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CONTENTS

Editorial

This issue again brings together a diverse range of papers on social work and welfare education. In this issue, we have a critical analysis of the research literature on client anger written with the goal of improving welfare professionals' understanding and capacity to respond to such anger which can be common in practice (Fiona Bosly). (Fiona's paper was one of the recipients of the 2007 AASWWE Best Paper awards as the best paper by a postgraduate student.) The next article is a paper which critically reflects on the term empathy by examining various definitions offered, reviewing previous research and then exploring some common assumptions about empathy, before concluding with ways in which both helpers and educators can learn and enhance their empathy skills (Susan Gair). The next paper is on developing a professional framework and training program for workers in Youth Justice Services Tasmania designed to enable them to practice restorative justice that again has valuable lessons for others (Steve Rogerson and Helen Jessop). Finally, there is a report on a research study that attempted to change students' attitudes to research at the beginning research subject at La Trobe University, which has implications for those teaching social work research to often reluctant students (Martin Ryan).

This third online issue of "Advances in Social Work and Welfare Education" is my last issue as co-editor as I will be leaving academia at the end of 2008 to take up a practice position. I have very much enjoyed my time as co-editor of "Advances" which stretches back to 1992 when I was a member of the editorial team at Monash University.

I would like to thank my current co-editor, Peter Camilleri, for his ever ready support to me. I would also like to thank the Executive of AASWWE during the time I have been co-editor for their assistance and support. Both Peter and I would like to thank our colleagues throughout Australia who generously act as reviewers of papers. They freely give up their precious time to conscientiously review submissions to the Journal.

Martin Ryan
Co-Editor
December 2008

Working with Angry Clients: A Critical Analysis of the Research Literature.

Fiona Bosly[1]

Social Workers in the frontline of practice often work with vulnerable people and are therefore more likely to be exposed to the expression of that vulnerability. As workers they are often dealing with the powerful emotional states of their clients, of which anger is one. How workers understand that anger and can work with it has implications for their clients and themselves. This paper offers a critical analysis and integration of research on anger for the purpose of improving social workers', and other welfare professionals', understanding of, and capacity to respond to client anger. It is intended that such understanding will enhance their practice and assist their clients towards change. This paper is aimed at informing direct practice education in social work and welfare fields.

Introduction

Frontline service workers and their experiences with client anger are relatively underresearched. There is little research into this area at all and, as will be discussed, anger itself is not well understood. Anger is a fascinating emotion and most of us experience it at one time or another. Surprising then that little is known in social work research on this important area. This paper offers a critical analysis and integration of research on anger. It will review current research on anger, explore some of the themes in social work practice and finally discuss some of the implications for social work education and practice.

This paper addresses the question 'What do social workers need to know about the research on anger to be more effective in working with clients who experience anger?'. This is an important question as workers are often unprepared to work with client anger. Indeed they may confuse anger with other emotional states. If client anger can be identified and worked with, frontline service workers can enhance their own skills in working with their clients in order to assist their clients towards change.

Current Research on Anger

What is Anger?

Defining anger is problematic and there is a great deal of confusion around what anger is exactly (Johnson, 1990). Although anger is a frequently felt emotion, there is no consensus, in the literature, about it (Schieman, 1999). To further complicate matters, anger is often approached from 'numerous theoretical perspectives… resulting in a perplexing variety of points of view and styles of analysis' (Kiewitz, 2002 p. 10). This means that there are differing perspectives on anger and proponents of each perspective would argue convincingly for the validity of their position. To gain a broader perspective of how anger is viewed, research from sociology, medical, psychology and political fields will be reviewed. This will help broaden understanding of the shared and differing perceptions around anger. Anger is often explored as an individual experience, particularly in psychology. The experience of anger is frequently researched in relation to its behavioural, physiological and

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She would like to acknowledge the help and advice given to her by Associate Professor Karen Healy, in the preparation of this article.

psychological features. Smedslund (1993) however, asserts that anger should not be defined in this way but rather through these features. He states that to define anger in any other way is to 'retreat from logic to intuition' (Smedslund, 1993 p. 31). This position seeks to find a logical way to explain the components of anger and would take a more objective stance. However, to define anger through its features may present a challenge. Anger is a powerful emotion and is often experienced physiologically, psychologically and behaviourally, so to try and define it logically, is challenging.

Although there are different frameworks for understanding anger, a multidimensional approach, already outlined, to anger is fairly consistent in the research. For example, Kiewitzs' definition encapsulates the physiological, psychological and behavioural states associated with anger. He uses a definition from Spielberger's 1999 State-Trait Anger Inventory. This states that anger is a psychobiological emotional state or condition that consists of feelings that vary in intensity from mild irritation or annoyance to intense fury and rage, accompanied by activation of neuroendocrine processes and arousal of the autonomous nervous system (Spielberger, 1999 p. 19 cited in Kiewitz 2000 p. 23).

This definition adds to the general confusion as it is quite fluid in its range of intensity and is more a description rather than a definition of anger. As already noted the definition covers the full experience of anger in that the thoughts, feelings, physiological and behavioural components that anger can arouse are noted. This multidimensional perspective is used considerably in research. (Berkowitz & Harmon-Jones, 2004; Eckhardt, Barbour & Stuart, 1997; Kuppens, Van Mechelen, Smits & De Boeck, 2003; Thomas, 2003b) and is often quite a subjective description.

Another area for investigation by researchers is how individuals appraise provocation. Considered in this approach is how pre-cursors to anger impact in relation to anger arousal. If the provocation is strong enough, the felt unpleasantness can lead to anger arousal. This model allows for the possibility of different experiences as anger provocations. It would account for why some people become angry at certain events and others do not. Berkowitz and Harmon-Jones (2004) research explores this area, however no definition is offered, instead they proffer 'a general conception of anger' (Berkowitz & Harmon-Jones, 2004 p. 108).

Frontline service workers are more likely to work with vulnerable and marginalised groups and are therefore more likely to be exposed to client anger (Trotter, 2004), which may be a response to their circumstances. This response, in these contexts, could be construed as a form of communication. Lyman (2004) states that the construction of anger as a psychological problem may be a political manoeuvre to silence angry speech and that anger is harnessed by liberal societies to protect the 'political order' (Lyman, 2004 p. 134). Social workers, working with the disempowered and oppressed may agree more with this analysis, especially if the perceived source of their client's oppression also has the power to negatively classify their client's emotional states. The possibility that people who experience social disadvantages are more likely to be angry is a common theme in the social work literature (Middleman & Wood, 1990; Mullaly, 1993; Trotter, 2004).

Anger as an outcome of social disadvantage is frequently cited in research (Leonard, 1997; Mullaly, 1993; Schieman, 1999). Social disadvantage has many faces and those experiencing poverty and racism, for example, often have to fight to be heard, particularly if the dominant culture has the power to define their experiences. Although there are links here with Lyman's political analysis, there are also strong links to the perspective of anger as a response to a threat to self. Social disadvantage, no matter what its content, would be experienced at an individual level and would possibly provoke feelings of powerlessness, which in themselves are strong precursors to anger (Berkowitz & Harmon-Jones, 2004).

In the biomedical literature angry feelings are associated with some disorders in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-Fourth Edition (DSM-IV) However, Conger, Conger, Edmondson, Tescher & Smolin (2003) note there is no inclusion of anger as a disorder in the manual, it is more a symptom of other disorders. This is credited to the lack of 'an agreed upon definition' (Conger, Conger, Edmondson, Tescher & Smolin, 2003 p. 249). It is possible that the form of anger the manual is referring to is more about rage, hostility, violence and aggression. As research has shown anger, in all its forms, to have far reaching implications on the health and well being of the individual (Conger et al., 2003; Linden et al., 2003; Tavris, 1989), this lack of a definition minimises the links between anger and health outcomes.

The many definitions of anger create a dilemma. With no consensus around a definition, anger can be confused with other emotional and behavioural states. As already indicated, anger, aggression, hostility (and other 'negative' emotional states) are often bracketed together leaving the reader unclear. These multiple definitions remain a subject of considerable debate. For the purpose of this paper the Berkowitz and Harmon-Jones, (2004) understanding of anger will be used as a definition. That is, it is a response to how individuals appraise provocation and their response to the felt unpleasantness. This definition implies a dynamic process both of the expression and experience of anger. This analysis will attempt to explore some of those dynamics, within the worker/client paradigm. Anger is an important emotion and it is necessary for workers to understand its usefulness to clients.

Why should workers take notice of client anger?

Theoretical and empirical investigations point to a number of uses of anger arousal. In a positive sense it is viewed as an attempt to restore some social balance that has been violated (in the individual's mind) and to energise and organise behaviour (Berkowitz & Harmon-Jones, 2004; Conger et al., 2003; Frijda, 1988; Lemerise & Dodge, 1993; Thomas, 2003b; Viscott, 1996). One purpose of anger, according to Viscott (1996), is to 'reinforce the expression of hurt' (Viscott, 1996 p. 81) and is an attempt to effectively prevent more hurt happening. For example, it is not uncommon for parents of children who have been taken into protective care, to behave with anger and aggression, to blame and attack those who remove the children, and to protest their innocence. That the processes occurring hurt them would be hard to disprove.

Client anger may indicate that they feel under threat. The expression of anger is a process of adaptation to aid 'the survival of the species' (Lemerise & Dodge, 1993 p. 537). Anger is adaptive in that it helps to organise and regulate 'physiological and psychological processes related to self-defence and mastery as well as the regulation of social and interpersonal behaviours' (Lemerise & Dodge, 1993 p. 537). What this means is that when under perceived threat, anger directs the individuals attention to the strong bodily and mental processes that occur. The individual may then use those processes as personal information to possibly enhance the relationship. These processes of defence, mastery and regulation are also shaped by the cultural rules around anger as the individual is socialised by family and community. Expectations about cultural rules and anger may also have a bearing on the interaction between frontline workers and their clients, particularly if the client or the worker feels that strong body and mental arousal.

An interesting link here is that infants too can experience anger arousal. Research with regard to the display of anger in infants and what elicits anger in the infant is most insightful. The provocations listed are 'physical restraint', 'interference with an infant's activity', and 'physical pain' (Lemerise & Dodge, 1993 p. 539). Frustration is also listed as another pre-cursor as infants display anger 'during extinction in a contingency learning task' (p. 539). I would suggest that these provocations would influence a similar reaction in non-infants. What is also interesting about this research is that infants, displaying an angry response, have not yet had time to learn the cultural rules around the display and expression of anger. Infants, it would seem, are responding to a felt unpleasantness.

The concept of felt unpleasantness is explored in more depth by Berkowitz and Harmon-Jones (2004). They suggest that there are a number of reasons as to why people are more likely to become angry and for each individual those reasons vary, according to what is personally important to them. They conclude that the individual's appraisal of the angering event and the felt unpleasantness, rather than the event itself may contribute to the level of arousal (Berkowitz & Harmon-Jones, 2004). If workers noticed that arousal in their clients, it may present them with possibilities for practice in working with their clients. In other words, it opens up different opportunities to assist clients to explore and help them understand their anger and the associated issues.

Another way to understand associated issues is through the concept that anger is also perceived as a moral emotion. When under threat by perceived unjust or unfair acts the individual may respond with anger. There is a long tradition of anger as a moral emotion in both 'contemporary and historic writings' (Johnson, 1990 p. 32) and one of the conditions of anger arousal, as a moral stance, is the perceived legitimacy, of the individual, of the right to be angry given the provocation. This stance may link with the perspective of Berkowitz and Harmon-Jones (2004) in that the individual may appraise the event as personally important to them and feel indignant about being obstructed in some way.

The lack of an agreed definition of anger implies there is still much to be understood about this emotion. Intersubjective communication allows us to experience the other, to permit their experiences to enter our consciousness so that we are 'testing out [our] understanding of each other and [our] knowledge of something' (Moustakas, 1994 p. 57). In Depth Psychology, Carl Jung (1961) posited other ways of knowing our reality with an emphasis on listening to 'the margins of our experience for thoughts, images, and bodily knowings that hold alternative perspectives and insights'

(Watkins, 1997 p. 2). This knowing and integrating of the internal self, Jung believed, contributed to differentiation. He believed this process involved assessing the self in process and reintegrating new ego information (Geoghegan & Stoehr, 2002). Is it possible that anger can contain ego information, which may be lost through blame, denial and justification? Anger, as already stated, is often a subjective and inner experience. 'Psychic life is accessible to us not only through self-experience but also through experiences of others' (Husserl, 1981 p. 23-24). So one's inner life is revealed through conscious experience with a view to revealing its subjective meaning. Frontline workers are exquisitely situated to illuminate this topic of client anger and bring new and exciting information to light. They are exposed to the dynamics of their clients and due to the intersubjective communication they are able to experience their clients in conscious ways.

Primarily then, anger can be viewed as a warning, an expression of distress, a cultural expression, shaped by rules of the culture, a provocation and a response to a perceived social inequality, as well as an attempt to restore a power balance. These are not necessarily negative processes; however it does direct attention to anger as a perceived negative emotion.

What are the perceived negative effects of anger?

In much of the research on anger, it suggests that anger is perceived as a negative process and to be feared. Johnson (1990) states that anger, hostility and aggression are 'often used interchangeably in the research literature as well as among the lay public' (Johnson, 1990 p. 10). This view gives rise to the belief that anger is negative and harmful and that when displayed, could escalate into violence and aggression. That aggression and violence is a logical extension of anger is indicated in the literature (Averill, 1982; Berkowitz & Harmon-Jones, 2004). The implication here is that anger, violence and aggression are parts of the same emotional state. This inference would enhance the negative perceptions around anger. Anger, as shaped by culture, is explored by Carol Tavris (1989). She concludes that anger is culturally shaped and that there are rules about the expression of anger. For example, she too draws the link between anger and violence in dominant Anglo American culture and states that within the rules of that culture, there is a belief that negative emotions, such as anger, can be so powerful and overwhelming that they are beyond rational control. If this is accepted as a cultural rule it has adverse implications for frontline service workers and may expose them to considerable risk. It is important therefore for frontline workers to understand the differences in what the culture terms as acceptable anger, what a negative and potentially unsafe process is and what can be worked with.

Anger is often regarded as one of the negative emotions. Negative emotions are more powerful in directing our attention to the issue at hand (Mahoney, 1991 p.190). Mahoney also notes that the negative emotions are 'generally associated with reduced curiosity and exploratory behaviour' (Mahoney, 1991 p.191). This means that when aroused with anger, the individual is less likely to want to explore why they are angry. This could be quite significant and could have disturbing implications for workers, during heightened emotional exchanges. For example, when working with angry clients, strategies to engage with them may not be understood or heard particularly if their curiosity is reduced. This could be further complicated if aggression is present, as it could leave the worker vulnerable to a physical or verbal attack.

