

Section 1
Introduction to Scientific Writing
and Publishing in Social Work

Scientific Writing and Publication in Social Work – Issues and Concerns

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Introduction

As early as 2001, Alter and Adkins, in their interesting article in Journal of Social Work Education, referred to the declining ability of social work students to write proficiently as a 'writing crisis' and reported the outcome of 'Writing Counts' a writing assistance programme at a graduate school of social work. This is one of the most serious issues with which the social work profession in India, especially in the context of the 'not so good' status of the profession in the country even after its successful existence for over 75 years. The western academia's dictum of 'publish or perish' has somehow not yet fully caught up with the social work academic community in India. However, in recent times, owing to stiff competition for entry into faculty positions and thanks to the stricter guidelines of the apex higher educational body namely the University Grants Commission insisting on Academic Performance Indicators (API) scored on various parameters including publications, social work faculty members and aspirants have started showing interest in getting their research articles and books published. There has been a phenomenal increase in the number of ISSN classified journals and ISBN classified books during the last few years. Even though much remains to be desired with regard to the quality of publications, it is heartening to see the upsurge in interest to publish among social work faculty, doctoral and pre-doctoral (M.Phil) students and even MSW trainees.

Importance of scientific writing

In science, writing is the most important means of communicating research findings. In most cases, scientists report the results of their research activities in scientific journals in a rather standard scientific paper format. In a recent article

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entitled *Developing the Writing Skills of Social Work Students: Connecting Academic and Professional Expertise*, Hughes, Wainwright & Ward (2011) discuss how academic writing skills support effective professional communication and research skills allow for evidence-based practice. We can assume that research not only describes what we do in practice but that it also provides the evidence on which our practice is based. There is an “important relationship between research and practice effectiveness” (Trevithick, 2012, p. 57). This connection between research and practice (an evidence base) is fundamental to the practice of all professions, but it is particularly relevant to the social work profession: “Practitioner research is potentially the most useful and relevant source of new knowledge for social work and service innovations” (Harvey, Plummer, Pighills & Pain, 2013, p. 2). McMahon (2008) also reminds us that it is our ‘job’ to write about what we do. It is not enough to ‘talk’ about the practice-based research we have done. Writing about our social work practice and research contributes to a knowledge foundation, educates others and passes our knowledge on to our fellow practitioners. McMahon (2008) urges us to become ‘published creators of knowledge’ (p. 40) and thereby recognize the value of our knowledge and practice wisdom – of what we have learned. McMahon concludes his paper by emphasizing the following points relevant to our own deliberations:

First, as researchers, the real task is to create knowledge relevant to our discipline. Second, doing research is a process of self-empowerment for the individual researcher but empowerment can begin and end with the individual unless the message gets published and broadcast to the wider context (p. 49)

Clear communication requires an array of skills and competencies, a number of which clearly relate to a set of skills that might be developed through academic writing, including the ability to:

- follow and develop an argument and evaluate the viewpoints of, and evidence presented by, others
- write accurately and clearly in styles adapted to the audience, purpose and context of the communication; and
- present conclusions verbally and on paper, in a structured form, appropriate to the audience for which these have been prepared (Quality Assurance Agency, 2008, p. 12–13).

Social work education is multidimensional (Tsang, 2006). Social work degrees are professional programmes which combine academic study with professional practice learning. Successful completion of the programme leads to both an academic award and a professional qualification. As such the curriculum has to be designed to reflect both academic concerns and the skills needed for future professional practice. It is important therefore that social work programmes are

able to help students to integrate their understanding of contextual, critical, explanatory and practical issues, and enable them to become accountable, reflective, critical and evaluative (Quality Assurance Agency, 2008).

Current realities

Ponnuswami and Francis (2012) expressed their concern about lack of originality and rampant plagiarism in the scientific social work publications blocking the progress of social work research in the country ultimately leading to lack of recognition of the profession. According to these authors, one of the major drawbacks is the lack of standard peer-reviewed publications in the field of social work in India. There are just a handful of good quality refereed social work journals. Most of the social work research studies are never published since there is a serious lack of 'publication culture' among the professionals. While some social work faculty and research scholars get their research papers published (at least for the sake of fulfilling requirements for their own career advancement), most of the practitioners in the field do not care much to write and publish even though their research works, if published, would make valuable contributions to the knowledge base of the profession and to the development of services for different client groups. This trend was also noted by Ramachandran in 1990 where the issues of research in India was more

