

# **Integrating social work and community development? An analysis of their similarities and differences and the effect on practice**

**REBECCA FILLIPONI**

*Key words: social work and community development, integrated practice*

## **Introduction**

Community work and social work have many similarities and differences in theoretical background and practice interventions. There are numerous perspectives for and against the greater integration of social work and community work. Some workers feel this would increase the success of interventions with clients, others feel that it would increase unnecessary constraints due to differences in theory and practice.

To understand this issue more comprehensively two research tools were utilised, two interviews and four case studies. Interviews were conducted with a social worker working in a community development role and a community development worker, whose names and organisations were changed to comply with confidentiality. Julie is a social worker employed by a not-for-profit organisation working on community development projects for the bushfire affected community in the Shire of Yarra Ranges. John is a community development worker and an affordable housing worker for a local government in Victoria. The second tool was an analysis of four constructed case studies evaluating the benefit and appropriateness of social work and community development.

## **Issues of Integration**

An integration of social work and community development in practice is difficult because there are numerous issues that inhibit this process from occurring effectively and being supported by workers, organisations and professional bodies. These issues include: difference in values, lack of understanding of each others' profession and role, difference in and importance placed on professionalism and qualifications, and finally, many community development workers and social workers do not want to be professionally identified with each other.

### **Issue One: A difference in values and approaches**

Community development workers work within the community at a micro and macro level. Firstly they aim to develop personal networks, create social capital at the neighbourhood level

and work at resolving inequalities at the structural and political level (Scott, 2001 and Mowbray, 1996). Furthermore many community development workers use a conflict based theory approach which enables them to have the potential to facilitate change effectively. Some community workers see social workers, in comparison, ignoring this macro level and perpetuating existing inequalities (Mendes, 2003). Another difference is that social workers focus on professionalism, qualifications and refining skills and knowledge which can assist their clients. In contrast community development workers are traditionally against professionalism per se. Moreover community development workers value skill sharing and feel that the community is the expert in their own situation. These differences create an incompatibility between the two professions.

Julie indicated that at times she finds there is no difference between the two professions and they are interchangeable. However there are numerous times when she finds she carries out her community development role very differently to a community development worker without a social work background. She focuses on the people, their needs as a community and the individual. Furthermore since she has no other social worker in her office and therefore very limited supervision with a social worker, she has found that her learning has been reduced, though at times she thinks about aspects of certain situations very differently to her community development co-workers. Social workers value supervision very highly as they are always wanting to learn from all their experiences in a personal and professional way. She finds that if there are conflicts in the expectations of either the community, colleagues or funding organisations, even though she uses many community development approaches, she always makes her decision and justifies herself based on social work theory. This has been effective especially with the funding bodies as they are aware she is a social worker and find it is a justifiable rationale.

In contrast John never works directly with individuals as clients. He also does not focus on his own ideas or expertise; he prefers to allow the community and groups of people from the community to drive the ideas and focus of all the community development activity he oversees.

### **Issue Two: Community development workers and social workers do not understand the role of each others' profession**

When asked if community development workers and social workers should be further integrated, John stated that he believed that more community development workers should be employed in service provision agencies. Furthermore he believed that a community development worker's role would be to bring individuals and families together in consultation with social workers, as social workers work with families and individuals and community development workers interact with a wider client base. It is evident that John believes that community development workers work on the ground with the people in the community and social workers are a profession which receives referrals from other disciplines. It is also apparent that John believes that community development workers are more in touch with the

members of the community and general population.

A misconception that has been noted by Mendes (2006) regarding social work is that the profession assists individuals to fit into current inequitable systems, rather than create a better situation for the client from the outside in (Mendes, 2006). There are many negative views of social work by community development workers, and Mendes (2003) states that the understanding of social workers held by many community development workers is distorted and not an accurate reality of modern social work (Mendes 2003). In contrast the reality is that social workers focus on numerous areas of clients' lives rather than purely focussing on counselling and individual needs. Social workers have a broad focus on the community and the individual as well as focussing on self-determination and encouraging the client and the community to work for their own results, empowering the client and creating more sustainable change.

