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Aims and Scope

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

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Editorial

Welcome to the first issue of *Advances* for 2019.

Advances is increasingly well known as an Australasian social work and human services journal with a focus on education for practice, and for inviting research and practice reflection that is grounded in the local, national and trans-Tasman context, with articles having a global reach for their cultural and pedagogical relevance.

This general issue demonstrates the extraordinary range of pedagogical and practice inquiry undertaken with education and practice in our field, and several articles take this inquiry beyond Australasia and into the Asia-Pacific region.

The first two articles provide thought-provoking challenges for social work practice and, by extrapolation, suggest how current issues facing families and communities need to be re-framed in social work and welfare education and research. David Burck, Deborah Walsh, and Deborah Lynch's article has been chosen as editor's choice for this issue because it provides a thoughtful, scholarly exploration of child-to-parent abuse (in itself, not perhaps a common focus within family violence practice, research and education). The article argues that a construction of child/adolescent violence towards parents arising out of permissive parenting styles is not sufficiently nuanced and may mask what is largely a gendered experience for mothers. The authors argue that, without consideration of protective parenting by mothers, and without acknowledgement of the impact of domestic violence trauma upon them, service delivery will continue to make gendered assumptions characterised by blaming and marginalisation.

Challenging assumptive thinking is also the task of the second article, by José van den Akker. His writing presents a philosophical debate that raises important challenges for our conceptualisation of person-centred work in social work and human services by juxtaposing the concepts of the neoliberal forces currently dominant in policy and practice alongside those of Rogerian person-centred thinking. The author argues that a reconstruction of Rogerian principles underpins the capacity of human beings to be active agents in the world, and that this can challenge power relationships and hierarchies upon which the neoliberal political economy, and its shaping of human services, is reliant.

The following five articles are bound together by a common thread related to social work and welfare education in the face of diversity and cross-cultural relationships, reflective of the colonisation and immigration stories of our Australasian world, but also of the desire of our programmes and students to explore what social work means in countries

outside of our own. David McNabb's research in the area of decolonising the social work curriculum in Aotearoa New Zealand explores the commitment of educators to honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi and promote decolonising processes, whilst recognising the systemic and structural barriers to achieving this. James Lucas and Sevi Vassos address the tensions inherent in the provision of non-traditional social work placements, which create opportunity but which may risk not achieving the pedagogical intent of the social work and human services programmes.

Three articles specifically address the outreach of Australasian social work programmes into countries in the Asia-Pacific region. These are important contributors to the debates regarding students' desire for cross-cultural learning, in balance with the risks of appropriation and further colonisation from "first world" to "third world" countries. Stephen Larmar, Jennifer Boddy, Patrick O'Leary, and Connie Allen consider how global mobility may contribute to transformative intercultural learning and the development of culturally sensitive practice, through consideration of Australian students' visiting Nepal. Lee Henley and a large team of largely local social work and teaching staff in Battambang, Cambodia, consider the impact of a student's placement, and how future experiences should be shaped. Amanda Nickson, Paula Baker, and Isidore Winkuaru explore the factors that contributed to a successful family violence placement for an Australian within a Papua New Guinea health context.

Two practice reflections and a book review complete this issue, with Greg Lewis and Suzette Fox considering skills-based training in grief and loss for health social workers, and Ariane Minc reflecting on a research-based placement with the Black Dog Institute. The latest edition of Cody and Lehmann's *Theoretical Perspectives for Direct Social Work Practice* is reviewed by Cherie Appleton.

A final word from the editor: this is likely to be my last editorial. After several years' playing in the editorial pool, I am moving on. Since first being a guest editor (for the 2014 special issue on Social Work Curriculum and Disasters), to being sole editor (with coaching from Liz Beddoe) and latterly being joined by Mim Fox as co-editor, I feel I now know half the social work educators in Australasia! *Advances* has been through a journal review and we continue to develop sustainable editorial and production processes, supported by an editorial committee and the invaluable assistance of Sue Osborne, our copy-editor extraordinaire.

It has been an immense pleasure and privilege to liaise with you all as contributors and reviewers, and your passion and professionalism is stunning. Beyond the treadmill demands that our neoliberal institutions impose upon us to "publish or die" lies a sincere and committed community of practitioners, pracademics and academics intent on exploring and sustaining the values, skills and knowledge base of social work and human services, all with the aim of making positive change in the world. Thank you all for permitting me to exercise my canine model of editorial leadership: from the Labrador's smiling cajoling (my preferred stance in life), the sheepdog's herding, and very occasionally, the terrier's yapping and the threat of Rottweiler teeth, the editorial experience has taught me more than I have given.

Carole Adamson
Editor, *Advances*

Silenced Mothers: Exploring Definitions of Adolescent-to-Parent Violence and Implications for Practice

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ABSTRACT

This paper highlights inconsistencies in how child/adolescent-to-parent violence (CPV) is defined. Definitions of CPV range from descriptions based on instances of physical assault to broad perceptions of violence, which include coercive control behaviours. Too much focus on physical violence has limited a broader exploration about the dynamics of CPV, which has disguised the gendered nature of this phenomenon. This literature review incorporates peer-reviewed quantitative studies, qualitative research with mothers, surveys of adolescents, youth justice court/law reviews, family therapy case studies and reviews of both “child-to-parent violence” and “adolescent-to-parent violence.” Key research in this area has overlooked the complex interplay between context, power and control dynamics that are clearly evident in the CPV experience. Reviewing the literature has uncovered how gender is rendered invisible and how research needs to move towards language such as: child/adolescent-to-mother violence or child/adolescent-to-mother abuse.

Keywords:

Adolescent-to-parent violence; Child-to-parent Violence; Domestic violence; Family violence

INTRODUCTION

Family violence is a social problem with long-ranging impacts on society and has been the focus of research for decades. In 2014, the World Health Organisation (WHO) reported that violence towards women and children has serious lifelong health and social consequences (WHO, 2014). However, one aspect of family violence about which there is a dearth of research in academic literature is child/adolescent-to-parent violence (CPV). Research into CPV suggests this type of violence is closely linked with using violence in future, intimate-partner relationships; therefore, it is crucial that academic research further explores this phenomenon (Lee, Reese-Webber, & Kahn, 2014). As early as 1979, Harbin and Madden discussed the phenomenon of CPV, describing it as “a new syndrome of family violence – parent battering” (1979, p. 1288). Prior to Harbin and Madden’s work, children’s and adolescents’ violence towards parents was not considered an aspect of family violence and was not formally studied in any depth. Simmons, McEwan, Purcell, and Ogloff (2018) state that, over the last three decades, the CPV academic literature and research have grown slowly; thus, a number of questions and gaps in methodology, theory and context still remain.

Authors continue to debate how to accurately define CPV and how to wrestle with the gendered nature of such violence. For example, Hunter, Nixon, and Parr (2010) highlights that mothers are the primary target of violence and how violence towards mothers is connected to young people witnessing domestic violence (DV). However, mothers’ voices are largely silent in the academic literature; this has implications for how CPV is perceived and appears to parallel how mothers are not supported by social services (Holt & Retford, 2013). This paper’s overall purpose is to explore how definitions of CPV have evolved over time and how gender-neutral concepts within the literature may silence victims and create barriers to help seeking. Furthermore, this critical review will propose a new lens through which to view CPV, moving towards a “child/adolescent-to-mother abuse” definition where the primary victim’s experience informs how this facet of family violence is perceived and explained.

METHODOLOGY

Due to the lack of research in this area, the inclusion criteria for this literature review are broad. First of all, research into how people define violence and domestic violence was used to add more context to existing debates within CPV literature. Even though there is a lack of research in CPV, a vast majority of research points to mothers/women being the primary targets of violence (Downey, 1997; Lyons, Bell, Frechette, & Romano, 2015; Robinson, Davidson, & Drebot, 2004; Ulman & Straus, 2003). Therefore, this critical review will focus primarily on mother’s/women’s experiences and not violence towards fathers. The review incorporates peer-reviewed quantitative studies, qualitative research with mothers, surveys of adolescents, youth justice court/law reviews, family therapy case studies and literature reviews on both “child-to-parent violence” and “adolescent-to-parent violence.” Moreover, reports on CPV by the Australian Government and reports on the impact of violence by the WHO and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) were also included in this review. This paper explores definitions of CPV; therefore, literature focused on intervention programs, and the efficacy of those programs, were excluded from this review.

Due to the lack of research into CPV, the date range for literature in this review ranges from initial research in 1979 to current research. Incorporating research across the history of CPV literature is necessary to give the reader a holistic picture of the CPV academic landscape. Databases used for this review includes: PubMed, SCOPUS, PsycINFO and The Cochrane Library. Also, this review includes reports on violence found in the publications section of the WHO's website. Keywords included: *child-to-parent violence, CPV, adolescent-to-parent abuse, child-to-mother abuse, violence, definitions of violence adolescent violence, CPV and mothers, domestic violence and child-to-parent violence, domestic violence and adolescent-to-mother abuse, battered parents, and battered mothers.*

DEBATES SURROUNDING DEFINITIONS

Firstly, this paper will use the term *child/adolescent-to-parent violence (CPV)* for the bulk of the paper in order to reflect the current terminology used in the literature. However, there will be a discussion later in the review as to why it is necessary to use *child/adolescent-to-mother abuse* terminology. This review's move from CPV terminology to mother abuse terminology mirrors the ongoing debate within family violence literature on how to accurately define CPV. Pagani (2015) wrote that narrow definitions of violence are easier for researchers to measure; however, broad definitions can describe the overall impact of violence on the victim. In the case of CPV literature, narrow definitions of violence are based on physical assault statistics gleaned from police and court reports, which are easier to measure; therefore, it is the preferred manner to study CPV rates (Agnew & Huguley, 1989; Contreras & Cano, 2016; Peek, Fisher, & Kidwell, 1985). These statistics rely on *specific incidents* of physical violence, as opposed to *patterns of behaviour*.

Similar to Pagani's argument, Downey (1997) contended that narrow definitions are not adequate as they minimise the complexity of CPV. Holt (2013) documented the changing definition of CPV in how the term itself has changed over time from "parent battering," to child-to-parent violence and finally to adolescent-to-parent abuse. The term *abuse* reflects the pattern of violent behaviour an adolescent uses within the home to create an environment of power and control, which is not accurately reflected in definitions based on single-incident violent behaviour (Simmons et al., 2018). This evolution in terminology illustrates how initial narrow definitions focused on "battering" have evolved to include patterns of violence and control, as well as other forms of abuse. The current debate on how to measure child/adolescent-to-parent abuse highlights the conflict between measuring specific incidents of violent behaviour versus reflecting the dynamic within the family and the impact on mothers specifically (Edenborough, Jackson, Mannix, & Wilkes, 2008).

Initially, violence towards parents was compared to domestic violence and defined as physical abuse, verbal abuse and non-verbal threats of physical abuse towards a parent (Harbin & Madden, 1979). Even though Harbin and Madden's definition of CPV extends outside the bounds of physically violent acts, it places physical aggression at its core. While a number of studies on CPV focus on instances of physical abuse, verbal abuse and threats of physical violence with a weapon; they place greater emphasis on instances of physical assaults of parents (Kratcoski, 1985; Margolin & Baucom, 2014). Other studies move away from including verbal abuse and threats and define CPV as entirely comprised of instances

of physical violence toward a parent (Boxer, Gullan, & Mahoney, 2009; Peek et al., 1985; Walsh & Krienert, 2007). Studies that consist of juvenile justice or clinical samples tend to rely on definitions of CPV which depend on reported instances of punching, kicking, shoving or injuring a parent with a weapon (Gebo, 2007; Kethineni, 2004; Peek et al., 1985). Even though these studies include violent episodes, they overlook more complex patterns of abuse and control within the family.

Feminist researchers mark a change in the literature and move from the term CPV to adolescent-to-parent abuse, or child/adolescent-to-mother abuse to accurately reflect the complexity and pattern of violence within these adolescent/mother dyads (Downey, 1997; Holt, 2011; Sheehan, 1997; Wilcox, 2012). Generally, they argue these narrow definitions of CPV are inadequate and not representative of the complexity of adolescent-to-mother abuse contexts (Calvete et al., 2014; Downey, 1997; Edenborough et al., 2008; Hunter, Nixon and Parr 2010; Sheehan, 1997; Simmons et al., 2018). Holt synthesizes this school of research into a definition of child/adolescent-to-parent abuse as "...a pattern of behaviour that uses verbal, financial, physical or emotional means to practice power and exert control over a parent" (Holt, 2013, p. 2). This definition reflects the complexity of child/adolescent-to-parent abuse within the family and highlights dynamics of power and control. Moreover, definitions of child/adolescent-to-parent abuse shift the focus from the young person's behaviour to the impact on the victim and the victim's experience (Downey, 1997). The shift from defining CPV based on specific incidents of physically aggressive behaviour to acts of violence within a larger pattern of power and control places more emphasis on context and highlights the victim's experience. Ultimately, broad definitions based on power and control may be more difficult to measure; however, they more accurately encapsulate the behaviour and its impact on the family. Therefore, the movement from CPV to child/adolescent-to-mother abuse is more reflective of the phenomenon and how it manifests itself in families.

NATURE OF ADOLESCENT-TO-PARENT ABUSE

The gendered side of CPV was identified early in the academic literature and has been reinforced in subsequent work. Initially, Harbin and Madden studied married couples with adolescents using violence and identified that mothers were the primary targets of aggressive behaviour by sons (1983b). In the decades following this groundbreaking study, research into CPV consistently reports that children and adolescents target their mothers more than other family members (Downey, 1997; Lyons et al., 2015; Robinson et al, 2004; Ulman & Straus, 2003). However, Peek, Fischer and Kidwell's (1985) study of over 1,500 male secondary school students found that fathers were slightly more targeted than mothers. Simmons et al. (2018) also cites Peek, Fischer, and Kidwell's work as evidence that there is gender parity among CPV targets. This study consisted of a survey which was given to each participant in his sophomore, junior and senior year of education. One of the study's limitations is that the authors defined violence as strictly acts of physical violence towards parents. This narrow definition does not take into account the broad range of violence used to exert control over the relationship, which may account for lower numbers of maternal victims. Moreover, rates of violence towards fathers, within a domestic violence context, is compromised in light of research into how children and adolescents intervene in domestic violence

incidents to protect their mothers and siblings, as opposed to using violence for personal gain (Buckley et al., 2007; Tuyen & Larsen, 2012). In addition, Holt (2013) found that, once coercive control and patterns of violence are taken into account, rates of violence towards mothers are consistently higher than violence towards fathers. Therefore, the gendered nature of CPV reveals itself when definitions include characteristics of coercive control such as: verbal abuse, intimidation, psychological abuse, physical abuse, financial abuse and emotional abuse. Moreover, research into rates of children and adolescents intervening in domestic violence incidents to protect mothers and siblings, calls rates of violence towards fathers into question (Tuyen & Larsen, 2012).

There appears to be a disconnect between research which documents that mothers are more targeted by children's and young people's violence, and how this violence is discussed in the literature. Even though a preponderance of the research clearly states that mothers are the primary victims of adolescent abuse within the home, the phrase used for the violence is "child/adolescent-to-parent violence" and not "child-to-mother abuse." In this sense, the mother's experience is silenced and the gendered component of the violence is disregarded in favour of the gender-neutral term *parents*. Wilcox (2012) points out this discrepancy in her work comparing the impacts of domestic violence on women and the impacts of adolescent abuse on mothers. She states that CPV is primarily violence used against mothers to control aspects of that relationship. Furthermore, Sheehan's (1997) main critique of CPV literature is that most authors neglect power, control and gender dynamics. Therefore, use of the term CPV does not accurately reflect how women are the main victims of abuse, continues to marginalise their experience and keeps the gendered nature of this violence invisible.

THE DISCONNECT BETWEEN POWER AND CONTROL DYNAMICS AND PERMISSIVE PARENTING LITERATURE ON CPV

One key aspect of CPV is that it reverses traditional power roles within the family, which establishes the adolescent as the figure in control. In these cases, children and adolescents gain power within the family and parents may not be able to re-establish control (Calvete et al., 2014). An Australian based study interviewed mothers who experienced CPV and found that children and adolescents use violence to assume power within the relationship, undermining the mother's authority as a parent (Stewart, Wilkes, Jackson, & Mannix, 2014). Even though it is well established that violence is a tool that adolescents use to establish power in the parent/child dyad, studies differ in explanations over what maintains this dynamic.

One popular discourse is that parenting styles are the primary maintaining factor for CPV (Harbin & Maddin, 1983a; Hong, Kral, Espelage, & Allen-Meares, 2012; Robinson, Davidson, & Drebot, 2004). Studies point to permissive parenting styles as possible factors maintaining CPV (Boxer et al., 2009; Breznia, 1999; Lyons et al., 2015; Margolin & Baucom, 2014; Ulman & Straus, 2003). Permissive parenting is described as parents who are not able to adhere to boundaries in order to avoid violent incidents. In essence, it is argued that adolescents use violence to get what they want and parents accede to their demands to avoid more severe violent outbursts (Hong et al., 2012). Harbin and Madden (1979) characterised permissive parenting as parents rewarding violent behaviour by giving into their children's demands.

The theory of permissive parenting as the maintaining factor for violence towards parents has continued to thrive in CPV research for the last forty years with recent criticisms from feminist authors (Downey, 1997; Edenborough et al., 2008; Holt, 2013). Other research goes further and defines permissive parenting as “lax” parenting, where parents lack the responsibility to adequately discipline children/adolescents for violent behaviour (Robinson et al., 2004). The link between CPV and lax or permissive parenting is both overly simplistic and potentially harmful. Research has clearly positioned mothers as the primary target of violence; therefore, statements regarding “lax parents” covertly target mothers as the lax parent. Such a link may reinforce messages of mother-blaming within the larger society.

There are a number of limitations to permissive parenting/lax parenting as causal factors for CPV. Firstly, linking CPV to lax/permissive parenting discounts the complexity of gendered violence and coercive control, and devalues the mother’s experience (Downey, 1997). Comparable to how describing violence as directed towards “parents” devalues the research stating that mothers are the primary victims; “permissive parenting” can be seen as blaming mothers’ parenting decisions for the violence. Ulman and Straus (2003) describe how mothers view permissive parenting as blaming their parenting for the violence, which can reinforce feelings of guilt and shame.

From a gendered perspective, the permissive parenting explanation for CPV does not value the mothers’ experience and may lead to entrenched maternal guilt. Added feelings of guilt and shame greatly reduce mothers’ help-seeking behaviour which can lead to mothers contacting police for support as a last resort rather than proactively seeking support before a crisis occurs (Holt, 2011). For social workers on the front line of service delivery, challenging the discourses that overwhelmingly ignore and silence maternal victims of this violence is of critical importance to ensure that barriers to proactive help-seeking can be overcome and effective interventions maximized. Holt (2011) engaged a unique method to explore this issue with this difficult-to-reach population. She systematically studied mothers’ posts on an online parenting forum and found that mothers who experienced DV talked about how their son’s violence made it challenging to parent. More recently, Williams, Tuffin, and Niland (2016) interviewed mothers and found that the psychological trauma of domestic violence and CPV impacted their parenting and led to intense shame. These studies highlight how theories of permissive parenting do not accurately describe complex trauma responses by mothers.

Causal theories for CPV based on permissive/lax parenting do not accurately reflect mothers’ protective parenting decisions. First of all, Holt (2011) found that mothers stated that they would minimise the violence for fear of their children being removed from their care by the child protection system and for fear that their children would enter the juvenile justice system. In this sense, mothers’ parenting decisions were made to protect their children from legal consequences and to protect the family from being broken apart. An Australian study by Jackson (2003) interviewed six mothers who experienced CPV and found that both their trauma responses to violence and fear of their children being removed were the predominant factors that influenced their parenting decisions. Therefore, permissive/lax parenting terminology does not adequately reflect protective parenting decisions by mothers and new language is needed to describe their experience. Without a greater understanding of the complexities at work in CPV, professionals run the risk of further alienating a

population who are already marginalised. Furthermore, ignoring the complexities of how CPV manifests itself within the child/mother dyad may lead to ineffective interventions for families, which may contribute to young people becoming involved in the judicial system.

LIMITATIONS OF DISCOURSES ON CPV AND THEIR IMPACT ON SERVICE DELIVERY

The critical flaw within the current conceptualisation of CPV is that it neglects gender, power, coercive control and decades of domestic/family violence research. At its heart, CPV (more accurately, child/adolescent-to-mother abuse), is a gendered form of violence which targets mothers (Hunter, 2010). Sheehan (1997) argues that we need to place CPV within a larger, gendered context of violence toward women in society. Furthermore, research on CPV within a domestic violence context, that focuses on instances of violent behaviour does not take into account beliefs that perpetuate the violence and the trauma the adolescent experienced while themselves witnessing domestic violence (Bobic, 2004). Simply focusing on the violent acts and not the context within the family, and within society, does not accurately represent the complexity of this type of violence.

Understanding causation of CPV is difficult, with permissive parenting explanations having a number of key limitations. Viewing CPV as specific instances of violence towards “parents” is inaccurate and may be harmful. Firstly, this construction of CPV does not take into account how girls use violence against their mothers (McCarry & Lombard, 2016). Also, this definition of CPV can lead to poor service delivery and lack of adequate supports for the family. A study of professionals in England found that inaccurate definitions of CPV led to service providers missing instances of violence in the family (Holt & Retford, 2013). In the case of conceiving CPV as social learning, other forms of violence and violence by girls towards mothers would largely be dismissed. Moreover, social learning theory’s focus on the behaviour and not the larger context within the family may devalue the mothers’ experience. For example, an Australian study of child-to-parent violence programs found that focusing on children’s behaviour and disregarding the mother’s experience perpetuated feelings of shame in mothers (Edenborough et al., 2008). Furthermore, Holt and Retford interviewed service providers and mothers in England and found that mothers experienced a “double stigma” through service providers not listening to their domestic violence and CPV experience (2013). These women stated that they were not supported, which led to feelings of shame and guilt (Holt & Retford, 2013). Therefore, services who construct adolescent-to-parent abuse in accordance with social learning theory run the risk of privileging the child’s behaviour over the mother’s experience, which can lead to shame and further isolating her, while at the same time providing the adolescent with more sophisticated justifications for the use of violence, thereby leading to further victimisation.

MOTHERS’ VOICES WITHIN THE LITERATURE

Even though a number of studies indicate that mothers are the primary victims of CPV, they do not explore mothers’ perspectives of CPV. For example, Downey (1997) argues that definitions of CPV that focus on instances of physical abuse oversimplifies violence and devalues the experience of the victim, which is generally the mother. Research, from

a number of different disciplines, such as the legal system, social work and counseling, contends that the lack of a gendered understanding of CPV leads to women feeling marginalised and isolated (Holt, 2011; Howard, Nixon, & Parr, 2010; Jackson, 2003; Williams et al., 2016).

Edenborough et al. (2008) found that mothers described their experience with CPV counseling programs as problematic. They report that the services minimised their experience which resulted in a reduction in help-seeking behaviours. Other interviews with mothers found that, along with shame and guilt, mothers report being traumatised by the violence and not wanting to report it to professionals (Williams et al., 2016). In addition, mothers' fear frequently acts as a barrier to help-seeking. Holt (2011) analysed mothers' posts on a parenting blog and found that mothers experiencing violence were scared that, if they reported the violence, their children would be removed from their care. This led to high rates of severe violence before an initial intervention, which was usually a police intervention (Holt, 2011). These studies shed light on the complex dynamics and emotions involved in adolescent-to-parent abuse. Conceptualising the phenomenon as child/adolescent-to-mother abuse values her experience and may help organisations work towards reducing feelings of guilt and shame, which might increase help seeking.

EMERGING RESEARCH INTO NEURO-DISABILITY AND CPV

One further limitation of both permissive parenting and social learning theory is that they do not account for emerging neuro-disability research. Recent research into CPV highlights possible connections between CPV and autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in children and adolescents. Interviews and surveys of victims of CPV conducted in Victoria, Australia by Monash University found that 22 of the 120 survey responses mentioned ASD, ADHD, Asperger's Syndrome, or a combination of them (Fitz-Gibbon, Elliott, & Maher, 2018). These findings support Holt's (2016) overview of the literature on the intersection between such disorders and CPV. However, Coogan (2018) warns researchers, and practitioners, that neuro-disability and mental health diagnosis are not concrete causal factors for CPV. In this sense, mental health diagnosis may indicate a CPV risk factor, which may increase one's understanding of CPV, as opposed to a fixed causal link (Coogan, 2018). Even though neuro-disability research does not draw direct causal links between diagnosis and CPV, it highlights the complexity of CPV and requires further study.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND CPV

Even though studies on substance abuse and CPV lie outside this review's gendered focus, it is important to note their place in the literature. Galvani (2016) interviewed family support group providers and found that, along with domestic violence exposure, children and adolescents who used violence had high levels of substance abuse. High levels of substance use are strongly associated with violence towards parents for both boys and girls; however, boys tend to use physical violence slightly more than girls when substance use is a factor (Calvete, Orue, & Gamez-Gaudix, 2013). However, the connection between substance use and violence is complex and it is not only reserved for intoxicated adolescents being violent

towards their parents. For example, substance use may not only increase aggressiveness, but it can also be the focus of the violent incident. In these violent incidents, boys and girls use a range of violence including physical, verbal and emotional abuse (Calvete, Gamez-Gaudix, Orue, Gonzalez-Diez, et al., 2013). Research into substance use and violence illustrates the necessity for service providers to be aware of substance use when working with families experiencing child/adolescent-to-mother abuse.

CHILD/ADOLESCENT-TO-MOTHER ABUSE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Even though CPV has been explored in the literature since 1979, critical gaps remain. One clear dilemma is the lack of an adequate conceptualisation of the violence, which reflects the gendered nature of the phenomenon. Definitions that focus on strictly physical abuse do not accurately embody the complex relational/family contexts within the child/adolescent and mother dyad. In order to respect the primary victim of violence while also accurately describing the pattern power and control within these families, it is imperative that researchers and practitioners move towards a child/adolescent-to-mother abuse framework. This lens will enable practitioners to more effectively support both young people and women experiencing child/adolescent-to-mother abuse.

Holt and Retford's (2013) work with social services in London underscores the importance of a child/adolescent-to-mother abuse conceptualisation. They found that excluding coercive control behaviours, such as emotional, verbal, financial and psychological abuse, from the definition creates fractured service delivery that does not adequately support mothers and families in need (2013). Fractured service delivery may lead to families missing out on support and professionals not adequately identifying instances of child/adolescent-to-mother abuse. Therefore, it is imperative to develop a definition in the academic literature which reflects what mothers are experiencing in their daily lives, in order to guide service providers on the ground. Most importantly, a universal definition of child/adolescent-to-mother abuse will help service providers develop effective intervention programs for young people, which may not only help young people avoid police intervention, but may also have an impact on these young people continuing to use violence in future intimate relationships (Reyes et al., 2015).

Another large gap in the literature concerns research into mothers' experiences. By not including mothers' voices in the research, the CPV academic literature itself mirrors the isolation, shame and blame they currently experience. In essence, keeping mothers' voices silent and focusing primarily on the perpetrators' behaviour sends the message that their experience is not valuable. Literature focusing on permissive parenting reinforces blame and grossly undervalues the complex emotions and trauma within mothers' experiences. One challenge for future research is to establish less threatening ways to recruit this difficult-to-reach population and to ensure that their voices are heard.

Research on the impact of domestic violence on the mother's attachment and parenting authority is missing from the literature. There are decades of domestic violence research that highlights how DV perpetrators use violence to continually undermine mothers' parental authority and erode their attachments with their children (Fish, McKenzie, &

McDonald, 2009; Buckley, Holt, & Whelan, 2008; Keeshin, Oxman, Schindler, & Campbell, 2015). However, literature on links between DV and CPV largely dismisses the complex power and control dynamics present in domestic violence. Recent research indicates that there are a range of complex familial violence factors which manifest themselves in the mother–child relationship (Gabriel et al., 2018). However, more research needs to be done to bridge the gap between domestic/family violence research and the impacts of parenting and attachment on child/adolescent-to-mother abuse.

CONCLUSION

Permissive parenting conceptualisations of child/adolescent-to-mother abuse are not nuanced enough to adequately reflect a mother's trauma responses and protective parenting decisions. Dominant views of permissive parenting as a causal and maintaining factor for abuse have negative impacts on service delivery, obscure rates of mothers as the primary target of abuse and may blame mothers for the abuse. Therefore, a new framework and language is needed to describe child/adolescent abuse towards mothers; especially where domestic/family violence exposure is a factor. Without a more nuanced view of child/adolescent-to-mother abuse, professional support services are doomed to repeat the mistakes of the past and continue to marginalise mothers who desperately need evidence-informed support.

