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Contributions to social work education, social work and social theory

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CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION, SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL
THEORY

Submitted by Nicholas G. Gould for the degree of PhD of the
University of Bath
1993

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SUMMARY

The thesis is a collection of papers published or written between 1989 and 1993. The content is diverse, but an implicit theme is the relationship between knowledge, action and learning in social work education. Based on the ideas of Donald Schon, a critique is developed of technical rationality as a characterisation of the epistemology of practice, and an alternative proposed of reflection-on-action. Parallels are drawn between reflection and personal construct psychology as theories of knowledge, and the possibility argued of utilising repertory grid techniques for assisting reflective learning. A longitudinal study to evaluate the use of repertory grids in social work education is described and data from the research drawn on to illuminate features of students' learning from practice and cognitive development. An alternative theorization of theory and practice has been suggested drawing on the insights of post-structuralism but this is rejected as a practice theory. However, the post-structuralist debates identify two problems within the reflective/personal construct position; firstly, the role of formal knowledge in learning to respond strategically to complex problem domains and, secondly, methodological individualism which obscures the social and political aspects of knowledge-creation. A research study undertaken by the author of the impact of race on sentencing in magistrates courts is included as an example of empirical knowledge developed in a field relevant to social work, where findings are complex and, arguably, counter-intuitive. A framework for teaching about anti-racist social work is suggested which addresses the political dimension by being organized around the conceptualization of power, and which integrates formal theory and practice experience. Penultimately, the theory of personal constructs is reconsidered and it is argued that the Kellian theory of knowledge, embedded in the metaphor of 'the person as scientist' needs to be reconstructed in the light of more recent developments in the sociology of scientific knowledge, to connect personal knowledge and learning with the social and political. Finally, the author's current and future research programme is briefly reviewed in the light of the content of the thesis, and some implications considered for social work education.

CONTENTS

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Page</u>
I A Reflective Overview	4
II Reflective Learning For Social Work Practice (from <i>Social Work Education</i> , Vol. 8, No. 2, 1989)	37
III Personal Construct Theory Research in Social Work Education	49
IV An Evaluation of Repertory Grid Technique in Social Work Education (from <i>Social Work Education</i> , Vol. 10, No. 2, 1991)	99
V Cognitive Change and Learning from Practice: A Longitudinal Study of Social Work Students (from <i>Social Work Education</i> , Vol. 12, No. 1, 1993)	112
VI Political Critique of Kantian Ethics: A Contribution to the Debate between Webb and McBeath, and Downie (from <i>British Journal of Social Work</i> , Vol. 20, No. 6, 1990)	124
VII Race and Sentencing (from <i>Probation Journal</i> , Vol. 38, No. 4) and 'Bath Magistrates Court: Race, Sentencing and Social Inquiry Reports'	130
VIII Anti-Racist Social Work: A Framework for Teaching and Action (proceedings of 26th International Congress of Schools of Social Work, July 15-19, 1992, Washington D.C.)	154
IX Metaphor and Meaning in Kelly's Personal Construct Psychology: reconstructing 'the person-as-scientist' as a theory of knowledge.	179
X A Summary of Ongoing and Future Developments	213

CHAPTER ONE

A REFLECTIVE OVERVIEW

CHAPTER 1

A REFLECTIVE OVERVIEW

This thesis comprises a selection of original work completed or published between the years 1989 and 1993. The constituent elements of empirical and theoretical research were not undertaken as a unitary project, nor with the anticipation of collecting them as a doctoral thesis. For that reason it is not claimed that the parts constitute a rounded whole or should be read as a conventional thesis. To that extent they represent something corresponding to Mathiesen's notion of the 'unfinished', a series of inquiries which attempt to find solutions and knowledge in response to a variety of problems and opportunities (Mathiesen, 1974).

However, the unifying factor is that these papers were written by myself and have as their point of origin the concrete circumstances of my own experience. The continuities in the development of my own work and thinking are reflected in the various projects included here, and through the work are revealed pre-occupations which connect superficially disparate lines of inquiry. One of those themes is the place of reflexivity in learning, that is recognising the importance of experience in intellectual activity, and the significance of turning academic analysis and experience back upon our own acts of knowledge creation. Although this chapter is not fully reflexive in this sense, it provides some autobiographical context within which to locate the development of the work included in this collection. In declaring some of my own antecedents, values and beliefs, I break with the conventional academic and literary practice of making invisible the author's own subjectivity. Nevertheless, revealing something of myself as an actor in the creation of the material collected here avoids aspects of what Woolgar and Pawluch have called "ontological gerrymandering", the problematization of objects of study within boundaries set to exclude one's own intellectual position (Woolgar and Pawluch, 1985).

Thus, prior to being a social worker, I was a political scientist who was primarily interested in relationships of power, and ways in which political actors used claims to rationality (eg technical

models of economic planning) to disguise the operation of political interest (Gould 1975 and 1977). Those preoccupations developed in the 1970s in a predominantly Marxist intellectual milieu which offered a framework of understanding which was seemingly unassailable and unproblematic: accounts of rationality and technical models of decision-making were forms of ideology manipulated by self-interested actors to disguise but advance their economically determined class interest. Within the Marxist cosmology the relationship between ideology and class interest is one configuration of the relationship between knowledge and action, theory and practice - a sociological perspective of knowledge which invariably characterised knowledge as epiphenomenal to the world of economic relationships.

I entered social work later in the 1970s when there seemed to be a highly permeable boundary between political radicalism and social work. I found within social work discourse an extension of the pre-occupation with the theory-practice configuration both within the domains of the epistemology of social work practice, and as a pedagogic concern of social work educators. Some writers were drawing on Marxist epistemology to disentangle the conundrum (eg Corrigan and Leonard, 1978), others were grafting on ideas from social constructionist perspectives (eg Webb and Evans, 1977). Since that time there has been a profound crisis not only within those political movements which had espoused Marxism, but a far-reaching intellectual re-assessment of Marxist tenets, not least such problems as economic reductionism and determinacy, reification of the concept of class, and failure to accommodate independent social variables such as race and gender. All of these developments required the recognition that ideas had at least relative autonomy from class interest. These debates are returned to later in this collection of papers, but suffice it to say that the wider intellectual history of the past twenty years is mirrored within social work discourse, albeit as I have argued, there is often a time-lag as social work catches up (Gould, 1990).

My own subsequent career as a social worker, and latterly as a social work academic, has been

characterised by a convergence between attempting to understand the relationship between social work and the wider social structure in what is arguably a post-Marxist world, and a developing concern with understanding the processes of adult learning and how individuals become good practitioners. In this way, teaching social work students and exploring the dialectic of theory and practice within an educational context has been the experience out of which the writings in this collection have been produced.

Meanwhile 'out there' social work has been travelling through its own profound crises of legitimacy and identity, and this turmoil has been reflected back onto education for social work. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to review the history of social work since the early 1970's, but it has been characterised by repeated public scrutiny of social work competence (see Howitt, 1992), continuous reorganization of social service bureaucracies in an apparently unsystematized attempt to improve effectiveness, (see Challis, 1992), radical re-assessment by the New Right of the place of welfare within liberal democracies (Jones, 1992), and an ongoing Greek chorus of public scepticism. It is now almost inconceivable that a paper could have appeared in 1974 with the title, 'Issues in Professionalism: British Social Work Triumphant' (Rose, 1974 cited Houle, 1980).

It would be a faulty analysis to see social work as *sui generis*, standing outside forces which also effect other occupational groups, and by the early 1980's there was an emergent discourse about the "crisis of the professions" (eg Schon, 1983). Thus, there has been a broadly-based debate about the power and accountability of occupational groups deemed to be 'professions', public expressions of disquiet as to the competence of these practitioners, and evidence of consumerist activity leading, particularly in the United States, to a spiral of malpractice litigation and defensive practice. An ever-present element in all these themes is the adequacy of qualifying education in preparing practitioners to be competent and, unsurprisingly, this has been a live issue within social work education.

Commentators have sought to locate the 'malaise' of social work education within various explanatory

frameworks, eg:

i) Some writers have suggested that the difficulties for social work practice lie in the particular nature of social work practice, that it requires practitioners to integrate what Stevenson has called the 'instrumental' and the 'expressive' (Stevenson, 1967). Traditionally higher education has legitimated 'instrumental' forms of knowledge and the transmission of that knowledge, but has no parallel tradition of recognition of 'expressive' competences, that is the intuitive and affective components of professional activity. A similar argument is presented but with a different taxonomy by Richards in differentiating between 'right hemisphere' activity, which is holistic, non-verbal and responsive to patterns, and 'left hemisphere' learning which deals with the verbal, analytic and linear (Richards, 1985). Given the historical bias in higher education towards left brain activity, social work education has struggled with the right brain facilitation which would produce creative practitioners. That there is institutional discrimination against forms of knowledge which are crucial in professional performance is a perspective reflected in the arguments of Donald Schon which are considered further below.

ii) There is a functionalist argument that the crisis of social work education is a product of the organizational expansion and transformations of social work bureaucracies. This is a widely permeated argument but has an early expression in Boehm (1976). The argument is advanced on two fronts: firstly, that the profession has broadened its definition of social work to become a highly diversified activity; secondly, social work organizations have increased dramatically in size, incorporating a wider range of social service activities than were within earlier definitions of social work. Consequently, the qualifying education of social workers faces the impossible task of being expected to operate competently not only in a variety of settings with a multiplicity of client groups, but also at any level of the organization:

"Social work education appears to be beset by so huge a number of demands and opportunities that it can hardly avoid being overwhelmed. Not only are the problems numerous but they occur simultaneously. The need to plan soundly for change in quantity, quality, direction and scope at the same time is more than any group of persons or institutions can digest, let alone find appropriate responses for." (Boehm, 1976 p.26)

iii). There is a critique of social work education that is essentially epistemological in character, which

suggests that there is no established disciplinary knowledge base for social work education, and that consequently educators and students struggle to assemble prescriptions for practice from a collage of social science foundation disciplines within which knowledge is increasingly seen as provisional, contingent and relativist. Responses to this range from reconstructing a social science-based understanding which accepts the fragmentation of theory as an inalienable feature of post-modernity to which social work has to accommodate (McBeath and Webb, 1991), or the substitution for social science of an alternative disciplinary base to education and practice, such as the substitution of forms of critique developed within literary criticism (England, 1986).

This is not an exhaustive list but is representative of the spectrum of self-analysis which has taken place. At the same time the debates are located within structures implicated in competitions of interest, with their own agendas. Stated boldly, there has been the interests of employers in extending their control of qualifying training to promote relevance of curriculum content and flexibility of the workforce in reducing qualification-based obstacles to deployment, institutions of higher education seeking to protect academic autonomy and validation of their own awards, and an increasingly interventionist validating body (the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work [CCETSW]) which is itself an arena within which these interests lobby (Sibeon, 1991).

Although these studies are not directly concerned with the institutional organization of social work education, the ensuing papers within this collection do reflect a view that the dilemmas within social work education operate within institutional mobilizations of bias (Schattschneider, 1960) against particular forms of theorization. These include the universities' suspicion of applied and 'expressive' competences, the mistrust of employers and politicians of critical theorizing, and further sub-divisions of these partisan positions.

A common thesis of these papers is that all these oppositions operate within an unsatisfactory problematization of what constitutes practice on the one hand, and on the other hand, its relationship

to the epistemological nature of formal theory or knowledge. Furthermore, these oppositions have been inadequately connected to ongoing developments in the understanding of adult learning. There has been an intellectual parochialism in social work education such that there has been under-recognition of well-developed debates within the wider educational literature about the characteristics of professional knowledge, the place of formal knowledge in practice, and implications for theories of learning.

Obviously, there have been important debates within the social work education literature but on the whole they have not, as Colin Whittington has also concluded, led to, "direct engagement with the fields of educational theory and research" (Whittington, 1986). In order to set the agenda for my own empirical study of social work learning and related theoretical papers, it will be helpful to set the context for when this study began in 1988. Taking as an example the literature produced for practice teachers in social work there had been little discussion of the epistemology of practice and its relationship to learning, other than a token acknowledgement of some general principles of adult education, usually instancing Knowles's work on adult learning as if this represented the corpus of knowledge in this area. Thus Danbury's Teaching Practical Social Work (1979) is essentially a list of tasks which should be undertaken by the practice teacher but includes no discussion of the educational principles which might justify these particular activities as being of more value in the student's learning than any others. Butler and Elliott (1985) also cite Knowles, although their wider perspective derives from Jungian psychology, and Ford and Jones (1987) briefly consider Wijnberg and Scwartzs' typology of student/ teacher relationships. But all these handbooks have an essentially pragmatic and prescriptive approach to teaching practice competence.

What theoretical debate there had been drawing explicitly on developments in educational theory had, in Britain, tended to be confined to the specialist journals for social work educators. The dominant theoretical discussions by that time centered (albeit not exclusively) on two themes, the transfer of

learning, and the relationship between theory and practice.

The questions, 'What theories do social workers use?' and the subsequent educational question, 'How should these theories be taught?' of course intrude upon the whole of social work education discourse, but the paper which probably establishes the terms of the modern debate was by Evans who sought to establish a distinction between 'theories of practice' and 'practice theories' (Evans, 1976). Theories of practice, Evans claims are those which are explicitly derived from academic social science and utilised in practice, whereas practice theories include the distillation of formal academic knowledge but are primarily experientially developed and usually uncodified and implicit. This distinction established a position of some orthodoxy, in particular it informed Curnock and Hardikers' influential research into social work assessment (Curnock and Hardiker, 1979). A critical response from within social work to the notion of 'practice theory' had been the claim that it is an apologia for the abandonment of intellectual rigour in practice and raises ignorance to a professional virtue (Hearn, 1982). Another criticism was that the identification of 'practice theory' is a hermeneutic exercise which is ultimately arbitrary (Paley, 1987).

The transfer of learning as an issue in social work education arrived starkly on the agenda when it appeared in 1981 in regulations governing the assessment of students for the Certificate of Qualification in Social Work (CCETSW, 1981). There had been no previous published discussion of the topic in social work literature (Harris, 1983; Whittington, 1986). At its simplest, transfer involves, 'a change in ability to perform a given act as a direct consequence of having performed another act relevant or related to it' (English and English, 1958, cited Harris, 1983). In psychological terms this is generally taken to be the capacity to generalise from concrete experience, to develop conceptual categories which can then be utilised in new concrete situations. Although the connection is not cited in the social work writing on the transfer of learning prior to my own paper (Gould, 1989), this conceptualization of transfer of learning is reflected in Kolb and Frys' cyclical model of experiential

learning.

The engagements that had been made with educational theory in the social work literature tended to latch onto various binary categorizations constructed by educational theorists, and to conclude that social work education needed, "a bit of both". As examples of this, Harris's conclusions are that social work education requires teaching methods which reflect both serialist and holist learning; this echoes the earlier discussion of expressive and instrumental modes. Similarly, Harris argues for a creative tension between Bernstein's collection and integration codes, between the former which would emphasise the content aspect of knowledge which social workers need, and the latter which emphasises process and personal growth (Harris, 1983 pp. 83-4). Gardiner's research into the process of practice teaching draws on Saljo's distinction between 'surface' and 'deep' learners (Saljo, 1976 cited Gardiner, 1988), although Gardiner does not seem to reflect very critically on whether Saljo's work, which is based on a distinction in the way individuals read texts, is transferable to his study of experiential learning in social work practice. Although these dualist categorizations of learning seem helpful in providing a conceptual framework, they may be arbitrary in their application and usually contain an implicit bias against one or other approach to learning (Badger, 1985).

These were some of the impasses within social work education at the point at which the work contained in this thesis began. It seemed to the author that there were crucial debates taking place around professional and adult education into which social work had not plugged, particularly in relation to the epistemology of practice and implications of such inquiries for the education of social workers. As Peter Casson had argued in his study which is a notable exception to this critique of social work insularity, but which focussed only on the classroom-based social work curriculum, a pedagogic theory for social work requires a knowledge component - with characteristics of the type of knowledge embedded in practice - and a pedagogic component - a theory of learning appropriate to the knowledge component, and their relationship to theories of instruction (Casson, 1982).

Knowledge-creation, reflection and professional practice

Thus, by the late 1980s I had become interested in adult educational literature; this did not represent a unified theoretical perspective, but had as a common point of departure a critique of 'technical rationality' or hypothetico-deductive reasoning as the defining characteristic of professional practice.

This critique incorporated three domains - the form of knowledge used in practice, the context of practice, and the nature of problem-setting (Usher and Bryant, 1987):

1) Forms of knowledge. It is now widely recognised that even good practitioners are often unable to give coherent accounts of their practice in terms of formal theory; they may be able to demonstrate a technique but not be able to say how or why it is effective (Jarvis, 1983). Sometimes, under specific conditions such as being evaluated, practitioners may feel constrained to act in bad faith by giving rationalised accounts of their practice, an example being general practitioners who are trapped into an, "unreal stereotype of omniscience" (England, 1986. p. 36). Similarly, Boreham, in a study of diagnostic competence in a range of professions found that the general finding of research comparing novice practitioners with experts indicates that, "what distinguishes expert diagnostic judgement from the inexpert is not the ability to make rule-governed inferences from abstract problem representations" (Boreham, 1988. p.97). As has been commented upon above, this is also congruent with Schon's case study research showing that problem-solving in professional practice could not be explained in terms of rule-governed hypothetico-deductive reasoning drawing on representations of formal knowledge. As Eraut had argued, practice seemed to be continuously engaged in knowledge-creation, the mediation of knowledge into new forms to meet the exigencies of problems encountered in practice. (Eraut, 1985)

2) The context of practice. This line of critique asserts that the traditional view of practice as applied formal knowledge, fails to recognise the context of practice as a formative influence in knowledge-use and creation by practitioners. Eraut argues that professional knowledge is created and revealed in a

range of contexts, from journals, academic coursework and policy discussion through to case conferences and personal action. Ideas have only limited meaning for the individual prior to their use and the way in which they become understood, internalised and personally owned is largely context specific and, despite presumptions made in social work education, research shows very limited transfer of understanding between contexts (Eraut, 1985. Whittington, 1986). Thus, theory-in-use is interpretative and associative (Broudy et al., 1964). In the former mode theory requires interpretation and transformation to suit the context of practice; in the latter - associative - mode theory-use is semi-conscious and often encoded in the forms of metaphor. Raw formal theory or knowledge is itself often metaphorical (see Chapter 8) but the extent to which it is operative in practice is very dependant on the context of practice. Eraut draws on McLuhan's distinction between the hot and the cool, and if for instance, social work practice takes place in a hot setting the pressure is likely to be to compress theory and increase dependancy on the associative mode.

3) Problem-setting. A third emergent line of critique of conventional epistemologies of practice had been the assumption that problems were pre-defined, that they already pre-existed and awaited recognition within the site of practice. This kind of assumption is a pre-Popperian belief that observation can take place independently of theoretical frameworks. As Popper showed (further discussed in Chapter 8) problems have to be constructed from a larger contextual field which is in itself is a selective act, the form of which will be influenced by the actor's assumptive theoretical framework. 'Technical rationality' views qualifying education as a process through which practitioners are provided with a set of theoretical models, from which in practice the individual draws down a model which most closely maps onto the situated problem. The study of practice shows that this 'clean' applied view of theory and practice is at odds with life in "the swampy lowlands", the infinitely complex context of practice (Schon, 1987 p.42).

Professional educators who were open to these lines of argument had begun to explore pedagogic

techniques which socialized practitioners in the skills and habits of self-analysis in practice, developing their own practice theories and using practice as an experimental situation within which hypotheses were constructed from engagement with problems, and interventions refined through systematic continuous evaluation. This approach has generically come to be known as 'reflective learning' as a process of inculcation of 'reflective practice' although there are inevitably debates within this educational movement. The greatest impetus for reflective learning has unsurprisingly taken place within the education of teachers (see Valli (ed), 1992 and Calderhead and Gates (eds), 1993).

Reflective learning has theoretical roots in the work of John Dewey, but particularly draws on the writing of Schon on reflection, Kolb and Fry on experiential learning, and critical theorists influenced by Habermas such as Kemmis.

All this was the starting point for the first published paper in this collection (Chapter 2 - Gould, 1989) which represented the first attempt within the social work literature to harness Schon et al's work on the epistemology of practice and reflective learning to social work education. At the same time the paper also attempted to meet Casson's point that epistemological theories have to be linked with theories of instruction and learning in order to be operative within social work education. To do this it was the first published exploration of the relationship between Schon's position on reflection as the basis of professional knowledge, and personal construct psychology as a body of psychological theory which opened up specific empirical approaches to the study of learning.

The paper suggested a radical re-appraisal of the epistemology of social work practice which sees practice itself, not as atheoretical routine behaviour, nor even (pace Evans (1976) or Curnock and Hardiker (1979)) routinised behaviour within which residual traces of formal knowledge can be glimpsed, but as a legitimate type of knowledge with its own form of rigour and validity. If a Foucaultian 'archaeology of knowledge' were undertaken it could be shown that these arguments have their beginnings in Bateson's single and double-loop learning (Bateson, 1973) as taken up by Argyris

and Schon. in their notion of theory-in-use. Argyris and Schon's taxonomy takes as a starting point the concept of knowing-in-action which is taken to be the form of knowledge which people reveal in their behaviour. 'Knowing' resides in the action and often will be tacit and unarticulated. Even when it is available to the practitioner to be articulated that knowledge will be mediated by language and the actor's conscious or unconscious selectivity.

As is explicated at greater length in the paper, this knowledge-in-action is developed through practice, through systematic experimentation, trial and error. The argument that practice itself contains encoded forms of theory challenges the traditional hypothetico-deductive view of practice as applied science, but also leads to the re-evaluation of the orthodoxy that theory is primarily developed by academic theoreticians within establishments of higher education. Schon's own research by case-study attempts to show how a range of practitioners (not including social work in his sample) create and transmit practitioner knowledge through the successive processes of problem-formulation, problem-engagement and problem-solution through reflection on action (Schon, 1983).

This is not to claim that all practitioners are equally competent or adept in the development of theory-in-use, or in making the transition from what Argyris calls Model 1 to Model 2 theory-in-use, that is from theory-in-use which is routinised, uncritical and ultimately self-defeating, to theory-in-use which will be undefensive, analytical and generative of new solutions (Argyris, 1978 pp 12-16). Schon's own subsequent work has explored the pedagogic implications of his and Argyris's work on reflection; how reflection can be inculcated and promoted within the qualifying and continuing development of professional and other practitioners.

Taking the reflective turn - using repertory grid in social work education

As already indicated, my own interest in reflection and its possible implications for social work practice and education coincided with an incidental interest in Kelly's personal construct psychology. The

starkest point of convergence was in their use of science and experimentation as metaphors of knowledge-creation. A later paper in this collection will examine the important philosophical and cognitive significances of metaphor, and particularly metaphor of the person as scientist, but suffice at this point to indicate that metaphor is not merely a literary ornament but is a meta-level codification of underpinning systems of meaning (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). As my 1989 paper points out there are strong and embedded parallels between Kelly and Schons' theories of learning and knowledge-creation. This suggested the possibility of using the research methodology which is a product of personal construct psychology - repertory grid technique - as a pedagogic device for promoting what Schon has called 'the reflective turn', but also as a research window into the process of experiential learning and professional identity formation in social work.

The longitudinal research study with qualifying social work students is reported in two published papers in this collection (Chapters 4 and 5 - Gould, 1991 and 1993), and an unpublished background paper reviewing literature in this field and explicating the research methodology (Chapter 3). The papers speak for themselves although amplification of some issues will be made here; the constraints of reporting research for journal publication inevitably involves some compression of arguments and condensing of empirical results. This study was no exception to the general experience of repertory grid researchers that the method is time consuming and generates large amounts of data. The fieldwork and ongoing analysis of grids was virtually a full-time pursuit for one sabbatical year, which still left many hours to be spent in multivariate analysis of grids over a subsequent period of time. Thus, the published discussion of, for instance principal components of grids, or cluster analysis of patterns of construing are a distillation of what at times seemed an exponential series of data calculations.

The study had four aims: to explore with social work students how they construe their practice; to investigate how that construing changes during the periods of placement in practice; to study the content of students' construing to see whether normative data can be identified concerning influences

on construing; and finally, to evaluate the usefulness of repertory grid technique as a method of helping students to reflect on their practice and improve competence. Having reviewed relevant literature on the use of repertory grids in higher education research, the research design was innovative in combining a Kellian, reflexive approach to working with and feeding back to the research subjects their own construing, but retaining features of a formal experimental design, except where this was in direct conflict with the Kellian approach. For instance, the design could have incorporated a group who completed grids but did not receive feedback, as a means of experimentally isolating the effects of giving feedback from the effects of grid completion. However, there was evidence in the research literature that grid completion (initially developed by Kelly as a psychotherapeutic tool) without follow up is found to be unsatisfactory by subjects (Pope, 1978); the process can evoke troubling thoughts for individuals and failure to provide follow-up is the kind of appropriation of scientific technique and produces vulnerability in research subjects which are unethical within a Kellian framework. Therefore, this question of the independent effect of the feedback was approached qualitatively using a semi-structured questionnaire at the completion of the study (Gould, 1991).

Another issue raised in the published findings, but with constrained development of the discussion, is the indication from a principal component analysis of the grids that students move from a form of construing which is primarily determined by concrete characteristics, to a more abstract form of conceptualization. I indicate that this is Piagetian in its implications (Gould, 1993 p. 86), and confirms Lifshitz's finding of a similar cognitive process in social work education (Lifshitz, 1974). The connections between Piaget's model of child development and adult education and learning are relatively undeveloped in the literature but here two points will be made. Firstly, the finding underlined in my research is that the direction of cognitive development within the adult learners participating in this study was in the direction of abstraction and complexity. Usher and Bryant have identified an ageist attitude in earlier adult educational theory which assumed a maturational model of cognitive simplification to adults (Usher and Bryant, 1989 p.90). The findings of my research provide evidence

for their argument that adults retain the capacity to increase the complexity of their understanding. Secondly, there is an issue to be explored at the inter-face between Piagetian developmental theory and personal construct psychology concerning the development of what I have called (following Mahklouf-Norris, 1970) articulated construing systems i.e. complex but linked patterns of thought. The concepts of 'assimilation' and 'accommodation', developed in Piaget, by which more elaborated schema of representation are developed, appear both to be discernable within repertory grid research as illustrated by my findings (Chapter 5 - Gould, 1993) and are therefore characteristic of adult as well as childhood learning. There are passing but undeveloped references to this process in the literature on learning to teach (eg Barnes in Russell and Munby, 1992) but my adaptation of Mahklouf-Norris et al suggests the feasibility and potential of using a repertory grid approach to study assimilation and accommodation through linkage constructs and the development of structure in construing. This has particular significance for social work as within personal construct research cognitive complexity has found to be connected with the important professional quality of empathy (Adams-Webber, 1969).

The final paper in this series of three appeared in mid-1993, but in the interregnum between the completion of that research and its publication my attention had turned to questions which remained from that work. One of these relates to a question posed by other researchers commenting on my 1989 paper in a discussion of their own research into reflective learning. This is that the concentrating on experiential learning and the creation of knowledge through reflection marginalised and underplayed the position of formal knowledge within practice (Downes and Smith, 1991). This had already troubled me as a weakness within Schon's own work, that the balance shifts too far in recognising the epistemology of everyday practice but then is unable to accommodate theory or knowledge which is external to practice (eg taught in the classroom). There are three problems with such concepts of experiential or informal knowledge. They suggest that knowledge-creation is a private, idiographic process and fail to conceptualise the social structure of knowledge-creation. Secondly, the implicit assumption is that informal learning improves practice when in fact most practice is concerned with

pragmatic, short-term fixes; in itself the notion of reflective learning provides no guidance as to how learning practitioners raise themselves above the pressing necessities of the present to construct more strategic, longer-term, preventative interventions. Finally, and as an adjunct to strategic problem-solving, reflective learning does not provide a framework for the complexifying of practice through depth of analysis. Usher and Bryant have rightly observed that the strength of reflective learning theory is that it is located in and raises the status of practice, but this is also its weakness (Usher and Bryant, 1989).

Given the broadly established critique of practice as "a field of applications" (Schon, 1991 p.5) two broad areas of enquiry had suggested themselves to me which are introduced below in this introduction and taken up substantively in the remaining chapters of this thesis:

i) theories of reflective learning as constituted at that time appeared to be making progress in refining an epistemology of practice and indicating compatible pedagogic approaches which were experientially-oriented. However, there seemed to be a problem in taking forward a conceptualization of 'experience' which was not highly individualistic and which characterised learning and knowledge-creation as private, idiographic processes. One approach which was emerging was to adopt an analysis drawn from poststructuralism, and its methodological corollary - discourse analysis, as a theoretical base from which to radicalise learning to practice (eg Usher, 1989) and social work practice itself (Webb and McBeath, 1989; Rojek et al, 1988). This became one focus of my attention following the repertory grid research (below and Chapter 6).

ii) As mentioned above, some British researchers commented that both I and Schon in our characterization of practice and learning for practice over-marginalised the place of formal theory or knowledge (Downes and Smith, 1991). This gave some confirmation to unease I was already experiencing that there was a danger in giving greater emphasis to practice as the context of knowledge-creation - that this could be misrepresented as supporting a populist case for siting

professional education outside higher education and for devaluing the contribution of scholarship and research to the development of good practice. It seemed necessary to retrieve formal knowledge but without relapsing back into a hypothetico-deductive paradigm. This issue seemed to me to be particularly pressing where research illuminated counter-intuitive processes; a theory of reflective learning which depended on the refinement of commonsense within practice may impede practitioners in moving from Argyris's Model I to Model II action where to do so depends upon developing complex, strategic interventions, incorporating generalised understandings from formal research and scholarship. My own programme of research and scholarship therefore, as well as addressing poststructuralism as an emerging perspective (Chapter 6), was involved with an empirical, arguably counter-intuitive, field of study - the relationship between racism and sentencing in the criminal justice system (Chapter 7); and the development of a reflective framework for teaching anti-discriminatory practice which was theoretically rigorous but transferable between classroom and practice-based learning (Chapter 8).

Engagement with these challenges also produced a re-visit to personal construct psychology to reconstruct some of its theoretical tenets in the light of the above reflections.

Poststructuralism - a theory of practice and experience?

As indicated, at the same time that my own research and writing were addressing some of the problems of experiential learning and knowledge-creation, some academics within social work and also in the wider adult education field were suggesting that poststructuralism offered a viable framework both for building an alternative theory of experience (Usher, 1989) but also as a theory of practice (Webb and McBeath, 1989; Rojek, Peacock and Collins, 1988). My interest in poststructuralism and social work pre-dated these publications and, with sociologist Kevin Stenson, I had written a short paper in 1986 criticising the way in which the concept of paradigm was being used in the literature on social work

theory (Stenson and Gould, 1986). Briefly, this followed the appearance of Whittington and Hollands' framework for social work theory which proposes a mapping of theory within four paradigms (Whittington and Holland, 1985). Stenson and I drew on the work of Foucault and disciples such as Donzelot to argue that knowledge is constituted not only by texts but also by practices which together form 'discursive practices'. These discursive practices are actions through which relationships of power operate; similarly, the creation of knowledge is intimately related to the exercise of power. Following Dreyfus and Rabinows' commentary on Foucault, we pointed out that this analysis could also be discerned in Kuhn's seminal work on paradigms (Kuhn, 1962). Consequently, Whittington and Hollands' use of the concept of paradigm was based too narrowly on texts; without the crucial political dimension of 'knowledge' and the organization of power their framework might have some pedagogic usefulness but was misleading as to the actual position of theories within social work. A situation of unconstrained pluralism is suggested within which practitioners 'choose' theory. Its positioning of theories against philosophical and political axes also is largely contingent and arbitrary. Although our paper was a hastily written response to Whittington and Holland it has been taken up and cited within the ongoing debates and texts about social work theory (eg Howe, 1987; Payne, 1991).

Thus, when work by Rojek et al, Webb and McBeath and others began to appear offering more extensive application of Foucaultian analysis to social work I read these as someone already familiar with the literature and some sympathy for their intellectual position. The arguments also had relevance to my work in social work education because poststructuralism potentially offered a theorization of practice as a form of codification of knowledge (as already discussed but from another philosophical position in my 1989 paper), but also it transcended what I was perceiving to be a weakness of the Schon/ Kelly approach, that is the lack of explanation of the relationship between personal experience and the social and political milieu within which experience takes place.