Another perspective of anger as a negative process is the belief that it can be a form of manipulation. Anger used in this way could be used to gain support by displaying hurt or disappointment as a guilt-ridden process. The display of hurt or disappointment as a means to get ones own needs met, may mean that the individual presents in a victim role (Viscott, 1996). There is also the probability that those fearful of their anger are more likely to not display it overtly. To do so might risk being disliked or unloved (Viscott, 1996). These descriptions, although manipulative, could be hostile in nature and do indicate the continuing confusion around what anger is.

As already stated, anger is often confused with hostility, violence and aggression (Averill, 1982; Eckhardt, Babcock & Homack, 2004; Ronan, Dreer, Dollard & Ronan, 2004). That it has a strong negative affect (Berkowitz & Harmon-Jones, 2004), that it can negatively influence health (Conger et al., 2003; Tavris, 1989), that it has an intense physical arousal (Thomas, 2003b) which is negatively experienced, that it can lead to maladaptive behaviour (Deffenbacher, 1993), that it needs treatment (Conger et al., 2003) are just some of the attitudes, in the research literature that create the sense that anger is a negative process. Where anger, violence and aggression are intermixed, the emphasis is on deficits in emotional intelligence (Winters, Clift, & Dutton, 2004), negative interaction patterns (Holtzworth-Munroe, Smutzler & Bates, 1997) and how to assess anger in potentially violent men (Eckhardt et al., 1997). Frontline service workers, working with vulnerable and disenfranchised people may be more exposed to the anger of their clients. Reasons for that anger may vary but it is important that frontline workers are given the opportunity to understand the many ways that anger can be expressed. It is important for them to be able to identify the different forms of anger so they can decide whether it can be worked with. This will better prepare them to work with client anger. The research literature on preparing frontline workers to work with client anger has little to say about this topic.

Themes in Social Work Practice

In the previous section I have considered current research on anger and front-line workers experiences in working with client anger. I now turn to the social work literature regarding understanding and responding to anger in practice.

Frontline service workers experiences with client anger

Research on frontline service workers and their experiences with client anger is very limited and, as already discussed, anger itself is not well understood (Gianakos, 2002). Whilst it is not the focus of this paper, there is substantial research literature on violence and aggression in the health and welfare work place, (Abdennur, 2000; Kiewitz, 2002; Shields & Kiser, 2003) particularly towards nurses (Deans, 2004; Thomas, 2003a). Some of the research literature looks at anger in the workplace and focuses on anger between workers as well as worker anger towards management (Abdennur, 2000; Kiewitz, 2002; Sloan, 2004).

The ability to express anger may be an issue for workers and their clients. Research around this area concludes that status has some impact on the ability to express anger. Sloan (2004) posits that the higher the status, the more freely anger may be expressed. Those of lower status have more constraints placed on them and are more reluctant to express anger overtly. For example, workers who feel angry but feel unable to express it believe that to do so may place their employment at risk. This can render the expression of anger, in the workplace, more unlikely for those of lower status (Sloan, 2004). This has ramifications for both frontline workers and their clients as a number of factors may be significant. One of those factors may be gender. Gender is significant in frontline service work as women make up the greater number in this area of employment (Meagher & Healy, 2005). Gender is also a significant feature when status comes into play. As women generally have lower social status (Erickson & Ritter, 2001) this raises a twofold possibility for them. The first is that, due to their lower status, women are more likely to be exposed to the anger of others. Secondly, they are more likely to hide their response, particularly if it perceived as negative (Erickson & Ritter, 2001; Sloan, 2004). Research indicates that these processes are factors in what constitutes emotional labour (Erickson & Ritter, 2001; Hochschild, 1983). There is limited research around emotional displays between worker and client, and even less on the gendered nature of those exchanges. Worker and client interactions contain significant information. How workers are affected by and respond to displays of client anger is a feature of Garot's (2004) study. He focused on the 'emotional synergy' that workers and clients shared (Garot, 2004 p. 739). What he means by this is that the combined emotional interaction between the worker and client has the potential to be greater than the sum of their individual effects. He found that the emotional synergy deeply shaped the interaction between worker and clients and strongly influenced worker decisions. This is particularly significant for front line workers as there may be a number of implications for them and their practice, if this emotional synergy is not clearly understood and managed, particularly when client anger is present. Frontline workers are exposed to a number of processes when working with client anger. Their status within the organisation along with their gender may have profound impacts on their own sense of confidence and effectiveness. Coupled with this is the angry client and the expectation both professionally and organisationally that this be managed. Workers may be unclear about how to do this, given the lack of preparation and research about this topic. There has however, been some research about frontline service workers and emotional labour and this paper will now give some attention to that research.

Emotional Labour

In the previous section I considered frontline workers experiences of client anger. In this segment I will reflect on emotional labour with respect to social work practice. The concept of emotional labour has received some attention in the research literature, (Erickson & Wharton, 1997 p. 560; Garot, 2004; Korczynski, 2003), along with the management of emotions (Garot, 2004; Hochschild, 1983). James (1989) defines emotional labour as the 'work involved in dealing with other peoples' feelings, a core component of which is the regulation of emotions' (James, 1989 p. 15). There is a growing interest in the area of human service work and emotional labour or management, especially the interactional component between the worker and the client (or customer). Emotional labour (Erickson & Wharton, 1997; Hochschild, 1979) 'is seen as an integral part of service sector jobs because of the intensely social aspects of these roles' (Erickson & Wharton, 1997 p. 189). This means that the basis for interaction is based on relationship and the social rules around establishing relationship. Hochschild, surprised, at the generally orderly way emotional interaction occurs, suggests an area for inquiry is in the social rules about the way we manage emotions in service interactions (Hochschild, 1979). Anger, in service interaction remains largely unexplored within social work research. There is an emphasis on engagement with clients through a number of models. For example, workers are encouraged to understand client needs (Maidment, 2004), how to engage with reluctant clients (Trotter, 2004) and build on client strengths (Saleebey, 2006). All of these processes raise the possibility of client anger at some point in the interaction. There is, however, little emphasis on how to work with this anger, other than in broad terms.

A strategy workers may adopt, in the face of client anger, is one of detachment. Whilst there is often professional and management expectation to express care, empathy and concern for the client, the worker may also be encouraged to remain detached in the face of clients' emotional displays (Garot, 2004; Sloan, 2004). This is not necessarily a productive process for the worker and may create a dilemma for them. Workers exposed to client anger may wish to 'create a contextually appropriate emotional display' (Erickson & Wharton, 1997 p. 189) which 'they may not necessarily privately feel' (Wharton, 1993 p. 208). The literature is not clear as to the psychological consequences of this form of emotional labour and whether the wellbeing of workers is negatively affected by the suppression of personal feelings (Erickson & Ritter, 2001; Hochschild, 1983). If they are negatively affected, might that contribute to workers feeling angry towards clients or the organisation they work for and might it also contribute to a rise in their own anxiety levels? For example, in social services, Hochschild (1983) argues that workers who experience emotional interactions as inauthentic are more likely to experience stress and burnout, particularly if there is low job autonomy.

Another feature of emotional labour is the emotional expectations placed on frontline workers when working with vulnerable groups. Sloan (2004) highlights that workers in the service sector are encouraged to not only suppress negative emotions, but to also display friendly and positive emotions. Workers are expected to be empathetic and engaging with their clients, even when challenging them, 'understanding your client's situation fully and conveying empathy are important elements in effective communication and confrontation' (O'Donohue, 2004 p. 227). This means that the frontline worker has to walk a fine line between keeping the client on side and risking a rupture to the relationship by challenging them. As already discussed, a client in a vulnerable place could perceive the challenge as a provocation and the felt unpleasantness could escalate into anger. There are a number of implications here; one is that if the worker is unprepared or misunderstands the client's anger, it places them at risk. That risk may be physical; however a more subtle risk is a psychological one, such as loss of confidence or a rise in anxiety.

Another component of emotional labour is that, for many human service workers, there is an expectation that they encourage the client to work towards self empowerment. As part of that strategy and to minimise feelings of powerlessness, the worker may encourage the client to shape and direct their interactions. Within this agenda, there may be times when client and worker expectations are not compatible and at this point as the client discovers a different agenda, they may react angrily (Korczynski, 2003). Again, workers who are not prepared for or have not anticipated an angry response may be placed at risk.

Research on emotional labour provides some indication of the expectations that are placed on workers either by their organization or the role they are in. These expectations include impacts that workers may experience when working with emotional processes of their clients. A number of questions are therefore raised around risk to the worker and challenges some of the accepted processes of engaging with clients. As already stated, statistics show that the social services sector, particularly at the frontline, are mainly female.

The suggestion that emotion work is gendered has also been observed in a number of studies (Erickson, 2004; Wharton, 1996). The research shows that for women more than men, job satisfaction is linked to work being meaningful and important to them (Wharton, 1996). For the workers who exhibited more confidence, it was clear that job satisfaction came with their sense of doing useful work with clients. Despite client anger, they were able to manage their own emotional state and enhance the client's experience. This links with Hochschild's research which contends that, within their working lives, women use their ability to handle feelings and relate to others in a practiced way (Hochschild, 1983). Erickson (2004) does a similar piece of research in that she explores gender differences in workers and their approach to the emotional demands of their jobs.

Unlike Hochschild, Erickson contends that emotional labour is not necessarily onerous and that when workers bring an authentic sense of self to their work, it has the ability to enhance their professional sense of self.

There are mixed findings about gender differences in the arousal and display of anger. Thomas (2003b), in a series of studies found some commonalities in the experiences of anger for men and women, however she also found there were significant gender differences as well. Gianakos (2002) cites a number of studies on anger in the workplace and her research states that no significant gender differences were found. She states that gender role, rather than gender may 'account for any differences in work related anger' (Gianakos, 2002 p. 158). This means that gender differences are attributed to different motivations in that women, in expressing anger openly, are more fearful of negative repercussions in their interpersonal relationships. For men, the expression of anger is more culturally linked with status and power and has less relationship sanctions.

Emotional intelligence posits that emotional regulation and the ability to know oneself, enhances the capability to relate more effectively (Goleman, 1995; Lyman, 2004; Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Thomas, 2003b). Thomas (1989, 1991, 1993, 2003) did several studies on men's and women's anger and highlighted different provocations for each gender. Research also indicates that men and women may express their anger differently with men more likely to express their anger directly and with strong revenge motives (Linden et al., 2003; Lowenstein, 2004; Thomas, 1989, 1991) Women however, instead of expressing anger are more likely to suffer from symptoms of anxiety, nervous tension and panic attacks (Lowenstein, 2004).

Averill's (1983) studies, whilst finding no differences in provocation, level of anger, intensity or frequency of anger between the genders, did find that women were four times more likely to cry. Given the differing findings about gender differences in the instigation and expression of anger, this information may be a factor when it comes to the gender of the worker and their client.

There are mixed findings in gender differences in emotional labour. What is clear is that research shows that when the frontline worker can bring an authentic sense of self to their work and behave in congruent ways according to their value system, it enhances their sense of doing good work. This has implications for good practice, especially if the frontline worker identifies with their role as helper.

Discussion and Implications

As the previous section has illustrated, social workers, working with the emotional processes of their clients adopt a number of strategies to manage these processes in their practice. I will now discuss some of the implications of working with client anger and direct attention to ways in which workers can enhance their own resiliency in the face of such difficult work.

An examination of some of the human services research literature reveals that whilst the effects of social injustices are talked about, in theoretical terms, client experience is framed in non-theoretical language. Terms such as powerlessness, helpless, vulnerable and at risk are used to describe clients' experiences. The expression of the experience of anger, within structural disadvantage, is not discussed in any real depth in the human services literature and frontline workers may be unprepared in their understanding of that expression. For example, it is one thing to understand that a client has experienced structural disadvantage, but it is quite another to work with the client's manifestations of that vulnerability.

Much of the human services literature, when discussing engagement and interaction with clients presents that experience as rational, logical and understated (Cleak & Egan, 2004; Egan, 2004; Farley, Smith & Boyle, 2006; Mandell & Schram, 2006). However the practice of working with clients is often overwhelming, in that they may present with multiple issues and can be emotionally complex and chaotic, particularly when angry. Workers may be unprepared in working with these clients and equally unprepared for the emotional labour needed to understand and engage with this degree of complexity. An understanding of anger and what it might mean and how it can be harnessed in the interests of client outcomes, would better prepare workers working with these vulnerable groups.

The human services research literature has a dearth of information about how to engage with angry clients and how to work with their anger. This may leave the worker vulnerable and exposed. Elsewhere I have highlighted a number of worker strategies to deal with client anger. One of those strategies is detachment. By detachment I mean frontline service workers are able to maintain a psychological distance from their clients. Detachment may be problematic however, for as Garot (2004) argues 'despite giving off an impression of detachment and neutrality, workers are unavoidable sensitive to the emotional displays of [clients]' (Garot, 2004 p. 736). In their role as helper, detachment may be experienced as inauthentic by the worker.

This may be problematic in that workers may be expected to display an appropriate emotional response, particularly when working with angry clients. If this response is one they do not 'privately feel', this has the potential to create an internal estrangement which may be psychologically damaging for them (Wharton, 1993). The notion of worker investment in working relationships is another strategy that workers use to enhance work with clients. Workers who are able to invest themselves in their role as helper, who remain authentic to that role, who are able to engage with clients at a personal level and believe their work was part of who they are, 'powerfully influenced the behaviour and expectations of both co-workers and customers' (Erickson, 2004 p. 550). This could be a significant point when working with angry clients, especially if both the frontline worker and the client recognizes and values the worker investment.

The ability to remain authentic within that investment is an important factor. The worker would need to walk that line that keeps them in touch with their own and the client's processes, especially their anger, and be able to communicate that effectively. The ability to build an authentic relationship with their clients would influence the client's ability to accept challenges from the worker, particularly at a time when anger is present. The ability to accept those challenges, and integrate the information may be what leads to change, for the client, and satisfaction for the worker. Whilst there may be a number of factors that contribute to workers investment in their clients, the research literature supports the notion that the agency in which the front line worker is situated, plays a vital role in workers sense of protection, support and safety (Glisson & Hemmelgarn, 1998; Jones, 2001; Tham, 2006). Frontline workers, working with challenging behaviours, such as anger, need opportunities for debriefing, supervision that encourages professional development and ongoing training in the management of angry clients. These factors would seem to contribute to a sense of being valued by the organization and assists and supports frontline workers to continue to invest themselves in their clients (Cearley, 2004).

Conclusion

In this analysis of the research literature I have argued that as anger remains undefined, it leaves the concept open to other interpretations. Anger itself has many positive uses and it is possible that those who understand the many forms of the expression of client anger are better equipped to assist their clients towards change. However as anger is often perceived as a negative process, and is confused with other emotional states, and as there is little in the human services literature on how to engage and work with anger, it does leave frontline service workers exposed, vulnerable and at risk. If workers feel at risk and are unable to articulate that risk, if they perceive that risk as part of their role as helper, their interactions would be infused with an emotional labour that may feel inauthentic and incongruent. This has far reaching implications for their practice. Direct practice with clients will be improved by better understanding of the nature of anger and social workers' capacity to engage authentically with it.

