ADVANCING THE HOLISTIC

APPROACH TO SOCIAL WORK

PRACTICE

by Ramon Kopas

A Practicum
Submitted to the College of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
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ABSTRACT

Advancing a Holistic Approach to Social Work
Practice:
A Practicum at the Inner City Social Work Program

This practicum report presents an exercise in the
development and operationalization of a holistic
approach to social work practice undertaken at
the Inner City Social Work Program of the Winni-
peg Education Centre.

The general purpose of the practicum was to ad-
dress the needs of the people comprising the sit-
uation of the Inner City Social Work Program
through the holistic approach to social work
practice including holistic assessment and inter-
ventive activities. Other purposes of the prac-
ticum included the development of skills and a
degree of proficiency in the holistic approach to
practice and an exploration of the practice pos-
sibilities of this approach.

The literature review presents the rationale of a
holistic approach, general directions and guides

for practice and the state of development of this approach.

The evolution of the practice process involved the identification of a wide range of concerns, issues and needs, holistic assessment and intervention activities with a combination of individuals and groups, and also the identification of possible strategies for the program as a whole.

The report on the practicum discusses the progress of the practice in relation to the situation being addressed and also discusses the limitations, difficulties and possibilities of this approach as realized through the practice.

CHAPTER 1   INTRODUCTION

This practicum constituted an exercise in the practice of the holistic approach to social work. The practicum was conducted at the Inner City Social Work Program at the Winnipeg Education Centre from April to June 1985.

THE DEFINITION OF HOLISM

Holism is defined by the Webster's Collegiate Dictionary as:

> "1: a theory that the universe and especially living nature is correctly seen in terms of interacting wholes (as of living organisms) that are more than the mere sum of elementary particles
> 2: a holistic study or method of treatment"

Webster's defines holistic as:

> "1: of or relating to holism
> 2: relating to or concerned with wholes or with complete systems rather than with the analysis of, treatment of, or dissection into parts"

In the social work practice literature that was reviewed 'holistic' is used to convey a sense of totality, entirety or comprehensiveness in practice. This is contrasted with other practice forms, which are characterized as fragmented or divided.

The holistic approach to social work practice developed as part of the movement toward generalist social work that flourished in the 1970's. The generalists sought to create forms of social work that were not divided into the conventional three specialized methods of social work practice i.e., case work, group work and community organization.

CONTEXT OF THE PRACTICUM - PERSONAL AND PROFES-
SIONAL THEMES

The practitioner has found it useful to understand the historical context in which different forms of social work developed. The specialization according to the three traditional methods of social work arose during a time when social workers were concerned, in part, with the achievement of professional status. The rise of the psychoanalytic movement boosted the primacy of casework and therapy. Then the social change movement of the 1960's created an interest in community development. An apparent dichotomy between personal troubles and social issues arose, and the generalists sought to reconcile it.
Seeing the issues and interests at play in their

historical context helped the practitioner to understand how particular developments arise from their unique contexts.

Similarly, the meaning and significance of this practicum developed from the interests and issues of the practitioner's own work context. This context is the source of the themes that have characterized the practitioner's search for a more rewarding form of social work practice: one which would link personal development with social development, private counselling with social change; one which would relate the personal to the political and help overcome the divisions that separate.

The practicum consists of the development of a holistic form of practice that is supported by theory and the practical experience of the practicum itself.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE PRACTICUM REPORT
The practicum report is organized into five chapters. This chapter, chapter one is the introduc-

tion. Chapter two is a review of the literature related to the holistic approach to social work. Chapter three describes the practicum. First the design of the practicum is set out, followed by the description of the practice activities. Chapter four is the report on the practicum. Chapter five contains the conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

Dissatisfaction with the conventional three meth-
ods model of social work practice resulted in the
practitioner's search for new forms of practice.
The practitioner explored the writings of several
practice theorists who recognized conventional
models of practice as limited and who proposed
new alternatives. Within the text of these theo-
rists the practitioner noted explicit or implicit
references to holism. Though brief they did moti-
vate the practitioner to search out, in the prac-
tice literature, theorists who developed a holis-
tic form of practice. The practitioner then ex-
plored these holistically oriented theorists.

CHANGING SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

The practitioner's approach to learning the ho-
listic approach to social work practice included
coming to know the context in which it emerged.

The interest in changing social work practice
stemmed from critical assessments of the conven-
tional divisions of casework, group work and com-
munity organization. Carel Germain writes:

> "Given the lack of knowledge for intervening in environmental forces, it is no surprise now, although it was then, that the revolutionary years of the 1960's produced criticisms of social work's goals and methods" (Germain, 1979, p.4).

Several authors have described the problems and limitations associated with the conventional speciality methods model of practice. (Pincus and Minahan, 1973, Vickery, 1977, Germain and Gitterman, 1980). Knowing these criticisms helped the practitioner to understand the nature of the new forms of practice towards which theorists were reaching. The practitioner saw this as a process somewhat akin to the dialectical process of change in which the traditional methods of social work practice and their criticisms passed over into the new forms of practice which resolved the conflicting issues. One criticism of traditional practice took issue with its dichotomous, divisive approach. Germain and Gitterman, for example, write:

> "Such methodological divisions in social work education and practice prevented an examination of the commonalities across methods, and thus inhibited the development of a distinctive social work method of practice directed to the social functioning of individuals, groups, and families" (Germain and Gitterman, 1980, p.359).

The practitioner believes that one of the most

serious consequences of this divisiveness is the

distorting effect it has on the reality of the

people who are the recipients of these fragmented

service approaches.

Germain and Gitterman see one consequence of the

divisionist philosophy as the tendency to define

people's problems or needs in terms that suit the

method of service. Siporin makes a similar point

when he lambasts the "ritualistic methodolatry

which disregarded the nature of problems"

(Siporin, 1975, p.42).

There are two other issues of significance relat-

ed to the traditional practice of social work

which the practitioner wishes to present. The

first issue has to do with a concentration on

technique and a trend toward the social worker

becoming a technician. First Siporin wrote:

> "This model of professional social work goes
> beyond the method and skills conception of
> social work practice that dominated social
> work for so many years...[and] gave highest
> value to technical skills and their
> mastery" (Siporin, 1975, p.32).

Then Herbert Bisno says:

> "Social Work, from this point of view, was
> seen to be moving from a period of desiccat-
> ed but non-institutionalized enthusiasm in
> the fight against entrenched evils to a
> stage characterized by a professional worker
> offering a regularized, necessary social
> service in a systematic and skillful manner.
> It is obvious that this aspect of the tran-
> sition in social work is intimately associ-
> ated with the concentration on method and
> technique. Both stress the technician rath-
> er than the policy maker" (Bisno, 1969,
> p.49).

The second issue is the mechanistic or mechanical

model of life which, as the practitioner sees it,

has lent philosophical support to the model of

social worker as technician. Germain and Gitter-

man relate this model to the development of New-

tonian physics and Western science, in general,

with its conception of the universe as a great

machine. This mechanistic view has fostered the

separation and alienation of human beings from

their natural settings and environments (Germain

and Gitterman, 1980). Recognition of the limita-

tions and problems associated with traditional

forms of social work practice has resulted in nu-

merous reformulations of social work. Among

these have been the unitary method (Specht,

1977), the Unitary approach (Goldstein, 1973),

the Generic model (Siporin, 1975) and the Life

model (Germain and Gitterman, 1980). Various

generalist methods or approaches to social work

practice were also developed, such as those of

Pincus and Minahan (1973), Johnson (1983), and

Compton and Galaway (1975). Lastly, the practi-

tioner wishes to note another area where new

forms of practice have developed. This is common-

ly known as radical social work. Its radical ap-

proaches to practice are illustrated by such au-

thors as Galper (1980) and Carrigan and Leonard

(1978).

Several features of these newly developed concep-

tions of practice were of significance to the

practitioner's development toward holistic prac-

tice. One of these features was the move away

from specializations, as illustrated by Vickery's

comment:

> "The profession has been fragmented in terms
> of methods specializations, and its knowl-
> edge and skill are incomplete and unevenly
> developed" (Vickery, 1977, p.40).

Another feature was the use of the concept

"situation", which conveys a sense of the ar-

rangement of circumstances at a certain time as

one of its meanings. Thus, Compton and Galaway speak of "a focus on the person-situation interaction" (1975). Siporin describes a social situation, in part, as a combination of people and settings and as a context for the transactions of individuals and social systems (1975).

A third feature of the new forms of practice involves the related concepts of interaction and transaction. These convey a combination of the dynamic sense of relating or in-relationship with a sense of mutuality, of reciprocal and back and forth or around and around influencing.

TOWARD HOLISTIC SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

Throughout the literature on the new forms of social work practice the practitioner kept finding references to holism. Though many of these references were only a word here and there, some of the contexts in which the references were used suggested a fundamental or primary organizing concept. For example, Goldstein says:

> "Recent years have witnessed the increasing
> utilization of systems theories and models
> to explain the holistic meaning of various

phenomena as well as the processes and prop-
erties which comprise the whole............
Similarly, the social sciences replaced the
concept of society as a sum of individuals
who are social atoms with the holistic con
cept of society, the economy, and the nation
as a complex that is superordinated to its
parts" (Goldstein, 1973).

In the same vein Compton and Galaway write:

"The 'wholes' concerned within social work
are more than the sum of their paired varia-
ble. That "more" is found in their purpose
(or goal-directed behavior) and in their in-
teractive complexity.......................
The assumption is that the behavior of the
parts is different when studied in isolation
than when seen within the whole because of
the dynamic interactions and organizing pat-
terns that are only observable as a part of
the whole" (Compton and Galaway, 1975, p. 73
& 78).

Hearn, in the introduction to the General Systems

Approach: Contributions Toward an Holistic Con-

ception of Social Work writes:

"This volume may be regarded as a benchmark
in the continuing inquiry concerning the
real nature of social work. It supports the
hope that we may eventually develop a sub-
stantially inclusive, internally consistent,
and organized conception of social work
practice and its approach to the human
scene. It indicates, in particular, the
contribution that the general systems ap-
proach may be expected to make to this
much-needed overall conception" (Hearn,
1969).

The practitioner, like Hearn, saw these expres-

sions of the holistic concept as pointing to the

possibility of a more significant form of prac-

tice which was yet to be developed.   For some so-

cial work practice theorists, holism or the ho-

listic, is the fundamental theme of their work.

