative learning. Whereas informative learning has the outcome of the student gaining knowledge, the outcome of transformative learning for the student is that of empowerment and freedom to think autonomously. Learning experiences are based on exploring social, cultural, and ecological relationships and also investigating power and knowledge relationships. This helps students shape their perceptions by including concepts of social justice and cultural awareness.

Transformative learning can be facilitated within the classroom in a range of ways such as: 1) through sharing meanings with other students, and making sense of a range of life experiences; and 2) through the creation of a 'disorienting dilemma' (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009).

Integral to the facilitation of transformative learning must be a willingness of the teacher to role model learning and change. There also needs to be a guided development of sensitive and trusting relationships within the class (Giles & Alderson, 2008). The teacher requires the social and emotional competence to facilitate these relationships and to develop an atmosphere within the classroom that is "socially enabling" and with a "warm, supportive, non-threatening and enjoyable environment" (p. 473). To successfully achieve safe and ethically sound transformative learning, it is important that the teacher be critically reflective of the whole process. This includes the period after the activity or exercise when the student may be processing the new learning and emotional transformation from previously held perceptions.

Sharing meanings and making sense of experiences

Within a social work degree, each step of the journey builds on the step before. This scaffolding allows for individual growth and change as there is more and more exposure to other views, theories, and challenges. For example, in the first year, students are exposed to the concepts of colonisation, Eurocentrism, and grievances arising from the Treaty of Waitangi. In 'Sociology', students explore sociological concepts and perspectives that equip the student to start thinking about societal traditions and behaviours. At the same time the students are also beginning to critically examine their own values and beliefs in a 'Self-Awareness' paper.

In the second year of study, more complex concepts are introduced. In a 'Social Policy and Law' paper, the students are challenged to think about social issues. The students are guided to consider questions such as "What impact do social issues have on people?" and "What is our role in addressing these issues?" Also in the second year the students have their first fieldwork placement. This is an opportunity to develop practical knowledge and awareness of social work practice.

In the third and final year of the degree, the students are encouraged to reflectively and critically rethink and possibly redevelop their individual responses to social issues, and then to build an individual practice framework based on these changes.

When students begin their fieldwork placement in a social services agency within the local community, many express their apprehension about being in the 'real' world with 'real' people. The fieldwork experience can be challenging and confusing for a student as they face situations which they might have only met in theory but of which they may have had no first-hand experience. One student told the class after his first week of placement:

[Y]ou tutors were right about so much – I went to a home that was worse than I had ever imagined and the problems those people had were so horrible...why didn't I see this before? (Second year student)

For this student, and for others in the class, here was the opportunity for transformative learning. The student was able to unpack the experience of entering a client's home for the first time, and of encountering a situation that was outside his current scope of experience. He was able to identify what had unsettled him, and to consider what impact the experience had on his worldview and his current beliefs and knowledge, and to initiate personal growth.

The student reflected that he had been challenged not only by entering a different world to that which he knew, but also by the shock and awareness that he had not before realised that such a different world existed for people within his own community. Through being aware of this new learning, the student and his class peers were then able to consciously identify new meanings for themselves.

Creating a disorienting dilemma for students

For some students, it may be necessary to challenge their values, beliefs, and knowledge in such a way that it disorients them. This has been described by the theorist, Jack Mezirow, as being a 'disorienting dilemma'. Mezirow and Taylor (2009) identify that by negotiating through dilemmas there can be transformative learning. It is the role of the teachers therefore to present a dilemma and to allow the student to construct the solution, or to create new meanings for him/herself. Such a change can be dramatic and create a 'light bulb' moment or it may induce a gradual growth of realisation and awareness.

The following steps are the framework on which a disorienting dilemma can support transformative learning.

- Present a situation in the form of a scenario, exercise, video, documentary, or other media that may challenge the student to experience a situation that they may not have previously encountered.
- Allow for emotional responses.
- Use critical reflection to facilitate a move from 'knowing what I know without questioning' to understanding 'why I know what I know'.
- Create new meaning; making sense of the new awareness.

The following two examples will demonstrate how the use of a disorienting dilemma may be incorporated into teaching within a social work degree.

1 Bastion Point documentary

The disorienting dilemma used in this example is the documentary *Bastion Point Day 507* (Awatea Films, 1999). This is a documentary produced by Awatea films and directed by Merata Mita, Leon Narbey, and Gerd Pohlmann. The documentary shows the stark reality of the final day of the 1978 Bastion Point occupation by Māori protesters from Ngāti Whātua iwi. The documentary was filmed from within the occupied area and is described as having "a partisan viewpoint, is short on commentary and emphasises the overkill aspect of the combined police/military operation" (*Bastion Point day*, 2008, para.1). The students watch as the police and army arrive in a long convoy of armoured vehicles. They see the leaders from Ngāti Whātua encouraging a peaceful and non-violent response to the approaching ranks of police and army. They see women and children being forcibly arrested or removed from the grounds. They see the anguish and heartbreak of the people as they live the experience of losing their land.

Every time I have watched this documentary with a class of first-year students, both Māori and Pākehā students have displayed raw emotion. There may be tears, anger, sadness, shame, confusion, helplessness, empathy, responsibility, and passion. The emotions are expressed, experienced, and shared.

Critical reflection in the class discussion following the showing of the documentary allows each student to process why they are feeling this way. They are encouraged to reflect on questions such as: What response do they need to think about? What is the shock they are feeling? What does this mean to the worldviews they already hold? Is their world suddenly upside down? Does it mean they have to reject what they already know to be fact? Will this new knowledge affect their relationships in their family, friends, and community?