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What is left of the person-centred approach in the Anthropocene? Rogerian and neoliberal ideologies informing human service delivery and education

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ABSTRACT

“What is a person?” ask Short et al. (2018) when they embark on a cross-disciplinary investigation around notions of personhood and how these apply to field education. This article affirms the significance of this investigation in light of the Anthropocene, which confronts people across the globe with ethical questions as to how, and for what purposes, we do the work we do. Human beings have taken over and transformed the world as if we are disconnected from it. The “person-centred approach” is widely adopted in human services work and promoted in government discourse, but the definition of “personhood” remains unclear. Moreover, there are two opposing poles of thought that influence the definition of personhood and person-centred care. To date, the literature has been silent around these opposing thought-systems. After a discussion on the need for practitioners and educators engaged in human services industries to reflect on those opposing perspectives in light of the Anthropocene, this paper homes in on the philosophical incongruities between the neoliberal idea of person-centredness and the original, Rogerian notion of person-centred care, to provoke dialogue in the community around the purpose and ways of doing human services work.

Keywords: *Anthropocene; neoliberalism; Rogerian person-centred approach; human services workers; human service education*

INTRODUCTION

We are confronted with the Anthropocene as human service work educators and practitioners. Hamilton, Bonneuil, and Gemenne (2015) offer two definitions of the Anthropocene. The first relates to geological history and major geological turning points for which evidence is sought in rock strata. The second definition relates to the Earth as a total entity; a system that is experiencing a shift with far-reaching impacts across multiple levels of existence (p. 2). The Anthropocene is a result of people engineering, governing and structuring the world as if divided from each other and from the eco-system with disastrous consequences (Chang, 2017; Hamilton et al., 2015; Lorimer, 2017; McLeod & Benn, 2019; Robinson, 2014; Stubblefield, 2018). This second definition relates to this article, because analytical thinking and neoliberalism (capitalism) lies at the heart of the Anthropocene and a negative development in how the human services industry conceptualises the person-centred approach. The neoliberal concept of the person-centred approach is based on deficit thinking and implies that human relations and interventions are synonymous with business relations (Bazzano, 2016; Tronto, 2013a, 2013b). It inverts the Rogerian person-centred approach. As Bazzano (2016) argues, neoliberalism effectively imitates the vocabulary of humanistic and person-centred psychology, with help of neo-liberal, person-centred practitioners “producing a brand new, consumer-friendly lingo of empathy and congruence, all the while obliterating the original meaning – twisting a language of liberation for the purpose of subjugation” (p. 343).

The problem is that the neoliberal, person-centred approach has become popular practice not only in care settings across the globe, including care for the elderly, care for people with disability, and child care (Misra, Woodring, & Merz, 2006), but also in social work more generally. Short et al. (2018) argue that this has occurred without exploring the philosophical base and the associated view on personhood. Mainstream, person-centred work is premised on analytic (Anglo-American) philosophy and discourses that dehumanise people and have led to exploitative, abusive practice (p. 140). Oriel (2014) argues that the anthropocentric idea of personhood is central to the problems we experience in the world today. The human being is seen as the only *self-aware* species with the right to intervene and structure relationships with the rest of the world. Indigenous ontologies however, and recent moves towards posthumanism show that the notion of personhood applies to all beings, including animals, plants and planets. All beings are self-aware and all live intentionally. Each being has a place in the vast web of relationships that run across time and space. People need to understand their responsibility as guardians of all beings, not as owners of property or exploiters of resources. A more eco-centric notion of personhood is warranted.

Stubblefield (2018) argues that we need to decouple ourselves from the capitalist system, focus more on agency and knowingness and our engagement in peaceable relations with each other and the rest of nature (p. 22). The author of this article agrees, especially in light of the theme of World Social Work Day: “Promoting the Importance of Human Relationships” (AASW, 2019). Human relationships are essential in any work that involves people, but especially social and welfare work and education. Human service workers act as an interface, collaborate with individuals, families and communities across the continuum of care in all health settings (AASW, 2011). Tronto (2013b) suggests that, to care well,

we need to recognise that “care is *relational*” (p. 140) (Italics in the original); caring is participatory at all socio-cultural levels and not limited to market values and economic life (Tronto, 2013a).

The question remains: to what extent is care relational and participatory? Edwards and Klees (2015) point out that the idea of participation at socio-cultural levels has been around for decades, and that most people want to be involved in decisions that affect their lives. But the meaning of participation is blurred by people’s different perspectives on human *being*. From a neoliberal perspective, human beings are rational consumers who participate in the market. From a liberal perspective, people are socially responsible members of society who participate in systematic processes. From a progressive perspective, people are political beings and social-justice oriented members of a collective who support and enact meaningful decision-making power (pp. 485–486).

The three perspectives all consider that the human being is a socio-cultural entity that engages in relationships that do not extend beyond the personal and social. These perspectives are informed by rational theory, which assumes that human beings are the only self-aware species with an advanced form of communication that is increasingly techno-logical (Oriol, 2014). They are the wisest of all species. Rational theory sees wisdom as inherent to human beings with psychological, rational, and socio-cultural expertise. Wisdom is not seen in terms of relationships at social, environmental, metaphysical, multilevel and multidimensional levels (Edwards et al., 2013, p. 21). However, Indigenous perspectives see wisdom as related to personal connectedness and the interpenetration of time, space and relationships at multiple levels (pp. 25–26). The Buddhist concept of wisdom also relates to multiple levels of existence, and understanding that wholesome and unwholesome actions have consequences (Bernert, 2018). Moreover, to transcend opposition and dualism, wisdom must unite with compassion; the yang with the yin, not striving for one without the other (Rinpoche, 2013, pp. 15–16). Human beings develop wisdom by purifying the mind and confronting their ways of thinking, being and doing. It means confronting the clinging “to wealth, status, ideas, identity and so on” (Bernert, 2018, p. 48), and the automatic rejection of what is experienced as a threat. It means confronting the craving for input from the senses, for them to be pleasant and agreeable whilst rejecting what is experienced as unpleasant and disagreeable (p. 48).

NOTIONS OF PERSONHOOD AND ASSOCIATED APPROACHES

Short et al. (2018) believe that (future) social workers need to inquire into the concept of personhood because analytic discourses have led to abusive practice (p. 140). Analytic philosophy is based on structural thinking, not process or relationships. It focuses on people’s *objective* features, not the *subjective* qualities of people and the central role of human relationships (p. 140). Although the authors inquire into the notions of personhood in relation to the person-centred approach in social work, they do not refer to the philosophy of Dr Carl Rogers (1902–1987), even though Rogers inspired the person-centred approach. They make no reference to Rogers’ insight into, what he called *the formative relational tendency*, that which “definitely forms the base for the person-centred approach” (Rogers, 1980, p. 133). Rogers focused on the formative relational tendency

of the human being, but saw it reflected in all life processes, whether individual or group, organic or inorganic. He defined it as:

...the evolutionary tendency toward greater order, greater complexity, greater interrelatedness... from a single-cell origin to complex organic functioning, to knowing and sensing below the level of consciousness, to a conscious awareness of the organism and the external world, to a transcendent awareness of the harmony and unity of the cosmic system, including humankind. (Rogers, 1980, p. 133)

Rogers (1980) supported the Taoist principle of *wu-wei*,

...which is really the action of the whole being, but so effortless when it is most effective that it is often called the principle of “nonaction”, a rather misleading term. Buber, in explaining this concept, says: “To interfere with the life of things means to harm both them and oneself.” (p. 41)

Wood (1998) points out that Rogers’ idea of the person-centred approach was an integrated approach, seeing the person as a whole evolving being, not limited to linear units of time and space. An integrated view does not separate the individual from society, culture, nature or environment (Edwards et al., 2013). Roger’s philosophy and his approach as a psychologist contrasted sharply with analytic philosophy and neoliberal ideology which consider the human body as a socio-biological machine that operates in linear and fixed units of time and space, as a unit of discrete parts bounded by a physical skin. Analytic philosophy and neoliberalism assume a colonising logic of a stable, divided *self* with an essential core that differs from the *not-self*; an assumption that is contested in quantum theory (Barad, 2014; Bohm, 1996; Bohm & Edwards, 1991; Joye, 2016). The worldview of Carl Rogers relates more closely to the Buddhist worldview which assumes that there is no permanent or essential self (Krishnamurti & Bohm, 1985; Percy, 2008) even though it does not deny the unique histories that each person lives and that a person does exist (Percy, 2008, p. 359). The Buddhist view assumes that the self is not fixed but a flow; the self which many people perceive as *their* self is a consequence of attachment, personalisation and internalization (pp. 359–360). The human self is one of many selves, none of which is permanent and none as they appear, because “nothing has inherent existence” (Bernert, 2018, p. 23).

Walker (1956) proposes that the Rogerian, person-centred approach is associated with a field of thought called the Self-Determinism Pole. This pole of thought includes Idealism, Humanism, Self-Directed Learning, Phenomenology and Self-Actualisation, and Democratic Government. The Self-Determinism Pole contrasts sharply with the Authoritarian Pole, which is associated with Neo-fundamentalism, Positivist thought and Discourse, Behaviourism, Learning Theory, Directive Counselling, and Paternalistic Government (p. 92). Later, we will explore Walker’s proposition more deeply to provide a basis for theory-building around the person-centred approach and how it relates to the Anthropocene. We will first reflect on the Rogerian system of thought, followed by the authoritarian system associated with neoliberalism and the impact on the person-centred approach in human services work and education.

THE ROGERIAN SYSTEM OF THOUGHT

Rogers (1980) suggested that there are two ways of relating to individuals who come for help. One is by understanding *about* the individual through testing, measuring, diagnosis, prescriptive advice, and nudging the person. This type of relationship is not premised on phenomenological–existential ideology which is inclusive, but based on distrust (pp. 33–36). Rogers (1989) believed that governments and education institutions focus on “government by others” because they see the person “as innately sinful, destructive, lazy, or all three – as someone who must be constantly watched over” (pp. 136–137).

The other way of relating is based on trust and premised in phenomenological–existential ideology, following the person, just listening for people to find and choose their own directions, exploring and understanding themselves and their experiences, their troubles and resolving those problems (Rogers, 1989, pp. 37–39). This trust-based relationship is not based on external morals or what other people deem important. For Rogers, “government of the self” meant that people learn to distinguish *conceived values* from their own *organismic* values. Conceived values are external judgments and evaluations, which people take on board and internalise for survival reasons (Rogers, 1973). In the process of person-centred learning, people learn to distinguish and rely on their own, operative or *organismic* values that are not socially learned but are inherent to their personal power of choice. It is a self-directed process of learning, about people’s self-governance, autonomy. It is opposite to government by others, standardisation, measurement and control. Self-directed learning is about questioning the way in which decisions are made in education and who makes them (Rogers, 1980, p. 294).

Rogers (1963) believed in the self-actualising tendency of a person, which leads to the autonomy of the human individual and a socially integrated functioning *provided* the social–environmental conditions are *optimal*. The core conditions of unconditional positive regard, empathic attunement, congruence and prizing the person for who he or she is (Kirschenbaum, 2012; Kirschenbaum & Jourdan, 2005) are essential for “self-actualisation to be experienced as a journey, not as an end-state to be achieved” (Rogers, 1980, p. 13). The journey of self-actualisation is a process of self-directed learning through agency, of human beings who live in and as a community. Learning facilitators and administrators who support self-directed learning have enough self-awareness to be able to hold a safe space that allows people who come for help to feel genuinely heard which, in turn, allows for self-healing; a process of meeting the other exactly where they are at mentally and emotionally (pp. 174–175). In a safe space there is no feeling of threat, of judgment and exclusion. The *being*, not the *doing* of the person is what counts for learning to be a *process of discovery*, purposely non-directive to help people become free and independent. This self-directed process of discovery is important, Rogers (1963, p. 89) argued, for people to learn what self-reliance or independence really means, as different from the type of self-reliance that institutions and theories of psychological science promote, which “enslave people” (p. 89). The type of self-reliance which Rogers envisaged meant that:

By firmly setting forth a new declaration of independence, he is discarding the alibis of unfreedom. He is choosing himself, endeavoring, in a most difficult and often tragic

world, to become himself – not a puppet, not a slave, not a machine, but his own unique individual self. (p. 89)

Rogers believed in an education that is not focused on training a particular brand of human service workers, or “client-centred therapists” (Biles, 2016). Education should focus *and* rely on students’ capacity to develop themselves as practitioners who fundamentally trust their inner direction (p. 331). Rogers did not believe in *training* people to learn *about* the person-centred approach towards certification, but in experiential, non-directive learning. He rejected fixed formulas, dogmatic institutions and certifying people because that “meant that you had to define the approach and that usually killed it” (Kirschenbaum, 2012, p. 17). Rogers (1951) stressed that education should not be about producing “well-informed technicians who will be completely amenable to carrying out all orders of constituted authority without questioning” (p. 387). Imparting skills or knowledge only make sense in a tightly controlled environment where nothing changes (Rogers, 1969, pp. 103–104). Skills such as goal-setting, he argued, are based on relationships of distrust, created by people in power-positions who believe that “goals must be set and the individual must be guided towards these goals, otherwise he or she might stray from the selected path” (Rogers, 1989, pp. 136–137). Rogers did not believe in traditional education. The “traditional mode is at one end of a continuum, and a person-centred approach at the other” Rogers (1980, pp. 294–295) argued. Traditional education has the following characteristics:

- 1/ Teachers are the possessors of knowledge, the students the expected recipients...
- 2/ Lecturing, or some means of verbal instruction, is the major means of getting knowledge into the recipients. The examination measures the extent to which the students have received it...
- 3/ Teachers are the possessors of power, the students the ones who obey...
- 4/ Rule by authority is the accepted policy in the classroom.
- 5/ Trust is at a minimum...
- 6/ The subjects (students) are best governed by being kept in an intermittent or constant state of fear...
- 7/ Democracy and its values are ignored and scorned in practice...
- 8/ There is no place for whole persons in the educational system, only for their intellects... (pp. 295–297)

Rogers had experienced and believed in different levels of consciousness and a transcending experience of unity, the oneness of spirit in community, beyond the usual barricades of ‘me-ness’ or ‘you-ness’ (Rogers, 1980, pp. 128–129). He believed in groups that do not follow a charismatic leader, theoretical or theological dogma, or any other human formulation that always contains some kind of error; in groups of people that “begin to live in ways more appropriate to our uncertain future” (p. 334) and “develop a participatory mode of decision-making that is adaptable [and] contains its own self-correcting gyroscopic mechanism and sense of community, where respect for others and cooperation rather than competition, are keynotes” (p. 335). He believed that a person-centred mode of education would dominate a future, where “the growing, learning person is the politically powerful force” (p. 302) and a person-centred education that works towards this vision, one with the following characteristics:

- 1/ Authority figures in the situation experience an essential trust in the capacity of others to think and learn for themselves...
- 2/ Facilitative persons share with others,

students, and possibly also parents or community members, the responsibility for the learning process. Curricular planning, the mode of administration and operation, the funding, and the policy-making are all the responsibility of the particular group involved. Thus, a class may be responsible its own curriculum, but the total group may be responsible for overall policy. In any case, responsibility is shared... 3/ Facilitators and learners provide learning resources... facilitators open doors to resources outside the group... 4/ Students develop their own programs of learning, individually or in cooperation with others... 5/ A facilitative learning climate is provided. 6/ The focus of the learning centre is primarily on fostering the continuing process of learning... 7/ The discipline necessary to reach the students' goals is a self-discipline [which] replaces external discipline... 8/ Evaluation of the extent and significance of each student's learning is made primarily by the learner him or herself... 9/ Learning tends to be deeper, proceeds at a more rapid rate, and is more pervasive in the life and behaviour of students than learning acquired in the traditional classroom. (pp. 299–301)

The Rogerian system of thought, Walker (1956) suggests, is associated with the Self-Determinism Pole. Central to this thought system is the actualising tendency of the human individual and the formative relational tendency toward greater order, complexity, and interrelatedness, toward a transcendent awareness of the harmony and unity of the cosmic system, which includes humankind (Rogers, 1980, p. 133). This central premise contrasts sharply with determinism, which underpins the Authoritarian Pole of Thought, including neoliberalism. Determinism holds that human action is not based on free will, but a consequence of external forces. It denies the power of the individual and justifies the need for external power systems and compliance to those systems (Negussi, 2014).

THE AUTHORITARIAN, NEOLIBERAL SYSTEM OF THOUGHT

Wacquant (2010) argues that the neoliberal state arose from struggles over and within the bureaucratic world that created a deregulated *workfare state* that is “liberal at the top and paternalistic at the bottom” (p. 217). It is an autocratic system of *social insecurity* that corrodes democracy and punishes the poor. It is a penal ensemble of public bureaucracies that “invest in human capital and activate communal springs and individual appetites for work and civic participation through partnerships, stressing self-reliance, commitment to paid work and managerialism” (p. 214).

Wacquant's argument contextualises the neoliberal concept of the person-centred approach promoted by Australian government bodies such as the Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council (CSHISC, 2016). The neoliberal interpretation reflects the “Authoritarian pole of thought” (Walker, 1956), evidenced in the fact that it is not practitioners who design the training, but bureaucrats. The training package which the CSHISC (2015) has developed does not emphasise learning *processes* or thinking of theory as inseparable from practice. It focuses only on skills-development, which produces passive learners and practitioners (Morley, Macfarlane, & Ablett, 2017, p. 29) and on supporting government policies for the education and human services sector to work in consensus and in cooperation between states, territories and the federal government (National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education, 2018, p. 22). There is a growing demand for workers

in the human services sector, so the Department of Education and Training (2016) has created a training package that, arguably, builds on Rogerian philosophy but is designed to meet labour-market demand and produce compliance. The promoted person-centred approach focuses on the development of professional skills such as goalsetting, futures planning and making action plans, either or not in collaboration with service users (CSHISC, 2015). It focuses on issues such as individualised funding, organisational capacity to design and deliver services for individuals, recruitment, staff training, business planning and management (CSHISC, 2015). The course structure and content is tightly structured and controlled so that workers in the field apply these skills in accordance with Commonwealth and State/Territory legislation, Australian/New Zealand standards and industry codes of practice (CSHISC, 2016). An example is the course titled CHCDIS002, which teaches students how to follow established person-centred behaviour supports. In other words, students learn to follow protocol to achieve outcomes which government bodies want. The CSHISC (2015) argues that the course unit reflects Rogers' theory but it merely mimics Rogerian concepts such as unconditional regard and trust to meet market-demands. It is not about trusting students and people who ask for help to trust their inner compass in a process of organismic growth – it supports neoliberal philosophy with the main emphasis on people's individual responsibility or self-reliance as *consumers* craving what is pleasant, pleasurable and agreeable.

Self-reliance is a widely supported concept in the community yet it is ill-defined in neoliberal government policy (Bredewold, Kampen, Verplanke, Tonkens, & Duyvendak, 2016). The dream of autonomy is widely shared among the general population, but does not match with the reality of many people in the community in need of a formal support system. To access formal supports, clients first have to recognise (accept, admit) that they have a certain physical or mental condition, which they cannot, or will not, always do (p. 25). Not all people have a natural support system, and if they do, these systems are often stretched. Where government agencies require people to rely on limited natural support capacity to, arguably, save public money, community relationships become exhausted, leading to stress and miscommunication and often greater emotional distance between people previously close to each other (p. 24).

The neoliberal, person-centred approach which governments promote is an external power system based on “utilitarian purposes of compliance and externally imposed direction on the service user” (Murphy, Duggan, & Joseph, 2013, p. 717). It is a technology of social domination, imposed upon people through chains of command that prompt people to blame themselves, not the system (Dowling, Manthorpe, & Cowley, 2006; Innes, Macpherson, & McCabe, 2006; Kendrick, 2008; Kinsella, 2000). It is self-serving, suits authoritarian governments and protects the status quo – it is divisive in that it separates individuals from their groups, and disempowers by turning them into consumers personally responsible for creating a successful “lifestyle” (Davies & Bansel, 2007). It is a new type of governmentality; a new kind of management, surveillance and control structure that does not offer people choice or power at systemic levels, but only individual choices and responsibilities (Davies, 2018; Davies & Gannon, 2006). It does not value people's organismic growth in human relationships and a form of belongingness that arises with the preliminary teachings of existential solitude (Bazzano, 2010). Neoliberalism commodifies

the human experience to meet the requirements of the market (Misra et al., 2006; Parcell & Jones, 2014); a system of self-centred egos that undermine human integrity through a rigid system of social control aimed at imposing “integrity” of a bureaucratic type that destroys the whole and strips people from their creative power of existence (Dimitrov, n.d.). It is a system of governance that favours simplistic methods and narrow goals (Skaife & Hsu, 2019). It opposes and actively *counteracts* implementation of the Rogerian, person-centred approach (Bazzano, 2016), because it ignores the value of face-to-face interactions and democratic decision-making processes, replacing these with technological communications and monitoring and quality control systems to manage people’s *performance* (Morley et al., 2017; Sorokin, 2017). It assumes that resilience is not organismic, part of human beings’ search for self-actualisation. In blind obedience to the market, the neoliberal idea of the person-centred approach is based on a worldview that is ethically unsound and aims to control people and collect more data, using positive psychology as an easy fix to reward unwholesome practices (Bazzano, 2016, p. 350). The neoliberal, person-centred approach does not question who makes the decisions and ignores notions of personhood in light of the Anthropocene and how, and for what purposes, we do the work we do.

NEOLIBERAL EDUCATION AND ITS FLAWS

Neoliberal education supports the Authoritarian pole of thought and its central premise of determinism. Critical pedagogy scholars argue that neoliberal education supports a government ideology that needs a challenge. Human service and social workers and educators cannot be seen as separate from each other or from politics, power and culture (Apple, 2011; Freire, 1968). Morley et al. (2017) point out that Australian social work education for example, has moved increasingly from a critical pedagogy culture to one that supports conformity and conservatism. This cultural change has been enforced by global forces and national governments that require (welfare and social work) students to learn skills that meet market and employment objectives and emphasises online learning rather than face-to-face teaching to attract a higher number of students to meet these objectives. A curriculum that emphasises “safe” knowledge to support and reinforce the status quo and its obsession with digital data-collection and “easily accessible facts” promises a homogenised welfare and social work philosophy, practice and education (Morley et al., 2017).

Education, training, health and human services and professionals have been reconstituted to become part of the market (Davies & Bansel, 2007); they have become commodities to serve the market and the state, expected to do more for less money (Apple, 2011; Ball, 2018; Connell, 2013, pp. 101–103; Morley et al., 2017; Raffnsøe, Gudmand-Høyer, & Thaning, 2016). The Australian Government Department of Education and Training authorises nationally recognised training packages, qualifications, units of competency, accredited courses and skill sets (Department of Education and Training, 2016,). Skills-development, not critical learning or self-actualisation is the objective. In Australia, modularised, standardised education and training and directive learning has become the norm (Connell, 2013, pp. 109–110).

Neoliberal universities reinforce the major split between Rogerian and neoliberal ideologies, creating an untenable gap between person-centred psychology and the instrumental

relationship-based approach common to contemporary social work (Murphy et al., 2013). Rather than entering into dialogue and reflecting on basic philosophical issues around *human being* and *being human*, these conservative universities undermine anti-oppressive practice in higher education contexts, effectively impacting on (future) social workers and service users (Morley et al., 2017). They support neoliberal governments that introduced laws to ensure the decentralisation of social and health services and produced massive structural global inequalities (Apple, 2010; Connell, 2013; Morley et al., 2017). Compliant staff who work in neoliberal universities want their students to have a happy customer experience (p. 28), consistent with the neoliberal, person-centred “consumer-friendly lingo of empathy and congruence” (Bazzano, 2016, p. 343). Their acceptance of existing inequalities in the system is antithetical to the emancipatory values and goals of social work (Morley et al., 2017, p. 27), which is why Morley et al. (2017) suggest that an emphasis on people’s agency and capacity to resist is necessary, especially in welfare and social work education. Uncomfortable knowledge is not necessarily something that staff and students enjoy, but it needs to be transmitted to allow people to make informed choices over dominant relations and structures in society. Morley et al. (2017) argue that there is a place for resistance and critical pedagogical approaches in human services work education to respond to neoliberalism, because course content and style of delivery impacts directly on future practitioners’ thinking and their ways of working.

Drawing from a large body of literature, Kirkman (2010) proposes that human services workers and educators look critically at the notion of *choice and control*, which has been impacted by neoliberal ideology, economic rationalism and managerialism, and negatively affects the disability services industry. This choice and control system is user-unfriendly, and the market limits the choices of low-income “consumers.” Service-users, funding parties, service providers, and carers all have their own ideas as to what the best or preferred choices are for service-users. Most problematic is that those in control of the funds are still the ones in power and determine best choices for consumers. Kirkman (2010) suggests that questions should be asked about whose decisions should be given priority, because in the market-place, economic considerations, not social justice principles, determine the outcome (pp. 40–41). Services committed to social justice principles that at the same time offer individualised funding and person-centred approaches, are forced to isolate and divide individuals from their group. This process, combined with professionals’ energy spent on accounting and administration processes, places service-users at risk of managerial abuse (p. 45).

Bredewold et al. (2016) similarly suggest that many human services workers and educators support the ideology of choice and control, but service delivery in general has become problematic in practice. People living in violent circumstances, for example, or people with weak community networks need help to make the step to services, so they get help from professionals to take the next step. But they are unable to make the step to other services by themselves, often overwhelmed by the intensity and complexity of their experiences. Both service providers and service-users complain about the dispersion of services, and lack of collaboration due to services competing with each other and obliged to work more for less money whilst being overloaded with administrative tasks. Data entry has become a complicated process because the type of assistance that people receive and the pace of progress is determined by the person receiving assistance, and effectiveness of service

delivery on client progress can only be measured on a personal basis (Dowling et al., 2006; Innes et al., 2006; Kinsella, 2000; Scerra, 2011).

Human services and social workers and educators are further reminded of Timmerman (2018), who points to the following “ugly” consequences of neoliberalism: people are left to sort things out by themselves; solidarity as a principle is undermined; vulnerability is considered a “bad” and shameful trait; and resilience is associated with personal performance; governments sanction communities that fail to perform according to expectation; volunteers function as a reserve-army; voluntary work is seen as a contribution in exchange for receiving public aid; and professionals are straightjacketed, unable to work in ways that fit with their value-system.

AN APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO NEOLIBERALISM IN THE ANTHROPOCENE

In *Moral Man: A Model of Man for Humanistic Psychology*, Prof Thomas Szasz (1967) talks about the importance of questioning what defines the *human being* and how humans survive. He argues that, in general, the issue of government of the self or government by others (autonomy and heteronomy) remains a concern that needs to be addressed (p. 47). After more than 60 years, Szasz’s argument is still relevant, considering contemporary debates on the Anthropocene and the fact that people have created a world in deep crisis at multiple levels of existence. It is also highly relevant to the fact that the Rogerian, person-centred approach has been inverted so that people become more reliant on government by others.

Szasz stresses that people’s social conditions play a major role in their conditioning behaviours. For example, people who have been educated to think critically do not easily commit to rule-following behaviour. People have grown up in societies that stress the importance of meaning in people’s lives try to find meaning in their jobs and other activities. People’s environments that stress the importance of living by religious codes restrict their choices in crucial areas of life. Many people in closed societies are afraid of freedom, of choice, which has kept people “stuck” in old forms of government, traditions and ways of working. Some individuals have become reclusive and stress the meaninglessness of human life. Others, however, have liberated themselves from groups to which they once belonged, seeking greater freedom and choice and, self-reflectively, find it.

Szasz’s (1967) argument around the issue of autonomy and heteronomy relates to the earlier discussion over the need for people engaged in the human services industry to reflect on the notion of personhood and the paradigms they support. It also relates to Monbiot’s suggestion that neoliberal ideology ignores two important economic pillars of governance – the household and the commons (Monbiot, 2016, 2018). Neoliberal ideology, Monbiot (2018) argues, is an inversion that creates ugly consequences because it is based on an economic story that disregards those pillars. There are four economic pillars: the state; the market; the household; and the commons. The neglect of the last two by both neoliberals and social democrats has created many of the monstrosities of our times. Monbiot argues (in Bollier, 2017):

Both market and state receive a massive subsidy from the household: the unpaid labour of parents and other carers... mostly women. If children were not looked after [and

the] ill, elderly or have disabilities were not helped and supported by others, the public care bill would break the state... There's another great subsidy ... the vast wealth the economic elite has accumulated at our expense, through its seizure of the fourth sector of the economy: the commons... A commons, unlike state spending, obliges people to work together, to sustain their resources and decide how the income should be used. It gives community life a clear focus. It depends on democracy in its truest form. It destroys inequality. It provides an incentive to protect the living world. It creates, in sum, a politics of belonging.