Maria Joan O'Neil is one of these.

O'Neil introduces her particular form of practice

by saying:

> "The fundamental theoretical perspective
> presented throughout the text is ecological
> and holistic" (O'Neil, 1984, p.XIV).

O'Neil's explanation of the meaning of holism is,

as follows:

> "In essence, holism refers to a totality in
> perspective, with sensitivity to all of the
> parts or levels that constitute the whole
> and to their interdependance and related-
> ness" (O'Neil, 1984, p.2).

For the practitioner, O'Neil's statement of es-

sence could be used as a direction for practice,

a prescription to perceive the totality which, in

O'Neil's further elaboration, meant the totality

of the person, including the totality of the per-

son's needs.

O'Neil's view of the totality of the person is

revealed in her "triplex of holism", a diagram in

which she attempts to categorize all the potential dimensions of the person (see Diagram 1).
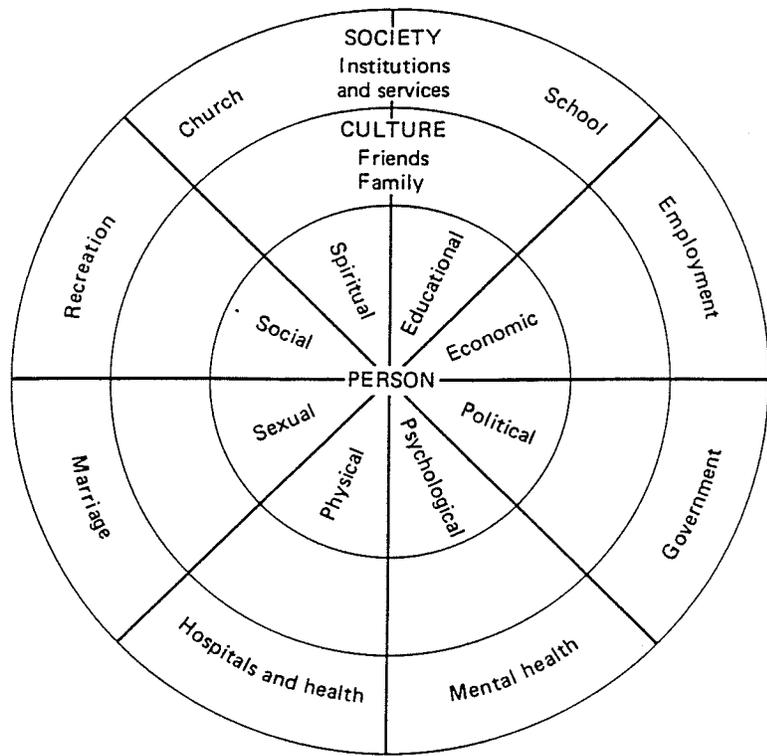
DIAGRAM 1 Holism in human services.

O'Neil's focus is on the whole person with his or her whole hierarchy of needs. The person, with his or her multiple needs exists within the immediate environment of family, friends and community. All are ultimately contained within the larger society. Further, O'Neil sees each need as being related to other needs and as being felt or actualized at different times in the person's life cycle. Assessment for O'Neil involves the identification of all needs felt at that point in a person's life and then the selection of the priority problem with its attendant needs.

When O'Neil considers the place of holism in Social Work, she basically draws on what she calls ecological-systems theory. This is a combination of general systems theory and an ecological perspective, particularly as expressed by the life model of Carel Germain. In terms of practice, O'Neil formulates a generalist approach, sometimes referring to a practitioner as an ecological generalist, though usually as a generalist, omitting the ecological qualifier. Her general method, which proceeds through the stages of en-

gagement, data collection, assessment, interven-
tion, evaluation and termination, is the process
elaboration of her approach. O'Neil concludes
each stage of the process with a statement on the
use of her holistic foundation for that particu-
lar stage. The practitioner saw this as an at-
tempt to maintain a sense of holistic orientation
throughout the text.

O'Neil's holistic foundation of values, knowledge
and skills is drawn from basic social work
values, knowledge and skills and presented in an
ecological framework. (See Diagram 2, page 21)

O'Neil's use of the concept of holism to mean be-
ing comprehensive was the most significant fea-
ture of O'Neil's approach for the practitioner's
purposes.

DIAGRAM 2   An Holistic Conceptualization of the Foundation for General Social Work Practice

ECOLOGY		
PERSON	IN	ENVIRONMENT

VALUES

Dignity and worth of every person	Practice principles Code of ethics	Democratic, caring society

KNOWLEDGE

Ego psychology	Role	Organizational theory
Developmental theories	Socialization	Political science
Biological	Behavioral theory	Economic theory
Sexual	Communication	Cultural anthropology
Psychosocial	Stress theory	Systems theory
Cognitive	Ecological-systems theory	Community resources
Moral		Social policy
Spiritual		
Self-actualization		

SKILLS

Relationship skills	Problem-solving skills	Political skills
Listening	Problem/need	Providing evidence
Responding	identification	Bargaining
Guiding	Data collection	Organizing
Paraphrasing	Assessment	Publicizing
Clarifying	Problem prioritization	Legal action
Confronting	Goal setting, planning,	Developing policies
Referring	contracting	Organizing demonstrations
Feeling/sensing	Evaluation	
	Termination	
	Professional skills	
	Recording/research	
	Workload management	
	Public speaking/	
	professional writing	
	Teamwork	

WORK ENVIRONMENT

Client systems	Agency of employment	Client-related resources
Individuals		Profession
Groups		Society at large
Families		
Local neighborhoods		
or communities		

SOCIAL WORKER IN WORK ENVIRONMENT

There is one other interesting aspect of O'Neil's
material. She traces the development of the eco-
logical perspective and general systems theory
back to their roots in holistic theory, first in-
troduced as a philosophical theory by Jan Smuts
in his book Holism and Evolution in 1926.

The other practice theorist who presents a holis-
tic formulation of social work practice and whom
the practitioner explored for the purposes of
this practicum is Shirley Grosser. In her arti-
cle "Educating the 'Holistic' Social Worker: A
Perspective and Approach for Practice" (Grosser,
1975), Grosser articulates operational principles
for practice which the practitioner found very
useful in the development of his practice. The
practitioner interpreted and used Grosser's oper-
ational principles as a general guide for the de-
velopment of his practice.

Grosser sees the concept of holism as providing,
in part, a philosophical perspective for prac-
tice. Grosser explains that philosophical per-
spective to mean that a philosophical intent

should guide our choice of behavioral theory and of concepts for practice. For Grosser, that philosophical intent means first, our assumptions and beliefs about man and second, our values for man as reflected in our societal relations or social ethics.

Grosser recognizes that holism means an existence of something more or "other" than the sum of parts. In Grosser's view, that other is man in association or in-relation who, in other words, does not live as a separate, self-contained entity, but for whom life is life-in-relation. One implication of this for a practitioner is as Grosser says:

> "A holistically-committed practitioner may
> avoid those behavioral notions which seek to
> measure and classify groupings, or those
> which seek to justify apparent cleavages and
> dichotomies in the human condition..........
> While this may be a 'blind side' to the ho-
> listically committed practitioner, he may,
> alternatively, expend more energies in the
> tasks of integrating his own behaviours and
> goals with the behaviours and goals of other
> 'actors' in the situation; he may expend
> less energies in the tasks of acquisition
> and refinement of specific methodologies and
> techniques" (Grosser, 1975, p. 31).

As a general guide to practice the practitioner

interpreted Grosser's above principles of prac-

tice to mean that through dialogical relation-

ships practitioners would align their practices

with the persons with whom they were working, and

that practice activities would be the outcome of

those interpersonal encounters.

Grosser specifies what she believes would be the

view of man and the social order that a holistic

practitioner would hold, as follows:

> "We would view man as a self-actualizing,
> self-regulating, rational, responsible, emo-
> tional, spiritual, growing and developing,
> innovation-producing and interdependent so-
> cial being; as one who has the capacity to
> make discriminative judgements; and as one
> who can select, when given the choice, those
> options which will provide the greatest
> benefits to self and others.
> Therefore we would value a social order for
> man which reflects the creation of opportu-
> nities to encourage the exercising of these
> attributes and capacities. For example, we
> would seek mutuality in the planning of so-
> cial and societal change; we would support
> the emergence of human activity which seeks
> to discover and to make explicit the avail-
> able options and alternatives; we would en-
> courage forms of citizen participation that
> demonstrate the exercising of more than to-
> ken choice and of decision making capaci-
> ties; we would encourage innovative and
> unique human problem-solving activities"
> (Grosser, 1975, p.32).

Apart from the philosophical perspective that
Grosser sees the concept of Holism as providing,
she also sees three behavioral constructs flowing
from holism: namely, 1) a systemic approach, 2) a
situational perspective, and 3) a planned change
approach. These three behavioral constructs con-
stitute Grosser's operational principles for
practice.

In terms of the systemic approach Grosser sug-
gests that the notion of systemic linkage is an
important concept for practice. Grosser explains
linkages to mean patterned interactions over time
between systems which express a system's unique
purposes, values, form of social organization and
notion of its task and maintenance functions.
Also, behavior as a patterned interaction is an
expression of the unique interplay of each sys-
tem's values, functions and organization.
Grosser further explains that the concept of
linkage provides a means of analysis for a prac-
titioner. First if a group of persons demon-
strates systemic attributes then it can be con-
sidered to be systemically linked. Second, unique

expressions of behavior can be differentiated
when comparing systems of the same order. Third,
take gross measurements of attributes such as
"strong" or "weak" can be taken. Fourth, differ-
ent attributes or their interplay can be consid-
ered as possible locations for interventive ac-
tivity. Lastly, interventive activities to devel-
op new systems, to strengthen the linkages of an
existing system or to end a system can be consid-
ered.

In terms of the situational perspective, Grosser
explains that it is this perspective of a social
situation which enables a practitioner to make
professional judgements about a system. For
Grosser, the social situation is the arena for
the interplay between the life tasks of persons,
systems and the social conditions. The four at-
tributes of a social situation are time, space,
focus and members. It is the members of a situa-
tion that allow a practitioner to make profes-
sional judgements; for it is the members, includ-
ing observers who are outside the situation, who
interpret the situation as it affects them and

determine whether they want help and what kind of
help. These interpretations by the members of a
situation (including a practitioner's interpreta-
tion as a "significant" observer) help the prac-
titioner make knowledgeable, professional judge-
ments about the kinds of activities that should
be undertaken and the goals toward which those
activities would be directed.