The students are then supported to make sense of their vulnerable and emerging awareness, and to begin to weave their understanding towards what may ultimately be incorporated into a practice framework.

A comment from a student following the experience of watching *Day 507* reflects some of the emotions raised and the transformative learning that arose following the class:

I had no idea that Māori were essentially raped of their culture, or of the hurt contained within them, or how they were set up to fail. ...I was ignorant but I'm not so ignorant now. I was ashamed I had so little knowledge. This course was taught with an atmosphere that was safe for me...I was able to ask questions and voice my opinions. (First year student)

Ingrid Huygens (2009) in a PowerPoint presentation *Pākehā Mahi for Decolonisation* used transformative change to describe how Pākehā need to work for change by the process of coming from a place of ignorance (not knowing) to awareness, to learning, and finally to action. She describes this as a “long hard journey” as Pākehā start to theorise their change process often through “dissonance and discomfort” (slide 4).

For many students, the process of transformative change begins in the first year of study, but the disorienting dilemma that provides the ‘aha moment’ may not happen until the second or even final year of the degree. For one student, the disorienting dilemma was experienced in the first fieldwork placement. The agency had a new building, and in keeping with Māori protocol, the building was blessed by local kaumatua. The student questioned:

Is it just hillbilly magic? Or PC? [Politically Correct]. I still don't really understand why most things these days have to have some Māori influence or input, or is it just being PC? (Second year student)

The student was clearly experiencing Huygens’ description of dissonance and discomfort. Together with a tutorial class, the student was able to critically reflect on the emotions experienced. The class discussed how to start to understand values and beliefs of clients they may be working with in their future practice. To further help their understanding, the students were also encouraged to explore a range of holistic whānau-centred principles that align with Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles. The transformative change became apparent when the same student began to identify and verbalise a new way of understanding:

This experience reinforced in me to respect other peoples cultures, values, beliefs etc. because the majority of clients I am going to deal with are going to be Māori. I may not understand why they do things this way, but I have to go along with it, be beside them and empower my clients. (Second year student)

2 Simulation exercise: ‘Children are born equal’

The following exercise is one I have developed to present to second-year social work students in the ‘Social Policy and Law’ class. The exercise is introduced to the class after four to five weeks of information about the New Zealand legal system, an introduction to a range of ideologies, and a basic introduction to the concept of well-being. At this stage of the course, the students are typically struggling to understand some of the concepts and appear at times to be clinging to the frame of reference that they feel most comfortable with when speaking about politics, social policies, and the debate about equality versus equity.

The exercise begins with each student being given a brief vignette of a hypothetical child’s life at three stages: three years, seven years, and fifteen years. No two cards are the same. The card briefly describes what is happening in that child’s life at each stage. The following areas are covered with a brief comment on the card.

-
- Who the child lives with. This may be Mum and Dad, just one parent, a grandparent, or caregiver. Sometimes the reason is provided for the caregiver, such as Dad being in prison or there has been a relationship breakdown.
 - The living environment. Do the parents own their home, are they renting (either privately or through Housing NZ), or are they perhaps living with another family or in a situation such as a hostel?
 - Education of the parents. For some children, the card will describe a tertiary or trade qualification. On other cards, the parent may not have finished secondary school at all.
 - Incomes coming into the home. There may be both parents working in professional jobs. One parent may be working. One or all adults in the home may be reliant on government benefits.
 - What assets are important in the home? This may include computers, I-Pads, TV, PlayStation, bikes, and books.
 - Education and extracurricular activities. Does the child have pre-school education? Are there other activities such as gymnastics or swimming?
 - Health of the child. On some cards, there are no health issues for the child. On other cards, the child may have asthma, scabies, constant upper respiratory or ear infections, rheumatic fever.
 - Family holidays. For some children, the family travels overseas. For others, there may be a camping or beach holiday, whereas others may not be able to have any vacation.

The information may change dramatically on some of the cards as the child becomes seven, then fifteen years old. For example, parents may divorce or die, there may be a mortgagee sale, or job losses. Another parent may gain a degree or enter another relationship. The child's health may improve or there may be other health concerns, either physical or mental.

The students are asked to read their card and think about the child being portrayed. It is explained that this is the 'life hand' being dealt to that particular child. The students are encouraged to develop the character of the child in more depth, to consider the various factors and how these might influence and affect the life of that child.

The next step is that all the students are requested to line up in a single line across the front of the room. It is explained to them that they are all going to pretend to be (or to represent) the three-year-old child portrayed on their card. They are going on a 'life' journey that will take them through to adulthood. All are on the same starting line. All are equal, with the same living force within them. When asked how 'their' child is feeling, most will reply that they are excited or happy, and eagerly anticipating playing the game ahead.

The first instruction is those with a scenario of a child with parents who have a tertiary qualification to take two steps forward, for those who have completed secondary school to take one step, and for those whose card says that the parents did not finish high school to stay where they are. Similarly, the other areas on the card are addressed. For example, excellent health is worth two steps forward, ongoing chronic health means no forward movement.

By this stage, some students with more favourable card-scenarios have moved a considerable distance from the starting line and others may have barely moved. Students at various points on the continuum are asked about their feelings: how do they feel about where they are standing? Where would they like to be? What are they experiencing? From very early on in the exercise, there may be a range of emotions expressed such as guilt at being out in front, despair at not having moved due to the parent's job situation. There may be anger or frustration at not being able to catch up with another classmate because one child has asthma and the other has no health issues.