Neoliberalism, which acknowledges only two pillars – the state and the market – disregards the power and authority of the household and the commons. It assumes that society is a business, and that the power of the state needs reducing because it interferes with the market. Neglecting the powers of the household and the commons, Monbiot (2018) continues, reduces the power of choice and control of the household and the commons. It promotes the idea of the human race, but as a race between winners and losers, suggesting that human beings are essentially competitive, evil beings. This is why Monbiot (2018) argues the neo-liberal story needs to be replaced with a *restoration story*. This story replaces the one of human beings as essentially competitive, evil beings, with the narrative of human beings as co-operative, social, empathetic and good-natured beings. The hero in the restoration story rebuilds political communities and gives real power back to the people with policies that support the transition. The hero restores power to the household and especially the commons, so that the pool of community resources is held together by rules that the community itself established; with people managing the resources so that the whole community benefits, not just the wealthiest. In other words, the cultural and natural resources which all members of society can normally freely access, including water, air and a habitable earth, will not be owned privately or made fit for only certain groups of people.

Monbiot's hero story sounds applaudable, but a variety of governance norms and rules would need to be employed, which brings us back to the argument that notions of personhood and with that, governance, need to be further explored: who or what is a person, with whom and what do they share the space, and what type of governance – internal or external, or both – apply? Moreover, do human and non-human beings have the same rights and responsibilities in the Anthropocene?

CONCLUSION

This article explored two opposing ideologies that the literature to date has not placed in the spotlight: that of neoliberalism and that of Roger's original concept of person-centredness. It argued that these opposing ideologies need to be brought into discussion in human services and also human services and social work education in light of the Anthropocene. The article explained that the Rogerian, person-centred system of thought contrasts fundamentally with the neoliberal, government-supported, person-centred system of today, the latter a political instrument that dominates both the human services sector and the field of higher education. The latter plagues educators and practitioners in the field and leads to unethical practices. Neoliberal ideology does not acknowledge the story of human beings as cooperative, social, empathetic and good-natured beings. It ignores the fact that

neoliberal ideology has created a world in deep crisis, sidelining the eco-centric notion of personhood as something that relates to all beings, all playing an important role in the web of relationships across time and space. It has commodified and inverted Rogerian philosophy to effectively manipulate people's thinking and ways of being and doing in the world. It promotes the idea that government-controlled bodies are the heroes in a story where people need to be repaired, analysed and controlled, to be protected from their own evil selves. It proves to be a story of a system that makes a lot of money by denying (and abusing) the power of the household and the commons, and, as such, disempowers the human race.

When *carefully* reflected upon, the Rogerian person-centred approach, which is about real power and helping people to realise their personhood, not as a form of superiority or weakness but as *agency*, can help restore the power of the household and the commons so that the whole community benefits. It can help individual people to recognise their rights and responsibilities to engage in participatory decision-making processes, change power structures and evoke culture- and systems-change through a rethinking of power relations, not only in their personal lives but also at the vertical levels of the bureaucratic hierarchy. It can help them understand the need for dialogue between government agencies and service providers, between managers and workers, between workers and clients, between educators and service providers and a diversity of service-users (Dowling et al., 2006; Innes et al., 2006; Kendrick, 1997, 2007, 2008, 2011, 2012; Kinsella, 2000). It can help them recognise that the dominant political discourse on economics stigmatises marginalised people as helpless, deficient and weak (Kendrick, 2008) and that race, class and gender issues also need to be addressed because they intensify people's traumatic experiences (Fopp, 2009). It can help people to recognise that the notion of personhood and the formative relational tendency is reflected in all life processes, whether individual or group, organic or inorganic. This recognition will help Western people to deepen their understanding about First Nations peoples and rely less on Western models of thinking.

In closing, it seems that Monbiot's idea of a restoration story can become a reality when a growing cohort of people engaged in human services work and education accepts their responsibility for life in the Anthropocene and reflects on the purpose and ways of thinking, being and doing human services work, to then ensure that Monbiot's idea of restoration turns into a real life story.

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Decolonising social work education in Aotearoa New Zealand

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ABSTRACT

The social work education sector has a vital role to play in advancing the rights and interests of Indigenous peoples. Global and national standards reinforce this requirement and regulatory frameworks identify decolonising practices as important to the delivery of social work education. While standards influence and guide practices, the degree to which decolonising practices are operationalised at the local level depends upon programme delivery within higher education. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with social work education leaders in Aotearoa New Zealand to explore how decolonising practices were demonstrated within their programmes. The research found that all programmes were committed to a decolonising approach but struggled in different ways to operationalise this commitment and to maintain momentum. Having Māori staff was seen as essential but there were too few, and meeting regulatory qualification requirements was problematic. Integrating Māori knowledge and practices within the curriculum was also vital for student learning and building their cultural responsiveness. Non-Māori staff had a particular responsibility to acknowledge the harmful effects of colonisation and to practise respectful partnership with Māori. The role of leaders and staff in the operationalising of decolonising practices within social work education is explored for future implications of policy and practice development.

Keywords: *Decolonisation; Indigenous; social work education; leadership; standards; regulation; Māori; Aotearoa New Zealand; Australia*

INTRODUCTION

Before discussing decolonising social work education in Aotearoa New Zealand (Aotearoa New Zealand, including both indigenous and colonial names), it is important that I situate myself as a Pākehā, or White social work educator with Scottish, Irish and English roots that go back to my forebears who arrived in Aotearoa New Zealand in 1843. I have learned from and consulted with a range of people and, in particular, Māori colleagues. I am grateful to them for their insights and for those who were willing to participate in the research. I particularly wish to acknowledge the contribution of Professor Marie Connolly in the development of this article. As sole author, I nevertheless take full responsibility for undertaking and reporting the research, and for the conclusions that are drawn.

Indigenous rights and decolonisation

Indigenous peoples have been fighting for their traditional rights ever since colonisers took their lands, wealth, labour, culture and language. The rights and expectations of Indigenous peoples have found their contemporary expression in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (United Nations, 2008). Globally, colonised peoples have mobilised in protest and have been at the forefront of the fight for change. Whereas people of colour have often been the colonised group, European or White people are usually part of the dominant population. In general, dominant group forces have been slower to support decolonising developments but can become important allies in creating societal change (Huygens, 2016).

From the context of Aotearoa New Zealand, Tuhiwai Smith (2012) notes that decolonisation was once only defined as the formal handing back of the governance of a country by the colonial authority but “is now recognised as a long term process involving bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic, and psychological divesting of colonial power” (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p. 175). Some have used the extended term *decoloniality* to emphasise the depth to which colonisation negatively affects the colonised group and the challenge facing the colonising group in addressing the knowledge of this harm. This highlights the work needing to be done with the colonising group for a more equitable society to emerge – including within the context of social work education (Hendrick & Young, 2018).

A critical analysis of colonisation and of race has challenged privileged status to confront the advantages that have been accrued by the dominant group and to take a stand against injustice and racism. Indigenous people challenge non-Indigenous people to take responsibility for addressing White privilege as a prerequisite to becoming allies in the work of decolonisation (Bennett, 2015). The concept of *ally* has been developed by Bishop (2003) and has been used by many groups working for change.

The term *White privilege* initially arose out of the critical White studies movement which spread to other parts of the world in response to challenges from black voices in the USA. Young and Zubrzycki (2011, p. 162) note the seminal work of Peggy McIntosh whose essay “White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack” in 1989 was important in identifying the often unseen and unacknowledged benefits of being White. The field of critical White studies, which incorporates the notion of White privilege, interrogates the ways in which this privilege “is raced and invisible; [providing] a method of unsettling this privilege;

and it offers guidance for more inclusive and respectful human relationships” (Young & Zubrzycki, 2011, p. 165). The wider theme of privilege has been explored by Pease (2016) including a focus on understanding the benefits of privilege by those in the dominant group and their complicity in others’ oppression.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, Māori have led the resistance to colonisation and its effects. In 1835, *He Whakaputanga - the Declaration of Independence*, was signed by Northern chiefs in Aotearoa New Zealand and recognised by Britain (Orange, 2015). Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Indigenous Māori language version of The Treaty of Waitangi, hereafter Te Tiriti) was signed by a number of Māori tribal leaders and the British Crown in 1840.

Whereas Te Tiriti held the hope of a mutually beneficial arrangement for Māori who signed along with the British Crown, including the notion of “bi-polity” where two sovereign nations could equitably govern (Ruwhiu, Te Hira, Eruera, & Elkington, 2016) the dominance of Britain was asserted and Māori experienced colonisation of their land and indeed, their whole world. Māori resisted colonisation, land battles were fought while, at the same time, Māori adapted to Western ideas and technology.

In contemporary times, Māori have protested for their rights and now through the Treaty of Waitangi Tribunal a number of iwi (tribes) have settled historic disputes with the Government. This has typically included an apology from the Government for the land taken and harm caused, and financial and other components of redress. At one level, decolonisation has been formally under way with a growing number of tribes engaging in the settlement process, since the Treaty of Waitangi Tribunal was established by an Act of Parliament in 1975, although it is acknowledged there is a long way to go (Huygens, 2016). On the other hand, it can be argued that any decolonisation process is limited due to the significant ongoing colonial legacy of major structural deprivation faced by Māori (Tuhivai Smith, 2012). Alongside the negative structural impact of colonisation, Te Tiriti continues to offer the potential of partnership between Māori and non-Māori.

Within the Aotearoa NZ education context, Mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) has been recognised as one of the guarantees of Te Tiriti and embedded within the education legislation of 1990. One example of the development of Mātauranga Māori within a public education institution involved a tool being created, *Poutama*, to assist all its programmes to honour Te Tiriti (Unitec Institute of Technology, 2011).

In the context of Māori self-determination we note the advent of Wānanga (Māori-based institutions) as a key site for decolonisation and indigenising practices also expressed in the context of social work education (Akhter, 2015). Other global manifestations of indigenous tertiary institutions include the indigenous university based in Canada, established in 2004 (Young et al., 2013).

Decolonising global social work education

Decolonising social work education is a global aim that unites countries with colonial histories. Some of the literature is contained in edited texts on the theme of indigenous or decolonising social work education and research (Gray, Coates, Yellow Bird, &

Hetherington, 2016; Fejo-King & Mataira, 2015; Zubrzycki et al., 2014) and many texts focusing on social work education with broader indigenous themes – in Aotearoa NZ (Crawford, 2018); in Asia Pacific (Noble, Henrickson, & Han, 2013; (Nikku & Hatta, 2014), and globally (Noble, Strauss, & Littlechild, 2014).

Countries in which decolonising and indigenising social work education is being advanced include: Aotearoa NZ (Anglem, 2009; Eketone & Walker, 2013;); Australia (Fejo-King, 2013; Muller, 2014); Canada (Johnson, 2010; Waterfall, 2008); the Pacific including Tonga (Mafile’o, 2004); Samoa (Faleolo, 2013); and the Pacific more generally (Mafile’o & Vakalahi, 2018); the USA (Yellow Bird, 2016) including Hawai’i (Morelli, Mataira, & Kaulukukui, 2013); China (Yuen-Tsang & Ku, 2008); South Africa (Harms Smith & Nathane, 2018), and Africa more broadly (Kreitzer, 2008); the Sami in the Nordic region (Merja, Sanna, Merja, & Sanna, 2016); the Americas more broadly (Tamburro, 2013); also Central and South America, and Europe (Young et al., 2013). Broader spiritual and religious themes can be aligned with the indigenisation project such as a text on Buddhist Social Work that roots practice in Asia (Gohori, 2017) and exploring the links between Islamic spirituality and indigenous social work education (Akhter, 2013).

The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) Code of Ethics, Reconciliation Action Plan, and Education Standards (AASW, 2012) privilege Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing within the curriculum and the broader practice of recognised social work programmes. A key document for Australian social work education, the *Getting It Right Framework* (Zubrzycki et al., 2014) provides a teaching and learning framework to advance decolonising efforts in social work education in Australia. The four key features of the framework include Indigenous “epistemological equality, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-centered social work, cultural responsiveness, and Indigenous pedagogy” (Young et al., 2013, p. 1).

However, because social work is a profession that originated in the West and continues to sit within a stream of colonisation, it has a problematic relationship with Indigenous peoples. This is why the *Getting It Right Framework* (Zubrzycki et al., 2014) argues that the social work profession must critically reflect on how it contributes to ongoing colonising practices and that White privilege must be addressed within social work education. Addressing non-indigenous privilege in the educational context can be informed by the broader notion of a pedagogy of privilege, where recognising one’s own privilege and the benefits it brings is vital along with continually challenging the systems that supports it.

Literature exists more broadly about race and racism, and how this can be addressed within the educational sector. Anti-racism practices include using agreements for “courageous conversations about race” at the classroom level, with leadership required at the institutional and policy levels (Singleton, 2015, p. 15). Racism covers a broad area of oppression whereby one cultural group discriminates against another based on biology and cultural difference, usually White against people of colour, with both structural and personal dimensions of oppression. Colonisation involves “the process by which European imperial powers gained military control of and subjugated the peoples of ‘colonies’ in Africa and Asia” (Gray et al., 2016, p. 333) and, of course, in the Pacific. Both racism and colonisation

are identified components that should be addressed in decolonising social work education (Zubrzycki et al., 2014).

Indigenous knowledge must be recognised as equivalent to Western knowledge creating “epistemological equality” (Zubrzycki et al., 2014, p. 17). In the Aotearoa NZ context this has been incorporated into the promotion of Mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) a feature which aligns well with the commitment of the Aotearoa NZ social work profession to honour Te Tiriti (Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers, 2013).

From a global and local perspective, regulatory frameworks provide opportunities to shape the ways in which social work education is developed to support democratising and decolonising practices (McNabb & Connolly, 2019). Standards provide a foundational platform on which best practice can be developed, and in this regard it has been argued that the role of leaders is to move social work education beyond baseline standards toward aspirational goals such as decolonisation (McNabb, 2017). Recent research identified democratising and decolonising practices as key themes that have been reinforced in the Global Standards, and the local standards of Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand (McNabb & Connolly, 2019). Further research has examined the ways in which democratising practices are given effect within programmes of social work education across Aotearoa NZ (McNabb, 2019). This adds to a growing body of literature that explores the influence of regulatory frameworks on social work education (McNabb & Connolly, 2019).

This article explores the ways in which leaders of social work education in Aotearoa NZ support decolonising practices within their programmes alongside their thoughts on the challenges and opportunities of demonstrating an enduring commitment to Te Tiriti and to advancing the partnership between Māori and non-Māori.

METHODOLOGY

The study undertook qualitative interviews with social work education programme leaders to investigate questions relating to decolonising of practices in Aotearoa NZ. One of the more common forms of qualitative research is the semi-structured, face-to-face interview of individuals (Brinkmann, 2013). This approach was particularly useful in this study as it allowed a more nuanced and richer conversation with leaders about the challenges and issues arising from advancing decolonising practices in social work programmes.

Leaders of all 19 social work programme providers were invited to participate in the study ranging across university, polytechnic, Wānanga and private institutional contexts. Unlike some countries where social work education is confined to universities, in Aotearoa NZ there is a diversity of tertiary education institutional contexts. By engaging with a range of providers, features of this diversity across the country were captured. These features include: metropolitan and regional geographies; polytechnic, private training establishments, universities, and Wānanga institutions; Māori, Pacific and mixed cultural settings; campus-based and distance mediums; small and large programmes; bachelor and master’s level programmes; and a special character faith-based institution.

Fourteen of the 19 programme leaders participated, providing a very strong representation of programmes across Aotearoa NZ. Two thirds of the respondents were women, and two thirds were Pākehā (non-Māori usually of British European descent). Leaders with Māori, Pacific and Indian ethnicity were also represented. The role of leaders in social work programmes in Aotearoa NZ is made more complex by the range and diversity of management and disciplinary leadership roles in the sector. These roles range from full management and leadership of the programme and its staff on the one hand, and roles focusing on disciplinary academic leadership without management responsibilities on the other. The respondents were roughly split in half between each of these categories.

Most interviews were conducted in person and where this was impracticable, online synchronous digital technology was used through the Blackboard Collaborate platform or through Skype. A semi-structured interview schedule was used that had been developed from the themes identified in the earlier document analysis, specifically relating to “service user and student participation, student representativeness, Indigenous rights and political action, gender and cultural equity, access and equity, and quality social work education and broader issues of equity” (McNabb & Connolly, 2019, p. 42). The NVivo data analysis software tool was used to assist in analysing the data thematically.

Ethics approval was gained from the Human Ethics Advisory Group of the University of Melbourne and the study was regarded as a minimal risk project; Ethics ID 1748887. All participants in the study gave informed consent.

In addition to the well-documented limitations of using a qualitative research methodology, there are limitations particular to this research which relate to the sample. Only interviews with social work programme leaders in Aotearoa NZ were undertaken, and the research does therefore not include the views of other social work academic leaders, academic staff, students or people who represent the wider social work sector including service users, iwi and Māori organisations, community organisations and other stakeholders such as government. Research with these groups may well offer some different views about the nature of decolonising practices.

FINDINGS

The leaders were asked to share their perspectives with respect to decolonising practices, and the ways in which these practices were given effect in their social work programme. Whereas the leaders were not given a definition of decolonisation and its respective practices, within the context of Aotearoa NZ, any action to promote Māori knowledge and culture, a deeper expression of commitment to Te Tiriti and partnership between Māori and Taiwi or biculturalism, would fit within a broad definition of decolonisation. These features of decolonisation are supported within the social work profession and within tertiary education policy.

Three key themes were identified: the commitment to decolonising practices; operationalising decolonising practices; and the enablers of decolonising practices. Each participant was assigned a non-identifying number which is noted beside each quote.

Commitment to decolonising practices

The importance of engaging with Kaupapa Māori values was seen as a critical foundation supporting a programme's commitment to biculturalism in practice:

Fuse those values that you know about, the Treaty values, and also other Mātauranga Māori knowledge values... and then we're moving from that toward decolonisation [of the whole programme]. (11)

Māori staff were seen as having a key role in this, a role that required institutional support:

One of the key parts of our... bicultural [journey] from a Kaupapa Māori [perspective]... supporting the Māori staff to start self-determining and owning key aspects of the programme and their place. (2)

In the context of decolonising practices, the leaders reinforced the deep commitment that social work education has to advancing Te Tiriti, and operationalizing the elements of Te Tiriti in practice. Establishing a firm foundation of responsiveness to Te Tiriti, was seen as critical to advancing practice. This involved establishing a strong Kaupapa Māori foundation in each programme with a particular expectation of responsibility as leader:

As a manager or a leader, that's where I see I have quite a high level of responsibility for the profession to ensure that we are being genuine in our commitment (to the Treaty), and I see my role as the enabler of that. (3)

One leader noted that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) is complementary to Te Tiriti based practice and was making a link between the global and local decolonising efforts:

The UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People, I think offers us a very unique opportunity to unpack what our Treaty relationship might look like. (13)

One leader of a programme with a deep and enduring commitment to Te Tiriti noted a dilemma in having a strong Kaupapa Māori based values where predominantly Māori students tended to work in iwi (tribal) services but might struggle to work in "mainstream" agencies due to the challenge of balancing Māori and non-Māori bodies of knowledge. In this instance, the importance of committing to a blended knowledge base was suggested:

I think our programme ... needs to be a lot stronger at that interface between Māori and non-Māori bodies of knowledge, because what we've found historically is that our tauira [students] have gone into statutory organisations and within a really short period of time they've felt quite isolated in terms of tracking their body of knowledge, which has primarily been from a Māori perspective. (13)

A number of leaders spoke about being committed to a bicultural journey but of also being restrained by resourcing or policy settings within their institution:

The social work programme particularly is totally committed to the bicultural Code of Ethics and

teaching in a bicultural manner... But, our institute has not supported us well with that and it's been a continuing challenge... (7)

On the other hand, when there was a clear, higher-level institutional commitment to advancing bicultural practices, there was a trickle-down effect that provided support for change throughout the organisation:

It came from the top, in terms of our commitment to biculturalism and in the context of colonisation. So, we've had conversations as a faculty about that... I think it's flown through to our school and conversations at staff meetings, and it's gone through to our programme level and it's showing up in class. (6)

Social work education nevertheless exists within a context of colonised practices and some leaders noted tensions in operationalising decolonising practices in the context of competing expectations of evidenced-based practice.

This is something we now turn to in the next major theme.

Operationalising decolonising practices

Leaders articulated the challenges in meaningfully and purposefully shaping bicultural social work programmes and the ways in which it might be monitored and sustained, without being formulaic:

How many tertiary institutions will simply see this as a tick box exercise rather than necessarily a fundamental look at themselves? (13)

Some leaders also noted that the physical environment for learning Mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) is important, including using marae (Māori meeting houses) as a way of deepening a student's knowledge through experience:

I think it's also the mode of delivery. And this is what our tauira [students] say to us. The moment we walk through the door we felt at home... It's a thriving [place]... And the students overwhelmingly have said to us that the penny dropped when they went onto a marae. (13)

What we ask students to do is to select an issue that is relevant to Māori... and then they complete presentations on the marae about the issue and solutions... So, they have the opportunity to apply Māori concepts, particularly tikanga [customary practices] and then to receive feedback. (8)

A number of leaders spoke about the challenge of maintaining momentum for a Tiriti-based programme. There were a number of facets to manage and any one or more could slow progress. Ongoing development of teaching practices that supported Mātauranga Māori in the programme was seen as critical. Where there was strong support from the institution, programmes moved from talking about decolonising practices, to operationalising them:

I think we've moved beyond caucusing to another era and so, looking at what is Māori knowledge, how is Māori knowledge taught, who does the teaching of Māori knowledge, and

then how is bicultural engagement included and what are the steps that we can make; how is te reo [Māori language] acknowledged? (2)

Leaders noted various ways in which the commitment toward biculturalism was operationalised. For example, aligning the curriculum in ways that reflect Te Tiriti, and integrating Te Tiriti within assessment processes in practical ways:

The Treaty and biculturalism form some of the backbones of our programme – the structural backbones. We declare ourselves to be a bicultural programme... In terms of delivering the programme, all our course outlines have to demonstrate how they meet the focus on biculturalism. (4)

Almost every assessment requires an examination of firstly the Treaty and then the community that you serve. (5)

Similarly, leaders explored the ways in which biculturalism can be strengthened through its integration into the whole curriculum, for example, by integrating Te Tiriti material in specific papers and also throughout the degree. The value of having had a quality assurance process during the construction of the curriculum that included a review by both a Māori and a Pasifika (Pacific Island) appraiser was also noted:

And all of it is reviewed by a bicultural appraiser and Pasifika appraiser; so, you have Māori and Pasifika perspectives reviewing our content, the whole course, before it's ever public. So, that builds it into the brickwork if you like. (10)

While the importance of advancing decolonising practices was uniformly supported, leaders also commented on some of the barriers to supporting biculturalism. A number of leaders noted the heavy load carried by Māori staff, which included: teaching Mātauranga Māori, supporting Māori students, managing external relationships with Māori and partnering with non-Māori staff. This requires targeted support by non-Māori and by leaders of programmes:

This is the issue too for Māori staff members having to wear all the curriculum that's Māori, and a pastoral care that's Māori, and do we support those Māori staff members in the way that they should be and need to be, and ought to be cared for? (12)

Most leaders noted the challenge of finding and developing Māori staff, and for some it was their biggest impediment to running a Tiriti-based programme.

Some leaders were in a position to grow their own Māori workforce which might include scholarship and assistance programmes along with innovative funding support. Where an institution had its own master's qualification, it tended to be easier to support Māori staff to get that qualification, and then become employed as academics.

Given the importance of recruiting and retaining Māori staff, it was particularly heart-breaking for programmes to have to let expert Māori staff and other specialists go because they could not meet all the Social Workers Registration Board (SWRB) relatively recently introduced academic staff requirements:

The sad thing for us is that we lost them [expert Māori staff] in the last couple of years. And we lost them actually primarily around the SWRB requirements, which I think has been quite sad for us as a programme. (13)

Losing staff in this way created significant challenges for programmes as it also impacted on the sustainability of the movement toward bicultural practice. There was always the risk that one or more key staff would leave and affect the momentum of the whole programme.

Enablers of decolonising practice

Working on a shared values-base was considered to be an important first step in creating the environment within which decolonising practices could flourish. It was notable that linking team values to Mātauranga Māori has helped departments in their Tiriti-based journey by providing a solid foundation for development:

That shifted staff thinking, and what they did was exactly what I asked them to do, which was linking between (the) Treaty and where people were at with that; but also, Mātauranga Māori, and also the values we've adopted as a team. (11)

A number of leaders were optimistic about what was already going well in their programmes and saw the potential for them to become enablers of decolonising practices more broadly across their own institutions and the wider social service sector in Aotearoa NZ. Indeed, this was an imperative:

I think Aotearoa is looked at, and looked upon, as being quite progressive in this area. So, in our profession we need to be driving this and leading this; or else, people from other broader social service professions will drive and lead it for us. (13)

Leadership, and in particular Māori leadership, was seen as a critical enabler of decolonising practice in social work education. Seeing this as part of a sector-wide development of Tiriti-based social work education was considered important to the overall sustaining of decolonising practices. Non-Māori support was also considered important to the advancement of Māori interests and leadership.

Having a close relationship with local iwi (tribes) and having iwi members involved in the programme was also seen as an enabler of decolonising practice. One of the sector-wide initiatives involving Māori leadership was the development of the draft Kaitiakitanga Framework. This would potentially create a more detailed set of standards around Tiriti-based practices in programmes, a significant gap for the SWRB regulator currently.

Further questions arose for a Kaupapa Māori based programme in considering how it might partner with a mainstream programme on something like co-publishing but still have an honourable relationship with mutual benefit. Other leaders noted the value of doctoral research and publications such as *Te Kōmako* (a Māori focused edition of the Aotearoa NZ social work journal) that targeted Tiriti based social work practice and education.

DISCUSSION

The findings have established the importance of Te Tiriti for social work educators and the fundamental place and value it brings to the profession. It is seen as critical in advancing decolonising practices in Aotearoa New Zealand. Indeed, the way in which Te Tiriti influences Aotearoa New Zealand law, policies and practice across the whole of government, its institutions and various public sector type groups reinforces a strong commitment to honouring Te Tiriti and partnering with Māori more broadly. Notwithstanding the long struggle that Māori have led and continue to lead so that Te Tiriti is honoured, Te Tiriti provides an overarching influence upon Aotearoa New Zealand, arguably creating what Andrews, Pritchett, and Woolcock (2016) call an “authorizing environment” (Andrews et al., 2016, p. 2).

Originally derived from the work of Moore (2013), the notion of an authorising environment has been developed by Andrews et al. (2016) as a way of critically influencing organisational behavior, and providing legitimacy and accountability for action. This idea has recently also been developed to include human services work, for example see Connolly, Healey, and Humphreys (2017). Andrews et al. (2016) notes, however, that creating an authorising environment is not always easy, particularly when systems “are commonly fragmented, and difficult to navigate” (Andrews et al., 2016, p. 5). Given the nature of entrenched White privilege underpinning structures, policies and programmes, there is an institutional bias toward the dominant colonial discourse. Therefore, both establishing appropriate authority and also undertaking the agreed change can be difficult to secure, even more so when the problems being addressed are often wicked in nature due to their size and complexity. This further highlights the importance of a strong base of authority and inherent influence from which to operate.

In the context of Aotearoa New Zealand, the concept of Te Tiriti as creating a foundational and ubiquitous authorising environment is particularly useful as it illustrates how influence can permeate aspects of government, social and economic policy, and law. The pursuit of Tiriti based partnership and decolonisation is a major initiative that involves both government and non-government agencies in Aotearoa New Zealand working together for its achievement albeit with varying levels of commitment. If we apply the notion of an authorising environment to Te Tiriti and its implementation within tertiary social work education, then we can conceptualise the way in which it influences and legitimises Tiriti-based partnership and decolonising practices (Figure 1).