Grosser explains her third construct, the planned
change approach, in terms of four elements:

    1.   deliberate intent in planning
    2.   orderly procedure such as identify-
        ing change-agent, client, target and
        action systems.
    3.   rationality in selecting appropriate
        strategies
    4.   knowledgeable judgements in action

In combination, Grosser's three constructs allow
for considerable overlapping and flexibility. For
example, she cites the use of the situational
perspective and situational assessment to identi-
fy change-agent, client, target and action sys-
tems as an example of the orderly procedure part
of the planned change process. In this aspect of
the flexibility and as she calls it
"non-prescriptive, open-ended" characteristic of

her model Grosser differs from many theorists who specify methods, procedures and techniques in detail. The practitioner believes that Grosser's approach supports the capacity to be "self-regulating" and to make "choices" beneficial for all, as Grosser states.

Grosser's description of the social situation as the dramatic representation of the dynamic reciprocal interplay of life tasks of persons with systems and social conditions confirmed, for the practitioner the legitimacy of including social conditions in the assessment of the situation. Characterizing the interplay as dynamic and reciprocal encouraged the practitioner to be aware of the complexity of the relationships and influences in a situation.

In summation, the literature reviewed directs social workers to view person(s) in-situation-within-social conditions as a whole. Dynamic interactions and transactions can and do occur within the whole. While situations and social conditions may impact on the person, the person can

act on them. In that capacity for action lies
the potential for personal and social change.

CHAPTER 3   THE PRACTICUM

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the design of the practi-

cum and the actual activities it involved.

The first section includes: a brief description

of the holistic social work approach used in this

practicum, the purpose, goals and setting of the

practicum are described, and an extended discus-

sion of the holistic approach. The section then

closes with a comment on evaluation.

The second section describes the activities un-

dertaken in the setting of the practicum.

The Practicum Design

The Nature of the Practicum

This practicum was a developmental exercise in

the holistic approach to social work practice un-

dertaken at the Winnipeg Education Centre. The

holistic approach began its evolution in the

1970's, part and parcel of the movement toward

generalist forms of social work practice which

sought to transcend the conventional divisions of

social work practice. Broadly speaking, in the holistic approach the practitioner attends to the totality of a situation. His essential concern is to be comprehensive -- that is, holistic.

In essence the holistic approach views the world of the person as a whole. The approach directs the practitioner to consideration or consciousness of the whole, i.e., the entirety of the physical, psychological, and social person. The practitioner comes to realize or know the world of the person by seeing the relationships that exist. Problems and concerns of the person no longer seem to be isolated matters, separated from the world of the person. The holistic view enables the practitioner to see those problems in terms of relationships.

Thus, the holistic approach extends the practitioner's view beyond that of the isolated person. The focus is no longer fixed onto the person or part of the person in isolation, but instead follows the flow of the interactions and transactions of the world of the person. Following this

approach the practitioner is able to understand

and assess what is happening in the world of the

person. By seeing connections the practitioner

is able to understand the changes in the world of

the person that contributed to a problem.

Through his or her relationship with the world of

the person, the practitioner is also able to see

how future changes can be influenced or effected.

The holistic aproach enables a practitioner to

see things differently from the fragmentation of

the traditional approaches which viewed persons

in isolation from their world. The holistic view

allows, as Moreau says:

> "consideration of the totality of the
> totality of the individual in a social,
> political and economic context - the full
> person in environment gestalt" (Moreau,
> 1979).

This practitioner became interested in the holis-

tic approach because it seemed to offer the pos-

sibility of transcending the divisions and asso-

ciated limitations of more traditional approaches

to the practice of social work.

Unfortunately, as Grosser notes, the very newness

of the holistic approach to social work means

that it is still "undeveloped and unexplicated'

(Grosser, 1975). This is still, as Hutton points

out, very much an approach that requires new ways

of thinking and acting (Hutton, 1986).

Given this new and as yet undeveloped state of

the approach, this practicum is conceived of as a

developmental exercise in the field. It is a

preliminary effort to examine some of the present

actualities and look toward some of the future

possibilities of the approach in practice.

The holistic approach to social work practice re-

quires that the practitioner exercise a high lev-

el of professional judgement and responsibility.

As Grosser tells us,

> "We know that intervention is thus non-
> prescriptive, that it is left open-
> ended...We know that it demands therefore
> that the practitioner must be situationally
> inventive and professionally self-regulating
> in his selection and use of strategies and
> techniques for change" (Grosser, 1975).

The practicum reflects the non-prescriptive and

professionally self-regulating nature of the practice as indicated by the theory. These theoretical indications, however, do not imply that the practitioner works in an arbitrary or idiosyncratic manner. The principles of holistic practice emphasize mutuality, dialogue and dialogical relationships, interrelatedness and integration with others in the process of the practitioner's work. The holistic approach also stresses the importance of the practitioner focusing on the situation and the needs of the people involved in it. It de-emphasizes the focus on methods and procedures. The importance of being wary of easy answers and oversimplifications in response to the complexity of situations in a complex world also guide the practice of the holistic approach.

The emphasis on relationships, the focus on people's needs in the given situations, and certainly the avoidance of neat and easy answers are all characteristics of the developmental nature of this practicum.

DISCUSSIONS OF PURPOSES AND GOALS

The general purpose of this practicum was to si-
multaneously develop and operationalize a holis-
tic approach to the practice of social work. The
practicum practitioner proposed to undertake this
practice with the Inner City Social Work Program
of the Winnipeg Education Centre. The practi-
tioner further proposed to address (within the
limits of the practicum) the needs of the people
comprising the situation of the Inner City Social
Work Program through a holistic social work prac-
tice approach.

As previously introduced, the practitioner had
been searching for a new form of social work
practice. The impetus for this search had arisen
from his previous experiences, at times as a
counsellor or therapist, at times as a community
development worker. In each instance, the prac-
titioner had struggled with the limiting and con-
fining focus of each approach, as he understood
it at the time.

The practitioner was interested both in personal

and social change and wanted to link "the person-
al and the political" in a way that did not di-
minish nor give inordinate emphasis to one or the
other. Though he had some knowledge and working
experience of those links, neither his knowledge
nor his experience were of a sufficient depth.

It was the literature on the holistic orientation
that provided the theoretical depth linking per-
sonal and social change. But the practitioner
needed to experience that depth in practice and
to ascertain whether the promise indicated in the
literature could indeed be realized in practice.
Through the practicum, he intended to explore the
possibilities of the holistic approach and to de-
velop a sufficiently high degree of proficiency
in this form of practice.

THE SETTING

The Inner City Social Work Program of the Winni-
peg Education Centre was the setting for the
practicum.

As part of the School of Social Work of the Uni-

versity of Manitoba, the Inner City Social Work
Program offers a four year off-campus program
leading to a B. S. W. degree.

THE START OF THE PROGRAM

The program was initiated in 1981 as an opportu-
nity for adults with an inner city background,
whether in Winnipeg or elsewhere.

THE STUDENTS

In the spring of 1985, 65 students were divided
among the four year levels of the program.
(Since the start of the program in 1981, 11 other
students had left the program.)

The average age of the students was approximately
31 years. About 50% of the students were native.
Roughly 29% were recent immigrants. The vast ma-
jority of the students were women -- approximate-
ly 70%.

The 65 students in the program had been chosen
from a total of 668 applicants. The selection
had been on the basis of the following formalized

criteria:

    a. Need. All places in the centre shall be reserved for persons who have tradition- ally not had the opportunity to obtain a post-secondary education, whether for social, economic, or cultural reasons, or due to a lack of formal educational achievement.

    b. Potential for employment.

    c. Knowledge, experience and involvement with the inner-city.

    d. Applicants must be at least 21 years of age on or before September 20th of the year of their admission to the program.

    e. Every effort should be made to have the student body reflect the population pattern of the inner-city in terms of ethnic background.

Each of the students selected went through an elaborate, three-phase selection process, which included a screening of applications and refer- ence letters, interviews by two panels and a three day in-service.

THE STAFF

In the spring of 1985, the program had five full-time staff and two extra sessional staff for the field instruction. The staff, then and now, are all staff of the School of Social Work at the University of Manitoba.

THE PROGRAM

The Inner City Social Work Program (ICSWP) is identical in curriculum, to the B. S. W. program employed on campus. Similarly, the degree offered through ICSWP is considered to be equivalent with respect to curriculum and graduating standards to the degree given on campus. The program at ICSWP is delivered over a 10 1/2 month period. For all year groups, a 7 1/2 week, block field placement occurs in March and April of each year.

THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The Inner City Social Work Program is housed in an old one-storey brick building on Chester Avenue in the Elmwood neighbourhood of Winnipeg. The building used to be an elementary school. It

is now shared by ICSWP with the other program of
the Winnipeg Education Centre -- an educational
program similar to the Social Work Program.

Each of the two programs operates in what amounts
to its own half of the building. The space is
cramped. There is no extra room for anything
other than bare essentials. Staff must make do
with a few desks crammed into office rooms. The
administration office, for instance, is full of
support staff desks and other equipment. One
room is set aside as a student lounge; another
functions as a small library. The rest of the
rooms serve as classrooms. They are occupied on
a tight schedule.

THE PRACTICUM APPROACH

As has already been indicated, the overall ap-
proach of the practicum was that of a holistic
approach to social work practice, including ho-
listic assessment and holistic action or inter-
vention.

The approach proceeded through three parts or di-

nensions, similar to the three phases delineated by Germain and Gitterman as follows: the initial phase, which is equated with assessment; the on-going phase, which is equated with professional action or interventions; and the ending phase. However, as Germain and Gitterman point out, the phases are presented as separate entities primarily to facilitate analysis of their component elements. They are, in other words, separated largely for the purpose of achieving intellectual clarity in the context of an abstract discussion and presentation in the literature. In actual practice, Germain and Gitterman go on to say, the phases are by no means always distinct (Germain and Gitterman, 1980). Indeed, O'Neil, who conceives of somewhat different stages, indicates that in reality the stages frequently occur simultaneously or out of order, and that the stages are not mutually exclusive (O'Neil, 1984).

