The Compleat Social Worker

20 April 2016
CRCF, UEA

David Howe
Centre for Research on Children and Families
University of East Anglia
Norwich
Individual <-> Social work <-> Society
People who have problems and people who are problems

The troubled and the troublesome
- **people and problems:** psychology, sociology, philosophy
- **rights and wrongs:** politics, social policy, the law, ethics
Most decisions in social work involve a complex interaction of ethical, political technical and legal issues.

S. Banks 1995
• Psychology (*individuals, development, behaviour*)

• Social psychology (*social interaction, groups*)

• Sociology (*communities, society, culture, power*)

• Social policy (*state responses and action*)

• Political theory (*power, resources etc*)

• Philosophy (*values, ethics, morals, meaning*)

• Law
Some binaries/dichotomies in social work

1. The Individual and Society
2. Order and Change
3. Care and Control
4. Bureaucrats and Professionals
5. Certainty and Uncertainty
6. Objects and Subjects
7. Quantitative and Qualitative
8. Thought and Feeling
9. The Past and The Future
10. Nature and Nurture
11. Art and Science
12. Good Relationships and Working Well
13. Freedom and Equality
14. Facts and Values
The *Compleat Angler* by Izaak Walton first published in 1653 in which he celebrates the ‘art, science and spirit of fishing’.

‘Like mathematicks fishing can never be fully learnt’ but for those willing to study and practice, they will find themselves on the road to becoming a ‘compleat angler’.
Some binaries/dichotomies in social work

1. The Individual *and* Society
2. Order *and* Change
3. Care *and* Control
4. Bureaucrats *and* Professionals
5. Certainty *and* Uncertainty
6. Objects *and* Subjects
7. Quantitative *and* Qualitative
8. Thought *and* Feeling
9. The Past *and* The Future
10. Nature *and* Nurture
11. Art *and* Science
12. Good Relationships *and* Working Well
13. Freedom *and* Equality
14. Facts *and* Values
Cause  Function
Cause

Change

Function

Order
Certainty and Uncertainty
‘A measure is a dangerous tool for it tends to take the place of whatever it measures.’

Skidelsky (2014: 7)
Facts and Values
Facts and Values

Brokers in shades of gray

Is and Ought
No amount of knowledge of what is the case can ever establish for us what we ought to do about it. The need for practical judgment of what we ought to do, granted our knowledge, is inescapable; and therefore there are radical limitations to the possibility of expertise. (Downie and Loudfoot 1978: 122)
Subjects and Objects

Inner and Outer worlds

Qualitative and Quantitative
Objects and Subjects

Quantitative and Qualitative

Explanation and Interpretation

Cause and Meaning

Science and Art/Humanities
Thought
Cognition

Feeling
Emotion
Empathy and Structure
Empathy and Structure

Good Working Relationships and Working Well

Therapeutic alliance and Technique/purpose

Connection before Correction
Safe Haven
Attachment
Feeling safe

Secure Base
Explore/Play
Reflect/Think
Empathy
Emotional intelligence
The relationship
Connection
Understanding
Mentalising
Repair

Structure
Problems
Needs
Purpose
Aims
Goals
Methods
Techniques
Collaboration
Summaries
Reviews
Practitioner process

1. What is the matter?  
   Problems, needs, concerns.

2. What is going on?  
   Assessment, analysis, diagnosis, formulation

3. What is to be done?  
   Aims, goals.

4. How is it to be done?  
   Methods of intervention; treatment.

5. Has it been done?  
   Evaluation, outcome.
Structure

Where are we?    Location

Where are we going?    Direction

How are we going to get there?    Procedures
                                Methods
                                Techniques
Feel secure:

1. Warm and friendly
2. Acknowledge and accept feelings
3. Understand

Then explore:

4. Opportunity to talk
5. Make sense of experience
6. Re-order/re-structure/change thoughts, feelings, behaviour, circumstances.
Principles of therapeutic change
(Castonguay and Beutler 2006)

Three major variable domains:

Technique

Participant characteristics

Relationship
Studies which have used complex statistical techniques to investigate whether some therapists consistently perform better than others have shown that they do. It seems that the differences in effectiveness between therapists carrying out the same type of psychotherapy often exceed the differences observed between different psychotherapies.

(R. Bentall, 2009, *Doctoring the Mind*, p 249)
Why this should be the case is not completely understood, but the ability to form a strong therapeutic alliance is undoubtedly a skill that is likely to affect the outcome of any kind of treatment.

(R. Bentall, 2009, *Doctoring the Mind, p 249*)
Good relationships, it seems, are a universal therapeutic good, and yet may turn out to be the single most important ingredient of effective psychiatric care. (R. Bentall 2009: 260).
Relationship-based practices

“Whatever the individual approach or clinical technique employed, the therapeutic relationship is one of the most powerful determinants of positive outcome…”

(Daniel Siegel *The Mindful Therapist* 2010)
Intellectual understanding and making sense

Less anxious

More emotionally available/responsive

Containment, safe haven-secure base, emotional intelligence, empathy, mentalising

Therapeutic alliance

The social work relationship and relationship-based practice

Technique (eg strengths, solutions, MI etc)
Curiosity and an interest in people.
Ethics, values and practical judgment.
Empathy, process and structure.
Relationship-based work.
Evidence-based and pragmatic practices.
Critical thinking and reflexive practice.
David Howe

The Emotionally Intelligent Social Worker

Palgrave Macmillan
2008
Empathy
what it is
and why it matters

David Howe

Palgrave Macmillan
2012