...the adhoc nature of research work, and the consequent limited career opportunities in research and has , on the one hand , resulted in a tremendous wastage of trained personnel and on the other, created a dearth of workers. Added to this is the fact that formal research training is not deemed as essential pre-requisite for research jobs advertise by potential employers (p.108)

This situation has not changed much since then but we can see a renewed interest in the profession to embrace the spirit of evidence based practice. It is in this context the exercise such as this creates an opportunity for students to engage in writing and publishing not only to just show case their own individual researches but the wider social impact it can create in the society. But we now see a renewed interest among practitioners, students and academic is social work to share their research ideas and publish their work which is indeed a positive direction and this book itself is an example of such a positive approach to building culturally appropriate evidences in social work practice and education.

In Australia, as in most other countries of the global north, there is a strong tradition of academics publishing in peer-reviewed journals, with many high quality journals for the academic researcher to submit to. However, there is not a strong tradition of practitioners engaging either in primary research activities or writing about or submitting the results of their research (if undertaken) to scholarly journals. The answer to why this might be so is complicated. It is generally the case that a social work degree is undertaken because of a passion for social justice and a belief in the possibility of contributing to positive societal change. Research and writing about research are seldom part of this original vision. Harvey et al (2013)

also argue that much of social work practice, which often requires the practitioner to rely on practice wisdom and thoughtful individualized interventions, does not easily lend itself to research based reflection and written transmission to others. Nevertheless, in recent years there has been a shift in the Australian social work landscape with “Growing support from within social work for the development of an evidence based for practice, together with recent interpretations and models of EBP [evidence based practice] congruent with social work, have increased the momentum for research capacity building” (Harvey et al, 2013, p. 4). There is now an emphasis, both in the practice and university sectors, on giving voice to social work knowledge. Ponnuswami and Francis (2012) commented that -

A careful analysis of the present trends in social work research reveals that there are encouraging and healthy developments on the one side and almost seemingly insurmountable challenges facing social work researchers. What is needed in the present scenario is a serious and careful review of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats relating to social work research in the country (p.xxvi)

Purposes of social work writing

First and foremost, social workers need to be clear about the purposes of scientific writing and publication in social work. Most of the social work trainees think of scientific writing as a mere academic requirement which is rather too cumbersome and boring. They fail to see social work writing as the most powerful means of communication with serious implications for the profession, clientele, the professionals and even the society at large. A majority of social work faculty members view scientific writing again as an essential requirement for their performance appraisal or career progress. On the other hand, social work practitioners doing tremendous work with different client groups in different settings seldom realize the importance of scientific writing and documentation of the enormous amount of practice-based knowledge and practice wisdom gathered by them over a long period. As a result of these, a vast majority of undergraduate, post graduate, pre-doctoral and doctoral research studies undertaken by students never get permanently documented in the form of publications. Most of the dissertations, term papers and theses end up in the shelves of libraries gathering dust. Especially with the current trend of digitization of publications and the tendency on the part of students and researchers to depend on digitized form of information, this enormous resource just gets lost. While this is the case with student dissertations and theses, just to fulfill the ever growing demand among social work faculty members to get papers published in peer-reviewed journals, we find a mushrooming of several online journals which claim to be refereed ones but the quality of majority of these journals is questionable (in fact, many of them do not have impact factor ratings, are not indexed in appropriate databases and are not recognized when

one goes for faculty positions despite the fact these so called peer-reviewed journals have ISSN numbers and books have ISBN numbers). In the case of practitioners, there is hardly any scientific writing activity going on.