The comments of these theorists certainly are relevant to the process employed in this practicum. It was this practitioner's experience that the parts involved in his holistic practice often

occurred in what might best be described as a
series of intertwining spirals.

The holistic approach of the practicum consisted
of a perspective of the totality of the so-
cial situation of the Inner City Social Work Pro-
gram at the Winnipeg Education Centre. Within
that comprehensive view of the total or whole
situation the practitioner focused on the people
in the situation and observed their dynamic rela-
tions, their interrelatedness, and their interde-
pendence.

The focus was on people in dynamic interplay with
other systems in the situation. In systemic
terms, the focus was on people and other systems
and their interactions and transactions.

The intent of the approach was to assess the sit-
uation holistically and, in response, to under-
take relevant holistic activities or interven-
tions.

As for the client, in this approach the potential

client or clients were considered to be anyone who was part of the situation. In terms of the practitioner's point of entry into the situation, a pragmatic decision was made in conjunction with the director of the program to consider the students as the initial clients. Beyond that, the practitioner considered the possibility of a wide range and combination of clients. Thus, the clients could be a combination of individuals and groups, possibly other systems or groups linked to the situation, or conceivably even the situation as a whole. Another possibility was that the client(s) or combination of clients could change.

As with these considerations of the potential client systems -- the wide range, the various combinations and possibilities -- the potential change agent system, the target system(s) and the action system(s) also consisted of a wide range and of numerous combinations and possibilities. In keeping with the practicum's holistic approach, the practitioner did not predetermine who or what the change agent, client, target, or ac-

tion systems were to be. That determination was
seen to depend on the unique dynamics of the
unique situation and the unique people and other
systems that comprised the situation. It was
also considered that these designated systems·
would not remain static, but would change over
time, again depending on the dynamics at any par-
ticular time.

COMMENT ON EVALUATION OF THE PRACTICUM

The practitioner used an informal system to eval-
uate the practicum. No formalized evaluation
procedures or tools were utilized.

The informal evaluation was based on self-
evaluation, utilizing individualized criteria,
personal opinion and professional judgement
(O'Neil, 1984). Specifically, the practitioner's
individualized criterion of evaluation was the
degree of progress that had been made toward ful-
filling the general purpose and goals of the
practicum. This evaluation was based upon the
personal opinion and professional judgement of
the practitioner.

Evaluation was ongoing throughout the course of the practicum. A final evaluation was done upon completion of the practicum. An assessment/measurement of the degree of difficulty involved was considered as a factor in the final judgement of the practitioner. The judgement was made in gross measurement terms, as reported in Chapter 4, The Report on the Practicum.

Various circumstances that influenced the implementation of the practicum and that are relevant to the evaluation of the practicum are also reported and discussed in Chapter 4, The Report on the Practicum.

During the evolution of the practice, ongoing evaluations of the specific activities of the practice were conducted not only by the practitioner himself, but jointly between the practitioner and the on-site supervisor, and finally between the practitioner and the practicum supervisor. These evaluations are not documented in the practicum report.

PRACTICUM ACTIVITIES -- THE EVOLUTION OF THE

PRACTICE

> "The conscious use of professional judgement
> represents the first intervention in a proc-
> ess of planned change" (Grosser, 1975).

The practitioner's first practice action was un-

dertaken as he drove to the Winnipeg Education

Centre in March 1985. It consisted of noting the

distance between the Centre and the inner-city.

At that time, the practitioner was change agent,

client system, target system and action system

all in one system as he told himself to hurry so

as not to be late for his meeting.

The practitioner wondered how it had come to pass

that the setting for a program designed exclu-

sively for inner-city people would be so rela-

tively far from the inner-city itself. This ob-

servation would take on greater meaning for the

practitioner later when he learned, first-hand,

of the transportation difficulties of inner-city

students in the program who were also single par-

ents having to contend with child-care arrange-

ments and student timetables.

The initial contact and subsequent meeting in March and April were with the director of the program and then with the staff person who worked half-time as the personal counsellor for the students. This staff person was designated by the director as the practitioners on-site supervisor.

As well as providing an opportunity to finalize the practicum arrangements, these initial meetings were also used for assessment purposes. Information was collected on the program -- such as its mandate and purpose, structure and organization -- as well as information on the staff and student populations.

Also of interest to the practitioner were the links between the program and other systems. Thus, the program is directly linked to the School of Social Work at the University of Manitoba to which it is administratively directly accountable. The director of the program has sole authority over the internal organization and operation of the program. However, he shares authority with the director of the education pro-

gram at the Winnipeg Education Centre for the operation of the centre as a whole. Though academic authority and decision-making power over the program reside with the School of Social Work, the funding for the program comes from the Provincial Department of Education through the Adult and Continuing Education Division. The Department of Education has some authority over policy.

The practitioner was also interested in the program's links with the inner-city community. Apparently the school was connected to the inner-city mainly through the inner-city agencies that served as locations for field placement. The practitioner was also aware that the students themselves were a link with the inner-city. Finally, another potential link was the educational content of the curriculum.

The practitioner was also interested in how students entered the program, and how the selection criteria defined the student population. This would in part be related to how the staff viewed the students. (Information on these selection

criteria is provided, above, as part of the description of the setting.)

In the beginning of May, 1985, the practitioner entered the program to begin a two-month, full-time residency. Over the course of that two month period, the practitioner worked with 23 individual students of the ICSWP for a total of 70 sessions or meetings. There were also six organized group meetings and six other meetings with informal groups.

Four out of the five full-time staff (one was unavailable) and one of the two sessional staff were interviewed. The practitioner met almost daily with the program counsellor, who acted as the on-site supervisor. With the other four staff members there were a total of 18 meetings. In addition, one of the so-called "parachute teachers" who taught one course in the program was interviewed twice.

Finally, four of the staff of the education program were each interviewed one time.

Surprisingly, as the work of the practitioner was only promoted within ICSWP, four education students came for counselling.

Besides the formalized sessions and meetings, the practitioner met several other students and had numerous informal contacts and chats in the halls and the student lounge.

At the start of the practicum, the uncertainty associated with the holistic approach to practice was a definite issue for the practitioner. Holistic practice does not offer a neat and tidy package, with specific procedures and "packaged" expectations and clients. Later, the practitioner would read Hutton's description of this aspect of the practice; she refers to it as "unstructured," as "where the path is still not developed" (Hutton, 1986). Actually, the practitioner had been prepared, somewhat, for this uncertainty as a result of his interviews with Walter Lampe, one of the developers of holistic practice at the School of Social Work of the University of Manitoba (Walter Lampe, personal in-

terview, April 1985). Though Lampe had cautioned
the practitioner, the uncertainty was neverthe-
less unsettling.

Armed only with his uncertainty, the practitioner
faced a difficult issue directly connected to the
unknown quality of holistic practice. The direc-
tor of the program had requested that a defined,
developed program be prepared for presentation
and delivery to the students. But the practi-
tioner shared Lampe's opinion that a problem as-
sociated with the holistic approach is that when
it comes to telling people what one is going to
do, the holistic practitioner cannot answer spe-
cifically or definitely (Lampe, 1985).

A major issue that the practitioner encountered
early in the development of the practicum was the
question of how to make contact with the stu-
dents. Within the first two weeks, the practi-
tioner identified this as a major problem and
designated it as a practice issue for further ex-
ploration. Unfortunately, a solution was needed
immediately.

The practitioner was definitely feeling the pressure of the requirements of the practicum. Not only was there the difficulty he was experiencing in responding to the director's request for a defined program that could be structured into the situation, but the pressure of the practicum expectations was another influence on the practice that originated from the change agent's very own system, i.e., graduate studies.

Toward the end of the second week the practitioner had formal sessions with "only" three students, two of whom had been referred to him by the program counsellor. The third had decided to talk to the practitioner on his own.

After the practitioner introduced himself, explained what he was doing and offered his assistance, two of the students raised concerns related to the two-month block field practice from which they and the rest of the students had recently returned.

One student's issue was with the field placement.

It involved a serious problem in his interaction
with the field instructor. Specifically, he felt
he was being treated "as if I was dumb". The
student's response to the problem had been to de-
cide to acquiesce to what he perceived to be the
field instructor's negative view of him. He de-
cided to play along, to hide his knowledgability
and "play dumb". His rationale for this behavior
was that he feared that to do otherwise would
lead to a confrontation with the instructor and
that he might even end up not getting his degree.

Even worse, perhaps, was his other response to
the situation. He began -- in light of these in-
terpersonal difficulties -- to doubt his decision
to become a social worker.

The other student's issue also resulted from
field practice. One aspect of the work of the
field placement agency -- community development
-- had sparked the student's interest. He now
wished to learn more about it. Indeed, he was
graduating that summer and was interested in ac-
tually becoming a community development worker.

But as the practitioner would later learn, community development was apparently not part of the program's curriculum. This gave the practitioner cause to wonder about a situation in which inner--city students would return to their community to do social work and yet be unfamiliar with community development.

Field placement, the practitioner later learned, was indeed the source of many students' concerns, and for a variety of reasons. The practitioner would eventually work with several students, like the one above, whose doubts and anxieties about being social workers were related to their field placement. The practitioner wondered how the program handled this negative interplay between the students and their field placement. He wondered if there had ever been any opportunities for these personal issues to be aired during the course of the field placement.

As part of the practitioner's continuing general assessment of the situation during the first weeks of the practicum, he went to the student

lounge to mingle with and talk to the students.
In the course of these discussions, which in-
volved several students and occurred over three
or four days, the most frequently voiced issue
was the students' experience of overload. Not
only in these conversations, but later throughout
the entire period of the practicum, this concern
about being overloaded was continually raised by
students. For the students, overload consisted
of a combination of pressures related to academic
difficulties, family or other interpersonal prob-
lems, money and time.

Worse, a few students described themselves as
feeling -- or actually being -- "burnt out".
These were all third and fourth year students.
They talked of having become deeply frustrated,
discouraged, or downright angry about the way
things were in the program. A couple of them
said they had given up trying to do anything
about their issues and just wanted to get the re-
maining year or two over with and get out. In
his initial interviews with the staff, the prac-
titioner had been told by some of them about the

overloaded condition of the students. Some of
the staff had, in the previous year, attempted to
restructure the program in order to lighten the
students' load. But apparently their would-be
solution had failed to win the approval of the
School of Social Work council.