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Walking a Mile in Another Person's Shoes: Contemplating Limitations and Learning on the Road to Accurate Empathy

Susan Gair[1]

Empathy is a very familiar term in social work and welfare education. It generally is promulgated in the literature to mean accurately perceiving of, or feeling, the experiences and emotions of another. Yet a broader literature review reveals that some of the helping literature may present an unreachable or, conversely, quite a narrow vision of empathy. Further, the literature may offer a confused range of definitions and much of the literature may fail to offer clear guidance about how we might learn empathy, particularly in a cross-cultural context. In this article, relevant helping literature is reviewed regarding the definitions and limitations of empathy, previous research is reviewed, and some assumptions about empathy are explored. How helpers (and educators) might learn and enhance their empathy skills is contemplated.

Introduction

> *You have to be able to venture into worlds that aren't your own, otherwise you're extremely limited (Gavron cited in Bodey 2008, 16).*
>
> *Walk a mile in my shoes, walk a mile in my shoes, and before you abuse, criticise and accuse, walk a mile in my shoes (lyrics by Joe South, Lowry Music, Inc. 1969).*

In the social work and welfare curricula in the Department in which I teach, the concept of empathy is implicit in many of the subjects taught. It is discussed explicitly in the teaching of interpersonal skills. However, nestled within the counselling skills subject in between active listening and paraphrasing, empathy does not really get comprehensive coverage. It is more of an assumed or agreed mutual understanding, or an implicit shared acceptance that we all know what it is, and that many students probably already possess it or why would they want to do social work or welfare studies? Empathy may be generally understood as accurately perceiving the experiences and emotions of another person (Rogers, 1957/1992), yet more specific definitions, and the actual mechanisms of empathy seem less clear (Duan and Hill, 1996).

Critical self-reflection

Recently I was prompted to revisit my own understanding of empathy as a social welfare educator and practitioner. At the time, I was working in a voluntary capacity with a local community network desperately trying to assist a distraught woman, with some significant disabilities, to retain her independence in the face of a looming Queensland Adult Guardian order. The order was supported by her family, and it was seeking to rule that she no longer 'had capacity' (ultimately we were unsuccessful in our quest). She had said to me on several occasions when I had visited her *...you don't really understand ... this is killing me... I am in prison… I have lost my life.* We had

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talked often about the grief, anger, fear, powerlessness and betrayal she felt, and I (with three other welfare professionals) had made a huge effort to help her precisely because of my empathy for her deeply distressing circumstances. Yet at the end of our coffee together I was able to walk away in my own shoes, and I really had not walked very far in hers. I reflected on these conversations over time, and this contemplation has provoked me to think beyond her circumstances to ask myself bigger questions about what are the complexities and limitations of empathy. Further, in a reflexive way (D'Cruz, Gillingham and Melendez, 2006), I wondered whether empathy is given less attention in helping texts, and in my own teaching, than it deserves, and whether some students may be missing out on 'learning' empathy.

Before beginning my review of the relevant literature on empathy, I first sought clarity with synonyms from Longman Pocket Roget's thesaurus. This thesaurus lists compassion, sympathy, imagination, understanding, realisation, sentiment, goodwill, kind-hearted, humanity and benevolence. I noted that sympathy is synonymous with empathy in this thesaurus. Yet, that position is not aligned with the helping literature where attempts are made (moderately successfully in my view) to draw clear definitional differences. A review of the literature revealed a large and complex body of work, not conclusive, in agreement, or offering clarity or direction. A selection of the literature relevant to this discussion is synthesised below.

Understanding Empathy: History and Definitions

According to Hankammer, Snyder and Hankammer (2006) empathy research is over 100 years old in its development. In the late 19th century, Vischer used the term 'Einfuhlung' 'to mean humans' spontaneous projection of real psychic feeling into people and things they perceive' (Duan and Hill, 1996, 261). Use of this term was in line with a shift in perception from an objective stance to one accommodating more 'contemplation of the world' (Duan and Hill, 1996, 261). According to Duan and Hill (1996, 261) Lipps contributed to advancing the theory of 'Einfuhlung', while Titchener (1924) first coined the term 'empathy' in 1909, to mean a process of humanising objects and 'of reading or feeling ourselves into them' (Hankummer et al., 2006, 9; Titchener, 1924). Kohut's work (1959, cited in Arnold, 2005, 32) emphasised the need for an understanding of another person by empathising with that person's reality and with their interpretation of their own experiences. Kohut's work is attributed with pioneering a departure from earlier scientific perspectives, and informing psychoanalytical and client-centred approaches, and student-centred learning pedagogies (Arnold, 2005).

Egan (2007) writes that empathy is a rich but confused concept (2007, 55). In western definitions the concepts of 'empathy' and 'sympathy' appear to be closely related and, whilst differentiation often is stressed in professional texts, the terms appear quite close with different emphases evident within different professional literature. For example, Trevithick (2005, 156) and Boulton (1987, 271) define empathy as *feeling with* the client, rather than *feeling for* the client (sympathy). Somewhat at odds with this definition, Hojat, Gonnella, Nasca, Mangione, Vergare and Magee (2002, 1563) state that in medical literature empathy and sympathy are often 'mistakenly tossed into one terminological basket' but that 'empathic' practitioners' share their *understanding* while sympathetic practitioners share their *emotions (feelings)*. Hojat et al (2002) do concede the two concepts do not function independently. Many helping texts familiar in social work and welfare education appear to differentiate between sympathy and empathy while inferring that the desirable position is empathy.

Discussing social work skills Trevithick (2005, 154) says 'the ability to be empathic is one of the most important skills… it involves attempting to understand thoughts, feelings and experiences from another person's point of view… in order to understand how they might be feeling'. Trevithick (citing Kadushin 1997) confirms that 'it goes beyond sympathy (passive understanding) in conveying a willingness 'to enter imaginatively into the inner life of someone else' (2005, 154). Of interest, Trevithick discusses the work of Dominelli (2002) attributing to that author the view that 'empathy goes beyond placing oneself in another's shoes by daring to put them on and wear them for a while'. However Trevithick (2005, 154) questions this position, asking 'whether it is actually possible to experience another's reality in this way', and concluding 'it clearly is not'.

Equally, Compton and Galway claim that 'full knowledge of another being is something forever beyond attainment by anyone and it can only be approached, but never achieved'. Indeed they argue if the worker felt like the client, 'they would be unable to introduce the differences in thinking and feeling that bring about change' (Compton and Galway, 1979, 177)

O'Connor, Wilson and Setterlund (1997, 95) identify 'partial empathy' as an 'excitement which comes from total identification with another's experiences' although they note it is often short lived. On the other hand 'true empathy', they continue, 'sharing the pain and confusion of another person's emotional… conflicts… (is) more effective' (1997, 95). Confusingly, Nicholson and Bayne (1990, 39) use the terms paraphrasing and 'basic empathy' interchangeably.

For Geldard and Geldard (2005), empathy is 'having a togetherness with the client …going on a journey with clients, listening with sensitivity, matching their every move…walking beside the client' (p18). Contributing to a discussion on empathy in working to bridge cultures in Aboriginal health, Eckermann, Dowd, Chong, Nixon, Gray and Johnson (2006, p113) remind the reader that empathy and sympathy are closely related and 'usage in most cultures overlap'. Sympathy, they state, 'basically means sharing another's feeling' while empathy is 'often portrayed as walking a mile in another person's shoes'. This familiar adage, according to Bolton (1987) is said to be based on the story of the epic barefoot walks by John Woolman to experience the painful encounters of 'black slaves' by putting himself in the slave's place (Boulton 1987, 269). Boulton continues that the empathic person is 'able to crawl into another's skin and see the world through their eyes (1987, 269). Carl Rogers (1956/1992), the American psychologist and passionate proponent of a client-centred therapeutic approach, describes empathy as accurately perceiving of the internal frame of reference of another. Rogers (1956/1992, 832) states that

to sense the client's private world 'as if' it were your own but without ever losing the 'as if' quality - this is empathy and this seems essential to therapy.

Combined with genuineness and unconditional positive regard, Rogers claims such an approach will empower a client to move forward (Hankummer et al., 2006; Rogers, 1956/1992).

Writing in the medical literature, Haslam (2007) argues that empathy can be defined as the capacity to take the perspectives of others, to be sensitive to their inner experience, and to engage with them compassionately, rather than simply sharing their emotions (sympathy). However, Haslam (2007, 381) notes that it is not only an 'appreciation of the patients' emotions' but an 'expression of that awareness to the patient' that constitutes empathy (Stepien and Baernstein, cited in Haslam, 2007). Similarly, Hojat et al (2002, 1564) define empathy as a cognitive attribute that involves an ability to understand the patient's inner experiences and perspective *and* a capability to communicate that understanding.

Haslam (2007) identifies that empathy is associated with positive clinical outcomes for patients, a positive effect on the therapeutic relationship, and a greater sense of accomplishment and wellbeing for the practitioner. Equally, a loss of empathy, or conversely, a total identification with another's experiences, may lead to a self protective disengagement from people's suffering, may be associated with creeping cynicism, and may lead to a sense of hopelessness regarding perceived therapeutic failure. This emotional state may interact with or be associated with conditions such as burnout or compassion fatigue (Figley, 2002; Geldard and Geldard, 2005; Haslam, 2007; O'Connor, Wilson and Setterlund, 1997).

Harris and Foreman-Peck (2004) write from an educational perspective that empathy is generally used in everyday terms to mean a sense of understanding someone else's state of mind, and it is used to imply not only appreciating someone else's beliefs, values and thoughts but also the significance that their predicament or situation has for them and the associated feelings they are experiencing. They further argue that the ability to empathise requires an effort of the 'informed imagination' (2004, 2). They argue that helpers cannot experience another's feelings in a literal sense but propose they can understand the feeling state; and can have insight into the 'feelings of' the experience. They add, importantly, that we can empathise without compromising our ability to evaluate the events; that is, empathy conveys an understanding about how it must feel but need not suspend an evaluation of the causes or consequences of the event. Additionally, they argue we might choose to use our imagination, in place of any moral judgement, to facilitate our empathy while remaining attuned to a bigger context. Finally, and worthy of note for later discussion, Harris and Foreman-Peck (2004, 3) identify that to inform our empathy we normally draw on our understandings of what people *generally do and feel in such circumstances,* combined with *our own personal life experiences (*emphasis added).

Relevant to this discussion and the contemporary Australian context, Canadian authors Bryant and Clark (2006) argue that understanding history, particularly for Indigenous peoples, is crucial. They argue that gaining 'historical empathy' (they admit the concept may be contentious) goes beyond 'emotive empathy' to cognitively acknowledge history in its own context for Indigenous peoples, while admitting there are limitations on our ability to understand the past. This latter point on a missing historical understanding and compassion also is argued by Pearson (2008).

Taking a radical stance, Fook (1993, 112) is critical of definitions of empathy where only a client's feelings and perceptions of their 'personal world' are explored. Accurate empathy, according to Fook, 'should reflect all perceptions, ideas and feelings' including those about the client's 'social world' (1993, 112). Fook (1993) names such a response 'social empathy'. Allan (2003, 66) takes a similar, critical stance, stating that 'structural empathy' can be used as an analytic tool to uncover overlooked political understandings. Mullally (2007) and Jessup and Rogerson (1999) also seek to extend personal empathy beyond our current conceptualisation which often is limited to a humanist discourse. For these authors a critically reflective approach to empathy could acknowledge broader theoretical frameworks and could encapsulate an educative, consciousness raising, structural and post-structural empathy.

Understanding empathy: Reviewing research (in brief)

Duan and Hill (1996, 269) identify confusion in empathy literature and research and they identify that while there is a considerable amount of research, an understanding of empathy still is limited.

Batson et al (cited in Brewer & Crano, 2000) undertook extensive research in the area of empathy and motivation and concluded that people feel empathy and want to help for many reasons including when they are similar to the person needing help, when they see severe distress in the facial expression of the other person, if they actually feel distress at the person's circumstances, if they (the person in need) are in an identified 'needy' group or, if they (helper) think they will see the results of their help. Research by Batson et al (cited in Brewer and Crano, 2000) also found that people will be more motivated to empathise if they are asked to imagine how they might feel if it was them, or when individuals are encouraged to focus on and advance their ability to empathise. They concluded that helpers can learn empathy.

Some of the identified confusion surrounding empathy, according to Duan and Hill (1996) arises from three different constructs of empathy. These constructs are: empathy as personality trait (that is, some people naturally will be more empathic than others), situation-specific cognitive-affective state (the situational context, coupled with additional factors such as motivation and altruism), and empathy as a multi-staged process. Duan and Hill (1996) describe how the concept of empathy commonly has been understood as 'cognitive empathy' (taking the perspective of another), or 'affective empathy' (focusing of the emotions of another) or, as a combination of the two. Feller and Cottone (2003) claim, reflecting the thoughts of Rogers, that empirical evidence strongly suggests that a counsellor's use of empathy and related constructs within the therapeutic alliance contributes significantly to therapeutic outcome, although not all agree (for example see Gladstein, 1983 cited in Duan and Hill, 1996).

Past research has suggested females of all ages will exhibit higher levels of empathy than do males, reflecting a perspective of gender traits. Other research contests these findings, suggesting a 'female role orientation' more closely is linked to empathy, combined with awareness of gender discrimination for women (Constantine, 2000). A number of researchers have explored perspectives of both clients and helpers regarding perceived empathy in the therapeutic engagement. A range of factors have been identified that may influence this perception including value differences between client and counsellor, counselling style, the timing of the empathy expressed, the context of the empathy expressed, or whether less or more self disclosure was used by the counsellor (Duan and Hill, 1996). Of interest, Duan and Hill (1996) argue that the actual process of measuring self-perceptions of empathy in past research has been a flawed approach. Research further suggests that empathy may be influenced by factors including a counsellor's mood, their level of verbal and non-verbal communication skills, knowledge of the client, and awareness of both their own (the helper's) and the client's culture (Duan and Hill, 1996). While some research suggests empathy could be either helpful, only helpful in specific situations, or even interfering (Gladstein, 1983 cited in Duan and Hill, 1996), a more commonly accepted position is that empathy is at the heart of a helpful alliance.