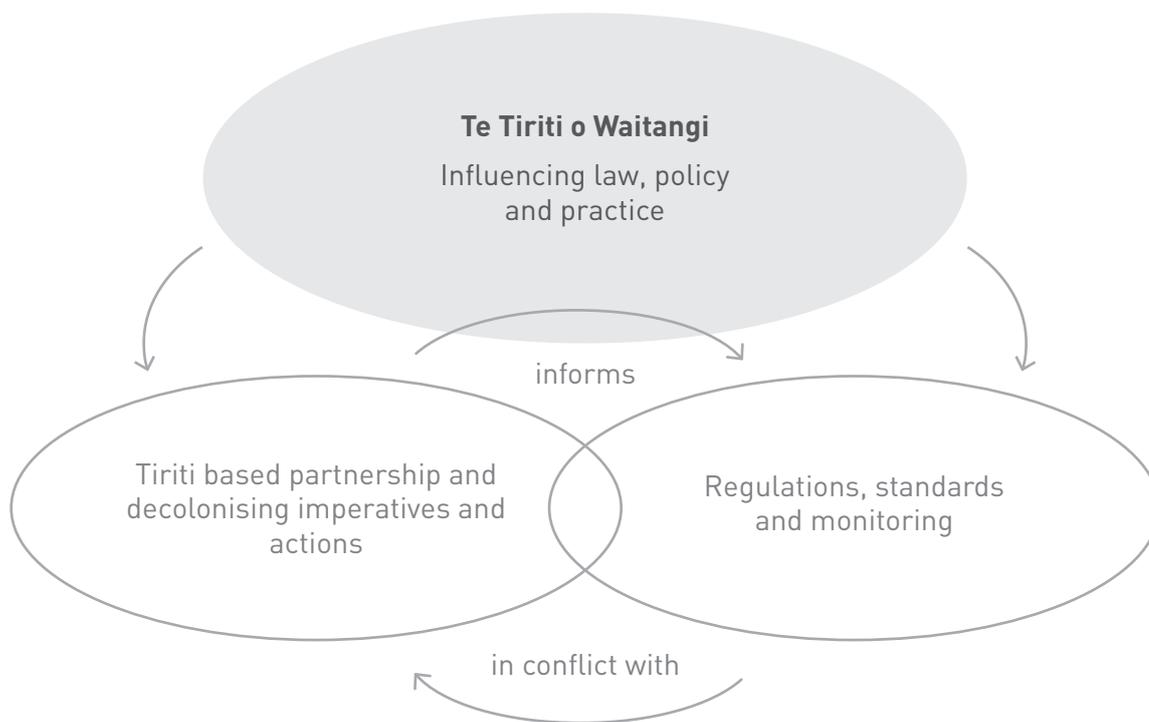


Figure 1. Te Tiriti o Waitangi creating an authorising environment for social work education.

From the findings of this research it is clear that a strong, authorising environment creates the scaffolding necessary for the sharing of high-level goals and their implementation in service delivery. At the same time, the research also illustrates the tensions that can exist when government imperatives give effect to conflicting expectations. The area of regulation and standards which are contained in the remit of the regulatory body in Aotearoa New Zealand, the Social Workers Registration Board (SWRB), provides a good example of this (Figure 1). Recent requirements that social work educators have a master's or doctoral degree (SWRB, 2017), has meant some Māori staff have been lost to programmes. This directly weakens the Māori workforce in contradicting the decolonising aims of Te Tiriti that specifically privileges Māori interests. Indeed, it also critically weakens the SWRB's own goal of producing graduates who are competent to practice social work with Māori (SWRB, 2016).

Although the social work profession is well represented on the SWRB, the entity nevertheless intersects with government as the Social Workers Registration Act (2003) requires the Board to report directly to a government minister who is ultimately responsible for the standards it establishes and monitors. This regulatory responsibility creates a fundamental tension with the Crown's imperative to advance and operationalise Te Tiriti. Ultimately, conflicting expectations have operational consequence for social work education programmes.

Although a heavy responsibility for creating safe practice systems rests with the SWRB, particularly in the context of child protection and risk-focused practice (Connolly, 2017), unless the regulatory body also pays attention to, and incorporates the decolonising expectations of Te Tiriti, social work education programmes will continue to be constrained in advancing Tiriti based imperatives.

It is clear that leadership activism by Māori and non-Māori allies is needed to work through these complexities, and to move forward in ways that are consistent with the clear requirements of Te Tiriti and the partnership expectations it presents. A ray of light within the regulatory environment of social work education is seen in the Kaitiakitanga Framework which fleshes out the implications of honouring Te Tiriti and of further clarifying priorities in terms of “competence to practise social work with Māori” (SWRB, 2016, para. 4). While early in its development, this strategic partnership between the SWRB and Māori social work educators and practitioners has the potential to break through what has become something of an impasse that places real constraints on the development of Te Tiriti based social work education and practice.

CONCLUSION

Te Tiriti is a major feature of the Aotearoa New Zealand landscape that provides a strong, authorising environment for the advancement of decolonising practices in social work education. This has created a public discourse around Te Tiriti that has supported its growing influence. This authorising environment has, nevertheless, been critical for Tiriti based social work practice to develop in Aotearoa New Zealand where both government and non-government bodies are inextricably involved.

Like Aotearoa New Zealand, countries with colonial histories either have treaties with their Indigenous peoples, or are exploring these possibilities. For example, Australia is in the process of considering a treaty between the state of Victoria and Aboriginal peoples (The Guardian, 2018), something that this research suggests could ultimately scaffold the development of a partnership to integrate Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledges. In this context, the implementation of the recently developed *Getting it Right* framework (Zubrzycki et al., 2014), a major policy document for decolonising social work education in Australia, could be enabled by a stronger, authorising environment over time.

Notwithstanding the strength of the authorising environment, however, it is clear that regulatory frameworks can also present challenges to the attainment of decolonising practices. This research reinforces the importance of resolving regulatory misalignments with Te Tiriti imperatives in Aotearoa New Zealand. As efforts toward the mandatory registration of social workers in Australia intensify, ensuring regulatory alignment with decolonising ideals will also be important to the development of partnerships that integrate Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledges in social work education and practice.

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Pedagogical Intent and Placement Diversity in Social Work Field Education: One University's Experiences

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ABSTRACT

Field placement is central to the professional education of aspiring social workers. The immersive learning that occurs in health and human service organisations under the direct supervision of practising social workers provides a real-world context for the integration of classroom and field-based learning. Yet, in recent decades, a range of contextual changes have impacted on the supply of quality placements. The concurrent marketisation of higher education and health/human services has led to widespread placement shortages. Universities and placement organisations are diversifying practice learning opportunities to build capacity for placements in organisations. Also, little is known about how today's placement opportunities align with the pedagogical intent of social work education. This paper aims to contribute to the discussion about placement diversity and how this aligns with our pedagogical intent. Adopting a case-study approach, the paper reports on the nature and structure of placements undertaken by 76 Deakin University social work students in 2018. The findings suggest that, although the traditional one-to-one placement remains dominant, placements are diversifying, yet not necessarily in line with our pedagogical intent. A more strategic approach is needed if we are to reap the pedagogical gains of practice-based learning.

Keywords: *Field Education; Social Work Placements; Placement Supervision; Practice Learning; Practicum*

Social work has traditionally relied on the one-to-one placement model to prepare students for professional practice. In this model, each student is allocated to a single direct practice setting under the supervision of a qualified social worker practitioner who is responsible for the student's daily practice learning and assessment for the entire placement period. (Bogo, 2015; Wayne, Bogo, & Raskin, 2006). The ability to source placements that are characterised as individually-focused, direct service placements with traditional one-to-one supervision has become increasingly challenging in recent decades. The deregulation and marketisation of the Australian higher education sector have resulted in the proliferation of social work programs and the number of students within these programs (Healy & Lonne, 2010; Karger, 2012).

As field education is a core component of all social work programs, the demand for social work placements has invariably increased. Yet at the same time, placement supply has progressively declined amidst the managerial mandates and fiscal pressures facing the health and human service organisations that have traditionally hosted most of these placements. In recognition of these challenges, social work education providers have routinely partnered with health and human service organisations to develop new ways of delivering placement learning with a view of enabling the sustainability of social work field education programs into the future (Crisp & Hosken, 2016). However, in line with Cleak (2018), we (the authors) regularly deliberate on whether the evolution of our placement program is aligned with our pedagogical intent and is not merely a reaction to the contextual pressures facing field education programs more broadly.

As academic leads of Deakin University's social work field education program, we consider it paramount to gain an accurate, local-level picture of how our placements are evolving in actuality. In this case study, we examined where 76 Deakin University social work students were undertaking placement in 2018 were placed (practice settings), what practice learning they were exposed to (learning focus), and how that learning was supervised (supervision arrangements). The aim of this study is to engage in an evidence-informed analysis of how our existing and emerging pool of placements is evolving and the extent that this aligns with the pedagogical intent of our social work program more broadly.

BACKGROUND

The traditional model of social work field education emerged from the psychodynamic schools of thought dominant in the early 20th Century (Wayne et al., 2006). This model involves the provision of one-to-one supervision from a qualified social worker employed within a specific practice setting to an individual social work student. The student-supervisor relationship is viewed as the primary vehicle for the student's professional learning on placement. More specifically, this relationship is modelled on the psychodynamic client-worker relationship and is the medium through which the student navigates the integration of theory with practice, reflects upon their professional use of self, and develops their emerging social work identity and practice skills (Bogo, 2015; Crisp & Hosken, 2016).

Despite significant reforms in both the higher education and health/human service sectors, this traditional model continues to be regarded as the "gold standard" of social work field

education. Testimony to this is how social work accrediting bodies, such as the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) (2012), still base their field education policies and guidelines on this traditional model. Individualistic practice teaching and learning is emphasised in the traditional model and seems to echo the profession's longstanding assumptions about what constitutes best practice in social work field education, rather than what the empirical evidence might suggest. As Crisp and Hosken (2016) argued, the social work profession needs to be mindful of not reinforcing those oppressive practices and philosophies that the profession seeks to challenge if such assumptions are not critiqued. In order to do so however, it is necessary to start from an informed position of how the contemporary field education environment is evolving and to base one's critique on this informed positioning.

Social work field education programs continue to find themselves placing students within health and human service agencies that are increasingly driven by neoliberal ideology. The reconfiguration of health and human services as a (pseudo) marketplace through the formalisation of competitive tendering in the mid 1990s has been pivotal in shaping their operative goals, outputs, and outcomes (Ozanne & Rose, 2013). In the current context, economic rationalism and managerialism have reduced social work practice to "simple answers and short-term solutions that focus on minimalist service provision, specialization [sic], and fragmented services" (Preston, George, & Silver, 2014, p. 59). While the social work profession strives to embody its social justice and human rights values (AASW, 2012), and to instil these values in our social work students, the neoliberal socio-political environment continues to commodify such values.

For example, respect for individuals and their rights to a quality service are increasingly being conceptualised in government schemes, such as the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), as the right of service users to choose their preferred services from a (pseudo) market of health and human services. These services then find themselves competing against each other for their market share of service users and the "business" (i.e., revenue) that these service users could bring. It is this increased contestability in the sector, under the guise of a respect for the individual's rights, that has been cited as the reason for erosion of professional autonomy in favour of technocratic, formulaic approaches to complex social issues and service delivery (Dominelli, 1996; Healy and Meagher, 2004; Singh and Cowden, 2009; Lonne, 2013).

Under these circumstances, it is imperative that we seek to broaden our repertoire of placement models and practices with a view to optimising emerging opportunities for quality placement learning in a changing environment (Crisp & Hosken, 2016; Scholar, McCaughan, McLaughlin, & Coleman, 2012). For example, social work students on placement may find themselves receiving onsite task supervision (i.e., day-to-day workload management and informal supervision) from a worker trained in a discipline other than social work, with at times a Diploma or Certificate IV level qualification. In these instances, the students would also receive formal supervision from a qualified social work external to the placement organisation once a week or fortnight. While such variations in placement arrangements may meet the program's accreditation requirements, the lack of social work presence could pose a challenge for beginning social workers who, in trying to develop their social work identity, do not have daily contact with appropriate social work role models (Cleak & Zuchowski, 2018).

In recent times however, experienced social workers are often engaged through Universities to play key roles in the planning and delivering of alternative placement innovations, as well as providing the daily supervision and support to the students. Vassos, Harms, and Rose's (2018) rotational placement model and Crisp and Hosken's (2016) remotely supervised action research placements are illustrative of the types of innovations being pursued. Additional out-of-the-box models of field education are needed if we are to meet the growing demand for placements into the future.

While the planning and resourcing of a growing repertoire of placement models is required, this needs to be based on an evidence-informed understanding of the local contexts in which each field education program operates. It is this understanding, in the context of Deakin University's social work field education program that we sought to ascertain in this study.

Deakin University's Social Work Field Education Program

Deakin University offers both the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) and the Master of Social Work (Qualifying) (MSW) courses with full AASW accreditation status. The courses are run from Waterfront campus, in Geelong which is a regional centre in Western Victoria. Although situated in Geelong, both courses attract students from across Australia given the availability of blended learning modes, that is, predominantly online study with 20 days of face-to-face intensive workshops. While the BSW is offered as both an on-campus and blended learning course, the MSW is only offered as a blended learning program. At the time of writing, 624 students were enrolled in the BSW, with a further 220 students enrolled in the MSW.

Contemporary critical approaches underpin X's social work program. These approaches include critical practice (Ife, 1997), critical postmodernism (Fook, 2012), feminist social work (Dominelli, 2002), anti-oppressive social work (Mullaly, 2010; Baines, 2011), human rights-based social work (Lundy, 2011), anti-racist social work (Dominelli, 2008) and anti-discriminatory social work (Thompson, 2012). As such, the program is oriented towards emancipatory change at personal, cultural and structural levels.

In accordance with the AASW's (2012) education and accreditation standards, the field education program forms a core component of both courses. All students undertake a minimum of 1,000 hours of placement across at least two placements. Not unlike other programs, our BSW students undertake their first placement in the third year of their four-year course. MSW students undertake their first placement after one semester of academic study, in the first year of their two-year course. BSW and MSW students undertake their final placement after completing all other units of study. In line with the philosophical underpinnings of our courses, the field education program endeavours to prepare students to reflect systematically and critically on issues of power, privilege, and oppression within their placement context and to practice in anti-oppressive ways within these contexts.

Our Pedagogical Intent

Consistent with the education principles of the AASW (2012), we emphasise a developmental model of education underpinned by adult learning principles (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2005) and a social constructivist perspective (Dewey, 1938) on learning.

Vygotsky's (1978) pedagogical concept of "zones of proximal development" and Wood, Bruner & Ross' (1976) "instructional scaffolding" are particularly relevant to our intent in transitioning students from the classroom to the field in their practice learning. The zone of proximal development is essentially the difference between the student's current stage of learning development and the level of potential development one is working towards with guidance and support from others. Instructional scaffolding involves the use of different teaching techniques to support students in moving incrementally towards a deeper understanding of, and greater independence in their problem solving, practice reflection and reflexivity as emerging critical social workers. With these two concepts in mind, our primary role as educators is to facilitate "just out of reach" practice learning opportunities in order to continually stretch the students slightly beyond their current stage of development. Direction and support are progressively withdrawn as students' confidence and competence builds in their emerging role as critical social workers.

As such, in the context of our field education program, our intent is to match students to placements that will enable them to relate and integrate meaningfully their classroom learning with their placement practice learning. Placements are essentially sites for intentional learning and critical reflection on the opportunities for, and challenges in enacting critical social work theory and practice within the real world. Placement experiences then form a key frame of reference for further learning in the classroom after the first placement.

Study Aim

The aim of this study was to develop a local level picture of the nature and structure of our placements at Deakin University, with a view of ascertaining the extent to which our placement development and allocation decisions align with our pedagogical intent. Our rationale was to develop an evidence-base to inform our future decision making in both the strategic direction and resource investment of our placement program - the goal being to systematically improve the alignment of our placements with our pedagogical intent. The study was therefore focused on the following research questions:

1. Where are our students undertaking their placements? (Practice Settings)
2. What are the practice learning methods that our students are exposed to on placement? (Learning Focus)
3. What placement supervision arrangements are in place? (Supervision Arrangements)
4. Does the nature and structure of our pool of existing and emerging placements reflect the pedagogical intent of the social work program at Deakin University?

METHOD

Design

A case-study approach was utilised in this study. The focus of case study research in general is to provide an understanding of a particular "case" within its localised environment (Woodside and Wilson 2003; Yin, 1994). In the current study, the "case" under

investigation is Deakin University's social work field education program. This case study involved a cross-sectional design (Hair Jr., Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010) in that data was collected at one point in time, thus providing a "snap shot" of the field education program as it currently stands in its local context. In particular, we wanted to know the diversity of the practice settings in which our social work students were undertaking placement (e.g., hospital), the type of learning opportunities the students are exposed to on placement (e.g., direct service with individuals and families), and the supervision arrangements in place (e.g., 1:1 onsite social work supervision).

Procedure

Ethics approval for the conduct of the study was granted from the University's Human Research Ethics Committee. A target sample (Hair Jr. et al., 2010) of participants were recruited via email invitations sent to all social work students who were involved in a field placement during the study year (2018). The invitations outlined the aims of the study and the voluntary and anonymous nature of participation. The invitation email also included a Plain Language Statement (PLS) outlining the participation requirements and a link to an online questionnaire, which the authors developed for this study, for participants to complete. Participants were advised that they could withdraw from the study at any time and that completion and submission of the online questionnaire would constitute their informed consent to participate in the study. No incentives were offered for their participation.

Materials

In the first section of the online questionnaire, all participants were asked to report demographic data on their age, gender, degree studying (BSW or MSW), and placement level (first or final). In the second and final part of the online questionnaire, participants were asked to select the practice setting in which their placement was located from a range of given options (e.g., hospital, youth service, mental health) as well as an open-ended "other" option. The same question format was utilised in terms of participants' type of learning focus on placement (e.g., direct service placement working with individual service users and their families), and their supervision arrangements (e.g., 1:1 supervision with a qualified social worker). Given the nominal nature of the questions, no reliability analyses could be performed.

Participants

A sample of 76 social work students from Deakin University (93% female) with a median age of 26-30 years participated in the study. This sample represents a 41% response rate of the total social work student population at Deakin University who were undertaking placement during the study period (2018) which, according to Moser and Kalton (1989), is sufficient for the purposes of statistical analysis. A Mann-Whitney U -test revealed no significant difference in age by gender (Mann-Whitney $U = 160.00$, $p = .71$). Participants were enrolled in either the BSW (59%) or the MSW (41%). Fifty-four per cent of participants were undertaking their first placement, with the remainder were undertaking their final placement. These sample characteristics (age, gender, degree, and placement level) appeared representative of the current student population in Deakin University's social work field education program.

RESULTS

The data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 25. Frequency analyses were conducted to gain an overall picture of where our students undertaking their placements (Practice Settings), what practice methods they are exposed (Learning Focus), and what placement supervision arrangements are in place (Supervision Arrangements).

Placement Practice Settings

Participants reported completing their social work placements across approximately 16 different health and human service practice settings. It was not possible to test for any association between practice setting by degree studied or by placement level without combining practice setting groups and therefore confounding cells, due to expected counts of less than 5 in more than 20% of the cells (Yates, Moore, & McCabe, 1999). As seen in Table 1, the top four practice settings accounting for 44.7% of participants' placements were: (1) hospital-based health (including mental health) settings (17.1%), (2) community-based child and family services (10.5%), (3) community housing/homelessness programs (9.2%), and (4) community mental health organisations (7.9%).

The most frequent practice setting for both BSW (15.6%) and MSW (19.4%) students was in hospital-based health organisations. Hospital-based health organisations were also the most frequently used practice setting across first and final placements (14.6% and 20% respectively). The second most frequent practice setting for first placement students was in community housing/homelessness services (12.2%). For final placement students, the second most frequent practice setting was in community child and family services (11.4%) and statutory child protection (11.4%). Interestingly, there were no first placements in statutory child protection.

Table 1. Frequency (%) of Sectors in which Participants Completed their Social Work Placement by Degree and Placement Level

Placement Sector	Degree (%)		Placement Level (%)		Total Frequency (%) (n = 76)
	BSW (n = 45)	MSW (Q) (n = 31)	First (n = 41)	Final (n = 35)	
Health (Hospital) Organisation	15.6	19.4	14.6	20.0	17.1
Community Child and Family	8.9	12.9	9.8	11.4	10.5
Community Housing/Homelessness	6.7	12.9	12.2	5.7	9.2
Community Mental Health	11.1	3.2	9.8	5.7	7.9
Community Disability	8.9	3.2	9.8	2.9	6.6
Community Health	2.2	12.9	4.9	8.6	6.6
Large Community Organisation (Multiple Services)	2.2	12.9	4.9	8.6	6.6
Youth	11.1	-	9.8	2.9	6.6
Mental Health (Hospital)	6.7	3.2	2.4	8.6	5.3
Migration or Refugees	6.7	3.2	7.3	2.9	5.3
Statutory Child Protection	6.7	3.2	-	11.4	5.3
Family Violence	6.7	-	7.3	-	3.9
School-Related Program	-	6.5	4.9	-	2.6
Commonwealth Department of Human Services (Centrelink)	2.2	-	-	2.9	1.3
Community Justice/Corrections	2.2	-	2.4	-	1.3
Government Disability	-	3.2	-	2.9	1.3
Other	2.2	3.2	-	5.7	2.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

NOTE: BSW = Bachelor of Social Work; MSW (Q) = Master of Social Work - Qualifying; Other = Peak Body for Community and Not-For-Profit Organisations; Government Health Counselling Service.

Placement Learning Focus

In terms of placement learning focus, the majority of participants completed a placement focused on direct service provision with individuals and their families (77.6%). In addition, 13.2% of participants completed a direct service group work or community development placement, while 5.3% of participants completed a research or policy focused placement. As mentioned earlier, it was not possible to test for any association between placement type by degree studied or by placement level due to low expected counts in multiple cells. In observing the frequencies by degree however, almost the same proportion of BSW (77.8%) and MSW (77.4%) students were in direct service placements working with primarily individuals and their families. In addition, a greater proportion of MSW students (12.9%) than BSW students (4.4%) were in placements whose learning focused on direct service provision with groups.

When looking at placement learning focus by placement level, there was a higher proportion of final placement students (88.6%) in direct service placements that focused on work with individuals and their families compared with first placement students (68.3%). Furthermore, there were no MSW students undertaking a direct service placement working with groups compared with 14.6% of the BSW students undertaking such a placement (Table 2).

Table 2. Frequency (%) of Placement Types by Degree and Placement Level

Placement Sector	Degree (%)		Placement Level (%)		Total Frequency (%) (n = 76)
	BSW (n = 45)	MSW (Q) (n = 31)	First (n = 41)	Final (n = 35)	
Direct Service with Individuals and their Families	77.8	77.4	68.3	88.6	77.6
Direct Service with Groups	4.4	12.9	14.6	-	7.9
Community Development/ Project-Focused	4.4	6.5	7.3	2.9	5.3
Research or Policy-Focused	6.7	3.2	4.9	5.7	5.3
Other	6.7	-	4.9	2.9	3.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

NOTE: BSW = Bachelor of Social Work; MSW (Q) = Master of Social Work - Qualifying; Other = Mix of direct Service with either community development or research/policy work

Supervision Arrangements

The most prominent supervision arrangement was an onsite social worker providing one-to-one supervision and facilitating the student's placement learning on a daily basis (42.7%). There was however, a further 40% of students who did not have an onsite social worker facilitating their daily placement learning. In addition, almost a quarter of participants (24.9%) reported that they had access to an onsite task supervisor on a daily basis and formal supervision with a university appointed qualified social worker who was external to the organisation.

There was no significant association between placement supervision arrangements and the degree that the student was studying ($\chi^2[4] = 1.24, p = .87$; Cramer's $V = .13$), although a greater proportion of MSW students (48.4%) than BSW students (38.6%) received supervision from an onsite qualified social worker who also managed their daily placement learning experiences. Also, a significant association was found between supervision arrangement and placement level ($\chi^2[4] = 9.72, p = .04$; Cramer's $V = .36$), with over half of the final placement students (54.3%) receiving the one-to-one model of supervision compared to only a third (32.5%) of first placement students. In terms of receiving external supervision from a university appointed social worker, this supervision arrangements was greater for first placement students (35%) than final placement students (11.4%) (Table 3).

Table 3. Frequency (%) of Supervision Arrangements on Placement by Degree & Placement Level

Placement Sector	Degree (%)		Placement Level (%)		Total Frequency (%) (n = 75) ^a
	BSW (n = 44)	MSW (Q) (n = 31)	First (n = 40)	Final (n = 35)	
One-to-One Traditional Model	38.6	48.4	32.5	54.3	42.7
External Supervision	25	22.6	35.0	11.4	24.0
Task Supervisor (not social work qualified) + Onsite Field Educator	18.2	12.9	10.0	22.9	16.0
Co-Supervision	11.7	12.9	15.0	8.6	12.0
Rotational Model	6.8	3.2	7.5	2.9	5.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

^a missing n = 1.

NOTE: BSW = Bachelor of Social Work; MSW (Q) = Master of Social Work - Qualifying;

DISCUSSION

In line with other studies exploring the nature and structure of placements in the contemporary context (e.g., Barton, Bell & Bowles, 2005; Cleak & Smith, 2012; Zuchowski, Cleak, Nickson & Spencer, 2018), the findings of this study similarly point to an emerging diversification of placement approaches. At present however, this diversification appears to occur on the periphery of the dominant, traditional one-to-one direct service placement model. Even despite Deakin University's investment in developing and implementing alternative placement approaches such as the rotational placements (Vassos et al., 2018; Vassos, Harms, & Rose, 2019) and remotely supervised action research placements (Crisp & Hosken, 2016), to date these approaches have been used intermittently on an adhoc basis. Cleak's (2018) discussion of the key drivers for the emergence of new and different placement approaches resonates in that pedagogical imperatives have not necessarily driven new and different placements. Cleak (2018) argued that the main driver for placement development is the widespread shortage of traditional one-to-one placements in increasingly marketised health and human services, coupled with a growing demand for placements due to the proliferation of social work programs and student numbers.

Exploring the Diversity of Practice Settings

In terms of where students were undertaking placement, it was not surprising that approximately 16 different practice settings were involved and confirms the breadth of social work practice in the Australian health and human services context (Ozanne & Rose, 2013). This finding also suggests that a range of organisations recognise the relevance and value of social workers within service organisations. We know from our own experiences at Deakin University, that third sector organisations with few, if any, qualified social workers on staff often embrace social work placements as part of their organisational capacity building strategy; for example, the Salvation Army, neighbourhood houses and Local, Learning and Education Networks (LLEN).

Also unsurprising is the observation that approximately 75% of students undertook their placement in third sector organisations, with over half 50% in community-based third sector organisations, and 25% in health services. It is important to note at this point that the Australian Government no longer deems health (including hospital) services as government services and instead are part of the third sector. As such they are a primary target for further market-based reform, as reflected in the most recent Productivity Commission inquiry (Australian Government, 2017). Only a small number of students undertook their placement in state and commonwealth government services. These findings are consistent with the way that health and human service delivery has evolved in Australia with the ascendancy of neoliberal politics since the mid-1980s. The wholesale marketisation and privatisation of public services in the name of increased competition, contestability and service user choice has ultimately resulted in the expansion of the third sector as the predominant provider of public services (Marston, McDonald & Bryson, 2014). As such, students can find themselves undertaking placement within a diverse array of practice settings.

This approach to health and human service delivery has allowed governments to drive efficiencies. A significant drawback however is the focus in many placement organisations in delivering on the managerial mandates set by (government) funding bodies, rather than on professional activities such as social work student education. Another drawback is that the service delivery within these organisations becomes increasingly fragmented (Wallace & Pease, 2011). On the one hand, the range of third sector practice settings can provide valuable learning opportunities for social work students undertaking placement. For example, students can experience and reflect on the strengths, limitations and challenges of critical social work theory and practice (a core aspect of Deakin University's social work degrees) within organisations driven largely by market-driven funding arrangements. On the other, there is the risk that students could internalise dominant neoliberal ways of being, knowing, and doing; particularly if the placement experience precedes relevant classroom learning. Contrary to our pedagogical intent, placement experiences that do not match the students' developmental stage can result in beginning social workers being easily co-opted as instruments of social control, rather than as beginning social workers who assume their professional role as agents of emancipatory social change (Morley & Dunstan, 2013).

In addition, the results also indicate that a relatively small number of government-based placements were almost exclusively undertaken by final placement students. This reflects the growing trend in both state and commonwealth government services to use student placement programs predominantly as a recruitment pipeline (Vassos & Connolly, 2014). These market-based approaches to government workforce planning and recruitment appear to drive the way in which student placements are viewed and implemented. This is particularly evident in services with a long history of high staff turnover, for example statutory child welfare services (Lonne, 2013). In the case of child protection programs, Deakin University and all other Victorian universities have been advised that only final placement students will be accepted. Other government-based human services also, although less overt about their strategic intent, often request final placement students.