Based on these reports both from students and
staff on the prevalence of overload and burnout
among the students, the practitioner decided to
request meetings with each of the four year
groups to discuss the problem. When he had dis-
cussed his intentions with one of the students
who earlier had complained of burnout, the stu-
dent urged him to go ahead and do it. Certainly
this seemed a most appropriate issue upon which
to begin formal meetings with the students.

The practitioner's plan was to present a mini-
workshop on burnout. The workshop would describe
and explore not only the relationship between the
burnout syndrome and the immediate situation in
which a person lives or works, but also the rela-
tionship that sometimes exists between the burn-

out syndrome and the conditions of the larger so-
cietal situation of which the person also is a
part. This analysis of the factors which con-
tribute to burnout would then be related to var-
ious strategies by means of which the person
could potentially cope with and/or change the
situation. The mini-presentation was also de-
signed to demonstrate that burnout can happen to
people in a wide variety of situations, from
workers in their job situations and students in
their school situations to mothers in their par-
enting situations and spouses in their marriage
situations.

In general, the practitioner's purpose was to
present a holistic way of viewing the burnout
phenomenon in terms of all the relevant varia-
bles, personal and social.

The four meetings were approved, and classroom
time for them was arranged with the instructors
by the director. The meetings were held in the
third week of the practicum.

Surprisingly and disappointingly, the degree of involvement and participation by the students during the meetings was minimal. There were on average only nine or ten questions or comments per meeting. This was not the kind of discussion that was wanted.

In the assessments that followed, three of the instructors pointed out that the students, though quiet, had been attentive and interested. The practitioner too had sensed interest, but was at a loss to account for the lack of interaction. Attentiveness, in the opinion of two of the instructors, was the best for which one could hope. What had happened, they said, was typical of the classroom situation.

Later in the practicum, in relation to an assessment of another situation, the practitioner realized that a mistake may have been made. He had come to understand that the passive reception of information by the students was the typical pattern of interaction in the classroom situation. It followed, then, that by setting the meetings

in the classroom the practitioner may have unwit-
tingly indicated to the students that they were
to assume their traditional roles. From another
point of view, the classroom-meeting situation
could be seen as a transaction in which the
practitioner-as-instructor in the teacher-student
interaction paid more attention to his material
and was personally more involved with it than he
was with the students.

Despite the apparent failure of the mini-
workshops, some students identified with the
burnout syndrome and came to tell the practition-
er about their personal situations. Others spoke
to him in the lounge about their problems with
burnout. There were increasingly more and more
indications that the overload problem was seri-
ously affecting the students.

Through these dialogues with the students, the
practitioner continued to learn about each stu-
dent's personal difficulties and to observe that,
in this situation, there were a multiplicity of
factors that contributed to the widespread over-

burdened condition.

Toward the end of the week, and by the beginning of the fourth, more and more students began coming for help. Finding a private place to work with them was a problem. Many of their issues were highly personal and sensitive. But while privacy was required, none was available. On one occasion, a student could not stop from breaking into tears as she sat at a table in the staff office room since she had nowhere to go.

This lack of counselling space inhibited students from seeking help for serious personal issues they needed to sort out. The unavailability of adequate counselling facilities was emerging in the practitioner's view as a major issue in this situation.

To illustrate the variety and scope of the students' issues and concerns, a list compiled from the records of the practitioner is presented below. The items are in no particular order.

Students' Issues and Concerns

- problems related to field placement

- marital or couple problems

- abuse of female students

- parenting problems

- financial problems

- abuse of students' own children

- child-care problems

- burnout

- feeling overloaded

- courses too hard

- identity problems related to family origin

- hassles with friends

- academics too hard

- no place to study at home

- no time for children

- upset with the quality of teaching

- no time because of children and school
  overload; no time generally

- doubts about being a social worker

- need help with community organizing

- feelings of inadequacy

- dealing with accusations of child abuse

- being treated like high school students

-tired all the time

-conflicts with staff

-problems with siblings living in same house

-fed up with the program; general problems
 with the school

-need help with community development

-frustrated with teacher-student relation-
 ships

-hard time coping with the stress

-feeling lonely and isolated

-problems understanding the courses

-poor quality of education in the program

The great gulf between the high demand for coun-
selling on the one hand, and the limited amount
of the service the practitioner was able to pro-
vide the students on the other, prompted the
practitioner to reclarify, in light of the situa-
tion, the practice issue of working with individ-
uals in a holistic approach.

By examining the situation of the individuals --
the students -- the practitioner could clearly
see that most of them were experiencing the con-

dition of overload. In many ways -- the diffi-
culty of the courses, the heavy schedule, and so
on -- the program was overburdening the students.
Indeed, for many of the students, their overload-
ed condition was the major effect the program was
having on them. Yet, in relationship to the pro-
gram that was overburdening them, the students
basically could do very little. They had no di-
rect control over the situation. The power re-
sided with the program. For various reasons,
what little influence some individuals did try to
exert failed to produce satisfactory results.

The students were then left feeling angry, frus-
trated, discouraged, or even hopeless. Natural-
ly, such feelings only added to their stress
load. Overburdened to such an extent, the stu-
dents felt unable to do much more to help them-
selves.

One of the major effects the students had on the
practitioner was to sensitize him to their situa-
tion. In the interaction with the practitioner,
they made their situation known by revealing

their problems and concerns. The practitioner

conceived of his purpose as being to receive that

knowledge and act on it. One obvious possibility

for action was to work directly with the individ-

ual students in the immediate situation to alle-

viate the stressful effects the situation was

having on them. From a holistic perspective, al-

ternative strategies pointed in the direction of

establishing some connection between the practi-

tioner's counselling activity and some program-

related activity which was producing the overload

effects. The practitioner's objective was to de-

termine the possibilities for those alternative

strategies.

In his continuing meetings with students as a

counsellor, the practitioner worked with several

single-parent mothers. For them, the academic

demands of the program were compounded by the

myriad responsibilities involved in caring for

their children.

There was, for instance, the need for child-care

arrangements to be made and maintained. If day-

care was involved, this meant transporting chil-

dren to and from the day-care centre. Sometimes

child-care involved the student's family, and

this often led to (or exacerbated) family prob-

lems.

Several of the single parents suffered from fi-

nancial difficulties.

Then there was the matter of finding enough time

in the evenings to care for the children while

attempting to attend to homework and studies.

Some of the single parents found it hard to con-

tinue to nurture their children in this situa-

tion. They found themselves becoming frustrated,

annoyed and angry with their children.

In response to the situation of the single moth-

ers, the practitioner saw several possibilities

for action. One of these would be the develop-

ment of a day-care facility for participants in

the program. The space problem at the Winnipeg

Education Centre precluded the establishment of a

day-care centre in the building. However, the
possibility did exist to locate one in a nearby
facility.

Another possibility was the formation of a
single-parent support group. Following up on
this idea, the practitioner found that such a
group had, in fact, been formed during the past
year. But the practitioner also learned that the
group had fizzled out or was on the brink of fiz-
zling out. The group had not met for some time.
A few of the single parents said it had been dif-
ficult for them to maintain involvement with the
group because of scheduling difficulties and, in
general, because it was difficult for them simply
to find the time.

One staff person was of the opinion that the
group needed the assistance of a facilitator, but
that none of the staff were able to continue to
provide that kind of support.

The practitioner began to realize that, because
of the academic demands and pressures and the ex-

isting strain on the resources of people within the situation, there was little time or energy left to go toward building something new.

While talking with students and staff about the day-care and single-parent strategies, the practitioner learned about the study groups which had been set up. Apparently, these study groups were largely student-initiated.

The study groups had become firmly entrenched in response to an extremely difficult research course. To some extent, they would still meet to study for exams.

The success and viability of the study groups was definitely directly related to the academic needs of the students and their fear of failing a difficult course. Some money had even been found to pay one of the students -- an individual with excellent research skills who was already tutoring other students -- to tutor the research groups.

There was another group about which the practi-

tioner wanted to know. That group was WECSA, the
Winnipeg Education Centre Student Association, or
"the student council", as many students referred
to it.

The first impression the practitioner got from
the students was that the student council "wasn't
getting anywhere". Again, many felt they could
not afford the time to become sufficiently in-
volved. Given the students' lack of influence on
the program, the practitioner wondered about the
potential of the student council to serve as a
power base for the students. But then there did
not appear to be much of a movement forming
around the council.

The practitioner also talked to a few members of
the staff about the student council. All saw it
as not being sufficiently organized. Opinions
differed as to the cause of this disorganization.
One opinion had it that conflict and bickering
between students was to blame. Another opinion
connected the Winnipeg Education Centre (W.E.C.)
Council to the issue. Apparently the W.E.C.

Council consisted of staff from both the education and social work programs and dealt with overall matters of internal organization at the centre. The impression the practitioner received was that the student association was having difficulty handling some bureaucratic questions involved in the issue of student representation on the W.E.C. Council.

Over the next while, the practitioner talked to some of the social work students, individually and in small groups, who were actively involved with the student council issue. The students expressed both strong interest in a student council and frustration with its development (or lack thereof). Some felt they did not know enough politically, and that only those students who had been politically active in their countries of emigration were savvy enough to handle the present situation.

And once again, there were the familiar complaints about problems with time -- in this case, the amount of time that work with the student

council required and yet how little free time everyone had.

The practitioner identified working with the student council as a possible action strategy, and the students expressed strong interest in the possibility of obtaining much-needed support and assistance.

Still, it was clear that a much more comprehensive strategy for action was needed. The practitioner's assessment of the overloaded or overburdened situation of the students had revealed that they were caught in a dilemma and were unable to do much more to help themselves. Student-intitiated resources desperately needed development. Students were expressing their need for counselling support to deal with their problems, their crises and their personal development issues. The practitioner was almost completely occupied working with individual students. There were indications that more than several students had given up on looking for help or seeking to make changes and had decided to settle for merely

trying to keep themselves going until they were
finished their studies. But the needs left unat-
tended would undoubtedly have some adverse ef-
fects.

Staff told the practitioner that consideration
was being given to cancelling the half-time coun-
sellor position in the next year. The rationale
was apparently financial. However, the practi-
tioner had the impression that this possibility
was only being given slight consideration. Yet,
knowing the needs of the students and some of the
situations they were dealing with, the practi-
tioner could not understand how the possibility
of not having a counsellor could even be given
slight consideration.