Limitations and Assumptions about Empathy

From the above discussion it is evident that there is a quantity of literature offering varied discussion of empathy, although clarity is not apparent and definitions are confusing. What appears even less evident in the literature is how to teach, learn and do empathy. How do we actually imagine others' lives and circumstances? How do we feel the fear, powerlessness and depression of the woman previously mentioned who describes herself as having been forced into a prison environment - a high care nursing home - at the age of 63. How do we accurately *feel* the trauma of war as felt by thousands of Australian Returned Servicemen and women; soldiers who were socialised to partake actively in battle but encouraged to remain silent about the horror of war while suffering in that silence? How do we understand the Vietnam Veteran experience of being shamed and rejected upon at their homecoming? How do I (as non-Indigenous counsellor, community worker, or educator) possibly understand the experiences of members of the Stolen Generation? Torn from their culture, parents, siblings, land and language, such trauma is foreign to most non-Indigenous Australians. The legacy for Aboriginal children and their families of this lethal fragmentation of culture is irreversible damage including severe mental health issues, immeasurable grief, intergenerational violence, crime, and suicide and a massive loss of cultural identity (Pearson, 2008; Pearson, 1994; Bringing Them home Report, 1997). How do we feel empathy for such trauma that many Australians have not experienced?

As noted above, Harris and Foreman-Peck (2004) state that we normally draw on our understandings of what people *generally do and feel in such circumstances, combined with our own life experiences (*emphasis added*).* Yet these scenarios are exceptional circumstances and not experienced by the general community. It becomes clear to me that, while I might be able to empathise somewhat with a woman aging in western society, I am not imprisoned as is the woman in the scenario outlined and, in the case of the returned Vietnam Veterans or members of the Stolen Generations, I have limited general experience from which to draw. Of course, for two of the above scenarios the Australian society has changed its position. Finally, a welcome home for Vietnam Veterans and a National Apology for the Stolen Generation were forthcoming. However, our changed value position begs a new question. Is it the case that our empathy mirrors social norms and values and the dominant ideology?

Adding weight to such a proposition, that empathy might be influenced by a deserving/undeserving discourse, when Trotter (1998, as cited in Stitts and Gibbs, 2007, 21) interviewed non-abusing mothers of sexually-abused children, it was found that the responsibility of the abuse was attributed to the mothers (mother blaming, failure to protect) and they were denied support and were treated with a lack of empathy from professionals that was tantamount to being totally dismissed. Equally, Krulewitz (1985, cited in Duan and Hill, 1996, 265) found that a victim's perceived innocence influenced empathy, and that rape victims perceived to be attacked by a stranger secured a more empathic reaction.

In considering further assumptions related to empathy other than those mentioned above (innocence, deserving or undeserving), the literature identifies some significant taken-for-granted notions. For example, highlighting an assumption that was alluded to earlier, Clark (2000) says it is extremely presumptuous that we really believe that we can walk in the shoes of another who have experienced a totally different cultural life. One academic solution to remedy our ignorance might be that we do a literature search and review on cultural groups and situations that are unfamiliar to us. However, we might subsequently ask would such learned empathy be built on second-hand knowledge? For example do we mostly know about Indigenous people from written accounts by anthropologists, (about wars from journalists, about clients from social workers)? Can we assume *our common humanity* is enough?

Related to the above discussion, have we generally assumed that 'feeling with' the client or client group, in a client-centred, humanist way, is sufficient? Can empathy reasonably ignore social, historical, cultural, gender and political positioning or should it reflect these structural understandings (Allan, 2003; Fook, 1993; Mullally, 2007).

Another assumption appears to be the positioning of the helper as an expert in the skill of empathy- that is, the 'expert' would know how the client is feeling and their empathy would be accurate, yet Clark (2000) wonders how this could be the case for those whose culture, history and background are completely different from the client group or community. Okun (1982) asserts that helpers should remember there are differences between groups and, that what is empathic for one helpee may not be so for another.

Several additional assumptions are evident. One appears to be that empathy is unidirectional. Almost all literature reviewed for this discussion appeared to implicitly assume that empathy was a unidirectional process, that is, it is the helper who would be expressing empathy for the client. There is little suggestion that empathy could be a two-way interaction. Exceptions include Clark (2000) and Mullally (2007, 305) who make mention of facilitating a process of dialogue, mutual learning and critical questioning through the helper's expressed empathy.

Further assumed in the literature appears to be a sense of generalisability, that is, all people with similar circumstances would have similar responses and we could base our empathy on that general premise (Harris and Foreman-Peck, 2004). Equally, we may assume that all people will convey their feelings in a similar way, and we may not perceive that client groups would convey their feelings in their own cultural, gender, age, spiritual, and historical context, and that their facial expressions will be based in that context.

Finally, some literature reviewed reveals the notion that empathy may be constrained by social norms, values, and judgment (Trotter, 1998, cited in Stitts and Gibbs, 2007; and Krulewitz, 1985 cited in Duan and Hill, 1996, 265). It seems useful to note the writing of Stanley (2006, 14), who identifies that the master narrative is a 'script that specifies and controls how social processes are carried out', while stories running opposite or counter to the presumed order and control are counter narratives. According to Stanley (2006, 23) when master narratives meet counter narratives there should be a deliberate intent to privilege counter narratives, that is*, those experiences other than the generally understood, common sense experience.*

Gaining empathy

Haslam (2007) says that empathy can be lost, but also can be gained. This final section supports the assumption that empathy is a multi-staged process and involves learned skills (Arnold, 2005; Clark, 2000; Duan and Hill, 1996; Haslam, 2007; Jessup and Rogerson, 1999). Limited literature offers useful guidance for gaining or learning empathy. Some strategies suggested are:

1. *Become a learner (particularly in a cross cultural helping context)*
Clark (2000) says helpers need to *learn* empathy by taking the stance of learner each and every time they are listening, to hear and begin to understand *this person's unique*, *individual, personal, cultural frame of reference*. According to Clark (2000) this stance offers respect, and recognises the uniqueness of each individual. This may be compared with, and considered different from, dumping (Dominelli, 1989) where Indigenous people are expected to act as cultural experts and educate others. In a Pacific cultural context, Petersen (2006, 9) argues that social work practitioners who come from a deficit, remedial practice position need to 'lose the expert role' when working in Pacific communities in order to be helpful. According to Constantine (2000) the acquisition of general empathy may need to precede cultural empathy, which can be facilitated through experiential exercises to identify personal experiences of prejudice, and immersion into the beliefs, values and practices of the group of interest. Tertiary educators need not be exempt from taking a learner stance regarding empathy. A 'deeper student learning' about empathy seems warranted and educators who are more in tune with a range of definitions of empathy (including exploring non-western definitions of empathy with students), and who might model a rotating or circular teaching and learning process with students, may better facilitate student-centred learning of, and their effective use of, empathy (Gair, 2008; Gair and Muller, 2008). Of course, while a cross-cultural context is emphasised in this article, the principles and practices for *learning* empathy can be applied when working with many people, including students, persons with a disability and veterans (groups who were noted in this paper when discussing my reflections), and most groups and contexts.

2. *Accept that empathy is a two way process*
In the past, rather like didactic teaching and learning approaches, empathy may have been viewed as a unidirectional process. Clark (2000) says empathy, particularly in a cross-cultural context, is a progressive dual process and not a unidirectional process. The client, family or community can recognise from sensitive questioning and facial expressions that the helper is trying to walk with them, and they begin to trust the helper enough to give the helper more information so the helper can understand; that is, the client group have empathy for the helper's lack of knowledge. For this process to succeed, helpers need to be reflective practitioners, and see that their knowledge is partial and could be wrong. Eckermann et al (2006) highlight the view that empathy is based on trust*,* that trust takes time, and that empathy works when the helpee can trust the helper, and trust that the helper is able to tune in, in some way, to their lived

experiences. This involves the client taking risks with the helper to help them understand, and the helper needs to recognise that trust and empathy build up over time and that empathy is a two way process.

3. *Use of interpersonal communication skills*
Related to the above two strategies, Eckermann (2006) says an empathic listener resists the temptation to filter the story through their own filters but rather uses deep listening, sensitive open questions, facial expressions, observation, and gut reaction to understand (learning from the client). Importantly, helpers need to express their growing understanding and awareness of the client's lived experiences to the client - as they have heard it (Hojat et al., 2002 and Haslam, 2007) in its social, political, structural or historical context (Bryant and Clark, 2006; Fook, 1993; Jessup and Rogerson, 1999; Pearson, 2008). The interpersonal skill of critical questioning may help facilitate such empathy (Fook, 1993; Jessup and Rogerson, 1999). Helpers also may need to seek out authentic narratives, and undergo cultural awareness where applicable to increase their understanding and empathy. Arnold (2005) says that educators must actively help students to develop their empathic intelligence. She emphasises assisting students through our teaching to *decentre* their own feelings, and to listen deeply and try to feel another's experiences. Empathic counsellors also need to be alert to dominant discourses (Stanley, 2006), and social or political assumptions or judgments as they take time and use their imagination to perceive the journey of the other that may not be the common experience.

Conclusion

It may be the case that 'walking a mile in the shoes of another' is less achievable than we may have taken as a given. Equally, teaching and learning empathy skills may have received less emphasis and less scrutiny in the broader helping literature, in social welfare texts, and in social welfare education, than may be warranted. Such a situation could contribute to cohorts of graduates who may have an assumed personal empathy but not a knowledge-based, learned empathy. It is evident that empathy is culturally influenced and may be influenced by social norms. Equally, empathy can be considered to be a two way process, needs to be treated as a skill, and can be learned in part by taking an ongoing 'learner' rather than an 'expert' stance. In particular, the development of empathy for client groups with a different cultural background from the helper may mean that educators need to advance students' learning beyond personal empathy, by way of experiential learning, cultural awareness training, and skills training, in order that they gain highly developed, accurate, historical, political and social empathy skills. Future research into the teaching and learning of accurate, contextual empathy, and the role, use of, limitations, and outcomes of using empathy in social work and welfare therapeutic engagements seems justified.

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Developing Restorative Practice for Social Work and Allied Health Professionals in Community and Custodial Juvenile Justice

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This paper presents an example of turning law into practice through professional development. The authors describe the comparative and problem based training approach used to support the practice of new legislation. Employed as consultant social workers by Youth Justice Services Tasmania, between 2002 and 2007, the authors developed a professional framework enabling social workers and other allied health professionals to practice restorative justice. The paper includes an example from both community and custodial practice. It is argued that this approach to training can provide a useful template for integrating human service law and practice.

Background: Practising the law

Laws continue to have an important impact on social work by prescribing practices according to statutory duties and powers (O'Connor, Wilson and Setterland, 2003; Williams, 2004; Trotter, 2006; Hill, Lockyer and Stone, 2007). At the same time legal discourse is contested knowledge (Healy, 2005), indicating that the implementation of the objectives and principles of legal statute are, to some extent, open to negotiation and provide an opportunity to design legal social work practice in particular ways (Wilson, Ruch, Lymberry and Cooper, 2008, p.232). A new law will therefore often trigger professional development for statutory social work and allied health professionals, resulting in policy and performance based on key practice principles. The law that prompted this process, described in this article, is the Youth Justice Act 1997 (*YJ Act 1997*) in Tasmania.

The *YJ Act 1997* was proclaimed in 2000, replacing the *Child Welfare Act 1960*. The *YJ Act 1997* incorporated principles and objectives that required quite different practices to youth crime than had previously been legislated. Even a cursory comparison of the *YJ Act 1997* and *Child Welfare Act 1960* confirms a marked difference in the expectations placed on practitioners. For example, the *Child Welfare Act 1960* required that 'each child suspected of having committed, charged with, or found guilty of an offence shall be treated, not as criminal, but as a child, who is, or may have been, misdirected or misguided, and that the care, custody and discipline of each ward of the State shall approximate as nearly as may be to that which should be given to it by its parents' (*Child Welfare Act 1960* Tasmania s.4).

Compare this to the *YJ Act 1997* which specified 'that the victim of the offence is to be given the opportunity to participate in the process of dealing with the youth as allowed by this Act' (s.5 (1) d) and that 'punishment of a youth is to be designed so as

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to give him or her an opportunity to develop a sense of social responsibility and otherwise to develop in beneficial and socially acceptable ways' (s.5 (1) h).

The *YJ Act 1997* introduced a range of measures to be implemented by the courts and practiced in community and custodial youth justice that were informed by the philosophy of restorative justice (RJ). This Act made provisions for victims to be included in the process of justice and emphasised the value of conferencing and diversion from the criminal justice system. The first step in developing professional training to practice this law was to understand the philosophy of RJ and therefore identify the competencies expected of any training.

Restorative Justice

The *YJ Act 1997* can be situated within the context of an international judicial movement towards RJ approaches to youth crime. This movement is part of the global implementation of related restorative practices that are taking place in a wide range of situations including schools and international political events, such as the Truth and Reconciliation Committee in South Africa. A literature review of RJ discovers a complex debate over the definition and efficacy of RJ. The following summary from Marshall was one definition used at the time of training:

> Restorative Justice is a problem-solving approach to crime which involves the parties themselves, and the community generally, in an active relationship with statutory agencies (2003, p.5).

Commentators often say that RJ results from disillusionment with prevailing responses to crime and punishment (Braithwaite, 1989; Zehr, 1990; Umbriet, 1998 and Marshall, 2003) that has been gathering pace over the past 30 years. RJ programs and the laws that support them, intend to provide alternative practices to traditional justice paradigms. In this way RJ holds offenders personally accountable to victims and community, rather than to a court system that excludes victims. RJ actively requires the offender to hear the voice of the victim of their crime. One common element of RJ responses is that victims meet those who offend against them, usually in a conference. There are clear assumptions here. It is a core idea of RJ that retribution by a court does not prevent crime nor leave victims satisfied. Equally, merely explaining offences as a product of previous social experiences is also unlikely to achieve either goal.

Reducing crime and repairing harm is more likely, say proponents of RJ, through a participatory conversation between affected stakeholders. By bringing the offender face to face with their victim future criminal behaviour is less likely. In Australia RJ programs have adopted the highly influential New Zealand conferencing model (Morris and Maxwell, 1994; Borowski and O'Connor, 1997). RJ programs are now prevalent in all States and Territories (Strang, 2001; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2007). To support this movement there are several international forums promoting a wide range of restorative practices (for example http://www.iirp.org/), as well as a United Nations Practice Handbook (2006). The recent Handbook of Restorative Justice (Sullivan and Tifft, 2007) continues to critique and share knowledge about global RJ programs, scholarship and staff training.

RJ is undergoing similar professional development processes that apply to other practices, such as mediation, conflict resolution and child protection. The research emphasises the need for accreditation and practice standards (Marshall, 1989) and training of criminal justice personnel in RJ programs (Marshall, 1989; IAHW 2007). This training is also offered to communities who will often need support (Marshall, 1989, p.8) to understand their role in RJ and to court clerks and magistrates (Sherman and Strang 2007, p.90). White has emphasized that there should be a 'close examination of the training and professional development needs of juvenile justice staff and community partners (professionals and volunteers) in relation to the restorative social justice model (2003, p.64). Sherman and Strang's meta analysis finds that training staff is an important component in the success of RJ including programs in schools:

> Successful implementation of RJ, even on a pilot basis for fair evaluation, requires broad institutional commitment within the relevant educational authority, the involvement and strong support of the school leadership, and adequate training in restorative techniques for staff (2007, p.55).