The exercise continues with the seven-year-old portrayed on the card, and then the fifteen-year-old. Throughout the exercise, at random points, two or three students are given 'wildcards' with a situation they are asked to consider. The students selected tend to be at different points on the continuum, perhaps one near the front, one in the middle and one near the end. The wildcards pose an age-appropriate dilemma such as 'Your bike has been stolen. What will happen?' or 'You have won a colouring-in competition and the prize is one free ticket to the movies. Will you go?' or 'Your parent has been given a one-off bonus of a

week's wages. Will it be spent on: (a) a roast of lamb; (b) some new books; or (c) paying the doctor's bill?' The wildcards give each student the opportunity to make a decision about what their child or the family would do in a specific situation. For some students there are clear choices to make, for others there is no choice.

Throughout the exercise, issues of identity and self-awareness are addressed in a simulated and safe environment that becomes real for the individuals as they begin to realise the inability of the child to have any effective control over life events. The students start to gain an understanding of the plight of children who, at seven years may not be able to have a birthday party, or at fifteen years may not be able to afford to go to the school ball. The students begin to see that 'success' in life is not all about making good or bad choices.

After the students have experienced being fifteen years old, they are encouraged to stand quietly for a moment and individually take note of where the other students are in relation to the starting line. By this stage some students will have traced out a path around the perimeter of the classroom where others may have moved a relatively short distance. At this stage the exercise is concluded and the students come out of the role they were playing.

Following the exercise there is a class discussion. The purpose of this is to follow the steps of transformative learning outlined above. Firstly, the students discuss their emotional response to the activity. For many students, this exercise is indeed a disorienting dilemma, and there are a wide range of emotions expressed. Some students feel uncomfortable with their position they found themselves or their friends in. Some others may feel guilty that they got so far while others couldn't move. There may be a sense of relief that there may be others in similar situation as you.

The students begin to critically reflect on what learning they have experienced from the exercise. This may include looking critically at assumptions or values held and whether or not there has been any personal change observed. The students are also encouraged to verbalise what new learning they may have from the experience, and what may this mean for them personally.

Finally, the class discussion focuses on making new meaning from the experience, and how this new awareness may be translated into social work practice. In the years I have been using this exercise, many students appear to have had a significant change in their awareness of social issues. One common outcome has been an understanding of the difference between the individual, such as the child, being seen as the problem versus collective problems or issues due to poverty, poor education, or ill health as a result of government policies or funding issues. Another outcome has been the way in which students develop an increased understanding of different values and beliefs that may be held by the clients they may be working with.

Conclusion

When a student begins their social work journey he or she brings with them a unique set of values, beliefs, and attitudes. Throughout the degree the student is constantly challenged to critically reflect on what worldviews and preconceived ideas they carry. Each student is exposed to a wide range of values, beliefs, and cultural practices. This may be in situations such as fieldwork placement or it may be a devised exercise such as described above. The intention of this education is to promote self-evaluation, self-critique, and to develop in the student new and deeper levels of awareness of not only within themselves but also of the world around them. From this, empathy grows.

Through the use of transformative learning theory for adults, the students are helped to identify, assess and evaluate their experiences, and to use the new knowledge and understanding gained to reframe or further develop their worldview, beliefs, and ideologies as they enter the world as emergent social workers and graduates.

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Corresponding Author
RAEMA MERCHANT
rmerchant@eit.ac.nz

13 An appreciative inquiry into cultivating 'fit and proper' social work students

CHERIE APPLETON Registered Social Worker (University of Auckland)

MATT RANKINE Registered Social Worker (University of Auckland)

JENNY HARE Registered Social Worker (University of Auckland)

Abstract

The development of 'fit and proper' students in the Bachelor and Master of Social Work (Professional) programmes at the University of Auckland (UOA) Aotearoa, New Zealand is explored by the Practice Learning team. Previous literature (Robertson, 2013; Sowbel, 2012) describes this task as contested between numbers of key stakeholders with placement teams acting as 'gatekeepers' in the process. Feedback was sought from three stakeholder groups to explore their definitions of 'fit and proper'; personal experiences of 'fit and proper'; and opinions on where responsibilities lie in growing 'fit and proper' students. The result of this appreciative inquiry and discussions with stakeholders has reinforced an aspirational framework that strengthens and further develops our relational approach to partnerships that contribute to cultivating 'fit and proper' students.

Keywords: fitness for practice, field education, students

Introduction

Social work courses have seen an increase in numbers in recent years and placement has been identified as where 'the rubber hits the road'. As Douglas (2011) emphasises, quoting Dick, Headrick, and Scott (2002, p. 35) "in all the literature on social work education...the practice placement is still considered the key element to successfully teaching social work professionals". Drawing from their experience working in social work placement teams, Kath Hay and Dominique Chilvers argue that there are noticeable contradictions in expectations of fieldwork placement resulting in "field education being marginalised within tertiary education, criticised for not being sufficiently academic, and marginalised in social work practice for being a distraction from real client work" (Hay & Chilvers, 2011, p. 1). In this somewhat contentious environment there appears to be a lack of current literature that canvasses responsibilities for 'fit and proper' or that seeks out possibilities for enhancing relationships for placements. In this paper we offer our discoveries to date relating to stakeholders' definitions, experiences, responsibilities, and collaborative partnerships that are necessary to support 'fit and proper' students. We suggest approaches and strategies involving academic colleagues, agency partnerships in research pods, and future research to explore client/service user partnerships that enable their contributions towards developing 'fit and proper' students.

The Social Workers Registration Board

The passing of the Social Workers Registration Act 2003 (SWRA 2003) and the establishment of the Social Workers Registration Board (SWRB) have contributed to significant change in social work practice in Aotearoa New Zealand over the last ten years. The SWRA 2003 and the SWRB were introduced to provide the public with a quality assurance system for social work in relation to setting the expectations and standards of services from social work practitioners. One of the aspects of the SWRB Code of Conduct (SWRB, 2005) that has remained particularly controversial is a focus of this discussion: it is the expectation of beginning social workers being 'fit and proper' and remaining so (Staniforth & Fouché, 2006).