Later, as already mentioned, I was to attempt some reconstruction of personal construct psychology,

suggesting that it need not be theoretically fixed within methodological individualism (see below). But in 1990 I attempted to address the particular question of whether the emerging Foucaultian/poststructuralist 'school' offered a way forward in formulating a theory of practice which was radical but also post-Marxist. A paper appeared in the *British Journal of Social Work* (Chapter 6 - Gould, 1990) which was specifically a rejoinder to Webb and McBeath but in its arguments takes in the wider poststructuralist debate.

In compressed form, the paper challenged the view that discourse analysis transcends the conventional terrain of values and ethics. The argument from within poststructuralism that its analysis stands outside the traditions of post-Enlightenment humanism is again an example of what has been called above "ontological gerrymandering", the application of an analytic framework to every domain except its own position and methodology. Thus, discourse analysis deconstructs the historical contingency and received ideas of other philosophies and ideologies but assumes that its own Nietzschean anti-humanism stands outside this process of deconstruction. My paper argued that when Foucaultian analysis is itself deconstructed, even ignoring the breaks and inconsistencies within Foucault's own work, a form of neo-conservatism is revealed within which there is no prescription for action, nor criteria by which one intervention can be evaluated as preferable to another. Foucault's protean and amorphous definitions of power, whilst offering important interpretations of the historical conditions under which processes of social control (both positive and negative) evolve, were never intended to be programmatic. Those social work writers (notably Webb and MacBeath, and Rojek) who have attempted to build a theory of social work practice on the foundations of Foucault are essentially bolting on to poststructuralist historiography and epistemology some rather undeveloped and unconvincing nostrums which themselves do not logically follow from their analysis. Amongst the correspondence which followed from the publication of the paper was a letter from the social philosopher, Mark Philp whose 1979 paper (Philp, 1979) was the first and very influential attempt to use Foucault and Donzelot to map out the structural characteristics of social work-discourse. My paper

was the first published challenge to an emerging Foucaultian social work literature. To my pleasure, Philp said that my article was "spot on" (Philp, 1990, private correspondence).

In both the 1986 and 1990 papers I have attempted not to take a philistine view towards poststructuralism, and the work of Foucault in particular, believing that this body of work makes very important contributions on three fronts. Firstly, it offers a historiography which escapes the worst features of Marxist economic determinism and reductionism. Secondly, it offers a subtle view of the inseparable and dialectical relationship between power and knowledge, particularly in the human sciences where power is in part applied through the production of knowledge - for instance through positivist criminology (Garland, 1985). Thirdly, it critiques the concept of private experience, showing how subjective experience, although appearing to be apprehended by ourselves as individuals, is patterned (but not determined) by social relations. This is the aspect of poststructuralism which Usher in particular draws upon in showing how conventionally, the experience in 'experiential learning' has been constructed within a psychologistic discourse which construes the making of meaning from experience as an internalised private activity (Usher, 1989). Discourse and language are constitutive of experience and these are socially produced. In Usher's own words,

"This implies that although experience belongs to us as individual subjects, we are not the authors of the meaning of our experience."

(Usher, 1989 p.29)

Usher, also citing critical educationalists such as Kemmis, looks to poststructuralism as a position which problematizes experience and particularly identifies the relationships of power which are contextual to learning from practice.

Formal knowledge, learning and practice

The papers following the *BJSW* article take up as their theme racial equality and anti-racist social work

education. They are self-standing pieces of work, one was empirical research commissioned by local courts and the probation service, the other is a paper written for an international social work education conference. Yet, they also reflect themes established in the work already discussed. The first is the problem of the relationship between formal and informal learning, given the arguments reviewed above that without this dimension, experiential and reflective learning are likely to lack the complexity necessary for professional practice. My research into sentencing of black people in magistrates courts is a small instance of a highly complex empirical field which could form part of the formal knowledge entity which informs learning for practice in the criminal justice system. This is particularly so given the centrality of anti-racism to social work education in recent years.

Sibeon gives a closely-argued analysis of the way in which social work education has promoted process models of learning to facilitate 'right brain' or 'expressive' learning (with all the attendant institutional problems already discussed), but has operated in the areas of formal knowledge what Sibeon calls, "cognitive closure" (Sibeon, 1991). Coterminous with process concepts of learning is a prioritization of the idiographic, non-generalizable knowledge which this may promote above empirical or theoretical scholarship knowledge. The pressure within a crowded professional curriculum is to bowdlerise or pre-digest knowledge for students in the belief that this transmutes it into a more applicable mode. There is also pressure upon educators from students to provide 'relevant' knowledge, which is likely to mean uncontested and unambiguous. This may take place in academic fields where theories and knowledge are actually highly contested and where only fragile points of concensus are established.

As an example of this I have included a small study which was requested jointly by local magistrates and Avon Probation Service (Chapter 7). Magistrates in particular were concerned to know whether they were acting discriminatorily in sentencing black people appearing in Bath magistrates court. The study was to be retrospective using demographic data and sentencing outcomes collected by the probation service using the Home Office PROBIS system. The research covered the period of January

1989 to June 1990, which was the length of time for which monitoring had been taking place, and gave a data-set of 541 individuals who had been sentenced. It was accepted at the outset that this omitted individuals on whom the probation service had not prepared reports, and some writers have suggested that this in itself may be a point at which discrimination enters the system. The data was prepared as an SPSS file for computer analysis and an abstracted version of the findings were published in the *Probation Journal* (Gould, 1991).

A preliminary stage in the research was of course a literature search which elicited a small number of studies on race and sentencing. The findings of these ran counter-intuitively to some of the received ideas within anti-racist literature. Briefly, this is that although there is no disputing the over-represented presence of black people in the criminal justice system, there was very little evidence for sentencing being the primary point of decision-making at which discrimination operated. Where claims were made otherwise (eg NACRO, 1986) this tended to be based on unpublished studies where the methodology could not be evaluated. By comparison, the published studies, showing a quite consistent view that sentencing was not discriminatory explicitly used statistical control of variables such as age, gender, seriousness of the offence etc. which is crucial in order to isolate the effect of race as an independent variable on sentencing outcome.

The Bath study was based on a sample which is quite small for research of this type, raising reasonable questions as to the validity and generalizability of the findings. They were consistent with previous sentencing studies, but fortuitously the publication of the findings co-incided with the published report of a far larger study of race and sentencing in Leeds magistrate court (Brown and Hullin, 1992), the findings of which were entirely consistent with my own work.

Thus, we have a body of empirical work in a policy area of great controversy where the findings so far are highly counter-intuitive, but are relevant to one of the central concerns of the social work

curriculum, anti-racist practice. This is an exemplar of a very important development in social work education, emerging from a growing realisation that black people are over represented in the social work client population as the objects of restrictive and coercive interventions, but under-represented as recipients of positive and preventative services (Roys, P., 1988). This critique has been reinforced by the overdue recognition that social work theory has been grossly Eurocentric in applying Western normative standards to a range of phenomena from family structure to beliefs about mental disorder (Dominelli, 1989). The ongoing attempts to develop anti-racist perspectives within the social work curriculum struggles with helping students to make connections between a knowledge-base about racism and social structure which is highly complex and contentious (as instanced by judicial sentencing, above), and as yet a lack of evaluation as to what forms of intervention have measurably anti-racist outcomes. This is despite a clear value-base within qualifying education which rightly says that racial equality must be an objective of social work practice (CCETSW, 1991). The danger, as Webb has argued, is that anti-racist discourse resolves into a form of "new puritanism" where its primary activity becomes a self-regarding policing of language and thought but without an underpinning of intellectual rigour (Webb, 1991).

Faced like other social work educators with a need to develop an approach in my teaching which incorporated an anti-racist perspective but which met concerns about forms of professional knowledge which are already outlined in this chapter, I began to develop a heuristic framework. The primary use of this was for teaching the sociology of social work to social work students but with the consideration that it could also be used in practice situations as a framework within which contexts of practice can be problematized and interventions considered:

"Progress requires that practice be re-presented (sic) and it is here that formal theory can be a useful tool or resource by providing a means to view practice in a different way and hence to reformulate the problem. Here, therefore, theory is not applied to practice; rather, the process can be conceptualized as one where practice is reviewed (re-viewed) through theory."
(Usher and Bryant, 1989 p.93)

The argument around which the framework is organized is that that the unitary concept underpinning

anti-racism is power. The framework draws on Lukes's three-dimensional analysis of power (Lukes, 1974), but based on the argument that this came prior to the establishment of poststructuralist models of power, a fourth dimension is added. The incorporation of post-structuralism also adds to the significance of the framework as it provides a theoretical rationale for the importance of the deconstruction of language and imagery which in much anti-racist material is untheorised. The framework reviews the four conceptualizations of power, illustrates how each form of power contributes to the maintenance of racism and racial inequality, and finally makes connections between these analyses and methods of intervention (Chapter 8 - Gould, 1992).

Publication of the paper is forthcoming, but it has been presented at a world conference, and at a British conference of social work educators. Against a high level of interest and receptivity, two specific discussions have emerged. The first is whether feminism should be recognised as a modality or dimension of power which adds a fifth dimension to the analysis of racism. My own position is that it is correct that the inter-action between racism and sexism has been under-researched but that i) feminism identifies gender relationships as a site of the operation of power, but is not a sui generis theory of power and ii) feminism is not a unified body of theory but draws on a range of theoretical and political traditions in its views of power relationships. As the paper acknowledges, there are particularly important connections between poststructuralist arguments about the construction of subjectivity and power relationships through discourse, and feminist analysis of the relationship between language and patriarchy. A second objection from a British social work academic was that the analysis of power is too complex for students. Given my own experience of developing the framework through my practice as a teacher and finding that undergraduate students can accommodate the complexity of the ideas and evaluate the teaching positively, this may be further anecdotal evidence of the possibility of Sibeon's 'cognitive closure' being enacted!

Reconstructing the metaphor of science in personal construct psychology

Chronologically, the final paper to be written in this collection is a return to personal construct psychology to grapple at a theoretical level with some of the features of Kellian psychology which I have come to see as problematic (Chapter 9). This is not entirely unconnected with the work discussed above on the nature of experiential learning, as it derives from the view developed in reviewing poststructuralist theories of experience, that there are problems in sustaining a model of knowledge-creation which is private and individualistic. In part this is an issue already identified above as retrievable from poststructuralism i.e. that experience may be subjectively experienced as private or individual, but occurs within forms of subjectivity that are socially constructed. This line of argument is supported through 'Continental' theorists such as Foucault and Derrida, but can also be constructed via Wittgenstein and his arguments which are sometimes referenced in philosophical short-hand as the 'private language' and 'rule-following' arguments (these arguments are explicated within the paper, below).

In recent years I have come to believe that some modernisation and reconstruction of Kelly is possible from a position which draws upon both postmodernist discourse analysis but also more strongly from Wittgensteinian theory. The point of access to this process of reconstruction is Kelly's metaphor of Man as a scientist (which henceforth it seems preferable to redesignate as the person as scientist metaphor).

Kelly's metaphor is pivotal to personal construct psychology as the exemplar of how cognition proceeds, how personal knowledge is created, and how learning occurs. Despite this there has been no systematic re-evaluation of the person as scientist metaphor since Kelly's original publications in the 1950s and despite the continuation and development of personal construct psychology as a cognitive theory. Kelly's explication of the metaphor of science clearly relates this to the individual process of

making meaning from experimentation on a trial and error basis. Drawing on recent developments in the philosophy and sociology of science I argue that Kelly's is a redundant view of science and experimental method; contemporary science studies (drawing methodologically on both discourse theory and Wittgenstein) show that 'scientific method' as portrayed in the Kellian tradition is a form of ideology which legitimates an individualistic, heroic, view of the scientist; instead, the creation of knowledge in science is a social process, not only in terms of the collaborations which accompany discovery, but at more subtle sociological levels through institutional and political constraint and opportunity, and the relationships of power which influence the validation and incorporation of knowledge.

The paper is a contribution to the development of personal construct psychology as a spin-off from my work in social work education. However, reframing the person as scientist metaphor in these more sociological terms potentially redirects it from the 'methodological individualism' which Jahoda has identified as its weakness, namely that when it deals with the social it does so as an aggregation of individuals divided by n (Jahoda, 1988). Whether this can be followed through at applied and methodological levels, for instance in studying the belief systems of social groups, is a waiting challenge.

Afterword - Chapter 10

At the outset of this chapter it was suggested that, like all knowledge-creation, the work contained within the thesis is unfinished. A final, brief chapter describes ongoing work which relates to the projects contained within the thesis, and potential opportunities for future research. Most obviously this includes continuing to study how social work students make sense of, and learn from, their experience, and make connections between this and formal learning. In the ongoing longitudinal study outlined this is being undertaken more discursively than in my previous research which employed repertory grids, and is using semi-structured interviews as the main research tool. A particular dimension of the study

will address the place of metaphor and imagery in the formation of practitioners' cognitions, providing empirical investigation of one of the themes of Chapter 9, that metaphor is a significant mechanism directing the incorporation and assimilation of knowledge. At the same time, this could illuminate related pedagogic challenges such as facilitating the transfer of knowledge between contexts of learning.

The investigations of forms of knowledge used in social work and their acquisition have applications outside social work education. The use of information technology in social work has increased dramatically in recent years, but without reference to some relevant debates which have are taking place within the field of artificial intelligence. Many of the same assumptions underpinning rational-deductive conceptualizations of the theory-practice relationship are also found in the literature on computer applications in social work. Chapter 10 reviews this author's writing and research in progress on the place of engineered knowledge within problem-solving in social work.

Finally, the thesis concludes with a summary of some of the implications of the ideas explored in this collection of papers for contemporary developments in social work and social work education. This thesis does not attempt to address directly the detail of the recent history of British social work and social work education, within which the pace of change has been rapid and the full effects as yet unknown. Nevertheless, there are important points to be made about the contribution which reflective learning and related pedagogic theories might make to the evolving nature of social work provision.

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CHAPTER TWO

(1989) 'Reflective Learning For Social Work Practice', Social Work Education, Vol. 8, 9-20

Reflective Learning for Social Work Practice

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Abstract

The conventional, normative characterization of the cognitive processes involved in social work practice is that theory is selected and deductively applied to meet the contingencies of the case and the context of practice. This model protects some sectional – particularly academic – interests, mystifies the actual nature of social work practice, and should be regarded as a form of ideology. Donald Schön has developed a powerful case for believing that the epistemological basis of practice can more accurately be understood as 'reflection-in-action', a view that theory used in practice is practitioner-led, implicit, and developed through experiential learning. It is suggested that there are parallels between Schön's notion of 'reflection-in-action' and Kelly's meta-psychology of personal construct theory: Kellian methods of repertory grid technique may be one procedure for helping students and practitioners to articulate and develop their personal and shared practice theories.

It is often said that educators bring to their teaching role a set of expectations and assumptions from their own experience as learners. My own recollections of being a social work student tend to centre on the vexed matter of convincing those who had the power to award or withhold the desired qualification that one had convincingly dealt with the business of 'integrating theory with practice'.

In the particular institution where I studied for my CQSW a key test of mastery of this ability was the *viva voce* presentation of a case from the student's final placement. My own case involved a peripatetic middle-aged man whose probation order I supervised during his brief sojourn in this university town. During the course of our meetings he revealed various traumatic sexual assaults from his adolescence which he came to consider might underlie his subsequent difficulties in forming lasting attachments. Though I still believe that I undertook some useful counselling with this man which may have gone some small way towards helping him come to terms with his troubled past, the work I did bore little relationship in terms of its direction to the ego-psychological framework I presented to the examiners on the day of my *viva voce*. Ego psychology fitted the form and content of my work adequately, and these I certainly did not falsify for the examiner, but an authentic explanation of my work would have revealed a reliance on intuitions and judgements more personally based than any text-book theory.

The main coaching point given to students preparing for the *viva voce* was that examiners would be most impressed by candidates who could not only demonstrate integration of theory and practice in their case but could also show an ability to hypothesize from other theoretical perspectives, should they have chosen to employ an alternative approach to the

case. It has since seemed to me that this view of student competence underpins social work education's dominant ideology of the epistemology of practice. It can be expressed in the adage of, 'if you only have a hammer in your tool-bag then you treat every problem as a nail', or more formally, that the cognitive processes accompanying professional practice involve the deductive selection of a theoretical approach from a potential range of alternatives to meet the contingencies of the presenting situation.

In view of my personal experience that I neither thought nor practised like this – and even when I considered that I employed a distinct theoretical approach, particularly group analysis and cognitive therapies – it has never surprised me that researchers observing actual practice very rarely identify the utilisation of theory in practice, nor – now that I am a teacher – that students do little more than strain after the effect that they are demonstrating theory in their practice.

This absence of theory clearly worries some social work academics who seek to rescue social work from the ignominy of being atheoretical by claiming to be able to discern in social workers' discourse the signs of internalised 'practice theory' (eg, Curnock and Hardiker, 1979). However, it will be argued in this paper that the abandonment of this conventional epistemology of practice need not mean the abandonment of intellectual rigour, but may free educators and researchers to pursue a reconstructed conception of 'theory' which reflects a truer epistemology of practice and generates a more useable form of theory. It is also a core assumption of this paper that demystification of the forms of knowledge actually used in social work would create a more credible basis for effectively preparing students for the reality of practice; the tenacious continuation of an insistence by academics that students demonstrate competence in forms of practice not actually replicable in the field may force students into accounts of their work which are the product of bad faith. It can also maintain a conviction on the part of educators that practitioners are pathologically remiss in their disregard for theory.

The Concept of 'Reflection-in-action'

This argument will be developed with close reference to Schön's concept of 'reflection-in-action' (Schön, 1985). Schön's work has hitherto been largely ignored in the social work literature although he has been influential in the field of adult education. Schön rejects the idea of professional practice as the deductive application of academy-produced knowledge, what he calls the 'technical-rational model'. He sees this as sustained by the anxiety of professional schools to demonstrate academic legitimacy to their host institutions. Schön finds from an analysis of the practice of a range of professionals that their theory is actually revealed and transmitted through practice exemplars, rather than through 'espoused theory' which is a form of legitimisation.

It will be suggested that Schön's radical conclusion that the essence of any theoretical stance is the practice exemplar is buttressed by recent contributions from the sociology of knowledge. The central educational problematic then becomes the enhancement of learning from practice rather than conventionally understood integration of formal theory with practice. Models of experiential learning suggest that reflection is the critical variable in learning from practice, which reinforces the relevance of Schön's writing about 'reflection-in-action'.

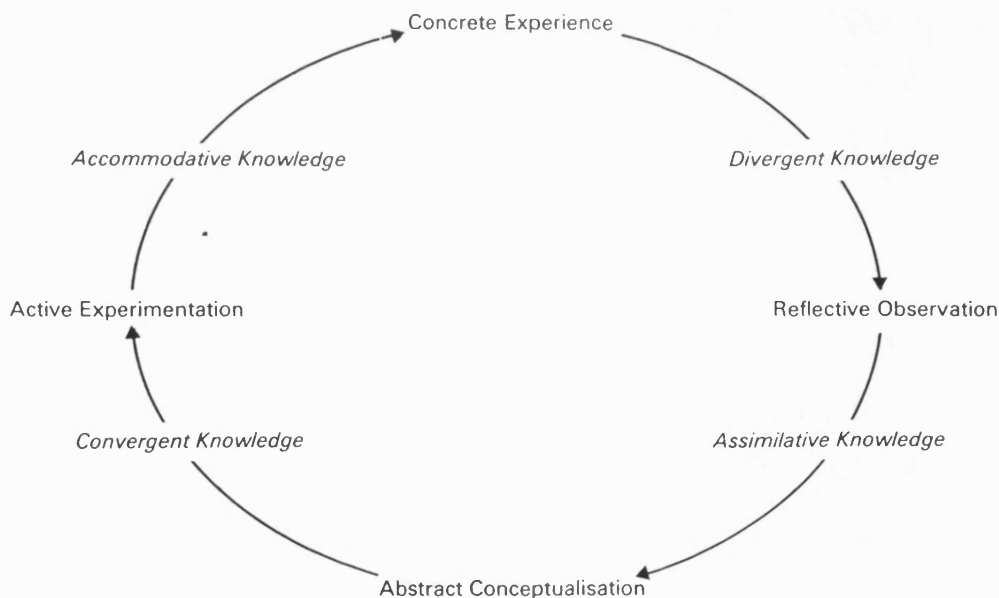
The question is then considered of how the concept of 'reflection-in-action' can be used by practitioners and researchers. A synthesis is suggested between reflection-in-action and the psychologist George Kelly's notion of 'the person as scientist' (Kelly, 1955) which in turn opens the way for drawing on personal construct theory and repertory grid technique as tools for accessing and facilitating reflection on practice.

The Impasse of Technical-Rationality

The idea that knowledge is created out of concrete experience via the mediation of reflection has a respectable pedigree in the traditions of educational theory and psychology. For John Dewey (1938), experience is the organising focus for learning, which in turn dialectically synthesises observations and actions with conceptual ideas and provides the basis for higher-order purposeful action. However, postponement of immediate action is necessary until, 'observation and judgement have intervened', (Dewey, 1938, p. 69) to produce the assimilation necessary for improved action.

As Kolb has noted (Kolb, 1984), this theme is echoed in the thinking of Kurt Lewin who suggests that here-and-now concrete experience initiates a feedback loop to the individual in which experience is transformed through observation and reflection into abstract concepts and generalisations, the implications of which are tested in new situations. The stages of this cycle are again not unlike Piaget's developmental psychology which explains the individual's capacity for adaptation towards abstract constructionist thought via an interactive process of accommodation of events into existing concepts and schemas, leading to extended and reconstructed conceptual understandings and thus modified behaviour.

In a seminal attempt to conceptualise the process of learning from experience Kolb draws on the founding fathers mentioned above to produce a heuristic map of the learning cycle which is strongly derivative of Lewin but which also introduces an epistemological framework identifying the forms of knowledge created at relevant stages of the cycle:



from Kolb, 1984, p. 42.

In their influential research into learning styles Kolb and Fry distinguish between divergent and convergent learners, between the former whose knowledge is created and remains at the concrete and anecdotal level and those who characteristically are located in the realm of abstract ideation (Kolb and Fry, 1975). The very little research existing on the learning style of social workers suggests that they are typically divergent and very close to

the concrete end of the spectrum (Sims, 1980). Such learners, if they are not able to bring reflection to bear on their experience, are likely to have considerable difficulty transferring knowledge to new situations or in thinking reflexively and creatively.

Kolb and Fry have little to say about the nature of reflection, and consequently little about how to nudge divergent thinkers on round the experiential learning cycle. However, the important function of their model is to illuminate the relationship of practice to conceptual learning and marks a differentiation from the more cognitive assumptions of the technical rational model.

To switch back from educational to social work discourse, the literature dealing with the nature of the relationship between knowledge and practice in social work often reflects the assumptions of the non-reflexive technical rational model. The function of theory and research is to inform a repertoire of intervention strategies which the practitioner can select from to suit the contingencies of the practice situation, but there is little recognition of the contribution of the practitioner to the corpus of knowledge or theory other than the exhortation of behaviourists for every practitioner to become more evaluative. Similarly, much of the literature tackling the subject of practice teaching might pay some acknowledgement to Knowles' principles of adult learning (eg. Butler and Elliott, 1986) but otherwise the learning process is taken to be self-evident.

Attempts to reformulate the epistemology of practice, and thus to create the possibility of reframing the learning process in more dialectical terms, generally try to uncover in practice the incorporation of tacit, internalised academic knowledge. In this respect Evans and Webb's concept of 'praxis' anticipates Schön, although ultimately their understanding of practice knowledge seems to resolve into a dualist relationship between theory and practice (Evans and Webb, 1977). Curnock and Hardiker developed this argument in their study of assessment in social work (Curnock and Hardiker, 1979) where they attempt to identify in the reports of social workers elements of internalised academic knowledge, although the arbitrary nature of this exercise has been pointed out by Paley (Paley, 1987).

More recently, Whittington and Holland have attempted to map the existence of paradigms of social work theory categorised by their epistemological and political assumptions, although my colleague Kevin Stenson and I have suggested that the core essence of a paradigm is the practice exemplar (Stenson and Gould, 1986). As yet there is little evidence that current practice in social work is as differentiated as the framework suggests. A similar case is made by Rojek in his critique of what he calls 'the gladiatorial paradigm' - the notion that there is pluralistic competition between conceptually opposed theories - showing that social work theories share many fundamental assumptions and are epiphenomenal to social work's historical evolution (Rojek, 1986). Again, the Whittington-Holland framework seems to rest on a deductive, applicative view of the relationship between theory and practice and if - as has been suggested - this is epistemologically suspect, then it has limited use as a pedagogic tool.

Schön inverts the conventional understanding of the relationship between theory and practice, firstly by acknowledging that professional practitioners operate within 'an indeterminate zone of practice' (Schön, 1987, p. 6), where problems have to be constructed out of messy, fluctuating circumstances, often presenting themselves as unique cases falling outside the existing categories of theory and technique (in Schön's terms, it is not 'in the book'), and containing inherent conflict between value systems:

'These indeterminate zones of practice - uncertainty, uniqueness and value-conflict - escape the canons of technical rationality. . . . And in situations of value conflict there are no clear and self-consistent ends to guide the technical selection of means' (Schön, 1987, p. 6).

Under these conditions formal knowledge will always have limited applicability. Instead of teaching students to aspire to a deductive, applicative mode of practice, we should be coaching them to reflect on their practice, to assimilate the resulting understandings into their stored repertoire of schemas, and then to experimentally apply this extended understanding in practice.

This reconstruction of the epistemology of practice is directly assimilable with Kolb's learning cycle and thus harmonises learning with the development of usable theory. This is not to argue that formalised theory and empirical knowledge should be consigned to the waste-bin but that, in Schön's terms, the 'high ground' where these can be used unmodified is rarely encountered by practitioners, and for the most part they are working in the 'swampy lowlands' (Schön, 1987, p. 42). The value of equipping students with formal theory and knowledge becomes one of providing metaphor and sensitising concepts through which practice can be reviewed (Usher and Bryant, 1987).

Schön and the Reflective Practitioner

As we have seen, Schön sees the technical rational model of professional practice as an impossible ideal which arises from a misunderstanding of the epistemology of practice and an inadequate grasp of the thinking processes which accompany professional action. Although Schön only mentions social work in passing, his exploration over the past 15 years of the nature of professional practice and the implications of this analysis for education, has profound implications for social work education (Argyris and Schön, 1974, Argyris and Schön, 1978, Schön, 1983, Schön, 1987).

Schön's earlier work in this field, with co-author, Chris Argyris, analyses the nature of individual learning about practice, and the application of this analysis to organizational learning (Argyris and Schön, 1974 and Argyris and Schön, 1978). Their earlier thinking is strongly influenced by Bateson's ideas on single- and double-loop learning (Bateson, 1973). Single-loop learning involves receiving and utilising feedback to resolve problems, but only within a narrow pragmatic frame of reference. Double-loop learning incorporates reflection and a readiness to engage with the wider normative context of the situation.

Practitioners who can only utilise single-loop learning develop a form of practice which is closed and defensive, utilising strategies of intervention which are geared to short-term pragmatic ends. Double-loop learners, on the other hand, are minimally defensive, able to learn about the value and assumptions underlying the behaviour of others, and willing to examine their own assumptions about the world. Much of Argyris and Schön's own teaching has been committed to helping learners move from single- to double-loop learning.

For the purposes of this paper we will attend to the central theme of Schön's more recent work *viz.* to study the artistry of a wide range of professionals' practice to reveal the epistemology of practice and the nature of the theory which practitioners utilise. Schön sees practice as a form of artistry, yet one which is related in everyday competences. Following Polanyi's notion of 'tacit knowledge' (Polanyi, 1966), Schön recognises that competence often does not depend upon being able to explain what we normally do, indeed it is often easier to explain mistakes or aberrations than normal behaviour itself. However, in our intelligent action we reveal know-how and this Schön calls knowing-in-action (Schön, 1987, p. 25).

In routinised practice knowing-in-action is demonstrated but there is little reflection, or double-loop learning, so that when a new situation arises the practitioner may deal with surprise by ignoring the contingencies of the new situation and carrying on regardless. Or preferably, the practitioner may reflect on the feedback received as he/she acts and is able

to modify or re-shape his/her intervention as he/she proceeds, thus adapting his/her knowing-in-action.

'Reflection', Schön claims, "gives rise to on the spot experiment" (Schön, 1987, p. 28). Thus the practitioner is characterised as an action-researcher testing knowing-in-action against the circumstances of the new case, modifying the intervention if necessary and moving by a series of experimental steps to a strategy which appears successful. Schön is emphatic that this is not the product of a process of trial and error, as new ideas are not randomly tested out, but rather reflection on each effort sets the stage for the next attempt. The experienced practitioner accumulates a repertoire of knowing-in-action to respond to the new case with an exemplar from his/her stock of strategies, until a new situation provokes the necessity of reflection to extend his/her existent knowing-in-action.

Superficially the notion of selection from a repertoire of learned strategies sounds very similar to the technical rational model of practice already rejected. However the radical difference lies in Schön's genealogy of practice knowledge. In his view applied science and research-based technique occupy marginal territory in the practitioner's world-view and are drawn upon as a secondary function to the *practice-learned* artistry of problem framing, implementation of knowing-in-action, and improvisation - an artistry which mediates applied science and research-based technique. According to this reconstructed epistemological view, knowledge for practice can only be engaged with as theory-in-action, revealed through practice, yet having some implicit characteristics of more conventionally recognised, academy-produced theory in that it is experimentally developed and rigorous in its own terms.

Theory-in-action will thus have quite a different vocabulary and form of explanation from espoused theory, the latter being usually post-hoc rationalisation of practice. This accords with the discourse analysts' observations of explanation in natural science, observing the separation between formal and informal explanations of events (Gilbert and Mulkay, 84). Like Kuhn (Kuhn, 1962), Schön finds that scientific or professional knowledge is embodied in the practice exemplar and legitimised by the appropriate reference group. Within this world-view there is no place for positivist, value-free knowledge of techniques, but only a relativist, constructed understanding which the practitioner continuously tests out and extends.

Reflection-in-action and the Person as Scientist

Schön's writings show no acknowledgement of the work of the late George Kelly (Kelly, 1955), the development of Kelly's psychological theories, nor their related research methodologies, although it may well be that Kelly's ideas are part of Schön's own 'tacit knowledge'. It is my contention that there are striking parallels between Schön's epistemology of practice and Kelly's view of the person as scientist. This possibility of reframing one theory in terms of another not only opens up the subsequent possibility of exploratory research to understand better the way practitioners actually think, but also of drawing on Kellian methods for promoting fuller reflection-in-action amongst social workers.

We have seen that Schön offers a constructionist view of reality, with the practitioner acting experimentally as an action-researcher, testing out and modifying hypotheses in the course of action. Similarly, Kelly's philosophy of 'constructive alternativism' views the individual as continuously striving for meaning, but unable ultimately to make contact directly with an interpretation-free reality. Contact is always mediated by the hypotheses or constructs held as being the most reliable about the world. These constructs will be tested out by the individual engaging with the world, evaluating outcomes of actions, reinforcing or modifying the individual's construct system and so on round the cycle. Kelly denied that

this was an existentialist theory, clearly the individual's construct system has a history and social context, but the emphasis is on action and anticipation of future events.

It was stated above that Schön sees professional practice as an extension of everyday activity, and Kelly describes a meta-psychology which in many ways is a template for Schön's description of the cognitive processes involved in practice. For Kelly, 'a person anticipates events by construing their replications', through which, 'persons choose for themselves that alternative in a dichotomised construct through which they anticipate the greater possibility for the elaboration of their system.' (Bannister and Fransella, 1986, p. 12). This is directly analogous to Schön's concept of hypothesis testing.

'Hypothesis testing experiment succeeds when it effects an intended discrimination among competing hypotheses. If the consequences predicted on the basis of a given hypothesis, *H*, fit what is observed, and the predictions derived from alternative hypotheses do not, then it has been tentatively *confirmed* and the others *disconfirmed*.

'... If the carpenter asks himself, what makes this structure stable? and begins to experiment to find out - trying one device, now another - he is basically in the same business as the research scientist. He puts forward hypotheses and, within the constraints set by the practice context, tries to discriminate among them - taking as a disconfirmation of a hypothesis the failure to get the consequences predicted from it. The logic of his experimental inference is the same as that of the researcher's.' (Schön, 1987, pp. 71-72).