Does RJ work and what are we measuring when we research success? The two main goals are crime reduction and victim satisfaction, although community reintegration can also be a broader aim of RJ (Braithwaite, 2007, p.692). Meta-analysis studies of RJ generally report promising results and there is evidence that RJ may be effective in reducing recidivism in some contexts (London, 2003; Cunneen and White, 2006). Sherman and Strang's 2007 meta-analysis of RJ programs concludes that an RJ response is as effective, and often more effective, than traditional forms of justice in preventing crime. Also, 'crime victims who receive restorative justice do better, on average, than victims, who do not, across a wide range of outcomes including post-traumatic stress disorder' (2007, p.89). The authors include results from the Australian Canberra Re-integrative Shaming Experiments (RISE) RJ programs which indicate that reconciliation and victim satisfaction are more successfully achieved compared to traditional court approaches. Bonta, Jesseman, Rugge and Cormier (2006) suggest that multiple experiences of RJ are more likely to reduce recidivism rather than a single conference or RJ event. Braithwaite and Daly have been particularly vocal in Australia in exploring the merits or otherwise of RJ. Braithwaite suggests that RJ has a place within a 'regulatory pyramid' (Braithwaite, 2002) to avoid situations where offences can be unsuitably downgraded and justice therefore betrayed should a conference be held rather than a court hearing and prosecution.

There are important questions regarding the suitability of RJ for some crimes and with some social groups. In Australia these questions concern the appropriateness of RJ practices for indigenous people (Cunneen, 1997; Bradley, Tauri, and Walters, 2006) as well as issues including family violence (Nancarrow, 2006) and gendered violence in particular (Daly and Curtis-Fawley, 2005; Daly and Stubbs 2006). It would appear that RJ may be experiencing "an acclimatisation dilemma" (Monterosso, 2007, p.14), or doubts about the ideas that established RJ to begin with (Daly, 2002; Moore, 2004). For example Braithwaite and Strang (2005) explore whether RJ programs adequately account for the specific imbalance of power inherent in situations of family violence and indigenous contexts. Yet, as Southwell concludes, despite these doubts there is much the RJ can offer as part of a criminal justice strategy, once it is not seen as an ‘exclusive strategy or panacea’ (Southwell, p.7). There are consequent debates over when and how RJ works in the criminal justice system and how RJ can sit alongside more formal and traditional court based processes (Daly, 2001). Braithwaite advocates that we should ‘encourage restorative justice’ (2007, p.698) while being aware that, like all justice programs, it can fail.

Despite the apparent ‘muddle of values’ (Braithwaite, 2006, p.426) Australian and international law and policy continues to enthusiastically implement various theories and applications of RJ approaches to crime. A glance at Restorative Justice Online (http://www.restorativejustice.org/) one of several RJ websites, will confirm the ongoing production of international theory and practice. On this site alone there are 8444 publications. In 2004 Daly’s conservative estimate was that the previous 10 years had produced over 60 ‘edited collections or book length treatments on RJ’ (Daly, 2004, p.500) and that “no other justice practice has commanded so much scholarly achievement in such a short period of time” (ibid, p.501).

A final important comment on the literature. With minor exceptions (for example Liebmane and Braithwaite, 1998) there is minimal discussion of RJ in custodial settings. It appears that a detention centre is an improbable site for a practice largely discussed as a community practice or as an alternative to custody. However, within the context of the *YJ Act 1997*, we were obliged to integrate RJ practices within the custodial setting.

The Training Model

The introduction of the *YJ Act 1997* represented a promising new philosophy of crime prevention and expected new practices to achieve RJ. However the Act was proclaimed without an accompanying practice framework or policy and delineating key practice principles for training staff involved both reference to the legislation and the prominent literature informing RJ. The evidentiary component of the training, at the time of implementation, included many of the above writers and in particular Zehr (1990 and 2002), Braithwaite, (1989) Marshall, (2003) and Cunneen and White (2002) as well as those specifically involved in designing services (O’Connell, Wachtel, and Wachtel, 1999 and Day, Howells, and Rickwood, 2004).

The key goal was to train 120 social work and allied health professionals working in community and custodial youth justice to competently practice the *YJ Act 1997*. Each stage of the training was designed using comparative, adult and problem based learning and 5 key competencies for RJ were developed as practice principles. This approach echoed social work’s long tradition of learning through action and reflection in the field, (Compton and Galaway, 1999; Maidment, 2003; Cournoyer, 2005 and Rai, 2004).

Comparative learning: working from difference

> only by making comparisons can we properly defend our positions on most questions of importance which require the making of judgments (Phillips, 1999, p.15).

The ideas of comparative educationalists (Eckstein and Noah, 1969; Alexander, Broadfoot and Phillips, 1999 and Broadfoot, 2000) extensively informed this training model. Since RJ is contested knowledge, without a unified model or goal, the most effective approach to training was the use of comparative learning. In this way training did not focus on RJ alone, but rather compared RJ with other models of crime prevention.

Adult, Action and Problem Based Learning

Adult, action and problem based learning are generally accepted as useful methods to teach new knowledge and skills to adult learners, who have life and professional experience and can readily explore how to apply innovative practices. These three approaches have a great deal in common, using authentic problems in real situations, team group work, reflection and planning, researching options and reporting back to a larger forum. This approach places staff in an active role as problem solvers and confronts staff with real life situations in their workplace. This is undertaken in small groups or action learning sets and enables each person to reflect on and review the action they have taken and the learning points arising.

Educationalists, social theorists and political commentators including Freire (2007), Bandura (1977), Knowles (1980) and Schon (1983 and 1989) have developed these approaches over time. They are now used extensively in teaching and organisational change management. In the training discussed here staff would apply new knowledge to two legislated tasks they carry out in their employment in Youth Justice. Community youth justice staff would develop pre sentence report writing and custodial staff would design and implement a behaviour development program for young people. Both practices needed to be informed by RJ rather than previous criminal justice paradigms.

Stage 1 Comparative Learning

Table 1 Comparative Models of Youth Crime Prevention: Major Themes

THEME	WELFARE	JUSTICE	RESTORATIVE JUSTICE
Crime	Crime is an act against the person, community and state	Crime is an act against the person, community and state	Crime is an act against a person and their community
The State	The state represents the victim and community and acts as a parent	The state represents the victim and community and manages the process of justice	The State facilitates a community process of reconciliation
***Etiology* and Assessment**	Crime is caused by social disadvantage. Social structures are responsible	Crime is caused by individual children who are criminally responsible at 10 years of age	Crime is an individual act with both personal and social responsibility
Intervention	the social environment	personal deficits	What happened in the commission of the offence
Community	little or no role	little or no role	manages the process of justice
Victim	little or no role	little or no role	appropriate active involvement
Aim	rehabilitation through social change	rehabilitation through personal change	restoration
Legal process	moral and reformative	adversarial and punitive	reparatory
The offender	Victim	Perpetrator	Debtor

In developing the first comparative learning typology, points of difference between three prominent theories and models of youth crime prevention, were taken from the literature (for example Borowski and O'Connor, 1997, p.229) and Cunneen and White (2002). These differences are idealistic. However they allowed a contrast between several of the key themes relevant to each theoretical perspective as indicated in Table 1.

Table 2 illustrates the second comparative typology used in training.

Table 2 Comparative Models of Youth Crime Prevention: Major Themes

WELFARE	**JUSTICE**	**RESTORATIVE JUSTICE**
Deterrence	Deterrence	Deterrence
Social assessment	Psychological diagnosis	Reparation
Social change	Personal change	Rehabilitation
Therapy	Retribution	Responsibility
Inclusion in criminal welfare system	Inclusion in criminal justice system	Diversion

Here major practices from each model of youth crime prevention are compared. We noticed that there are common practices given that all three models aim to prevent crime. However it is the striking differences between both welfare and justice models compared to RJ that provide the most valuable learning.

In Table 2 the major practices of RJ are clearly different from those in welfare and justice models. For example a key difference concerns the goal of rehabilitation. The *YJ Act 1997* contends that 'appropriate' rehabilitation is achieved through personal responsibility and reparation to the victim. At the same time this particular legal construction of rehabilitation contends that core social processes including family, culture and education should be taken into account if this is to happen. In doing so the legislation makes an effort to integrate personal and social responsibility (the tenets of justice and welfare paradigms) and define 'rehabilitation' as specific actions: responsibility and reparation. In this way RJ in the *YJ Act 1997* appears to equate justice with offenders taking responsibility and repairing the damage done as far as possible. This is 'classic' RJ thinking. Indeed the Act aims to prevent crime through these actions. Again this is a core RJ idea: meeting the victims and repairing harm can reduce crime.

Stage 2 Practice Principles for RJ

The next stage in professional development involved condensing 5 five core practice principles of RJ from the literature and the general objectives and principles legislated in the YJ Act 1997.

Table 3 Practice Principles for Restorative Justice

Practice Principle	Objective	*YJ Act 1997*
Responsibility	To develop and implement services that encourage the young person, family, community and State to accept appropriate responsibility for what happened.	s.4(h) 'to ensure that, whenever practicable, a youth who has committed, or is alleged to have committed, an offence is dealt with in a manner that takes into account the youth's social and family background and that enhances the youth's capacity to accept personal responsibility for his or her behaviour' s.4 (f) 'to enhance and reinforce the roles of guardians, families and communities'.
Rehabilitation	To provide a service that provides opportunities for young offenders to deal with the effects of both individual and social factors that have increased their likelihood of beginning and maintaining a history of offending.	s.4(e) 'to ensure that a youth who has committed an offence is given appropriate treatment, punishment and rehabilitation' s. 4(f)(iii) 'rehabilitating youths who have committed offences and directing them towards the goal of becoming responsible citizens'.
Reparation	To provide opportunities for the harm done to the community to be repaired as far as possible as a major goal of court sentences including conferencing, supervision and detention. The victim is given an opportunity to be involved in the reparation, often by meeting the victim.	s. 5(1)d 'the victim of the offence is to be given the opportunity to participate in the process of dealing with the youth as allowed by this Act' s. 5(2)a 'compensation and restitution should be provided, where appropriate, for victims of offences committed by youths'.
Diversion	To provide services and programs that embody strategies for working with behaviours in ways that maximise opportunities for the least restrictive alternative in the management of young people's behaviour should be provided.	s. (7) 'to divert, in an appropriate case, a youth who admits committing an offence from the courts' criminal justice system' s.8(1) 'if a youth admits the commission of an offence and a police officer is of the opinion that the matter does not warrant any formal action under this Act, the officer may informally caution the youth against further offending and proceed no further against the youth'.
Deterrence	The community is to be protected from illegal behaviour and the young person may require punishment and treatment as a deterrent. The Act expects punishment but the punishment should deter further crime by providing opportunities for developing responsibility for individual action and pro-social change in the future.	s. 5(1)c 'the community is to be protected from illegal behavior' s. 5(1) 'the punishment of a youth is to be designed so as to give him or her an opportunity to develop a sense of social responsibility and otherwise to develop in beneficial and socially acceptable ways'.

Table 3 defines these principles and includes sample sections of the Act as legal authority for each principle. These 5 practice principles were said to constitute the legal principles of the *YJ Act 1997* and therefore inform expectations placed on social work and allied health professionals, who were employed to enact the legislation. We noted the options in naming these principles. Given the contested knowledge of RJ alternative principles could have been 'healing', 'reconciliation', 'victim involvement' or 'participation'. For example Van Ness and Strong (2006) have constructed 4 'cornerstones' of RJ as encounter, amends, reintegration and inclusion.

The principles we chose represented the principles and objectives of the *YJ Act 1997* and provided a broad framework that could convert the following overall legal objective into practice: 'an Act to provide for the treatment and punishment of young persons who have committed offences and for related purposes' (*YJ Act 1997* preamble).

How is the actual work in youth justice performed using these 5 RJ practice principles? How is it different? This paper provides an example from both community and custodial youth justice.

Stage 3 Applied Learning

Community Youth Justice Pre-Sentence Reports

Social workers are trained in providing social assessments and the *YJ Act 1997* requires a particular kind of assessment to be made. This law stipulates that an 'assessment' will be informed by the objectives and principles of RJ. This assessment is clearly different to that previously required by the *Child Welfare Act 1960*, since the objectives of RJ represented in Table 1 and 2 and to be practiced as represented in Table 3, are quite different.

The *YJ Act 1997* says that a report should provide the court with factual and verifiable information concerning the offence and 'provide specified information, assessments and reports relating to the youth or the youth's family or other matters' (s.33.1). The Act required the content of the report to be informed by RJ.

A comparative exercise based on the models of youth crime prevention above was used in the professional development of RJ report writing. Practitioners were asked to write a pre-sentence report using each of the three available theoretical positions: welfare, justice and RJ. Each approach provides different 'specified information and assessments', and practitioners were able to effectively contrast the different reports. In writing an RJ report the assessment was constructed from the practice principles of diversion, reparation, responsibility, rehabilitation, and deterrence. The report has to describe to the court how these principles will be put into action. The following are examples of practice questions used to determine the content of the report.

Responsibility

How will any recommended programs or activities be aimed at encouraging the young person to develop a sense of responsibility?
Are there any supports that need to be provided by the State for the family, community and victim support this process?

Reparation

Which activities in the report provide for restoration of harm to the victim and community? This could be an apology, some form of work, attendance on a program or an appropriate period in detention.

Rehabilitation

What are the circumstances that contributed to the current offence and how should they be treated? How will this treatment encourage personal responsibility and restoration?

Diversion

Taking into account the gravity of the offence how can 'treatment, punishment and rehabilitation' minimise the impact of the possible sentence on the young person's education and employability?

Deterrence

Can the report conclude with a recommendation to prevent further offending and as far as possible repair the damage done? How will 'treatment, punishment and rehabilitation' encourage the young person to 'develop a sense of social responsibility and otherwise to develop in beneficial and socially acceptable way's (*YJ Act 1997* s.5.1h).

Custodial Youth Justice: Restorative Justice and Behaviour Development

The *YJ Act 1997* legislates for community youth justice and custodial youth justice and both are administered by the same government department and require the same RJ objectives and general principles of the Act. Part 6 of the Act states that 'the Secretary is responsible for the security and management of detention centres and the safe custody and wellbeing of detainees' (s.124.1). This includes issuing instructions for the 'management, control, health, treatment and security of detainees; and programs for detainees' (s.124 b and c).

A Behaviour Development program was developed to operationalise RJ at the Centre. The program comprises two schemes designed to develop pro-social behaviour and manage negative behaviour; the incentive scheme and the incident management scheme. Briefly, there are 4 colour levels, each based on the level of responsibility demonstrated. Benefits and incentives are fixed to each colour. Green attracts the highest level of privileges. Here the young person has met all the requirements that signify pro-social behaviour. The colours then grade from Yellow to Orange to Red. Red represents non-participation and overt acts of violence requiring the highest level of security.