Falk and Ross (2001) reviewed nine purposes of social work writing—

PURPOSES OF WRITING	ASSIGNMENTS TO PRACTICE SOCIAL WORK WRITING	WRITING SKILL BEING ADDRESSED	OTHER SOCIAL WORK SKILLS ADDRESSED
TO UNDERSTAND AND CARE FOR THE SELF	Reflective writing: personal journal free writing	Getting started, over coming barriers, writing freely	Self-knowledge
TO COMMUNICATE THE SELF TO OTHERS	Professional journal	Writing coherently, mechanics	Expressing the professional self
TO UNDERSTAND THE PERSPECTIVE OF OTHERS	Writing the voice of a client	Writing from a consistent point of view	Empathy, ability to envision a client’s world view
TO DESCRIBE	Description of clients, agency, community, social work transactions	Making writing come to life, creating accurate, detailed representations	Observation skills, ability to recognize bias, communication of professional information
TO ANALYZE	Psychosocial assessment, process recording, term papers	Organization, using logical, progression of ideas	Critical thinking skills: drawing inferences from descriptive information
TO BE ACCOUNTABLE	Agency documentation: treatment plans, progress notes treatment summaries	Clarity, focus, consciousness of diverse perspectives and requirements of potential readers	Analytic reasoning skills: ability to formulate appropriate, specific time measurable goals and objectives
TO REACH AND PERSUADE DIVERSE AUDIENCES	Proposals, testimony, letters to the editor, etc.	Adapting style and terminology to audience	Communication skills, including “cross-cultural” communication working with diversity

PARTICIPATE IN KNOWLEDGE BUILDING	Reading journal articles, writing articles, research	Writing to share practice discoveries, writing for publication	Analytic reasoning skills, clear and succinct communication of ideas conceptualization of professional practice
TO REPRESENT THE PROFESSION TO SOCIETY	Any and all assignments	Using “the social work voice”	Ability to communicate social work ethics, worldview, practice models

The current context for higher education in India

By international comparison, the higher education participation rate in India is fairly low. According to OECD data (reported by the American National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education) College Enrolment is 10% among young adults aged 18-24. However, due to the size of the Indian population, this participation rate still amounts to well over ten million students. In 2002 the well-respected education scholar Suma Chitnis wrote:

Although enrolment is inadequate by comparative standards, the growth in the demand for higher education has been unmanageably large, rapid, and pressing. The centers of excellence have been protected. But the universities that constitute the backbone of the system have been stretched, their standards of teaching and of evaluation compromised in order to accommodate demand. As a consequence, education at Indian universities has deteriorated into an examination-driven, certificate-oriented exercise. The faculties of the arts and the humanities, which account for 60 percent of the total enrolments in the higher education in the country, have fared the worst (2002, p.19-20).

Generally the higher education system in India has been found to be examination-oriented and based almost entirely on the rote memory learning by the students without much importance given to development of analytical, critical and reflective skills.

An influential Indian academic recently commented on the current situation which serves as a fairly neat – if unforgiving – summary of the key issues faced by those involved with the Indian HE system:

Higher education in India is fragmented, scattered, and takes place in nearly 16,000 institutions called affiliated colleges, many of which are tiny and a trace better than higher secondary schools. They do not have libraries worth the name. Most of them have a faculty strength varying from 100 to 200 and the number of faculty with doctoral qualification is pitifully low or nil in many cases. These

institutions of higher learning perform only classroom teaching, preparing students for examinations like tutorial colleges. The affiliating system, which dominates the Indian scene, has long been given up even in the country of its origin. It does not exist anywhere in the world barring India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh (Kulandaiswamy in *The Hindu*, 18/05/2005)

Separation of teaching and research

One final important point to underline is the pronounced separation of teaching and research in Indian Higher Education. Cutting edge and world class research does take place in Indian research institutions as well as the central universities and is supported centrally by the government. It also happens in the university departments of some state universities (where graduate students have historically been taught), but the research process is far removed from the teaching of undergraduates, which mainly takes place in affiliated colleges.

Academic writing within the curriculum

Of course, students can learn – and many do – but difficulties with writing need to be identified early on and the support provision has to be in place. Indian programmes rely very heavily on written exams at the end of the study period, i.e. either the end of the semester or the end of the study year. Under the affiliating system, it is only the marking based on public examinations that counts. Academic writing and coursework do not form an integral part of most Indian curricula, which are dominated by assessment by examination. It is unsurprising then, that we could not find written rules or regulations pertaining to the offence of plagiarism when we asked during the fieldwork in India. The term ‘plagiarism’ is not necessarily meaningful – a more suitable alternative (following popular usage in India) would be ‘copy-paste’ which directly draws on the computer command that is often employed in the process.