Clearly Kelly and Schön's allusions to the procedure of scientists are at the level of metaphor rather than arguing a literal comparison and, indeed, philosophers of science such as Feyerabend throw doubt on conventional understandings of how knowledge is produced within science (Feyerabend, 1975). What Kelly and Schön in their own ways are drawing attention to is the process of 'successive triangulation' by which new understandings and actions emerge from engagement with the problem.

The methodological corollary of personal construct theory, devised by Kelly as a means for exploring personal construct systems, is repertory grid technique. This is the elicitation, through structured conversation with an individual, of the constructs which characterise the area of activity or discourse being studied. The individual is assisted to conceptualise the construct as a bi-polar scale and the 'elements' of the area of study are rated on each construct. From the resulting grid, statistical techniques such as multivariate analysis - be it factor, cluster or principal component analysis - can be used to map the infrastructure of the individual's perception of the studied topic. Description of the variants of repertory grid technique and the various forms of analysis are beyond the possibility of this paper although the interested reader could consult Fransella and Bannister (1986) or Beail (1985).

Personal construct theory and repertory grid technique are well established within both educational and clinical psychology - for reviews see Pope and Keene (1981), Beail (1985), Bannister (1985) - however their influence upon social work practice and education have been minimal, or at most stop-go. Possibly, as social work is a relatively non-numerate profession, educators have been daunted by the seeming difficulty of multivariate analysis, although readily available software programmes for micro-computers now remove most of the mystique.

Of the rare examples of personal construct research into social work, Philips and McCulloch produced a single case study of how a psychiatric social worker construed his

clients (Philips and McCulloch, 1968) and in the early Seventies Ryle and Breen published repertory grid studies of post graduate social work students, although the authors' interest was in the personal growth of students rather than educational or practice issues per se (Ryle and Breen 1974a; Ryle and Breen, 1974b). A few years later a clinical psychologist, J. Bryan Tully, published an excellent paper giving a succinct exposition of Kelly's theory and suggesting some avenues for research in social work education but the signposts seem not to have been followed (Tully, 1976), a notable recent exception being O'Connor and Dalgleish's Australian study of how newly qualified social workers adapt their personal models of practice from those developed on qualifying courses (O'Connor and Dalgleish, 1986).

The untapped potential for using repertory grid techniques for studying how social workers think about aspects of practice is very considerable, and through that process helping practitioners to develop their experiential learning and reflection-in-action. Such research is very much part of the 'new research paradigm' (Reason and Rowan, 1981), whereby research is undertaken with subjects as co-researchers, rather than from the perspective of positivist research on subjects.

As an example, the author is currently undertaking a longitudinal study with two cohorts of students from two forms of qualifying training (a four year honours degree and a two-year non-graduate course) to explore their construing of practice and how it changes over time. Students are completing grids at intervals during their final two assessed placements. The grids are subjected to cluster analysis using the FOCUS programme (Thomas and Harri-Augstein, 1985) to draw diagrammatic representations of their construing, and the grid analysis is fed back to and discussed with individual students. The elements of the grid include not only clients but also other significant figures in the student's learning and practice environment.

For the students this is a fresh perspective on their personal models of practice and provides insight into how they perceive and assess clients, makes them aware of their meta-learning, and helps them to construct an agenda for change to become more effective in their practice. Similar action research with student teachers produced significant improvement in practice as evaluated by both the students and assessors (Pope and Keen, 1981).

The method itself carries no assumptions or bias about what makes a good practitioner; it simply provides for the student feedback about patterns of construing too subtle to be captured in unsupported self-analysis or conventional tuition. For the educator it reveals categories students actually use to think about practice, as opposed to espoused theory produced for public assessment, and a whole range of other factors such as whether the form of training influences construing, the influence of gender, previous experience, culture or any other variable selected for attention. Repertory grids can be a base for producing 'hard' statistical results from phenomenological data, but an equally important purpose is for researcher and students to experience the reflection process itself.

This is one study of CQSW students; other potential areas for study include in-service training, post-qualifying education, and direct studies of practitioners' knowing-in-action. Furthermore, social work's pre-occupation with small empirical studies to 'prove' the effectiveness of particular methods, usually producing results of very limited generalizability, has drawn attention away from our knowing with a fairly high degree of consensus who is a good practitioner. Repertory grid techniques, possibly combined with other phenomenological research methods, may reveal instructive lessons about the theory good practitioners use.

Schön describes practice as a form of artistry and, as England argues, we have to develop and refine an aesthetic sense of that artistry (England, 1986). Part of the develop-

ment of that aesthetic would be the aggregation of studies of (and with) good practitioners to discover the common elements of their personal models of practice.

Discussion

To place the practitioner centre-stage as the primary creator and bearer of theory carries radical implications. Such a conception challenges conventional understandings of the function of the professional academic as the primary producer and disseminator of knowledge. It requires academics responsible for professional studies to re-direct at least some of their skills so that they are, 'enhancing the knowledge creation capacities of individuals and professional communities' (Erault, 1985).

Perhaps most importantly, certainly for Schön, the practicum becomes the primary site of learning, requiring practice teachers to develop the highest level of pedagogic skill, not in methods of didactic teaching but in techniques which Schön sees as analagous to sports coaching. If reflection-in-action is taken to be the correct epistemology of practice then practice teaching becomes the art of facilitating students in articulating personal categories of understanding, framing a problem and implementing strategies of action. The practicum will still require students to learn to apply technical rules, be they statutory or organisational, but this is reframed as helping students to incorporate this technical application within their knowing-in-action.

Within the field of adult education, reflection is increasingly becoming recognised as a potent part of the process of 'perspective transformation', freeing learners from habitual ways of thinking and acting (Mezirow, 1983). Although the process of reflection is inculcated in the individual, the objects of reflection are inevitably socially and historically situated. Reflection is a concept which underlies the theories of many of the most radical influences on educational theory such as Freire, Illich and Habermas and is being developed by a broad movement of adult educators (Boad, Keogh and Walker, 1985).

This paper has explored how an understanding and reconciliation of the work of Schön and Kelly can equip social work educators to grasp a revitalised conception of theory in social work and to engage with front-line workers and students in developing a new reflective consciousness and practice.

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CHAPTER THREE

Personal Construct Theory Research in Social Work Education

CHAPTER 3

PERSONAL CONSTRUCT THEORY RESEARCH AND SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

The following chapter combines an overview of the 'tradition' of personal construct research in professional social work education (Part I) with discussion of the methodology used in the research study reported in Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis (Part II). Following from the discussion in earlier chapters reviewing the crisis of social work education, the arguments for developing a reflective dimension within the educative process, and the suggested possibility of utilising personal construct theory both to study the cognitions of student social workers and to enhance their reflective capacities, the aims of the research study were formulated as:

1. to use repertory grid technique to explore with social work students how they construe their practice;
2. to investigate how construing changes during the period of the students' placements in practice;
3. to study the content of students' construing to see whether normative data can be identified concerning influences on construing;
4. to assess the usefulness of repertory grid technique as a method of helping students to reflect on their practice.

Part I - The Legacy of Personal Construct Research in Social Work Education

Personal construct research in the fields of social work and social work education is limited in quantity and hence it is difficult to discuss at a generalised level themes and trends. However, a tentative and broad distinction can be made between two categories of personal construct social work research, firstly that which seeks to identify the constructs of qualified practitioners and, secondly, longitudinal studies which document changes in the construing of student social workers during or shortly after their qualifying course. Lifshitz's study comparing students with experienced practitioners (Lifshitz, 1974) has aspects of both types of study but, as will be seen, the total number of studies which fall under these two rubrics is modest.

It will be argued that the use of personal construct techniques by social work researchers has exploited repertory grid methods as empirical research tools, but has tended not to be Kellian in the sense of research being reflexive and enlisting repertory grid completion and feed-back as opportunities for helping participants to become personal 'scientists' in exploring their own construing. The latter form of research, which implicitly has an action-research orientation, has tended to be the province of researchers within the field of teacher training, using repertory grid as a technology for collecting data on the structure and content of student teacher's construing but also - by giving students ongoing feedback - giving them the opportunity to reflect on and work towards modifying their cognitions. Thus, this chapter will review the relevant research which has social work content but will then

consider personal construct research with student teachers which operationalises the principles of subject participation and feedback and which, it will be argued, provide a more appropriate research exemplar for social work education.

The study of practitioner construing

Philip and McCulloch's 1969 study still stands alone as the only published research which is solely a study of the content of an experienced practitioner's construing of their practice. The study's objective was to investigate the conceptual processes involved in social work assessment interviews, taking as a case study one social worker's construing of former clients. From a population of 511 patients who had during a period of eight years been admitted to the Poisoning Treatment Centre of the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh following acts of self-poisoning or self-injury, two random samples of twenty-five cases were drawn. The first sample was used as the elements of a grid which was completed by a psychiatric social worker to whom all the clients were known (McCulloch) using the full context form of construct elicitation. Eleven constructs were identified and all the elements scored on the constructs using a seven point scale. The resulting grid was analysed using McQuitty's Elementary Linkage Analysis, a relatively simple form of cluster analysis, and the procedure repeated for the second sample but - taking as provided constructs - those already elicited using the first sample.

Philip and McCulloch found that two distinguishable types of construct were used to describe the patients in the two samples. One type of construct is concerned with assessing the degree to which a patient copes and functions socially, the second is concerned with the way the worker feels towards the client. There was some difference in the structure of clusters between the two samples, the first sample

producing a small third cluster relating to problems of substance abuse and marital problems, which in the second sample merges into the second cluster described above. The authors account for this difference as possibly resulting from the constructs used in the second grid having been elicited from the first sample and thus being less applicable. A further confounding factor was that some of the clients would have been known to the social worker as long ago as eight years previously, consequently some of the clients would probably have been construed on a fairly generalised basis. The authors note that a grid based on current cases might have produced more specific construing (Philip and McCulloch, 1968; p. 120). The expressed aim of the research was to identify some of the conceptual processes involved in the assessment interview but no attempt is made to research whether the two clusters identified from the grids can be identified in the practice of the psychiatric social worker.

The study which is most akin to research undertaken for this thesis is Ryle and Breen's' (Ryle and Breen 1974a) repertory grid study of student change in the course of social-work training. This is a longitudinal study of a cohort of students who undertook the Masters in Social Work course at Sussex University. The aims of the study are not very explicitly stated but generally are described as an attempt to discern how far students achieve the course objectives, which are represented by Ryle and Breen as giving intending social workers adequate theoretical knowledge, supervised experience in the field, helping students acquire a sense of professional identity and modifying those aspects of their personalities and ways of relating to others which might interfere with their capacity to see clients and colleagues clearly and respond to them appropriately (Ryle and Breen, 1974: p.139). It is not clear how far this expression of the course objectives corresponds to those contained in

any course documentation nor whether they would be endorsed by those people responsible for designing and teaching the curriculum.

The apparently global intention of the study, to map the attainment of these objectives through completion of repertory grids seems particularly ambitious and the actual design of the research actually indicates a narrower focus on issues of personal growth and maturation, along with a broadly identified assessment of students' construing of their professional role and relationships. Fourteen volunteers out of a course intake of sixteen agreed to participate in the experiment although only twelve completed the procedure. Each student was requested to complete a repertory grid on three occasions during the course of their two-year Masters programme, in their first term, three months later and sixteen months later.

The format of the grid administered to the students was the 'dyad grid' in which the elements of the grid are the relationships of one person to another. These relationship elements were supplied and included a range of individuals from the students' academic, professional and personal life. Constructs were also provided, comprising sixteen unipolar constructs determined from 'previous pilot studies' (p.139), but which were judged to represent a range of issues relevant to the relationships under consideration. The Ingrid computer program was used to produce a principal components analysis of the grids, both individually and on a group basis. On the first two occasions students were sent a written report on their grid analysis, and they were offered the opportunity to discuss that report with one of the researchers or to take it to share with their tutor.

This procedure raises both ethical and methodological questions. At the ethical

level it is evident that students were receiving written feedback on grids which potentially made them aware of painful personal material. Repertory grids were initially developed by Kelly and colleagues as a device for making accessible personal material for psychotherapy. It is questionable whether a grid with no other supporting evidence gives a researcher the authority to 'report' on a subject; secondly the procedure leaves it to the initiative of the student to seek discussion with any person about the content of the report. Conceivably, students could have received highly upsetting material in their grid report but have been unwilling to share this with researcher or tutor, in this way the research was potentially damaging. The validity of these reports, and ultimately of the overall findings of the research are further compromised by the researchers' decision to provide all elements and constructs. The research report provides no description of the pilot studies which were used to determine the constructs to be used, but there is a high degree of consensus in the repertory grid literature that grids which are entirely provided allow relatively less scope for the individual to articulate to their satisfaction their personal construing (as discussed further in Part II of this chapter). As the authors themselves concede:

"Standardizing the grids in this way diminishes, to some degree, the data yielded upon each individual, but permits comparisons within the group." (Ryle and Breen, 1974a p.139)

Ryle and Breen provide their results in the form of an illustrative case study of one student and a group profile identifying changes in grid features in all 12 students. The case study reinforces general findings of the study that students perceive their role towards clients as similar to those towards parents, and that the tutor-student and supervisor-student relationship were models for the student-client relationship. Even without considering the evidence and assumptions for these findings further,

there is an apparent contradiction between the notion that relationships with parents are the prototype for the professional relationship, but also finding that it is modelling on the supervisor/tutor relationship. Ryle and Breen take their finding that the role of supportive son or daughter is a precursor to the choice of social work as a career as born out by an unsubstantiated claim that social work students have an above average rate of parental loss and separation (Ryle and Breen, 1974a; p.142).

Ryle and Breen take as evidence for similarity between relationships and a consequent causal relationship (thus committing a confusion between correlation and causation), the finding that when reciprocal relationships are plotted on a two component graph and are parallel, they have been similarly construed. Their research design did not allow for the student to provide any validation of this assumption nor for the hypothesis that similarly construed relationships have also acted as models. Indeed their provision of all the constructs to be used and the relationships to be used as elements already begins to predetermine the nature of the study's findings. Some of the 'hidden' theoretical assumptions of the study can be elicited from the authors' discussion of the case study student's relationship with her parents and how this may influence her professional role:

"The relationship with *mother* probably underlines this ambivalence. There is a possibility that professional relationships might be sought as a means of creating manageable ones where powerful and confusing involvement is avoided... As *clients* are bound to produce ambivalent feelings in the casework relationship this professional detachment could only be coupled effective social-work performance if the ambivalence in the self was recognised and come to terms with." (Ryle and Breen, 1974a p.143).

The flavour of this analysis is psychodynamic, both in the importance attached to the concept of 'ambivalence' but also in the detachment of the writing and the assumption implicit in the methodology that the researcher relates to the subject analogously with the analyst to the analysand. There is corroborating evidence from Ryle's other published grid research that he saw repertory grid technique as a method for illuminating psychodynamic processes, such as counter-transference in professional relations (Ryle, 1975).

Overall, Ryle and Breen found that constructs relating to the professional role remained relatively stable over the period studied but that the relationship between students and parents underwent some reappraisal. Ryle and Breen take this as evidence that educating social workers need not be constrained by deterministic theories of personal development and that adults can resolve issues from their family life during the course of training. However, Ryle and Breen give no information about the age range of the sample and it is possible that this finding may be confounded by maturational processes. Ryle and Breen did find some evidence for increased complexity of construing during the course of the research, taking as their measure the value of the total variance accounted for by the first two components of the grid (the lower the value the greater the level of complexity). Following Adams-Webber (1969), they speculate that this is associated with greater ability to infer the construing of others and hence indicates a capacity for empathy. Again, the study cannot corroborate whether cognitive complexity thus measured was associated with the students' actual ability to demonstrate this skill.

As an addendum to this study, Ryle and Breen (Ryle and Breen, 1974b) also undertook a repertory grid study with the social work tutors who had taught the

students in their cohort sample. The aims of the study were to see how far tutors' views of students were concordant, to look at some aspects of the tutors' construct systems and to investigate the relationship between the tutors' construing of students and some of the findings of the above-reported dyad grid study. The elements of the grid were the fourteen students who had commenced the grid study, and twenty constructs were supplied (the basis for selecting the constructs is not explained). Only nine of the constructs were found to be appropriate and usable by all three tutors (Ryle and Breen, 1974b: p.149). Principal component analysis of the grids revealed construct systems which were relatively one-dimensional, with the first principal component of the grids accounting for between 60 and 69 per cent of total variance. This component was characterised as an overall evaluation of the maturity and social-work skills of students and there was a high degree of inter-tutor agreement on the distribution of students on this component; judgements of competence, emotional maturity and likeability were closely interrelated. This study suggests a low level of cognitive complexity on the part of the tutors and the possibility of stereotyped judgements of students being prevalent; in the light of the high level of concurrence between tutors this might also indicate the possibility of labelling being a powerful process within such a small group. The study was able to make few connections between the construing of tutors and the data produced by the dyad study, in particular there was no association between students' evaluations of whether they had successfully resolved problems on the course and tutors' perception of whether problems had been dealt with. Ryle and Breen acknowledge that these findings may be indicative of the relatively low level of sensitivity of dyad grids to the nature of individual difficulties:

"The dyad grid might have a role in clarifying the nature of students' problems early in the course, but to be used effectively in this way, a

grid using elements and constructs elicited from the individual student would give more information, and the feedback of the analysed data from such a grid to the student and tutor jointly might represent a more creative use of the method on the students' behalf." (Ryle and Breen, 1974b p.152).

An Israeli study published in the same year as Ryle and Breen's' research used a shortened form of Kelly's Role Construct Repertory Test to explore differences between students and trained social workers in their construing of social work (Lifshitz, 1974). The question Lifshitz sought to answer was, "Does their (students') lack of professional education make any difference in the way they view or organise their practice-related perceptions?" (Lifshitz, 1974: p.183). Two groups of subjects participated in the study, nineteen social work students from the University of Haifa with a mean age of 22.7 with no previous social work experience, and thirty-one social workers with a mean age of 39.9 and averaging 11.7 years experience in social work. Both groups completed one grid with twelve provided elements comprising people drawn from professional, family and social spheres. Each subject was helped to elicit twelve constructs which were scored against all the elements. Each grid was then factor-analysed to identify the most representative construct in assessing people, a 'representative construct' being the label assigned by the subject to those rows most saturated with the main construct factor. Lifshitz then assigned the constructs of each grid to one of seven categories (task orientation, concrete situation, abstract intrapsychic, abstract interpersonal, abstract social values, intellectual characteristic or affective egocentric approach). Lifshitz found that students tended to use concrete ascriptions to describe people whereas the experienced practitioners were more likely to use task orientation, abstract intrapsychic and interpersonal characteristics to describe people. The elements most positively construed by students were familial or from the primary social

group. For the experienced group the equivalent figures were the subject, partner or a social worker 'holding the highest ethical values'. Both groups negatively construed 'same-sex disappointing good friend' but the student group also showed a significant negative evaluation of 'the professional object' i.e. client, which was not the case for the experienced group.

Lifshitz claims that this study supports the hypothesis that training does make a difference: she cites as evidence that students use more concrete constructs and have different professional models, whilst also devaluing clients. "Our findings provide reinforcement of the assumption that there is a change in values, change in approach to people, as a result of professional experience " (Lifshitz, 1974 p.187). However, these conclusions beg questions about Lifshitz's methodology and interpretation of the findings. Two points need to be made concerning methodology: firstly, that the breadth of elements - family, friends, colleagues etc. - is much wider than the supposed range of convenience of the grids i.e. social work. Thus, it would not be very clear whether a particular construct had the same meaning when applied across such wide contexts. This problem in grid design is discussed again later in this chapter.

The second note of caution to be raised concerning the study is Lifshitz's assumption that the independent variable producing changes in construing is training. The concept of training is not problematised in the study, but also considering the relative youth of the students, training is not separated from confounding factors of age and maturation, nor the general effect of accumulated professional experience. Nevertheless, the study is still widely cited in the literature and points to some interesting features of students' construing which remain to be replicated, albeit as

in the study undertaken by this author and described in the following chapters, using a revised grid methodology.

The next reported account of training and research reported in the social work literature occurs after a ten year interval with an educational psychologist's account of an exercise employing personal construct theory to help residential social workers to "reflect upon their own needs and how they translated into specific modes of work. We hoped that they would gain a more enlightened framework for discussing and labelling their clients in case conferences, when important decisions may be taken about the future needs and placements." (Raymond, 1984, p.22). The project, very briefly written up in a professional magazine, involved eight residential workers from a community home for adolescent girls. The workers attended two sessions as a group and 'several' individual sessions; the research protocol is described in no more detail than this. Each worker identified 12 clients as elements and 16 bipolar constructs were elicited and ranked in order of significance to the worker. In subsequent sessions workers were helped to reflect upon their working style and coping strategies and on how these related to their personal constructs. The report gives four brief case studies instancing individual social worker's primary constructs and a description of how these relate to his or her perception of the social work role. The general finding was that the most difficult clients for residential social workers are those who most threaten their personal needs.

In feedback to the researcher, participants reported that they had not found the exercise useful as an aid to proficiency in reporting to case conferences, but that it had been useful in gaining understanding of the way their work related to personal needs. All the social workers found it difficult to do and 40 per cent found it

threatening. Nevertheless, most of the participants thought that the form of exercise would be a useful part of qualifying education or in-service training. Raymond gives percentage figures for responses in the feedback but given that there were only eight respondents such specific data would seem to have little meaning. Raymond's final conclusion is that personal construct theory gives psychologists a useful methodology for helping social workers with their personal and professional development.

O'Connor and Dalglish's study of fifteen University of Queensland social work graduates (O'Connor and Dalglish, 1986) used repertory grid technique to assess whether personal models of social work developed during qualifying training survive the transition to full-time employment. Given the smallness of the sample the authors claim that the usefulness of the study lies not in the specific results but in its conceptualisation and method, (O'Connor and Dalglish, 1986: p.434). A repertory grid was completed by each participant on three occasions during their first eight months of employment after qualification. The elicitation and analysis of the grid are not described in the research report, the authors state that,

"It is sufficient to state that the elicitation of the content of the *Personal Model of Social Work Grid* aimed to delineate the concerns that were personally important to the individual's definition of social work." (O'Connor and Dalglish, 1986 p.435)

Participants completed grids at the beginning, middle and end of the eight month period and subsequent to each grid completion the participant discussed the analysed grid with the first author, O'Connor. At the final meeting a short list of issues was discussed with the individual social workers including supervision, membership of professional association or union, continuity between social work education and practice, preparation for work, alterations to their social work course

and an evaluation of the research process. The form of grid analysis used was INGRID72, which uses principal component analysis and plots elements and constructs on components 1 and 2. The primary finding of the research was that the core features of personal models of practice evolved during courses remained essentially unchanged during the transition to employment but the model had to be extended in its range of convenience to incorporate the practice context. This was a difficult process for new graduates which produced in the second grid completed by eleven participants an increased disjuncture between the constructs DESIRED SELF AS SOCIAL WORKER and PRESENT SELF AS SOCIAL WORKER, though for seven of these individuals these constructs became more highly correlated in the final grid (O'Connor and Dalglish, 1986: p.440). The negotiation of a role in teams and agencies was particularly problematic and graduates felt that their education had not prepared them to adapt to new organisational environments (O'Connor and Dalglish, 1986: pp.441-444). As to methodology, O'Connor and Dalglish concluded that the grids provided an effective tool for accessing individuals' diverse construing of social work but also useful data for systematic comparative study. This is useful not just for research but, because it engages the individual in active reflection and self-evaluation, it has considerable potential for social work education and professional supervision. Given the potential usefulness of O'Connor and Dalglishs' research, and the potential for replication, it is frustrating that their published account of the study is not more explicit about their grid methodology.

Student teachers and personal construct research

Other writers have promoted the usefulness of personal construct psychology and repertory grid technique as vehicles for studying the socialisation and processes

involved in the education of professionals, (e.g. Tully, 1976; Stewart and Stewart, 1981; Pope and Keen, 1981) but for the purpose of illuminating the research reported in chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis, the most relevant research studies complementing those cited which are concerned directly with social work, have been studies of construing by student teachers. The professional education of teachers and social workers are similar insofar that there are various routes to qualification, but they mainly involve some combination of college-based learning, with an emphasis on theoretical input, and periods of supervised direct practice where the objectives are the integration of theory with practice and the development of higher-level practice competencies.

Pope's longitudinal study of student teachers' construing of practice monitored over the period of an academic year is in many ways an exemplar of this field of research (Pope, 1978). Pope's objectives were to monitor students' viewpoints prior to, during and after teaching practice and to evaluate the use of repertory grid technique as a means of giving feedback to students about their ideas about teaching. To achieve this she drew two samples of student teachers from two institutions of higher education, one which offered a one year post-graduate certificate in education, the other a four year Bachelor of Education degree. The total sample was randomly allocated to three groups: the first were interviewed before and after their teaching practice; the second completed repertory grids on three occasions during teaching practice and the third also completed repertory grids but in addition were given personal feedback shortly after completing each grid. Feedback took the form of analysis of grids by FOCUS, a form of graphic display generated by cluster analysis of the grid and displayed as a tree diagram (this is an earlier version of FOCUS than that used in this author's study). At the end of

their teaching practice every student was graded by his or her supervisor, giving Pope a measure of competence by which to evaluate whether there was any correlation between grid completion, or grid completion accompanied by feedback, and success in teaching practice. Pope found positive correlations between grid completion and success in teaching practice, with the group who received personal feedback faring the best of all. Despite the neatness of the design of Pope's study important methodological problems are also raised.

As Yorke has observed (Yorke, 1985 p.385) a difficulty with grids using elicited elements can be vagueness, or unless the parameters of appropriate elements are defined, the elements can have such a wide range of convenience or apply to such a diversity of contexts that few constructs can subsequently be elicited which have a range of convenience sufficiently broad to be meaningfully applied to all the elements. Pope asked her student teachers to provide "a list of things which come into your mind when you think about teaching"; in many of the subsequently elicited grids this virtually free association resulted in grids with numerous elements but dramatically fewer constructs. Yorke cites as an instance the problems for one respondent of identifying a construct to subsume the elements 'chalk', 'headmaster' and 'worry' (Yorke 1985, p.386). Thus, although Pope's study gives supporting evidence for the argument that grid completion can be a factor in improving professional practice, there are grounds for reconsidering her grid procedure.

A later, similar study by Diamond (Diamond, 1985) also plots changes in student teachers' construing over the period of an academic year during which time the seventeen respondents taught once in primary and twice in secondary schools. Elements were provided in the form of sixteen role titles which included family,

professional colleagues, friends and six differing self elements. interestingly, children - who it would be imagined should be the principal focus of attention in becoming a teacher - are included only as a single element, "pupils". Grids were completed at the beginning, middle and end of the year-long diploma course. The grids were analysed again using FOCUS, but also the related SOCIOGRIDS program was used to explore similarity and differences in construing between individuals.

The general finding of Diamond's study was that the group developed increasing heterogeneity through two intermediary stages, from expressing personal and professional qualities, to categorical, instrumental concerns and finally pupil-centred ideas. There was also an overall tightening of construct systems suggesting, he hypothesises, either increased anxiety or increased professional confidence. (It will be argued that this is more likely to be an artefact of normal learning cycles). Corroborating evidence for this becoming a reflection of anxiety in the teaching situation is indicated by the general construing of children being by the end of the year essentially pessimistic particularly revealed by a need to control them and fear of loss of discipline. These are the tentative conclusions Diamond draws from his study which suggests some caution in assuming that becoming "child-centred" was, for these students, a positive process. Nevertheless, Diamond follows members of the Centre for the Study of Human Learning at Brunel University in expressing caution before drawing general conclusions from grid studies and suggests that the real benefit of such undertakings is in providing a technology for teachers to monitor their own socialisation and development as well as that of their pupils.

Chard undertook a similar study (Chard, 1988) with the purpose of monitoring, "the

developing constructs that teacher education students applied to children early in their course and to see how these changed over an extended experience of working with children in the classroom" (Chard, 1988 p.185). Grids were completed at the beginning and end of a six month teaching practice by forty-three students from the first year of a B.Ed course. Follow up interviews were conducted with a subsample of thirteen students to provide supporting evidence for the information obtained from the grids (Chard, 1988 p.187). The elements of the grid were children in the students' classes and constructs were elicited; the resulting grids were analysed in terms of the content of constructs, the structure of the grid - in particular the degree of integration of the constructs - and these aspects of the grid were examined in relation to the students' teaching performance as assessed by college supervisors. The study found that students showing most change in construing were judged by supervisors to be more successful in their teaching, and that the type of construct which changed most were those which had general applicability and were derived from the student's pre-course understanding of children, rather than school-specific constructs. Chard draws the conclusion that student teachers should be allowed in the early stages of their professional development to express themselves non-technically, in the language of their everyday construing, and to introduce more specifically educational language later in their socialisation as teachers (Chard 1988 p.191). The study also found that the most successful students became more integrated in their construct systems by the end of their teaching practice. This increase was taken to indicate the emerging perception of patterns of relationships among constructs as they related to children. Other writers have warned that tight or loose construing (to use Kelly's terminology for the same phenomenon) in themselves are neither good nor bad, but effective learning involves alternation between the two structural characteristics of construing. However, Chard found

from follow-up interview confirming evidence for the hypothesis that high integration students were more anxious and preoccupied with problems (Chard 1988 p.192) Chard suggests that the evidence of the study indicates that supervisors would be helped by recognising the differing problems of, on the one hand, low integrating students who can make few conceptual connections and, on the other hand, high integrating students who are inflexible and stereo-typing in their attitudes.

Conclusions - Part I

The above review of the literature is not intended to be comprehensive in terms either of social work research or educational research uses of repertory grids. Rather, it is selective in presenting the most notable attempts to utilise the technique within research relevant to social work education. The critical reading of this literature focuses attention on various issues of research methodology relevant to designing the study outlined in Part II:

- attention should be paid to the relationship between repertory grid and the ethical and epistemological principles of personal construct psychology. Repertory grid techniques and grid analysis can become fetishistic, in particular much repertory grid research is not reflexive, and ignores the implications of not involving participants in such research studies as 'co-researchers';
- insufficient attention can be given to the effects of decisions as to whether elements and constructs should be elicited or supplied;
- the content of the grid should be appropriate to the 'range of convenience'

of the topic being researched and interpretations from the data should be supportable either from the data or from a relevant point of 'triangulation';

- grid research into learning should pay attention to the aspects of structure of construct systems. The most germane of these are -

- tight vs loose construing and the dynamic interplay between these two positions as aspects of learning;

- measures of cognitive differentiation which may be indicative of levels of complexity and are in turn related to an individual's capacity to construe social behaviour in a multidimensional way.;

- statistical modelling of construing based on grid data can help to map structural features of construing but these heuristic snapshots are subject to change over time.

Part II - The protocol and methodology of the study

Having reviewed the body of literature which informed this study, the following section describes the protocol and methodology of which underpinned the author's repertory grid study.

Phases of the research

The following is a precis of the research protocol as it was carried out during the academic years 1987/88 and 1988/89; greater detail and discussion of methodological considerations follows below.

Phase 1: Social work students from two types of social work qualifying course, both located within the same institution of higher education, were asked to volunteer to participate in a research programme lasting one academic year. The study would involve each student in completing a repertory grid at the beginning and end of each

of their two practice placements and meeting with the researcher to discuss computer-generated feedback on each grid. As more students volunteered than could be managed within the resources of the project, the opportunity was taken to assign students on a matched pair basis to an 'experimental' and 'control' group. Students were informed by letter as to whether they would be participating in the repertory grid study.

Phase 2: Every member of the group who would be completing grids was contacted approximately three weeks after the commencement of their practice placement and an appointment was made to meet with the student to administer a repertory grid. The grid was duly completed at the researcher's office.

Phase 3: A follow-up meeting took place within one or two weeks of the grid being completed to give the student feedback in the form of a computer print-out of a spaced FOCUSed grid (Thomas and Harri-Augstein, 1985). This was used as the agenda for a semi-structured discussion, which was tape recorded.

Phase 4: Within the final three weeks of the placement the participants met with the researcher in two groups, comprised of the two-year and four-year students respectively. Each group was reminded of the procedure for completing a repertory grid and every individual was then given their personal grid as originally elicited but with scores omitted. The students were requested to re-score their grids in the light of their subsequent experience on placement.