The preference for final placement students appears to be linked, at least in our experience, to organisations' perception of them delivering immediate returns on investment.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that at least the human resources arm of some organisations, perceive student placements as a cost-efficient way of recruiting and training the future workforce of their organisations. This is clearly reflected in the language used with respect to student placements. For example, the use of business terms such as “try before you buy” is not uncommon. Also, students who are predominantly focused on securing immediate employment in relatively well-paid graduate level positions are, understandably, keen to undertake their final placement in these settings. The use of placements as a recruitment pipeline is also attractive to universities as it increases rates of graduate employment, which is a key measure of the education providers’ success in meeting industry demand for work-ready graduates (Johnston, 2011).

Exploring the Diversity of Placement Learning

It was clear that the majority of placements were solely focused on direct service with individuals and their families (77.6%). A small number of placements involved direct service at group and community levels (17.1%) and very few involved macro-level social work practice (5.3%). As most health and human services are government funded to work at the individual service user level, it is unsurprising that placements (most of which were hosted within the third sector) focused on direct service with individuals. This is consistent with the neoliberal narrative that valorises the role of the individual in society (Preston et al., 2014; Wayne et al., 2006).

One prominent example is the emphasis on “consumer-focused” care in public health and disability services under the National Disability Insurance Scheme. While the provision of such versions of person-centred care has its benefits in diminishing paternalism in the services sector, there is also the risk of reinforcing the neoliberal narrative around personal responsibility and public services as a last resort for support. It is important therefore, that social work students undertaking direct service placements with individual service users are critically reflective on such issues to avoid internalising oppressive values.

Furthermore, when examining the results by placement level, it becomes apparent that final placement students were largely concentrated in direct service placements where the sole focus is working with individuals and their families (88.6%). Although most first placement students were also in these types of direct service placements (68.3%), first placement students were more likely to undertake placements that involved meso (group work and community) or macro (research and policy) level social work practice. Although individual-focused placements may meet students’ preferences and the demands of placement organisations, there is scope to broaden the placement learning of our students to include at least one placement that involves meso and macro level practice learning.

Placement Supervision Arrangements

The findings clearly show that the traditional one-to-one supervision model remained dominant in Deakin University’s field education program in 2018. At the same time however, the incidence of external supervision (24%) suggests that there is also a challenge to the one-to-one supervision model as it comes face-to-face with the contemporary environment where there may be few qualified social workers within placement organisations (Cleak & Zuchowski, 2018; Crisp & Hosken, 2016). These findings do not support those of Cleak

and Smith (2012) who found that most of the 263 students they surveyed (86.3%) had access to on-site social work supervision; either as part of a traditional one-to-one (54.7%), co-supervision (9.9%), combination task supervision and on-site social worker supervision arrangement (21.7%).

In addition, while Cleak and Smith found 13.7% of their student sample received external supervision, the incidence of this supervision arrangement in our study is considerably higher at 24%. Whether the use of external supervisors in the study year is an anomaly or indeed reflective of a trend is yet to be established. Replication of the same study across multiple years will help to discern this. It is noteworthy however, that an analysis of supervision arrangements by placement level revealed that 35% of first placement students had external supervisors compared to only 11.4% for final placement students. Also noteworthy is the finding that almost two thirds of final placement students (65.8%) had direct access to qualified social workers within the organisation, in either one-to-one supervision, co-supervision or rotation model arrangements, as compared to just over half of first placement students (55%) who experienced the same.

As social work practitioners and educators, it is incumbent on us to engage with the ethical and professional implications of having students, and especially first placement students, developing their sense of professional identity and practice competence in placements that are under the daily guidance of non-social workers. This is particularly pertinent when we consider that the quality of practice learning in social work placements is directly impacted by the presence, or in this case absence, of credible social work role models on placement (Lee & Fortune, 2013).

Alignment of Placement Learning with Pedagogical Intent

Like many other accredited social work courses, the curriculum of BSW and MSW courses at Deakin University is designed to scaffold learning from micro to macro level social work practice. As a consequence, first placement BSW students and especially first placement MSW students are least likely to have participated in core study units that equip them with the critical social work knowledge and skills necessary to engage in intentional learning and critical reflection in the areas of group work, community development, practice research, and policy practice. It is not until the final placement, the capstone unit in both courses, that students have had the formal learning inputs to integrate theory and practice in placements involving meso and macro level practice.

The findings show that almost one third of BSW and MSW students (31.7%) undertook a placement prior to engaging in classroom learning related to their placement learning. This result brings into question the extent to which pedagogical intent is informing decisions around placement allocation. As discussed earlier, widespread placement shortages and the exclusion of first placement students from some practice settings can drive placement development and allocation. The high proportion of final placement students in individually-focused direct service placements however, suggests that there are additional variables at play.

The AASW stipulates in its field education standards (AASW, 2012) that all students are required to undertake at least one direct service placement during their course. The

findings imply that there are many more students at Deakin University undertaking two individually-focused direct service placements than there are students undertaking a combination of direct service and research or policy placements. Although this is not problematic from an accreditation viewpoint, it is concerning from a program leadership perspective, particularly in an environment of constricting placement capacity. If final placement students are being allocated to individually-focused direct service placements when they have already completed one direct service placement, then this creates an unnecessary bottleneck for first students who would benefit most from an individually-focused direct service placement.

Anecdotally, it appears that most students perceive that placements providing individually-focused learning opportunities represent the gold standard social work placement. In an era where students have become the consumer of higher education degrees, there is increasing pressure on social work programs to allocate placements in line with students' preferences. Yet, placements focused on meso and macro level social work practice are equally valuable in supporting students to develop practice knowledge and skills in working towards social change at cultural and structural levels. Furthermore, it is these practice learning opportunities that align coherently with the critical social work underpinnings of Deakin University's social work program.

Study Limitations

Although this study offers some useful insights into the field education program at Deakin University, caution needs to be exercised in interpreting the findings. A key limitation is that the study offers only one year of data, 2018. Replication of the study over a number of years would enable us to develop a deeper understanding of the emerging trends in the distribution of placement settings, learning foci, supervision arrangements, and the alignment of placement learning with pedagogical intent. At best, this study provides a useful benchmark for measuring the impact of any programmatic changes we make into the future to more coherently align our placement allocation decisions with the pedagogical intent of our field education program.

Another key limitation is the study's focus on one field education program. As such, findings are not generalisable to other field education programs. In saying this, a cross-institutional benchmarking study would enable us to compare and contrast the findings of this study with other social work field education programs. We have proposed a cross-institutional study to our field education colleagues across the other six Victorian schools of social work. There is widespread agreement that such a study will provide a broader-scale picture of field education and enable evidence-informed decision-making on how we might capitalise on the existing and emerging placement opportunities.

CONCLUSION

The aim in this study was to determine the structure and nature of placements undertaken by students as part of the BSW and MSW programs at Deakin University in 2018. In canvassing the current placement environment in which Deakin University's social work field education programs operates, a preliminary picture of the complexities of field

education was ascertained. In many ways this study affirms Cleak's (2018) findings in that the current diversity of practice settings, placement learning foci, and supervision arrangements is largely driven by the impacts of marketised service systems and the pressures that this generates at the personal, cultural and structural levels. It is perhaps time for us to resist more strategically the pressure of current conditions through a systematic alignment of our placement distribution and allocation decisions with our pedagogical intent.

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Building Culturally Sensitive Practice for Social Work and Human Services Practitioners in Training: The Role of Transformative International Intercultural Learning

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the findings of an investigation exploring transformative intercultural learning with a focus on the development of culturally sensitive practice for a cohort of 20 Australian human services and social work students. The research was facilitated over a three-week period and was embedded within a field trip to the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal. The field trip centred more broadly upon student exploration of international human services and social work within a developing country through an immersive, hands-on approach. The findings of the study provide an evidence base highlighting the utility of global mobility programs in promoting transformative intercultural learning, including the development of culturally sensitive practice for social work and human services students.

Keywords: *Transformative intercultural learning; Culturally sensitive practice; Human services and social work; Students; Nepal*

INTRODUCTION

A key aim of social work education is to equip graduates to work in culturally sensitive ways that are anti-oppressive. Increasingly it is recognised that this cannot be achieved solely through academic learning but requires some connection to lived experiences and critical reflection (Gollan & O’Leary, 2009). A range of studies have been undertaken that highlight the benefits of immersive, cross-cultural experiences for learning with social work and human services students (Dorsett, Clark, & Phadke, 2015; Kreitzer, Barlow, Schwartz, Lacroix, & MacDonald; Nuttman-Shwartz, & Berger, 2012). Such experiences have the potential to raise awareness of, and challenge, existing cultural bias and, in the process, develop greater understanding of practices that align with culturally sensitive practices when working in cross-cultural contexts (Gammonley & Rotabi, 2007; Nuttman-Shwartz & Berger, 2012). There is evidence this can be achieved within the learning environment; however, there is less clarity on what the particular turning points in a student’s learning are when they are involved in immersive experiences.

Higher education over the last few decades has valued the role that international experiences can contribute to a well-rounded graduate. Governments in countries such as Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, the United Kingdom and the United States have funded global mobility programs to support this endeavour as well as strengthen international relations. These schemes provide a great opportunity for social work and human services students to immerse themselves in an international learning experience especially aligned to enhancing key educational aims and values (Gammonley & Rotabi, 2007). This paper details a study on student experiences of one global mobility program for 20 Australian undergraduate social work and human services students that included a three-week field visit to Nepal. The paper contributes to the existing pedagogical evidence base for how international immersion experiences can facilitate transformative learning to build culturally sensitive practice for social work and human services graduates.

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEARNING AND CULTURALLY SENSITIVE PRACTICE

According to Brown and Posner (2001), transformational learning is associated with “...a dramatic and fundamental change in the way an individual perceives themselves and the world in which they live, that results in behavioural change” (p. 274). This conceptualisation is consistent with the broader literature focusing on transformative learning (Hallows, Porter Wolf, & Marks, 2011; King, 2000, 2004, 2007; Kovan & Dirkx, 2003; Lough, 2009; Lyons, 2002; Sathe & Geisler, 2015; Stone & Duffy, 2015). Within the context of higher education, Mezirow’s transformative learning theory has provided a robust framework to give explanation to the functional role of learning in the transformative process (1978, 1981, 1991). According to Mezirow (2000), transformative learning applies to “...learning that transforms problematic frames of reference – sets of fixed assumptions and expectations (habits of mind, meaning perspectives, mindsets) – to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change” (p. 222). Given the constraints of this paper, and the fact that it is comprehensively and extensively covered elsewhere, Mezirow’s work will not be discussed at length here. Rather, an outline of his framework for transformative learning is provided below. The 10 phases which conceptualise the transformative learning process (Kitchenham, 2008) are referred to throughout this paper:

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame
3. Critical assessment of one's basic underlying assumptions
4. Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared with others
5. Exploration of new roles and relationships
6. Planning a course of action
7. Acquisition of new knowledge and skills
8. Provisional trying of new roles
9. Building competence and self-confidence
10. A reintegration of changed perspectives into one's life.

This paper uses Mezirow's framework as a foundation to explore themes which emerged for students as they engaged with transformative inter-cultural learning in an overseas context.

Transformational learning can lead to a range of positive outcomes for students. For example, it can promote increased critical reflective capacity (Blake-Campbell, 2014; Clapp-Smith & Wernsing, 2014; Hallows et al., 2011; Lough, 2009; Lyons, 2002; Patterson, Munoz, Abrams, & Bass, 2015; Vatalaro, Szente, & Levin, 2015), reassessment of the individual's chief assumptions (Clapp-Smith & Wernsing, 2014; Taylor, 1994; Young & Karme, 2015), and philosophical engagement with others (McDowell, Goessling, & Melendez, 2012). This can occur because transformational learning is often grounded in experiences that disorientate individuals based on their existing views and assumptions about the world (Dunn, Dotson, Cross, Kesner, & Lundahl, 2014; Lough, 2009; Lyons, 2002; McDowell et al., 2012; Perry, Stoner, & Tarrant, 2012; Taylor, 1994). This invariably requires learning experiences that sometimes are confronting and raise students' consciousness about privilege within dominant cultural narratives, structures and practices (Gollan & O'Leary, 2009). Here the aim is to facilitate opportunities to engage in new ways of interacting with the external world (Hallows et al., 2011; Vatalaro et al., 2015; Young & Karme, 2015). Our study examined if this was the case for students in their experience of engagement in a short-term, immersive, cross-cultural experience in Nepal.

Much research has been undertaken within the fields of human services and social work focusing on the intercultural dimensions of learning (Colvin-Burque, Davis-Maye, & Zugazaga, 2007; Fisher-Borne, Cain, & Martin, 2015; Kohli, Huber, & Faul, 2010). Further, many definitions have been identified that centre upon the notion of intercultural competence; however, such definitions lack clarity (Deardorff, 2011; Fantini, 2009; Fisher-Borne et al., 2015). Ongoing critique of concepts such as cultural competence call for a

need to consider alternative discourses focused on intercultural awareness and interaction (Garran & Rozas, 2013; Goldberg, 1993; Park, 2005; Pon, 2009). According to Danso (2018), semantic appeal does not necessarily add more value to social work practice; what matters is that the fundamental ideas underpinning cultural humility – of anti-oppressive social work practice and education – are adopted. Given the range of contextual factors highlighting the controversial nature of definitions associated with intercultural practice, for the purposes of this study, the term *culturally sensitive practice* has been utilised. Culturally sensitive practice refers to interactions that are founded on thoughtful practice decisions that are inclusive of all cultures and that demonstrate respect, care and concern for all individuals and groups (Gray & Allgritti, 2003).

WORKING IN INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITIES: NEPAL FIELD TRIP

This study is based on a three-week field trip to the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal. The field trip formed an integral component of the semester-length course “Working in International Communities; Nepal”, a 13-week, 10-credit-point undergraduate social work and human services elective focusing more broadly on international social development work. The field trip was funded through an Australian Government grant (the New Colombo Plan).

Given the high level of interest in the course, students were selected for inclusion in the program through an initial screening process including the completion of a short, written application and a 20-minute interview that focused on the potential benefits of each candidate’s involvement in the course. Of the 30 students interviewed, 20 were finally selected for inclusion. The final cohort participated in a series of induction meetings and workshops prior to the field trip component of the course. Curriculum was based on international social work and social development literature. A number of pre- and post-trip assessment activities were employed. One of the meetings focused specifically on an in-depth exploration of culturally sensitive practice in international human services and social work.

The field trip was facilitated in June 2016 and consisted of a three-week itinerary engaging with a range of human services agencies within the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal and enjoying a number of cultural experiences including visiting temples and other cultural sites of interest. The services visited included NGOs (non-government organisations) working with people from a range of diverse backgrounds such as aging populations, LGBTQI groups, children and youth, and an INGO (International non-government organisation) partnering with local service providers focusing on child protection and maternal health. The program also allowed for students to engage in a hands-on capacity with the various NGOs and schools visited through planned, capacity-building focussed activities. This component of the program ensured that the cohort was meaningfully contributing to the work of the various organisations as part of their interaction across the various service sites.

As part of the course assessment, students completed a travel diary throughout the duration of the field trip component of the course. This assessment gave students the opportunity to reflect on their attitudes and perceptions, particularly in relation to their engagement with a cultural context different to their own. This focus was particularly important to the overarching purpose of the study that was to explore how student experiences of

intercultural learning may have influenced the development of culturally sensitive human services and social work practices.

PARTICIPANTS

Twenty university students participated in this mixed-methods study. Prior to the commencement of the research, full ethical approval was obtained from Griffith University's Human Research Ethics Committee. The study adhered to all research protocols as outlined by the Australian "National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research" (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2007). As a means of acquiring informed consent for participation in the study, all participants read an information sheet outlining details on the nature of the investigation. Each participant was invited to participate in the research on the condition that they could withdraw at any time during the investigation without penalty. Privacy was assured and upheld with names, contact details and personal information not shared with, or identifiable by, third parties.

The majority of participants were female, reflecting the predominance of female students enrolled in human services and social work courses in Australia. Sixteen students identified as female (mean age 24.5) and four as male (mean age 24.9). All but one student indicated that this was their first trip to Nepal, although the majority had experienced at least one trip overseas prior to embarking on the course. The majority of students fell within the age range of 18 to 25 years given that one of the key selection criteria for the New Colombo Plan funding is that participating students are aged between 18 to 25 years. Four mature-aged students (above aged 25) were granted permission to participate in the course in accordance with the funding rules. The majority of students were drawn from one of three undergraduate programs: 10 from the Bachelor of Social Work program; five from the Bachelor of Human Services degree; and four from the Human Services/Criminology combined degree. One student was completing a Master of Social Work program. Many listed their prior education at the high school, Year 12 or Year 10 level ($n = 14$). Some participants had also completed certificates ($n = 4$), diplomas ($n = 2$), part of a degree ($n = 2$) or a degree ($n = 1$). Thirteen of the participants specified their ethnicity as White Australian. One student identified as Aboriginal Australian. The remaining six students did not specify their ethnicity.

METHOD

The research in this study was directed by the following question: In what ways can an international immersive, cross-cultural field engagement focussed learning experience bring about transformational outcomes including the development of culturally sensitive practice? In order to address this question a mixed-methods approach was employed utilising both qualitative and quantitative data derived from two focus groups and a written survey.

Data collection

The first and second authors facilitated a 90-minute focus group with all participants (FG1) on the first day of the field trip, after students and staff had settled into their accommodation. Students were asked 11 open questions about their motivations,

expectations, beliefs, values, principles, attitudes, behaviours, understanding of cultural diversity and concerns. A second focus group (FG2), also of 90 minutes' duration, was facilitated by the first and third author on the final day of the field trip to explore the ways that these factors may have changed since the first focus group time point.

In addition to the focus groups, students were also asked to complete a written survey following the conclusion of the second focus group. This survey was adapted from King's (2000) survey instrument. The survey is a 22-item measure with strong validity and reliability that seeks to identify: (1) educational experiences during the field trip; (2–3) changes in values, beliefs, opinions or expectations; (4) factors that influenced change; (5) engagement with the program; (6–7) reflections of experiences; (8) learning modalities experienced during the field trip; (9) the impact of gender; (10) marital status and ethnicity); (11) program of study); (12) prior education; and (13) age. Two of the survey questions prompted participants to describe their experiences: “Briefly describe what happened that influenced changes in your values, beliefs, opinions and/or expectations”; and “Thinking back to when you first realised that your views or perspective had changed, what did your engagement with the program have to do with the experience of change?”

Data analysis

Basic descriptive analyses were conducted on quantitative survey data using Microsoft Excel with a focus on mean scores for all measures. Qualitative data from the two focus groups and survey were analysed through the six-phase thematic analysis procedure suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (p. 79). This process was conducted by the fourth author and verified by the other authors to ensure the reliability and trustworthiness of the qualitative data.

Quantitative reflections on experiences (survey responses)

All participants ($n = 20$) completed the 22-item survey. The majority reported that the field trip had included at least one experience that made them question their normal actions ($n = 19$) and ideas about social roles ($n = 15$); and consider acting in a different way ($n = 15$). Table 1 provides details on other educational experiences that students encountered during the field trip, including the realisation that other people also questioned their own beliefs ($n = 17$). Twelve students suggested that their values, beliefs, opinions or expectations had changed since engaging in the Nepal field trip. Participants went on to describe something that had influenced changes in (or consolidation of) their values, beliefs, opinions and/or expectations in the survey, and identify specific learning modalities that had influenced this change (Table 1).

Qualitative reflections on experiences from focus groups and survey

Overall, the data suggested that the cohort of students were generally self-reflective but had varying levels of experience in developing countries. All participants reported that they characterised themselves as individuals who reflect on previous decisions or past behaviours. The majority also indicated that they frequently reflected on what their studies meant for them personally ($n = 18$). A few participants said that this was their first opportunity to “get out of Australia”. Others had “been to some developing countries before”, “done a fair bit

Table 1. Number of Students Indicating that Particular Statements Applied to their Educational Experiences During the Field Trip

Survey question	N	%
I had an experience that caused me to question the way I normally act	19	95
I realized that other people also questioned their beliefs	17	85
I had an experience that caused me to question my ideas about social roles (e.g., the role of women within the Nepalese context)	15	75
I thought about acting in a different way from my usual beliefs and roles	15	75
I tried to figure out a way to adopt these new ways of acting	13	65
I began to think about the reactions and feedback from my new behaviours	13	65
I took action and adopted these new ways of acting	13	65
I felt uncomfortable with traditional social expectations	11	55
As I questioned my ideas, I realised I no longer agreed with my previous beliefs or role expectations	9	45
I do not identify with any of the statements above	1	5

Number of students identifying specific learning modalities that influenced changes in their values, beliefs, opinions and/or expectations

Survey question	N	%
Engagement with the culture	19	95
Engagement with group discussions	16	80
Engagement in informal discussions	16	80
Journal reflection	16	80
Verbally articulating your experiences	16	80
Personal reflection	15	75
Self-evaluation	10	50
Your lecturer's support	9	45
Another student's support	8	40
A challenge from your lecturer	7	35
Engagement in a course assessment task	7	35
Course reading content	6	30

of volunteer work in third world countries” and one participant indicated that they were “born in a similar environment” to the field location.

Analysis of the qualitative information collected through focus groups, surveys, reflections from students and the observations of staff accompanying them indicated that all participants experienced some level of transformative learning from this intercultural experience. Three distinct themes emerged from the data: (1) preparation for collaborative learning (being open and humble); (2) being immersed in a range of learning experiences and modalities; and (3) solidifying personal/professional values and actions. These themes seem to nest within Mezirow’s well-established model of transformative learning, and elucidate how immersive intercultural learning experiences may fit within his 10-phase transformative learning framework. A visual representation of these thematic relationships can be seen in Figure 1 and are further described below.

Theme one: Preparation for collaborative learning (being open and humble)

The first theme that emerged in the transformative learning process for participants seemed to be about developing an understanding of group members’ motivations and establishing a shared intent; specifically, learning in an open and humble manner, and consciously trying not to cause any harm. Students did this by discussing their personal and professional motivations and goals, and establishing a shared frame of reference.

Discussing professional and personal motivations and goals

Discussing their motivations seemed to be an important part of the collaborative learning process; developing a deeper understanding of what they (and others) hoped to achieve from this experience. This links with phases 1–5 of Mezirow’s framework.

During their first focus group discussion, participants established nine learning goals:

1. being exposed to different cultures, values, beliefs, needs and ways of doing things;
2. learning to work with (rather than imposing on) others in a culturally sensitive way;
3. seeing what community development and human services and social work principles look like in practice;
4. being able to use/apply the skills they had learned through their degree and placements;
5. seeing if they would like to undertake this type of work in the future;
6. learning from other peoples’ experiences and points of view (including each other);
7. enhancing their understanding of complex social issues (e.g., poverty);
8. becoming more conscious of their own privilege compared to others;
9. wanting to develop more life experience and grow as a person.

There seemed to be a mixture of professional and personal motivations, including wanting to assess the person–profession fit between them and this type of work.

One participant described three of these goals (numbers 2, 4 and 6):

[My] first one would be, my first placement was in a local community development setting, so to be able to take those skills and be able to apply them to an international [setting] ... The second one is to learn to be culturally competent ... we talk about it, but actually applying it and seeing how to approach that and do that in practice [is valuable]. And then the third one would be just getting the opportunity to hang out with twenty other social work students who were handpicked, with the social workers leading us.

Another participant placed her experience in a global context, reflecting goal numbers 1, 2, 3, 5 and 9:

...learning about new cultures [and] social work internationally; ...see[ing] what [life is] like for [Nepalese people and] try[ing] to understand it from their point of view; seeing if they might enjoy (and be able to handle) this type of work; and growing as a person.

Such responses reinforced the students' awareness of the relevance of culturally sensitive practice as emerging practitioners.

Ultimately, many students mentioned that they wanted to discover whether there was a good person–profession fit between them and a career in international contexts such as Nepal, (learning goal 5). One participant stated that she had “quit previous degrees, because [she] went out on [practicum placements] and ... didn't like it”; she enjoyed studying the content, but realised that the practical application “isn't for me”. Another indicated that she would “have studied for four years [before getting] to do one prac.” She was hoping that this experience would enable her to find out if she liked working in international, low income countries, or if she would be better off “steer[ing her] placement in another direction”. This seemed to be an important component to peoples' training as aspiring human services and social work practitioners.

Establishing a shared frame of reference

The students also appeared to create a shared frame of reference in the first focus group, underpinned by a sense of openness and humility. Several mentioned that they wanted to approach the trip “with an open mind; ... experienc[ing] it for what it is”, rather than imposing any expectations. This spirit of discovery included a willingness to be exposed to difficult issues (e.g., child trafficking), and different perspectives and ways of doing things; knowing that they were bound to be uncomfortable at some points, and inspired, surprised or unsure at others. Many were conscious of their potential impact on their host country; wanting to do what they could to avoid harm. This reinforced the shared desire within the group to be mindful of culture, including potential individual and group impacts on cultural interactions. For example, one participant wanted to make sure that they did not “come in with their heart[s] in the right place but [inadvertently] perpetuate an entire

industry built on suffering”, while another reflected on a time when his efforts to help one community had created unanticipated tensions among other groups. Many people said that they wanted to learn how to help in an empowering, sustainable manner with one participant articulating that they were interested in building capacity “rather than just going in there and doing something for six months and then just leaving”.

The group collaboratively identified a number of intentions and values that reflected their role as open and humble observers, trainees and guests. These included: respecting local customs and needs (e.g., wearing long pants and not wasting food); sitting back, listening and seeking to understand, but suspending judgement; asking questions if they were unsure what to do (e.g., when to say *Namaste*); being grateful for the opportunity to learn and experience another culture; and ensuring that they took time for self-care (e.g., journaling).

One participant incorporated many of these points in the following statement:

... being respectful. Don't come in “guns blazing, just because I'm from a developed country and I know best”, you know. It's all about coming in and ... being a guest and letting them explain to you how they think it is. It's putting ourselves in their shoes,... seeing it from [their] perspective. ... Empathy.

Participants appeared to want to act with integrity, demonstrate their respect, listen and learn in a culturally sensitive manner.

Theme two: Being immersed in a range of learning experiences and modalities

While the first theme of the transformative learning process in this cross-cultural experience seemed to revolve around orientating (and opening) students to the field trip, the next theme encompassed the actual immersion process, including: (1) interactions with community members and organisations; (2) group reflections with their peers and lecturers; and (3) individual reflections (e.g., journal entries). This theme links with phases 5–8 of Mazirow's framework for transformational learning, and serves to demonstrate how it can be applied in an intercultural setting for the purposes of developing cultural sensitivity.

Interacting with community members and organisations

The students said that they had learned a lot about their profession, Nepalese culture and themselves through the organisational visits, discussions with community members and student guides, and leisure activities. This was articulated in various ways that showed the immersion in culture and the environment provided a basis to be out of their comfort zone, for example:

Speaking to the beneficiaries and staff ... really impacted my beliefs and opinions, as they gave me the chance to see the impact international development can have, which is something I had no previous knowledge of, and also further inspired me to learn more about international development.

Other learning experiences came from linking personal experiences to the cultural processes in the Nepalese context. For one participant, this helped her to process a personal loss:

I ... witnessed a funeral whilst in Nepal and ... our [student] tour guide explained why they do the ceremony and what it represents. Later in the trip I got a call from home saying [a friend] had committed suicide and although I could not be home for the funeral I did try the Nepali ways of letting go of their loved one through accepting what has happened and saying a prayer that would be released into the atmosphere through the pray[er] flags they have over the Tewa centre. After doing this I did feel better about the situation I was in even though there was still sadness and pain for the loss. This is just one of the ways that the trip influenced my values and opinions on death and other subjects through making me question what we do in Australia.

These reflections showed changes in emphasis in the development of a culturally sensitive orientation to practice.

Reflecting on experiences with peers and lecturers

Many students said that they appreciated being able to debrief with their peers and lecturers; one on one, in small informal gatherings, or formally as one large group. Reflecting with their colleagues seemed to help them to process their experiences and gain a deeper understanding of various issues, observations and challenges. One participant indicated that these conversations helped him to contextualise what he had learned about “wicked problems” at university:

I've got this whole understanding of what wicked problems really mean now. I've struggled with trying to wrestle with why is the system like it is? ... I've tried talking to everybody and I get so many different views from the different local people I talk to. I guess that's been a real eye opener for me just to understand that, having to be okay with knowing that some problems are just too big for one person to fix. I guess what's been one of my highlights this trip has been the conversations I've had with people... where I've been able to process that information so then trying to work out how do I apply that to myself?

There were numerous examples where students reported the benefit from their cross-cultural immersion *and* their ability to discuss their experiences with their peers and lecturers. Action and group reflection were both important in bringing about transformative change.