Social work research and education

Through this process of education and upselling of the students and practitioners we aim to support the students to become a ‘research informed student’ (Walker, 2011, p.123). With this knowledge base students are able to critically evaluate arguments, assumptions, and to frame appropriate questions to achieve a solution to a problem. This exercise of conducting a workshop in India demonstrated a great interest among social work students. This will enhance them to analyse the current situations and use current knowledge for the best social work practice. In ‘becoming research informed’ student/ practitioner Hilary Walker (2011) suggested students to develop the habit of:

- Being enquiring about and alert to what research is currently available
- Regularly checking the websites and keeping up to date
- Focusing on reliable and relevant sources

- Using research guidance and reviews
- Access and read arrange of materials
- Be alert to the historical relevance and /or currency of the material (p.132)

The view on research quality in social work research is that it should be based on rigor-with-relevance. Social work research should maintain both academic standards but at the same time use to the profession. The new recent definition of social work brings for the very nature of social work profession and its role as facilitators in creating changes in the world.

Social work facilitates social development and social cohesion. Core to social work is supporting people to influence their social environments to achieve sustainable wellbeing. The profession is underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, and indigenous knowledge. Principles of human rights, collective responsibility and social justice are fundamental to practice. (IFSW, 2013)

What are some of the current issues in social work writing and publication?

Writing is a core professional skill in social work practice (Healy, 2007, p.123). As practitioners, researchers and academics we are required to contribute to the knowledge base of the profession. Hence writing for publication in journals, books and for conferences is essential to share ones practice experiences with a broad range of people and audience. We can find a variety of opportunities to publish our work and some of them are referred journals, edited books, conference proceedings, online journals etc. While there is a need to publish and disseminate information about practice experience, the reality is that many social work professionals do find it difficult to engage in this process of writing and publishing. Following are a list of issues which we were able to discuss at our workshop in 2013.

- Developing scientific rigor in research
- Developing adequate training opportunities
- Opportunities to write and publish
- Lack of Mentoring in research
- Lack of resources to pursue research
- Ethical issues in research activities
- Value positions and ongoing debates about the “social justice issues in research”
- Plagiarism
- Not able to show case the great work the practitioners do in the field
- Issues around research leadership and accountability
- Issues around the methodology of social work research
- Creating safe place for students to experiment and engage new ways of enquiry
- Promoting skills
- Embracing technology and use of multimedia in research work
- Above all cultivating an atmosphere of research in universities and places of higher learning.

There are no short cuts to address all these issues. While we acknowledge that there are issues in writing and publishing, we need to move forward to embrace the waves of changes in the field of social work practice and education. A new direction and approach to training and practice needs to emerge in each specific context to address some of these issues. We need to be aware that ‘our work’ can make a difference in the field and with this positive approach new initiatives are to be initiated and developed to support social work writers.

Conclusion

The importance of writing in social work is very crucial whether it is for obtaining funding or for establishing a point of reference in academic discussions. Healy(2005 cited in Healy 2007)comments that it is important that social work educators, students and professionals focus on developing their written communication skills for a range of reasons. According to this author,

Writing is a core mode of communication in many fields of social work practice. The capacity to communicate effectively in writing can enhance practice in many ways, from promoting interdisciplinary team communication to advancing the capacity to attract funds and influence policy. Writing skills, like all professional skills, can be learnt. Just as social work professionals can develop effective spoken communication skills, so too their professional writing skills can improve through sustained attention and effort. Written communication can represent complex matters better than speech alone. So it's is a vital tool for social workers, who are often involved in complex situations with individuals, families and communities and need to be able to convey the intricacies to others who may have limited first-hand experience of the specific situations. In addition, some professional writing tasks, such as completing tender documents, can require the integration of detailed and complex information in a succinct and cohesive format. On the whole, social workers' approach to writing should reflect the distinctive character of their professional purpose. This is shaped by the institutional context and audience, and must always be driven, at least in part, by professional knowledge and an ethical value base. (p.2-3)

What we have tried to highlight here, through this article, is that writing and publishing is an important aspect of social work training and practice. Through writing and publishing we are able to increase professional recognition of our practice and create evidences that demonstrate a commitment to excellence in social work practice. It is the responsibility of all of us to engage in this process, (students, academics, social work institutions, social work practitioners and researchers) and together we can create a change in this field. This is both a challenge and an opportunity for social work fraternity in India.

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Mentoring Research Scholars for Publication

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Research should be published. Researchers create knowledge; they seek out people and situations, spend time on the research and ask others to give of their opinions, time and wisdom. Not to publish that knowledge is to say that that time and effort were not worth telling others about it. A researcher who never publishes is not a person who creates knowledge or adds to the sum total of knowledge but only someone who consumes other peoples' effort.