The perspective of some social workers is that community development workers are untrained and lack professional qualifications and skills. Furthermore it is believed that they also lack judgement and detachment when working with clients (Mendes 2006). Moreover this lack of detachment is evident through being too invested in the community and not keeping a professional distance from clients. It is thought that community development workers lose some of their professional integrity when getting too invested in one's cases. This perception is incorrect as community development workers have the qualifications, knowledge and skills to be successful in facilitating community development, which is their focus. In relation to the perception that community development workers lack detachment when working with clients it is evident this is a misconception of the profession. The reality is community development workers aim to involve community members in the process of change, they are client-focussed *or* community-focussed and aim for sustainable change by involving the client, which is not to be confused with detachment issues (Mendes 2006). Being real and invested in one's clients is an important feature to have as clients can sense whether a worker is engaging with them because it is their job or because they genuinely care and this has a great effect engagement and should be viewed as an important value.

### **Issue Three: A difference in importance placed on professional qualifications**

Social workers place high importance on professional qualifications. One can not be a social worker without a social work degree attained from university. Furthermore there is a regulating body that a social worker can register with once the appropriate qualifications are attained. Julie has a Bachelor of Social Welfare. She found that with this qualification she could not attain the type of position she wanted so she went on to attain a Bachelor of Social Work. In contrast community development workers require qualifications to gain a position, however they may gain these qualifications from university, TAFE or life and work experience. To clarify, social workers and community development workers often attain the same positions and are equally successful in these roles, however to have the title of a 'Social Worker' one must have a social work degree but to have a 'Community Development' title

one does not require a community development degree. John is well qualified with a Bachelor of Arts, Masters of Environmental Science and Certificate IV in Training and Assessment but this is not always the case with all community development workers. The view of community development workers is that the worker should not be held in higher regard than the client or clients regardless of educational status, as the client is the expert and the worker's role is to assist the client to create their own sustainable change. This allows all members of society to take part in community development action including lower socio-economic members of the community. In this area social work differs and has an underlying value that those that are professionally educated are somewhat more equipped to assist those in need than those that are not educated in the field. Further to this, social work can be seen as a profession of middle class citizens serving middle class communities (Mendes 2003), whereas community development aims to assist the disadvantaged and not estrange them. Therefore as community development focuses on empowering all members of society, it can be seen as a more inclusive profession than social work.

#### **Issue Four: The two professions do not want to be associated with each other**

Although Julie and John are quite happy for a greater integration of community development and social work to occur, neither of these professionals would like to stray from their core values and approaches. Moreover Julie already encompasses community development approaches in her role however John would prefer not to utilise social work skills and approaches but would prefer to just work more closely with other social workers in his role.

This issue makes it very difficult for a supported integration between the two professions to occur. Previously in Australia community development has been seen by social workers as a branch of social work, although this was not necessarily supported by community development workers. In past years however, the two professions have become more independent (Mendes 2003). Many community development workers see themselves as radical and see social workers as conservative. Moreover community development workers want to remain independent so these differences can be enhanced, which therefore perpetuates independence between the two professions.

#### **Positive aspects of integration**

There are however numerous reasons why an integration between social work and community development would have positive outcomes for the workers and the clients. Society is an interwoven tapestry of individuals, relationships, organisations, institutions and groups (Coulton, 2005). Because society is so complex, the more skills and diverse approaches a worker can utilise, the better the chances of a positive outcome for the client. Positive reasons why a greater integration would work include: it will allow the benefits of social work approaches and skills to profit a greater number of people, social work and community development have more in common than many workers think therefore would be more

compatible than currently thought and finally, a greater integration will ultimately benefit the clients and communities.