Reflecting on experiences as an individual

The ability to undertake individual reflections seemed to be another important aspect of people's learning experience. Students described a number of personal insights that had arisen through their reflections. For example, one participant had learned to question her cultural privilege by experiencing what it was like to be a minority:

It was a combination of being in a different culture and becoming the minority, as well as realizing my own privilege, and the challenges that come with questioning what that means and the values that I bring.

Examples like this demonstrated the deeply personal nature of this type of reflection, and its intrinsic connection to past experience; present characteristics, strengths and learning edges; and future aspirations as culturally sensitive practitioners.

The students' experiences in this study suggest that these three learning modalities (learning from organisations and community members, reflecting with peers and lecturers, and engaging in personal reflections) were connected in a synergistic manner; building on (and adding to) each other. Several students seemed to demonstrate the holistic, integrated quality of this learning process by discussing all three aspects as a whole as demonstrated in the following quote:

My time in Nepal allowed for exposure to a culture completely different from my own...Additionally, the discussions with other students and staff members allowed me greater reflection on not only my thoughts and opinions but those of others. This allowed me to challenge my own beliefs by listening to others opinions and justifications. I believe this was a crucial part in my change of perspective...

There were numerous similar comments from students about changes and clarifications in values that shape professional and personal identity.

Theme three: Solidifying personal/professional values and actions

The third theme acknowledged a desire to solidify the lessons people had learned about themselves and their profession, and determine whether they would be a good fit for this type of work. This links to phases 9–10 of Mezirow's model of transformative learning.

Increasing understanding of profession and self

The field trip seemed to enhance people's understanding of their profession. Some realised how much they already knew and its applicability to other cultures. One participant mentioned that she was "surprised at how well our social work values from Australia ... connect in Nepal"). Many enjoyed seeing how this knowledge was applied to various populations and settings. The ability to learn from a range of different organisations and beneficiaries seemed particularly helpful. Another participant indicated that she found the "range of different perspectives ... really useful", while another noted that "the amount of detail and honesty ... each organisation provided [was] great, as well as the depth and breadth of the questions we were able to ask".

It was evident that students felt they were not simply observers but had meaningful interactions and first-hand experiences that enabled them to get a better understanding of many issues including poverty, child-trafficking, family violence, the sex-trade, elder-care, and LGBTIQ issues. One participant suggested that this trip had enabled her to learn about "the layers and dimensions involved in just the one problem" and the diversity of ways each issue can be addressed. Thus, this field trip appeared to build on (and confirm) existing knowledge, demonstrate what this might look like in practice, point to the diversity of potential approaches, and reinforce the need to apply cultural sensitivity to identify and understand client perspectives, expectations and needs rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach.

The students also reported a better understanding of their beliefs, values, experiences, vulnerabilities and strengths as a result of this trip. Several said that they had learned a lot about themselves. A number of participants declared that “this trip ha[d] been life changing”, while one individual acknowledged that she was “not going home the same person”. Some said that they had become more confident in their ability to practise social work and human services while others had realised how much they still needed to learn. One student said that she had developed a sense of “cultural humility”, which had prompted her to want to find out about peoples’ experiences and needs rather than assuming that everyone experiences things in the same way. The students mentioned several other personal insights including: a desire to learn more about other peoples’ cultures; a new (or renewed) level of gratitude and appreciation for being able to access things like food and water; an acknowledgment of their own privilege and a commitment to not to make other people feel uncomfortable through their clothes, etc.; a deeper understanding of the emotional impacts of dealing with this type of work and the need to prevent a sense of being overwhelmed; a greater sense of connection to people (and potential clients) on a very human level; and a stronger commitment to “allowing the other person to take the lead in ... their experience”.

Some people who had travelled to other countries previously said that they wanted to make sure that they maintained these changes after this trip. For example, one participant mentioned that:

Every time I go travelling for a significant amount of time I go home and then it’s just some little things about me that have changed. I just hope that this time it really solidifies with me and extends through my professional [life] as well.

The students seemed to be conscious of several changes that they wanted to continue when they returned home, including maintaining a culturally sensitive orientation across future contexts.

Assessing person–profession fit and next steps

Students also discussed their perceptions of whether this type of work was likely to be a good fit for them as a person and proposed next steps. This trip confirmed some students’ desire to work in a developing country. For example, one participant said that this trip had “cemented into me that this is what I want to do with my degree”, while another had affirmed that “yes, this is what I want to do and this is going to be my driver”. This experience had also confirmed another’s feeling that international work might be something she would “enjoy” and be “good at”, while another individual had “never been so clear” on his career plans. Others had not planned to get into international work after their studies, but this experience had made them more open to (and confident with) this type of work. As one participant explained:

I now have even less of an idea which direction I want to go in because it’s just opened my mind completely. [A]t the very beginning of the field trip I questioned whether can I do this, am I cut out for social work because of the impact that some

of the organisations and beneficiaries had on me. As I've progressed I now have more confidence and yes, I can do this.

The students seemed to be assessing other peoples' needs and their ability to help. Some decided that it would be good to help people in developing countries. One participant articulated that "it would be a tragedy to be educated in our society and not really consider coming to somewhere where it's really in need."

While some students did not envisage their careers being based outside of Australia it gave them a focus on priorities and global issues in the local context: "There is still so much disadvantage in Australia" and I want to focus on "our own issues at home [including] refugees [and] Indigenous" people. An overarching theme emerging through the person-profession fit discussion was the necessity to sustain an underpinning posture of cultural respect as future human services and social work practitioners.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study clearly indicate that the Nepal field trip experience facilitated transformative intercultural learning for all participants. Further, the primary learning outcome under investigation – the development of culturally sensitive practice – was achieved to varying degrees for the 20 participants.

The three themes identified by this study contribute to the establishment of an evidence-based pedagogical approach to transformative intercultural learning, with the ultimate aim of promoting culturally sensitive practice. The study also points to the utility of Mezirow's (1978, 1981, 1991) transformative learning theory in providing an explanation of some of the key processes underpinning transformative change as an outcome of inter-culturally immersive experiences of learning within higher education more broadly and within Human Services and Social Work training specifically.

Many participants were surprised by how much they had grown through the experience and emphasised how the intercultural learning approach had served to better prepare them as practitioners in training. The examples students provided about how interacting with community members and organisations impacted their beliefs, values, perspectives, and behaviours appeared to reflect many of the principles in Mezirow's (1978, 1981, 1991) transformative learning theory, as well as Kovan and Dirkx's (2003) suggestion that transformative learning results in "a deep, structural shift in basic premises of thought, feelings and actions ... a shift of consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our way of being in the world".

All participants indicated that their values and beliefs were directly challenged as a result of engaging in the program. Responses highlighted a deep shift for many participants in both their conceptualisation of, and outward responses to, culturally sensitive practice. In doing so it necessitated students reflecting on their own personal experiences as well as their position of relative privilege. The culturally immersive focus of the program created an environment for transformative change, where existing assumptions were challenged through ongoing reflective engagement in a range of intercultural activities.

Results suggest that immersive intercultural field trips can enable people to develop, refine or recommit to an open, respectful and empowering (client-centred) perspective that is culturally sensitive in orientation. The process seemed to expand or consolidate peoples' values and approaches, enabling them to recognise new situations, ask for guidance, adapt their perspectives and behaviours, and reflect on their responses to diverse cultural situations.

The findings also support the broader acknowledgement of the efficacy of cross-cultural immersive experiences of learning in facilitating transformative engagement for social work and human services students. Government-funded schemes such as the one utilised in this study provide a powerful opportunity for immersive learning experiences in international contexts. This is especially important for social work and human service graduates to develop applied knowledge and skills for an increasingly complex and diverse world.

Limitations and future recommendations

This study is relatively small in scale and the generalizability of findings need to be viewed with some caution. The field trip allowed for the exploration of the development of culturally sensitive practice within only one specific international location. Different cultural contexts may change learning foci and require different pedagogy. The quantitative component of the research was limited to analysis of mean scores. Future research could look at multiple sites of immersive learning experience to compare and contrast survey data. This could include the facilitation of longitudinal research that tracks the sustainability of transformative effects of intercultural learning over time. Field education programs also are immersive in nature and could be compared with short-term immersive activities for students. Our research did not have the scope to test the relationship between time spent in an immersive experience and the degree of transformational learning.

CONCLUSION

The results from our study provide an evidence base for the value of immersive international experiences for social work and human service students. Learning gained from the course and field trip were profound and transformative for students establishing an applied basis for culturally sensitive practice informed by the global context. The experience consolidates core professional values and identity that are critical graduate qualities. Further, the outcomes of the research lend support to the efficacy of intercultural learning as a vehicle for enhancing work readiness for individuals training to engage in human services work with individuals and groups located within a range of diverse cultural contexts. Social work and human service programs add value to the quality of the learning experience when they provide global mobility components to their curriculum.

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International social work placements: Can overseas students stimulate professional learning for NGO staff?

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the outcomes of collaborative work undertaken between a team of social workers supporting a New Zealand social work student from the University of Waikato completing her final placement. The student was placed at Children's Future International (CFI), a non-governmental organisation (NGO) in Battambang, Cambodia. While a great deal of research looks at learning achieved for students, this article examines whether the student had an impact on the knowledge, awareness and practice of the social workers and teachers at the NGO. Specifically, it considers the student's focus on consumer empowerment and service dependency over a three-month period. Recommendations are provided to ensure the effectiveness of overseas placements.

Keywords: *Dependence; independence; social work; international placements; cultural competence*

INTRODUCTION

It has been long established that social work students feel better prepared following opportunities to practice what they learn in a formal classroom setting through role plays and field placements (Cooner, 2010; Peterson, 2014; Wehbi, 2011). This international social work placement took place in Battambang, Cambodia for a New Zealand social work student studying at University of Waikato. This small-scale research project set out to determine the efficacy of a foreign student supporting the development of a new process within a Cambodian-based non-government organisation (NGO). The host NGO, Children's Future International (CFI), had been exploring service dependency, consumer empowerment and consumer advocacy; all relatively new concepts for the NGO. To support these explorations, the social work placement was set up to seek ways to enhance service delivery, increase staff understanding of service dependency and improve outcomes for consumers at CFI in these areas. The organisers of the placement were cognizant of the risk of further encouragement of colonial practice models. This risk was discussed overtly throughout the placement; some of the reflections from the student focused purely on *white privilege*.

This research aimed to determine whether an overseas student social work placement could have a positive effect on the host organisation's awareness, knowledge and practice regarding specific social work processes. This paper provides an overview of the literature as it relates to social work in developing countries, dependency, empowerment and advocacy. Alongside this there is a focus on the learning outcomes of this placement which, the authors believe, was enhanced by tacit learning. An outline of the methodology for this research is provided, with key findings and finally some recommendations for future placements.

This piece of research was a collaborative effort between CFI and the University of Waikato involving 12 staff, one student social worker and the field supervisor from the university; in total, 10 Khmer (Cambodian nationals) and three New Zealand citizens participated in this study. An invitation to be involved was offered to a Cambodian social work programme – this offer was declined. Human ethics approval was gained through the University of Waikato.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this brief synopsis, this literature review will firstly offer some foundation of cross-cultural social work practice in a developing context. Secondly, literature regarding dependency and empowerment in a developing context; thirdly information regarding empowering people within a range of contexts; and finally, a consideration of the learning that takes place during student placements.

Social work in a developing context

Transferring western theories to other contexts has been shown to be flawed (Larson, 2013). Western theories are not tailored to the needs of the local environment nor do they ensure local ownership (Larson, 2013). Coates, Yellow Bird, and Gray (2008) argued alternative strategies need to be adapted to address local community problems and needs. Hugman (2012) considered these issues are further compounded by professional ethics and how these may change when working between cultures. This is due to the values and beliefs of the client group but also the needs within the community. When working in a developing

context, western social workers must recognise the role of the community and families in keeping children safe and that formal child protection models may fit poorly in a local context as they are often modelled from countries in the global north (Wessells, 2015). There was an identified need, though, to effect some change in the processes at CFI. With careful planning and negotiation, an attempt to implement a westernised process with a strong Khmer influence was made to try to navigate some service developments.

Dependency

Managers at CFI had noticed there was what would be described, in western social work practice, as a dependency on services. This dependency had caused a huge client base at the NGO, as people known to CFI were being held in the service longer than required. Effectively, there was no throughput of people within the service. This had led to a slowing down, or an inability to offer services to new children as the system had become blocked. There was a culture of *non-closure* within CFI. This piece of research and specifically the student placement, was set up to try to understand and, if appropriate, effect a change to this culture. Cooper (2012) argues that, when a client becomes dependent on services, they become disempowered through reinforcement of the message that they cannot do things for themselves. Dependency can be defined as unequal, asymmetrical, and sometimes a paternalistic relationship, in comparison to a partnership which is based on equality, mutual respect, joint activity and joint learning (Strier, 2013). When a client is dependent on a service, they are unable to complete usual tasks by themselves, therefore become dependent on extra support (Cooper, 2012).

Harnett and Day (2008) argued child protection interventions can have negative impact on children and families, particularly when the family becomes dependent on the service. This is demonstrated when services disempower parents, which reduces their autonomy and capacity for positive actions (Harnett & Day, 2008). Also, potentially harmful, is a lack of clarity over the changes that a family may need to make for a child to be successfully exited from the child protection service (Harnett & Day, 2008). The lack of a robust plan can result in learnt behaviour while families seek guidance and survival (Drewery & Claiborne, 2014).

Empowerment

Although empowerment is a well-supported and lauded western philosophy, it is not necessarily understood in the same way as it is in non-western societies. There is a diverse range of meanings for the term *empowerment* within which are many inconsistencies (Davies, 2013; Narayan, 2002; Sheppard, 2007). Due to these differing definitions, the idea of empowerment can be hard to follow or demonstrate in practice. Empowerment changes through cultural context. Therefore, what may be empowering in one cultural context may be disempowering in another (Chenoweth & McAuliffe, 2017; Menike, 1993; Teater, 2014).

Empowerment seeks to enable people to manage their own affairs and participate fully within the community (Barnes, 2008; Davies, 2013; Sadan & Churchman, 1997; Sheppard, 2007). Empowerment exists where people are disadvantaged or powerless, and interventions are made to reassign power back to the people within their situation or society (Narayan, 2002).

Evidence suggests that school can be an empowering setting since it holds an important role of empowering students as the school environment influences individual characteristics and ecological factors; however, the main focus is empowerment within the academic domain (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009; Kirk, Lewis, Brown, Karibo, & Park, 2016; Maton, 2008).

Empowerment within an NGO in a developing context is about supporting people to no longer live in poverty and to develop sustainable livelihoods (Menike, 1993). To do this, NGOs empower the client with tools and resources they can use individually, such as education and training (Menike, 1993). It is important to note individuals living in poverty will have their own definition of empowerment and creating this change may be a slow process. This process is said to come from wisdom and experience rather than a defined set of steps (Chenoweth & McAuliffe, 2017; Davies, 2013; Menike, 1993; Narayan, 2002; Payne, 2014; Sheppard, 2007; Teater, 2014). The team were also aware of the 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' and sought to increase empowerment in respectful and sustainable ways that did not see western concepts as the only solution to poverty (Frey, 2016).

Changing behaviour through tacit learning and capacity building

An important feature of changing behaviour and attitudes is to enhance people's tacit knowledge. People need to participate in a range of learning experiences from deliberate learning (based in traditional classroom or professional development settings), through to reactive learning (which takes place through experiences), in order to develop a clear understanding (Eraut, 2000). Tacit learning takes place through experience and is much harder to define (Leonard & Sensiper, 1998), but is generally thought to provide more in-depth learning that can last a lifetime (Warhurst & Black, 2015). Tacit learning occurs at a non-conscious level, embedding knowledge in a way that classroom learning cannot; providing the rationale for social work students to participate in student placements as an essential part of their learning and development as professional practitioners (Andrews, 2017; Evans & Light, 2014; Lam, 2000; Marsick & Watkins, 2015).

Research has shown there are inherent complexities to capacity building in developing contexts. A study by McWha (2011) found barriers to capacity building in developing contexts were largely due to power imbalances and perceived divisions between "expatriates" and "locals". Her research found capacity building was more effective when undertaken by a volunteer (who was seen as more equal once potential salary inequalities were removed) who overtly showed they were interested in two-way learning. In this context a student volunteer was best placed to take on a capacity-building role (McWha, 2011).

Background to the placement NGO

CFI is situated in Ek Phnom, approximately 8 km north of Battambang, Cambodia. Ek Phnom is a rural and an extremely poor part of Cambodia. CFI provides a holistic service to children and their families in the region. CFI is part of two national child protection networks: Family Care First (2019) and 3PC (2019).

CFI exists first, to provide for the basic needs and safety of children (ages 5–21), and second, to provide them with educational opportunities not otherwise accessible. CFI favours a

results-driven approach that delivers programmes in a community with untreated trauma from the Khmer Rouge genocide, poverty, malnutrition, unsafe migration, and exploitative experiences such as child labour, physical and sexual abuse, underage sex work and neglect. CFI empowers children and youth to break the cycle of poverty utilising innovative social work approaches and first class education. CFI's services provide basic support needs and reduces risks regarding child protection and unsafe migration, for some of the most resource-poor and vulnerable children, and their families, in Cambodia (CFI, 2019).

Organisational approach

CFI provides services that support sustainable change (Richter et al., 2017; Seyfang & Smith, 2007). This change supports the development of a robust social infrastructure needed to foster child and youth development and lead to economic growth. CFI's methodology is succinct and targeted. Focusing intently on moving children and youth along a continuum of services that ensures basic needs are met, maintains school enrollment, promotes higher education, and gives youth the opportunity to become modern leaders and professionals.

This study sought to measure the ability to address knowledge and awareness of consumer empowerment and service dependency via student-led interventions, among managers and staff at the placement NGO. Importantly the student's placement was planned by the student's field educator, field placement coordinator and the student, to ensure that interventions took a volunteering for development approach, over a "voluntourism" approach (McGloin & Georgeou, 2016). The student's support team recognised the risks associated with positioning the student as an expert, coming to a developing country to help in a developing context. This was evidenced by the fact the student had their own learning objectives, positioning the placement as an opportunity for two-way learning, and ensuring that interventions focused on capacity building of both the staff at CFI and the student (Frey, 2016; Henry, 2019; McWha, 2011).

The student's work focused on developing awareness of the need for, and how to, implement a consumer consultation group (thereby increasing empowerment) and developing an exit pathway (therefore reducing dependency).

Student placement setup

The placement setup was an important factor in the success of this intervention, both for education but also for the host organisation. The placement was designed to be a learning environment for all involved. The student and field educator set a work plan which involved various tasks, such as: literature reviews, interactive workshops and system design. The student social worker was placed in the social work office with Khmer social workers to enhance learning opportunities. This allowed for informal conversations regarding culture, knowledge and social work practice which, in turn, provided the student insight towards context, study and further knowledge that could be shared. The aim of this placement was to create a learning and reflective environment through the processes of the student's interactions, research and time at the organisation.

METHODOLOGY

Before this placement commenced, consideration was given to how the student's learning objectives would be reached. Only one of the Khmer social workers and two of the teachers had a qualification in their profession – this is not unusual for Cambodia; what was unusual was a student holding more theoretical social work and research knowledge than most of her employed colleagues. The placement tasks were planned to flow into each other, with increasing knowledge regarding how to develop empowerment and how to reduce dependency as an overarching aim. The student commenced tasks such as a literature review, leading to delivery of professional development sessions for staff and finally to the development of practical service and systems processes. This approach was termed “knowledge development and flow” (Henley, Lowe, Henley, & Munro, in press). The student had support from colleagues and weekly supervision, provided by the field educator; however, they commenced most tasks individually

Strengths based scaling questions (CELSC Board, 2018), an internationally recognised framework, is the theoretical social work framework used by CFI social workers. This approach was also used as the means to gather quantitative data for this research. Staff at CFI are familiar with scaling questions as part of using a strengths based approach in practice (Roberts, Caslor, Turnell, Pearson, & Pecora, 2018). Five scaling questions were designed to capture participants' views on empowerment and dependency. These were placed into a Qualtrics online survey. Results were ranked into three categories: *bad*, *some*, and *good*. Answers on the likert scale, between 0–6 were considered *bad*; answers between 7–8 were ranked as *some*, and answers between 9–10 were ranked as *good*, the sectioning and labelling of ratings was automatically managed through Qualtrics™ online surveying software. The aims, as identified by CFI's management team and discussed with student and field coordinator, were to explore the following questions:

1. Could an overseas student provide interventions that increased awareness of service dependency in a developing context?
2. Could an overseas student provide interventions that increase awareness of empowerment in a developing context?
3. Could an overseas student design interventions to prepare workers to engage with service users in a developing context?

Alongside these five scaling questions were five, semi-structured, narrative questions designed to capture further information and views. These narrative responses were thematically grouped to understand the participants' views. The participants included CFI staff, predominantly social workers and teachers, who responded and agreed to be participants in the study.

CFI staff who decided to participate were asked to complete two surveys. Not all participants had a good level of spoken or written English. The questions were therefore presented in English and Khmer. It should be noted that, where qualitative responses were given, these have been left as given, these quotes are presented in *italics*.

Ethics approval was obtained through University of Waikato (the university where the student was studying). The field educator distributed the survey via email to the participants who had previously agreed to be part of the study; there was no compulsion to complete the survey. Participants were asked to complete an initial (baseline) and final (endline) questionnaire. Participants could remove themselves from the research at any point up until the end of the student placement. Responses were confidential. Participants were asked to sign a consent form prior to completion of the survey. In total, 13 surveys were sent out for the baseline, with 11 replies. All participants were Khmer except the Managing and Executive Directors. All participants agreed to a joint authorship approach, ensuring the same group were contacted to complete an endline.

Work undertaken was not only focused on education and knowledge raising via formal methods such as presentations but also via informal approaches, as the student social worker was sitting with CFI Khmer social workers on a daily basis and engaged in ongoing conversations.

One of the main interventions was at the halfway mark of the placement. This involved the student delivering a presentation to prepare CFI teams to consider definitions of empowerment and dependency. The entire CFI staff group (not just those involved in the research) were asked to consider both what the organisation and themselves personally could do to increase empowerment, decrease dependency and ensure support is in place for those who need it. The presentation was in a workshop format.

FINDINGS

The findings presented are selected from the 10 questions participants answered before the social work placement began and again in the final week of the placement. The focus is on the scaling questions, although some of qualitative responses are included. It should be noted that these questions measured participants' self-reflection on their understanding of these topics, rather than an exam or test of their knowledge in each area.

Consumer empowerment

These questions explored the participants' understanding of consumer empowerment. The baseline data demonstrated eight out of 11 participants believed they had little understanding of consumer empowerment and how this related to people using CFI services, with the exception of three participants who showed some or good understanding of this concept. The baseline was not surprising as empowerment is not commonly discussed in this context.

The endline data showed a significant difference in participants' views of how well they felt they understood consumer empowerment; 45% (five participants) described a good understanding, 18% (two participants) felt that they had some understanding and 36% (four participants) still had no understanding.

There is a clear overall difference between the baseline and endline for the participants' understanding of consumer empowerment moving from 9% (one participant) to 45%

(five participants), some understanding remained at 18% (two participants) and no understanding decreased from 72% (eight participants) to 36% (four participants). However, it should be noted that, when looked at separately, the level of change in knowledge between the social work and teaching team varied greatly, as presented in Figure 1:

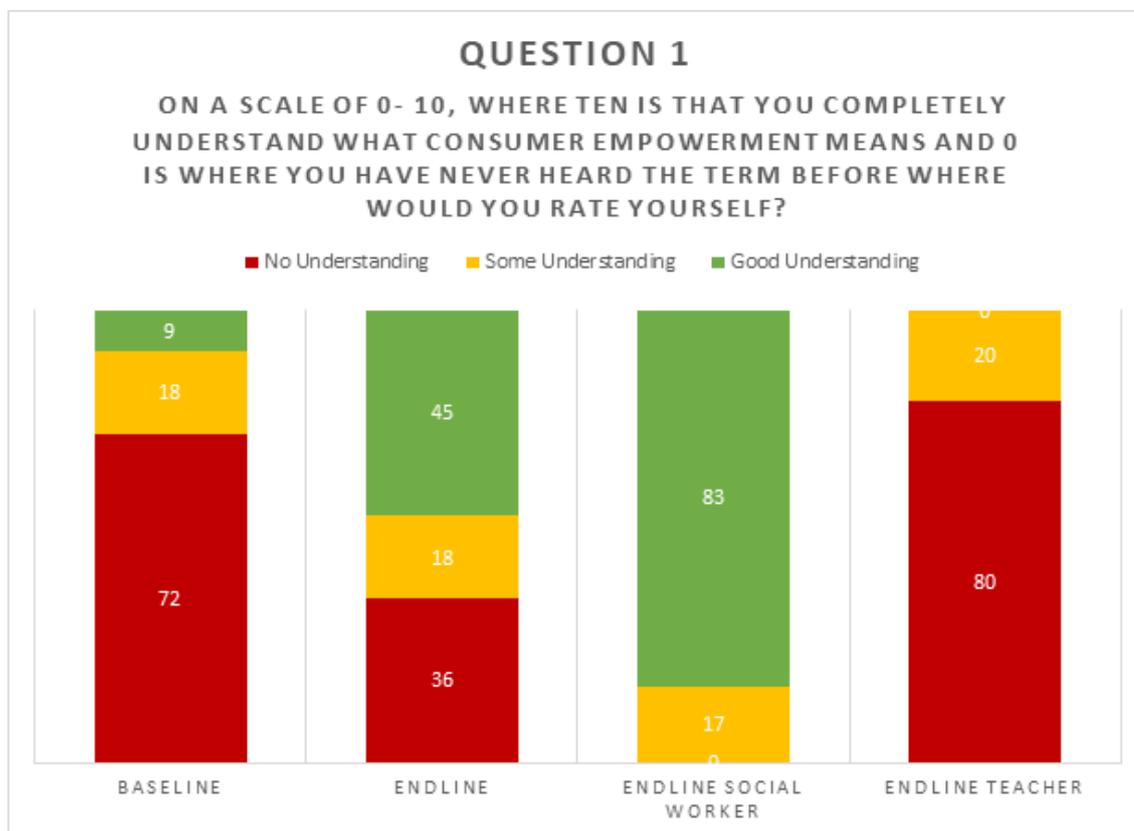


Figure 1. Baseline versus endline data for Question 1.

Though the samples were relatively small, these results indicate that there had been a positive improvement of a self-assessed understanding of consumer empowerment; however, it is evident that there were gaps and significant differences between outcomes for social workers and for teachers.

At the endline survey, the results demonstrated 83% (five participants) of the social workers had a good understanding of consumer empowerment and 17% (one participant) had some understanding. The results from the teachers show an opposite conclusion, as 80% (four participants) had no understanding and 20% (one participant) had some understanding of consumer empowerment. This is a significant difference. The implications from this finding are that regular discussions around empowerment enabled social workers to grasp the concept more readily and be able to apply the concepts to practice. Maintaining the conversation about empowerment with all staff on a regular basis would likely improve the overall understanding of the concept.

This comparison can also be seen in Question 2 regarding understanding of consumer empowerment. The responses from the baseline included answers such as *“I have no ideas”* and *“Ask them what they like and what they want to change about CFI”*, ranging to other answers such as *“To me consumer empowerment is when a worker enables a person to take responsibility for themselves, know where to access support”*. This showed there was a different understanding across the participant group particularly in the initial stages of this research.

However, the responses at endline, Question 2, provided a range of answers from *“through survey, training, asking the question”* and *“don’t know”* to detailed responses such as *“I know that consumer empowerment is all about to empower the client to involve in every discussion and decision making that affect their life and benefit”* and *“From my understanding of consumer empowerment, it means you give the power to the family or your client by providing them a say”*. By being able to compare these responses, a clear increase in understanding of this concept for most participants was demonstrated.

Service dependency

These questions explored the participants’ views of how well they understood service dependency. The baseline demonstrated 72% (eight participants) believed they had no understanding of dependency, 18% (two participants) had some understanding and 9% (one participant) had good understanding.

The endline results show a positive move to 55% (five participants) stating they felt they had a good understanding, 9% (one participant) had some understanding and 36% (four participants) felt they had no understanding.

Comparing the baseline to the endline showed that there was an increase from 9% (one participant) to 55% (six participants) displaying that participants felt they now had a good understanding of dependency. Again, there was a significant difference between teachers’ and social workers’ endline view of this question, with a notable improvement in the social work participants, as seen in Figure 2. Please note in Figure 2, where zeros appear, this means no participants answered in this category. For example, no social workers rated themselves as having “no understanding” at the endline.