Phase 5: This was a repetition of phase 2 i.e. the grid was focused and discussed with students on an individual basis, attention being drawn to changes which had

taken place in the students' construing of practice.

Phase 6: Most students commenced their final placement after the Easter vacation, with the exception of four two-year students who elected to remain in the same agency for the remainder of the academic year. Those students who had changed placement completed a new repertory grid, using elements drawn from the new practice context and eliciting new constructs. As this was a block placement with just a few recall days in college the logistics demanded that students be visited in placement to complete the grids.

Phase 7: As for phase 2

Phase 8: As for phase 3

Phase 9: As for phase 4 with the addition of the administration of a questionnaire to gain the student's evaluation of participating in the research.

Context of the study

The subjects of this study were all full-time students at a College of Higher Education in the south of England. At the beginning of the study the college was a local authority establishment but, approximately mid-way through the research programme, the college became a Higher Education Corporation within Polytechnic and College Funding Council (PCFC) arrangements, that is to say - along with

polytechnics - it became a self-validating institution partly funded by central government and partly self-financing. This change had no direct impact on arrangements for existing students although teaching staff were involved in faculty re-organisation and uncertainties ranging from office relocation to negotiation of new conditions of service.

The College of Higher Education is the product of an amalgamation of a College of Technology sited in a medium-sized town characterized by light engineering and new technology industries, and a teacher training college situated on a rural campus in the hinterland of that town. Teacher training has been phased out since the mid-1970's and the college has diversified with social work education being one of the areas of professional education which has grown since that time. In 1974 a two-year CQSW programme for non-graduates was established and this was followed in 1978 by incorporating a social work option within an existing honours degree programme in sociology (since the completion of the research both programmes have converted to the Diploma in Social Work). The undergraduate programme constitutes a four year course of study at the end of which successful candidates are awarded the CQSW and a BSc (Hons) in Sociology and Applied Social Studies. Numbers admitted to the two courses fluctuate with the availability of financing for students but at the time of the research programme the two-year course was approved by the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work to admit 25 students every year, whilst the degree programme had an intake of 35 students, although undergraduates did not decide whether to elect for the social work branch of the degree until the Easter of their second year.

There are obviously some differences in philosophy and curricula between the two

courses. The two year non-graduate course, in the C.C.E.T.S.W. validation document most recently completed before the research period, states that the assumptions informing its curriculum are:

- " - that knowledge from the social sciences is necessary to help understand human action and inter-action and thus assist in informed judgements;
- that both in its knowledge of methods and in its practice of skills, social work possesses a generic identity;
- that the development of a professional identity in a social worker demands not only an examination of professional values but also an acceptance of shared values."

The conceptual framework for the organisation of the social work teaching was the unitary model (Pincus and Minahan, 1973), a meta-theory of social work intervention grounded in general systems theory. This is seen as providing an integrative perspective for students and "meeting to some extent the contradictions between a recognition of the tentative nature of all knowledge in its pure forms and the demands of placements for applied knowledge".

"By the end of the course, it is hoped the student will possess knowledge and skills of a sufficiently wide range to enable him (*sic*) to select appropriate methods of social work intervention within the framework of a developing professional identity".

In contrast, the character of the four year undergraduate programme derived in part from it being a 'two plus two' course, ie. students initially spend two years following a programme which is a broad introduction to the social sciences though with an emphasis on sociology. At Easter of the second year those undergraduates who wish

to elect for the social work branch of the degree are interviewed by a panel of social work academics and a practitioner. If successful, the students spend a further two years following a social work syllabus but with a continuing emphasis on sociological studies, particularly compulsory modules in the sociology of deviance, sociology of organizations and the sociology of social work. In the 1984 submission to C.N.A.A., the course leader stated that "We are offering a generic education in social work with an opportunity to explore the special relevance of sociology to social work." (p.9). In the same document the aims of the social work branch of the degree are stated as being:

- " 1. To enable the student to acquire specialised knowledge in the social sciences, social policy and social administration which is relevant to social work.
2. To explore the relevance of the social sciences to social work.
3. To develop in the student a range of skills and knowledge necessary for effective social work intervention, and to appreciate the criteria used to select and evaluate methods of social work practice and policy.
4. To enable the student to practice social work in a variety of settings with a variety of clients, using a variety of approaches."

The researcher's resources were sufficient to allow a cohort of students to be studied for one academic year: to maximise that opportunity it was decided to work with students in their final year who would be spending a greater proportion of their time in practice. Although all the placements in the final year are of approximately similar length - fifty to sixty days - on the two year course the first placement in the second year is spread over two terms concurrent with three days per week in college, whilst for the undergraduate students the equivalent placement is undertaken in a

lengthened autumn term concurrent with two days per week spent in college. On both courses the final placement is full-time, apart from a few college recall days, during the summer term.

Recruitment of research subjects

The objectives of the research were to investigate the way in which social work students construe social work practice and to evaluate repertory grids as a method for this purpose and as a tool for reflective learning. Locating the study within the college described above also allowed for a comparison to be made in these respects between two forms of qualifying programme, that is the two year non-graduate course and four year undergraduate degree. The respective course leaders were approached to gain their approval for my having access to the students, and for agreement to discuss the research proposal with social work tutors - and contingent upon the latter's agreement - to directly approach students to volunteer as research subjects.

The nomenclature and implied dichotomy between 'researcher' and 'subject' can in itself be seen to be problematic and it is clearly implicit in the Kellian paradigm that the so-called subject is as actively involved in research as the researcher. Heron (1981) has suggested that 'new paradigm' research can incorporate the subject as co-researcher on a spectrum of involvement between strong co-operation in the research formulation, and a weak understanding of co-operation, "in the sense that the subject is thoroughly *informed* of the research propositions at all stages and is invited to assent or dissent, and if there is dissent, then the researcher and subject negotiate until agreement is reached." (Heron 1981 pp. 19-20) The model implicit in the research under discussion corresponds to Heron's weak notion of co-

operation in that the broad parameters of the research design were already existent although I hoped to recruit volunteers to the study on the basis of informed consent and openness as to the methodology and its rationale. Consequently the offer from one of the course leaders to make participation compulsory was declined.

The researcher attended a meeting with the six social work lecturers during the Spring term of 1988 and explained the objectives of the research and the form it would take i.e. competition by final year students from the two courses of repertory grids and subsequent feedback discussions at the beginning and end of their two practice placements. No objections were raised and support was offered for the project. The researcher made it clear that the grids and content of meetings between myself in the role of researcher and students would be confidential. If, in the course of the research, I became aware of educational or personal issues which I felt a student should share with his/her personal tutor I would advise the student so to do, but would only breach the confidentiality of the research encounter with the express permission of the student.

The only subsequent liaison with social work academic staff in respect of the research was at a faculty seminar in the autumn of 1988 to present a draft version of a paper (Gould 1989) setting out some of the theoretical thinking informing the research: this served to remind staff that the research was under way and to consolidate support.

Recruitment of student subjects

During the academic year 1987/88 there were fourteen students on the third year of the B.Sc programme and twenty-four on the first year of the two-year CQSW course.

These were the prospective subjects to participate in the research during the academic year 1988/89. Arrangements were made with course leaders for me to use a period during their respective time-tables to meet with students to explain the research and ask for volunteers. I met with undergraduates as a single group, and the non-graduate students as two seminar groups. All three meetings were conducted in a standard format, giving an explanation of the objectives of the research and briefly describing the research method - repertory grid - before asking students to consider participating and, if interested, to complete a simple consent form. They were advised that it might not be feasible to include all volunteering students in the study, and that allocation would be random. The request met with one hundred percent volunteering by the undergraduates, and one refusal from the non-graduates. This very high level of co-operation from students meant that a group of subjects for the research could be randomly drawn up without worries that the participating students were unrepresentative by virtue of being self-selecting.

Lack of resources other than the researcher's own time meant that including all thirty-eight students in the study was an impossibility. Working with approximately half this number was just manageable but also produced the situation where the students not included in the study potentially constituted a control group for the study. Although the research design and objectives of the research were not primarily of a positivist, experimental nature it was possible, as is discussed below, to see whether the findings of other repertory grid studies of student professionals which found that grid completion enhanced practice, could be replicated.

In an attempt to make the group taking part in the research as representative as possible of variables represented within the relevant student intake, it was decided

to stratify the sample by certain variables, identify matched pairs and randomly allocate the divided pairs into the experimental and control groups. Because the study was exploratory and there was no existing knowledge as to the critical variables involved in students' construing of practice, an intuitive assessment had to be made as to the variables for which it would be desirable to control. Thus, it was decided to match students on the variables of course membership, age, sex and length of pre-course social work experience. It would have been highly desirable to control for other extraneous variables, such as ethnicity, but in the latter instance there was only one black student in the entire intake and it would seem gratuitous and of dubious validity to include a 'token' black subject. Similarly, to have included more variables would have produced numbers in each 'cell' or category of such smallness as to make tests of statistical significance very difficult.

During the summer vacation of 1988 the students were banded by the factors identified (course, age, gender, pre-course experience) and matched in pairs. Of the thirty-seven students it was possible to match fourteen pairs on four variables, one pair on three variables, one pair on two variables with two remaining individuals, one from each course. The individuals comprising the pairs were randomly allocated between an experimental and control group. They were informed by letter as to the group to which they had been allocated and it was emphasised that this had been a random allocation and inclusion or exclusion did not reflect on the qualities of individuals.

One non-graduate student withdrew before the commencement of the study on the grounds that a close friend had a terminal illness and she wished to minimise her obligations in order to assist the sick friend.

The repertory grid

Few psychological theories can be so inextricably linked with one research method as personal construct theory and repertory grid technique, although the reverse is not always the case; in more recent years a number of researchers whose work is not grounded in personal construct theory have used repertory grids as an adjunct to other methods. In its original form, as a device for facilitating self-exploration in psychotherapy, Kelly developed the Role Construct Repertory Test. This required the subject to identify 20 to 30 people to fill prescribed roles which delineated the significant others in the individuals social network. Taking three roles (in Kelly's terminology 'elements') at a time, subjects identified characteristics ('constructs') which were points of similarity or difference between the individuals. Later Kelly elaborated this basic technique so that, having conceptualised elicited constructs as bipolar continuums, elements could be assigned to either end of the construct in binary fashion. The matrix or repertory grid which emerged from this exercise could then be subjected to simple nonparametric analysis to reveal more clearly to the subject their unique pattern of construing. Kelly himself increased the complexity of grid technique to allow subjects to rank elements on constructs, or to use rating scales which then enabled more sophisticated cluster or factor analysis of the completed grid. Other researchers have added their own refinements to the repertory grid format, for instance the Implication Grid (Hinkle, 1965), the Dyad Grid (Ryle and Lunghi, 1970), Group Grids (Fransella, 1970) and many others designed for particular research purposes.

It is not the intention here to provide a comprehensive review of the history of repertory grid techniques and their applications, but before considering the

methodological issues underpinning the grid design in this study, it can be summed up that the defining characteristics which differentiate repertory grids from other research tools are:

- i) Grid completion involves the person in attempting to articulate the relationship between those constructs which have relevance to an identified topic area, be it through construing elements, as in conventional ranked or rated grids, or as in the Implication Grid, through the comparison of constructs one with another;
- ii) Although the researcher may be attempting to aggregate data which has normative value, the primary intention of grid use is to elicit the individual's idiosyncratic construing. The discussion below considers some of the dilemmas of nomothetic as opposed to idiographic grid research, but ultimately repertory grids are methodologically individualistic - both in administration but also by virtue of the difficulty of knowing whether individuals use verbal labels analogously.
- iii) Repertory grid is a technique and not a test as it has no standardised form, the content being adapted to the research topic, therapeutic purpose or whatever. The most similar schedule in usage is probably Osgood's Semantic Differential Test, the crucial difference being that this uses a standard list of dimensions supplied to all subjects alike (Adams-Webber, 1979 p.20).

iv) The format of grids allows for statistical analysis of the grid content, be it very basic analysis by hand, simple linkage analysis, or computer-derived multivariate analysis. Depending on the strength of the analyst's allegiance to Kelly's theories the assumption underlying the statistical approach is that the mathematical association between constructs reflects the psychological relationship between them for the individual.

In the following sections the features of the grid used in this study and their rationale are described.

Elements and Constructs - to provide or elicit?

"The elements are chosen to represent the domain in which construing is to be investigated." (Beail, 1985 p.3)

Beail's bold statement about the function of elements immediately begs two of the perennial questions within the literature on grid methodology, namely how can it be ensured that elements are representatives of a domain and, secondly, who is to do the choosing? As to the first issue, Fransella and Bannister (1977) suggest two principles for ensuring representativeness (a) that elements must be within the range of convenience of the constructs to be used and (b) the elements must be representative of the pool from which they are drawn (Fransella and Bannister, 1977, p.13). A considerable amount of grid research has fallen foul of the first requirement by selecting elements which are outside the context of the topic being investigated, and so disparate that the subject cannot evoke constructs which are applicable to all the elements (Yorke, 1985 p. 385). Research which contains this

error is usually discernible by grids which contain a lot of 'not applicables' in the ratings, or produce few constructs relative to the number of elements (an example of the latter being Pope's study of student teachers discussed earlier in the chapter, (Pope, 1978). In reviewing the evidence for element selection to optimise the usefulness and stability of the grid, Yorke concludes that the context of the study should be clear, elements should be concrete and reasonably homogeneous (Yorke, 1985 pp.385-388).

These findings inevitably bear on the other question earlier raised, who should choose the elements? The debate is inconclusive, depending on the purposes of the research, but the thrust of Yorke's review is that elicited elements i.e. left to the free association of the subject tend to increase the vagueness and consequent 'statistical noise' in the grid i.e. distracting and inconsequential data.

The elements chose to be included in the grids for this study were chosen to meet Yorke's criticisms in that the context was clearly defined as being the practice placement, concrete in the sense that they are persons, some predetermined, some requiring the subject to supply the individual to fit the role, and there is homogeneity in that all the elements are ostensibly contributing to the students' learning. Even greater homogeneity could have been provided if all the elements were social work clients. This option was considered but rejected as excluding the desirable possibility of studying how students construe professionals involved in their learning and the question of whether 'clients' and 'others' are seen as discreet categories or coterminous groups of people. Finally, following Slater's advice that, "omission of any form of self-concept from elements seems ill-advised" (Slater, 1977 p.25) the elements of 'self', the social worker I wish to be like', and 'the social

worker I do not wish to be like' were included. This allowed students not only to explore their current self assessment, but also to measure this against a set of expectations as to the kind of worker they aspired to progress towards becoming through their learning and, conversely, the example they would hold up as a poor practitioner.

The final consideration was the number of elements to include in the grid. In a survey of 1,000 examples of grid usage, Slater found that the modal number of elements was 12 (Slater, 1977 p.31). He goes on to suggest that if a grid is too small (he instances 50 entries) it will not support reliable statistical analysis; if the grid is to be large enough to sustain ideographic conclusions, to study sub-systems within the grid and to measure distances between elements such as self and ideal self, then the grid needs to approach the size of 10x10. In conclusion it was decided to use the following ten elements: five clients, self, the social worker I wish to be like, the social worker I do not wish to be like, practice teacher and my college tutor.

Subjects were invited to add further elements if they so wished. The students tended to carry small case-loads and some would have in any case found it difficult to nominate more than five clients. Students were encouraged to give as diverse a sample as their case-load permitted. In construing the social worker they did or did not wish to be like, students were allowed either to imagine a real person who fitted the category, or to project themselves into the role, whichever felt the most appropriate.

This approach to providing elements can be seen as something of a compromise, it *provided* roles but gave some leeway to *elicit* individuals to fit the roles. Importantly

for this study it allowed a degree of standardization as a basis for nomothetic comparisons, whilst accepting that this is a departure from pure Kellian principles.

In contrast, to encourage reflection, and because the study was conducted with no preconceptions about the kind of constructs students would provide, it was decided that constructs should be entirely elicited. There is also clearer supporting evidence from previous research that completing a grid using personal elicited constructs is a more meaningful experience for the subject. In reviewing the research Adams-Webber found consistent evidence for individuals finding elicited constructs more meaningful and differentiated:

"In the research considered so far in the present chapter it has been demonstrated convincingly that individuals exhibit consistent preference for using particular words to describe themselves and others, judge people more extremely in their own terms and draw more inference from information presented in their own language."

(Adams-Webber, 1979 p.31)

Grid elicitation and ratings

Kelly suggested a total of six methods for eliciting constructs from elements (Kelly, 1955) but that most frequently employed is the Minimum Context Card Form whereby three elements are presented on cards to the subject who then identifies some important way in which two elements are similar and thereby different from the third (Fransella and Bannister, 1977 p.15). Laddering is undertaken by asking the subject which pole of an elicited construct he or she prefers and then asking them "why?" as a basis for formulating a new construct ('laddering up') or subjects can ladder down by selecting a construct and asking the subject how it would be

known that an individual is characterised by that construct. It is useful when subjects get stuck in using the minimum context card form. The Full Context Form involves displaying all the element cards to the subject and asking which elements can be grouped as similar and thereby different from other elements. Again, it is useful when other methods are found to be inhibiting. These methods were used in combination in the study.

There is perhaps a tendency in the repertory grid literature for the various forms of grid elicitation to be reified as if they constitute a scientific method, when in fact they are merely a device for encouraging the articulation of constructs. At the end of the day grid elicitation is more art than science although systematizing the procedure is important as it assists in encouraging the subject towards producing a range of constructs which he or she feels represents the important dimensions of their construing. To do this a random list of triads was generated using the computer, which ensured that in the Minimum Context Card Form procedure all elements were presented an equal number of times before switching to other procedures.

The principal consideration in choosing a rating system are whether to use rankings or a rating scale of a chosen length. Kelly's original method of dichotomous allocation of elements to poles of the construct allows the respondent no gradation of meaning in the completion of the grid and there are significant problems of statistical analysis if elements are not divided between poles on an equal basis (Bannister and Mair, 1968 pp.59-60). Rank order methods of grid completion require the respondent to place the elements in rank order on each construct; given that the grids in the study were to have a minimum of ten elements this would have

been very time consuming and forces respondents to make discriminations between elements where possibly none are felt. In conclusion it was felt that a rating scale offered the flexibility for subjects to express gradations of meanings, offered subjects the possibility of giving equal scores to elements on a construct where this was appropriate, and carried no inherent problems of statistical analysis.

There is general concensus that a scale longer than 1 to 7 can be cumbersome and that for most situations a 5-point rating scale is adequate (Pope and Keen, 1981 p.47) - this was therefore the chosen method of scoring the grids.

Analysis

There is no intrinsic reason why patterns of meaning within a repertory grid cannot be elicited by manual and visual methods (see Thomas and Harri-Augstein 1985 pp 55-66 for an exposition of some of these) and there may be occasions when this is a preferred approach, for instance in a workshop where there is not time or resources for computer analysis. However, if levels of significance within the grid which are not self-evident from the raw grid are to be abstracted, then some form of multivariate statistical analysis which displays 'hidden' associations between elements and constructs is required. Earlier studies eg. Philips and McCulloch (1968) used McQitty's elementary linkage analysis to show clustering. More recently, and particularly since the development of software packages specifically designed for analysis of grids, the tendency has been for grid researchers to choose between principal component analysis, factor analysis (often using Slater's INGRID package) and cluster analysis of various types. Such is the level of technical complexity of the relative mathematical merits and demerits of which form of analysis to use that the deciding factors usually will be the form of output which is

most appropriate for the purposes of a particular research study (eg. is it educational or clinical?), and the degree of user-friendliness desired by researcher and respondent Reassuringly, case studies comparing statistical analyses of the same grids do tend to give similar results (Beail, 1985 p.17). Based on Stewart and Stewarts' summary of the statistical debate (Stewart and Stewart, 1981) the following pros and cons can be demonstrated:

Cluster Analysis

Includes all the detail of the raw grid.

Some inspection required before relationships can be grasped completely.

Two grids can be compared by holding constant elements or constructs.

Uses nonparametric statistics so no assumptions about data, other than scores can be ranked.

Suitable for interactive software.

Principal component/factor analysis

Omits some detail

Relationships easily grasped.

In comparing grids, constructs and elements must be held constant.

Uses parametric statistics, thus various assumptions eg. interval scaling etc.

Not suitable for interactive

programmes.

Easy to explain to respondent what computer has done with raw grid to produce feedback.

Difficult to explain to non-numerate respondent.

Given that most of the positives are on the side of cluster analysis it was decided to use the FOCUS program developed at the Centre for the Study of Human Learning, Brunel University (CHSL) by repertory grid practitioners specifically for educational purposes. Shaw, one of the authors of the FOCUS program, has particularly criticised factor and principal component analysis as alienating the grid analysis from the elicitee - the principal components or factors produced by these procedures no longer correspond to any of the exact constructs supplied by the subject but only an approximation to a grouping of constructs or elements which have a statistical association (Shaw 1980 p.32).

FOCUS undertakes a two-way analysis of the distances (a) between elements and (b) between constructs, using the 'city block' metric to measure distances. These distances are scaled to give 'percentage matching scores' using the formula:

$$d(ij) \rightarrow \frac{-200d(ij)}{(n-1)e} + 100$$

where n is the maximum value of the rating scale and e is the number of elements. Where the match between two constructs is negative this implies that a better match would be produced if the construct were reversed, which the program undertakes. The FOCUS procedure then re-orders the elements and constructs to place alongside one another those rows and columns of the grid which are maximally

matched. Two further procedures further enhance the accessibility of the statistical properties of the grid: (1) 'spacing' the FOCUSed grid spatially separates the elements and constructs in proportion to their matching score and (2) TRIGRID gives a quickly readable print-out of matching scores for all pairs of constructs and elements.

Feedback interviews

"To comply with the spirit of psychologists such as Rogers and Kelly one must aim to interpret the results as little as possible, leaving this to the subject. The focused grid was developed in answer to this problem, producing results in a form which allows the person to reflect on his patterns of meaning by retaining the original responses, grouped using cluster analytic techniques. The purpose of the feedback is to offer the elicitee a pattern of the groupings of the elements on the constructs and the constructs on the elements. The ensuing conversation is an exploration of the personal meaning attached to these groupings by the elicitee. The validity of the analysis is measured only in terms of the subjective feeling of personal significance assessed by the occurrence or otherwise of what has been called the 'aha' experience (eg. Ruger, 1910; Durkin, 1937), or what Lorenz (1977) calls 'the creative flash'."

(Shaw, 1980 p.33).

Meeting both the research and educational goals of the project required that students be given feedback on their focused grids; as Shaw says any validity which grids contain as a method largely depends upon the meanings which subjects themselves ascribe to statistical correlations. Similarly, if an objective is to help students to reflect on their construing, some face-to-face feedback is required. Pope in her repertory grid study of student teachers found in a pilot study that postal feedback was found unsatisfactory by students (Pope 1978), and in discussion of Ryle and Breen's' grid research it has already been suggested that not providing adequate personal follow-up to grid elicitation might also be unethical.

It was arranged with each student that a further meeting would take place with the researcher approximately one to two weeks after the grid elicitation. This meeting constituted a feedback session when students were given a FOCUSed print-out of their grid and this was used as the basis for a semi-structured discussion. The following prompts were given to students to provide some structure:

1. How do the elements cluster? Are there any particularly high matching scores between elements? What meaning does the student think these positionings in the grid indicate?
2. What is the position of 'Self' in the grid and are there any surprising proximities or distances from other elements?
3. How do the constructs cluster, and are there any significances which register with the student as to the relationships between constructs?
4. Consider the total pattern of the relationship between elements and constructs. Are there further significant issues identifiable from the grid?
5. When feedback was given for second and subsequent grids these questions were amplified by considering notable changes from the first grid.
6. The grid was considered in relation to the students' feelings about their learning hitherto in the placement and their personal learning objectives for the future.

Space was also given for open-ended discussion arising from the grid. To free the researcher from the constraints of note-taking, and to avoid the shaping of responses which selective note making can produce, the permission of students was sought (and in all cases given) to tape-record the feedback sessions.

Questionnaire

"An acceptance of the need for reflexivity is intrinsically a denial of the doctrine that scientists think and are purposive while their subjects are mechanical and determined." (Bannister, 1981 p.196)

As has been discussed above an important value assumption of personal

construct research is that 'researcher' and 'subject' as would be identified in a conventional research paradigm, are in fact both engaged in personal research. Taking this position seriously means that the 'researcher' should be interested to learn from the 'subjects' perception of how it was to participate in the research and to give an evaluation of the experience. This dialectical process happened naturally through the feedback sessions which gave space for reflexive discussion to evaluate the subjective experience of students participating in the research. However, to augment this on a systematic basis a semi-structured questionnaire was completed at the end of the project to provide qualitative and quantitative indicators of the usefulness of the exercise for the students.

Assessments of practice competence by external examiners

As has already been explained, participants in the research constituted approximately 50 per cent of the student group, and there also existed a matched control group. A special request was made of the two external examiners from each course's assessment board who bore a special responsibility for assessing practice (via practice teachers' reports and students' case summaries), that all students be awarded a percentage mark representing a general grading of practice competence. Given that the external examiners did not know who had taken part in the repertory grid research, this gave opportunity for making a comparison as to whether the 'experimental' students did better in practice. Although this was a tentative prediction, both Pope's and Shard's research found a positive relationship between grid completion and receiving feedback and practice performance on the part of student teachers (Pope 1978 and Shard 1988).

Formation of self-identity as a social worker

As has already been cited from Slater, one of the opportunities of quantitative analysis of grids is to study change in the construing of self. The supplied elements for the grids allowed the possibility to see whether students became more like the social worker they wished to be. As already described, the FOCUS programme can provide a measure of distance between elements, and therefore change can be computed between grids. The significance of change was measured using Wilcoxon's T test.

(A further refinement of the analysis for future research would be to measure the relative stability of the self construct, i.e. to see whether changes in statistical distance between self and another element indicates change in the construing of the other, or change in the self concept.)

Integration of constructs

One of the central ideas in Kelly's personal construct psychology is that the process of learning involves a cyclical process between 'loose' and 'tight' construing. The initial engagement with a new domain of learning requires loosening of construing in order to generate perspectives on the new challenges. Being able to act within that situation requires some tightening or structuring of construing in order to construct concrete strategies. Ongoing feedback from those interventions may produce further loosening of construing in order to create new strategic approaches. Writers have also described this as a 'creativity cycle' (Bannister, 1981). The concept is closely related to 'cognitive complexity' in grid research: the development of differentiation of construing which is measurable within grids (discussed Fransella and Bannister, 1977). Whether Kelly's prediction of movement between looseness

and tightening of construing occurred in learning from practice was measured using the integration score (also called the intensity score in Fransella and Bannister, 1977). This was computed for every subject's grids by generating a measure of the relationship between every pair of constructs, expressed as a Spearman Rho. The integration score of the grid is the sum of the Spearman Rhos. Change between looseness and tightness was estimated using Wilcoxon's T test.

Articulation of Conceptual Structure in the Construing of Practice

Measures of integration or cognitive complexity provide one basis for studying the degree of structure within an individual's construing, but the use of only one measure means that a considerable amount of detail is lost from the grid. An alternative approach to studying the topography of a grid, giving a graphic representation of the structure within it, was pioneered by Makhoulf Norris, Jones and Norris (1970) and this was adapted for this study (Gould, 1993) to illustrate the development of cognitive structure in a case-study drawn from the research sample.

The analysis was based on the four grids completed by the subject over the course of two placements. An identical procedure was followed for each grid. The correlation coefficient of each construct with every other construct was calculated using Spearman's *rho*, and a correlation construct matrix drawn up for each grid. To concentrate on those relationships within the grid which seemed meaningful, and to eliminate statistical 'noise', correlations were eliminated if they were not significant at the 5 per cent level. As Makhoulf et al comment, the selection of a significance level is ultimately arbitrary, but this level produces a structure which is, "not too complex for further qualitative analysis." (Makhoulf et al, 1970 p. 265)

The constructs were then iteratively sorted so as to form groups or clusters of constructs which were related to all others within the cluster, so forming 'primary' clusters.

The remaining clusters were sorted so that: a construct significantly correlated with one or some constructs in a primary cluster was considered a 'secondary' cluster; a construct correlated with constructs in two separate primary clusters was considered a 'linkage' cluster; a construct not correlated with any other was considered an 'isolate'.

These types of cluster and constructs were then drawn using a solid circle to represent a primary cluster, a hyphenated circle to represent a secondary construct, and linkages within straight lines connecting primary and secondary clusters. The total effect is something like a molecular diagram, and graphically represents the degree of integration, or in Makhoulf Norris et al's terms, the degree of articulation of the conceptual structure represented by the grid. Clusters which are fragmented and lack linkages suggest a conceptual structure which lacks integration of the varying aspects of thinking about practice. Alternatively, a structure which is dominated by one large cluster suggests monolithic thinking which reduces all elements to one dimension. An articulated system suggests separate but linked clusters, through which connections can be made about aspects of thinking about practice, but in a complex, differentiated mode.

Makhoulf Norris et al found this to be a reliable procedure which could discriminate at a level of 5 per cent significance between clinical populations, (Makhoulf Norris

et al, 1970 p.271). Similarly, Baker found it to be a reliable method in her study of changing cognitions of pregnant women (Baker, 1986).

Representative Constructs

Finally, a principal component analysis of each grid was undertaken using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to identify the construct which accounted for the greatest loading on the first principal component. This was taken to be the superordinate construct for the grid. These superordinate or main constructs were categorized in terms of Lifshitz's seven categories so that, in replicating aspects of her earlier study, some observations might be drawn concerning her conclusions about the relationship between the content of construing, and independent variables such as experience and training. Lifshitz used a seven-fold system of categorization: *task orientation, description of concrete situations, abstract intrapsychic characteristics, abstract interpersonal characteristics, abstract social values, intellectual characteristics and affective-egocentric approach*).

With any content analysis it is inevitable that there will be ambiguities of meaning of categories or dispute as to how a unit of meaning should be categorized: one procedure for assessing both validity and reliability of content analysis is for a second coder to assign a sample of units to categories to measure that *intercoder reliability* or *reproducibility* reach acceptable levels (Weber 1985 p.17) with negotiation of the allocation of marginal cases. Accordingly, this was undertaken with the present study. Finally, the significance of difference in the content of superordinate constructs between students on the two courses was measured using the chi square test where the sample size was sufficient, and the binomial distribution test where numbers were smaller.

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CHAPTER FOUR

(1991) 'An Evaluation of Repertory Grid Technique in Social Work Education', Social Work Education, Vol. 10, 38-49.

An Evaluation of Repertory Grid Technique in Social Work Education

NICK GOULD

Social work educators need to develop a repertoire of methods to help students and practitioners reflect on and learn from practice. A matched subjects experimental research design was used to evaluate the use of repertory grid technique with cohorts of students from two social work qualifying courses. Students found completing and discussing computer analyses of grids a useful adjunct to conventional supervision. Grid completion was also associated with improved course performance.

Social work education continually struggles to find teaching methods which can equip students to become active learners, able to respond to a rapidly changing professional environment. The emphasis in professional education on learning from experience in the form of practice placements raises particular questions about the facilitation of that learning if the process is to be more than one of crude and inefficient osmosis. In recent years a range of educationalists have proposed theories of 'reflection' as a crucial variable in experiential learning (e.g. Freire, Mezirow, Kolb, Schon, Boud et al.) but with little empirical study or evaluation of how reflection can be enhanced. Nevertheless, the concept has crept into social work education and CCETSW's Paper 30, *Requirements and Regulations for the Diploma in Social Work*, requires that qualifying social workers demonstrate an ability to 'reflect on their work' (CCETSW, 1989 p.20).

This author has argued that personal construct psychology, with its conceptualisation of learning as a feedback process of active experimentation, has resonances with contemporary adult learning theory, and that its methodological corollary, repertory grid technique, may be a useful tool for understanding more about how social workers learn from

REPERTORY GRID TECHNIQUE IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

practice and can be evaluated as a method for enhancing that learning (Gould, 1989).

In his original formulation of a theory of personal constructs, Kelly suggested that the individual develops a range of categories or criteria through which the external world is conceptualised and sorted. In conceptualising the individual as actively engaged in interpreting and responding to the environment, Kelly sought to escape the determinism of other theories of personality, and can be understood as a pioneer of modern cognitive psychology (Jahoda, 1988, p.3).