### **Using an integrated approach can benefit the greatest number of people**

If social workers focus on the community or groups within the community it can provide a more holistic approach and benefit a greater number of people than a casework approach. Social workers in Brittan have embraced this integrated approach and have found that they have gained a greater ability to assist their entire community and achieve greater reach in their work (Mendes, 2003). Furthermore social workers that utilise community development provide long-term benefits as they focus on the cause of the issue in the external environment rather than the consequences the issue has on the individual. This point can be demonstrated in the following example. In some communities illiteracy is a major issue and it inhibits individuals from gaining jobs and financially supporting their families. A model of intervention that focuses on the individual would be to assist the individual to gain a job in a position where illiteracy is not an issue. A community development intervention could create a literacy program for members of the community from children to adults. This would decrease the overall illiteracy of the community and would in turn give individuals a greater chance of securing employment. Reaching a greater number of community members is important for Julie as she is only employed on a temporary basis and needs to serve a large proportion of the community. Because of this she finds that integrating the two practices gives her the greatest short term and long term outcomes. This is because she can focus on individual needs and counsel those in distress by utilising a social work model but can create sustainable change when using the community development model by establishing ongoing support and focus groups. Furthermore community development aims to change structures which support inequality, empowering whole communities to make positive change. Again the literacy example can be used to demonstrate that if the source of the issue is targeted, illiteracy, then the overall quality of life can improve. Moreover those who are illiterate are more likely to be unemployed and remain in a lower-socio-economic geographical area, and because of this their children are more likely to be illiterate. If this issue is changed then they can move to a different area and it will break the cycle of poverty. Finally many people suffering from issues do not ever seek help. In a traditional casework approach these people would never experience the benefits of an intervention, however by utilising a community development approach and targeting the source of the issues, these people would also receive the benefits.

### **Community development and social work are more similar than many people currently believe**

Community development workers and social workers currently share many of each others' skills and strategies in their core interventions (Mendes, 2006). Postmodern and reflective radical approaches, which focus on the broader context, are used by both professions. This is demonstrated through one main point that community development workers feel differentiates them from social workers, which is their focus on disassembling inequitable structures,

however in many areas modern social workers claim to already fulfil this role (Mendes, 2003 and Goldsworthy, 2002). Many community-focussed social workers and community development workers are employed in identical roles in the community. Furthermore the way in which they achieve goals in their position can be interchangeable. For instance when John sees a need in the community he meets with community members to discuss the issue and to facilitate the community members' establishing an initiative. Once the idea is formed his role is to locate others who can connect with the initiating group and support the community members in its development and implementation. This is similar to the approach that Julie uses. She meets with her mothers' coffee group to discuss needs in the community. They then think of ways that this need can be met and the women link other suitable community members into the initiative. Julie often uses this process in schools as then the parents and teachers can continue the implementation and evaluation once Julie has left the area. Another similarity is that in some contexts both professions can be seen as taking a conservative view, ignoring the external broader issues and encouraging individuals to conform to current societal expectations (Goldsworthy, 2002).

### **Integration will ultimately benefit clients**

It is suggested that a social work approach with community development values and strategies encompassed within it can create more positive outcomes for clients (Mendes, 2006). These community development values create a community continuum rather than a hierarchy as used in traditional social work, and include empowering casework, community building and social action, which are used in a decentralised strategy and are altered depending on the needs of the client (Goldsworthy, 2002). Moreover an integrated approach allows clients to take an active role in the intervention, being the expert in their own issues and situation. They are empowered to take control of their lives (Goldsworthy, 2002) and in doing so will learn the skills and strategies to continue dealing with their issues long after the professional relationship has ended. This is the aim of both social work and community development but unfortunately because of organisational constraints it does not always occur. However if not only individual social workers and community development workers, but organisations employing these professions, adopted this integrated philosophy then it would be more likely that worker would have the opportunity and be encouraged to use this approach.