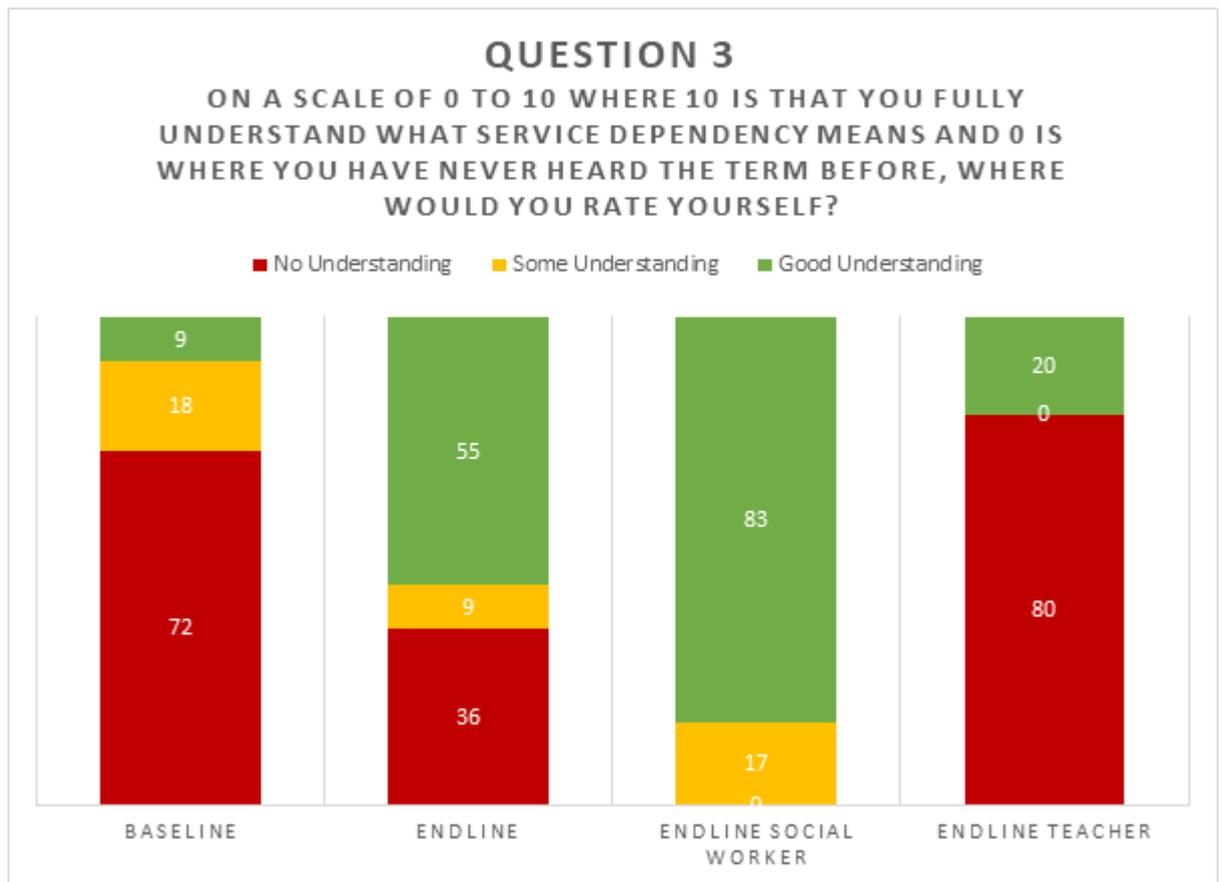


Figure 2. Baseline versus endline data for Question 3.

Do you feel ready to work with families to seek their views?

The final set of questions explored participants’ views on how ready they were to work with families to seek their views. At baseline, 55% (six participants) did not feel ready to work with families in this way, 36% (four participants) felt somewhat ready and 9% (one participant) felt ready. This meant that over half (6 out of 11) of the staff group involved in this research at baseline did not feel ready to work with families and gather their views on CFI services. This is a significant piece of data and one the student’s interventions set out to challenge.

The results of the endline showed a marked difference as 27% (three participants) still did not feel ready; 27% (three participants) felt somewhat ready and 46% (five participants) felt as though they were ready to work with families to seek their views. Comparing the baseline to the endline data, there was a noticeable difference in responses to the same question with an increase from 9% (one participant) to 46% (five participants) who felt they were ready to work with families to seek their views. There was a decrease from 36% (four participants) to 27% (three participants) who felt somewhat ready and a decrease of 55% (six participants) to 27% (three participants) who did not feel ready to work with families to seek their views. Again the differences between the social work and teacher participant groups are highlighted in Figure 3, with a clear distinction between the two groups.

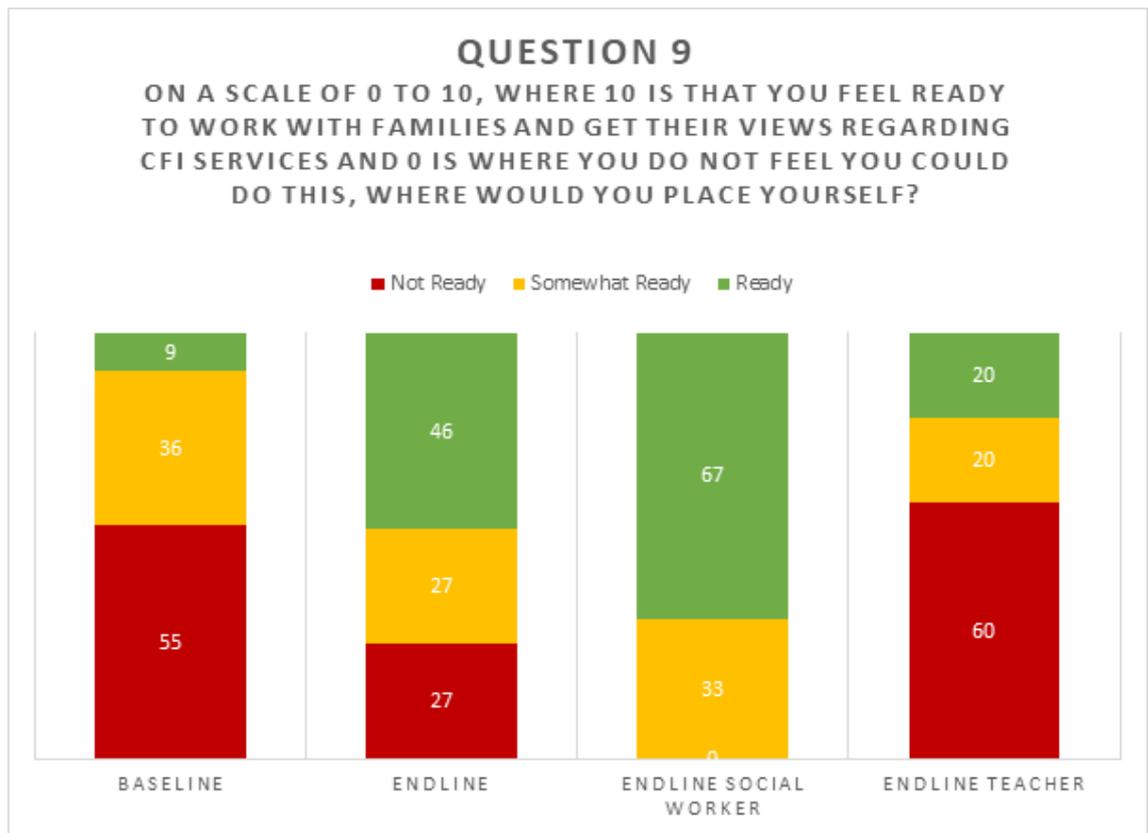


Figure 3. Baseline versus endline data for Question 9.

Completing a clear baseline before the student arrived in Cambodia ensured we could meaningfully assess the impact of the student placement on staff attitudes and knowledge. This baseline provided a basic measurement of where CFI was at regarding the researched subjects before the student intervention.

As explained in the methodology, an overall endline was taken, but with an additional question of whether participants were teachers or social workers. Overall results indicated successful interventions were delivered regarding an increased knowledge and awareness, with improvements across all scaling questions, see Figure 4 below:

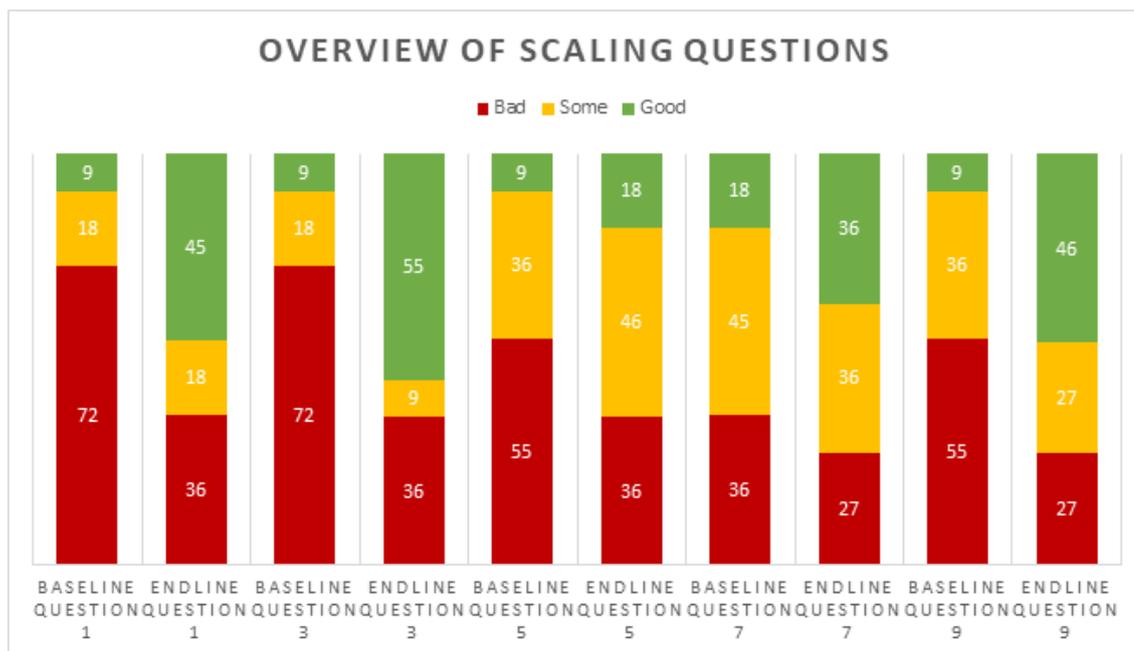


Figure 4. Baseline versus endline data over the five scaling questions.

These findings demonstrated it was possible for an overseas student, with planned delivery to increase awareness and knowledge regarding empowerment and dependency within a developing context. However, the interesting findings from this data were apparent when results from social workers and teachers were compared.

This section has presented a range of evidence from a staff-wide workshop and comparison of survey data between the baseline and the endline. Having established these findings, we will now discuss their implications.

DISCUSSION

Consumer empowerment

As described in the literature review, empowerment seeks to enable people to manage their own affairs and participate fully within the community (Barnes, 2008; Davies, 2013; Sadan & Churchman, 1997; Sheppard, 2007). We broke this question down to the difference in understandings from the social workers and teachers for the endline. The social workers and teachers all attended a workshop delivered by the student on this subject; however, the social workers had more daily informal conversations with the student social worker which might have resulted in the difference in understanding. Empowerment within social work often focuses on individuals at the expense of wider societal issues. To undertake this work, a good understanding of the reasons for someone becoming disempowered is required. Work then focuses on the individual and their environment (Connolly, Harms, & Maidment, 2009; Payne, 2014). Literature highlights how goals, shared power, shared decision making and a positive sense of community all help to create empowering environments (Cargo, Grams, Ottoson, Ward, & Green, 2003; Maton, 2008). From the data collected, it is apparent participants from CFI have been able to reflect on the concept of empowerment and apply it to their daily practice.

Empowerment within a teaching environment considers how teachers need to be aware of students' experiences and how they can empower them in the classroom. Empowerment can occur when students are enabled to meet their individual needs through learning and social relationships and working with others (Kirk et al., 2016). The different knowledge outcomes between social workers and teachers could suggest that more time and engagement is needed with the teaching team to build their tacit knowledge in this area.

Service dependency

There is an obvious difference between CFI social workers' understanding of dependency and that of CFI teachers. Again, the authors believe that this was a result of the additional time spent working, learning and developing tacit knowledge in informal peer group settings. However, the increased knowledge overall of the CFI staff group compares well with established literature; Cooper (2012) argues that, when a client becomes dependent they become disempowered, as there is a reinforcement of the message they cannot do things for themselves. For the team at CFI this meant dispelling some of the concerns associated with client exits and challenging the non-closure culture. It could be expected more conversation related to this took place in the informal office setting rather than the more formal setting of the capacity building workshop.

For an NGO moving in the direction of consumer empowerment, the final two questions were the most important. What impact will the student's work have on readiness of CFI's workforce to meaningfully seek the views of families? Following the established pattern, there were mixed results.

Do you feel ready to work with families to seek their views?

The results from this section highlighted a clear difference in response from baseline to endline data. Clearly, some participants saw the importance of this work, and were already undertaking, or wanting to undertake, activities in this area. This final question provided an overall summary of the success of the student's interventions. What we noticed is a significant increase in the number of workers feeling ready to interact with families. In comparison to the rest of the data gathered, this is particularly true regarding social workers, rather than teachers; the evidence demonstrated a complete reversal of numbers of staff ready to engage.

Understandably, as they were already engaging with families more frequently, social work participants were far more comfortable with the level of engagement with families than were the participant teachers. However, one argument for such a shift from baseline to endline is the impact of the daily interactions between student and social workers, as opposed to the irregular interaction with teachers. Additionally, as McWha (2011) describes, it could have been the transfer of knowledge via a student volunteer that supported learning to take place.

What has been established is that it is possible for an overseas student to increase knowledge regarding dependency among social workers. What is harder to achieve is an increase among professional groups not directly involved in the placement, in this case, teachers. Among this group these concepts would not have been discussed in as great a detail, or as frequently, and may have been a huge shift of thinking for teaching staff.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the data gathered from this study the team has clear recommendations for those planning overseas student placements:

1. Impact of interventions may be different between professions. Ensure interventions take these differences into consideration, with opportunities for students to work across teams and with different professional groups regularly.
2. Design different interventions for different professions or mixed professional groups to maximise learning.
3. Recognise tacit learning as an important part of two-way placement learning. Ensure opportunities for this learning are supported.

CONCLUSION

This small study has demonstrated an overseas social work student can have a direct and successful impact on the awareness and knowledge of staff in the host agency. To enhance success, a placement needs to be well planned and targeted to achieve certain set outcomes.

This study demonstrates a clear difference in the success of interventions between different professions, in this instance social workers and teachers. The reasons for these significantly different outcomes could be the result of different starting positions of professions or as a direct outcome of the student interacting on a daily basis with social workers.

This placement experience provided an excellent two-way learning opportunity for the host agency staff. The benefits for both student and CFI staff to engage in joint learning has enhanced long-term learning and positive behaviour change for everyone involved.

Thanks to the engagement of the entire CFI staff, the student, and the support from the University of Waikato, CFI has been able to make significant improvements to service delivery and outcomes for people using services. CFI's intention is to take this learning and build it into future placements, where comparative research will be completed, and to enhance service delivery.

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Cross-cultural learning in a domestic and family violence agency in Papua New Guinea: Reflections from a Field Placement

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ABSTRACT

With a growing interest in international social work in the tertiary sector, an increasing number of social work students seek field placements overseas to gain cross-cultural experience (Harris et al., 2017). This article reflects on a successful overseas placement of an Australian social work student from James Cook University with the local non-government organization, Femili Papua New Guinea, a case management centre providing support for women and children survivors of family and intimate partner violence based in Lae. The role of partnerships between agencies, including an external supervisor, a medical social worker at the Port Moresby General Hospital Family Support Centre, contributed to a rich learning experience. The article gives perspectives from the key stakeholders – the student, the field educator (an external supervisor) and the university liaison person and placement coordinator. The main learning contexts for this placement included a review of the organisation's policy and guidelines and adding value to service delivery. This provided learning in social justice and the challenges of inequities, injustice and oppression in relation to gender. The importance of prior preparation; the availability of quality supervision by the field educator, support and the personal resilience and resourcefulness of the student are key elements in the placement's success – are all factors to consider when considering overseas placements.

Keywords: *cross-cultural learning; international field placement; Papua New Guinea; domestic and family violence*

BACKGROUND

This article reflects on a successful overseas placement of an Australian social work student from James Cook University and the local non-government organization, Femili, in Lae, Papua New Guinea, a case management centre providing support for women and children survivors of family and intimate partner violence. It is written jointly by the key stakeholders, so the voices of the university liaison person / field education co-ordinator, based in Townsville, Australia; the student, based in Port Moresby; and the field educator (the external supervisor) in Port Moresby, are heard. The role of partnerships between agencies, including an external supervisor, a medical social worker at the Port Moresby General Hospital Family Support Centre, contributed to the student experience. The different support and learning opportunities, the role of technology and attributes of the student that contributed to the success of the placement are discussed. The main learning goals for this placement included a review of the organisation's policy and guidelines. Gaps in policies and service responses to domestic and family violence were identified. How the placement was arranged, reflections from each key stakeholder, and major learnings from this experience are discussed.

The liaison person /field education co-ordinator's experience

The field placement came about after the student requested doing a placement in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, where she was residing. The student had been living there for a year and had an interest in working with a family violence service. The student knew some *Tok Pisin*, one of the national languages and was able to suggest an agency, Femili PNG, who were willing to have an Australian social work student.

International student exchanges and field placements have been growing in number in Australian universities; a number of compelling reasons to undertake international social work student exchange reported by Harris et al. (2017, p. 431):

[T]he enhanced student learning in the intercultural dimensions of social work practice (Bell & Anscombe, 2013), the development of a global understanding of social issues, for instance, gender inequality and environmental degradation (Bell et al., 2015; Boetto, Moorhead, & Bell, 2014), the development of a sense of global citizenship (Trede et al., 2013), and the opportunity to experience different worldviews, to learn different systems of social welfare, and to witness diverse ways to remediate social problems (Schwartz, et al., 2011).

The role of field education co-ordinator for social work students involves negotiating between possible placement agencies, field educators and the students to match the learning needs and interests of the student with the needs and expectations of agencies who agree to take on this task. In considering an overseas placement, a requirement of the James Cook University Field Education was that there must be a suitably qualified and experienced social work supervisor in Papua New Guinea; if not within the placement agency, then available externally. Other considerations included the need for the placement to have a clear learning plan and assessment process as outlined by the university; an experienced and available field educator to provide professional supervision; availability of basic technology such as phone and computer for the student and the university liaison person to have

regular and timely link-ups and feedback; maturity and flexibility of the student working cross-culturally; the willingness of the student to learn some local language whilst doing placement, and the willingness of all stakeholders to work collaboratively (Nickson, Briscoe, Maconachie, & Brosowski, 2011; Nickson, Kuruleca, & Clark, 2009).

The student found a suitably qualified social worker who was working at the Port Moresby Hospital who was delighted to do the external supervision for the placement. Before the placement commenced, the student and supervisor met and arranged regular supervision meetings; dates and meeting times with all parties were arranged well in advance. These were to be by Skype. Femili PNG was very keen to have a student placement and for the project to go ahead.

The university liaison role includes being a support and resource person to both the field educator and the student. The liaison person receives reflective journals from the student on placement as part of their assessment for the university. The student sent the journals to the liaison person by email and prompt feedback was given. Regular links by Skype were arranged to ensure the student was managing the usual demands of a placement in a challenging field of domestic violence, and the demands of working cross-culturally.

As the liaison person / field education co-ordinator, I had some initial concerns about the student's safety and the university's duty of care to a student on a placement. The immense gaps in services and extent of domestic and family violence in Papua New Guinea (Médecins Sans Frontières, 2016) could have the potential to overwhelm a student. However, I was reassured by several characteristics of the student, including the knowledge that the student was already living in Port Moresby, was familiar with the culture and knew some of the language, was of mature age and presented as having flexibility and common-sense. That the placement was a policy review project rather than direct practice provided further safety for the student.

An understanding of policy and the ability to critically analyse policies, systems and structures is an important area of knowledge for practice (AASW, 2013). The proposed policy review which would rely on engagement with staff within the agency, was an excellent opportunity for the student to develop skills in this area of practice with existing organisational policy, which covered how domestic and family violence was viewed and responded to in the Papua New Guinean context. The student had made contact with some experts in Australia for assistance in this domestic violence policy review task and the agency had links to expertise on its management committee. This provided a larger network of supports for the student engaging in the placement tasks.

The student's perspective

Studying as a distance education (external) student at James Cook University in Queensland, I completed the Bachelor of Community Welfare mostly whilst living in the Middle East with my family and a Master of Social Work whilst living in Papua New Guinea. After a year living in Port Moresby with my husband, it was time to do my final field placement and a friend suggested the possibility of doing this at Femili PNG. This local non-government organisation in Lae, was set up in 2014 as a case management centre

to help survivors of domestic and family violence to reach the services they needed. These included medical, legal, government child protection and *seifhaus* (safe houses). I completed a 14-week field placement at Femili PNG.

Context of my direct experience with workers on field placement

On placement, I was responsible for the task of a review of policy guidelines concerning adding value to service delivery and experienced first-hand the work they do there. I spent two weeks with the staff in Lae observing, listening, asking questions about their work and the rest of the time I was based in Port Moresby. This got me thinking about how the task environment impacts organisational process and ways of working. Understanding the “realities of practice” was what I needed to get some grasp on before I was to think about what contributions I could make to the review of service delivery policies based on practitioners’ experiences.

Some of my interactions with the case workers were one-to-one, in the office and out on field appointments with clients. Some meetings with service providers were arranged for me to understand their case management processes. In this field work I was to think about how the organisation engages effectively with service co-ordination in providing support for women who want to exit the violence occurring in their lives. I did not want to generalise about what violence is about in Papua New Guinea or make assumptions about what I know about culture, cultural practices and keeping women and children clients safe so I spent a lot of time listening and observing. I learned about the context of practice, coming to an understanding of “the ecological environment of which the client group is part” (Cleak & Wilson, 2007, p. 33). As part of this process, I attended three first-intake interviews. One of the interviews was in *Tok Pisin* and was with a woman who had made a decision to come forward after medical treatment to tell her story with a caseworker. These women come forward because they have decided to think about what their choices might be. The caseworker’s commitment to explaining and completing paperwork focused on how the organisation can support a client was explained in a way that was about supporting women to make an informed choice. Permission was given to be present in these interviews taking place in a confidential safe space. The interaction was to hear the woman’s story and to think about ways of navigating external service co-ordination for her.

The “Cycle of Violence”, also known as the “Cycle of Abuse” (Walker, 2001) is a tool that informs a theoretical perspective on the impact of violence itself and the build-up to the violent behaviour of an abuser. Caseworkers understand the context of the violence women face and discuss the impact of the violence and talk about what the client can do to increase her safety during a build-up phase or during an active violent event. I witnessed caseworkers talking to women about the patterns of their partners’ violent behaviour (Walker, 2001).

Thinking about the context of the work and the context of culture I made no assumptions about the fear and complexity of the violence women in Papua New Guinea experienced. I was mindful not to impose my own values as part of ethical conduct, demonstrating ethical literacy, which includes for workers “to be aware of their own value position, acknowledge judgements and bias and seek to ensure that they do not impose their values on others”

(McAuliffe, 2014, p. 20). Workers acknowledged why it is important that a woman stays with an abusive partner because it can be difficult to imagine a woman's vulnerability leaving her husband, her support and her community (personal conversation with a worker, 2015). In another example I remember meeting a woman and her baby during a visit to a *seifhaus* with Femili PNG's senior social worker. A deep wound still evident across the mother's face and deep wounds still there on the baby's head perpetrated by a neighbour who had entered the woman's house to rape her, this mother and child had been recovering at the *seifhaus* for some weeks. Fighting off the perpetrator they escaped their village travelling by boat with people from her community to get to the nearest major health facility in Lae, the social worker told me. Both were recovering from horrific injuries and were staying at the *seifhaus* to recover and gain some mental stability before working out a future plan for their safety. During our visit there was no referral planning or discussion about what the next steps would be for this woman and child beyond their recovery at the *seifhaus*; although charges for the perpetrators arrest had been laid, I would still not discount the victims' perception of danger and viewed her as the most important source of information for future ways to cope beyond the *seifhaus*. Weekly discussions with the refuge manager were held with the case worker in responding to the client's progress and preparation to leave the *seifhaus*.

The level of experienced violence is very shocking in PNG. Although, in this example the perpetrator was a neighbour, research suggests major injuries and death threats are reported as experienced by women in their homes through intimate partner violence (MSF, 2016). Facilitating escape for all those exposed to harm I acknowledge a deep complexity to the work of case workers who are responding in the work they do with survivors. I was able to debrief with the senior social worker in the organisation and talk about this with my field educator. Having had good support placement networks helped me to maintain a level of resilience.

Case workers support survivors to seek justice regardless of the challenges of the type of violence that presents in case management for clients. Case workers plan for harm minimisation or elimination as much as possible as a very important step in the management process. Critically reflecting on my observations from fieldwork in Lae, I considered the context and how this reflects a reality of practice that connects the fieldwork to the organisation's broader foundation of case management. I used this direct experience with workers to connect both observation and critical reflection to help support the review of policy guidelines with a particular focus on case management policy. Much of the work to inform policy review was in discussion with the wider Femili PNG management team extending from Canberra, Port Moresby and Lae. It was also helpful to connect with former colleagues, supervisors, and people from the domestic violence sector in Australia who identified with the context of the work and were a constant source of information and advice. In addition, I had the regular (external) supervision with my field educator and support from a local social worker in PNG and I was invited to seek support and guidance in my placement. Inter-professional learning and networking was significant for my learning on placement because I learned so much from all the staff, many of whom did not have formal qualifications.

In contributing to the review of case management policies, the typical task environment of the worker was clarified. With permission from the operations manager and senior social

worker, I facilitated a group work activity with the team in Lae that was to identify the typical task environment. This activity reflected Chenoweth and McAuliffe's (2017, p. 225) five aspects of practice in organisations: engagement, assessment, intervention, termination and review. Mapping out the process of case management in the group activity involved writing on several sheets of chart paper tacked to the wall with each worker taking a turn to write down parts of the case management process with the idea documenting the practical experience and practical knowledge of the caseworker. This process provided a way of analysing agency policy and led to strategic planning and developing the human service organisation (Chenoweth & McAuliffe, 2017, p. 226).

Discussion began with the clients' point of admission and referral as a triage process to determine client needs and potential benefits from Femili PNG's services by identifying the presenting problem. In the workshop a process was identified and documented for "working with children" in child abuse cases and also a process for working with high-risk women clients for crisis support and emergency accommodation. The skill of this work is that workers continually (every day) assess risk and the documented process of their actions revealed the challenges of this work in practice. Agreeing on a course of action in supporting clients to reach essential services meant that a client's individual plan was regularly reviewed, assessed and adjusted as the stages of assessment, planning, monitoring and evaluation in case management for the care and protection of survivors was documented.

Revealing the challenges and the constraints in monitoring case progress based on practical examples of their experiences highlighted the necessity of building an engagement with stakeholders. Critically reflecting on knowledge as a process is what the caseworkers are learning to adapt themselves to every day in their work. Thinking in a positive way about process was about building on what workers were already achieving in supporting client service responses and to think about process as a way to come up with new ideas and new knowledge.

For the policy review, I was asked to make technical contributions to the policy work already started, critically analysing the policies particular to case management. This was very challenging and time-consuming work. New knowledge meant that I needed to know what to look for in organisational policy in identifying possible gaps that affect service response. This reflected policy analysis at the micro level, in the service delivery at the local community level (Carson & Kerr, 2017, pp. 88–89). Asking for help from management and a social worker from Australia working in the sector made me think about organisational policy that is not just about governance and administration but also about informing what it is the workers do. Taking the practical examples from the group work and fieldwork enabled an understanding of procedures the workers were developing and use that informs organisational method and process. The benefit of direct experience on the field and group work gave meaning to organisational resources that were being provided by the workers themselves informing current working methods and processes as a foundation of case management. These working processes were used in addition to the case management policy shown as flow chart diagrams and descriptions.