Personal construct psychology - and repertory grid technique - have developed exponentially within educational and clinical psychology, but only surface intermittently in social work related literature. This may in part be attributable to the deterrent effect on a humanistic profession of a methodology which is statistical in procedure. However, developments in personal computing can reduce some of the mystique and intimidation of a mathematical approach, a point which is explored further in this paper.

The reported uses of repertory grid in social work research are ad hoc and form less than an integrated body of knowledge. An early approach to using personal construct psychology as a method for studying social work was Philip and McCulloch's case study to elicit how one psychiatric social worker's assessment of clients was influenced by his personal constructs (Philip and McCulloch, 1968). This study found that the social workers conceptual processes were conducted around two main clusters of constructs; the first was suggestive of the subjective impact made on the worker by the client; the second construct cluster reflected more technical formulations of the case. Ryle and Breen (1974a) used a form of repertory grid technique to study the changes which take place in student social workers' construing during the period of qualifying training. These results suggested the importance of childhood experiences of being supportive sons or daughters as influential in subsequent construing of the social worker-client relationship. An interesting parallel study of the same students' tutors revealed worrying indications of one dimensional stereotyping of students (Ryle and Breen, 1974b). Lifshitz (1974) used repertory grid technique to compare the construing of student social workers with experienced practitioners, finding significant differences between the concrete descriptive construing of students and the more abstract relationship-orientated construing of the experienced social workers. Her research produced some

NICK GOULD

corroboration of Ryle and Breen's findings that early family roles influenced later professional attitudes. More recently, an Australian study of qualifying social workers examined how construing, as developed during the process of qualification, is modified by the impact of the first year of employment in an agency (O'Connor and Dalgleish, 1986). They found that personal models of practice do survive the transition to paid employment, but that newly qualified social workers find it difficult to subsume the organisational culture and demands of the employing agency within their pre-existing attitudes and values.

All of these studies illustrate viable research applications of repertory-grid technique, although they are limited in their contribution to personal construct psychology as Kelly intended, that is as a reflexive, humanistic project within which research is a shared, joint collaboration between 'personal scientists'. Within this paradigm research is not a positivist venture which regards respondents as inert objects, but is a participatory exercise through which the data as elicited through the repertory grid is explored and reflected upon. So alienated from the Kellian position has this use of repertory grids become that Phillips in a recent review article argued that some grid studies bear no relationship to the concept of personal constructs from which they originated (Phillips, 1989, p.194).

The study reported on here attempted to combine a controlled experimental design with a Kellian commitment to engaging student social workers in exploring repertory grid as a means to articulating and reflecting on the conceptual processes they brought to their social work practice. Two cohorts of students from differing forms of qualifying course completed a series of repertory grids over the course of their final year of study. Each grid was computer analysed and the output discussed with individual students in the form of a semi-structured interview. In this way the heuristic form of the grid was intended to become a map for the student by which personal constructs could be made explicit, the process of personal change charted and, ultimately, the research/learning process could be evaluated.

The research hypotheses were that students would experience repertory grid as a positive aid to learning and that participation in the study would be associated with superior performance in their professional studies. These findings would corroborate those of researchers studying repertory grid applications in other areas of professional education, notably teacher training (Pope, 1978; Diamond, 1985; Chard, 1988).

REPERTORY GRID TECHNIQUE IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

Method

The repertory grid procedure

Repertory grid is a technique and not a test as it has no standardised form; since Kelly's original formulation of the technique in his therapeutic work there have been many adaptations of the method to suit diverse research, educational and therapeutic needs. In most instances the raw grid constitutes a matrix of elements, factors which are representative of the issue being studied, and constructs, the dimensions of thinking through which an individual differentiates between and categorises the elements. Usually, pairs of elements are rated or ranked on each construct and the resulting matrix is subjected to statistical analysis to reveal the underlying patterns of construing; the assumption underlying the statistical approach is that the mathematical association between constructs reflects the psychological relationship between them for the individual. Such a stark statement of the technique belies the powerful and subtle processes which can be elicited by grid completion; a full exposition of repertory grid techniques is beyond a brief paper and the interested reader would be referred to a standard manual such as Fransella and Bannister (1977).

For the purposes of this study, elements were supplied by the researcher so as to represent the significant persons involved in the students' learning from practice. The ten supplied elements were: 'practice teacher', 'college tutor', 'self', 'the social worker I wish to be', 'the social worker I do not wish to be', 'a client I find difficult to work with', 'a client I find easy to work with', and three other clients selected by the student. Provision of element labels gave the student some freedom in the ascription of individuals to roles but allowed for grid comparison on a group basis. Constructs were elicited by the conventional method of randomly selecting three elements and asking the student to identify some important way in which two of the elements were similar and thereby different from the third. Having elicited a construct in this way each element was then rated in terms of the construct on a scale of 1 to 5. This process was repeated until the student could produce no more constructs which were felt to be meaningful.

The grids were analysed using the FOCUS programme (Shaw, 1980; Thomas and Harri-Augstein, 1985). Most forms of computer-based grid analysis use either cluster analysis or factor analysis. FOCUS uses a form of cluster analysis and was developed for use in

NICK GOULD

educational and personal development contexts. Its advantage for the purposes of this study is that it is easy to explain to respondents what the computer has done with the raw grid to produce the printed feedback. In essence, the programme re-orders the raw grid so as to place adjacent to one another those constructs and elements which have been most similarly rated by the respondent. Two further procedures further enhance the accessibility of the statistical properties of the grid:

1. 'spacing' the focused grid spatially separates the elements and constructs in proportion to their matching score;
2. 'trigridd' gives a quickly readable print-out of matching scores for all pairs of constructs and elements.

Subjects

The research was undertaken at a college of higher education where there are two qualifying social work courses, one a two-year, non-graduate course, the other a four-year undergraduate programme. With the agreement of course tutors, a meeting was held in the summer term with first year students from the two-year course and third year students from the degree. All students had a basic understanding of personal construct psychology and repertory grids from their psychology studies. The research protocol was explained to them and consent forms given to each student: they all volunteered to participate in the research with the exception of one two-year student. As this gave a potential population of 36 subjects, a number too great for the researcher's resources to accommodate in the study, the opportunity was taken to adopt a matched pair experimental design which allowed comparisons to be made between participating and non-participating students. Subjects were matched on variables of age, gender, previous social work experience and whether they were two or four year students, they were then allocated on a random basis between an experimental and control group.

The final group of participating students was 18 in number (seven from the degree programme, 11 from the two-year course), 15 were women, mean age 32.0 years and with a mean of 2.5 years previous social work experience.

Procedure

Students participated in the research throughout the final year of their studies. On the two year course students could elect to undertake a one

REPERTORY GRID TECHNIQUE IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

year practice placement, all others undertook two separate placements; three of the research subjects chose a year placement, the remaining 15 completed two placements. Every student completed a repertory grid approximately three weeks after commencing a placement, this was then analysed by computer, using the FOCUS programme (Thomas and Harri-Augstein, 1985) and a print-out of the FOCUSed grid was discussed with the student within two weeks of its initial completion. The student rescored the same grid towards the end of the placement, adding any new elements or constructs as wished, the previous procedure was followed of FOCUSing the grid and meeting the student to discuss changes between the two grids to reflect on how these might indicate alterations in the student's construing of practice. This entire procedure was repeated during the students' final placement, so providing four grids and feedback sessions; those students undertaking a one-year placement completed a mid-way grid giving a total of three grids and feedback sessions. At the completion of the study all students completed a semi-structured questionnaire giving the researcher feedback on the experience of taking part in the research.

Results

Two contrasting aspects of the research findings are reported; firstly, a case-study of a student from the two-year, non-graduate course is given to illustrate the range of reflection on learning from practice which can be prompted using repertory grid methods and, secondly, a summary is given of the students' assessment of using repertory grids and its correlation with final course results.

Case study

The student selected for the illustrative casestudy is a middle-aged woman, married with a family who, prior to commencing the two-year non-graduate course, had for four years been a volunteer with a non-statutory agency involved in supporting young families under stress. She elected to undertake a year-long placement spent with a children and family psychiatric service, and therefore completed and received feedback on three grids. For purposes of illustration her final grid is given (Figure 1). All three of her grids were relatively consistent with one another and the feedback sessions centered around themes which developed through the placement.

Although the student construed herself as part of a cluster which

NICK GOULD

FIGURE 1 - STUDENT'S FINAL GRID

SPACE FOCUSED GRID

CONSTRUCT POLE RATED - 1 -		ELEMENTS								CONSTRUCT POLE RATED - 5 -	
		E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E		
		0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0		
		8	4	15	2	6	7	3	0	9	

CARING/INTERESTED	C5	* 5	1	1	1	1	3	3	4	5	5 * C5 SELF-INTERESTED
		*									*
SENSITIVITY TO OTHERS	C2	* 1	1	1	1	2	4	4	5	3	4 * C2 INSENSITIVITY TO OTHERS
		*									*
VALUES OTHERS	C7	* 1	1	1	2	3	3	4	5	3	2 * C7 PATRONISING
		*									*
DEMOCRATIC	C4	* 1	1	3	2	3	3	4	4	5	4 * C4 TYRANNICAL
		*									*
SELF-MADE	C8	* 2	1	2	3	3	1	1	4	3	4 * C8 GIVEN OPPORTUNITIES
		*									*
WANTING TO DISCOVER SELF	C3	* 2	1	1	1	1	1	2	3	3	5 * C3 DENYING SELF
		*									*
DIRECT	C1	* 2	2	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	5 * C1 AVOIDING ISSUES
		*									*
STUBBORN	C10	* 3	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1 * C10 MEEK
KNOW WHAT S/HE WANTS	C6	* 3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1 * C6 INDECISIVE
		*									*
VALUE THEMSELVES	C9	* 3	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	3 * C9 ABUSED
		*									*

		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	* DIFFICULT CLIENT
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	* CLIENT 3
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	* SW I DONT WISH TO BE LIKE
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	* EASIER CLIENT
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	* CLIENT 2
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	* SW I WISH TO BE LIKE
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	* TUTOR
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	* PRACTICE TEACHER
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	* SELF
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	* CLIENT 1

REPERTORY GRID TECHNIQUE IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

included significant co-professionals, in all three grids she also placed herself alongside 'Client 1'. In feedback sessions this precipitated long discussions of the student's identification with this client's position as a woman of similar age. The student reflected on parallels between her own earlier life and development, the tasks the client was now facing to assert her identity and needs, the extent to which these resulted from similar family dynamics and the extent to which they were more structurally determined aspects of being women. In this instance the constructs most highly matched in the grid, 'stubborn - meek' and 'knows what s/he wants - indecisive' (matching score 85%) were seen by the student as critical to herself in her emerging identity as a professional woman, and to her client in resolving family issues. The client's husband is represented in the grid as 'easier client' and his position in the grid - distanced from his wife - suggested the distance which actually existed in the marriage and, through examination of how the student had evaluated them both on the constructs, some hypothesising of their relationship problems was possible. The light shed on this case by the grid was brought into formal supervision sessions by the student.

The student decided to ascribe as 'the worker I wish to be' a co-worker for whom at the outset of the placement she had a high professional regard. The three grids saw a progressive distancing of the student from this person (matching scores of 85%, 80% and 72%). This was noted in the feedback sessions which prompted discussion of the student's growing disquiet which was generalised from aspects of the co-worker's value position and ethical conduct towards a family with whom they both worked.

Matching scores between self and practice teacher decreased and increased (77%, 75%, 82%). This was explained by the student in terms of the first half of the placement being characterised by the process of becoming autonomous, but then later in the placement finding a new relationship with the practice teacher based on mutual regard and an acceptance of difference. Matching scores between 'self' and 'tutor' increased as the placement developed (72%, 77%, 80%) which was a feature of the research sample generally and for the student denoted a growing recognition that she and the tutor had some similarities of personality, but also that she increasingly experienced the tutor as supportive as assessment of the placement and academic work approached.

These themes have been sampled from the feedback sessions with this student but indicate their range and content. In the final question-

NICK GOULD

naire to evaluate completing grids she gave this the maximum rating as being 'very helpful'. She felt that grids had made her more aware of assumptions she brought to her practice, and in particular felt that they had made her more objective about status figures towards whom she could be deferential. She had taken her printed grids to supervision in the placement for sharing with her practice teacher and felt this was an enrichment of her learning experience.

Evaluation of repertory grid

All of the participating students completed the questionnaire at the completion of the research. They were asked to rate the usefulness of the exercise from 1 (not at all helpful) to 5 (very helpful); of the 18 participants, seven gave taking part in the repertory grid study a rating of 5 and nine rated it as 4. Amplifications of these ratings included typical comments such as:

- 'It created tangible awareness of change in myself.
- 'It helped me to see how my perception of clients changed as time went on'.
- 'An occasion to sit and work out where I stand'.
- 'It gives time to reflect on one's development - compensates for lack of supervision, gives structure to thinking'.

None of the participants rated the use of repertory grids negatively although two gave neutral ratings (i.e. 3). One of these explained this in terms of previous educational experience making her 'turn off' from anything with a mathematical format, the other commented that 'it makes me think, but I don't know whether that equates with being helpful'(!).

Of the 18 students, 16 considered that completing grids and receiving feedback made them more aware of the assumptions which they brought to their practice, examples given included negativism about clients, age as a construct influencing attitudes towards clients, stereotyping of clients, acknowledging reasons why some areas of work were found to be difficult. The same number of students felt that repertory grid technique would have been useful if incorporated within the supervision process. Asked which was the most enlightening part of the process, completing grids, receiving feedback or whether both were of equal value, the majority considered that feedback was the most impor-

REPERTORY GRID TECHNIQUE IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

tant element in the process, whilst all the remainder except one thought that grid completion and feedback were of equal significance.

A hypothesis of the research had been that participation in the repertory grid research would be associated with improved course performance. External examiners from both qualifying courses, who could not know which students were assigned to the experimental and which to the control groups, were asked to grade placement material for overall competence. The students who had participated in the study, judged by the examiners' ratings, demonstrated significantly higher competence than their matched pairs ($S=4$, $N=17$ [one tie], $p<.025$, sign test). On both courses students had to complete a final, long essay designed to demonstrate their capability to integrate social work theory with practice considerations, again the gradings indicated superior performance by the experimental over the control group ($S=4$, $N=17$ [one tie], $p<.025$, sign test).

Discussion

Although this was a small study based on samples drawn from two qualifying courses, there is evidence to suggest that students find repertory grid technique a helpful tool in learning from practice, and that this correlates with improved course performance. An objection to the experimental findings might be that there could be a Hawthorn effect involved, that is that the additional individual attention received by the experimental students is responsible for the difference between the two groups. This seems unlikely given that the amount of time spent by the researcher with individual students - three or four grid elicitations plus half-hour feedback interviews - when averaged over the course of an academic year is fairly minimal. It is much more likely to be the potency of the technique and the reflection it prompts which are the influential variables.

Although there is an abundance of educational research using repertory grids, its reported use in social work education has been limited. For this reason this could be seen as exploratory research. It might be, for instance, that any subsequent research gives greater freedom to subjects to provide their own elements. This would be closer to a 'pure' personal construct psychology approach, although from a research point of view it places limitations on the possibility of studying group trends or comparative studies of grid content.

Nearly all the participating students thought that the use of grids

NICK GOULD

could have been usefully incorporated within practice supervision. The increasing availability of computer facilities in agencies makes the use of repertory grid software packages feasible, or there are straightforward manual methods of grid exploration (Thomas and Harri-Augstein, 1985). The pending accreditation of practice teachers in the UK and the requirement that they undertake training in practice teaching is an opportunity for some of these techniques to be introduced. Gardiner's qualitative research into the content of practice teaching suggests that at present many practice teachers have little idea of teaching methods, falling back often on inappropriate social work approaches as means of teaching (Gardiner, 1989). The congruence of personal construct psychology with principles of adult education suggests that repertory grid techniques could appropriately become part of the repertoire of the practice teacher and social work educator.

There is a growing awareness in social work education that practice competence cannot be understood simply as the application of theoretical knowledge to a real-life situation. This crude epistemology fails from various perspectives to deal with the complexity of social work. In the first instance it disregards the situation that theory itself is socially constructed (Payne, 1991) and that theory is a constituent part of the struggles and rivalries within social work, rather than a neutral resource which is applied deductively. Furthermore, as Schon has shown in respect of other occupational groups, the particularities of the individual case always require that theory or knowledge has to be mediated by the practitioner to make it relevant and useable (Schon, 1983). Recognition of this modified epistemology requires that educators engage with learners in the process of articulating and examining the assumptions or constructs which they bring to bear on their practice, be those constructs culled from experience or from academic theory. It should not be a surprise that for all of us our construing is not a seamless, rational, consistent world-view; England (1986) has written that social work requires uncommonly good common-sense, and the study by social psychologists of common-sense thinking suggests that this is irreducibly characterised by internal dialectic, dilemma and contradiction (Billig et al., 1988). Personal construct theory, and repertory grid technique, do not offer a grand theory of social work or social work education, but constitute one point of access to the student practitioner's world view and, on the evidence of this and other studies, may have a beneficial influence on practice.

REPERTORY GRID TECHNIQUE IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

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CHAPTER FIVE

(1993) 'Cognitive Change and Learning from Practice: A Longitudinal Study of Social Work Students', Social Work Education, Vol. 12, 77-87.

Cognitive Change and Learning from Practice: A Longitudinal Study of Social Work Students

NICK GOULD

Although agency-based practice accounts for approximately half of the period of qualifying education, relatively little is known about the cognitive changes which take place during placements. A longitudinal study of 18 social work students, using repertory grid technique as the primary research tool, finds that pre-entry experience and age significantly influence the pattern of formation of professional identity, and also the content of thinking about practice. Analysis of the pattern of structure and coherence of personal models of practice also suggests that transfer of learning may be a more problematic competence than conventionally recognised.

The practicum has long been established as a key component of professional education. The Diploma in Social Work reinforces and extends the place of assessed practice as an essential part of the qualifying process. There are indications from other areas of professional education (particularly teacher training) that there is a political and ideological shift towards 'on the job' training as offering a more 'relevant' and effective learning experience. Despite this changing emphasis in social work there has been comparatively little empirical investigation of the processes involved in learning from practice (with notable exceptions such as Syson and Baginsky (1981), Gardiner (1989) and Secker (1990)). Much of the literature on practice learning draws on adult learning theory, which in turn is often both heuristic and a priori; as Collins has observed (Collins, 1989), most theories of learning are 'black boxish' and say little about the transformations involved in the learning process.

This author has argued elsewhere that one method of gaining a window on the processes involved in learning from practice is through repertory grid technique (Gould, 1989; 1991). Repertory grid technique is the methodological corollary of personal construct psychology and has

Nick Gould

been widely employed in other fields of educational research (see for instance Beail, 1985) but has been little utilised within social work. Personal construct psychology uses the metaphor of the person as scientist to illustrate Kelly's theory of learning as a feedback loop comprising hypothesis, experimentation and hypothesis modification. These hypotheses, which are continuously tested against reality, are known as constructs and are the criteria through which experience is mediated, categorised and understood.

This personal construct model of cognition and learning has much in common with some influential models of experiential learning (see Gould, 1989, p.11), in particular the Kolb and Fry experiential learning cycle of experience, reflective observation, conceptualisation and experimentation (Kolb and Fry, 1975). Repertory grid technique, which helps individuals to articulate the constructs they are using and reveals the structural relationship between them, offers a research method which supports reflection and provides information on the changes taking place in an individual's thinking about practice. To borrow Mezirow's phrase, repertory grid offers a graphic illustration of the 'perspective transformations' taking place through experiential learning (Mezirow, 1983).

This paper is the final report from a longitudinal study of experiential learning in social work education. Previous papers explored the epistemological nature of practice knowledge (Gould, 1989) and evaluated the usefulness to students of repertory grids as an aid to reflective learning (Gould, 1991). This paper concentrates on the formation of students' professional identity during practice placements; the structural pattern and coherence of personal models of practice, and implications for the transfer of learning; and the content of thinking about practice.

Method

Subjects

A total of 36 students from two qualifying courses volunteered to take part in a longitudinal study of learning from practice. For the purposes of evaluating repertory grid as an aid to reflective learning the volunteers were randomly allocated between an experimental and a control group. This paper reports on grid material provided by the eighteen students in the experimental group. Eleven students were in the final year of a two year non-graduate CQSW programme, seven were in the final year of a four year undergraduate CQSW programme. The two sub-groups

Cognitive Change and Learning from Practice

presented quite different profiles in terms of age and previous social work experience. The non-graduates were comparatively older (median age = 38 years) and most had previous social work experience (mean = 3.5 years). The undergraduate sub-group was comparatively young (median age = 25 years) and only one had any previous experience (2.5 years). Both courses at that time recruited few male students and two participated in the study; similarly, the courses only had one black student, who was not randomly included in the research.

Task

The study followed the cohort of 18 students through the final academic year of their studies. During this time most undertook two placements (N=12), although six of the non-graduate students elected to complete one long placement in the same agency (N=6). In this way the data allowed us to work with 18 students, but material was collected relating to a total of thirty placements.

Every student was asked to complete a repertory grid three weeks after the beginning of a placement and at its completion. Elements which were provided for the grid were: self, the social worker I wish to be, the social worker I do not wish to be, practice teacher, college tutor; and five service users were included. Students were invited to include any other figures they considered influential in their learning. Constructs were elicited by the conventional method of considering three elements at a time, and identifying a criterion by which two were similar and different from the third. The process was continued until the individual felt that no more constructs could be elicited comfortably and without repetition. Every element was then rated on every construct using a 1 to 5 scale. The resulting grid was computer-analysed and the researcher met with the student two weeks later to discuss the output.

Results

Every grid was analysed in terms of correlations between constructs and elements, integration (Chard, 1988), conceptual structure (Mahklouf-Norris et al, 1970), a principal components analysis of the correlations, and content analysis of the superordinate constructs (Lifshitz, 1974).

Formation of self-identity as a social worker

All the grids contained the elements 'self' and 'the social worker I wish to be'. Comparing the relationship between these elements at the

Nick Gould

beginning and end of the placement gave a measure of how successful students felt they had been in becoming their idealised self. The distance between the elements was measured using the FOCUS programme (Thomas and Harri-Augstein, 1985) which produces a matching score expressed as a percentage. Taking the group as a whole there was significant change for them in becoming the social worker they wished to be: Wilcoxon's $T(16) = 35.5$ $p < 0.05$. However, closer scrutiny showed that change was not statistically significant during the first placement, but occurred during the final placement: Wilcoxon's $T(9) = 4$ $p < 0.025$. Students undertaking one extended placement ($N = 6$) did not change in this respect significantly.

For the younger, inexperienced undergraduates, becoming 'the social worker I wish to be' was accompanied by closer matching with their practice teacher; for the more experienced non-graduates, becoming 'the social worker I wish to be' was accompanied by greater separation and autonomy from the practice teacher and other professionals.

Integration of constructs

Personal construct psychology contains quite specific and testable theories about how people learn (Kelly, 1955; Philips, 1989). The process of learning is conceptualised as a cyclical process which involves moving between 'tight and loose' construing. A construct which is used in a tight way leads to unvarying predictions, whereas a loose one leads to varying predictions. Familiarity and understanding comes from the experience of finding some constructs more useful than others, more differentiation takes place, and structure is created in the cognitive process. The continuous process of experiential learning requires alternation between tight and loose construing, without becoming stuck at either end of the continuum.

Tightness or looseness can be measured from grid data by calculating the integration score (Chard, 1988). This is calculated from the relationship between the set of ratings for every pair of constructs in a grid, expressed as Spearman's Rho. The sum of the Spearman's Rhos for any grid is the integration score (the same calculation is called the intensity score by Fransella and Bannister, 1977). The prediction for the students in this study would be that social work students beginning a new placement would initially be lower, as they attempted to incorporate new experiences which at first were highly fragmented and unintegrated. Towards the end of the placement, their thinking would become more structured, with some integration of constructs.

Cognitive Change and Learning from Practice

The prediction was confirmed that integration increased significantly during the placement experience (Wilcoxon's $T(30) = 98$ $p < .005$). Moving to a new placement precipitated a reduction in the integration score of most students, which subsequently increased again. In other words the creation of structure in students' thinking about practice was not a unilinear process - the transfer of learning required of students involves measurable regression before renewed and accelerated progress was possible.

Structure and articulation of construing

A graphic illustration of what these processes involved in showing changes occurring in a student's thinking about practice can be produced by using the grid data as a basis for mapping changes over time. Mahklouf-Norris et al. (1970) describe a process for drawing a topographical illustration of an individual's construing system to show the degree of integration of that system. Firstly, using Spearman's Rho as a measure of correlation between constructs, all those correlations are identified which are significant at or above the five per cent level. The significant constructs are then arranged to form clusters within which all the constructs relate significantly to all the others within the cluster. Such a cluster is called a primary cluster and is represented by a circle drawn with a solid line. Any remaining constructs are then examined: a construct significantly correlated with one or more in a cluster is considered a secondary cluster, drawn by a hyphenated circle; a construct significantly correlated with two or more primary clusters is considered a linkage construct; and a construct not significantly correlated with any other construct is considered an isolate.

Taking at random one of the participating students, a male undergraduate, this method has been used to draw the four grids produced during the research period (Figures 1-4 overleaf).

In both placements the initial grid shows segmented and disorganised construing. At the beginning of the first placement thinking is dominated by a monolithic cluster of constructs, indicating a highly undifferentiated, one-dimensional evaluation of others, with two isolate constructs. By the end of the placement the student's construing has become more complex and differentiated, and all the constructs show an articulated, integrated system of primary clusters which are linked.

The transfer to the final placement once again produces a segmented structure with no overall integration or coherence, but by the end of the

Nick Gould

Makhlouf-Norris diagrams to show changes in construct integration of an individual student during two placements

Figure 1: First placement - week 3

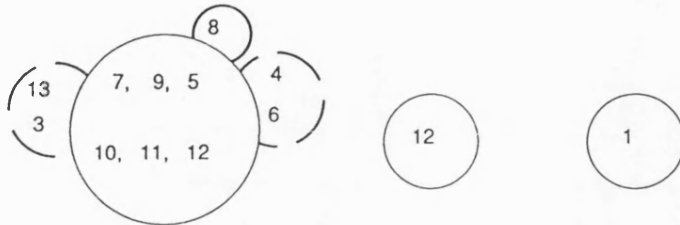


Figure 2; First placement - towards completion

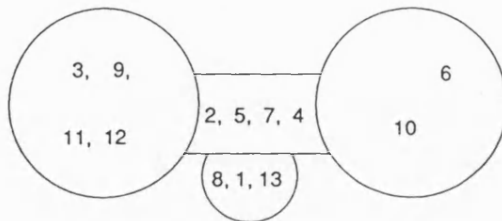


Figure 3: Second placement - week 3

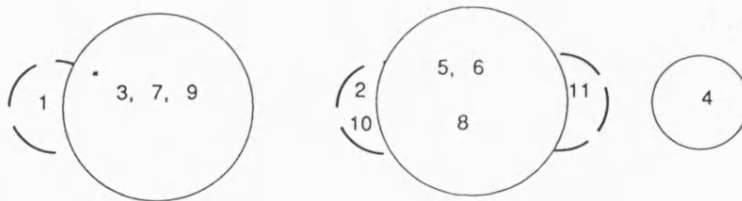
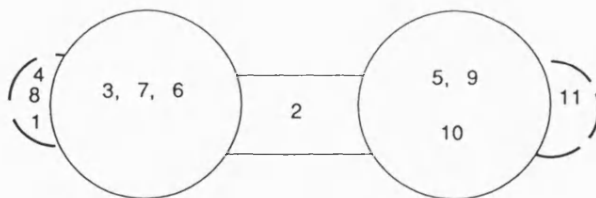


Figure 4: Second placement - towards completion



Cognitive Change and Learning from Practice

Constructs first placement (Figures 1 and 2)

1. Laid back-Formal
2. Planner-Drifter
3. Weak-Strong
4. Happy-Unhappy
5. In control-Out of control
6. Satisfied-Dissatisfied
7. Confident-Lacking confidence
8. Excitable-Calm
9. Able to get things done-Unable etc
10. Empowered-Unempowered
11. Articulate-Inarticulate
12. Interesting-Uninteresting
13. Stimulating-Unstimulating

Constructs from second placement (Figures 3 and 4)

1. Introvert-Extravert
 2. Reflective-Unreflective
 3. Sad-Not sad
 4. Sporty-Unsporty
 5. Anti-Racist-Racist
 6. Secure-Insecure
 7. Laid back-Intense
 8. 'Off the ball'-'On the ball'
 9. Organised-Disorganised
 10. Genuine-Artificial
 11. Uses derogatory humour-Doesn't use derogatory humour
-

placement an integrated structure has once more emerged with two primary clusters related to one another by a linkage construct.

Representative constructs

All the forms of analysis so far reported deal with the structure of students' thinking, but not the content. Repertory grids are essentially an ideographic research method, i.e. they elicit the idiosyncratic thinking of the individual, but data can be grouped by categorising the constructs elicited from individuals (Landfield, 1971). A principal component analysis of every grid was undertaken using SPSS and the construct

Nick Gould

was identified which accounted for the greatest loading on the first principal component. This construct was taken to be the main or superordinate construct for the grid. Using Lifshitz's taxonomy of constructs from her influential study of the effect of training in social work (Lifshitz, 1974), each main construct was assigned to one of the following seven categories (taking examples from Lifshitz):

1. task orientation e.g. diligent, responsible;
2. description of concrete situations e.g. age, sex, occupation;
3. abstract intrapsychic characteristics e.g. self-awareness;
4. abstract interpsychic characteristics e.g. wish to help others;
5. abstract social values e.g. equality, justice;
6. intellectual characteristics e.g. abstract thinking;
7. affective-egocentric e.g. 'good to me'.

The examples of constructs given in figs. 1-4 illustrate the general finding that most students gave constructs that had a vernacular or metaphorical quality, and rarely gave constructs which could be directly related to academic, theoretical learning. This seems to support Sibeon's claim that knowledge in social work is characterised by a 'culture of orality' which is legitimated both within agency-based learning and by the process orientation of much academic social work teaching (Sibeon, 1991). For the older, more experienced students the dominant constructs were descriptive of intrapsychic or interpsychic characteristics ($\chi^2 = 23.668$, $df = 6$, $p < .001$). This is essentially the profile of experienced practitioners as discovered by Lifshitz (1974, p.185). For the younger undergraduates the most commonly used main construct was egocentric (binomial distribution test $p = .0176$), followed by abstract interpsychic characteristics; this contrasts with Lifshitz's finding that undergraduates' grids were dominated by concrete descriptive constructs.

Discussion

The findings from this longitudinal study both confirm some research evidence about the way in which social work students learn from practice, and confirm some intuitive understandings of that process, but also raise questions for social work educators. Most significant change occurred in the final placement and reinforces the anecdotal view often expressed by tutors that students 'take off' in the final placement. Repertory grids are of course a form of self-assessment and it is not possible to correlate this perception from students of their own rate of

Cognitive Change and Learning from Practice

development with any independent measure. Nevertheless, if it is acknowledged that self-assessment should be taken seriously (discussed Evans, 1990, p.50), the confirmation from the data that students do not feel that their progress is at a uniform rate across placements presents issues relating to the qualifying award. In particular it suggests caution in undertaking the intermediate assessment required by CCETSW's regulations for the Diploma in Social Work. At a time when there is a general move towards explicit, objective criteria for assessment, there may be grounds for suggesting that many students will only realise their full potential in the final placement, and that judgements at the intermediate stage have to be treated with caution (unless of course a student has shown serious irresponsibility or unsuitability).

With regard to the general development of a professional self-identity, differences between the two sub-groups of students suggest that this has different meanings depending on age and experience. For young undergraduates this means incorporating the influences of an external role-model; the older, more experienced students see themselves as becoming more separated from professional others - more autonomous and independent. This corroborates the findings from Lifshitz's comparative study of students and experienced practitioners. However, she attributed the differences to the effect of training, whereas this study, which compares students still in training, suggests that the differences relate to more generalised variables of life and work experience. Unfortunately, the research design does not allow for the effects of age and previous professional experience to be assessed independently of one another.

Again, it has been suggested that some students, the younger and more inexperienced ones, have a greater tendency to use constructs which reflect preoccupations with the subjective impact of others. This is a similar finding to Secker who found that:

...in the early stages of their work, their pre-occupations revolved around their own presentation rather than around learning about and making sense of their client's situation. Their concerns were about whether their clients would like them and whether they would think of them as good enough social workers (Secker, 1990, p.82).