Thus, the assessment indicated that in the exist-
ing situation, less help and less resources were
available than needed. To understand both the
changes that would be needed to provide more and
the rationale for the contemplated change that
would mean less (cutting the half-time counsellor
position), the practitioner needed to look at the

counselling situation in relation to the whole

situation.

In order to better understand the place of the

counselling function within the context of the

program as a whole, the original purpose and man-

date of the Inner City Social Work Program was

carefully considered. According to a report en-

titled "Inner City Social Work Program," Univer-

sity of Manitoba, School of Social Work, Self-

Study Report, a consideration which led to the

School of Social Work's proposal for the program

in 1980 was:

> "...the goal of substantially increasing so-
> cial work education to people not normally
> part of the School's student body (Natives,
> immigrants, the poor, etc.)..."(Bracken,
> 1985).

That same report gives us an indication of the

purpose of the Social Work Program and the coun-

selling function in the following statement:

> Social and Academic Supports -- Social Work
>
> Program
>
> "A premise of the inner city social work
> program is the need to provide a supportive
> environment for the students. This can be
> roughly delineated into two areas -- social
> and academic, with the knowledge that these

areas are interrelated and mutually rein-
forcing. Social supports include an on-site
personal counsellor who spends approximately
50% workload in this capacity. As well,
other staff frequently perform this role on
an ad hoc basis" (Bracken, 1985).

The above-stated purpose of the program clearly

gives considerable significance to the social

program dimension of ICSWP, even recognizing a

direct and strong link or relationship between

the academic and social areas. Interpreting the

stated purpose of the program as its theory, it

seems evident that the social program and the

counselling function are theoretically well-

established as part of the ICSWP and in relation

to the education area. Yet, in practice, accord-

ing to the practioners's assessment, many of the

identified needs remain unmet.

One factor that was considered to be related to

this failure to meet the personal needs of the

students was staff overload. As previously not-

ed, the position of the personal counsellor was

only a half-time position. This necessarily re-

stricted the amount of time allotted to attend to

all of the students' needs.

Many of the staff reported being as overloaded as
the students. Staff were directly associated
with the School of Social Work, with its attend-
ant requirements and expectations.

Some staff members indicated that a pattern had
been developing since the relatively recent crea-
tion of the half-time position of personal coun-
sellor: More staff were referring students to
the counsellor. As staff and students alike in-
dicated to the practitioner, if you had a problem
with a course you were supposed to talk to the
teacher; if you had a personal problem you went
to the counsellor. The division that seemed to
be emerging -- though not this clear-cut in actu-
ality -- was that the teachers handled the stu-
dents' academic development and needs and the
counsellor was responsible for their personal de-
velopment and needs.

The ICSWP's connection with the Department of
Education was clearly a factor in the interplay
between the counselling function and the program.

As funders, the Department of Education deter-
mined the number of available staff and were
therefore implicated in the condition of staff
overload. Also, the consideration being given to
cutting the counsellor's position was also di-
rectly linked to the financial situation of the
program.

Another aspect of the relationship of the coun-
selling function to the program's purpose and
function was what the practitioner came to see as
an underlying conflict in the situation. In the
course of interviews with ICSWP staff regarding
the purpose and function of counselling in the
program, the practitioner discovered that there
were widely diverging views among the staff.

One view expressed was that the program did not
need a personal counsellor: Academic counselling
by the teacher was sufficient.

Another view was that while the program should
provide personal counselling, this counselling
should be limited to non-intensive, low-level

support to be delivered on a brief and casual basis. The counsellor would maintain a distance and not become closely involved in the personal issues of the students. According to the staff person who held this view, many of the students had deeper underlying personal issues that were unresolved. The program could not afford to "open them up", mainly because this would impede their academic progress.

Yet a third view of counselling saw it as an absolutely necessary function which needed to be expanded to include a full range of counselling activities, from supportive counselling to frank therapy. According to this view, there was a need for the program to allow more room for self-awareness in social work education and to be more involved in helping students deal with personal issues and pursue their psychological development.

In the assessment of the practitioner, these divergent views on the counselling function also represented widely different views of the purpose

and functioning of the program in relation to the students. Exposure to these views considerably enlarged the perspective of the practitioner on the dynamics of the situation. The differences expressed shed new light on the interplay between the needs of the students and their overburdened situations, and on the personal counselling function, as well as the purpose and functioning of the program as a whole.

From a holistic perspective, the practitioner saw several relationships involved and several potential locations for action possibilities.

One potential focus would be to clarify and strengthen the relationship between the purpose of the program and the different functions which operationalized that purpose.

Another potential area of focus would involve the staff dealing as a group with actual and potential opportunities for joint planning, joint decision-making, and joint problem-solving and conflict resolution.

A third area would involve a relationship that
the practitioner saw between the views of some
staff on counselling and their orientations as
social policy specialists with less emphasis on
the personal and individual dimension.

The fourth focus, and the one that the practi-
tioner regarded as the most significant because
of its impact on the whole system at ICSWP, was
the association between the program and the larg-
er educational system within which it operated.

In the course of the practitioner's assessment of
the counselling function and its status in the
program, some staff expressed what the practi-
tioner saw as a traditional view of the education
system, namely that "academics is what matters."
In the experience of the practitioner, personal
development is not the primary purpose of the
educational system. Academic progress and aca-
demic achievement are the dominant concerns of
the schools. The whole person and his or her de-
velopment receive little consideration. In fact,
the person may not even be seen, as Jules Henry,

a cultural anthropologist studying education,

points out in the book <u>Jules Henry on Education</u>:

> "How is this manoeuvere accomplished?
> [i.e., as Henry elsewhere says, "How does
> society make one sensitive to one's vulnera-
> bility?] Surely it can be accomplished best
> through acquiescence and through disregard
> ing and even punishing the emerging self.
> It is not so much though that the child is
> punished for asserting his selfhood, but
> that the thrusting upward of the self is not
> even seen" (Henry, 1966).

As the practitioner began to understand the dy-

namics of the program's situation, it was not

surprising -- though it was perplexing for some

time -- that in the relationship between the aca-

demic area and the social area, the academic area

so clearly dominated. The practitioner began to

see that, as an extension of the conventional

education system, the program was similar in bas-

ic form to a conventional school. Thus, in gen-

eral, the structure and function of a convention-

al school was reflected in the Inner City Social

Work Program. These structures and functions in-

cluded the roles of the students and teachers,

the pattern of interaction within the student-

teacher relationship, the hierarchical bureaucra-

cy, and the power structure of the school, with

the students having very little or no power. The
curriculum of the program was patterned after the
program of the School of Social Work and the aca-
demic standards of the program were expected to
match those of the School.

True, the program had many unique and distin-
guishing variations; it was, in fact, those
unique features that the practitioner had fo-
cussed on initially. When the practitioner fo-
cussed holistically, the situation of the program
within the context of the large education system
was seen to be that of a school. As Grosser
says:

> "The concept of "holism" forces us to focus
> beyond the reality which our limited under-
> standings are tuned to perceive -- to focus
> comprehensively" (Grosser, 1975).

Focusing on the program as an extension, and thus
a part of the larger education system opened up
new areas of action for the practitioner. The
practitioner saw possibilities for working with
both staff and students as individuals or in
groups.

The practitioner's immediate strategy was to approach individual staff to see if they shared or accepted the view of the program as, basically, a conventional school. As for those staff members who didn't share this view, the practitioner saw the possibility of engaging those persons in an ongoing dialogue regarding their experiences both in the present situation and in their past, when they were students in the school system.

In terms of the present experience, the practitioner was aware that most of the staff had experienced difficulties in their work as teachers in the program. As one staff member told the practitioner, "there are a lot of strains in the situation".

The teachers had experienced conflicts and disagreements with students. They spoke of their difficulties motivating students and interesting them in the course material.

These strains can be understood through an analysis of the dynamics involved in the working of a

traditional school system. The practitioner
could help staff members assess how their diffi-
culties may be related to their conventional
teaching practices or the conventional school
processes. In the experiences of the practition-
er many professionals who are teachers model the
education practices they themselves have experi-
enced, thereby unconsciously reflecting and per-
petuating the traditional education system. But
once this cycle is exposed, new possibilities
open up to do things differently. Ironically,
the analysis and assessment that the staff, as
social workers, have applied so well to social
welfare institutions and agencies could be ap-
plied to the educational institution as well.
Staff could use that.

With staff members who shared the view of the
program as a traditional school within the educa-
tional system, the practitioner saw many possi-
bilities for working together as a change agent
system or action system on potential changes, de-
pending on the interests of the staff members.
The practitioner also knew that it was important

to be a source of social support to critically
minded teachers who were working within a conven-
tional school system. One of the issues that the
practitioner saw as a possibility for working
with these teachers was the power differential
between them and the students. This had been ac-
knowledged by one of the staff members who had
said, "We talk of empowerment, but don't practice
it". Teachers who were open to the idea of
"power sharing" could look for ways to support
student empowerment in the program in general and
in their classes in particular.

Many of the individual students with whom the
practitioner worked expressed their powerlessnes
in the situation, directly and indirectly. Some
spoke openly of feeling powerless to change the
situation. Several told the practitioner of
their feelings of discouragement or frustration
in trying to get things done, yet getting no-
where. A message that was often conveyed was a
sense of resignation and futility, along with a
feeling of being tired of it, of having had
enough. The practitioner's strategy in his con-

tinuing work with individual students was -- if
the situation was appropriate -- to help them un-
derstand the relationship between their personal
experiences and the educational system of which
they were a part. In some instances, it might
have been considered appropriate to link a stu-
dent with other students, such as those involved
in the student council. Or it might have been
helpful to explore personal coping strategies
with students in need of tools to maintain their
equilibrium.

Beyond the level of the individual student, it
was important as well to continue assisting in
the development of the student council. The
practitioner was committed to help students fol-
low through in any of the ways they might find to
band together for support or mutual empowerment.
Around this time the practitioner began contem-
plating strategies which were related to seeing
the whole situation of the program as a reflec-
tion of the larger education system. The practi-
tioner envisioned the possibility of a coopera-
tive strategy involving staff and students to

change the learning environment within the class-
rooms. The idea would be to integrate, as much
as possible, the curriculum in a given course
with the lived experiences of the students, both
within and outside the program. The practitioner
knew that there was an existing course which was
organized on a similar basis. It could, he felt,
serve as a foundation from which to expand the
appproach into more of the curriculum. The idea
would be to create an alternative form of educa-
tion within the existing structures by stretching
the boundaries of the curriculum and classroom
practices as much as possible.