I acknowledge that the workers had a natural expression of empathy influencing their values of understanding a person's situation, customary ways and traditions. In whatever I was contributing to, I was continually reflecting on empathy as a concept underpinning everything I did. The diversity of context of environment and culture, along with being a student, meant that my constant thinking and analysis work contributed to a highly productive placement and a unique opportunity I am very grateful to have experienced. Having had the experience of work in the field and collaborative involvement in the review of policies, the message I would like to get out is that the workers themselves are the organisation's most valuable resource. It is the workers themselves who are working at the critical edge of the continuing development of service response for survivors of family and sexual violence in PNG. The workers are the role models for the success of the organisation in all the work they do. Their thinking, their planning, their influence and collaboration efforts with other services support women to access the services they need. Discussing these options with women is what workers do in helping women to make an informed choice.

Inter-professional learning in an Indigenous culture

As a non-indigenous social work student, I learned from the workers doing their job to support survivors of violence; that is, I gained experience by "doing" – an Indigenous way of learning (Jackson-Barrett, Price, & Stomski, 2015). It has taken time to critically reflect on what I have learned from workers and an understanding of context has taken time to build. Some workers had no formal qualifications, and for those with qualifications, the qualifications varied. It fascinated me to witness how workers were able to adapt their practice to their unique ways of working.

"Mainstream" practices in social work, such as task-centred or narrative approaches (Connolly & Harms, 2009) appeared evident in the caseworkers' ways of working. Perhaps more difficult to identify was an understanding of a theory that was particular to Papua New Guinean customary ways or tribal philosophies. As a white western woman, I was studying from the *outside*. Underlying cultural and gender issues were not discussed with workers (perhaps these were considered not appropriate to share with me, or perhaps it was their tacit knowledge in relation to women's safety in Papua New Guinea).

Comments made in personal conversations with my field educator included that patriarchy is not part of Papua New Guinean culture in responding to gender-based violence, particularly in rural settings. A community's own social systems take care in customary ways, through a "by nature" response (personal conversation with field educator, 2016).

THE FIELD EDUCATOR'S EXPERIENCE

It has been a privilege to provide external supervision to a Master of Social Work student from James Cook University, in Port Moresby under the Social Work Service on a regular basis.

The focus in supervision was providing cultural knowledge, especially on customary marriage, adoption, fostering and child protection practices in Papua New Guinea. Information was provided to the student on areas of research methods to help with understanding the process, method and ideas around "best practice" through observation and analysis.

Providing cultural knowledge

Supervision was centred on providing the student with in-depth knowledge about cultural practices and keeping women and children safe from any form of violence. PNG has a long history of family and tribal support systems relative to providing safety; however, this system is slowly breaking down due to modernisation. The important cultural practice of breaking the cycle of violence in families is that the survivor, usually a woman, seeks family intervention for protection. She seeks refuge at her family home and then her family make certain demands to her abusive husband. Demands are made, for example, in the form of killing pigs and giving these to her family. The husband is to make peace with the woman before she returns to him. This is done to maintain peace and to prevent further violence.

Customary marriage is a recognized form of marriage in PNG. Bride price payments and an exchange of food items are most commonly practised to formally recognise a man and woman as a husband and wife. However, from my practice as a social worker, I have come across cases where husbands have used the bride price payments as a reason to take “ownership” of their wives. It appears that the bride price gives some men a sense of power over their wives, leading to controlling the women and depriving them of their rights. Women are seen as objects and not as equal partners in marriage, leading to psychological and physical abuse, and creating gender-based inequality.

The student was mainly focused on the policy research task whilst on placement, so much of the external supervision was an opportunity for consultation on this and to discuss networking. This included discussion on how to share information with all stakeholders involved in casework.

DISCUSSION

The learning process as an Australian social work student included understanding both the challenges and the opportunities encountered through acknowledging the significance of the cultural differences in the context of practice in Papua New Guinea. Broadly speaking, I think that the Australian social work course as a discipline does make a connection to the work anywhere, because any human service work takes into account social justice and gender perspectives and the impacts of these on society and the person in micro, meso, macro ways. Drawing from direct experience with workers, while there might some similar ways to approach and respond to domestic violence in Papua New Guinea through these fieldwork examples, there were also many different experiences (based on the significance and diversity of culture) for women who came forward. Connecting inter-professional learning, the Australian social work education system and the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) *Code of Ethics* (2010), recognise the importance of working in ways that are respectful, empathetic, culturally competent, safe and sensitive manner with clients from culturally, linguistically and ethnically diverse backgrounds (Bennett, Green, Gilbert, & Bessarab, 2013).

The experience, on placement, of working directly with workers is to know that workers are the best resource to provide new knowledge that informs practice approaches. Drucker (1972) described the exploration of social work in the Pacific as a process of education that

includes the idea that both staff and students are part of a group of colleagues in search of knowledge and skills not common in the region. In their contemporary discussion on social work education and practice in Papua New Guinea, Brydon and Lawihin (2014) note that numerous authors call for the Indigenisation of social work and generally resist the dominance of the western paradigm because there is insufficient clarity about the ways in which this can be achieved. Working collaboratively in complex situations as an “outsider” included working with elements of uncertainty of the cultural dynamics as well as thinking about the role the state plays in responding to gender and violence. Synonymous with Brydon and Lawihin (2014), Duke (2004) also notes the challenges for sustainable solutions across the Pacific, and the need to slowly develop Indigenous technical and professional capacity through quiet example and mentoring. Many conversations, listening, and observing played significant roles during student in-country supervision sessions. As a visiting student, I did not think about counteracting a position of power or privilege in the context of western social work practice compared to if I had been an Indigenous student on placement doing the same tasks. This was not specifically discussed during supervision; however, discussions on cultural knowledge and practices were regularly part of my supervision.

Reflecting on student learning through practical experiences and theoretical knowledge informed by Australian social work curricula, cultural analysis would help to explain the differences in the diverse response experiences of clients that inform practice. Perhaps future discussions on culture; including aspects of racism, colonialism and slavery, are needed to inform mainstream social work practice to tackle institutional change. An inter-disciplinary approach that analyses the different interpretations of what a white, western paradigm of social work is could then learn from an Indigenous-defined perspective of fieldwork practices and ways of doing social work.

CONCLUSION

This field placement worked well for all stakeholders and contributed to the future safety of women and children affected by domestic and family violence who access help through Femili PNG. The key factors which are recommended in considering overseas placements and which contribute to success, are for the placement to be well planned; for an experienced field educator to be available to the student; the willingness of each stakeholder to make it work and the availability of regular link-ups by phone, email or Skype. Important student attributes include a willingness to learn and understand a different culture; having cultural supervision; an openness to acknowledge and utilise the skills and expertise that already exists in the community; flexibility; initiative and resourcefulness; being willing to share the knowledge and skills you have as well as learn from those with whom you are placed; having a desire to contribute to the host organisation and country and having the skills to develop and maintain supportive relationships.

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Practice Reflection

Between theory and therapy: Grief and loss skills-based training for hospital social workers

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ABSTRACT

Social work grief and loss education often concentrates on theory and therapy, neither of which are particularly accessible to practitioners in a crisis. Both new and experienced social workers in an acute health environment are challenged to craft a practical, skills-based approach which is part grief therapy and part crisis-response. A working party at a major hospital developed training to bridge this gap. Evaluations indicated attendees made meaningful connections with their practice. This practice reflection describes the development of the training and its outcomes.

Keywords: *Grief and loss; hospital social work; skills-based training*

WHAT DOES THE LITERATURE SAY?

The many definitions and concepts of grief and loss are extensively examined in the literature. In social work, the Dual Process Model perhaps best represents the tension that the social worker manages in navigating the emotional and instrumental tasks of grief and the fluctuation between loss and restoration (Stroebe & Schut, 1999). This review focusses on grief and loss practices in hospital social work, wherein interventions may be practical or emotional, iterative or perceptive, and range from assessment through various practice intervention models and theories. Enacting these interventions is influenced by the priorities of the working environment and the treating team.

Such a review should aim to identify techniques and trends which ground current social work practice in evidence, and stimulate developing and extending these practices in acute healthcare settings. The SocINDEX database was searched for best practice social work in loss in an acute healthcare setting. Abstract reviews highlighted the experience for parents, children, the elderly, and people living with HIV/AIDS. Topics included sexuality, suicide, substance use, joblessness and socio-economic disadvantage, trauma, disaster, cancer and migrant communities.

Much of the grief and loss literature focuses on the evolution of theory, and concepts for practice application. Various models exist, with Curren (2007, p. 99) supporting “models and theories that work”, and cautioning workers against using theory “as a barrier to protect themselves” from recognising and responding to individual needs (p. 98). Similarly, Lloyd (2002) recognises the difficulty in applying “theoretical underpinnings by...professionals in their practice” (p. 215) and warns resource-challenged working environments against conforming loss experiences to a model. The dual process model (Stroebe & Schut, 1999) discusses loss and restoration orientations; however, the loss experience may be dual in other ways too – the intellectual and logical may be distinct from the emotional, indeed Martin (2002) recognises instrumental and intuitive grieving styles (Pomeroy & Garcia, 2009). Bruce and Schultz (2001) focus on the many types of non-finite loss. Pomeroy and Garcia (2009) highlight the importance of recognising familial grief styles, although the instruments used to assess grief seem lengthy and ill-suited to hospital use. Worden’s (2003) tasks of mourning discuss factors which mediate the grief response.

The literature also addresses external factors influencing the loss experience, for instance Thompson’s work (2002) examines the impact of race, gender, cultural practices, poverty, ill-health and other social factors. Non-demographic contributors include loss history factors such as complicated grief, prolonged grief and multiple losses. The systematic review by Lobb and colleagues (2010) highlights complicated grief predictors, a phenomenon potentially amenable to intervention by hospital social workers. Authors claim that 10–20% of the population experience complicated grief (prolonged, acute grief symptoms), predicted by factors like childhood events, dependent relationships, negative cognitions, traumatic death, and serious mental health issues. Reducing carer burden, addressing mental health issues, and providing psychosocial education can help facilitate coping in complicated grief – interventions which are all within the scope of hospital social work practice.

Support as a key intervention is highlighted by Clark and colleagues (2011) who consider family-centred work, effective communication and emotional support are fundamental to grief work, yet as most support is provided to primary carers, the needs of the extended support group are often unrecognised. In examining preparedness of health care workers dealing with grief and loss in its various presentations, Currer (2001) reports “some practitioners felt that there had been too little in their training about death and grief” (p. 150). Breen and colleagues (2013) agree that knowledge is often underdeveloped, with university courses offering brief training. In discussing the health social work role, Herbert and colleagues (2008) emphasise that social work facilitates communication between carers and the medical team, arguing that medical teams often lack skill and comfort in the language of death and dying. The presence of a team member who can recognise, endorse and accompany grief and link grieving people with resources and support services is especially highlighted in Currer’s work (2001, pp. 109–110). Such skills are supported by Lloyd (2002) who emphasises practitioners need “a guide to draw on theoretical resources in the immediate and everyday situation” (p. 215).

While the literature provides much information on theory and conceptual frameworks, techniques to assist social workers responding to the crisis of grief or loss are lacking. Undergraduate social work courses provide training in counselling and communication micro-skills; however, the challenge is to convert the sometimes esoteric into a noticeably effective practical response.

The Grief and Loss Working Party at RBWH

The Grief and Loss Working Party is a cohort of clinical social workers from different clinical teams at a large inner-city tertiary hospital. The group examine and address the needs of inpatient hospital social workers responding to grief and loss across the gamut of teams. In an acute, discharge-focused setting, loss is a pervasive theme, but rarely involves ongoing therapeutic or counselling work. Instead, required practical skills include broaching conversations about loss, assessing implications for the patient and family, and providing short-term interventions such as crisis intervention or supporting patients undergoing significant transitions. This occurs in a shared, busy, noisy, often public environment where the treatment of medical conditions takes reasonable precedence over emotion.

Defining and recognising loss in the acute health context can be difficult for treating teams in the setting of competing medical problems – it begins with a recognised event or need which can involve a combination of a tangible, recognisable loss, and a symbolic, evolving or anticipated loss, which may be less evident. The most obvious tangible loss in hospital is death, but loss also encompasses disability, anticipated loss of function or role, and many others, including historical losses. Hospital social workers intervene with people immediately affected by grief although may encounter people immersed in more complex experiences, affected by a range of factors described in the literature. A patient is rarely admitted to hospital for grief, nor is it usually a discharge factor, hence, unless identified and addressed by a social worker, the experience can go unrecognised, leaving the individual and family more susceptible to a complicated grief response.

Development and delivery of the training

The Grief and Loss Working Party met monthly for six months to examine literature, survey staff needs and develop training. The group developed a skills-based workshop for new graduates, focussed on clarifying purpose in grief and loss hospital social work. This approach aimed to remove both “theory as a barrier” (Curren, 2001) and discourage application of a particular model (Lloyd, 2002). Two-hour training was delivered in October 2017 beginning with an overview of grief and loss theory development. Three separate case studies were workshopped to facilitate experiential responses to different losses, such as: a) the “cold call” sudden death situation; b) responses to expected death; and c) addressing multiple losses. Attendees discussed in small groups and provided feedback to the large group. Using three case studies afforded less time for discussion and skills practice, even so, participant evaluations indicated that tailoring grief and loss training to organisational context encouraged more meaningful practice connections.

The second training iteration in November 2018 further developed Lloyd’s guide for “the immediate and everyday situation” (2002, p. 215), and assumed that social workers have a reasonable foundation in grief and loss theory. Workshop content was revised to focus on a skills-based approach. One case study was used, divided in three unfolding parts. This invested less time on “story”, more on intervention incorporating different types of loss experience. Handouts were distributed on research efficacy in grief interventions, and broaching conversations about loss with suggestions for conversation starters. The 2018 workshop emphasised understanding the purpose of practitioner response in grief and loss interventions and applying core skills. The additional time allowed for increased interaction in small group discussion, with feedback structured around three key questions:

- What is your purpose?
- What main loss issues are present?
- What interventions would you use, and why?

In addressing the question regarding what assists social workers to operationalise an effective grief and loss response, and then describe it meaningfully afterwards, evaluations showed the workshop increased participant understanding and confidence in acute grief and loss work. They also expressed gratitude for the opportunity to share practice knowledge and refresh generalist social work skills for attending to people experiencing loss and grief, linking them with resources and support services.

REFINING THE TRAINING

The practical or emotional, iterative or perceptive interventions involved in grief and loss social work are perhaps anticipated by the tension between what the loss experience brings to a person, and the recognition that humans are not a tabula rasa upon which grief is written. The Grief and Loss Working Party will further refine the training to equip hospital social workers in the difficult task of conceptualising loss to address the immediate needs of the patient and family, including those beyond the primary carer role, as well as the treating

team and health system. Training focussed on practice uses theory as a foundation from which social workers respond pragmatically to those complex needs. Much of our grief and loss understanding is necessarily conceptual, but balancing the philosophical with the operational challenges both practitioners and educators.

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Practice Reflection

A Transformative Research Experience at Black Dog Institute

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ABSTRACT

This reflective writing piece discusses the various and unexpected impacts an intensive staff pilot research placement at the Black Dog Institute (BDI) had on my understanding of, and attitude to, research as a social worker. Pivotal were the ethos of the BDI and the discovery of research design and methodologies compatible with social work values. This piece aims to inspire readers to enquire further into research with a view to initiating or collaborating in new projects.

Keywords: *Suicide prevention; Research; Knowledge translation; Staff development innovation; Social work values*

HAT IN THE RING AND JUMPING IN

I graduated with a BSW (Hons) in 1984 with a very particular understanding of research and researchers that did not include me as a researcher. Blumenfield and Epstein sum up the situation faced by many social workers:

...practitioners who are exposed to research educators in the classroom develop a “trained incapacity” to engage in research because their understanding of what research is, is overly perfectionistic, incompatible with their practice values and/or their organisational role-requirements. As a result, practitioners themselves come to believe that they have no interest in or ability to do research. (Blumenfield & Epstein, 2002, pp. 2–3)

It would be 33 years before I would act to challenge my notions of research and my research abilities. In May 2017, I noticed a call for expressions of interest by the NSW Mid North Coast Local Health District (MNCLHD) offering three Staff Research Placement (SRP) opportunities in Sydney for the month of July 2017.

There were three collaborating Sydney-based research organisations: The Garvan Institute of Medical Research, Neuroscience Research Australia (NeuRA) and the Black Dog Institute (BDI), each offering a number of research topic areas. The latter was of most relevance to my counsellor role at Lismore Sexual Health Service, owing to the BDI’s focus on mental health research excellence and the topic area of suicide prevention.

Among the primary aims of the SRP pilot project was the provision of an in-depth research experience for staff including observation, participation and where possible, contribution to existing research; further there was the opportunity to gain insights into the demands of being a researcher, research processes and to explore research questions arising from everyday clinical practice.

Below is an excerpt from my application addressing why I wanted to undertake the placement and how it fitted with my professional experience and interests:

Research that can help to prevent suicide and enhance people’s lives by providing evidence-based information about how to support individuals, families and communities is vital. As a seasoned social worker/counsellor with over 30 years’ experience in a variety of settings, both city and rural, suicide is a prominent issue. In my current role, at Lismore Sexual Health Service, a large portion of my time is spent counselling people living with HIV, of whom many have contemplated or attempted suicide in the past. I think there are many factors involved when people begin to think about ending their life. I am interested in people’s lived experiences.

I value research that can have a social impact and improve wellbeing and quality of life, that can support people more fully to live rich and meaningful lives rather than lives of disconnection and despair. Whilst I have helped others in their research projects, the main “research” I have initiated has been around evaluating projects I have conducted and/or devising questionnaires. I would like to gain the confidence and knowledge to

initiate or contribute to research that will benefit clients. There is research that informs practice, but I am also interested in practiced-based research.

Crucial in my decision to apply were four excellent student social work placement experiences; a favourite part of my social work degree and I remember each placement more than classroom-based learning. Hence, an SRP steeped in experiential learning held numerous appeals including the potential to become an “activated” researcher.

LEAVING THE COMFORT ZONE

My main worry was around needing to commit to the development of a publication on return to the Local Health District. In truth, this was scarier than the share household prospect of living with two unmet men – the other successful applicants. While acknowledging all my gender-focused concerns for safety, as it transpired, we were collegial house-mates and sharing our varied research placement experiences provided a vital aspect of peer-to-peer learning in my development towards becoming a researcher. Lee, a doctor at Coffs Harbour hospital, was placed with The Garvan while Vince, a nurse from Coffs Harbour specialising in Parkinson’s disease, was placed with Neuroscience Research Australia. I am being transparent about these fears because I think it is important to consider how fear gets in the way of pursuing opportunities. Writing this journal article was enormously challenging. One suggestion for future programs would be to guide participants more clearly around the placement research post-writing expectations and offer additional support.

MAXIMISING MULTIPLE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Key placement aspects that supported my transition to active researcher at BDI included:

Firstly, good organisation and utilisation of my time on a brief placement. I was given a comprehensive orientation, a security access card, my own desk and computer and warmly welcomed by everyone.

Secondly, some autonomy to tailor my learning; for example, I met with researchers exploring novel neuro-stimulation techniques for treating depression. I also mined the BDI website (www.blackdoginstitute.org.au) for clinical resources such as the Expert Insights podcasts.

Thirdly, access to multidisciplinary teams that are committed to research and include those with lived experience. I observed that BDI as an organisation walks the talk in terms of workplace mental health, fostering a supportive work environment including the design of the building.

Fourthly, the opportunity to be immersed in action-based research via my peripheral participation in a huge suicide prevention trial called LifeSpan; an evidence-based, integrated approach to suicide prevention that includes nine key strategies:

- Crisis care and aftercare
- Psychosocial and pharmacotherapy treatments

- GP capacity building and support
- Frontline staff training
- Gatekeeper training
- Schools programs
- Community campaigns
- Media guidelines
- Means restrictions

(Black Dog Institute, 2017; Ridani et al., 2016).

Twelve Commonwealth funded Primary Health Network locations (e.g., Townsville) are adapting the LifeSpan model to suit local community needs. (Black Dog Institute, 2017).

LIFESPAN LEARNINGS

For my brief stay, I became a quasi-member of the LifeSpan Central Implementation Team (CIT), based at BDI, who assist the four NSW trial sites. Being attached to a specific project made the research placement meaningful and greatly enhanced my learning opportunities.

I was able to draw on my clinical experience to assist the CIT; however, my most satisfying research learning experience came about with the opportunity to contribute to the development of a clinical summary tool for use in emergency departments and other acute settings. What matters to me as a clinical social work practitioner, is the way that relevant research discoveries are transmitted to service providers to be incorporated into best practice for the benefit of the community. It was my first introduction to the concept of Knowledge Translation (KT) – moving research into the hands of people who can put it to practical use (“Knowledge translation,” 2017).

By being part of the research translation process I helped turn 12 pages of Guidelines (created using the Delphi consensus method) into a two-page clinical summary tool to be utilised by front-line health staff (Hill, Halliday, & Reavley, 2017, pp. 25–26). The Delphi consensus method combines evidence-based research with the wisdom of clinicians’ practice experience and of those with lived experience in equal measure (2017, p. 7); “nothing about us without us” becomes a key research and practice ethic.

I regard this methodology as highly respectful and egalitarian, and sympathetic with the three key social work values of respect for persons, social justice and professional integrity (Australian Association of Social Workers, 2010, p. 12). It was refreshing and inspiring

to discover this consensus research process as a shining example of what I would consider ethical, evidence-based research practice in action.

On this topic of KT strategies, I was further enthused when introduced to the transformative potential of the creative arts to convey research findings meaningfully to diverse audiences including those that are the subjects of and/or affected by the research (Parsons & Boydell, 2012, p. 2). In an Australian context, The Wobbly Hub Art Project collaboration is one innovation that included the conceptual creation of a 3-D interactive art object designed to share knowledge about the lived experience of rural people with disabilities, their families, carers and therapists using sounds, prose and poetry (Faculty of Health Services University of Sydney, 2015, p. 1). This active desire to convey results to local communities in an accessible and engaging manner demonstrates respect and inclusiveness.

My placement within a LifeSpan team afforded me many learning opportunities to understand the complexities of research at different stages. For example, the dynamic collaborations involved in funding such a large-scale project, the detailed work involved in gaining ethics approval for research, and the many different methodologies used to answer different research questions and provide varying levels of evidence (Ridani et al., 2016, p. 40). Most importantly, what became clear to me via my exposure to LifeSpan was not only how this project was using research evidence to shape practice – the bedrock of the model being trialled – but conversely, how the program was developing practice-informed evidence through sophisticated, evaluative design structures.

Social workers have a professional responsibility to view concerns, such as suicidality, within a broader cultural and political context. This was beyond the LifeSpan brief. Significantly, my placement at BDI in 2017 was the year of the “Marriage Equality” debate and subsequent Australian plebiscite. I want to believe that the “Yes” outcome and resultant legislative change will have a positive, measurable impact on the mental wellbeing of same-sex-attracted peoples, including reduction in suicidality (Jacobs & Morris, 2016, p. 9). Anecdotally, this is what I am hearing from clients and so I view that legislation as a big picture “P” for suicide prevention.

CONCLUSION

I fully endorse the MNCLHD Staff Research Placement model as a pathway to becoming research active. There were multiple learning opportunities available through my placement at BDI. Integral to the pilot success was my inclusion and participation in a specific research project, LifeSpan. Discovering research design, delivery and dissemination of findings in alignment with social work values was inspiring and central to this was the calibre of the staff. In particular, the women who guided me during the placement I consider remarkable with their intellect, research acumen, achievements and dedication coupled with pedagogic generosity. To see myself as a part of this in the role of budding researcher was transformative. By shifting my notion of research, this placement has increased my confidence to pursue collaborations with work colleagues.

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BOOK REVIEW

Theoretical Perspectives for Direct Social Work Practice - A Generalist-Eclectic Approach (Third Edition)

Nick Cody and Peter Lehmann (Eds.)
Springer Publishing, New York 2016
ISBN: 978-0826119476, pp.477, Paperback. AU\$103.80

This social work practice text is targeted at all students of social work and related fields such as counselling and psychotherapy. It endorses the eclectic use of theory using a problem-solving approach (p. 61) and draws heavily on recent research.

A comprehensive book edited by well-known authors, Professors Nick Cody and Peter Lehmann, it is a detailed and in-depth publication. Revised and updated, the book includes a new section on critical theories, and a chapter on empowerment theory. Strengths-based social work has been added to the section on meta-theories and there are new chapters on emotion-focused and collaborative therapies.

As a USA book, there are some differences in language and, of course, practice context that come to the reader's notice; however, this is not intrusive. Careful attention has been paid to the critique of all topics, drawing from extensive literature. Endorsement of the 'helping relationship' and a 'common factors model' was, for this reader, very reassuring (pp. 26, 61-77). All the content, I believe, is relevant to current explorations and practice experience here in Aotearoa New Zealand and, I strongly suspect, in Australia.

The book is divided into four parts: Part 1, The Generalist-Eclectic Approach. Part 2, Metatheories for Direct Social Work Practice. Part 3, Mid-level Theories for direct social work practice, with Part 4 containing the Summary and Conclusion. Part 3 is further divided into subsections A–E– Section A: Psychodynamic Theories; Section B: Cognitive Behavioral Theories; Section C: Humanistic Theories; Section D: Critical Theories; Section E: Postmodern Theories. Within subsections A-E, 14 specific models and therapies are addressed by a wide range of contributors with relevant expertise from across the USA and Canada. Part 4 is a summary and conclusion revisiting the generalist-eclectic approach. A feature I appreciated was the application of theory to the four phases of helping and the inclusion of case examples in most chapters.

As it would be impossible to attempt to do justice to the entire book in this review, I have selected two chapters (6 and 16) that were of particular interest to me, to discuss in more detail.

Chapter 6 (Strengths-based Social Work: A Social Work Metatheory to Guide the Profession): Here four social work educator/practitioners give an overview of Strengths Based Practice (SBP) and connect to the writing of Jane Addams (1902) and beyond to Aristotle, Greek and Roman philosophy, Christian and Buddhist scholarship, Yoga and Chinese medicine.

The chapter looks at compatibility with the generalist-eclectic approach and the USA NASW code of ethics. The Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics and Social Workers Registration Board Code of Conduct compare favourably as they too draw from a strengths approach.

Aspects of modern psychology from early practitioners such as James (1902), Buhler (1935), Jung (1993), Frankl (1967), Maslow (1943) and Rogers (1961) are discussed. Human capacity-building, constructive growth experiences, positive reinforcement and many others, seen as leading to a strengths and skills building model are additionally discussed. Strengths principles originally created by Saleebey (1992) and the strengths standards created by Rapp et al. (2005) have been combined by Manthey, Knowles, Asher, and Wahap (2011) and expressed (pp. 136-137) as:

1. SBSW is goal orientated.
2. SBSW contains a systematic means of assessing strengths.
3. SBSW sees the environment as rich in resources and explicit methods are used to leverage client and environmental strengths for goal attainment.
4. The SBSW relationship is hope inducing.
5. In SBSW the provision of meaningful choices is central and individuals have the authority to choose.
6. Strengths-based practice assumes that we best serve clients by collaborating with them.
7. SBSW assumes that trauma, abuse illness, and struggle may be harmful but they may also be sources of challenge and opportunity.
8. SBSW assumes that the worker does not know the upper limits of individuals' capacity to grow and change.

SBSW is then applied to the phases of helping – Engagement, Assessment, Intervention and Progress Monitoring, Evaluation and Termination. A relevant case example covering all phases is given, along with a succinct critique of SBSW before the summary concludes, “Viewing SBSW as a metatheory reflects the central importance of its values, assumptions, and principles for all social work practice, and this will be useful in moving the field forward.” (p. 150).

The second chapter (16) I would like to highlight in this book is by Sarah Todd, an associate professor at Canada's Carleton University. Sarah gives a succinct overview of feminist theory, its constructs, historical development and connection to social work.

The theory is applied to the phases of helping and its significant application to family and group work is explored. The limitations and strengths of feminist approaches to social work are identified and people and their situations most suited to the application and integration of feminist theory discussed.

The case example of a student with an unplanned pregnancy enables a range of feminist approaches to be highlighted and the compatibility with the generalist-eclectic framework demonstrated. Applying a feminist analysis that attends to issues of diversity and empowerment ensures social justice is at the core of all work done. Feminist social work is presented as able to use a wide range of theories depending upon the client, the presenting problem, and clinical setting.

I found this book was best approached in small instalments (one chapter at a time), allowing plenty of time for digestion, reflection and introspection as it led me to explore and challenge my own philosophical and personal practice framework and some individual experiences of case work within it.

I would recommend this book for its intended student audience and for all social work educators and field educators/supervisors who want to support their own and help develop their colleagues' practice. Resources for instructors, including an Instructor's Manual and PowerPoint slides have been developed and are available from the publisher.

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