Overall Julie feels that a further integration of social work and community development would be positive for her clients. She states that community development workers undertake research assessing the communities' needs before implementing programs and initiatives. Therefore in her experience it has been more effective and has had positive outcomes as well being better accepted by the community as a whole. This can be demonstrated through a community mothers' group that meets each week for coffee. She asks this group for advice regarding her ideas for future projects in the area. She finds that getting these women involved in the projects strategically and practically, by telling their friends and families and assisting in running the programs, the programs have greater success and a greater number of community members participate. She feels that a greater integration could be positive in

numerous fields, however there is still a need to differentiate the two approaches as different means of practice, as in some instances there is a need for one on one counselling sessions and the use of social work micro skills. However in other instances she has found it best not to use a predominantly social work focus as the community development approach has been more effective. For example the Labour Government uses a paradigm of social inclusion to assist vulnerable members of the community in Australia. This focuses on improving the community as a whole to enrich the lives of the individual rather than simply focusing on individual needs. John implements this paradigm in his affordable housing role. John could try to find housing for individuals, however he focuses on making a greater number of houses available to the community by organising meetings and information sessions for developers, housing providers, council staff, landowners, service providers and councillors, to discuss new public and private housing projects. This approach adopts the social inclusion paradigm and benefits many members of the community, as they have greater access to housing if more housing is available, and it benefits the community as a whole as there are a lower number of homeless people in their area. Therefore as long as each worker has the capacity to choose the approach that will best work in their situation for their particular clients' circumstances, then a further integration between social work and community development would be a positive occurrence for the community.

## **Case scenarios of appropriateness of traditional social work and community development approaches**

### **Case scenario one**

A rural Aboriginal Community in Northern Territory has recently received a government grant for a social worker to improve the health and social issues within the community. This particular community is similar to various other rural indigenous communities, as it has high family violence, high rates of suicide, substance abuse and numerous health issues. The majority of the community members are unemployed and in poverty. A social worker has been sent to the community by the Federal Government for two years. The aim of this period is for the worker to educate community members and to facilitate positive change. It is hoped that a worker focussing on one community at a grass roots level will have a larger positive impact than a national program.

### ***Application of the community work approach***

It is important when implementing change that Tesoriero's (2010) idea of change from below is used as much as possible. This theoretical framework values local knowledge and local culture. This may be achieved more easily in such a community as this, as a shift in culture may not mean that the worker has to disagree and oppose the culture, they just may have to strengthen the subculture to overpower and become the dominant culture, as there is a strong subculture of mutual respect and pro-social behavioural expression within this community and numerous other Indigenous communities.

Strategies that will be implemented include citizen participation, popular education and local services development (Checkoway, 1995). The citizen participation strategy is used as an overall strategy and will incorporate an encouragement of all members of the community to be actively involved in the change initiative by encouraging members to not only become involved but also have them encourage others to become involved. The popular education strategy will include various educational groups and programs that will give the community tools in which improved living standards can be achieved in day to day living. These will include parenting classes to improve parent-child relationships, strengthen families and marital relationships and ultimately decrease family violence. Education programs and groups will also be operated to increase the knowledge of issues and possible assistance and increase the awareness of issues including mental illness, substance abuse and suicide risks. Popular education will also be useful to express new acceptable behaviours as well as what the community has decided they will not tolerate in their community in the future.

Finally the social worker will assist the development of local services which will be managed and run by local members in the community to ensure a long-term establishment in the community in the absence of current workers, specific funding and government grants. These will include programs in local primary and high schools for children and youth and community programs for adults and families.

### ***Skills and roles***

Skills that are required by the community development worker are diverse. One of the first skills that a worker would need in this situation is to establish one's credibility. Many Indigenous communities have had numerous workers involved in their community, yet the overall condition of Indigenous communities is still very poor. It would be important to establish that the needs of the community will come first and that the worker has something to offer the community that will benefit it as a whole. Further to this, Kenny (2006) has established six skills that are necessary when working with communities. Facilitation skills are necessary as macro management will allow the members of the community to gain the skills to continue on with the programs and change after the social worker has left. Another set of macro-management skills that are required are organisational skills and strategy skills. Although Ife (1996) states that some of the skills brought to the community by the worker contradict the idea of community work, as interventions are meant to focus on the strengths and knowledge of the community members, these skills are important as they will give the worker the ability to view the bigger picture and direct the ideas and change of the community members in a positive way (Ife, 1996). Networking skills will allow the worker to establish connections with other indigenous communities that have formal assistance and with those communities that are achieving positive change. This will assist the community to feel solidarity with groups outside their primary community and be exposed to continual experiences of pro-social behaviour. Research skills are important as even though the focus of this work is to empower community members to identify their own issues and solutions, they may not have the ability to articulate their needs accurately, and therefore having empirical