Secker does not give the ages or amount of previous experience of the students she studied but her evidence together with the structure

Nick Gould

and content of the grids produced for this research study confirm a straightforward but overlooked lesson. That is that students reveal a classical picture of Piagetian cognitive development (discussed Lifshitz, 1974). Less experienced students show a tendency to be concerned with the subjective impact that others are having upon them, looking to external models around whom to shape behaviour; more experienced students are using less self-centred, more 'objective' assessments of others. There is no evidence from the research that there is any difference in the level of competence of either group, simply that they show different patterns of enculturation during training. This is a view based upon a small research sample but calls into question pedagogic approaches in social work education which do not recognise and accommodate variations in learning needs which may result from factors of age and experience.

The overview gained from repertory grid information about the structure of cognition about practice supports the theory from personal construct psychology that learning involves the capacity to accept the inner disorganisation produced by new contexts of learning, and to reconstruct a modified model of understanding. This generalised finding from the data is exemplified in the diagrams based on the Mahklouf-Norris method. The transfer of learning is now regarded as a core competence in social work (Harris, 1983; Gardiner, 1984), and yet we see that students' cognitive models of practice fragment when moving to a new placement. Apparently finding a similar phenomenon in her own research, Secker has suggested that this is indicative of students attempting to cope with new situations by falling back on previous, inappropriate experience (Secker, 1990, p.87), or in personal construct psychology terms, using inappropriate constructs. Transfer of learning is not something which is automatic and linear in its manifestation, but is likely to require structured support and facilitation from practice teachers. If students are to move towards complex but coherent personal models of practice then a function of practice teaching is to help students articulate their assumptions or constructs, and to make connections between them.

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Cognitive Change and Learning from Practice

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CHAPTER SIX

(1990) 'Political Critique of Kantian Ethics: A Contribution to the Debate between Webb and McBeath, and Downie', British Journal of Social Work, Vol. 20, 495-499.

Br. J. Social Wk. (1990) 20, 495-499

Political Critique of Kantian Ethics: A Contribution to the Debate between Webb and McBeath, and Downie

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The debate between Webb and McBeath on the one hand (Webb and McBeath, 1989, a and b), and Downie on the other (Downie, 1989), over Kantian ethics in social work, is in essence an exchange between people speaking different languages. Downie argues from within the tradition of post-Enlightenment humanism, Webb and McBeath from within a post-Nietzschean tradition of anti-humanism. This is not simply a matter of fact-value dualism and the technical difficulties of crossing that divide, it is the impossibility of conducting meaningful exchanges between two separate paradigms. Webb and McBeath are correct in objecting that Downie only deals with their critique of Kantian ethics and virtually ignores the latter half of their first paper which dealt with a Foucauldian reading of social work. That this should be the focus of the debate is curious as the Webb and McBeath critique resolves into the well-rehearsed argument that codifications of ethics in social work tend to be asocial and ahistorical. In this way Downie fails to challenge what I take to be the main thrust of Webb and McBeath's paper, that Foucauldian studies can take forward our understanding of social work and contribute to a progressive, politicized practice. This very brief paper seeks to take up where Downie left off and to suggest some fundamental reasons for caution in following the Foucauldian road.

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It seems to be the curse of social work theory that it arrives upon and attempts to incorporate gobbets of social theory some considerable years after other social science disciplines have moved on. Thus, social work discovered systems theory a decade after it had been thoroughly critiqued within political science and sociology, behaviour modification became part of the social work repertoire after cognitivism had overtaken behaviourism within psychological theory, and so on. This pattern threatens to repeat itself with the recent explosion of social work literature claiming an indebtedness to Foucault; it is true that commentaries on Foucault and studies claimed to be influenced by Foucault are still current in social theory but the debate over the meaning of Foucault's work has raised sufficient scepticism for us to seriously question whether we can accept Webb and McBeath's case for accepting an undifferentiated 'Foucauldian' construction of social work.

It has become a truism to say within sociology that we cannot validly talk of 'Marxism'; we have to talk of 'Marxisms' in recognition both of the discontinuities within Marx's own work but also the diversification of interpretation of his ideas in this century. So it is with Foucault within whose work at least three major projects and associated 'epistemological breaks' can be identified: firstly, a concern with constructing histories of rationality and the conditions under which forms of knowledge emerge that may come to be judged scientific; secondly, an exploration of power/knowledge in the context of various practices relating to the human sciences—the development of the 'disciplinary society'; thirdly, in his final period, the historical construction of subjectivity through the exemplar of sexuality. For Webb and McBeath to claim that their article, 'shows how Foucault can be applied to social work' (Webb and McBeath, 1989, p. 493) requires some explanation as to which Foucault they mean.

For social workers interested in the work of Foucault etc. it was the article by Mark Philp which for several years held the status almost of *samizdat*, passed on and referred to by word of mouth as an important attempt to deconstruct the discourse of social work to reveal the epistemological terrain occupied by social work, in the language of earlier Foucault, an 'archaeological excavation' of the conditions which created the possibility of the emergence of social work (Philp, 1979). In many respects this contribution remains the seminal treatment of social work from Foucauldian perspectives, showing that social work as an activity is historically contingent, emerging from a conjunction of political forces in the late nineteenth century, that it has no pre-ordained right to exist or a priori purposes. In a work which has been sadly under-recognized in social work literature, David Garland in *Welfare and Punishment* could be said to have put the empirical flesh on the skeleton of Philp's

argument, documenting through close analysis of contemporary discourse the genesis of statutory social work as part of a complex of social and penal strategies produced as a response to perceived political threat in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Garland, 1985). The richness of Philp's and Garland's work is the accommodation of Foucauldian historiography and analysis of power as an elaboration of Marxist and other sociologies of knowledge. Neither is attempting to give prescriptions for social work:

... the aim of the analysis is to understand the constraints and possibilities which define social work and which control the things that its members say; as such it is an attempt to grasp social work theoretically and is not an attempt to legislate for a new or different brand (Philp, 1979, p. 95).

It is Webb and McBeath's contention that a Foucauldian analysis of social work can transcend the orthodox dualism of fact and value, revealing the regulative, normative character of traditional ethical discourse. However, it would be absurd and illogical to argue that Foucauldian theory is outside the realm of discourse; it is legitimate to also deconstruct the values represented by the Foucauldian argument and to explore what it may be able to offer as praxis, in particular whether it can be translated into a form of praxis which could be identified as progressive or empowering. Foucault's work is pervaded by an implicit pessimism and conservatism, and by a perverse refusal to take an explicit position, indeed appearing at times to wilfully lay false trails lest a consistent position emerge for which he might be held accountable. The pessimism is demonstrated through the assertion that all forms of reform only modernize and replace one set of disciplinary practices with another; this may healthily sensitize us to the over-simplifications of Whig historiography, but requires us to accept ingenuously that the analyst's couch is no better than the chains of Bedlam (Foucault, 1973) or that contemporary forms of penalty are not preferable to the gibbet and instruments of torture (Foucault, 1977). Even Foucault's most persuasive advocates, Dreyfus and Rabinow, are forced to express some petulance that he, 'owes us a criterion of what makes one kind of danger more dangerous than another' (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982, p. 264). Were Webb and McBeath to argue that a judgement or preference can be made between forms of discipline then this would lead directly to the Foucauldian heresy of letting the universal human subject in through the back door.

The sub-text of Webb and McBeath's article is a romantic anarchist programme which construes the client as heroic rebel. If we feel we have been here before it may be an echo of R.D. Laing's early work, influenced by Foucault's *Madness and Civilization*, originally published

in French in 1961, romanticizing the psychotic individual as the carrier of radical political insight. Foucauldian analysis of social work substitutes the client for the schizophrenic patient and suffers the same problems of reductionism found in Laingian psychiatric discourse. Thus, all encounters between social worker and client can be decoded as political but without providing any consistent definition of power or interest. Similarly, it is a central problematic of Foucauldian theory, because it rejects notions of human nature and interest, to explain actual or potential resistance. Certainly, there is a banal sense in which it could be argued that Foucault's claimed identification of the omnipresence of power also indicates a matching potentiality for resistance, but from within his own and his disciples' discourse there is no independent basis from which to develop principles of opposition (Walzer, 1986). For those within social work who feel a continuing need to resist the apparent hegemony of the right, the Foucauldian social work camp is handicapped by the confusion of its analysis from giving a lead. Webb and McBeath claim at an early point in their first paper that they will indicate how their critique informs effective practice but this is never delivered. Similarly, Rojek *et al.*'s Foucauldian deconstruction of social work discourse collapses into a feeble endorsement of participation as the way forward:

On the other hand, participation will certainly enable social workers, clients and members of the community to be exposed in concrete ways to the diversity of values and needs in society. It will also give them first-hand knowledge of the capacities of the welfare services to meet values and needs. Clients and social workers are skilled and talented people (Rojek *et al.*, 1988, p. 180).

Apart from the patronizing tone of this conclusion, it has to be said that the argument shows an apparent unawareness of the realpolitik of participatory programmes on both sides of the Atlantic in the Sixties and early Seventies, ironically experiences which in many ways validated Marxist theorizations of power and the state (for example, Community Development Project, 1977).

In conclusion, this author stands by an earlier defence of Foucauldian historiography (Stenson and Gould, 1986), in particular the potential for using this approach in social work education, specifically as a means to helping students understand the socio-political context and content of social work theory. But Webb and McBeath are contributors to an emergent literature which suggests that the same body of discourse can make a direct contribution to praxis. Unless the Foucauldian protagonists can escape the conundrum of trying to bring an anti-humanist, relativist philosophy to bear on social work as a material form of inter-

vention in people's lives, the Foucauldian theorization of social work is likely to be condemned as a decadent cul-de-sac.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

- i) 'Race and Sentencing', Probation Journal, (1991) Vol. 38, No. 4, 195-197.

- ii) 'Bath Magistrates Court: Race, Sentencing and Social Inquiry Reports', an unpublished report prepared for Avon Probation Service and Bath Magistracy.

A copy of the report on which this article is based can be obtained from Nick Gould, Director of Social Work Studies, University of Bath, Claverton Down, Bath, BA2 7AY.

The over-representation of black people in the prison population is rightly a matter of growing concern. The Judicial Studies Board's ethnic minorities advisory committee has established a working party to consider the extent of racial discrimination in sentencing and appropriate remedial measures [1]. In various parts of the country anti-racism training is becoming established as part of the induction and training of magistrates. All of these measures should be seen as positive and yet there is a danger of a growing orthodoxy which says that differential sentencing will be eliminated by changing the attitudes of sentencers towards culture and race. A recent study conducted in Bath supports other published research in suggesting that sentencing is not the most critical stage in a judicial process which produces a net bias against black people.

The methodological problems inherent in studying race and sentencing are considerable [2] but published studies of British courts which show awareness of the difficulties have tended to find that when like was compared with like, there was little evidence of black defendants being treated more harshly than white counterparts (e.g. McConville and Baldwin [3], Crow and Cove [4]), Moxon [5]). In an authoritative review of the research Hudson [6] suggested that although this was the broad finding from the evidence we should not ignore the possibility that the research asks the wrong questions, in particular whether there may be

variability between courts in their degree of racism and that the research has focused on the less overtly racist courts. For this reason case studies of individual courts are significant - although we should be circumspect in how we generalize from them.

The previous research has tended to be conducted in courts serving metropolitan areas which are ethnically diverse, e.g. London, Birmingham, Bradford. In contrast to this Bath is a predominantly white city with a total population of about 77,000, and an estimated Black/Asian population of 2.7% within which no particular ethnic group predominates [7].

The data for the research was taken from PROBIS statistics kept by the local probation service, which records a total of 34 variables on subjects of SIR's, including the individual's self-ascription of ethnic identity. To limit the study to the subjects of SIR's limits the scope of the findings, notably excluding committals to Crown Court, bail decisions and sentences passed without reports. Nevertheless, it provides a sample within which racial fairness or bias can be studied. The research covered the period January 1989 to June 1990 during which time 541 persons were referred to the probation service for reports, of whom 31 (5.7%) described themselves as black, with no Asian defendants being referred.

Overall, as can be seen in Table 1, there was general equity in the sentencing of black and white defendants with no difference of statistical significance ($\chi^2 = 0.215$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.90$). Following Voakes

and Fowlers' device in their study of race, sentencing and SIR's in Bradford courts [8], the disposals were grouped according to whether they fell into "high", "middle" or "low" ranges in the tariff (Table 1).

TABLE 1: DISPOSALS GROUPED "HIGH", "MIDDLE" AND "LOW" RANGE

	White <i>N</i> (%)	Black <i>N</i> (%)
Prison		
Youth Custody	79 (15.5)	4 (12.9)
Suspended Sentence		

CSO		
PO + condition	201 (39.5)	12 (38.7)
PO		

Attendance Centre		
Fine		
Discharge	229 (45.0)	15 (48.4)
Other		
Totals	509 (100.0)	31 (100.0)

It was not the case in the Bath magistrates court that black defendants had moved more rapidly through the tariff. In the case of defendants receiving immediate or suspended custody there was striking similarity between the two groups' previous offending histories with black defendants averaging 10 previous convictions and white defendants 10.3. Another hypothesis has been that unemployment may interact with race to produce an effect on sentencing, either because employment fails to act as a mitigating factor for black defendants, or because unemployment confirms for sentencers negative stereotypes of black people. As is consistent with known patterns of unemployment, black people in the study experienced higher levels of unemployment than whites (71.0% as opposed to 61.9%) but when the unemployed were treated statistically as

a separate group then unemployed black people were treated no more punitively than whites.

As a form of methodological triangulation to confirm or otherwise the findings already reported, McConville and Baldwins' approach was replicated using the Bath data. Black defendants were matched with a sample of white defendants in terms of sex, age, type of offence, number of counts in the indictment, criminal record and pre-trial bail status. Considerable care was taken over the matching process, using thirty-five categories of offence. Two black defendants were not matched: one because of the unusualness of the primary offence, the other because the offence had not been accurately recorded.

Table 2: DISPOSALS RECEIVED BY MATCHED BLACK AND WHITE DEFENDANTS

<i>Sentence</i>	<i>Black N</i>	<i>White N</i>
Prison		
Youth Custody	4	3
Suspended Sentence		

Community Service Order		
P.O. + condition	10	12
P.O.		

Attendance Centre Order		
Fine	15	14
Discharge		
Totals	<u>29</u>	<u>29</u>

Again, there were no significant differences between sentences for black and white defendants ($\chi^2 = 0.358$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.80$), confirming the earlier analysis of the data. The matching of defendants also allowed

sex to be controlled for as a variable interacting with race in its effect on sentencing. The thesis suggested by some writers that black women are dealt with more interventively by the courts was not confirmed, although the numbers of black women were too small to test for statistical significance (N = 8).

The conclusions to be drawn from the findings are not that we should be complacent about sentencing as a site of discrimination, nor that we should abandon measures to sensitize sentencers to race issues and monitoring of sentencing decisions. Rather, we should be realistic in our expectations of what such measures will achieve in reducing the proportion of the prison population which is black, or in making the sentencing of black people less interventive. To achieve these objectives we have to see sentencing as the end point of a series of interventions which sustain an accumulative bias against black people. To understand the complete process we need a unified monitoring system which incorporates all the relevant levels of the policing and judicial system, rather than isolating sentencing as the explanatory variable.

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BATH MAGISTRATES COURT:

Race, Sentencing and Social Inquiry Reports

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July 1991

The idea for this research arose from a conference organized by the Bath Ethnic Needs Steering Group at which representatives of both Bath Magistrates Court and Avon Probation Service indicated that they would welcome research which addressed the question of possible racism in the local criminal justice system, with an emphasis on sentencing. Further discussion revealed that the probation service had been keeping data on defendants since 1988 as part of piloting the Home Office monitoring system called PROBIS. The data-base produced through this system contained diverse data on people sentenced in Avon courts including both demographic details such as age, sex, employment status etc., and information on offending "careers" such as previous convictions. It seemed feasible to use the PROBIS information to conduct a statistical analysis of the relationship between race and sentencing behaviour in Bath Magistrates Court without needing to secure research funding. The following report is the result of such analysis, acknowledging that in some respects it is an incomplete picture, but hoping that the findings provide a basis for debate about the direction of future research or monitoring.

Research on Race and Sentencing

The history of research into the relationship between race and sentencing in this country is very recent, in contrast to the United States where there is a long research tradition in this area. Much of the research on both sides of the Atlantic has been of dubious quality, failing to follow basic methodological principles, although as the

research improved in design the findings which began to emerge suggested that the existence and direction of racial bias in court decisions were not as self-evident as first appeared. The growing awareness during recent years that racism is endemic in most institutional processes and the knowledge that black people are disproportionately represented in the prison population seems to point unambiguously in the direction of racial discrimination in sentencing. Nevertheless, the research has been inconclusive and sometimes contradictory.

The first British study of sentencing was published in 1983, co-authored by McConville and Baldwin, drawing random samples of defendants appearing at Birmingham and London Crown Courts and comparing sentences given to white and black defendants who had been matched according to charges faced, social characteristics and previous offending behaviour (McConville and Baldwin, 1983). They found that black defendants did not receive heavier sentences than white defendants. A subsequent study by Crow and Cove surveyed a sample of juvenile courts, magistrates courts and crown courts, but came to the same conclusions as McConville and Baldwin that, despite minor variations in sentencing between black and white defendants, the courts did not deal more punitively with black people (Crow and Cove, 1984). Moxon's study of sentencing practice in crown courts also supported McConville and Baldwin's finding that ethnicity was not related to the use of custody although he found that black people were less likely to receive a probation order (Moxon, 1988)

Some studies have found contrary trends, for instance an unpublished study of Nottingham juvenile court found a greater propensity for black

defendants to receive a custodial outcome (16.9% as against 9% for the white group), similarly the South East London Probation Service found a higher rate of sentencing to youth custody for young black men than white counterparts (both studies quoted NACRO, 1986). Hudson, in an authoritative review of the British research on sentencing and race concludes that although the balance of findings is that sentencing is not blatantly discriminatory, we should not close our minds to the possibility that the research is asking the wrong questions; the effect of race may be mediated by other factors such as employment or gender. Other possibilities are that black defendants move more quickly up the sentencing tariff i.e. white offenders commit more offences before being dealt with severely by the courts, or that courts are more loathe to use "rehabilitative" options such as probation with black defendants.

The general view at this stage is that more research is needed to give a fuller picture before any confident conclusions can be drawn. Bath is potentially an interesting case-study because it is a small provincial city with a comparatively small ethnic minority population. This is in contrast to the focus of previous research on large, multiracial conurbations and answers Hudson's plea for "smaller-scale studies to test specific forms of disadvantage within the criminal justice system". (Hudson, 1989).

The Research Data

As has been stated, the research is based on data collated using PROBIS records. This was a monitoring form completed by probation officers whenever the court requested a Social Inquiry Report (SIR) on an

individual. An SIR is a report written by a probation officer at the request of the court to assist sentencers in reaching a decision; characteristically it contains brief details on the social circumstances of the defendant and his or her attitude towards their offence(s), and usually a recommendation as to sentencing. A report will only be prepared where there is a plea or finding of guilt.

The data on which this study is based collates PROBIS forms on all those individuals who appeared before Avon courts and who were the subjects of SIR's during the period January 1989 to June 1990. This was around five thousand individuals in all, of whom 541 were sentenced in Bath Magistrates Court. PROBIS provides information on 34 different variables. The preparation of all this data in computer-analysable form is entirely the work of Shirley Phillips, information and statistics officer with Avon Probation Service, to whom I am extremely grateful.

Using PROBIS as the basis of the research is not beyond legitimate criticism. Limiting the discussion to those individuals on whom reports are prepared leaves out of consideration possible racial discrimination over the decision to grant bail or remand in custody. Magistrates may also select on a racial basis the individuals on whom they wish reports to be prepared. On the first criticism, it seems that the number of remands of black people in custody are so small at Bath Magistrates Court as to make statistical deductions dangerous. On the second count of selectivity, it is theoretically possible that magistrates do not ask for reports on black people who they intend to treat punitively, but this was not the impression of the local probation officers who are

generally in court. Ultimately, the argument for a study based on PROBIS is that *within* the sample of people on whom reports have been written comparisons can still be made *between* black and white defendants. From a resources perspective, it would be difficult to justify an expensive research input to monitor the few examples which are not incorporated by the PROBIS statistics.

Social Inquiry Reports and Ethnicity in Bath Magistrates Court

At the point of writing this report the information available on the ethnic composition of Bath is almost ten years old (the 1981 census). As is well known this data in itself contains almost insurmountable problems of interpretation, being based on the concept of birthplace rather than racial or ethnic identity. Pauline Schofield attempted to provide more reliable data based on extrapolation from county figures updated in 1986 and an abortive attempt at house-to-house sampling (Schofield, 1989). This report will use Schofield's figures as being the best that are currently available.

The 1981 census gave the number of persons in households with New Commonwealth heads as being 1918, updated in 1986 to 2,100 approximately. Based on a calculation of the total population of the City being 76,700, Schofield estimated a Black/Asian population of approximately 2.7%. She does not give a breakdown of the identity of persons within this total for 1986 but for 1981 it was as follows:

TABLE1 PERSONS IN BATH HOUSEHOLDS WITH NEW COMMONWEALTH HEAD

East Africa	140
Caribbean	706
India	456
Bangladesh	24
Remainder (NCW)	518
Pakistan	74
TOTAL PERSONS	1918

During the research period of January 1989 to June 1990, 541 persons who appeared before Bath Magistrates Court were referred to the probation service for reports. As part of the report completion process defendants were asked to give their ethnic identity.

TABLE2 ETHNIC IDENTITY OF SUBJECTS OF SIR REPORTS BATH MAGISTRATES COURT

JAN 1989 to JUNE 1990

White - British	507 (93.7%)
Other European	1 (0.2%)
Other	1 (0.2%)
Black - British	26 (4.8%)
West Indian	3 (0.6%)
African	2 (0.4%)
Other	1 (0.2%)
Total	541 (100.0%)

If these categories are collapsed into white and black groupings, then 509 (94.1%) reports were completed on white defendants and 31 (5.7%) on black defendants, plus 1 other. No Asian defendants were the subject of reports during the research period. Given Schofield's estimation of a black population of 2.7% in Bath, then by any calculations a disproportionate number of reports are being completed on black defendants. Without further evidence it is not possible to say whether this reflects a disproportionate number of black people appearing in the court or whether it reflects bias in the selectivity by magistrates of individuals on whom reports are to be prepared. Whatever the explanation, there is a strong indication of a phenomenon which requires monitoring.

Ethnicity and Sentencing

As has been discussed, the controversy surrounding the relationship between racial or ethnic identity and sentencing invariably raises the question of whether courts deal more punitively with black or Asian defendants than with white defendants. This seemingly straightforward question raises difficult methodological problems about statistical

interpretation. The following table shows disposals that were made by the Magistrates Court during the research period.

TABLE 3: DISPOSALS MADE BY BATH MAGISTRATES COURT JAN 1989 TO JUNE 1990

Result	Black	White
	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)
Prison	2 (6.4)	31 (6.1)
Youth Custody	1 (3.2)	20 (3.9)
Suspended Sentence	1 (3.2)	28 (5.5)
Community Service Order	3 (9.7)	83 (16.3)
P.O. with residence	1 (3.2)	4 (0.8)
P.O. with group attendance	5 (16.1)	66 (3.0)
P.O.	3 (9.7)	48 (9.4)
Attendance Centre Order	0 (0.0)	2 (0.4)
Fine with M.P.S.O.	1 (3.2)	3 (0.6)
Fine/ Compensation Order	6 (19.3)	128 (25.1)
Discharge	8 (25.8)	87 (17.1)
Other	0 (0.0)	9 (1.8)
Totals	31 (99.7))	509 (100.0)

At this level of analysis the figures show little difference between the treatment of black and white defendants, though the numbers are so small in some categories as to require caution. There is noticeable similarity in the use of custody between the two groups, though with a greater proportion of black people being discharged. Voakes's study in Bradford produced similar findings of non-significant differences in the sentencing of white and black defendants to immediate or suspended custody (Voakes, 1989 p.9) although he points out that in his sample there was less use of 'middle range' disposals for black defendants, perhaps suggesting a stereo-typed view on the part of sentencers that black people are less amenable to rehabilitation. This was not the case in the Bath study where middle-range disposals were used equally between

black and white defendants (Table 4). There was some variation within the middle-range band, notably a greater use of probation with a condition of group attendance for black defendants and a slightly lower use of community service for the black group, but these differences represent a small number of individuals and disappear when the figures within the bands are aggregated.

TABLE 4: DISPOSALS GROUPED "HIGH", "MIDDLE" AND "LOW" RANGE

	White		Black	
	<i>N</i>	(%)	<i>N</i>	(%)
Prison				
YC	79	(15.5)	4	(12.9)
SS				

CSO				
PO + cond	201	(39.5)	12	(38.7)
PO				

AC				
Fine				
Discharge	229	(45.0)	15	(48.4)
Other				
Totals	509	(100.0)	31	(100.0)

Race and tariff sentencing

Some researchers have suggested that the apparent equity in the sentencing of white and black defendants ignores the possibility that black defendants move more quickly up the sentencing tariff. In other words they find themselves facing severe punishment when their criminal records are shorter than white offenders. As Table 5 shows, the numbers

of black people receiving custodial sentences or suspended custodial sentences were very small and insufficient to measure statistical significance. Nevertheless, analysis of the data showed that the average number of previous convictions for black defendants receiving high tariff disposals was 10.0, and for white defendants 10.3. Thus, although it was not possible to control for the severity of previous convictions, there is evidence to suggest that the Court is not imposing a shorter tariff on black offenders.

Employment

It has been suggested that unemployment may be a factor influencing sentencing, either because being unemployed confirms negative stereotypes which produce harsher sentencing, or conversely because being in employment is a point of mitigation. Black unemployment rates are generally higher than white unemployment rates which further complicates the interpretation of sentencing statistics. The relationship between sentencing and unemployment remains an under-researched area (Hudson p.29).

In this study of Bath Magistrates Court, 315 of the 509 white defendants were unemployed or unavailable for work (61.9%), as opposed to 22 of the 31 black defendants (71.0%). Both groups demonstrate high levels of unemployment although the differential might have been expected to be greater. All of the black people who received high tariff sentences were unemployed (N = 4) as opposed to 64.1% of the white group. The small size of the former group makes any interpretation of these figures very hazardous.

Sentencing Recommendations

It is usual practice for probation officers to conclude Social Inquiry Reports by making a recommendation as to the sentence the court might most appropriately impose. The policy of Avon Probation Service is not to recommend custodial sentences and the usual intention is to suggest community-based alternatives to custody. In this study it was possible to compare probation officers' recommendations with the sentences actually imposed. The hypothesis being tested was that magistrates might be less inclined to follow probation officers' recommendations for sentencing of black offenders than in the case of white offenders. It emerges that 69% of recommendations were followed in the case of white offenders, whilst recommendations for black defendants were followed in 60% of cases. This is not statistically significant. Further scrutiny of the data revealed that where recommendations were not followed by magistrates in respect of black people there was a tendency for magistrates to impose significantly higher tariff sentences than the probation officer thought appropriate. In only one case were the magistrates more lenient than the recommended course of action. Some of the cases where the sentencing outcome was more punitive than the recommended course of action seem to be accounted for by the absence of a clear recommendation where custody will have appeared to the probation officer to be fairly inevitable. But this leaves a minority of cases where there was a discrepancy between recommendation and outcome which could not be investigated further without access to the original reports and possibly the authors of the SIR's. Nevertheless, it may be worth the probation service monitoring the relationship between recommendations and actual sentences to see whether race is an issue, and if so to

identify whether there are categories of offenders in respect of whom there is systematic disagreement between officers and magistrates as to appropriate sentencing.

A matched comparison of sentencing

All of the above analyses are based on bivariate analysis, that is they consider the effect of single variables on sentencing. An alternative form of analysis to cross-check the findings is to use McConville and Baldwins' methodology of matching black individuals with white equivalents on a range of variables which could be considered to be significant in sentencing. Failure to match like with like was a principal failing of the American research and seems an appropriate way of controlling data in order to isolate the effect of race on sentencing, particularly in a small study.. Replicating as far as possible McConville and Baldwins' approach, two groups were drawn up which matched black and white defendants in terms of : sex, age, type of offence, number of counts in the indictment, the defendant's criminal record, and pre-trial bail status. Considerable care was taken over the matching process, using thirty-five categories of offence, and as Baldwin and McConville found, the complexity of matching does not allow exact matching on every variable, the exceptions were so slight as to make distortion in the results very unlikely. It was impossible to match two black defendants, one because of the unusualness of the primary

offence, the other because the offence had not been accurately recorded by the probation officer.

Table 5: DISPOSALS RECEIVED BY MATCHED BLACK AND WHITE DEFENDANTS

<i>Sentence</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>White</i>
Prison	2	1
Youth Custody	1	1
Suspended Sentence	1	1
Community Service Order	3	4
P.O. + residence condition	1	0
P.O. + group	4	6
P.O.	2	2
Attendance Centre Order	0	1
Fine + Money Payment		
Supervision Order	2	0
Fine/ Compensation Order	5	9
Discharge (absolute or conditional)	8	4
Totals	<u>29</u>	<u>29</u>

The discrepancies which are of any significance occur at the lower end of the tariff. However, if the two categories of fine are collapsed the difference largely disappears (7 black defendants fined as opposed to 9 white defendants) with the major residual difference being that twice as many black people were discharged as white people.

Conclusions

1. Black people are over-represented in the sample. This is consistent with other research findings that black people find themselves disproportionately before the courts. If Hudson's hypothesis is correct that sentencers tend to be biased against asking for SIRs on people from ethnic minorities, then black people may be even more over-represented in appearing in court. This research can do no more than report that this is the case, but it is clear that we would benefit from monitoring at every level of the local criminal justice system, from police arrests to court decisions including remands and committals to Crown Court.

2. This research is also consistent with other British research findings that sentencing practice does not represent a site of blatant racial discrimination. The sentences passed on subjects of SIR's during the eighteen month research period, on the basis of the data available to me, were broadly equitable between black and white people and to the extent that there was a residual difference this was in the direction of black people tending to be discharged.

3. There was little evidence that magistrates were less likely to follow the recommendations of probation officers in sentencing black people, although where recommendations were not followed in the cases of black people the magistrates were more punitive than the recommendations made. This may be of interest to the probation service and a further issue for monitoring to identify whether there are particular categories of black

offender whose sentencing needs are being differently interpreted by sentencers and probation officers.

4. This has been a small-scale study, and leaves numerous questions open. A larger sample would permit more complex analysis to see how race interacts with other variables in influencing sentencing. It will also be interesting to see whether the Criminal Justice Bill which attempts to make sentencing more specific to the nature of the offence, and to reduce the impact of social factors and previous offending, will produce measurable differences in practice. A cautionary note is that if, as some research suggests, black people tend to be charged with more serious offences in circumstances where discretion exists, the Bill by being more offence-centered could worsen the position of black defendants

Again, it has been clearly demonstrated in research on sentencing that there is significant variation between courts as to how offences are regarded. In the same way, it is entirely conceivable that some courts are more racist than others. Bath comes out of this study untarnished, but it is still an important research task to look at other courts to compare performance.

5. A more comprehensive study than this one would require the monitoring of all people who appeared before the magistrates court. The numbers of black people coming before the court are relatively so small that it is my impression that it would take a long time to collect sufficient data to improve on what has been possible simply from studying the PROBIS statistics. Such a study would require research funding which it may be

difficult to justify and might not be forthcoming from the major funding bodies. A more satisfactory step would be for the Bath Magistrates Court to introduce a monitoring system, using the categories included in the 1991 census. The introduction of such a system seems to be the intention of the government although the Court might consider implementing this innovation in advance of any statutory requirement.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

'Anti-racist Social Work: A Framework for Teaching and Action'

A paper given at the 26th International Congress of Schools of Social
Work, July 15-19, 1992. Washington D.C.

Anti-racist Social Work: A Framework for Teaching and Action

A paper presented at 26th International Congress of Schools of Social Work, Washington DC, July 15-19, 1992 and the Annual ATSWE Conference, Oxford, July 23 & 24, 1992.