Some guiding principles for the assessment of a practitioner's fitness to practise (drawn from the SWRB Code of Conduct, 2005) include:

- adherence to principles of human rights and social justice
- ethical decision making
- cultural responsiveness and valuing difference
- objective non-prejudicial and evidence-based decision making.

The criteria that may prevent applicants from meeting the requirements of 'fit and proper' are outlined in Section 47 (2) of the SWRA 2003. This section in the Ministry's document states:

a conviction in New Zealand, or overseas for an offence that is punishable for imprisonment of 3 months or more; and an offence where the nature and circumstances of the offence reflect adversely on the person's ability to practise social work, that a person is unable to perform adequately the functions required to practice social work satisfactorily; and that a person is not of good character and reputation.
(Ministry of Social Development, 2003)

Additionally, Section 50 (a) outlines: "in order to help determine whether a person is a fit and proper person to practise social work, [the Board must] check with the NZ Police for criminal convictions in NZ or overseas" (Ministry of Social Development, 2003). In academia, decisions relating to fitness to perform are usually made during student engagement in practicum experiences.

The process of professionalising social work allows for a 'sharper' focus on 'fit and proper' processes as well as professional misconduct (Clark, 2006). However, as Staniforth and Fouché (2006) have stated, the issues relating to 'fit and proper' conduct of social work students, whether viewed from an academic or a non-academic perspective are neither new nor straightforward. We are reminded that the ultimate impacts of 'fit and proper' issues are on the service users who remain our key responsibility and of central concern to us all. Our aim as educators must be to support students to develop the holistic skills, knowledge, values, and attitudes that will enable them to engage positively, respectfully and professionally. Social workers are responsible for delivering services that are ethically, morally, culturally, and socially appropriate to the identified needs of clients in Aotearoa New Zealand. How best to prepare students do this is a challenge the Practice Learning team in the school of Counselling, Human Services and Social Work at the University of Auckland has been grappling with.

The social work student's 'fit and proper' journey

The development of a 'fit and proper' social work student is an organic and evolving process. At the University of Auckland (UoA) this traverses all Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) and Masters in Social Work (Professional) (MSW-P) programmes. Emphasis is placed on the importance of the relational aspect in the development of 'fit and proper' beginning practitioners. Our learning through involvement in designing, facilitating, and embedding this relational process as a Practice Learning team is now described and explored.

Entry into the degree programme begins by student participation in a group interview. The academic staff observe group interactions and relational competencies according to an applicant's ability to demonstrate communication skills. In particular we look for: positive self-esteem in manner and language; a positive outlook on life evident in vitality, personality and sense of humour, adaptability and initiative in the interview setting; respect for others in the group; and respect for the cultural and social diversity of Aotearoa New Zealand. Further criteria include an attitude of curiosity towards learning, current awareness of the professional social services context in Aotearoa New Zealand (or if the applicant has made an effort to familiarise themselves if recently from overseas), empathy, and sound listening skills. Evidence of an ability to express her/himself in an interesting, clear way that demonstrates appropriate tertiary-level abilities is also sought.

Our lecturing colleagues lay a broad foundation of papers in years one and two, including social work theory, sociology life-span development, communication skills, psychology, culture, and the importance of the Treaty of Waitangi to social work practice. Intensive social work practice skills labs encourage ongoing dialogue, exploration, and application of skills and bring attention to shaping professional relationships through tutor-guided interactions. Real-life application, integration, and testing of these practical skills and academic knowledge begin as the student embarks on their first placement.

Upon undertaking their first block placement of ten or twelve weeks in an agency, (in the third year of the BSW and first year of the MSW(P)), students complete a series of three structured 'Use of Self' assignments following a template. The assignments are designed to enable the student to demonstrate their developing awareness, reflective thought, observation, and use of self on placement. The student connects practice with theory through research evidence and drawing upon previous skills and knowledge gained in the classroom. The nature of the assignments encourages character development as students identify and engage with ethical dilemmas that test and confront their previously unexamined attitudes and beliefs. The template allows opportunities for the student to explore and develop desirable values and attributes consistent with the principles of the SWRB Code of Conduct. This model operationalises Holmström's (2014) work which emphasises the importance of the holistic development of the social worker encouraging the growth of "moral character and virtue" (p. 2). The Practice Learning team's method of marking the assignments includes constructive feedback, suggestions, and further questions designed to coach and develop the student's ongoing exploration and understanding of 'fit and proper'. Emerging from this critical reflection, through creating a professional development plan the student begins to identify and articulate their individual practice principles. As a final requirement in this placement paper, the student presents, to their peers and assessors, their emerging practice framework and understanding of the placement agency, its context, function, purpose, and key relationships.

The second placement in the student's final year allows for a further integration of knowledge and practice, a 'joining of the dots', and a coming together of the multi-layered preparation for social work practice. The hard toil is done and we support students to flourish, to critically reflect on a situation in the placement context, again providing a structured template to assist them in the scaffolding of the learning process. This guided framework allows students to evidence a deeper understanding of their use of self and the dynamics of social service agencies and their ability to respond to client's needs and identify the linkages between theory-evidence and practice. The student demonstrates critical reflective thinking in their supervision sessions, gathering and using feedback from their supervisor and peers to develop new learning. The student is required to identify areas for their own further development and to look at potential research opportunities for practitioners within the placement setting.