Research scholars must publish. Typically, a student spends a couple of years researching and writing up a thesis. The supervisor reads, edits and comments on what the student produces. Finally, examiners and a committee decide if the work is the required standard for a particular degree. But, unless that work is published it does not receive an audience wider than the half dozen examiners and thesis committee members that reviewed it. McMahon explains that 'unless (the) writing gets into the public arena, it is as if (the research) never happened' (2008, p. 39). Students, like all researchers, create knowledge so that others can consume it. 'Research helps define the practice of the social work profession' (Sohng, 1998, p. 187). Research scholars owe it to themselves, their supervisor, the people who have given them their time and their knowledge to write a thesis and the larger public to publish their work.

That being so, we should expect the same high standards of social work research students as we expect of them as social work practitioners. We need to model in our mentoring and in publications the values we expect from practice. As the draft Global Definition of Social Work states:

The social work profession facilitates social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledges, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing (IFSW 2013).

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Social work research and the consequent mentoring of researchscholars for publication rely on the same principles of social justice, human rights, responsibility and respect for diversities. This paper is written from the perspective that publishing is a form of social work practice that ‘facilitates social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people’. Therefore, mentoring for publication begins with formulating the topic, choosing and setting out the approach to research and deciding on the intended outcomes of research long before a paper or thesis is being prepared for publication. This paper follows that premise and is based on the principles in the Global Definition of Social Work above.

Research that empowers and liberates

The Global Definition of Social Work speaks very positively of the purpose of social work practice. In contrast, much research seems to be pessimistic and limited in application. It is very easy to undertake and publish research that describes what is wrong with a situation or population group. Often, this type of research reinforces stereotypes of particular marginalised groups in society. It is done from a deficit mentality (the very opposite mentality of the Global Definition of Social Work) and produces results that confirm the plight and misery of the people being researched. This type of research merely reinforces oppressive social relationships and has limited value for social work practitioners. They know there are social problems; what they want to know is what works, what can be done to change peoples’ situations.

All research is conditioned by the political and cultural contexts in which it is undertaken. This is even more obvious when research is undertaken to facilitate ‘social change and development, social cohesion and the empowerment and liberation of people’ in the global definition of social work cited above. The idea that research on people can be merely the disinterested objective search for knowledge is a myth. To give an example from research on ‘race’, the subjectivity inherent in all research is particularly damaging to the subjects of research when derogatory or negative subjectivities on the part of the researcher are not questioned or challenged. Rigney (2001) reveals Western research frameworks as no neutral instruments to capture ‘reality’, but rather as products of a racialised society which directly influences how knowledge and claims about the truth of ‘reality’ can be created, “the concept of ‘race’ upon which Western societies were built, disacknowledges Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies and methodologies, which resulted in the ‘Intellectual Nullius’ of Indigenous peoples” (p. 4). Thus, among Indigenous peoples, research has a racist history, making it not only a ‘dirty word’ in the Indigenous contexts but a word laden with abuse, exploitation and mistrust on

the part of its subjects of inquiry (Smith, 1997; Rigney, 1999). While all research, whether quantitative or qualitative, is a systematic search for patterns and meanings, the researcher brings their own presuppositions to shape and constrain the research focus, the questions asked and the crafting of the results of that research. The scientific model is not neutral or disinterested. As Laurel Richardson has written

In our work as researchers we weigh and sift experiences, make choices regarding what is significant, what is trivial, what to include, what to exclude. We do not simply chronicle 'what happened next', but place the 'next' in a meaningful context. By doing so, we craft narratives, we craft lives (1990, p.10).

Mentoring research students for publication means mentoring them to craft empowerment and liberation by engaging 'peoples and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing' (IFSW 2013).

An example of research that creates a liberating political understanding is the work of Martin Nakata. Nakata, now Professor of Indigenous Studies at University of Technology Sydney Australia, is a former student in our postgraduate research group at James Cook University Australia where he coined the term 'the cultural interface'. Nakata's notion of the cultural interface (Nakata, 2002, 2007a, 2007b) provides a conceptual framework for exploring the dialogical exchange between Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge systems, as well as situating the lifeworlds of contemporary Indigenous people in the dynamic space between ancestral and western realities. Although he asserts this space is highly political and contested, it also carries a strong reconciling dynamic (Nakata, 2007a). Elsewhere in the literature, Nakata's notion of the cultural interface is seen as an opportunity for innovation and creative dialogue (Ball, 2004; Bala & Joseph, 2007), a harnessing of two systems in order to create new knowledge (Durie, 2005; Yunkaporta & McGinty, 2009) that meets rigorous epistemological criteria as well as respects the diversities of Indigenous knowledges.