A Detention Centre Support Team meets each week, comprising the young person, Case Management worker, Unit Managers, Education, Health and other staff who collate the weekly program, behavioural points and incident management feedback. On the basis of behaviours represented by recorded points, casework notes and incidents recorded for that week, the incentive colour level is then fixed for the following week for each young person with its predetermined access to an ascending range of privileges. All decision making in relation to young people is centralised and could only be based on RJ principles.

Just as pre-sentence report writing can be practiced according to welfare, justice or RJ principles so too can behaviour development in the detention centre. Behaviour development can be used punitively or allowances may be made for antisocial behaviour based on welfare principles. In our case the *YJ Act 1997* required that this program had to be based on the same principles of restorative justice used in the community sector of youth justice. The following summary explains the application of these principles and some initial results.

At the detention centre the young person is provided with opportunities to learn to make choices and manage their own behaviour responsibly by becoming involved in various programs and activities. In replicating the goal of restorative practice these therapeutic programs are designed to meet needs and reduce risk; targeting significant issues including mental health, substance abuse, education and employment. The overall purpose is to develop personal responsibility. Successful involvement in programs and unit based activities is rewarded and young people acquire points towards their colour rating in the behaviour development scheme on a weekly basis. Both the Incentive Scheme and Incident Management invite self-directed choice from young people as far as possible. The behaviour development program works in a way that maximises opportunities for the least restrictive alternative in the management of young people's behaviour

Young people are also accountable for anti social behaviour. Sanctions have been developed that provide punishment, yet within a restorative justice context. These include reduction of privileges, reparative tasks, extension of earliest release date and return to court. However the most important response to such behaviour is conferencing.

The detention centre operates as a local community where young people can develop the skills necessary to live in the external community. Conferencing with 'victims' is the principal means of responding to harmful incidents in the Centre, just as it is in the community and is a significant context in which young people develop these skills. Victims in this sense can include young people and staff who are assaulted and also less serious general disagreements. Parallel to community youth justice this measure is designed as reparation, diversion from the court system where appropriate and a further opportunity to change behaviour. The colour scheme is an indicator that a young person has successfully participated in programs including the conferencing process. Green and Yellow indicate successful conferencing participation.

Figure 1 Detention Centre Behaviour Development categories March 2002 to September 2003

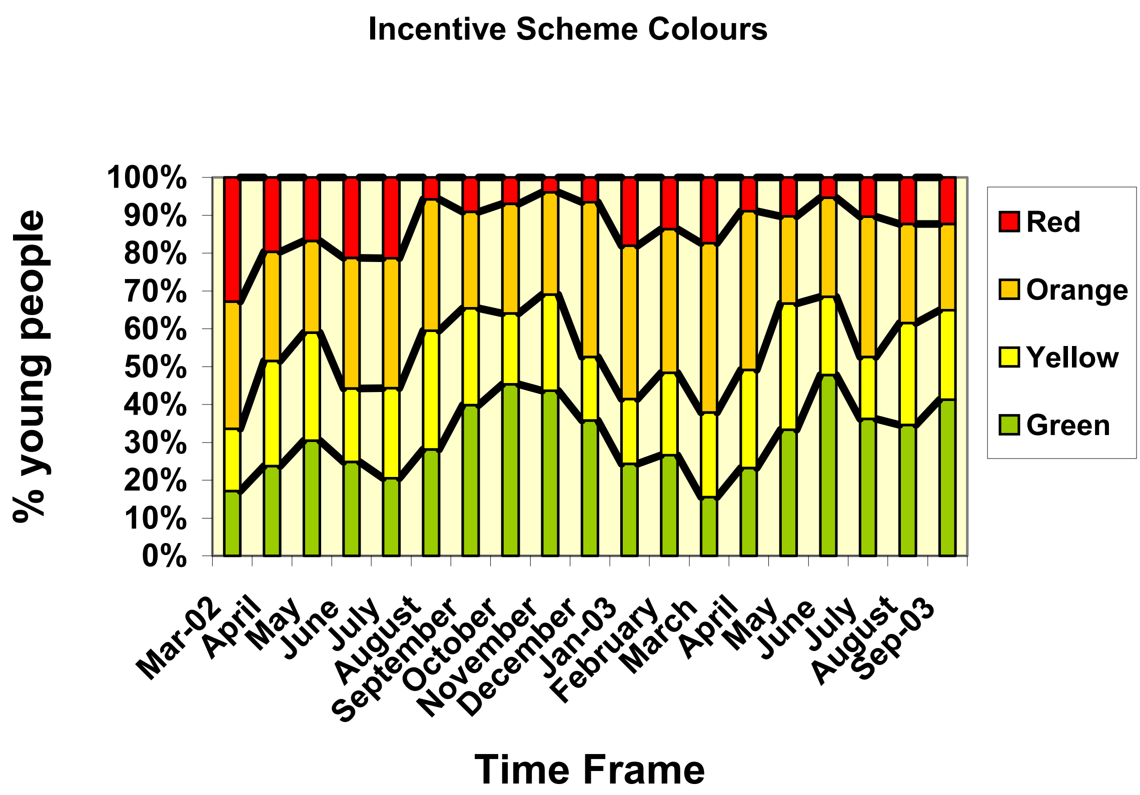

Figure 1 illustrates an 18 month period when RJ principles including conferencing young people was used in the Detention Centre. This data was first presented at the Australian and New Zealand Conference of Criminology in 2003 (Rogerson, Jessup and Whiteley) and is unpublished.

The Figure quantifies the percentage of young people at each colour level in the detention centre across a 12 month period in 2003. Red represents young people who have detention centre offences for violent, assaultive behaviour, security issues and who refuse to engage in programs including conferencing. Engaging in programs and no assaultive offences moves a young person to orange; however the level of responsibility is still low and need for supervision high.

Yellow and green represent young people who are usefully engaged in programs and demonstrate sufficient levels of safety security and responsibility to go off site for programs and family visits. Yellow and Green represent successful restorative practice using this model of behaviour development and conferencing: the 'greening' of the detention centre.

The 'troughs' in Figure 1 at July 2002 and April 2003 occurred when the conference facilitator was on annual leave and conferencing was not efficiently available. Certainly other variables are at work to explain this data. However we can say that these initial results were encouraging and positively viewed by staff and most young people.

Conclusion

In both the examples given in this paper practice principles distilled from the law and literature were used to develop a framework for professional practice. From our experience the following three points are of particular importance.

First, designing a principle of responsibility in the way described here allows for responsibility to be shared between the State, community and the young person who offends. In this way the State itself has some responsibility for the provision of programs if the objectives of the Act are to be met and responsibility is not unilaterally attributed to a young person, propelling practice into a justice approach to crime prevention and a neo-liberal approach to social policy. In this way the government agency responsible for enacting the law in community and custodial youth justice do need to provide resources.

Second, a major challenge concerned the requirement for 'punishment' in the YJ Act 1997. This could have been interpreted as a practice more congruent with retributive justice approaches to crime. However the law allows for the determination that punishment equates with reparation to victim and community. In the professional practice constructed here punishment needs to be practiced concurrent with other principles, ensuring that rehabilitation is taken into account in how a presentence report is written in community youth justice and provided in custodial behaviour development. Punishment is thus an effect of rehabilitation and reparation.

Third the practice framework maintains a social and cultural context to the definition and practice of rehabilitation. The idea of rehabilitation has historical importance for social work. Many of the writers cited in this paper are anxious that RJ will ignore social dimensions of power imbalances. However the practices resulting from this professional development go some way to implementing a systemic understanding of youth crime so valuable to social work. In doing so RJ practice can continue to reflect on its own development to take account of socio-structural inequality.

Summary

This paper has not been a critique of RJ and has not judged the effectiveness of RJ in youth crime prevention. Our intention has been to share an important experience of translating law into practice. As law continues to regulate social work practice it will remain important to influence the impact of that legislation on those we work with and for. We have emphasised that social work's engagement with a legal framework is much more than merely understanding the law. Commentators continue to stress the need for quality assuring RJ so that it is accountable to its core philosophy. It is important therefore for social work to exert some influence on law by actively developing preferred frameworks for practice. Without the framework for practice described here RJ could have been shaped in a myriad of ways. Asking staff to practice all 5 practice principles simultaneously actively privileged a certain discourse of RJ that we believe was compatible with the best understanding of RJ that we have.

In addition we argue that the educational methods that were used did provide ownership and sustainability for this RJ model. Certainly, as the literature, says 'it can fail'. Yet in 2008 the practices introduced are still in place and being further developed, although we have consistently advocated for a Restorative Justice Board as the next step in policy development, further research and evaluation and professional training. It is useful that the recent research emphasises the same 'way forward' (Heather and Strang 2007: 4).

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Much More Important Than I First Thought It Was: A Report on a Study Aimed at Attempting to Change Social Work Students' Attitudes in a Beginning Research Subject.

Martin Ryan[1]

The stereotype of a social work student is one of being notoriously 'research reluctant', but the available research indicates that this is not always the case. Secret et al. (2003), in a U.S. study looking at students' initial attitudes towards learning research, found considerable variation, with a large portion reporting overall positive attitudes. They further suggested three pedagogical principles on which to base teaching strategies (students' views canvassed about the subject, students setting the pace of teaching of the subject and the use of a range of teaching interventions). The present study sought to assess a class of students' attitudes to a beginning research subject and to utilise and test the impact of the implementation of Secret et al.'s three principles at the mid-way point and at the completion of the subject. It was found that these students did have a range of initial attitudes towards learning research and the implementation of the three principles increased students' interest in and perception of the usefulness of research, but not their levels of fear about research. Qualitative data provided further insight into these findings. The implications of the findings for teaching beginning social work research are discussed.

Introduction

The stereotype of the typical social work student being 'research reluctant' is certainly one that fills the international social work education literature and may in practice govern the attitudes and pedagogical strategies of social work academics who are teaching social work research subjects (e.g. Epstein, 1987; Forte, 1995; MontCalm, 1999; Gustavsson & MacEachron, 2001). So much so that Epstein's (1987) assertion that: 'No other part of the social work curriculum has been so consistently received by students with as much groaning, moaning, eye-rolling, hyperventilation, and waiver-strategizing as the research course' (p.71) has been oft quoted (Royse & Rompf, 1992; Dunlap, 1993). As a result, social work educators who teach research continue to search for and implement innovative and creative teaching strategies that will overcome these seemingly negative attitudes by students (Epstein, 1987; Wainstock, 1994; Berger, 2002; Hardcastle & Bisman, 2003; Jacobsen & Alysha, 2006; Kapp, 2006).

But research studies have found that not all students have negative attitudes about research. For example, Lazar (1991) reported that social work students had positive attitudes to studying research and that a number of students did not fit the profile of being 'research reluctant'.

In order to clarify these contradictory views, Secret, Ford & Rompf (2003), in a US study, examined undergraduate social work students' attitudes towards learning research at the beginning of their first research course and then attempted to identify some of the student based characteristics associated with these attitudes. Their study of 285 BSW students over a four year period found considerable variation amongst

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the students in terms of attitude towards research, with a large proportion of students reporting overall positive attitudes. In summary, their analysis revealed that women and students with less statistical knowledge were more fearful of research courses, while older students and those with greater levels of 'social work empowerment' (defined as 'positive self-evaluation and confidence necessary for active participation in the social environment' (Frans, 1993), as measured by The Social Work Empowerment Scale (SEWS) (Frans, 1993) found research courses to be less daunting and more attractive.

Secret et al. (2003), based on their study's findings, suggested three pedagogical principles on which future teaching strategies for social work students could be based. These three principles were: 1) academics should ask students directly what they think about an upcoming research course rather than just assume students, in general hold negative attitudes; 2) students should be allowed to set the pace of the course; and 3) because student attitudes about research are quite complex, one dimensional or oversimplified teaching interventions should be avoided (pp. 419-20).

In contrast to the U.S. and the U.K., there has been little Australian research on research education for social work students. There have been case studies of the efforts of individuals in schools in teaching research such as Crisp (1998) who recounted her experiences at Deakin University in teaching research via distance education. There have also been broader survey articles such as Crisp's (2000) profile on the history of Australian social work practice research, Ryan and Sheehan (2000) survey of research education in Australian BSW programs, and Fook's (2003) survey of Australian social work research.

As well as the scarcity of Australian research which directly evaluated research teaching, the author was keen to improve student engagement and participation in research. This goal was influenced by pressures within the author's school and university, as well as national and international debates and calls for greater social worker competence in utilising and conducting research, particularly in light of the evidence-based practice movement (Gibbs & Gambrill, 2002; Plath, 2006). The author's school of social work is located within a Faculty of Health Sciences in which there is a high priority placed on the teaching and implementation of evidence-based practice across the Faculty.

The present study was carried out in view of the dearth of research conducted in Australia that empirically evaluated the teaching of research to social work students. The author sought to directly assess the effects of the implementation of Secret et al's three principles in an Australian setting by testing three hypotheses derived from these principles. This was done in a second year research subject in 2005 at the author's university. The present study was also designed to examine beginning-level Bachelor of Social Work students' initial attitudes to learning research and to identify their associated characteristics. Both aims were attempts to add to knowledge and inform strategies on teaching beginning social work research, particularly in terms of the generalisability and effectiveness of Secret et al's implementation of the three pedagogical principles.

The study tested the following three hypotheses: 1) social work students entering their first social work research subject will report a wide range of attitudes about learning research; 2) students who report more prior research knowledge will report more favourable attitudes to the social work research subject; 3) students who are studying a social work research subject where the three pedagogical principles are implemented (students' views canvassed initially about the subject, students allowed to set the pace of teaching in the subject and use of a range of teaching interventions) will report favourable attitudes towards learning social work research as compared to prior to the subject.

The Research Subject

The Australian Association of Social Workers specifies that 'research and knowledge generation has to be one of the six main areas of practice taught in a recognised social work course' (Australian Association of Social Workers, 2008). The Association does not specify where in a course research should be taught. In the social work course at the author's university, students undertake two research subjects. The first, (the one in which the present study took place) is taught at second year level and the second one at third year level. Based on Ryan and Sheehan's survey (2000) of research education in Australian Bachelor of Social Work programs, most schools teach research subjects in the penultimate or final year of the course (p. 140).

These subjects adhere to what Punch (2005) calls the two level structure of research methods training. At the first level, the subject provides a basic level of understanding which primarily deals with the logic of research and covers both qualitative and quantitative approaches to it. The second level is 'more technical and more specialised, dealing with the different techniques of qualitative and quantitative research' (p.6). At the author's university, the second level is more focussed in that it directly applies the basics of the research process to social work practice. Therefore it specifically covers techniques for direct practice research in social work, and program monitoring and evaluation. It also provides more depth to quantitative methods via the teaching of statistics through the use of the SPSS software package and also looks in more depth at qualitative analysis, particularly utilising grounded theory.