knowledge of similar situations, solutions and programs will assist in the brainstorming phase with the community and its leaders. Finally communication skills are of utmost importance as it is not only important to listen, respond and articulate ideas effectively, but this will be required to occur with language barriers, as this particular community's primary language is not English.

### ***Why a community work approach is more appropriate than traditional case work intervention***

The reason why a community work approach is more effective in this case than traditional case work intervention is because every member in the community is affected by the current situation. Furthermore, as the worker is only in the community for two years, the worker needs to create an environment in which the members of the community can benefit from subsidiarity, where decision making is devolved to the point closest to where it impacts (Kenny 2011:6). In the past the government has tried to improve Indigenous communities' social, health and economic problems with a national solution. This has had mixed results. A community development approach in one community will allow the power to be shifted from the government and put back into the community members' hands. This subsidiary, grass roots approach will empower the community to explore solutions that will be most effective for their particular diverse community. This approach would be more beneficial to the community rather than traditional social work because it allows the community to work together and strengthen themselves as a whole in order to continue to produce positive change and support each other in the future.

### **Case scenario two**

In February 2009 fires raged through many rural parts of Victoria. 'Black Saturday' not only had lasting effects on land and houses but emotions, family structures and communities. A woman presented at a community social workers office. The woman stated that she is living with her husband, mother and three small children in a small shed on their property while awaiting their insurance company to approve their claim so the family can start rebuilding. The woman's husband was working on their farm, however due to the fires he is unable to continue this and has been looking for work elsewhere without success. Her father died in the fires so her mother is living with the family for emotional and financial support. Her three children are four years, two years and six months old. She has presented to the social worker as there is mounting stress on the family. She is feeling pressure to make the household run smoothly, manage the bills, comfort her mother, support her husband and care for and entertain her children in a very small space. She is feeling isolated and depressed and does not know what she can do to improve her situation.

### ***Application of the community work approach***

The social worker could take a traditional casework approach and give the woman general counselling as well as grief and loss counselling, information on finance management and offer grief and loss counselling for the husband and mother. The way in which community

work would be applied is that the worker can create a group for mothers and fathers affected by the Black Saturday bushfires to bring their preschool children to. This would allow the children to socialise, play with toys which they may have lost in the fire and exhaust some energy in a large safe place. Furthermore it would allow parents to get out of their small confined residence and socialise with other adults. Moreover it facilitates building support networks and allows parents to speak to other adults in the same situation as themselves. Finally it can encourage community members to take part in social action and advocate for themselves as a group with similar needs. Education into these groups can empower individuals to take control of their situation and empower them to work towards a more positive future.

### ***Skills and roles***

This intervention would require both micro and macro skills. The group would have to be established and logistical items would need to be managed such as finance, program development, implementation processes and report writing for reporting back to funding organisations. Furthermore micro skills would need to be used as certain group members may have been through traumatic experiences and require some informal counselling during the group sessions, and finally facilitation skills would also be used in getting the group established.

### ***Why a community work approach is more appropriate than traditional case work intervention***

This community work approach would be more effective than a traditional casework approach. The reasons for this are as follows: creating a group for the community allows a wide range of people to become involved. Some of these individuals may have approached the social worker for assistance and therefore this will be more time efficient as all of these individuals can be assisted in the same session. Individuals that may not have approached the social worker for assistance will also benefit from the session. Furthermore a community development approach will provide empowerment for the group as they are taking control of their own situation by supporting each other rather than gaining continual assistance from a professional. Eventually the worker will leave the group and allow the individuals in the group to run it themselves. This will provide long term benefits for the community without long term intervention.