As a Practice Learning team, we seek to create a climate for open and constructive dialogue; to 'name' issues as and when they arise, and at the earliest possible opportunity to allow exploration and identification of solutions. The team searches for, assesses, and retains agency placements. We invest extensive face-to-face time with individual students, agencies, and key stakeholders through pre-placement workshops, lectures, fieldwork visits, call back days, field work educator days, and a supervisor's celebration day. Relationship and

rapport building is promoted and continuously modelled within these activities. We give careful thought and attention to the many contributors and stakeholders in growing 'fit and proper' practitioners. We explore this in the discussion that follows.

Key stakeholders in 'fit and proper'

When we pose the question "who are the key stakeholders invested in ensuring 'fit and proper' social workers?", several can be considered. As Table 1 below identifies, this ranges from the SWRB to the students and, of course, service users themselves.

Table 1: The key stakeholders for ensuring 'fit and proper' social workers in an Aotearoa New Zealand context

The Social Workers Registration Board (SWRB)	Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW)	Competency assessment panels
Employers of social workers	Fieldwork educators	Supervisors of students
Schools of social work	Students	Service users/clients

The next question arising: "how can all key stakeholders work together in order to identify, support, and grow 'fit and proper' practitioners" appears less easy to identify and define.

Staniforth and Fouché (2006) traverse ideas nationally and internationally around developing 'fit and proper' criteria and note that, at specific times, the responsibility for this may change. Initially, when a student commences their degree in social work, the focus of responsibility appears to be on the schools of social work. Assessing 'fit and proper' in academic courses may be seen as more straightforward due to screening of a student's academic aptitude, and the 'rules' that determine termination of enrolment within the social work school. Aspects such as mental health, illegal activities, lack of conformity to social work values, and principles of human rights are considered. Criminal conviction checks, and the 'fit and proper' policy issued by the SWRB are applied. The non-academic realms of poor health, ethics, and bad judgement are much more complex in determining 'fit and proper' (Staniforth & Fouché, 2006).

Initially, schools of social work appear to take responsibility for ascertaining the 'fit and proper' status of students applying for a social work course and undertaking placement through various means. Apaitia-Vague, Pitt, and Younger (2011) outline the contradictions and tensions of what contributes to 'fit and proper' and comment on the responsibilities surrounding this. Four major issues can be identified. Firstly, 'fit and proper' will be seen to relate to different information depending on an agency's criteria, policy, and the schools of social work's criteria and policy (Staniforth & Fouché, 2006). Secondly, the exclusion of students from programmes and placement opportunities may contradict the principles of social justice and marginalisation integral to social work practice. Thirdly, many organisations are bound by contractual obligations and have a risk-averse culture of policies/procedures around previous convictions of students who may be deemed to pose 'risk'. Finally, social work educators are seen as the 'expert assessors of risk' for programmes, agencies, SWRB, and ANZASW (Apaitia-Vague et al., 2011).

Further contradictions and tensions are identified in a recent study by Schaub and Dalrymple (2013), who drew on interviews with field educators around failed student placements. The field educators identified that poor communication, lack of insight, poor moral values, and student timekeeping were common 'fit and proper' issues for the student. Field educators themselves identified associated anxiety, isolation, and scrutiny from schools of social work in trying to manage these 'fit and proper' issues and communicating with placement teams. Schaub and Dalrymple argue the need for more safe discursive 'spaces' on

placement that will enhance 'fit and proper' for students, field educators, and placement teams.

Robertson (2013) noted from her study of fieldwork in Canada that there was a need for placement teams to be at the heart of supporting students, field educators, and administrative systems and to be addressing concerns around student professional suitability. In particular, Robertson commented it is essential that relationships between all other systems are established and continually maintained. Sowbel (2012) discusses the term 'gatekeeping' and the need for placement teams to continually work towards 'fit and proper' students while understanding the ambiguity and imperfection around the processes so that both the profession and the service users are protected. This literature aligns with the SWRB who are interested in obtaining further information, definitions, and experiences from key stakeholders in order to enhance their guidelines around 'fit and proper'.

Discussions in the field

In order to strengthen our own understanding of a 'fit and proper' framework as a Practice Learning team, we decided to invite further input on the topic via discussion with three key stakeholder groups: academic staff, fieldwork educators, and student social workers. We identified and approached six people in each stakeholder grouping and invited them to contribute to our discussion. This piece of work was not a research project (although it has led us to design one). Rather we chose to undertake an evaluation of our current processes and to employ an 'appreciative inquiry' approach (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2003) as we perceived it to be a relational and participatory way of collecting and respecting stakeholder stories and wisdoms. Bellinger and Elliott (2011) argue that appreciative inquiry is an approach particularly suited to social work. We chose just 18 participants in total as our time and resources were limited. We used our professional connections in academia and personal relationships with field educators in agencies across our area to ask for volunteers willing to participate in a brief conversational interview based on the three questions below. The graduating students from the Masters in Social Work (Professional) degree were asked to respond to the three extra questions in addition to their course evaluation. All participants gave their permission for material contributed by them to be used in our conference presentations and subsequent write-up for publication. The questions were:

- 1 What is your definition of 'fit and proper' and expectations of students?
- 2 What is your personal experience of 'fit and proper'?
- 3 Who do you think has responsibility for ensuring students are 'fit and proper'?

Representative comments from each stakeholder group are presented. In reporting stakeholder responses to the above questions, pseudonyms have been chosen or assigned to all contributors in order to preserve confidentiality.

Academic staff

Contributors described a number of key attributes when defining 'fit and proper' behaviours and expectations of students. Tom argued that students need to be "*adequately informed, sufficiently skilled, behaviourally competent, ethically aware, and reflective to practise effectively*". Rose stated:

*I think they should be people who are honest, who know their limitations, who belong to the professional association, who are able to give and receive feedback. Someone who does an honest day's job.
Someone who can justify the actions they've taken.*

In his definition, Bryan commented that it moved beyond individual attributes and 'fit and proper' needed to be consistent ecologically for the emerging practitioner. Bryan reflected that "it needs to come from a social justice place" and that this comes from "an integrity that links the micro, meso to macro".