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ABSTRACT:

Although anti-racism is now formally established in the social work curriculum, educators lack an integrative framework for relating contextual social sciences to forms of anti-racist intervention. Such a framework is offered for teaching about racism and anti-racist social work which is based on the concept of modalities of power. Building on the work of theorists of power such as Lukes and Clegg, it is suggested that four important conceptualizations of power - behavioural, non-decision-making, hegemonic and post-structural - provide perspectives from which aspects of racism and anti-racist practice can be analysed. This approach may be transferrable to teaching about other forms of anti-discriminatory practice.

This paper seeks to support and advance the development of anti-racist social work education through the example of a framework for teaching which identifies the operation of power as a key concept in both the understanding of racism and the development of anti-racist social work interventions. Although primarily developed through my own classroom teaching, the framework may also be useable in practice teaching situations as a tool for reflective learning; the underlying pedagogic assumption is that reflective analysis is a key component in radical, emancipatory education (Mezirow, 1990. Gould, 1989).

Arguably the major transformation in social work education during the last decade has been the emergence of anti-racism and anti-discrimination as dominant perspectives. Within the British context this has been consolidated by the regulations buttressing qualifying professional education requiring that qualifying social work programmes be underpinned by a value-base which includes the necessity for qualifying social workers to, "demonstrate an awareness of both individual and institutional racism and ways to combat both through anti-racist practice" (CCETSW, 1991). This is reinforced through a range of directives requiring social work students to have a knowledge base which includes understanding of anti-racism and to have practice competences in anti-racism.

The emergence and consolidation of anti-racist perspectives in social work education has been produced by a coming together of various critiques within social work. This has included the empirical

demonstration that the rights and needs of many black people have been systematically ignored. Put simply, black-people are over-represented as subjects of social work intervention involving co-ercion and restriction of liberties, and under-represented as beneficiaries of the allocation of social work resources (Roys, 1988). At the theoretical level there has been a developing critique of the race-blindness and eurocentricity of mainstream social work theory. This has been compounded by the acknowledged failure of much Marxist and radical social work theory to incorporate race perspectives.

There is now a growing literature on anti-racism, anti-racist social work and anti-racist social work education. However, this is a developmental process, beginning with identification and definitions of the problems, the placement of anti-racism on the social work agenda, and eventual theory-building and empirical evaluation of anti-racist social work strategies. Inevitably earlier contributions to this process have incorporated polemics in order to confront the prevailing inertia on race and to mobilise an anti-racist pedagogy. This paper is intended to continue the process of building an anti-racist praxis. It may be seen as too cerebral and detached from every-day struggle, but is premised on the belief that anti-racism cannot be outside the requirement upon any aspect of an academic curriculum to have analytical coherence.

As already stated the framework is organized around conceptions of power. It is accepted from the outset that definitions of power are

irreducibly contested (Gallie, 1955, cited Lukes, 1974); the framework cannot reconcile competing theories of power but implicitly suggests that contrasting paradigms of power illuminate different aspects of the totality of racial inequality and oppression. Any student of the sociology of power will recognise the transparent indebtedness of the framework to Luke's seminal work, Power: A Radical View (Lukes, 1974). It must be acknowledged pre-emptively that Lukes has his critics (for example Morriss, 1987 and Clegg, 1989), but Lukes's study of power has a robustness which largely has withstood the test of time. However, I have sought to update his approach to incorporate more recent approaches to power located within post-structuralist social theory.

Given the constraints of length in a paper, some qualifications and compression of the arguments need to be entered. Firstly, there is not the space to enter into extensive argument over competing definitions of 'race', racism and anti-racism. Briefly, I follow Miles in arguing that 'race' is an inherently problematic concept, emerging historically from biological, supremacist ideologies and which has gained its own momentum in *racializing* structures and institutions to produce exclusionary practices including unequal allocation of scarce resources and unequal representation in the hierarchies of social relations (Miles, 1989). In addition I write as a white person in the United Kingdom, where racism conventionally means processes of discrimination and oppression directed at people of African-Caribbean and Asian origins; references to black people are not intended to homogenise the experiences of peoples of different ethnic and religious backgrounds, or to deny the oppression of

peoples of other ethnic and religious backgrounds, but again is the result here of necessary compression of the arguments.

Finally, I may be criticized for an implicit ethnocentrism within the framework presented; I have tried to show the fundamental contribution of black scholarship to the study of power and racism.

Social Work and Modalities of Power

"Because racism is tied up with exploitative systems of power, and even sometimes racism predicates that power as in South Africa where it predicates the structure of the state, predicates social welfare, personal relationships, predicates how a man and woman might live together, how they might make love, how they bring up their children and look after them. If, in the final analysis, racism as I see it is tied up with exploitative systems, our struggle is not only against injustice and inequality and unfreedom, our struggle is against the system of power that allows these things to happen." (Sivanandan, 1991)

The quotation from Sivanandan is given in support of the contention that power is an inalienable element within the dynamics of racism, although it is suggested that we cannot talk about a unitary system of power - power exists in a variety of forms which are conceptually distinct although at times overlapping. Racism is underpinned and sustained through the operation of these differing forms of power and give rise to contrasting levels and manifestations of racism. In turn these forms of racism can be linked with appropriate forms of social work intervention. The assumption is, as within the generic field of social work theory, that anti-racist social work is not reducible to a single paradigm of practice (Whittington and Holland, 1986). Building on Lukes, I wish to identify four views or modalities of power. This taxonomy is not meant

Figure 1

	<u>Form of power</u>	<u>Racist manifestation</u>	<u>Anti-racist strategies</u>
First modality	Behavioural, overt control of decision-making, allocation of resources and restrictive gate-keeping.	Monopolization of services and preferential treatment of members by dominant racial group. Exclusion of minority groups.	Enforcement of equal opportunity policies. Advocacy and support for victims of discrimination in appropriate services. Development of ethnic-sensitive practice and employment by agencies of racially representative staff.
Second modality	Non-decision making through control of the political agenda and the mobilization of bias	Non-recognition by agencies of discriminatory issues. 'Colour-blind' policies.	Consultation with minority groups to identify issues. Demographic profiling, social surveys and monitoring of service uptake. Encouragement of non-tokenistic participation by minority group and individuals.
Third modality	Hegemony - exercised through strategic compromise and co-optation, legitimating ideologies and mobilization of opinion-forming institutions.	Creation by ruling class of tokenistic race representation and race forums. Co-optation of the 'race industry'. Promulgation of racial supremacist ideologies. Cosmetic reform.	Social and community work support of authentic minority organizations. Non-co-operation with tokenism and co-optation. Empowerment as a social work method.
Fourth Modality	Post-structuralist conceptions of power including discourse and background practices.	Permeation of ordinary language and other discursive practices with images and representations supporting power relationships between oppressor and oppressed.	Deconstruction of texts to expose racist assumptions. Promotion within agencies and with service users images and language which are affirmative of racial identity and integrity.

to be exhaustive, nor to deny that there are points of mutual exclusion between them, but simply that each represents a substantive area of theoretical and empirical work. Lukes himself identifies three dimensions of power within modern political theory; firstly, the traditional behavioural view of power (exemplified by Dahl, 1961); secondly, the anti-pluralist, non-decision making view of power (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970; Crenson, 1971), and thirdly, a theory of power which rests on the notion of hegemony and which is largely drawn from Gramsci (1971) and Marxist conceptions of 'interest'. During the last twenty years the major theoretical challenge to these schools of thought has come from the writings of Foucault and others sometimes (unhelpfully) categorized as post-structuralist. Taking this as a fourth major theorization of power, a framework has been constructed (figure 1) which correlates these 'modalities of power' with aspects of racism and matched anti-racist strategies. This is a heuristic exercise, vulnerable to the intellectual objections already mentioned, but which has pedagogic and practical applications. Under the headings of the four modalities of power, a brief characterization is given of the form of power, examples of how it underpins racism, and examples of appropriate anti-racist practice.

The first modality of power

The behavioural exercise of power. Sometimes referred to as the pluralist view of power, this first modality of power relates most closely to our common-sense or intuitive understanding, namely that "A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B

would not otherwise do" (Dahl, 1961). Thus, it is an analysis of power which focuses on behaviour, key issues, observable conflict, and interests as expressed through *decision-making*. In Clegg's terms, this is the character of 'episodic agency power' (Clegg, 1989), "the most apparent, the most easily accessible and most visible circuit of power". Although its original proponents labelled this a pluralist theory of power, believing that its study revealed the pluralist distribution of power within Western democracies, there is nothing intrinsic to this theory of power which prevents it being used as an analytic tool in studying any political system, and indeed its critical application to the political process in Western democracies can demonstrate the 'mobilisation of bias' (Schattschneider, 1960) within supposedly benign systems.

Racist manifestations of the first mode of power. The methodology associated with this understanding of power requires firstly the identification of decision-making events relating to an identified issue, analysis of the range of interests involved in making the decision and the process involved, and identification of the interest which prevailed as an outcome of the decision.

Within the teaching of race perspectives in social work, this can be applied at macro, middle-range or micro levels. At the macro or state level this can involve studying legislative decisions and social policy-making as related to the welfare and status of racial groups. Taking my own background in the United Kingdom, it can educate students to the

making of legislation which relates to immigration and nationality status, and the way in which it has been dictated by governments composed of political parties predominantly representing the white majority, responding to the pressure of (again) white employment interests, and over-ruling the conscious interests of black groups (Layton-Henry 1985). At the middle-range it encompasses regional and local-government decision-making, again taking specific case-studies of decision-making to reveal the racial interests which prevail, for instance in the UK the misuse at the local level of central government funding allocated for the development of services for racial and ethnic minority groups (Roys, 1988). At the micro level students can study decision-making within social work agencies which are race-specific e.g. the placement of black children, compulsory detention of mentally-ill black people, the allocation of services for black elders etc.

The first modality of power and anti-racist practice. The translation of this form of analysis of power to practice situations will vary greatly with the context of practice. At the macro political level the social work student is unlikely to be able to go beyond identification of the constraints and disempowerment exacted upon black service-users by the state. The practice response is likely to be limited to identification of the issues and perhaps the encouragement of clients to bring dissatisfaction to the attention of political representatives. At the local level there may be more possibility of engagement in decision-making processes, possibly through community development initiatives and direct or indirect lobbying of politicians and administrators. But

within the agency, students would be expected to be able to analyse the mobilization of racial bias in decision-making and to use their own competences in challenging processes and decisions which over-ride preferences and wishes of black users. Other strategies arising from analysis of the first modality of power would be the upholding of equal opportunity policies, advocacy for victims of discrimination by social services, and employment by agencies of racially representative staff.

The Second Modality of Power

Power and non-decision making. The critics of Dahl and other behavioural theorists of power have claimed that their focus on observable decision-making produces a systematically biased description of the distribution of power because there are many issues which never reach the political agenda (Barnes, 1988). These issues are characteristically those through which the interests of the relatively powerless are represented. This is not to entirely reject the behavioural study of power, but rather to acknowledge that it needs to be augmented by conceptualizations of power which identify and bring into the political arena those aspects of non-decision making through which elites exercise power. The theoretical locus classicus of non-decision making is the work of Bachrach and Baratz (1970) and empirical studies based on their work (e.g. Crenson, 1971). Critics of this second dimension or modality of power point out that reasons for non-participation, or non-appearance of issues on agendas, may be other than the insidious use of power; for instance, Wolfinger has argued that this may be the product of habit or routine, rather than an intentional exercise of power (Wolfinger, 1971,

discussed Clegg, 1989). From the perspective of race, the issue of intentionality may not be of great interest. The concept of power as non-decision making sensitizes the student or activist to the need to go beyond formalised political processes, and in particular decision-making, to identify concerns which racial minorities cannot get onto the agenda.

Racist manifestations of the second modality of power. Even a critic of the general theory of non-decision making such as Wolfinger concedes that it has validity in relation to race (Wolfinger, 1971, p. 1077). This may result from the active, conscious exclusion of minority issues from the agenda by the racial majority from whom decision-makers are predominantly drawn. In this way the specific needs of black people with regard to housing, employment, welfare services etc. do not manifest themselves within political debate. Very often this will be ideologically legitimated by an explicit 'colour-blind' rationalization that all individuals should be treated equally and that to make a special case on the basis of race is inherently racist. In social work colour-blindness has been further underpinned by the traditional philosophy and values of social casework which construct the individual outside of her or his political context (Dominelli, 1988). The differential (i.e. reduced) levels of resource and access to decision-making on the part of members of racial minorities is systematically ignored.

The second modality of power and anti-racist practice. This is likely to centre around the identification and articulation of concerns to

minority groups which are not being addressed by agencies. One strategy will include demographic or community profiling to provide a data base for the evaluation of service take-up. Within the social work education programme for which I have responsibility it is a requirement on all practice placements that students undertake such a piece of work. It is frequently the case that racial minority groups are identified by such an exercise whose needs have never been identified, or whose wishes have never been elicited. As Cheetham has commented, such exercises do not provide answers about what is to be done, but they provide a factual basis for rational discussion, and identify who is being ignored (Cheetham, 1982 p. 41). Going beyond this process (which is still susceptible to tokenism) requires engagement with minority groups to identify issues and the creation of structures within which representatives can meaningfully participate and influence decisions. In the city where I work, where public services have been dominated by a colour-blind approach, this situation has been addressed by the creation of a forum of representatives of racial and ethnic groups which meets with senior members of social work and other service agencies to raise matters of concern and receive feedback on how those issues are being progressed within agencies. Although not a fully accountable and effective process this is at least raising expectations that concerns can be put onto the agenda, and is the kind of case study which can highlight for students issues relevant to non-decision-making and the mobilization of bias.

The Third Modality of Power

Hegemonic power. The third modality of power goes beyond the methodological individualism of the first two modalities. Both the behavioural and the non-decision making approaches to power operate on the assumption that the exercise of power can only be identified where there are overt conflicts of interest, being acted upon or excluded from the agenda. Lukes's third dimension of power, which he claims has a radicalism which goes beyond the previous two, is premised upon the claim that the most potent form of power can be that which pre-empts the possibility of conflict existing. In other words there may be situations of latent conflict where individuals or social groups do not realise that their real interests are being suppressed. This modality of power has its intellectual roots within Marxism in general, and Gramsci's idea of hegemony in particular. False consciousness, the inculcation by disadvantaged groups of beliefs and values which disguise from themselves their potential gains to be made by challenging the status quo, is so broadly pervasive that a ruling elite can exercise power without the appearance of so doing. Objections to the concept of hegemonic power tend to come from those who question whether classes can be said to exercise power intentionally, and the rejection of the claim by intellectuals or activists that they have privileged knowledge of other people's real interests (Hindess, 1982 p 508). Despite the retreat of Marxism as a political force in recent years, as a critique it remains a potent and developing basis of praxis:

"Marxism makes these ideas available to social work in understandable form, and has led to substantial development of

practice in relation to these ideas. Its emphasis on power in particular draws into social work theory perspectives which have direct relevance to sexism and racism in ways which few other theories adequately achieve." (Payne, 1991: 217)

In a summary of Gramsci's theory of hegemonic power, Clegg claims that hegemony involves the mobilization of dominated groups through the four following strategies:

- i. Taking systematic account of popular interests and demands;
- ii. Making compromises on secondary issues to maintain support;
- iii. Organizing support for national goals which serve the long-term interests of the dominant group;
- iv. Providing moral, intellectual and political leadership to form a collective will or national popular outlook. (Clegg, 1989)

Although the classical Gramscian formulation would be that hegemony exists when an alliance of ruling classes and class fractions creates an intellectual and moral outlook which comes to be accepted by the whole society (Bocock 1986), more recent revisionists of this position have pointed out that it may be more productive to consider *hegemonic power* as an imperfectly realised situation rather than fully-established hegemony.

Racial manifestations of hegemonic power It is important to remember that there is a long tradition of black scholarship which has either been in dialogue with or within the Marxist tradition - notable examples would include Garvey, James, Fanon and Cox. At the same time there has

been a central problematic within Marxism in finding a non-reductionist analysis which deals adequately with the relationship between race and class. More recent perspectives acknowledge some autonomy of race from class (eg Miles and Phizaklea, 1981), and in particular cite the way in which the achievement of hegemony involves the imposition by the state and ruling class of a racialized form of common sense (Lawrence, 1982).

Deconstruction of common sense reveals the pathologization of non-European forms of life, association of black people with the problems of inner city deprivation, and the identification of black youths with criminality etc.. The underlying assumption is the naturalness and superiority of white European society. At the same time 'common sense' allows white people to feel that they are not racist, that this can be projected onto fringe, extremist groups (Hall, 1980 cited Dominelli, 1988).

Racial hegemony is further sustained by strategic co-optation of potential challengers, accompanied by tactical concession of demands which do not critically undermine the dominant racial interest. The former may be achieved through the co-optation of the 'race relations industry', and the latter through liberal reforms such as anti-discrimination legislation which is unaccompanied by any fundamental redistribution of political and economic resources.

The third modality of power and anti-racist practice. Within social work education the consideration of hegemonic power can stimulate students to engage in the deconstruction of their own 'common sense' and to appreciate its racialized aspects, and to try to identify the processes

through which such ideologies are legitimated. Clegg claims that hegemonic power is further sustained by the individual's sense of powerlessness, and fragmentary consciousness of issues (Clegg, 1989 p.110). This modality of power puts empowerment of the individual firmly on the agenda (Solomon, 1976) but also the principle of support for organizations authentically representing oppressed groups. This can present for students consideration of those circumstances when non-involvement would be the preferred strategy, despite the discomfort at times of staying outside a situation.

The Fourth Modality of Power

Post-structuralist conceptions of power. The most recent theoretical challenge to the conceptions of power so far described comes from the work of Foucault and post-structuralism. Seeking to escape the economic determinism and fixed conceptions of human nature of Marxism, writers such as Derrida, Laclau and Foucault have explored the circumstances under which subjectivity is created and transformed, the 'discursive practices' (primarily linguistic) through which our sense of our own experience of ourselves is created. Foucault in particular, through a series of case studies concerned with the emergence of the human sciences, sought to identify and describe the historical circumstances under which new forms of subjectivity are constituted. Within this paradigm power operates through those forms of knowledge which define and proscribe human identity. Thus, medical science and practice has created the modern conception of the body and physicality (Foucault, 1975); military and penal forms of practice underpin disciplinary power

(Foucault, 1977) and discourse on sex has constructed the individual's experience of their own sexuality. Followers of his methodologies have analysed the emergence of social work and related practices by which the 'social' is created and policed (Donzelot, 1979; Garland, 1985). These forms of knowledge reside in texts and other linguistic representations, but also those forms of practice with which they are associated. Power cannot be reduced to any fixed point of reference such as class interest, but is fragmentary, inherently unstable and based on shifting alliances.

Race and post-structuralist theories of power. There are many examples of forms of knowledge through which claims are made for black capabilities being less than those of the white propagators of that knowledge; examples abound in such fields as psychology and psychiatry. These forms of discourse arise from and reinforce a context within which white subjectivity constructs itself as superior, and is matched by an implied, if not explicit construction of black subjectivity as inferior. Although emerging from the historical experiences of slavery, imperialism and exploitation (Gilroy, 1987) white ethnocentric discourse has taken on its own momentum, disguising but at the same time legitimating the power relations between oppressor and oppressed. The Foucauldian view of power as mediated through forms of knowledge offers a possible theoretical framework for reconciling analyses of race and gender. It has been observed that the study of race often ignores the double-oppression experienced by black women within patriarchy (Mullard,

1991). Discourse theory offers an explanation of gendered subjectivity (e.g. Weedon, 1987) which can incorporate the racial dimension

Discourse, power and anti-racist practice. Within the British social work literature there has been a growing recognition of the analytic possibilities of post-structuralist theories of power (eg Rojek et al 1988, Webb and MacBeath, 1989) although the approach has not been explicitly allied to anti-racist practice. Although it could be said that these writers have made a significant contribution to the sociology of social work, the practice implications have tended to be over-stated (Gould, 1990). However, some significant texts on anti-racist practice could have deepened their analysis by drawing on some of the theoretical insights of discourse theory. There is a growing recognition which is approaching the point of being an orthodoxy that social work theory has been ethnocentric in its assumptions (eg Dominelli, 1988) and that the language of social work and its texts are saturated with racist attitudes, but these claims are often atheoretical and rhetorical. Post-structuralism offers for the educator and student a position from which to consider the effects of power exercised through social work discourse in constructing the relationship between social worker and 'client' (Philp, 1979). For the social work student going into practice the deconstruction of racism within agencies then has more purpose and force than empty 'political correctness'. Similarly, the promotion of images and language which are racially affirmative become understood as crucial elements of good practice.

Discussion

This paper has suggested the possibility of teaching anti-racist social work practice within a framework premised upon conceptualizations of power. It is not the claim that power can only be located within four analytical paradigms, merely that these 'modalities' represent significant positions within the academic debates about power. More pragmatically, they represent perspectives through which social work students can approach the contextual study of anti-racism and develop analyses for application in practical situations which may be more subtle than conventional taxonomies of 'direct' and 'indirect' racism, 'individual' and 'institutional' racism etc. A continual bugbear of social work education has been the tendency to place reductionist glosses upon complex fields of social theory (what Sibeon has called 'cognitive closure' (Sibeon, 1991)) in order to render it more easily assimilated within practice theory.

Similarly, there is no claim that the modalities can be ordered into a hierarchy of explanation - for instance that post-structuralism supersedes and replaces earlier conceptions of power. Rather, they are selected as representing distinct intellectual positions which illuminate contrasting facets of the operation of racism. Finally, although the exemplar has been racism, the framework would be transferable as a generic method for studying other dimensions of discrimination such as gender, class or sexual orientation.

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CHAPTER NINE

'Metaphor and Meaning in Kelly's Personal Construct Psychology:
reconstructing 'the-person-as-scientist as a theory of knowledge.'

METAPHOR AND MEANING IN KELLY'S PERSONAL CONSTRUCT PSYCHOLOGY: reconstructing 'the-person-as-scientist' as a theory of knowledge.

Abstract

Metaphor is a fundamentally constitutive element in language and cognition. George Kelly's personal construct psychology conveys many of its defining principles through the metaphor of the-person-as-scientist. It is argued that primarily Kelly took the metaphor to be self-explanatory, but when his explicit considerations of the meaning of science are examined he lacks consistency in his philosophical position. Probably the most developed position within his 'constructive alternativism' equates to an implicit Popperian falsificationism. More recent developments in the philosophy and sociology of science, particularly within the Wittgensteinian tradition, draw attention to the socially contingent nature of scientific experimentation and the production of scientific knowledge. Reconstructing the metaphor of person-as-scientist from this perspective of science studies reveals the possibility of retrieving personal construct psychology from methodological individualism. Just as metaphor itself is socially and experientially produced, so the person-as-scientist can be understood as containing a social and political understanding of the production of 'personal' knowledge.

The core metaphor in Kelly's personal construct psychology is the-person-as-scientist. The parallel explicitly drawn between doing science and everyday cognitive functioning anchors the epistemology of personal construct psychology and its conceptualization of learning and personal change. The metaphor of person-as-scientist has remained essentially unreconstructed within personal construct psychology since the 1950s. Potentially, this produces some contradictions between what was intended to be an emancipatory, humanistic theory which empowered psychological subjects as experts, and a metaphor which can actually suggest a positivist, reductionist view of the subject. Furthermore, the metaphor of person-as-scientist, by equating the practice of science with individualistic pursuit of knowledge and truth has (perhaps unintentionally) constrained personal construct psychology within an epistemological framework which corresponds to methodological individualism.

Clearly, in the 1950s, the deployment of science as a metaphor for cognition had a powerful legitimating function for a new psychological theory seeking acceptance within an intellectual environment where scientific method would be recognised as representing the highest form of rationality. However, since Kelly produced his seminal works, some philosophers and sociologists have radically re-appraised

our understanding of what is involved in doing science, including doing experiments. So far there has been no significant discussion of whether the evolution of such science studies offers an opportunity to modernise and reconstruct some of the tenets of personal construct psychology. This paper will argue that, following from a discussion of the primary role of metaphor within the construction of meaning, a re-analysis of the metaphor of the-person-as-scientist is crucial to the possibility of theoretical development within personal construct psychology. In particular it provides a rationale for the development of personal construct psychology as having a more explicit social and political dimension.

Metaphor and Cognition

Although Aristotle made passing references to the nature of metaphor, modern discourse on the subject is usually traced back to the work of Richards in the 1930s, and his arguments have been the point of departure for subsequent writers (Richards, 1936). Richard's linguistic analysis now seems remarkably prescient in his anticipation of many of the themes of poststructuralist discourse analysis. In brief, he argued that words have no universal or schematic meaning, but that meaning is constructed from their position within a broader contextual framework. This led him to view metaphor

as a juxtaposition or transaction of thoughts between contexts. Consequently, the impact or force of metaphor derives from the tensions and complementarities between the contexts contrasted within the metaphor. This has come to be known as Richards's interaction view of metaphor.

Although Richards was making tentative explorations within literary criticism, the interactive thesis has become a fertile basis for the explication of the function of metaphor in cognitive psychology and the philosophy of science, to name but two instances. Why does a common figure of speech have such potency? Black, in a refinement of the interactive thesis argues that, *pace* Richards, the metaphor introduces two contexts, the principle and subsidiary (Black, 1962). The principle subject acquires fresh meaning through involvement with the subsidiary one. The subsidiary subject organises thought about the principle subject in a new way, each bringing with them "their own systems of associated commonplaces" (Martin and Harre, 1982). Metaphor is not a simple, ornamental literary device which enriches imagery, but is a dialectical approach to creating original understanding and insight.

The capacity to explain the effect of metaphor is a challenge for any psychological theory. The reading, recognition and response of the reader to metaphor requires

explanation of the hidden relationship between ostensibly dissimilar contexts. Thus, the exploration of metaphor involves hypotheses about the organization of ideas, their inter-relationship and interpretation (Tourangeau, 1985). At the same time the production of new meaning through metaphor provides insight into the process of knowledge creation, and the place of language and experience within that process.

Kelly's choice of *science* as metaphor carries some irony, as metaphor itself was to become to be a pre-occupation of the philosophy of science (eg Leatherdale, 1974). The central controversy is whether metaphor is necessarily constitutive of the explanation of science. In particular, phenomena which are not apprehensible as sensory data (eg atomic structure) or newly-discovered phenomena without a pre-existing vocabulary, may only be communicated to an audience via metaphor i.e. the vehicle of familiar images. In the taxonomy of Gentner (Gentner, 1985), these are 'explanatory' metaphors which when successful provide a coherent, accurate mapping from subsidiary to principle subject. Literary metaphor on the other hand is often intentionally 'expressive' leaving the relationship between subjects as ambiguous and open-ended to create resonance for the reader.

In a wide ranging cultural and linguistic analysis, Lakoff

and Johnson show that knowledge and language are only possible through the deployment of categorisation, and that a great deal of that categorisation is indeed metaphorical in nature. (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) Thus, the study of metaphors reveals their underpinning conceptual systems and the grounded experiential gestalt which gives rise to the metaphor and renders it comprehensible. The relationship then of metaphor to theory is not merely epiphenomenal, but as is the case in Kellian psychology where the metaphor of science is all-pervasive, constitutes a crucial point of connection between thought and action, between the apprehension of the theory and its application.

Science as a psychological metaphor

Using the conventions outlined in the above discussion of metaphor, we can see that within the person-as scientist metaphor 'the person' is the principle subject and 'scientist' the subsidiary subject.

As Harris and Harre have argued, the subjects within metaphor connote for the reader their "associated commonplaces". It seems a reasonable assumption that the lay conception or associated commonplaces of science are grounded in a Newtonian paradigm of method and knowledge which tacitly corresponds to philosophical realism i.e. that scientific theories aspire to reveal the truth, and that the

objects mentioned in theories really exist (Hacking, 1983). Furthermore the body of scientific knowledge is assumed to be continuously enlarged through observation and controlled experiment. In this way we are assumed to be moving nearer and nearer to an ultimate and uncontested understanding of the physical world.

At first George Kelly's conception of science as an activity appears to follow this lay view as being primarily grounded in the concepts of prediction and control. Certainly Kelly asserts that this has characterized the claims of psychology to be regarded as a science and thereby differentiated from non-science. But at the same time he cites mainstream psychology as having contributed to the dehumanising construction of the subject in psychological discourse as either the victim of uncontrollable drives, or motivated by gratification of narrowly-defined material needs. However, Kelly ironically appropriates this positivist model as his own paradigm for the construction of personal knowledge:

"Might not the individual man, each in his own personal way, assume more of the status of a scientist, ever seeking to predict and control the course of events with which he is involved? Would he not have his theories, test his hypotheses, and weigh his experimental evidence? And if so might not the difference between the personal viewpoints

of different men correspond to the differences between the theoretical points of view?" (Kelly, 1955, p. 35)

Most personality theories contain a hypothesis about the individual's core motivation, be it gratification or libidinous drives in psycho-analytical theory, or information processing in cognitive theories. Kelly saw men and women as motivated by an existential engagement in the attempt to make meaning out of their lives and to be able to use their understanding to predict and control future contingencies. The process of doing this involves the development of hypotheses about themselves and the external world, testing out those hypotheses, and through their confirmation or disconfirmation adapting their repertoire of understandings.

Kelly saw this as analogous to the scientist conducting experiments to test theories and enlarging, abandoning or modifying theory in the light of experimental findings.

Despite the anachronistic sexism of Kelly's language, it is clear that the metaphor of *man-the scientist* is intended to be taken as universal in its application. All thinking, Kelly claims "is based, in part on prior convictions" p.36, these are in the nature of templates which the individual creates and attempts to fit over the perceived world in

order to chart a course of behaviour. These 'constructs' may be, "explicitly formulated or implicitly acted out, verbally expressed or utterly inarticulate, consistent with other courses of behaviour or inconsistent with them, intellectually reasoned or vegetatively sensed." (Kelly, 1955; p.38). The individual may attempt to improve his or her's capacity for prediction and control by increasing the repertoire of constructs, adapting them to achieve a better fit with reality, or by subsuming them with superordinate constructs.

As already stated, Kelly's metaphor operates through irony, subverting the claim of psychologists to be scientists and experts by appropriating their supposed methodology as a model of everyday cognitive functioning. The difficulty with all this has been that it has emancipatory aspects, but because the metaphor is presented as an individualistic description of learning and knowledge creation, has also limited personal construct psychology to being ideographic (individualised and non-generalizable) and to corresponding to methodological individualism (taking the individual to be the only explanatory unit and excluding social, structural and institutional factors (Lukes, 1973). It has been written that , "Kelly found a way to a quantifiable description of individual uniqueness" (Jahoda, 1988; p.4).

From a philosophy of science perspective it is difficult to find a totally consistent position in Kelly concerning the nature of science and scientific method. Kelly has no fixed, consistent epistemological view of science; he makes epistemological claims for his theory which shift between quite incommensurate positions of relativism, pragmatism and realism.

In his own brief discussion of the philosophical implications of his personal construct theory Kelly confusingly suggests that the view of man-as-scientist is at the same time positivist, empiricist and reliant on the principles of pragmatic logic, "In this respect we are in the tradition of present-day American psychology." (Kelly, 1955; p. 43) Again, at times he denies that his theory is realist, for unclear reasons other than that he rejects realism's supposed determinism (Kelly, 1955; p. 44) It is clear from other parts of his writing that on the grand scale he is a realist, regarding the development of the individual's constructs as moving closer to the essential nature of a fixed reality:

" The truths the theories attempt to fix are successive approximations to the larger scheme of things which slowly they help to unfold." (1955; p.45)

There is a tension then, if not contradiction, between Kelly's 'constructive alternativism' (his own widely used label for his epistemological position), with its claims to be compatible with existentialism and relativism, and Kelly's apparent (but sometimes denied) realism expressed in his views that the world has an existence independent of human consciousness and that judgements can be made as to the degree of utility of an individual's constructs in revealing truth:

"While there are always alternative predictions available, some of them are definitely poor implements. The yardstick to use is the specific predictive efficiency of each alternative construct and the overall predictive efficiency of the system of which it would, if adopted, become a part." (Kelly, 1955; p.42)

The revisionist epistemology of science

It will now be considered how the philosophy and sociology of science have departed from the Kellian depiction of science. Although the positivist paradigm may remain the broadly accepted - albeit implicit and inchoate - lay view of science, science studies since the 1970s have amassed a body of theoretical and empirical knowledge which is suggestive that science is not a 'private' rational-deductive process, describable in terms of a rule-governed

'scientific method'. Instead it is a public and social activity which is like other social practices which depend upon shared assumptions and the negotiation of meaning. This is not to argue that science studies, be they philosophical or sociological in their disciplinary base, offer a unitary discourse to explain science. The subject area contains its own subdisciplinary disputes, but it operates within a paradigm which does present some shared assumptions through which Kelly's metaphor of science needs to be modernised.