### **Case scenario three**

During the Victorian Bushfires in 2009, a young boy, aged seven, lost his father, mother and younger sister in the fires. The family saw the fire approaching but it was too late to escape their property. The mother grabbed the two children and their pet dog and hid in their large metal shed, while their father tried to fight off the fire to save his family. The shed quickly heated up and began to collapse. It filled with smoke and the family could not see. The mother tried to carry the young girl out of the shed while the boy carried their pet dog. Tragically only the young boy and his dog were able to escape out of the collapsing shed.

Once the fire had passed the young boy knew that his mother and younger sister would not have survived. He then began searching for his father. He heard his dog barking and ran to find his father. The young boy stayed by his father's side as he waited for help. Hours later a neighbour came to look for the family. The father was taken to hospital with severe burns and days later, passed away.

### ***Application of the traditional case work approach***

The main area that a worker could assist this young boy is one-on-one grief and loss counselling. Working through the trauma that the young boy has suffered would be the workers primary focus. This would allow the child to work through his feelings regarding the incident and the family members that he lost. The worker would also assist the boy in other ways to satisfy the child's basic needs for food, shelter and care.

### ***Skills and roles***

Knowledge of social work theories that are relevant to this case is vital for the worker. Relevant theories include grief and loss as the boy has suffered trauma and the loss of family members and crisis-intervention as the boy now has no home and has lost his primary caregivers. Because of this he will need to find temporary and permanent accommodation and will need to live with friends or family until a decision is reached where and with whom he will end up living. Furthermore, knowledge of developmental stages is also necessary as understanding where the child is developmentally will assist in assessing his needs and shed some light on reasons behind behaviours and feelings that may arise post-Black Saturday. The worker would play a case management role and a counselling role. The boy now has many needs that must to be considered to ensure that he recovers from this life changing event as best as possible. A case manager would need to be aware of the systems theory to understand what supports the child has and what services may be available to assist him. A case manager would also manage all of the other services and people involved in the case so that the child does not become overwhelmed by the system that will assist him though this time. Finally the worker would need to have an advocacy role. By building trust through counselling sessions, the child may state his wishes in relation to his future. This can easily be overlooked by other services and government departments as he may have limited adults in his life to stand up for his rights and wishes. Therefore providing advocacy to the boy would allow him to feel some sort of power and self-determination through this process, which is an important Australian Association Social Workers ethic.

### ***Why a traditional case work approach is more appropriate than community work intervention***

A community work approach may create programs in which young people can talk to their peers about their experiences or provide activities for children to have fun and forget about the tragedy of Black Saturday. This approach is less appropriate in this case. This boy is not ready to actively participate in society. He has experienced horrific trauma and should not be expected to share this with a group. In cases like this a community work approach could be

very beneficial in several months or even years as re-engaging with his community and peers is an important stage in recovery, however at this particular moment this child requires support and one-on-one counselling. Using social work theories such as grief and loss, crisis intervention and stages of development would assist the child to work through his experiences and feelings.

#### **Case scenario four**

A father has been displaying aggressive behaviours towards his wife and children. The mother has decided that although her husband is not physically hitting their children, he is verbally abusive so she wants to leave him. She acknowledges that her children and their father are very close and she can not enforce zero visitations by the father. Because of this she also acknowledges that the father will continue to be aggressive during his contact with the children even after a separation has occurred. The mother does not know how to solve this problem and expresses her concern to her Maternal Child Health Nurse.

#### ***Application of the traditional case work approach***

The Maternal Child Health Nurse could refer the father to a domestic violence men's group in the community, however at this point in time it would be more beneficial for the family to work out their issues together. There are two avenues that would benefit this family, both requiring a willingness to participate. The first intervention plan is one-on-one counselling with the mother and the father separately and the second is a relationship counselling approach. One-on-one counselling could aim to unlock the father's childhood experiences to encourage self-awareness and evaluation of cause and effect relationships of child experiences of abuse and current aggressive behaviours. Working on issues behind current aggression rather than just the surface behaviours would allow the father to make permanent positive changes to his emotional well-being and relationships with his wife and children. Secondly relationship counselling involving the father and mother could assist in repairing the breakdown of their relationship. Moreover it could facilitate conversation in a safe and open environment to allow expression of feelings, fears and expectations and goals for the future.