The practitioner saw the possibility that, to
some extent, such a change in the classroom envi-
ronment might meet some of the present needs of
the situation. It could create the "room" for
personal development that was missing in the ex-
isting, overburdened situation by integrating
relevant material from the lives of the students
into their formal learning. The time that stu-
dents did not have to develop their self-help
groups outside of the school day could now be

found within classroom time. Students and teachers could work together to find better ways to develop and organize the formal learning experience. Thus, while students would be empowered to shape the classroom situation to meet their needs and interests, teachers would benefit from having more involved participants in the situation. Many of the traditional strains and tensions in the traditional student-teacher interaction might well be alleviated. The potential would exist for teachers and students to do innovative problem-solving concerning some of the experiences they shared.

This development seemed to contain the potential to enhance the social program area of ICSWP by allowing for development within the classroom learning environment. The teachers would have the opportunity to apply their social work experience instrumentally in the development of this integrated program curriculum concept. The creative process of development that both staff and students would be mutually involved in could also become the content of appropriate course curricu-

lum. For example, assessment or negotiation
skills and skills in anaylsis of policy issues
that were part of the development process could
be matched with the appropriate content area of a
particular course. In this way, content and
process, knowledge and skill development and
theory and practice would be continuously merg-
ing, much like in a dialectic process.

Knowing that the implementation of such a compre-
hensive program of change and development would
depend on several conditions -- one of the most
important being the involvement of staff, with
their time restrictions -- the practitioner con-
templated several alternatives. One of these
would have been to devise a long-term implementa-
tion plan whereby selected development procedures
could occur over varying periods of time. Dif-
ferent parts of the development process could be
adjusted and implemented in accordance with the
capacity and extent of available involvement that
was organizationally feasible and within the
boundaries of what participants, both teachers
and students, felt comfortable. Many of the po-

tential benefits of the development process such as an improvement in teacher-student interaction, would likely be felt simply by moving in this direction, without the strategy having to be fully implemented. Another alternative to a comprehensive plan of action would be to implement the same form of development in scaled-down versions. Individual teachers could create this alternative model in one course or even within a section or parts of a course.

The practitioner also considered the possibility of working with an interested group of students to intitiate these changes. Specifically, this might mean that students would approach an individual teacher with a proposal to undertake some form of this kind of development within a course or some part of it. A related strategy would be to work with interested students, individually or as a group, to find ways they could express or incorporate various needs or interests of their own within the context of their educational requirements. For example, when doing a project, a report or an exercise for a course, students

could use the occasion to deal with something
that was more than simply interesting, but a vi-
tal and important part of their present living
experience. In a small way this would provide
students with some "room" to explore and express
the personal meaning of the issues and situations
in their lives.

A different way of working with individual stu-
dents, possibly groups, occurred to the practi-
tioner during the period when the strategy for
the alternative form of education was being for-
mulated. This approach was in some ways already
part of the practitioner's work with individual
students. But now the possibility of undertaking
the role of "mediator", with and for students,
became more clearly defined.

As a mediator, the practitioner could help stu-
dents navigate their way through the education
system of the program, assisting them in their
interactions and relationships within the system
-- not necessarily dealing with other people di-
rectly, but doing so if the occasion called for

it.

In some ways the previous strategy of assisting students to incorporate experiences of personal significance into their educational work was an example of helping students find a meaningful way to proceed with something of value to them. The practitioner conceived of this as a kind of "mediation" between the demands or requirements of the education system on the one hand and the students personal issues and needs on the other.

The assessment and planning involved in formulating these strategies for changing the traditional form of education and learning resulted in the practitioner becoming more aware of the interplay between the students and the system with which they were struggling. As a bonus the possibility for other actions was clarified.

A most significant issue, namely the need to support the person and his or her personal development within the context of the education system of ICSWP, was dramatically demonstrated at the

first graduation ceremony of Winnipeg Education
Centre social workers. Each graduate gave a
brief comment upon receiving his or her degree.
It was obvious that most of them wished to make a
statement that would express the essential mean-
ing of the four-year experience to them. Gradu-
ate after graduate said how "hard" it had been.
But many also recalled the relationships in which
a staff person had supported them as a person,
even if only for a brief moment. Thus, one of
the staff was thanked by a graduate for "seeing
who I am". Afterwards the staff person said he
was surprised. He had only talked individually
to the student twice briefly.

ENDING THE PRACTICUM
Quite suddenly, after having been involved with
the program at Winnipeg Education Centre for
nearly four months and "in residence" full time
for two months, the practitioner had to end the
practicum. With the approval of all concerned
the practitioner prepared to leave without seeing
many of the strategies enacted. Had the practi-
tioner remained until the end of the term in

three weeks, putting some of the plans into practice would not have been possible in any case. Entering the situation not knowing what would be encountered meant not knowing how the practicum would evolve.

All of the practitioner's lengthier short-term work with individuals had previously terminated. The practitioner did contact several of the individuals to tell them he would be available if needed and to tell them goodbye.

During those final days the practitioner toured the school to tell other students that he had worked with, or come to know, that he was leaving, and to say goodbye. Some of those same students came, in the last day or two, to tell of some recent development relating to their previous work. The practitioner used those meetings to confirm the work that had been done and the results for the individual.

The practitioner had a final meeting with some of the students from the group that had discussed

the student council issue. The purpose was to do
some final brief strategizing with them, but
mostly, to acknowledge their effort and convic-
tions and to encourage them.

Another of the practitioner's concluding activi-
ties was to meet with two of the staff who were
of special significance in the work at the pro-
gram. Evaluations were done, one brief and the
other lengthier, covering the longer-term action
strategies the practitioner had considered.

The practitioner's final meeting with his on-site
supervisor first involved a review of the more
intensive individual student situations with
which the practitioner had worked. This was fol-
lowed by an extensive evaluation of the practi-
tioner's work in total, covering its various evo-
lutionary stages, including the more comprehen-
sive strategies and their feasibility.

The final event of the practicum was a meeting
with the director who briefly evaluated the prac-
ticum activities and outcomes. The director re-

ported some encouraging feedback he had received

from students. With those last words the practi-

cum ended.

CHAPTER 4   REPORT ON THE PRACTICUM

INTRODUCTION TO THE REPORT ON THE PRACTICUM

There are many, many issues to discuss and so

much to tell. Each incident, even each sentence

that the practitioner heard came to have so many

connections to so many other things because so

much was happening. That is an issue in itself.

For the purposes of this report on the practicum

the practitioner will attempt to organize the in-

formation around major issues.

THE PRACTITIONER AS `CRITIC'

First the practitioner wants to clarify an issue

about his relationship to the people of the situ-

ation in relation to the nature of the practicum.

At times during the practicum itself, and espe-

cially during the writing of the practicum re-

port, the practitioner was anxious about being

seen as critical, especially toward people whom

he liked. No criticism of anyone in the situa-

tion was either intended or felt.

Looking at the situation and at himself at the

time, the practitioner sees that he heard so many

problems, difficulties and concerns from the stu-
dents and some of the staff. This was the
"stuff" the practitioner, as social worker, was
handling. These problems and issues were what
the practitioner was thinking about, assessing,
and working to change. The practitioner did not
record the "other" moments and has yet to see a
case study of a social worker intervening to
change a situation with which everyone is glori-
ously happy.

The practitioner was in the situation in order to
work on problems and difficulties, if there were
any. In the language of systemic assessment,
that was the practitioner's function in the situ-
ation. The practitioner had socially organized
himself so that he was situated to have those
problems and issues coming to him and even going
out to get them.

It could have been otherwise. The practitioner
could have closed his boundaries and socially or-
ganized himself so that an "off-limits to serious
problems message" was conveyed to others. The

practitioner went into the situation to respond

to issues and concerns, and that is what he did.

However, now the practitioner is reporting those

issues and concerns and wants to comment on the

reporting.

The practitioner wants to report on what the

practicum was not. It was not a program evalua-

tion. Nor should any statements be construed in

that way. Any reader taking any comment to mean

anything in terms of a program evaluation should

re-read the section on the uniqueness of situa-

tions in relation to their attributes in time and

space. Everything may have totally changed after

the practitioner left, a holistically conceivable

possibility, is in keeping with Grosser's concept

of the inconstancy of events.

THE ENDING OF THE PRACTICUM

The practitioner wants to comment on the fact

that some of the planned action strategies were

not implemented. In those cases, the practition-

er was able only to report on the extent which

the planning had reached. In the specific case

of the plan to develop an alternative learning situation, the planning had reached what the practitioner would call a medium stage. Most of the systemic assessment had been done. The attributes of the system were assessed i.e., the educational purpose of the program, the values with respect to graduates and educational success, and values germane to personal development, the function of the students and the staff as teachers, the social organization in terms of the organization of the course-classroom-learning structure and processes. As well, instances of the interplay between attributes were observed. Most of the situational assessment had been done to some extent.

The practitioner knew how the learning situation affected some, but not all the students. How many students would have to be contacted seems like a decision to be made in the situation, taking situational factors into account at the time. Only a few students had said whether or not they wanted help and what kind. So, more student interviews were needed.

Some of the social work activities related to the

strategy had been identified and undertaken, such

as the systemic assessment and parts of the situ-

ational assessment. The practitioner had also

done some of the planning on the goals of the

planned change and the tasks of the strategy.

Since this was considered at that point in time,

to be a mutual change process, the planning was

considered preliminary and required collaboration

with students and teachers, at least initially.

If teachers had not wanted to get involved or if

only some teachers and some students were inter-

ested, the planning would have needed to be

changed.

As previously noted, the practitioner did not

know what he would find in the situation before

entering it, and even from time to time in the

situation, developments occurred so quickly that

it was hard and would have been hard to set a

schedule for the plan. Unfortunately, the prac-

ticum was time-limited and, also unfortunately,

the practitioner had to leave three weeks early.