The commentator on the work of Kelly struggles in interpreting his influences with the fact that his writing is sparsely referenced. Thus, it seems very difficult to know (although it seems unlikely) whether he would have been influenced by the writings of Karl Popper challenging orthodox inductivist explanations of science, given that Popper's *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* was not translated into English until 1959 (Popper, 1959). However, it is certainly clear that in advancing the notion of the person-as-scientist Kelly is partially advancing a constructivist view of knowledge which shares a number of assumptions with the Popperian position.

Popper's critique of inductivism is well known; observation alone cannot form the basis of generalised knowledge, nor can observation be made independently of pre-existing theory

or assumptions. Like Popper, Kelly diverged from an inductivist approach in that he saw all apprehension of the self and external world as deriving from existing personal theories or 'constructs', and personal knowledge as evolving through experience and inevitably incompleting; life always carried the possibility that a new experience would produce change in the individual's construing and produce a new personal reality. As Bannister and Fransella have written in their commentary on Kelly:

"In saying that all persons are scientists Kelly is clearly not saying that we all wear white coats, use jargon or fiddle with test-tubes; he is saying that we all have our own view of the world (our theory), our own expectations of what will happen in given situations (our hypotheses) and that our behaviour is our continual experiment with life." (Fransella and Bannister, 1986 p.8)

In parallel with Popper, Kelly superseded a crude inductivist understanding of scientist with one that can be characterised as falsificationist. One of Popper's central concerns has been to develop a basis for distinguishing between science and pseudo-science, and this he saw as primarily operating through a process of successive falsification. Science, in the view of Popper, is driven by

the attempt through falsification of preceding theory to enlarge the explanatory power and predictive capacity of revised scientific theory. This is very similar to Kelly's model of learning and personal change, that the efficacy of personal constructs are improved through experimental engagement with the world,

"Essentially, this means that any of our interpretations of the universe can gradually be scientifically evaluated if we persist and keep on learning from our own mistakes." (Kelly, 1955; p 15)

Mancini and Semerari (1988) have also noted some parallels between Kelly and Popper, seeing as part of Kelly's contribution the rejection of naive inductivist views of science whilst retaining the possibility of achieving human knowledge; constructivism validates the personal perspective of the learner or patient, and is also optimistic in that it offers the possibility of developing constructs which can be connoted as *better* through the experimental development of a higher empirical content and improved predictive capacity (Mancini and Semerari, 1988 p. 72).

Although Mancini and Semerari usefully draw attention to the need to examine Kelly's metaphor of person-as-scientist,

their analysis ignores crucial subsequent criticisms of Popper and , by extension and analogy, possible problematics within personal construct theory. It will be argued that these problems are not necessarily terminal for Kellian theory, indeed their solutions may be a basis for revisions within personal construct theory, and provide a sounder basis for Kellian theory and research.

Weaknesses in the Kellian/ Popperian position can be summarised thus:

1. In science, falsification has been found often not to lead to the abandonment or revision of theory. At the psychological level, how can personal construct theory accommodate evidence that individuals sometimes do not learn i.e. modify their construing, in the face of invalidation of constructs? How can change in science be explained and, under what conditions do individuals change their own personal paradigms? Relatedly, if theory precedes facts, in Kellian terms if constructs precede perception and behaviour, how are problems of determinacy avoided?

Following on from this, does Kelly's constructivist epistemology inevitably lead, as has already been suggested, to a relativist/ subjectivist position and methodological individualism? Certainly, this seems to be taken to be the

case by many writers and researchers within personal construct psychology. Thus, it is assumed that meaning is privately and individually produced. This is an implication which can be drawn from much of the personal construct literature and is supported in critical observations by Maria Jahoda that, "for Kelly the social in social psychology is the social knowledge of an individual" (Jahoda, 1988; p.14). She goes on to comment that the social cannot be defined simply by adding up individual processes and dividing by 'n'. This methodological individualism goes deeper within personal construct psychology than just adding additional corollaries, but derives from Kelly's fundamental postulate, and metaphor of science and experimentation which has remained individualised. Personal knowledge or meaning are taken to be private experiences which are imagined, thought or felt by an individual but can never be fully known or communicated to another. Neither can experience be described independently of individual experience. Following from this any structures imposed on meaning (such as repertory grids) are merely provisional, meanings have no natural structure, and meaning cannot be fully represented and communicated.

2. The assumption of Kelly and Popper is that there is a scientific method (trial and error experimentation) which can be formulated in terms of rule-governed behaviour.

However, subsequent study of science has drawn heavily on the Wittgensteinian argument that rules cannot be explicated from within themselves - they always draw upon additional rules for their application, and so on in an infinite regress. Doing science, it is argued, is rescued from the experimenter's infinite regress, by constructing socially shared boundaries around the rules which will be recognised and how they will be interpreted. How can the Kellian metaphor of person-as-scientist be reconstructed in the light of science as underpinned by this understanding of science as the social construction of method and knowledge?

i) Falsificationism, research programmes and paradigms

The first controversy and point of departure from Popper and Kelly is over the doctrine of falsificationism. Historical and empirical study of science shows that scientists do not simply change or renounce their views because they have been falsified. Falsification of a theory can always be rationalised (more or less convincingly) by the construction of a rescue hypothesis to explain contradiction or anomaly. Popper's classic example was that observation of white swans on a river might lead to a general observation that all swans are white. According to Popper this would be immediately falsified by the appearance of a black swan which would require revision and improvement of our theory to incorporate the knowledge that swans can be black or

white. As Collins has pointed out, one could hypothesize that the black swan had been painted that colour, and leave the original white swan theory unmodified (Collins, 1992). Other instances of the rationalization of falsification as merely an anomaly or failure to replicate experimental procedures accurately are now common in the literature (eg Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984)

Lakatos gave particular attention to this phenomenon:

"Scientists have thick skins. They do not abandon a theory merely because facts contradict it. They normally either invent some rescue hypothesis to explain what they then call a mere anomaly, they ignore it, and direct their attention to other problems." (Lakatos, 1978 p.4)

Lakatos's alternative view of science is that theory cannot be understood as comprising discrete hypotheses which stand or fall according to their falsifiability. Rather, science consists of clusters of beliefs or 'research programmes' and any programme will comprise hard-core defining hypotheses surrounded by a protective layer of auxiliary hypotheses. A research programme also contains a 'heuristic', a problem-solving strategy for dealing with anomalies and problematics (Lakatos, 1978, p.4). As a last resort, if anomalies cannot

be accommodated then an auxiliary hypothesis may be modified to protect the integrity of the core hypotheses.

How is change from one research programme to another accounted for and on what grounds do scientists change their minds? Lakatos introduces the notions of progressive and degenerating research programmes. A progressive research programme is one which is capable of predicting or discovering hitherto unknown knowledge. In contrast, degenerating programmes modify and fabricate theory in order to accommodate known knowledge and to rationalise unrealized predictions (Lakatos 1978, p.5) Scientists will leave degenerating research programmes to join emerging progressive ones, since there is inevitable overlap between these two processes scientific 'revolutions' do not represent dramatic epistemological breaks but are representative of the evolutionary fall and rise of research programmes.

If, returning to personal construct psychology, the individual's constructs can be seen as analogous to Lakatos's research programmes then this is anticipated in Kelly's organization corollary viz.,

"Each person characteristically evolves, for his convenience in anticipating events, a construction

system embracing ordinal relationships between constructs."

In order to produce consistency and manageability of construing, an individual's construing system will typically be hierarchically organized. Superordinate constructs could be said to correspond to Lakatos's core hypotheses, and subordinate constructs to auxiliary hypotheses. By implication the individual will seek to sustain his/her sense of self by maintaining the integrity of superordinate constructs and allowing some regulatory change in superordinate constructs, until the pressure becomes so great that core constructs themselves have to be abandoned or revised. Of course, various Kellian researchers have indeed developed repertory grid methodologies to elicit the hierarchical organization of individual's construct systems (e.g. Hinkle, 1965; Landfield, 1971; Fransella, 1972). However, Lakatos shows that these are also socially produced (as 'research programmes') and that individual change and the reordering of hierarchically-organised constructs is related to social opportunities and constraints upon the validation of knowledge.

Extending this work - which has generally been undertaken in clinical contexts - to other spheres, it becomes theoretically possible to study the impact of experience on

the individual's core construct system, and the process by which individuals abandon anachronistic, degenerating "personal research programmes" in order to join "progressive research programmes".

The social basis of change is further illustrated by Kuhn's work on scientific revolutions. Lakatos describes change in science at times of evolution and incremental change. Kuhn's studies focus on points of radical scientific re-alignment; science is characterized by periods of normal science, represented as a paradigm or the shared gestalts of a community of scientists demonstrated through practice exemplars (Stenson and Gould, 1986). Eventually, anomalies will accrue with which normal science cannot cope; the magnitude of the anomalies will finally precipitate a period of extraordinary science when activity will appear almost random until a dramatic gestalt shift takes place analogous to religious conversion - when a new paradigm will emerge demanding realignment and new allegiances within the scientific community. Kuhn's thesis contains radical implications; primarily paradigmatic change is a process which is not explicable in terms of the rationality of individual actors. It also rejects teleological assumptions that science is necessarily moving towards any closer approximation to truth. Finally, it raises questions, because of the severe epistemological ruptures between

paradigms, as to how there can be meaningful communication across the boundaries of paradigms.

ii) Experimentation as a social process of knowledge creation

Above all, the sociology of scientific knowledge over the past fifteen to twenty years has promoted an understanding of science as a social process. That is to say that it is not a private activity, conducted according to objective, value-free procedures by isolated individuals or teams within their own laboratories. The construction of scientific knowledge is contingent upon such factors as; who the scientist is, the professional network of which she is a part, and her social status and power.

Revised in the light of these understandings, the metaphor of person-as-scientist opens the possibility of further extending the understanding of personal construct psychology as a social psychology. The lack of a social dimension within personal construct psychology has been criticized by those working within and without the PCP tradition. For those who are 'within' , there is scepticism about the attempts to use methods such as repertory grid within nomothetic research i.e. claiming to produce normative knowledge about categories of subjects (e.g. Thomas and Harri-Augstein, 1985). From 'outside' PCP has come the

criticism already outlined that Kellian psychology fails to theorise the social (Jahoda, 1988).

If we deconstruct the practice of science from the perspective of sociologists such as Gilbert, Mulkay, Collins, Latour etc. it becomes evident that a revisionist view of the person-as-scientist metaphor is that it does provide a possibility of conceptualising the creation of personal learning and knowledge. Working from within differing theoretical perspectives such as discourse analysis and Wittgensteinian philosophy, the level of consensus within science studies is that what comes to be recognised publicly as knowledge is determined by social processes extrinsic to that which has traditionally been thought of as scientific method alone. This is not to follow Feyerabend in arguing the anarchist case that there is no such thing as scientific method. (Feyerabend, 1975) Nor is it an attempt to denigrate the achievement of science (as characterised by Wolpert, 1992), but rather that doing science is within rather than without the sociological considerations which apply to any other arena of human activity.

Thus, Collins has shown through a series of participant-observation studies that the performance of scientific experiments depends upon contingencies such as the skill of

the experimenter, and her social connectedness. Within scientific discourse (eg accounts of experiments in journals or textbooks) the skill and social components of science are neutralised and made invisible. When the outcome is not successful, particularly in the replication of experiments, this is rationalised in terms of the incompetent performance of the individual experimenter. In contrast, successful performance of the experiment often depends on manipulation of experimental procedures not described in the scientific literature but only communicated between those in contact through informal social networks (Collins's ethnographic account of the building of the TEA laser is an excellent example - it was only successfully achieved by those who had personal contact and discussion with other successful laser builders (Collins, 1992 p.55)). For Collins this supports an enculturational model of learning; the successful accomplishment of experimentation depends upon the acquisition of social connections and competences (Collins p.57)

Whilst Collins's perspective on science has developed out of the sociological application of Wittgenstein (via Winch and Bloor), adherents of discourse analysis likewise uncover the social contingencies of doing science. Gilbert and Mulkey pursued the unfolding of a controversy within biochemistry by interviewing major protagonists within a specific debate

(Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984). Again, they discovered that the construction of knowledge is mediated by the social nexus of the scientific world. The issues cannot be fully understood by reference to published sources alone; closure of controversy and building of consensus can only be fully understood through the social, informal communications between scientists and the structure of power within the profession. The point can be amplified through additional case-studies, for instance Callon and Latours' studies of how technical knowledge is transmitted and modified across time and space (cited Sibeon, 1990: pp. 40-43). Again, Gooding has noted Faraday's use of a London-based network of scientists to develop his understanding of magnetic fields (Gooding, 1990)

In summary, it can be argued that the new sociology of science shows that knowledge is not the "personal knowledge of the individual, distilled from his or her individual experience. It is the inherited and shared knowledge of the.....scientific community." (Barnes, 1985. p.63)

Discussion

It has been argued that Kelly's own comments about his metaphor of the person as scientist, and its implied view of the scientific basis of personal construct psychology sometimes lack coherence, but that the most consistently

held position to be found in his writing is as a Popperian falsificationist, albeit expressed by Kelly as 'constructive alternativism'. Kelly suggests that learning and the development of personal knowledge proceeds by a psychological process of trial and error, in rule-governed fashion. Just as Kellian literature conveys a picture of science as the private accumulation of knowledge, so personal construct psychology has developed as methodologically individualistic in its theoretical and research applications. As already mentioned, it has produced little in the way of normative knowledge or data, or as a specifically *social* psychology and this has rightly been a source of criticism.

Reconstruction of the metaphor of person as scientist in the light of more recent studies of science show that the principle of falsification is problematic. Seemingly falsificationist evidence may be rationalised away, both in science and by the individual. Extending Lakatos's arguments scientific knowledge and personal knowledge are hierarchically organised, and preparedness to compromise or change will depend on the place of the threatened knowledge within the structure of meaning, with core knowledge (or constructs) being particularly resistant to change. The possibility of change will depend in part on the efficacy of the construct, but also the social milieu which influences

whether the construct is approved and validated. The accumulation of anomaly within scientific evidence eventually destabilises the dominant scientific paradigm and gives rise to a new configuration of scientific theory. So, for the individual the accumulative difficulty of sustaining cognitions which are at odds with wide belief systems create social pressure upon the individual to alter their construing. This is a social psychological dimension to personal construct psychology which becomes apparent when the person as scientist metaphor is reconstructed.

Case studies from science reinforce the contention that the construction of knowledge through experimentation is socially mediated. The process of learning through trial and error does not occur within a neutral, unconstrained environment.. The ability of the scientist to redefine knowledge depends on such interrelated contingencies as status, access to resources, membership of the scientific community etc. This 'reading' of science reframes the person-as-scientist metaphor to connect the personal with the political. Whether the individual has the environment which is conducive to personal development, whether his or her definition or construing of a situation can be heard, and whether it is validated, crucially depends upon the distribution of power and resources in such a way that make those things possible. Again, the finding of this author is

that personal construct psychology has stood outside these issues.

The final consideration of the person-as-scientist metaphor, reverts to the discussion at the very outset of the epistemological basis of personal construct psychology and the centrality of metaphor within theory. Hitherto the science metaphor has constrained personal construct psychology within an individualistic mode. The sociology of knowledge, particularly as informed by Wittgenstein, shows that there cannot be private knowledge any more than there can be private language. Knowledge, within which language is central, depends upon the recognition and manipulation of symbols. Such recognition is achieved through enculturation, practice, and training. If learning and knowledge-creation take place through application of the rule of trial and error ('experimentation'), then a rule cannot be followed privately - obeying a rule is a practice which validated through social confirmation of whether the rule has been correctly followed.

If this sociological reading of science supersedes Kelly and his followers' falsificationist interpretation the metaphor becomes a new point of departure for personal construct psychology which connects the personal with the political. One of the major developments within social theory in the

last twenty to thirty years has been feminism's articulation of the relationship of the personal to the political. A modernised reading of the-person-as scientist promotes personal construct psychology as an avenue of exploration of this relationship.

It also does this in a way which validates the importance of experience as a component in learning and knowledge creation and escapes the crude dichotomy between objective (scientific) knowledge and subjective (non-scientific) knowledge. Such conceptual oppositions do not take into account the proposition that all objective, rational discourse depends upon categorisation and inference. Lakoff and Johnson demonstrate that much of such categorisation is metaphorical, and its understanding requires the employment of imagination. Hence, metaphor and imagination are constitutive of objectivity. On the other hand, subjectivism or relativism ignore the fact that personal understanding is only possible through the employment of conceptual systems which are derived from our successful functioning in a physical and cultural environment (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980 p. 194). Metaphor is a vehicle for 'experientialist synthesis', the possibility of the articulation of truths, but within the condition that those truths are relative to the conceptual system within which they are developed.

The concept of private knowledge is part of the subjectivist myth which assumes that experience has no natural structure and no external constraint. 'Private knowledge', for example the constructs elicited by repertory grid technique, are the products of experiential gestalts which are in turn environmentally patterned. Much of this knowledge is metaphorically expressed, the metaphors providing the basis for negotiated understanding between individuals and cultures. Rather than understanding self-understanding as prior to mutual understanding, which is the assumption of much personal construct discourse, mutual understanding constructs the metaphors which are used to interrogate the self. 'The person as scientist', is such a metaphor, which if grasped as suggested in its reconstructed meaning, suggests not the private individual in the laboratory, but the socially and politically-situated individual using experience to build an imaginatively-deployed rationality.

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CHAPTER TEN

A Summary of Ongoing and Future Developments

Chapter 10

A Summary of Ongoing and Future Developments

This collection of papers began with Mathiesen's concept of the unfinished, and accordingly, the work included here has not come to some tidily resolved end-point, but rather sets the agenda for my continuing work in the fields of social work education and the epistemology of professional practice. This endpiece very briefly summarises empirical and theoretical research which has evolved out of the range of work included here, and some of its implications for social work education . But first of all it may be helpful to bring up to date some aspects of the context within which British social work now operates, and the challenges confronting social work educators which emerge from that scenario.

It was observed in Chapter 1 that aspects of triumphalism can be found in the literature of the early 1970s, but which from a contemporary viewpoint now seems eccentric. In some respects this is to overlook historical events which encouraged a belief that social work had achieved a position of unassailability and permanence. This sense of professional coherence was buttressed by three significant, and related, developments. Firstly, the Seebohm report of 1968 set out the blueprint for a universalist, integrated personal social services located within local authorities. In 1970 the Local Authority Social Services Act translated Seebohm's vision into organizational reality, and so gave to the newly-created generic social work the central role in developing

and delivering those universalist services. Secondly, qualifying education for social workers was reformed to meet the reality of the new context of practice. The newly-created Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work brought into existence the Certificate of Qualification in Social Work as the only recognised British qualification (although the new departments had incorporated many unqualified staff, and there has never been a statutory requirement for social workers to be qualified). Academic departments of social work, revising their own curricula to meet the necessity of educating many of their students for generic practice, embraced systems theory as a meta-theory for reconciling the intellectual and practical difficulties of equipping students to practice with diverse client groups and at different levels of intervention. Systems theory as espoused within the mainstream literature was functionalist in its theoretical assumptions, and consensual in its value-base (eg Goldstein, 1973; Pincus and Minahan, 1973). Thirdly, the newly created British Association of Social Workers, whilst never attaining the degree of representativeness or legal force of professional associations as understood within the sociology of professions, added to the picture an impression of professionalization and internal coherence (Joyce, Corrigan and Hayes, 1988).

It is now well documented that even by the mid to late 1970's this process of profesionalization was slowing and the unity of identity was fragmenting (Webb and Wistow, 1987). As part of the general monetary and fiscal crisis of the late 1970's spending on personal social services

was severely throttled back, and in the case of capital spending, actually cut (Langan, 1993). From within the social work community self-doubt began to undermine any intellectual consensus which had been established. In part this was fuelled by media and political hostility which associated social work with a broader moral panic emerging around issues of permissiveness, state dependency and fragmentation of the social order (Parton, 1985); much of this discourse was mobilized around high profile 'failures' to protect children. Intellectually, social work writing reflected a rising critique of functionalist orthodoxy drawing on a range of critical theories (eg Bailey and Brake, 1975; Statham, 1978) and perspectives of social groups who were consumers of services but felt marginalised by large, unaccountable bureaucracies.

In the 1980's these trends have accelerated under a government committed to the introduction of market mechanisms in public service provisions and the 'rolling back of the state'. This creates a residual state which is primarily concerned with regulation rather than provision. British social work is characterised by a close interdependency with the state for the definition of its tasks and organizational form, and is now struggling with centrifugal forces which are re-arranging the relationship between social worker and clientele. In particular, the separation between purchase and provision of services, institutionalised by the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990, separates functions of assessment and intervention which have traditionally been conceptualised in social work theory and practice as deductively connected processes. At this point it is not at all clear whether social

work can continue as a unified profession, or whether in the medium to long-term there will be occupational re-grouping around service tasks (such as care management) which will cut across the current divisions of labour between social workers, nurses, occupational therapists and others.

It has been observed that in these respects the recent history of social work reflects a number of features of the 'post-modernist' thesis (McBeath and Webb, 1991). This would include the fragmentation of sectional interests, organizational flux and diversification, the unsustainability of grand theory within the social sciences, the acknowledgement of knowledge as provisional and contextual, and an ideological shift towards the de-centering of power from professional control. Whether the protagonists of post-modernism overstate their case (ontological gerrymandering again leading to the non-recognition of their own theory as a form of grand theory) there is an empirical correspondence between events and aspects of the thesis. These developments underline the relevance of the content of the empirical and theoretical research included in this thesis. In a situation where social work educators cannot know with certainty what the context of practice will be for qualifying practitioners, or predict the continuing learning needs of existing practitioners, the importance of reflective learning from experience and the preparation of social workers to be continuing learners becomes imperative.

There is still much to be studied and conceptualised to this end

concerning the way learners construe practice, how they make use of knowledge gained in the classroom, or from sources such as texts, and how reflection on practice contributes to personal knowledge. Chapter 3 pointed out some of the parallels between educating social workers and teachers. Education colleagues and I have embarked upon a further longitudinal study, funded by the former University Funding Council, which is a comparative study of student teachers and social workers. As in the repertory grid study reported here in Chapters 3,4 and 5, this will study the developing cognitions of students concerning practice , but will be more discursive than repertory grid methodologies allowed, using semi-structured interviews as the main research tool. Resources have allowed a larger sample to be studied, drawn from several academic institutions, and analysis is about to begin of qualitative data collected from cohorts of students over a period of two years.

A particular focus of my own role in this research is to look at the place of metaphor and imagery in the development of students' practice theories. Chapter 9 considered the place of metaphor in personal construct psychology, but a secondary theme in that paper addresses the place of metaphor as an element of cognition. The empirical results of my repertory grid research used statistical modelling to show the looseness of construing and conceptual disorganization of students at the beginning stage of learning to be practitioners. This finding is supported by Secker's study of social work education (Secker, 1990), and qualitative studies of student teachers in teaching practice (Bullough and Knowles, 1991). There is evidence that the conceptions which

learners bring to their training, through which they attempt to make sense out of confusion, and their self-identity as professionals, are cognitively represented as images and metaphors (eg Connelly and Clandinin, 1988; Munby, 1986; Calderhead and Robson, 1991). This work has all been in the domain of teacher education but it is a reasonable assumption that this will also be a cognitive characteristic of social workers. The longitudinal study is explicitly exploring with teaching and social work students their evolving images and metaphors of practice. A related theme which has surfaced at various points in these papers is the possible potential of drawing on Piaget's concepts of accommodation and assimilation to understand the development of professionals' 'schemata', and thus the transfer of learning between contexts, or adaptation to changing circumstances. This may again be taken further through this exploration of imagery and metaphor; Bullough and Knowles have recently argued that the Piagetian processes of accommodation and assimilation are indeed crucial processes in the formation of professional self-identity and learning from experience, and which they believe may operate through "metaphors, understood as picture-preferences or language embedded pictures" (Bullough and Knowles, 1991; p. 123). They write of the analysis of learners' metaphors as a "very promising" research avenue in this respect. As well as adding to our understanding of the place of metaphor in the thinking of practitioners, and in cognition generally, the work has practical implications for the education of social workers. Failure to engage with, and where necessary challenge, the self-images or metaphors of beginning practitioners may well reduce the effects of education for

practice.

As well as the demands of contemporary social work for meta-theories of learning to support 'learning to learn' in practice, we are experiencing a transition towards the management of information as a central characteristic of social work activity and an expectation that the deployment of information technology will be a competence of social workers (CCETSW, 1990).

This leads directly into a thematic concern in these papers - the epistemology of practice - because it raises the question of what the relationship is between engineered knowledge and practice knowledge. Chapter 2 reviewed the epistemology of practice, developing a critique of practice as being characterised by hypethetico-deductive reasoning, and substituting a view of practice as itself generative of distinctive forms of knowledge developed through systematic, experimental engagement with problem domains. This line of argument develops from Schon's work on reflective learning but now has a quite extensive independent literature which is referenced at various points in this thesis. It was argued in the introduction that although this may be preferred to applicative models as a paradigm for the education of professionals, there are still problems to be addressed, particularly in conceptualising the contribution of non-experiential, formal knowledge to the improvement of practice competence.

Apart from the educational ramifications, this pedagogic and

intellectual problem has direct practical relevance to the deployment of artificial intelligence and information technology within social work. There is a proliferation of computer hardware and software within social work agencies but little empirical analysis of how social workers solve problems, or how forms of knowledge which can be engineered for software systems might contribute to problem-solving.

Earlier writers about computer applications in social work argued the syllogism that practice can be represented in algorithmic form, this is the form of logic used by computers, therefore computers can support and simulate social work (eg Glastonbury, 1985: p. 77). This argument runs into exactly the same problems already expressed in Chapter 9 with rational-deductive views of science, that whilst this is an accurate representation of computer logic, it misrepresents the nature of professional practice. It is not a coincidence that the sociology of scientific knowledge, within which the Wittgensteinian critique of normative theories of science developed, has also made artificial intelligence one of its fields of study. Attempts to create expert systems to support medical diagnosis for instance, have found that the algorithmic and probalistic reasoning of the computer are unable to simulate the lateral solutions produced by expert clinicians (Pritchard, 1985). A pessimistic response to this is argued by Dreyfus, that there is a 'knowledge barrier'; expertise within domains of practice which are complex and open-ended, such as social work, is only developed through the experiential acquisition of lateral and heuristic problem-solving strategies (Dreyfus, 1979). These, in turn are context-specific and not codifiable (Benner has developed a sophisticated model of experiential

learning in nursing directly derived from Dreyfus's argument concerning artificial intelligence and tacit knowledge (Benner, 1984). However, it does encounter the objections raised earlier in response to 'purist' reflective models of learning i.e. that it disregards the possibility that formal knowledge may support and inform decisions in practice, particularly where knowledge is counter-intuitive and not available to common-sense.

Collins, a colleague and sociologist of scientific knowledge has argued more optimistically that there is not an impassable knowledge barrier, that the barrier is permeable and that open-ended domains are not infinitely complex, but comprise a myriad of variables which can be progressively codified (Collins, 1990). This argues for the development of software systems which are not expert systems, i.e. designed to simulate and replace human practitioners, but for knowledge-based systems which make information efficiently available to practitioners to support decision-making (Lipscombe, 1989). This is a view of the deployment of engineered knowledge which still leaves moral responsibility with the human practitioner. There remains a need to bring the artificial intelligence debates into the social work arena, but also to study empirically the uses which social workers are able to make of information support systems - this is a project which has been planned by Collins and myself under the auspices of Bath University's Centre for Scientific Studies.

It has been argued that repertory grids could be a fruitful technique

for modelling expert systems (Boose, 1988). However, as has been pointed out earlier, both poststructuralism and postmodernism challenge the possibility of sustaining totalizing theories within the social sciences, and this would include theories of personality such as Kelly's personal construct psychology. This presents the question of whether the empirical and theoretical research on personal construct psychology included here is potentially an ongoing project, or should be regarded as finished. I have been explicit in my published work in this area that I am not proselytising for personal construct theory, but regard it as one window of access to the formation of practitioners' cognitions. Furthermore, my study of using repertory grids to promote reflection found - as did repertory grid studies of student teachers - evidence that learners could find this an aid to reflection. However, it would be wrong to argue simply for wholesale introduction of repertory grid sessions as an educational panacea. Some of the objections to this are straightforwardly logistical and practical; regardless of any other considerations, grid completion and analysis is a complex task requiring time and computer resources, as well as some expertise in the techniques on the part of the educator or trainer. These obstacles have been exacerbated by problems of access and applicability of user-friendly computer resources. It was argued in Chapter 3 that FOCUS was a relatively acceptable program for educational purposes. Even so, until quite recently it only ran on 'Apple II plus' personal computers which have been obsolete and difficult to access for some years. Not reported in my published research, was the fact that I found errors in the program, which I reported to its authors, but for which ongoing

corrections had to be made. Shaw has reported that FOCUS is to be incorporated in a suite of repertory grid programs called PLANET (presumably now debugged), and this is re-written for Apple Macintosh use, which is contemporary but still not as available in organizations as IBM-compatible personal computers (Shaw, 1988).

These practical issues aside, repertory grid technique should be seen as just one of a potential range of reflective tools and practices which can be explored and evaluated with students and practitioners. A forthcoming volume will present reports of other approaches to reflective work in social work, not only with qualifying students, but also with teams and individuals in social work agencies (Gould (ed.) forthcoming). At the same time reflective theory draws attention to the need to reconceptualise some of the divisions of labour and status differentials between those involved in preparing student social workers for practice. Chapter 2 was written and published before the move to accreditation of practice teachers became policy for British social work education (CCETSW, 1991). This provides preconditions for the enculturation of practice mentors who hopefully are informed of developments in understandings of adult learning, who value practice as a site of production of professional knowledge (pace Eraut), and who have a teaching repertoire. As I argued in 1989, this involves status and power shifts in the relationship between educational institutions and agencies which will be uncomfortable. At the same time it behoves academics to redefine their own role in the learning process for, as I have argued at various points in my later writing, experiential learning and reflection-in-practice are not the whole of the story. Social work

is a complex set of processes which requires analytical practitioners. Reflective learning approaches can be vulgarised as rationalisations for cost-reduced apprenticeship approaches which marginalise or even deny the significance of education (as opposed to more instrumental training). There may be debates around the comparative merits of foundation disciplines, whether social science or humanities-based, but I have attempted to show that whatever the disciplinary base, the intellectual complexity of social work necessitates an educational contribution which is not compromised in terms of intellectual rigour. I take this to be in accord with recent writings of Stuart Rees, who writing within an Australian context, who by coincidence has also argued for the centrality of the analysis of power to developing anti-oppressive social work practice. Rees stresses the importance of educating social workers to a properly sophisticated level of academic competence (Rees, 1991). Furthermore, this concession to rigour is to be detected in the more recent writing of Schon himself, examining the concepts of validity and utility as necessary to rescue 'reflection' from rhetoric and "woolly-headedness" (Schon, 1991: p. 10).

For both Schon and Argyris the pursuit of a reflective educational theory began with what might be called continuing education, analysing the characteristics of practitioners who continued to learn and develop, and the organizational conditions under which such development can take place. Again, the innovations within British social work of an Advanced Award (CCETSW) and for agencies to become approved in order to provide validated practice teaching, are compatible with this ideal. Whether any of this comes to realisation will depend not only upon dedicated

resources, but also upon the broader context of political and social change. The central lesson to be learned from the poststructuralist arguments reviewed earlier in the thesis is that social work as an occupation has no universal character or even claim to exist. It emerged at a specific juncture in the emergence of modern industrial society to maintain the 'social', the interface between the regulatory state and private individual and family life (Donzelot, 1979; Garland, 1985). It has never achieved the degree of closure which has been taken to be a defining trait of professional autonomy and power. Recent social policy changes, particularly the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1991 but also parallel changes in child care and the criminal justice system, open up the 'social' not only to organizations outside the traditional ambit of social services, but to occupational groups who may be equally or more successful than social workers in persuading employers and purchasers of services that they are fitted to the tasks of providing social care. Reflective education is about learning to learn within a changing environment; it may not be just a pedagogic option, but a strategy for occupational survival.

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