#### ***Skills and roles***

Traditional case work approaches often utilise numerous theories in order to inform practice. Theories that would be beneficial to use when working with clients in these circumstances include: Attachment – which assesses the attachment of a child to their primary care giver as this has ripple effects on the child throughout their life; Social Learning – people can learn behaviours by observing, imitating and modelling others behaviour; Object Relations – aims to understand the capacity for loving (emotional bonding) and reacting appropriately to another person (Aymer, 2008), Systems Approach – assist in macro analysis of the systems and supports that one has or has experienced in the past; Behavioural and Cognitive Social Approach – assist in micro analysis of a person to gain a further understanding of how a person operates (Victorian Association of Family Therapists (1985). An ability to utilise theories appropriately in practice is as important as the knowledge of the theories.

### ***Why a traditional case work approach is more appropriate than community work intervention***

Building non-violent communication skills is an important part of overcoming violent behaviours. These skills include conflict resolution, empathy and self-empathy. A development of these skills can assist one to develop healthy relationships post domestic violence and trauma for men and women (Little, 2009). These skills could be developed in a group (community work approach) or in sessions with a social worker (case work approach). However to gain a deeper benefit to a family experiencing domestic violence a traditional case work approach may be more beneficial as although a traditional casework approach does not improve the domestic violence issue in the community, it could have a dramatic effect on this family. In some cases spousal abuse and abuse against children can be attributed to patriarchy and sexism. In these cases where abuse is related to ideas about women and children in general, then a community work approach would be very beneficial as this would target society's views of women and children through men's domestic violence groups. However it is more common that as well as patriarchy and sexism and societal issues, the abuse of women and children is related to earlier experience of abuse as a child or adolescent. Such System causes still have individual effects and individual intervention can be very beneficial. In these cases it is important encourage the development of insight and build skills that facilitate adaptive psychosocial functioning (Aymer, 2008, p1). Furthermore by increasing psychosocial functioning, one can unlock suppressed emotions and allow an understanding of effects of previous experiences of abuse on current relationships (Aymer, 2008).

### **The next step to assist further integration between social work and community development**

#### **Education**

Current stereotypes are inhibiting social workers and community development workers from working together effectively (Mendes, 2006). Education will allow these stereotypes to be overcome and an integration to occur more smoothly. Moreover this education will create a more cohesive and cooperative professional system of workers and professions. Ife (1996) suggests that educating both social workers and community development workers in the skills of the others' profession will compliment one's current skills (Ife, 1996), and ultimately benefit the client. It is also important to educate the employers, services and government bodies that an integration of professions is an important step towards a higher quality service provision. Finally educating funding bodies is also a very important step in the process of greater integration. This is because workers and organisations are highly accountable to funding bodies and if they had a greater understanding of the issue and adjusted their requirements accordingly, workers would have increased flexibility and opportunity to tailor interventions to their clients' needs using a combination of community development and social work approaches, either simultaneously or at appropriate times for clients.

## Conclusion

There are many barriers to integration between social work and community development. It is important to understand the history of these professions to gain understanding of why these barriers have arisen and how these barriers can be overcome to create a succinct effective practice that satisfies the needs of the client. Some of the barriers that have been discussed include: differences in theoretical background, differences in values and approaches, a lack of understanding of each other's profession and a lack of desire to be associated with one another. However a greater integration can be achieved by education of all parties involved including social workers, community development workers, funding bodies, the AASW and the ACWA and service organisations that these professionals operate in and alongside.