Most academic staff could draw upon their own examples of 'fit and proper' issues with students. Elizabeth discusses her experience working with an 'A' student:

This student had all the answers, she wrote beautifully, the whole thing. But she failed her placements. She would pass her exams; she would come out with all 'A's. But that's not the only thing we need in social workers is it?

We'd interviewed her – was there anything in her past – “no, no, no.”

Every time she went on placement there were incidents and it became bizarre.

On her third one I said, “Look, come and sit down here, I can't believe in three placements everybody has done this to you!” I mean this student was all over the place! “You know we need to talk about what's going on for you.”

Elizabeth's experiences resonate for us in that we also have found that, academically, a student can be seen as 'fit' and able to meet the requirements of assignments and exams but is still struggling to meet criteria of 'proper' often in relation to their emotional stability and ability to conduct mature professional and appropriate interactions with students and staff. Additionally, other factors we need to see demonstrated in social workers are the fusing or integration of theory to practice. Alana framed this by saying, "If I was to say that they were fit for practice, I would want to know that they are capable, able and do it in a manner that was safe to themselves and the profession."

Academic staff generally felt that all key stakeholders had responsibility for producing 'fit and proper' students. As Alana comments: "That's interesting. I don't think it's any one person's responsibility". Bryan added that the 'fit and proper' process begins in the academic environment where the student is studying social work. He considered it the responsibility of tertiary providers to ensure students were not "unfit and improper".

Once the student begins their first placement, the responsibility for assessing 'fit and proper' can shift from the tertiary provider to the agency where the student is able to be observed interacting on placement. Alana stated:

They are the only ones who really witness practice. They develop those relationships and see them in practice. Our stuff (in academia) is just based on theory. It's the agency that does the matching up between practice and theory.

An important point was made about students having the ability to assess themselves as 'fit and proper'. Caveman suspected that, "if the student was so reflective that they could see themselves as not being 'fit and proper', it would suggest good practice and good insight into their practice."

Field educators

Field educators with whom we had conversations were qualified and experienced social workers from across the region; they had all previously supervised one or more students on placement. In defining 'fit and proper' students, field educators touched on students' personal ethics, and values as well as their ability to adhere to ANZASW's Code of Ethics (ANZASW, 2008) and SWRB's Code of Conduct (SWRB, 2005). Sally commented that "this would be a student who acts professionally with honesty and integrity. They are able to adhere to the Social Workers Registration Board Code of Conduct." Carole stated being 'fit and proper' meant:

[A student's] honesty, integrity, competence and capability will have been explored as part of a process. A person who does not have any criminal convictions or pending convictions and does not have any condition or dependence that would render them incapable of carrying out the tasks of social worker. A person who is able to uphold the code of ethics and practice standards of the ANZASW.

For field educators like Veronica, 'fit and proper' needed to be a transparent process for students that maintained the same criteria and expectations from all key stakeholders such as the SWRB, acceptance onto the social work degree and agencies. Therefore, 'fit and proper' is a clear process and "the students aren't led up the garden path in them thinking they will be able to be registered and get a job as a social worker."

The field educators shared some of their own experiences of supervising a student on placement. Sally highlighted that relationships with others throughout the placement experience was as important as policy and procedure.

Carol commented on her experience in working with a student who did not seem prepared for the placement journey:

I had a student who was so overwhelmed and not prepared for the emotional intensity. There were things in her background that I would really want her to explore more. She just went to bits and couldn't cope. I've consulted with other colleagues, and clients that the social work students have worked with and asked for their input into that. I think if you've got others looking at it with a critical eye that can be helpful.

Field educators agreed with the academic staff that responsibilities for 'fit and proper' students rested with a number of key stakeholders. Patsy stated that there needs to be a "combination of all three, the student having good self-awareness. Care by the university in the original selection of students. Fieldwork agencies need to assess honestly." Katie identified the process and roles for three of the stakeholders:

I believe social work students need to be given the opportunity to self-assess their own abilities/capabilities/areas for learning. The university has a responsibility to ensure students know about [fit and proper] concerns and that there are steps taken to ensure students have opportunities to address these concerns e.g., counselling, extra supervision. The field work agencies also have a responsibility to communicate with student and university any concerns regarding the student being fit and proper. Boundaries need to be an on-going discussion with students.

Students

The graduating students canvassed came from the second-year qualifying masters' cohort and their responses drew upon their experiences over the previous two years of academic teaching and two field work placements. These students had experienced both a community and a statutory placement, and, depending on their ability and the agency, they progressed from an observational role to that of a more interactive beginning practitioner. They affirmed the experiences and perceptions of both academic staff and field educators regarding 'fit and proper' being holistic in its definition and in its being the responsibility of a number of people.

Students' feedback was consistent with our observations in marking their 'Use of Self' assignments during their first placement and their critical reflection assignments on their second. These assignments are constructed to raise self-awareness around previously held assumptions and biases and promote an engagement in developing a professional social work approach to their client group. Within these assignments, attention is also given to areas of 'fit and proper' with a particular focus on identifying and critically analysing ethical dilemmas. Alan's comment links the processing and consideration that the students give to 'fit and proper' in relation to boundary issues and ethical behaviour as they select significant events and examine them. He identifies a 'fit and proper' social worker as:

A person who is clear about their role and responsibilities within the organisation, at a wider social level, legally, and also at a personal level, can separate personal issues from work with clients. Integrity is crucial – social workers are human (thus not perfect) must work to their word and values to the best of their ability.