Research that addresses life challenges

Research can reveal political repression, exploitation, domination and social manipulation (Sohng, 1998). Researching and documenting the oppressive working conditions of garment workers and the relationship to economic and political decisions, researching the plight of refugees and the relationship of their conditions to international and national policies, to give some examples, all contribute to making oppression regimes explicit. But, really addressing oppressive situations means making the link to social action explicit (Sohng, 1998).

For example, Nonie Harris (2005) used a critical feminist framework to explore the relationship between government ideology and the materiality of women's lives

by researching government subsidies for accessing childcare in Australia and California. While appreciative of the subsidy to gain child care for their per-school children, the research uncovered and displayed the conservative and patriarchal power explicit in social policy and affecting these women's lives, rendered invisible their experiences as gendered subjects and thus made their oppression difficult to identify and resist.

Similarly, Tyson Yunkaporta (2010), worked with 50 non-Indigenous teachers in a rural area. He found that teaching an explicit Aboriginal pedagogy, combined with a willingness to learn on the part of the teachers helped them to implement a culturally strong pedagogy which engaged young people. The teachers reported less disruptive behaviour by the students in the classrooms and the intellectual work produced by the students was of high quality and beyond what they, as teachers, had thought possible. In his thesis, Yunkaporta makes an excellent point, that the aim of research is to create new ways of doing things not just critique the old.

Research that values Indigenous and local knowledges

A central criterion of social work is to start where the client is. More recently, social work practice has emphasised the strengths perspective (Saleeby, 1996) which takes that notion a couple of steps farther to respect clients' agency, abilities and knowledge of their own situations. This way of working is essential for working with oppressed groups lest the research (and the researcher) further disempower and disadvantage those being researched. This can be clearly seen in working with disadvantaged Indigenous communities.

Much of the published research about Indigenous communities reinforces negative stereotypes, creates and reinforces feelings of hopelessness and confirms participants' understanding of their own worthlessness. De-colonising and de-racialising research is more than just a call to action against institutionalised racism and discrimination within the academy (Smith, 1999). Rather the process seeks to define, value and articulate Indigenous knowledge frameworks, epistemologies and ontologies whereby, in an Indigenous context, social and political agency is enacted through research which promotes an anti-racist and anti-colonial standpoint. This critique provides a starting point for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholars to (re)claim the space from which they can speak of, and indeed speak back to, the corpus of knowledge produced about them.

An example of this is the work of Karen Martin (2005), an Aboriginal woman from South East Queensland who researched a Rainforest Aboriginal Community in Far North Queensland. Being Aboriginal but also an outsider, a major feature of her research was its Indigenist research paradigm based on cultural respect and

cultural safety and embedded in Aboriginal Ways of Knowing (epistemology), Ways of Being (ontology) and Ways of Doing (axiology). For her thesis, she used the concept of *Storywork* which is a way of telling traditional Aboriginal stories through a repetitive style of sentence construction. It is a culturally safe, culturally respectful and relevant research method based on Aboriginal epistemology and communication protocols. It builds on the seven principles of respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, holism, interrelatedness and synergy that form a framework for understanding the characteristics of stories, appreciating the process of storytelling, establishing a receptive learning context, and engaging in holistic meaning-making (Archibald, 2008). Her writing incorporated both Indigenous and non-Indigenous patterns of discourse to value Indigenous knowledges.

Valuing client perspectives and local knowledges, and seeking social change, are essential aspects of current social work practice and theory. Local knowledges are not just Indigenous knowledges. McMahon (1998), focused on the local knowledges and day-to-day experiences of child welfare workers rather than on child clients, their families or child welfare administrators. His research showed the hard reality of child welfare work in a large American city. At the end of the study, he notes 'if the response to this study is merely to change, tighten up and modify current practice then the result will be just more of the same. This study has shown that the current way of doing child welfare is inherently counterproductive for workers and clients' (p. 104).

Doing research that 'facilitates social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people' (IFSW 2013) is what social work researchers do. Research supervisors and committees guide scholars in the ways described above. The next step is to have scholars write and publish.