Overall it is important to focus on the client. It has been established through case studies that an integration of these professions can provide a greater benefit to the clients, as many clients that come to each profession, can be best assisted by one of the two approaches. Furthermore this integration can also benefit the greatest number of people, providing quality assistance to more of the community. In each situation a worker faces, the clients' needs should be at the forefront of their intervention plan. When assessing the needs of the client and community a worker should identify whether a community development approach, a social work approach or an amalgamation of the two professions would be of the most benefit to the client and create the opportunity for the greatest results. However the worker can assess the situation and decide that best practice for this particular client in this particular situation would be a practice approach other than that of their profession, yet the worker is powerless to provide this approach if the organisation they are working in does not allow them to continue along this path. Therefore if community development workers and social workers are to stay true to their core value of serving the need of the client, then organisations need to readdress their acceptance of integration. Barriers need to be tackled and clients need to be advocated for, so that service providers can provide what the client requires. Therefore the question is not whether a greater integration is best for the client, but whether the system that community development workers and social workers work in as well as the workers themselves will embrace the need for change and integration and support a model that will greater serve the needs of the client.

## References

- Australian Association of Social Work (2010) *Code of Ethics*  
<http://www.aasw.asn.au/document/item/740> (Date accessed: 25th April, 2011)
- Australian Institute of Welfare and Community Workers (1999) *Code of Ethics*  
[http://www.acwa.org.au/sites/www.acwa.org.au/files/Code%20of%20Ethics\\_0.pdf](http://www.acwa.org.au/sites/www.acwa.org.au/files/Code%20of%20Ethics_0.pdf). (Date accessed: 25th April, 2011)
- Aymer, S. R. (2008) 'Beyond Power and Control: Clinical interventions with men engaged in partner abuse' *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 36, 323-332
- Checkoway, B. (1995) 'An International Forum' *Community Development Journal*, 30, 2-20
- Coulton, C. (2005) 'The Place of Community in Social Work Practice Research: Conceptual and methodological developments' *Social Work Research*, 29, 73-87
- Goldsworthy, J. (2002) 'Resurrecting a model of integrating individual work with community development and social action' *Community Development Journal*, 37, 327-337
- Henderson, P. and Thomas, D. (2002) *Skills in Neighbourhood Work* 3rd ed, Routledge, London
- Ife, J. (1996) *Rethinking Social Work: Towards critical practice* Longman Cheshire, Melbourne
- Kenny, S. (2011). *Developing Communities for the Future, 4th Ed.* Engage Learning, Melbourne, Victoria
- Little, M. (2009) 'Total Honesty/Total Heart: Fostering empathy development and conflict resolution skills: A Violence Prevention Strategy' *Masters Abstracts International*, 47, 60
- Mendes, P. (2003) Community Development and Social Work: Are they compatible? *New Community Quarterly*, 1, 24-27
- Mendes, P. (2006) Community Development and Social Work: Different but Complementary, in Alice, L, Barbara, J, Brown, K, Connors, P, Kelly, M, and Kenny, S. (eds), *Community Development in a Global Risk Society: Proceedings of a conference held in Melbourne 20 - 22 April 2006*, Deakin University, Geelong, Victoria, 204-215
- Mendes, P. (2008) 'Integrating social work and community development practice in Victoria, Australia' *Asia Pacific Journal of Social Work and Development*, 18, 14-25

Mowbray, M. (1996) 'A Case for the Renovation of Community Work Education' *Australian Social Work*, 49, 3-10

Scott, D. (2001) 'Building Communities That Strengthen Families' *Family Matters*, 76

Tesoriero, F. (2010) *Community development: community-based alternatives in an age of globalisation, 4th Ed.* Pearson Australia, Frenchs Forest, New South Wales

Victorian Association of Family Therapists (1985) 'A Theoretical Model for Integrating Children's Group Work Together with Family therapy Approaches to Help Children and Families Achieve Interaction Skills' *Proceedings of the Sixth Australian Therapy Conference, Melbourne 1985*

***Rebecca Filliponi is a fourth year social work student at Monash University Caulfield Campus***