Other students commented on the need for 'fit and proper' to encompass a deeper delving into 'self', promoting a more integrated and critical connection with theory and literature and identification of areas for skill development. Carrie felt that it is the "ability to rationalise and justify decisions backed up by theory/practice principles". Lauren also believed that a 'fit and proper' social worker "displays empathy and critically reflects and recognises own biases".

Students reflected on their experiences of 'fit and proper' and how this had impacted upon their current thinking. Carrie commented on the complementary roles of the placement setting, the university class work, and assignment learning:

My current social work skills are 40% from my class and assignment learning and 60% my placement learning... My personal belief is that your education gives you the foundation of what you need to become a social worker and then your placement builds on it and gives you the ideas about social work, practice, and supervision that you are taking with you initially into the workforce.

Anne highlighted the crucial role critical thinking played in processing and integrating experiences into their 'fit and proper' practice framework.

I have come to really value critical thinking, having professional (and personal) principles to work by, and remaining focused on the client. I have found that in almost every circumstance where I am at a loss as to what to do, I can turn to a combination of these three values and figure something out on my own (and even find out later that I did quite well!).

Students perceived the responsibility to ensure they were 'fit and proper' to be a shared responsibility involving themselves along with academics and placement settings. It is interesting to note that they appear to have a stronger leaning towards the individual student's or social worker's responsibility. Carrie stated that it is, "the individual first and foremost", and then "with strong guidance and support" tertiary providers, placements, field educators, staff, and supervisors all had a role to play. Barbara agreed and also commented that 'fit and proper' responsibilities extended to the "SWRB and ANZASW and the global social work profession".

Lauren shared:

I think everyone involved in the education process has some responsibility, from lecturers to all students themselves, to the organisations that employ social workers, to the registration boards, to government. Unfortunately, I don't think the responsibility is evenly shared in practice, so there are situations, for example, where the individual might have a greater burden to be "fit and proper" in the absence of much organisational support.

Lauren's comment highlights an interesting point, that the onus for maintaining 'fit and proper' can feel a burden to a student when the organisation is not able or willing to shoulder its obligation. An example may be the absence of regular, dedicated supervision. A gap such as this is significant as the necessary support and monitoring in order to develop safe professional practice does not occur.

Alan identifies the role of the client as a contributor to the notion of developing 'fit and proper' and notes, "that is my [as a social worker] responsibility to develop it. My clients can help me to have a good idea in order to develop effective intervention skills and understanding of them."

The client role, their participation, contributions, and perspectives, in assessing and developing 'fit and proper' student social workers is important and necessary to explore. As key stakeholders and ultimate recipients of the social work services agencies provide, it would seem essential that client input is obtained, respected, and valued. This requires careful and further ethical considerations with the agencies where placements exist. Consequently, for the purpose of this consultative piece, clients' views were not sought. However, we want to explore ways of doing this safely, sensitively, and positively for all concerned as the client contribution is currently a 'missing piece' in an otherwise holistic approach to growing 'fit and proper' practitioners.

Discussion

By exploring the understandings, experiences, and opinions from this small appreciative inquiry with key stakeholders we identified three themes that resonated across all three groups.

- Defining 'fit and proper' is complex; it extends from the microsystems of personal attributes and values through to the macrosystems of law and legislation.
- Personal experiences around the issue of 'fit and proper' are rich and diverse and require an integration of factors and sustainable relationships.
- Academics, field work educators, and students all make important contributions, and have roles and responsibilities in cultivating the many facets that support 'fit and proper' practitioners.

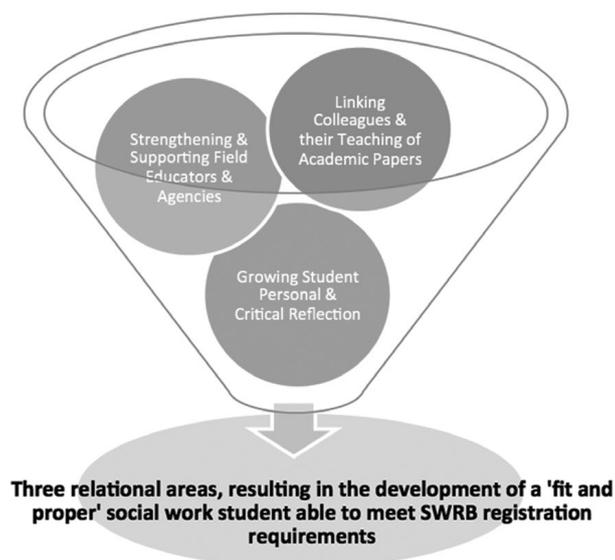
In our initial explorations of the 'fit and proper' landscape, we identified the 'gatekeeper' responsibility that often falls to the Practice Learning team. While a shared responsibility for 'fit and proper' was acknowledged and endorsed by participants, the ownership of this concept and the seamless sharing of knowledge, issues, and information between all stakeholders can, at times, be lacking.

What has since emerged from this appreciative inquiry is the consideration that, while the Practice Learning team definitely play a pivotal role in the cultivation of 'fit and proper' students, of greater importance is the role we play as facilitators of excellent, sustainable relationships amongst the key stakeholders. Our processes of meeting fieldwork educators and students in their agencies both prior to and during placement increases our understanding of the context in which they are operating and some of the current issues they face in delivering their agency's services. This is an important investment in relationships and allows us to clarify roles and expectations and share resources, frameworks, and experiences that support students and their fieldwork educators. These ongoing conversations and interactions also keep academic lecturers in touch with current practice.