Something, but certainly not everything, could

have happened in those three weeks. The practi-
tioner would definitely not have been around to
see the strategy through. Ideally, one of the
situation participants may have picked up on it.

The practitioner knew that time was running short
and that even if the practicum had gone the re-
maining weeks the time situation would have in-
fluenced the strategy in some way. The decision
was to carry on with the assessment and planning.
The practitioner considered that even if the plan
or variation never occurred, the dialogue with
students could be considered an interventive
strategy in itself, in that students would have
imagined alternatives that could be applied in
other situations. The mutual assessment was con-
sidered a positive educational event, and actual-
ly found to be so, for the students seemed to
find it worthwhile. The decision to continue
working on the strategy was made on the basis
that some change could occur. The practitioner
actually considered that some variation of the
strategy could be planned and conceivably would
be planned for implementation in the fall.

THE DIFFICULTY OF THE PRACTICUM

The practitioner realizes that this was a huge
undertaking. Before beginning, the practitioner
had conceived of that possibility, given the
scope of the proposed practice in that setting.
The actual situation was never even imagined.
The number of individual students who wanted help
was more than the practitioner had imagined and,
as reported, during the first one to two weeks,
the practitioner was feeling anxious about not
having enough to do. Assessing the situation
from this perspective, the practitioner wondered
about taking on so much individual work because
the time required was considerable when one in-
cluded the recording and thinking that went on
outside of the actual meeting time.

Another difficulty, which was previously men-
tioned but needs to briefly be noted again as
part of the difficulty, is that the holistic form
of practice is not likely to be neat and tidy.

This practice is very open-ended and unstructured
in the sense of not being predetermined, adher-

ing to prescribed procedures which usually oper-
ate to contain a process. Holistic practice has
its structure, but it is not the kind of struc-
ture that pre-packages an activity.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICUM ACTIVITY
The practitioner consciously used a form of de-
scription which involved the temporal reporting
or chronological relating of his activity. The
choice of that form of organization of the mate-
rial in that section was made on the basis of the
nature of the practicum.

The practicum was considered to be developmental,
as developing over time in the situation. In or-
der to convey that developmental history, partic-
ularly given the extreme complexity of the situa-
tion, the temporal reporting form of description
was chosen.

An attempt was made to report not just the de-
scription of the physical activity (e.g., con-
tacts made) but the thinking of the practitioner
in relation to the assessment or planning or in-

terventive nature of the particular instance.
"Thinking" in this sense refers to the cognitive
activity involved in assessing, planning, evalu-
ating, etc., at every step and the cognitive ac-
tivity involved in organizing each step in the
larger process of the practice. "Thinking" also
refers to the cognitive activity that correspond-
ed to the development process. During that de-
velopment process, the practitioner would think
about a particular difficulty related to the
stage of development. At those times, the prac-
titioner would be involved in a cognitive
"struggle" to comprehend the meaning of the situ-
ation. Two particular examples come to mind.
One was the point at which the practitioner had
to re-think the issue of working with individu-
als. In part, re-thinking that issue meant link-
ing work with individuals and work with social
conditions. In another sense, re-thinking the
issue meant considering it in terms of the prac-
ticum purpose. Another instance, to just be not-
ed only, was when the practitioner had to consid-
er the issue of counselling in the program.

The practitioner wanted to report the full range

of the activity over the period of the practicum.

Throughout the practicum, the attributes of range

and scope were highly significant. The practi-

tioner considered those attributes to be essen-

tial to the holistic approach to practice.

Therefore, an effort was made to maintain a bal-

ance of breadth and depth and height in order to

cover the scope of this practice approach.

EVALUATION

The practitioner considers that he made very good

progress in terms of fulfilling the main purpose

of the practicum which was to simultaneously de-

velop and operationalize a holistic approach to

social work practice, particularly given the high

degree of difficulty involved.

The determination of progress as "very good" was

made first on the basis of a successful practice

process throughout the period of the practicum.

During the course of the practicum the practi-

tioner made successful contact with the popula-

tion. The practitioner completed a successful

assessment of the situation. As the practitioner
was required by the dynamics of the situation to
work with differing sizes of client units at var-
ious times, assessments were done on an ongoing
basis as needed in relation to which situation
the practitioner was responding. Information was
collected, plans were made, carried out and eval-
uated in each instance of activity. Assessments
were made of the various situations the practi-
tioner was encountering. The dynamics of the
situation were such that the practitioner was
dealing with situations within situations and
also situations which overlapped. Assessments
and interventive activities were successfully
performed in relation to the focus of each situa-
tion. The assessments enabled the practitioner
to plan and carry out successful interventive ac-
tivities in relation to the member(s) of the sit-
uation, except for the long term planned change
activities beyond the scope of the practicum.
The practitioner also negotiated successful end-
ings or terminations for each instance of activi-
ty involving work with individuals or groups.

The practitioner drew on a range of practice

theory knowledge and knowledge of other theories

such as communication theory and crisis theory,

which enabled the practitioner to assess and in-

tervene with each situation successfully. Simi-

larly, with the exercise of skills, the practi-

tioner was required to use a wide range of skills

in relating to the nature of the situation the

member(s) of which the practitioner was attending

to.

Evaluations were carried out throughout the

course of the practicum. Evaluations were done

in relation to each completed interventive activ-

ity such as the work with individuals or the year

group meetings. Evaluations were also done in

relation to the completion of phases of a longer

term activity, for example, the work in relation

to the student council. Process evaluations of

both the work process and the practice or practi-

cum process were done. Evaluations were done

with the relevant member(s) of the situation that

was being addressed as well as evaluations by the

practitioner himself.

GAPS IN KNOWLEDGE

Having completed the practicum, the practitioner sees several areas where there are significant gaps in knowledge.

More theoretical knowledge of the holistic approach to social work is needed. Only a few sources exist. The practitioner has often had to make theoretical assumptions or inferences from the available material, as the literature did not speak directly to certain areas. Therefore, the theory of the holistic approach needs to be elaborated.

More articulation of the uniqueness and difference of the holistic approach is needed. The unique significance of the approach and the holistic concept to social work practice needs further development. The indications of the value of the approach were strong enough to prompt the practitioner to pursue this practicum. But, more knowledge is needed to further demonstrate and clarify that value.

The theoretical literature on holistic social

work practice is weak in the area of wholes and

relationships between wholes other than the indi-

vidual, whole person. Indeed, the practitioner

has yet to read a satisfactory description of

what that something 'more' is, that the diction-

ary tells us a whole is other than the sum of its

parts. The literature skirts this issue yet, in

the opinion of the practitioner, it would seem

crucial to the development of the holistic ap-

proach in practice.

More knowledge is needed to show if and how the

holistic approach might incorporate or directly

relate to other social work perspectives, such as

radical social work. We need to know the corre-

spondence between the holistic approach to prac-

tice and other practice perspectives or theories.

Where is the holistic approach situated in the

comprehensive framework of social work?

More knowledge of the particular problems or

practice issues associated with holistic practice

is needed. Would-be practitioners would benefit

greatly if they could be given a sense of the concrete experience of the approach. Case studies would be helpful.

More knowledge of the relationship between the theory of holism and the holistic practice concepts and principles is needed. We need to know how, in the holisitc approach, systemic and situational assessment reflect the holistic concept. Practitioners need a clear understanding of how the principles are derived from basic concepts in order to put those principles into practice.

CHAPTER 5   CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This practicum provided the practitioner with the opportunity to develop and operationalize the holistic approach to social work practice. Supported and guided by the theory of holistic practice the practitioner was able to develop and carry out practice activities which served to effect change or to plan change strategies to meet the needs of many of the people in the situation of the practicum setting.

Using the holistic approach, the practitioner successfully related personal development to social development. Use of the holistic approach also enabled the practitioner to relate working with people as individuals to working with people as members of a social system.

As a result of the practicum, the practitioner became proficient in holistic theory and practice as demonstrated within the practicum report.

As a result of the practicum experience with the holistic approach the practitioner, since 1985, has continued to use the approach in his social

work practice. The practitioner has applied the approach in a variety of complex situations with the same successful results.

Unfortunately, since 1985, the holisitc practice approach has not attracted the attention of social workers-at-large and has not been developed any further in practice. Theoretical developments have also not gone any further than in the mid 1970's. To the practitioner's knowledge the holistic approach, as such, has not appeared in the theoretical or educational social work literature. The practitioner's impression is that since 1985 even the movement toward the development of generalist forms of practice has slowed considerably. The creative and stimulating discussions over new formulations of practice that characterized the field of social work in the 1970's and early 1980's seem to have abated, both among field workers and the academics.

The practitioner does not believe that the issue of social work practice has been resolved even though it has ceased to be an engaging area of

concern. The practitioner's observations are
that much of social work practice in the field
continues to be done in the casework method mold,
though there does seem to be some enlargement of
the traditional casework practice consistent with
a generalist practice influence. In the view of
the practitioner, though changes in professional
practice akin to the developments of the 1970's
have stalled, the need for a generalist approach
and a holistic approach in particular has in-
creased in relation to the increased need of sec-
tors of the population for assistance with the
social, political, and economic milieu of these
times.

In part the lessening of attention toward prac-
tice as an issue seems to have resulted from
burnout due to the conflicts and disagreements
which ensued over the attempts to establish new
forms of practice in social work education. Re-
ports from social work educators and theorists
indicate some became tired of the struggle to re-
solve the issue. Also, in part the attention of
social workers seems to have turned to timely

issues in the policy area and in various field of
practice areas.

As well, the conditions of the work situation of
many social workers have played a part in pre-
venting them from addressing problems holistical-
ly. The practices of increasingly large and bu-
reaucratic social welfare agencies have con-
strained the vision and activity of many practi-
tioners. The trend toward increasingly detailed
procedures and protocols has restricted the range
of opportunity for social workers to act in a ho-
listic manner. The trend toward greater cost-
efficiency has increased workloads and reduced
the scope and breadth of practice. Cutbacks in
social welfare programs militate against holistic
practice while increasing the social need for ho-
listic approaches to personal and social prob-
lems.

The practitioner would like to make the following
recommendations:

    That social workers in training and in the
    field undertake to familiarize themselves

with the holistic approach to social work practice.

That social work theorists continue the effort to develop and promote the holistic approach to practice.

That social work educators consider the appropriate context for integration of the holistic approach within the framework of social work education.

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