The first of these subjects, the second year subject entitled 'Research for Social Work Practice A' had as its goals on completion of this subject that students would: '1) have a basic familiarity with the role of research in social work practice; 2) be able to critically review literature for use in social work practice and research; 3) be able to prepare a research proposal for a social work research problem; and 4) be aware of the importance of research findings in social work practice' (Ryan, 2005).

The subject ran for the entire length of a semester (13 weeks) and consisted of a one-hour lecture and a one-hour tutorial per week. The author was the subject coordinator and presented the lectures in the subject. He was also one of two tutors in the subject.

The Lectures

The topics covered in the lectures would be fairly standard for most introductory social work research subjects (see Table 1 for a summary of the lecture and tutorial content.).

Table 1: Summary of Lecture and Tutorial content in the research subject

Week	Lecture	Tutorial
1)	Introduction to subject Research in Social Work (1)	No tutorial this week
2)	Research in social Work (2) Quantitative & Qualitative approaches to research	Research in social work. Quantitative & Qualitative approaches to research
3)	Critical Thinking for social work research	Using Critical Thinking in practice
4)	Ethics in social work research	Ethical dilemmas in social work research
5)	Beginning the research process (1)	Library research skills class
6)	What does a research article look like? Assessing a research article	Reading a research article (1)
7)	Writing a critical literature review	Reading a research article (2)
8)	Continuing the research process	Assessing research literature
9)	Selecting a sample	Writing a literature review – practical class
1st Assignment due (Critical literature review)		
10)	Collecting data	Problems in real-world research and overcoming them
11)	Doing Research in the Real World (Guest lecturer)	Developing a research methodology for a research problem (1)
12)	Summarising and Presenting Quantitative & Qualitative data - the basics	Developing a research methodology for a research problem (2)
13)	Drawing Conclusions and Reporting & Disseminating findings	Developing a research methodology for a research problem (3)
2nd Assignment due two weeks after last lecture (Development of a research methodology for a given research problem)		

The lectures were presented using PowerPoint with these being accessible prior to the lecture via the school web site. Print copies of the PowerPoint lecture were also distributed to the students at the lecture itself.

Assessment

Students in the subject were required to do two pieces of assessment. The first was a 2,000 word essay requiring a critical literature review based on one of three topics that students were give (worth 60 per cent of the marks in the subject). The second piece of assessment was a 1,000 word essay requiring the development of a proposed research methodology related to the topic they had chosen for their first piece of assessment (worth 40% of the marks).

The three topics which were the basis for both pieces of assessment involving social workers learning about the nature and issues for three different client groups: 1) people with dementia; 2) Refugee survivors of trauma and torture and 3) women with post natal depression.

The key requirements for the literature review were that it should be both critical and evaluative of the literature, not merely a summary. Students were to cite no more than 15 works in the review including web sites. The most popular topic was the one related to post-natal depression, followed by, in much smaller numbers, the dementia topic with only a handful tackling the refugees' topic.

The second piece of work (the research proposal) required them to imagine that they had been asked by their manager as the social worker in each scenario to develop a research study which looked at the problem in the scenario. For the proposal the students were required to address the following points: 1) develop three research questions that you are going to answer in researching the problem; 2) what a) broad approach to research i.e. quantitative, qualitative or a combined approach; b) research design; c) sampling method; and d) data collection method you would use to investigate the research problem? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each of the above that you have chosen? 3) Outline some of the key issues/problems that would need to be considered in developing a feasible methodology to study this research problem. (Ryan, 2005)

Tutorials

There were three tutorial groups, two of which were taught by the author and the third by the other tutor in the subject. Each tutorial group contained between 20-25 students. The aim of the tutorials was to enable students to discuss the lecture material, particularly as it related directly to preparing for the two pieces of assessment. They were also intended as a forum to enable students develop their ideas for, and to work directly on the two pieces of assessment and as an opportunity to consult their tutor about these pieces of work.

The tutorials were the primary vehicle for the implementation of the three pedagogical principles contained in the third hypothesis i.e. student views being canvassed initially about the subject, students setting the pace of teaching in the subject and use of a range of teaching interventions.

In the first tutorial, student views about the subject were ascertained through asking them to introduce themselves, talk about any previous research education they had had, and their attitude to research and this subject. (They were also later asked about their views on the subject more formally via the mid-way questionnaire). Small groups (4-5) were formed at the first tutorial based on their interest in doing particular scenarios for the assessment. They met in these groups through the semester as a means of support and information exchange for their assessment. As the semester progressed, the tutorials focussed on preparation for the research proposal.

This assisted them in setting their own learning pace in the subject. It should be pointed out that the notion of students setting the pace of teaching is in practice fraught with difficulties. What is that pace? Is there one pace for all students or each proceeds at their own pace? In conducting these tutorials, these dilemmas were resolved by proceeding at the pace as dictated by the general consensus of the tutorial group e.g. if most members of the group indicated a common problem, the pace of teaching was slowed to accommodate resolving that particular issue to the satisfaction of the majority.

In terms of having varied teaching interventions, as well as didactic lecture input, the tutorials incorporated a mixture of individual work, didactic input, small group work, quizzes, role-plays and discussion.

Methodology

The participants in the study were students enrolled in a second year social work research subject at one campus of the author's university in second semester of 2005. The study received ethical clearance from the relevant Faculty's ethics committee prior to its commencement. Data were collected via anonymous questionnaires and returned anonymously.

The major ethical concern the study raised was whether responses in the survey questionnaires would influence student assessment due to intervention by the researcher/subject coordinator. This was not the case as all questionnaires were completed anonymously and therefore individual students could not be identified by the researcher.

Data were collected from an availability sample of 52 second year Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) students enrolled in the subject. In the first lecture of the subject, prior to the distribution of the subject outline, or any discussion of subject expectations, or the presentation of the content of the introductory lecture, the author as the subject's coordinator introduced the research study and told the students that the questionnaire will ask them about their attitudes to social work research and the forthcoming subject. The questionnaire with an information statement about the research study was then distributed. Therefore students were informed verbally and in writing of the requirements of the study, as well as participation being voluntary. Those choosing not to participate were instructed to return the forms anonymously. Students were then asked to complete this brief pre-test questionnaire and were given time in class to do so. They were also reassured that refusal to be involved or withdraw from the study would in no way impact on their teaching and assessment outcomes in the subject. They were also told that they would be asked to complete a similar questionnaire at the conclusion of the subject, as well as a brief questionnaire at about mid-way through the semester. The only other requirement for the study was that they participate as they would normally as a student in this subject.

In the pre-test questionnaire, the students were asked for some basic demographic information such as gender and age. (Gender was coded as 1 = female and 2 = male, whilst age was treated as a continuous/interval variable.) They were also asked if they had studied a research subject previously at University or TAFE (Technical and Further Education). If they had done so, they were asked to give the titles of the subjects and the names of the institutions where they had studied them. They were next asked to rate on a ten-point Likert scale their level of interest in taking this particular subject, followed by a rating of how useful the subject would be to them again on a ten-point Likert scale. They were next asked if they had any fear of this particular subject and then indicated their level of fear of the subject on a ten-point Likert scale again. At the conclusion of the questionnaire they were given two open-ended questions to respond to: the first of these asked them how they felt about doing this subject and the second one asked if there was anything else they would like to add about taking this particular subject.

For the midway questionnaire, students were asked: 1) what you like most about this subject to this point? 2) What would you like to see changed in the subject? 3) Is there anything else you would like to add about this subject?

In the post- subject questionnaire, they were again asked to rate their attitudes to research at the conclusion of the subject using the same three scales used in the pre-subject questionnaire (interest, usefulness and fear). They were also asked: 1) what they thought about social work research after having completed the subject? 2) Did they think their views of research in social work had changed as a result of doing this subject? 3) Which particular aspects of the subject had contributed their response in the question above? 4) What did you like most about this subject? and 5) what would you like to see changed in the subject in the future?

The present study was strongly derived from Secret et al.'s study (2003), but was not a full replication of that study. Similar to that study, it utilised three questions measured by a ten-point Likert scale in relation to interest in taking a research subject, its perceived usefulness and extent of fear of the research subject. These three items were taken from Royce (1995). As Secret et al. (2003) point out, despite the fact that these measures have been used in previous studies, these attitude scales have not undergone psychometric testing. Therefore the empirical reliability and validity of these measures is really unknown, and the measures must simply be judged on face validity alone (p.414). Unlike Secret et al's study (2003), the present study did not utilise a statistical knowledge index as the students were not studying statistics in the subject. Nor did it utilise measurement on the social work empowerment scale which they used in their study, as Secret et al. (2003) had found it was a relatively poor predictor of student attitudes to research (pp. 415-17).

The present study made two significant advances on Secret et al.'s study: 1) it used pre and post-measures to examine the impact of the subject on student attitudes (as recommended by Secret et al. in their suggestions for future research) (p.419); and 2) it used a number of open-ended questions, in addition to the rating scales, to provide the added dimension of having qualitative data to enrich the study.

The survey instruments were a mix of quantitative and qualitative items. The quantitative items were used to compute index scores and were also analysed using related samples T-tests and Pearson's correlations. Multivariate analysis was not feasible due to the relatively low numbers in the sample. The qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis (Kellehear, 1993) to extract emergent common themes in response to open ended questions.

Findings

There were 52 students enrolled to do the subject of which 45 attended the first class and all of them completed the pre-subject questionnaire. This represented a response rate of 86%. Of the 45 students, 36 (80%) were female and nine (20%) were male. Of the 45, 43 supplied their age and the median age was 21 years. The standard deviation was 6.1 and their age range was 27 with the youngest students being 19 and the oldest 46 years of age. Of the 45, eight (17.8%) had studied research at university or TAFE previously.

The response rates at the mid-way point in the subject were 24 out of 52 (46%) and at the conclusion of the subject, it was 40 out of 52 (77%). This discrepancy was due to the mid-point questionnaire being distributed only at the lecture, whereas at the conclusion of the subject, it was distributed both at the lecture and in the tutorials thereby increasing the response rate.

The findings will now be set out in terms of each of the three hypotheses, followed by the qualitative findings.

Hypothesis 1: Students will have a range of attitudes about learning research

The first hypothesis was proven in that students doing the subject did report a range of attitudes about learning research. In terms of rating of interest in the subject, the median score was five on the 10 point scale, with the standard deviation (SD) being 1.75 and the range was 8. In terms of how useful the subject was perceived to be, the median score was 7, SD = 1.75 and the range was 8. Fifty-five percent (25) of students reported that they were fearful of the subject, with 44% (20) saying that they had no fear of it. The median score on the fear rating of this subject by respondents was 5 with the SD = 2.3. In terms of level of fear, only 13.3% (6) rated their level of fear at 7 or over.

In terms of the correlation of the three variables related to pre-subject attitudes to research with age and gender, these are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Correlations of gender and age with the three pre-subject variables of attitudes to research (interests, perceived usefulness and fear)

Pre-subject variables of attitude to research	Gender	Age
Pre-subject interest in research subject	-.07	.30*
Pre-subject usefulness of research subject	.18	.35*
Pre-subject fear of research subject	- 11	-.18

Gender produced very low correlations, none of which were statistically significant. In terms of age, older students were both more interested in research and were more likely to perceive its usefulness than younger students (correlations of .30 and .35 respectively, both of which was significant at the .05 level). On the other hand, older students were more fearful of research, but not at a statistically significant level.

Hypothesis two: Students who reported more prior knowledge of research would report more favourable attitudes to social work research prior to the subject

The second hypothesis was supported by the findings. It was found that those that had studied research previously at university or TAFE were less fearful of research (r= -.039, p=.798) and perceived the research subject as being useful (r=.124, p=.424), but neither of these correlations were at statistically significant levels. There was a relatively high pre-subject rating of interest in research for this sub-group (r= .315, p=.035), which was statistically significant at the .05 level.

Hypothesis three: Students who were studying a social work research subject where the three pedagogical principles were implemented would report a favourable attitude towards learning social work research.

As stated previously, the suggested principles was chiefly implemented in tutorials in the subject. Students were canvassed about their views on the subject, had the opportunity to set the pace of teaching and a range of teaching interventions were used. Again a complex picture emerged when looking at the quantitative data to test this hypothesis. Analysis was based on paired sample t-tests that compared the pre-subject ratings with post-subject ratings on the three variables of interest, usefulness and fear of the subject. The mean for pre-subject rating of the interest was 5.47, whereas post-subject that rating mean was 5.97, so there was an increase in the mean rating on this particular variable over the course of the teaching, but it was not statistically significant ($p=.233$). For perceived usefulness of the subject, the pre-subject the mean was 6.94, at post-subject it was 7.53, but again this was not statistically significant at $p=.401$. In comparing the pre-subject fear mean rating with the post-subject fear mean rating, there was an increase from 5.07 to 5.15 which was again not statistically significant ($p=.879$). For this last variable, the fear ratings had actually increased slightly over the course of the subject.

Qualitative Findings

The responses to open ended questions in the pre-subject questionnaire, the mid-way assessment and the questionnaire given out at the conclusion of the subject were a means of further testing the third hypothesis (improved student attitudes to social work research after the subject as compared to pre-subject) and were useful in explicating the quantitative findings.

In the pre-subject questionnaire, the response that was most revealing about students' attitudes was in response to the question: 'In your own words, how do you feel about doing this subject?' When these responses were analysed, it was found that they could be coded into a number of categories. The category with the highest number of responses (11) was those that could be called 'overwhelmingly positive'. Samples of such responses included: 'I am looking forward to it, as it is interesting, challenging and useful'; 'I am confident it will assist me in understanding aspects that affect social work practice.'

The next category was those students that could be classed as 'unsure about their response due to the lack of familiarity with research' (6 responses). One student encapsulated this category in writing: 'I am not really sure what the subject is about, so I can't really answer properly.'

The third most common set of responses could be classed as students who were 'anxious about doing the subject' (5) as it was their perception that it involved mathematics or statistics, which had often produced negative experiences for them in the past. A typical response in this category was the following: 'Research is a subject I usually relate to maths and stats which I find difficult to deal with.' The next category was those who said they were interested in the subject, but were concerned that it would be dry or boring (4). The next most commonly cited category was those who expressed anxiety and apprehension about it (3).

At the mid-way point in the subject, albeit with a relatively small sample size of 24 out of 52 (46%) students having responded, the students were generally positive about the subject. Their positive comments tended to relate to the lectures being interesting and concepts being explained clearly; being introduced to new and useful knowledge; the relevance of research to social work being clarified; and the tutorials were stimulating. Negative comments about the subject related to the timing of the lecture and the tutorials which both caused inconvenience for students; difficulties encountered in being able to undertake a critical literature review for the subject; the need to make the lecture more interactive and interesting; making the lecture notes available before class rather than handing them out in the lecture. (Following the last complaint, lecture notes were placed on the school's web-site prior to the lecture.)