Placement teams, interfacing as they do with academics, students, and field educators, are in an ideal position to work with key stakeholders to encourage and sustain relationships that benefit the developing student social worker. As each stakeholder discovers and owns their role in 'fit and proper' development, a strong and robust process can be successfully applied.

Figure 1 illustrates the way in which we as a Practice Learning team conceptualise, approach, and actively support all our key stakeholders through focused attention on relationships. The combination of all contributors results in a qualified, competent, beginning practitioner who is able to wear the mantle of 'fit and proper'.

Figure 1: The Pivotal Relational Role of the Practice Learning Team



Our reflections on key stakeholders' contributions and the themes that have emerged from this appreciative inquiry into 'fit and proper' have led us to explore and propose an aspirational framework involving our partnerships with academic colleagues, fieldwork educators, students, and client/service user groups.

Supervision

Currently, as a way of responding to resource need (more than purposeful planning), we have engaged a number of our colleagues as external supervisors for students across the BSW and MSW (P) cohorts. This is for students who are in placements where their agency is unable to provide it. An interesting, positive, and helpful side-effect has been the genuine enjoyment staff have expressed in engaging on a more personal and direct practice level with the students. This has also allowed for a greater appreciation of the student's developmental stage and has assisted when a student has needed extra guidance around an area for enhancement, for example, transferring and translating cultural perceptions into a placement setting. The matching of student to external supervisor is done with care to ensure a good fit and aligns with Bennett's and others' viewpoints on positive attachment and the supervisory relationship (Bennett, 2008; Gardiner, 1989; Lefevre, 2005, all cited in Wilson, Walsh, & Kirby, 2008 p. 3).

Student feedback is that these relationships have served to enhance their understanding of praxis. The supervisory relationship gives academic staff a window into placements and allows for 'road testing' of theoretical knowledge. This privileged knowledge assists with ensuring that ongoing curriculum development continues to acknowledge and develop the strong symbiosis between theoretical learning and practical application. It directly contributes to the individual student's development of 'fit and proper' attributes and additionally to the wider student body's development by highlighting areas that may require more focus in academic teaching.

Research pods

In collaboration with agencies, field educators, and practitioners the Practice Learning team has begun to identify, establish, and develop student 'research pods'. These pods are an enhancement to the placement experience and contribute to the continuing development of partnerships with social service agencies. We are exploring the integration of continuous research placement opportunities for students from successive cohorts with the expressed aim of supporting and encouraging practitioner research. At the heart of the research pod concept and project is the notion of amplifying practitioner and student research in social work practice as a worthwhile, creative, enjoyable and critically reflective task that enhances and develops service and ultimately client well-being. This work is premised on the belief that in order to practise professionally, and demonstrate 'fit and proper' attributes, current and future social workers need to have embedded the skills, knowledge, and aptitude to be confident and consistent researchers. Our work in progress complements and builds on the growing research in practice (GRIP) model (Beddoe & Harington, 2012; Lunt, Fouché, & Yates, 2008) and draws upon learning from our colleagues who have recently piloted a collaborative research project in the social services field (Maidment, Chilvers, & Crichton-Hill, 2012). It is envisaged that the attention paid to normalising research as a valid and significant social work role and responsibility will not only add to the enhancement of a 'fit and proper' beginning practitioner, it will significantly contribute to agencies' ability to evaluate, evidence, and address the strengths and gaps in their services to clients and build robust learning cultures within their teams.

We continue to aspire to strengthen our collaboration with students and service users. Along with the maintenance of relationship via engagement throughout the degree, we invite ongoing feedback and evaluation from the student body as to what enhances their learning experience and helps to create a safe and inviting learning environment. As indicated earlier in this article, an area that would benefit from further exploration is the service users'/clients' input into 'fit and proper' social work practice. While there is

literature on the subject (Bland, Laragy, Giles, & Scott, 2006), and it is a mandated requirement in the UK, this is an area not adequately or fully explored in the Aotearoa New Zealand social work training context. Our intention is to explore and develop the ways in which service users can be involved in, and contribute to, the development of 'fit and proper' social work students.

Conclusion

Having elicited the views of some of the key stakeholders in the ongoing development of the 'fit and proper student', what has become clear is the strong commitment from all parties to ensure the best possible outcome for both the developing social worker and the service user. There is a shared perception of the need for all stakeholders to invest in the commitment to continual development of a 'fit and proper' social worker. While this much was evidenced in the gathered narratives, an important part of advancing that collective will rests with the Practice Learning team as facilitators of the ongoing partnership building between all the parties. As Douglas (2011, p. 38) states, "...fieldwork 'happens' because of the goodwill of agencies who offer places to students...". We believe placements with agencies can be judged successful when all stakeholders are supported to carry out their roles and responsibilities that contribute to cultivating a holistic 'fit and proper' practitioner. The support is outworked in the positive relational connections communicated by the Practice Learning team. This relational approach sends a message of value and worth to all participants and affirms the importance of the collective voice in developing 'fit and proper' social workers. The next step in our journey and a further extension of our role will involve exploring the missing piece, the most important factor in the equation, namely service user/client contribution. It is hoped that investigation into service user/client opinions will lend balance and wisdom to the existing story and create further learning opportunities to extend and infuse 'fit and proper' values and qualities for student practitioners.

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Corresponding Author
CHERIE APPLETON
c.appleton@auckland.ac.nz





**Social Workers
Registration Board**
Kāhui Whakamana Tauwhiro

New Zealand Government

Social Workers Registration Board
PO Box 3452
Wellington Central
Wellington 6140

Phone +64 4 931 2650
Fax + 64 4 931 2651
info@swrb.govt.nz
www.swrb.govt.nz