Mentoring research scholarsto write

Many of us, including students, have a fear of letting others see what we have written. There is the fear of humiliation and embarrassment in having someone else criticise our work. It is often a shock to writers to see their work edited and critiqued by editors or reviewers. This is something we need to help students get over. Yes, it can be embarrassing, even annoying but it is better to have some good advice about writing and how to write before it goes off to a publisher. William Zinsser says 'Few people realise how badly they write' (Zinsser, 1998, p.19). Part of the academic process is peer review and reviewers see our work with fresh eyes. We don't know who the reviewers are and they don't know who we are so we must be prepared for some forthright, even contradictory, advice. So, in mentoring research scholars we must critique their writing to ensure it is at a suitable standard,

says what the student means to say and addresses the topic. It is an absolute myth that truly skilled writers rarely revise. Writing is a constant process of revision.

Students should not think that writing is a lonely craft conducted by introverts who never talk to others about their work or show what they have done. Writing is a communal task; it is not really writing unless it is seen and read by others. It might as well be a diary entry, otherwise. Nor does everyone find writing a physical pleasure; sometimes it is drudgery. Writing is a craft, a skill, and like any craft has to be learned and practiced and laboured at. Even worse is to think that writers actually know what they are going to write about before they start. One might know where one would like one's writing to go but sometimes it has a life of its own. Writing is, in fact, a way of thinking (Wolcott, 2001, p.21) and by composing and writing we are analysing and synthesising our material, sifting and sorting it.

Besides being mentored for composing and writing, scholars need to be mentored about creating a place and some space for writing. Virginia Woolf said in 1929 that 'a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction' (Virginia Woolf, 1929/2002). This is true and not just for women or those who write fiction. The physical space only needs to be big enough to do the work, where they won't be always interrupted and can leave their work undisturbed, at least for a time. A writer must also create some psychic space as well as a physical space. While one should not neglect one's family and friends while writing, they will survive for a time. The best time to write is also part of creating some psychic space. Some people work best in the early morning, others late at night. Some can write in the midst of turmoil, others need perfect quiet. What really matters is 'time on task'.

As well as having a quiet space for writing, we have found that writers' retreats or workshops, where a group goes away for a few days with the specific intention of writing papers/chapters, are good for communicative practice and productivity. During these retreats, the writer has the opportunity to get feedback on their writing, to share ideas and to write without distraction. Other, more easily organised, supports could include a peer support group dedicated to writing and publishing made up of research scholars and attending writing master classes or writing workshops as they become available. These types of workshops and support groups have been found very useful in ensuring research scholars keep up the momentum in their writing. Mentors could be a resource for beginning and supporting such initiatives.

The writing process begins when one actually writes something. Scholars sometimes think they are writing when they are just reading, or taking notes or getting ready to write but those things are not writing. Wolcott says, 'at the moment you generate sentences that could conceivably appear in your completed

account, you have begun your writing' (2001, p.13). And it doesn't matter how that writing gets done as long as something is produced. Wolcott (2001) says there are two types of writers—freewriters and bleeders. Freewriters just let it flow and edit later. They can just sit there and write and write and turn out thousands of words. It might need a lot of editing but they can certainly produce the written product. On the other hand, some are bleeders and really take time, searching for the right word or phrase and revising each sentence as they go. They are slow and methodical and what they produce is fairly good the first time. But, it doesn't matter what sort of writer a person is; 'what counts is what you produce' (Wolcott, 2001).

Mentoring scholars to write means mentoring them to get organised. Neuman (2006) talks about a threestep process involving pre-writing, composing and rewriting. By prewriting he means organising the material and notes, making lists, outlining what is going to be done. This is essential, but it is not writing. In composing, the ideas get on to paper or the computer, referencing is done correctly, data prepared for presentation, the introduction and conclusion are written. That is writing. Finally, in rewriting, the composition is evaluated, polished, proofread. Writing is a skill not an innate talent and good writing comes with practice. Every piece of writing, from a memo to an email to a journal article to a book, must be re-written and polished so that it says, clearly and elegantly, exactly what one wants it to say.

Mentoring research scholars for publication

There are a number of different ways to get research out to a wider audience. Some are easier than others. Posters can be one way to get research outcomes known. Posters sound easy but a good poster takes work and may require professional graphic design help. Letters to the editor, either to a newspaper or a professional journal, are also ways to join in public debate. So, too, are opinion pieces in a newspaper. But the usual methods for publishing work are through presenting at a conference or by having work published in an academic or professional journal.