In the last week in which the subject was conducted, the concluding questionnaire was handed out in both the lecture and tutorials for that week producing an 80% response rate. In terms of the open ended questions in this questionnaire, those that were most relevant to assessing any changes in attitudes towards social work research and therefore testing the third hypothesis were: 1) What do you think about social work research after having completed this subject? 2) Do you think your views of research and social work have changed as a result of doing this subject?

The responses to this first question were coded into categories. It was found that the most common category was that students reported that they could see the utility of research and the subject (15 respondents). This was followed by those who thought that the subject was boring and they had little interest in research (6 respondents); five found it difficult or complex; four respondents said they had little interest in research, but could see its importance; whilst three respondents were overwhelmingly positive about the subject. All other categories had only a single response in them. Therefore, 23 (59%) saw the utility of research at its conclusion (23 out of 39).

The question 'Do you think your views of research and social work have changed as a result of doing this subject?' found that 28 students (70%) responded that their views had changed and of these 24 (86%) of these were positive in terms of their perception of research in social work, three were negative about it and one was neutral. Five students thought their views had not changed (12%), with two remaining negative, two remaining positive and one remaining neutral. Seven students did not respond to this question. Hence 73% (24 out of 33) of those who responded to this question reported positive changes in their attitudes at the completion of the subject which provides further support for the study's third hypothesis.

Typical of the positive 'yes' responses to the question were the following quotes:

> 'knowing that even social work, being such a practical subject, relies a lot on knowledge from research.';
> 'It provides a more critical thought process of how to critically evaluate research material in whatever field of practice we are in';
> 'Much more important than I first thought it was.'

The following question was asked as a follow up as to whether their views had changed: 'What particular aspects of the subject have contributed to your response above?' The most frequently cited response here was doing the literature review and its associated tasks i.e. searching databases and using the library; this was mentioned in a positive way by 13 students. Two students mentioned particular lecture topics and two cited the entire subject in contributing to this.

The students were also asked ‘what did they like most about this subject?’ Ten of the 40 students did not respond to this question, but of the remainder, three groups of responses were ranked first with five students each in them. Learning new skills and new material was mentioned by five students. The tutorials were mentioned by five respondents, with particular mention of how these were linked to the assignments and to the lectures. The lecturer was mentioned by five respondents, with particular mention of the lecturer being interesting and knowledgeable. A number mentioned that the lecturer was good, despite the content presented was relatively dull. Four respondents mentioned the lecturer and the tutor in combination as being what they liked most about the subject. Of the remaining responses, two respondents mentioned the library session, two mentioned the fact that there was no exam in the subject as being a positive and two also mentioned they had the opportunity to learn about the assignment topics and found them interesting.

Discussion

The study’s findings supported the first hypothesis that there will be considerable variation in social work students’ initial attitudes towards research. Many students were favourably and positively disposed to this subject. This study's findings support those of Secret et al. (2003) who found that students are not necessarily research reluctant and that this is an exaggerated stereotype.

Attitudes to research were in fact quite complex. Most students in the present study saw its usefulness; many were interested in it and may or may not have been fearful of it. The low negative correlations between pre-subject ratings of interest and perceived usefulness of the subject and pre-subject fear ratings indicated that if students were interested and saw the usefulness of research, they were likely to be less fearful of the subject.

What student characteristics account for the variation in students’ initial attitudes towards research? As the second hypothesis substantiated, having studied research at tertiary level previously does have a relatively strong positive impact on students’ interest in research, and a slightly lesser positive impact on their perception of the usefulness of a research subject and a lessening of their fear of research. However, this result must be regarded with some caution as they were only eight students in this subcategory.

It seems that older students were in fact more interested in the subject as compared to younger students. They were also more likely to find it useful, but at the same time were more fearful of it. Gender produced no significant correlations, although it must be stressed that there were only nine males or 20% of the students in this particular subject.

The third hypothesis was partially proven with an increased interest in the subject and an increased perception of the usefulness of research, but not at statistically significant levels. Unfortunately there was an increased fear of research, but it was also not at statistically significant level. The qualitative responses also lent weight to the finding of a more favourable attitude overall towards the subject at its conclusion.

Based on the present study, it appeared that changes in attitudes towards research were mainly due to engaging with the assessment tasks in the subject, which when examined alongside the responses to what they liked most about the subject (the tutorial, the lecturer, the lecturer/tutor combination plus learning new skills and new material) suggests that meaningful assessment combined with student-centred teaching can produce positive gains in student attitudes towards research. But unfortunately such student centred teaching does not appear *per se* to diminish student fear of research with the level of fear rising slightly over the course of the subject.

Limitations of Research and Future Research

It should be noted that this study is based on an availability sample from a relatively small group of students in one subject in one Australian university's social work course and that the measures used had not been tested for reliability and validity. The measures of attitudes towards research however were similar to those used in previous studies and so could be discussed within the context of that existing literature, but as Secret et al. (2003) point out they were still '… only one or two item measures of complex abstract concepts that are not easily operationalised' (Secret et al., 2003, p.419).

Due to the use of anonymous questionnaires in the study, there could be no correlation of the variables examined in the study and student grades in the subject. The students who completed this subject in 2005 have now completed their degrees and began their first year of practice in 2008. It would be worthwhile to follow up these students via a mail questionnaire to ascertain their attitudes to, and participation in research.

The study did have the strength of seeking to assess students' changing attitudes using pre and post measures, although not in randomised controlled experimental design. It would seem appropriate that longitudinal research be carried out e.g. with students' attitudes being assessed at the beginning of the four year course and then again when they do the second year research subject and then at the third year research subject level. It would even be worthwhile to do this at the end of the course as well i.e. after four years. Such research should have both quantitative and qualitative elements, including focus groups interviews with students to directly access their perspective.

Implications

In terms of immediate implications of the findings of the present study, whilst the author did not teach this subject in 2006, he did in 2007 and was able to implement in that year a number of changes arising from the study. These included: holding the lecture and tutorials on the same day; having the lecture notes available on the subject website prior to the lecture; efforts were made to clarify the literature review process by providing high quality examples and changing the nature of the scenarios used in both assessments to keep them as contemporary as possible. These measures seemed to contribute to an improvement in the overall quantitative rating of student satisfaction with the subject as compared to that in 2005.

Whilst students may be fearful of research, that fear does not necessarily increase or nullify their perception of the usefulness of research. The author agrees with Secret et al. (2003) that fear and attractiveness towards research are quite different constructs. Attractiveness towards research therefore needs to be cultivated and developed. Initial attitudes and perceptions need to be tapped into i.e. why is it interesting? Why is it useful? Once this has been established, this could then be built on with assignment topics students found of particular interest. These topics would need to be not only of interest to students, but perceived as useful for future social work practice and also for developing skills applicable to practice.

Fear of research, on the other hand, appears to be a separate construct. What exactly is this fear about? Part of it appears to be related to mathematics and statistics. How can this be broken down? Part of this fear is fear of the unknown or lack of familiarity which can be tackled directly.

It might appear that one size fits all is not the way to go and therefore the idea of having separate tutorials for students of different characteristics, knowledge levels and fear levels about research should be canvassed. The author could not find any research that examined the effectiveness of such streaming or ability grouping at tertiary level in social work courses. But it has been used at primary and secondary education levels. Streaming has the advantage of exposing students to content which matches their abilities and levels of understanding and therefore improves understanding and competence (Slavin, 1990). Yet on the other hand, streaming is reported to communicate stigma through labelling, is discriminatory and students in lower streams report alienation and disillusion (e.g. Zevenberger, 2002). In a review of the ability grouping literature, Ireson & Hallam (1999) claim that there is no conclusive evidence to support or dispute the value of streaming in increasing academic achievement. Given these findings, albeit at primary and secondary levels, it appears that having streamed groups on the basis of fear of research may not be totally effective for social work students.

Many social educators have shared their thoughts and experiences aimed at engaging and involving students in research with innovative content and a range of strategies designed to enthuse them about research (e.g. Montcalm, 1999; Auslander, 2000; Berger, 2002; Hardcastle & Bisman, 2003; Reese, 2004; Ditz, Westerfeldt & Barton, 2004; Hyde & Meyer, 2004; Smith & Gore, 2006; Bolen, 2006; Ello, 2006; Jacobson & Alysha, 2006; Kapp, 2006). Doubtlessly there is much to learn and draw upon from their work. But at the same time, students' real fear and anxiety about research needs to be examined and addressed.

A number of writers have also specifically examined social work students' fear of research (Royse & Rompf, 1992; Wilson & Rosenthal, 1992; Gustavvson and MacEachron, 2001; Davis, 2003). Most of these have focused on research anxiety particularly as it relates to mathematics and statistics rather than to research *per se*. The important commonality in all their work was the need to confront the fear and tackle it directly, constructively and positively. Suggested/possible ways of doing so are journal-keeping which has been found to reduce anxiety levels about research (Onwuegbuzie, 1997); cue-controlled relaxation and group anxiety management training (Gilliland & James, 1983) to reduce anxiety, having educators who are not ‘intimidating’ (Davis, 2003), as well as more cognitive measures such as peer mentoring, concrete demonstrations of the value of research to social work, seeing students for individual consultation as a means of breaking down students fear of asking for help (Davis, 2003), use of multiple methods of assessment, and use of appropriate supporting material.

In teaching social work research, cognitive/intellectual aspects need to be attended to e.g. different teaching strategies/didactic input etc., but educators need to also pay due attention to emotional/affective aspects i.e. student fear of research. It appears that this fear cannot be ignored; if that is done, it may well impact negatively on the students’ learning and experience of research.

In conclusion, based on the findings of the present study, it seems that the challenge for social work educators in teaching beginning-level research lies in being able to build on this interest in research and its perceived usefulness and, at the same time, being able to lessen and confront students’ fear of research. By meeting this challenge, it is hoped that: ‘… it is possible to effectively and even joyfully teach and/or study social work research’ (Epstein, 1987, p.73).

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3. In a number of cases, both reviewers will recommend publication be considered after some revision or only minor changes. In others, both will recommend more major revision before publication could be considered. This may involve changing the length, clarifying expression, improving structure, changing some content or improving focus. This is quite a common occurrence and should not to be seen as failure. In other cases, a paper will be rejected outright or major revisions recommended i.e., a total rewrite. Reviewers all follow guidelines drawn up by the editors.
4. Occasionally, reviewers will disagree on the outcome, for example, one will recommend publication, the other a rewrite or revision, or one may recommend rejection. In this case, a third opinion is sought, in conjunction with the editors.
5. When an article is returned after revision, it is usually sent to one of the previous reviewers and one new reviewer for opinion. If only a small change in the article's length has been requested the revised version is usually sent to one previous reviewer and also considered by an editor. If only minor changes were needed, for example insertion of headings, correction of referencing, an editor will check to see if they have been carried out. The final decision on publication rests with the editors.
6. When an article is being revised, editors are available for consultation with the author. In fact, at any stage of an article's production, editors may be consulted. They are listed on the first page of the Journal.
7. Once an article is accepted for publication, the editors have the job of proofreading, editing and deciding the appropriate journal edition for publication, position, layout, etc. The editors are also interested in improving the clarity of unclear or woolly writing and may rewrite sentences and sections to improve clarity or expression.
8. Finally, the Journal is placed on-line on the AASWWE homepage (www.aaswwe.asn.au).
9. The time, from acceptance to publication, will vary according to the number of articles awaiting publication, length of article, topicality and publication of special theme issues.

INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS

Preparation of Copy

1. Contributors should submit **one copy** of a paper to the editors, which can be done electronically. Copy should be double-spaced on A4 or quarto paper on one side of the page only. Articles should include:
   (a) An abstract. This is an informative summary of no more than 150 words, suitable for abstract journals without the need for rewording.
   (b) A detachable separate cover sheet to ensure anonymous reviews. This should contain the title of the article, word length, the author's name and address, sufficient information for a brief biographical note, which includes the author's highest qualification, current position and email address (if applicable) and any personal acknowledgements.
   (c) Numbered pages (in the top right hand corner of each page).
   (d) Photographs and figures relevant to the article, on separate sheets. Only photographs with a high degree of definition will reproduce well, hence black and white photographs are preferred.
2. Copy should not normally exceed 6000 words, double-spaced and exclusive of references. Papers longer than 6000 words will be considered.
3. Contributors should use language that clearly includes both sexes when reference to both male and female is intended. Thus both gender words 'he or she', 'her or his' should be used, as well as neutral terms such as 'spokesperson' or 'representative', 'chairperson', 'staffed', 'you' and the plural forms of he/she. For further information refer to, Miller, D. and Swift, K. (1988) (2nd ed.) *The Handbook of Non-sexist Writing*, Harper and Row, Sydney.
4. Notes should be kept to a minimum and combined with the text whenever possible. They should be numbered serially and placed at the end of the paper, as endnotes, before the references.
5. (a) The Journal uses the Author-Date (Harvard) System of referencing. The references should be included in the text.
   (b) References in the text give the author's surname and year of publication (with page number if necessary) in this style:

   > The major improvement concerns the structure of the interview (Ulrich and Trumbo 1965, p. 112)...Later reports (Carlson, Thayer, Mayfield and Peterson 1971) record greatly increased interviewer reliability for structured interviews...

   Note that surnames only are used. Initials are only added to the surname when they are required to distinguish between authors of the same surname.
   (c) Where a reference contains the names of two or more authors, all names are given the first time the reference is cited; on subsequent occasions only the first name followed by 'et al.' is required except where this may cause ambiguity.
   (d) At the end of the article references are arranged in alphabetical order of authors' surnames and chronologically for each author. The author's surname is placed first, followed by the year of publication in parentheses.
   For books, the layout is:

Smith, N. and Jones, M. (1979) *A Companion Guide to Good Authorship*, Social Work Press, Sydney.

For Journal articles the layout is:

Wright, O. (1969) 'Summary of research on the selection interview since 1964', *Personal Psychology*, Vol. 22, No. 2, pp. 391-413.

For a chapter or article within a book compiled or edited by others, the layout is:

Morris, J. (1986) 'The art of the review' in Warren, E., *Innovations in Editing*, Bromley Press, Sydney, p. 8.

For electronic media (e.g. internet websites), the layout is:

Collins, S. and Ryan, M. (2003) 'How to put a social work education journal together'. Retrieved November 5, 2003 from the World Wide Web:
http://www. socialworkjournals.com/doing it/

(e) Where reference is made to more than one article or book by the same author published in the same year, use letters (a, b, etc.) to distinguish one from another e.g. (Smith 1970a).

(f) Papers with more than one author are listed after any sole publications by the first author, and in alphabetical order of second authors.

For further information refer to *Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers* (1994), 5th edn, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.

6. Spelling should conform to the usage of the Macquarie Dictionary and abbreviations should be kept to a minimum. Where appropriate spell all words with -ise, -isation, -ising (not -ize, etc.). The modern tendency to use single quotation marks rather than double is recommended. Frequent or lengthy quotations should be indented. No quotation marks are then necessary.

7. Paragraphs should be separated by double spacing, without indentation.