For conference papers, students will need support and guidance even to write the abstract. As it can be frightening for a beginning researcher to speak in front of an audience, the student may need some practice before they present formally. Attending a conference and seeing the varying standard of presentations is also a good realistic preparation for a presenter. One failing of novice presenters is to stand and read from their paper; a conference presentation is a presentation, not just a reading. There can be a temptation to fit a whole thesis into a ten minute talk. Just speaking faster is not going to make the presentation better. The student needs to be coached to pick out the main things they want to say. Another common

failing is the use of a PowerPoint presentation with too much data on each slide or the use of colours that make it difficult to see or sounds that are distracting. It is always best to keep things simple.

To be serious about making a contribution to new knowledge means publishing in refereed journals. In writing for academic or professional journals, we are taking part in the creation of knowledge in our profession. Research scholars need to be encouraged to do this and it is appropriate, as they are beginning researchers, to have their thesis supervisor co-author with them. While students may or may not need to be encouraged to publish, there are tried and true rules for publishing in refereed journals and students need to be made aware of those rules to have an article accepted. This is where the mentor's experience and expertise are very important.

The first issue to discuss with the student is the intended professional audience for the paper; this will determine the journal or type of journal for the submission of the paper. It is important not to restrict the choice of journal because of concerns that the journal is too prestigious to aim for; aim for the best. The second issue is to be scrupulous in providing what the journal editors require. This means following the journal's instructions exactly, especially about their preferred style and citation system. The third issue is to ensure that the student doesn't give the editors or reviewers an excuse to reject the paper because of typos, spelling, grammatical errors or poor presentation.

A critical stage for the mentor is when the reviewers' comments are received. Some scholars give up at this point because of criticism. It is important that they not be discouraged by negative peer reviews and rejection. Perhaps the mentor can share their own experience of rejected articles to normalise the experience. Reviewers' comments are an opportunity to learn from the criticisms and if a particular journal rejects the paper outright another may accept it.

If the paper is accepted, usually with some modifications, make sure these are done promptly. Scholars may need to be assisted to re-work the paper, send the agreed changes back to the editor with a letter showing how they have responded to the criticisms. Not all editors and reviewers are always right so the student should be assisted to argue about some issues especially if a reviewer has misread or misunderstood what is written.

Publishing a book is a different method of publishing altogether. Publishing is a commercial concern and publishers want to know how many copies they will sell and why customers should buy this book rather than someone else's. Publishers usually require a prospectus that sets out the purpose of the book, the intended audience, competing books in the field and why this one is superior or meets a niche in the market. In the prospectus, one must sell the concept of the proposed

book just as hard as one hopes the publishers will sell the book itself when it is published. Unlike submitting papers to journals, where one can only approach one journal at a time, it is standard procedure to seek publishing contracts from a range of publishers and then to choose the best deal. If a student wishes to submit a thesis to a publisher to be considered for publication they need to be aware that, generally, publishers won't accept the thesis format. This means the thesis must be trimmed and rewritten to meet publishers' expectations.

Finally, one sure way to mentor research scholars to publish is for the mentor to incorporate their work as chapters in an edited book. This way the mentor does the work of approaching publishers and getting a contract rather than the student. Editing a book can be very time consuming and will, at times, require skills in negotiation, coaxing and directing. The editor's reputation is at stake, as well, as he or she has to make sure that deadlines are kept, chapters actually address the topic and proofs are read and approved. But the mentored student only has to write the chapter according to the criteria the editor requires. This is usually easier for the student than the review process in journal publishing.

Mentoring as social work practice

Social work is a profession that prepares candidates for professional practice through an apprenticeship system of supervised field placements. The requirement for students to undertake a series of supervised placements is a strength of the profession in preparing, guiding and supporting students for real world practice. Mentoring is a similar developmental partnership where one person shares skills, insight and knowledge with another. Therefore, mentoring research scholars for publication should also be seen as part of the professional social work apprenticeship system and essential for building the expertise and knowledge base of the profession.

The principles and examples set out in this paper provide some guidance to mentors assisting research scholars to publish. Just like the overall preparation of students for professional practice, where skills, knowledge and professional behaviours are taught, so the mentoring of research scholars has the same professional responsibility for the research scholars they are teaching.

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