THE MIGRANT FAMILY:

Some comments on Social Work Practice with non-English speaking migrants.

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In this article she critically examines the role of Social Workers who are working with Migrant families and concludes her article with some constructive suggestions.

"FAMILIAR STORY"

The description of the P. family — their anxieties, hardships and frustrations will be a familiar story to social workers working with non-English speaking migrant clients, regardless of whether the social worker is employed by ethnic or sectarian agencies or the wider general agencies such as government departments, municipal councils or independent organizations. This attempts to investigate some of the ways in which social workers can attempt to help and support the migrant client from a different ethnic group in his struggle to create a new life in Australia. The P. family's story will be used to illustrate some of the major areas of difficulty faced by a migrant family and a number of social work roles and strategies are suggested which might be employed in seeking to bring about social change. The implications of ethnicity for social work practice in a multi-cultural society form a central focus of concern. Finally, general comments and suggestions will be made about the role and responsibilities of the social worker in the multi-cultural society.

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Mr. and Mrs. P. and their three children* migrated to Australia from their rural village in Greece some eighteen months ago. They managed to secure rented accommodation in a crowded and dilapidated inner city area, where migrants from Southern and Eastern European ethnic groups made up a large proportion of the population. The area offered few facilities. Mr. P. obtained work on a production line in a car factory, while Mrs. P. found a job in a local knitwear factory. Their two elder children, Anna (13) and George, (10) were sent to the local school, while the combination of day and night shifts allowed Mr. and Mrs. P. to share supervision of the youngest child, John (4) at home. The family's only relative in Australia consisted of Mr. P.'s brother who had migrated some years earlier and now owned a small shop in an outer suburban area across the city.

Six months ago, Mr. P. suffered a heart attack. After several months convalescence, his doctor had declared him fit to return to work but specified that this must not involve strenuous or prolonged effort. Mr. P.'s employers were unable to offer him light work and he lost his job. Ignorant of their social security rights, Mr. and Mrs. P. had used up their meagre savings and were trying to live on Mrs. P.'s low wages when a neighbour told them of their right to government assistance. Their neighbour assisted them to fill out the complex and bewildering forms claiming unemployment benefit and the P.'s waited anxiously for payment. Several months went by without any response and Mr. and Mrs. P. grew increasingly desperate, with their feelings of anxiety, frustration and humiliation leading to considerable family and marital tension. To add to their anxiety the childrens' term school reports, when reluctantly translated by their daughter, revealed that the childrens' teachers saw them as performing poorly and of only limited ability.

When the long awaited 'letter from the government' arrived, it informed the P. family that Mrs. P.'s wages raised the family's income to a level which made them ineligible for payment of benefit. Desperate, Mr. and Mrs. P. went to their local Social Security office to explain that they needed extra financial assistance, taking their daughter with them to interpret as both adults spoke only limited English. The young Social Security counter clerk, baffled and irritated by the family's vehemence and apparent inability to understand either plain English or the basis for payment benefits, brusquely told them to go and see the social worker at . . . . . agency if they were unable to manage.

Several days later, the daughter telephoned the agency and hesitantly asked if anyone could help her parents.

Mr. and Mrs. P.'s rural village origins reflect the fact that over 75% of the Southern European migrants coming to Australia are villagers from rugged mountain areas or from steep coastlines and islands.[1] Motivations for migration vary widely between ethnic, national and religious groups, with a number of migrants leaving their homelands as refugees. However, the Southern European migrant is usually influenced by a number of 'push-pull' factors. He may be 'pushed' to leave his birthplace by overcrowding, impoverishment or lack of opportunity, particularly for his children. Australia offers the 'pull' of its reputation of a 'land of opportunity', where kinsmen may have established their families and prospered and where, according to the promises of the Immigration Department recruiting officers based in Naples or Athens, everyone lives in a spacious, garden-surrounded suburban home, drives his own car, sets up his own business and watches his children attain fame and fortune on the basis of the free education they will have received.

Disillusionment does not take long in setting in. The fine house depicted in the government brochure is a far cry from the cramped and dilapidated flat for which Mr. P. is forced to pay very high rent. However, the flat may be located in an inner city area where at least a number of shop keepers and neighbours speak his language, offering a respite from the tiring, frustrating and humiliating experiences of trying to communicate with an Australian community which generally demonstrates intolerance and some antipathy towards the inarticulate newcomer.

Mr. P.'s essentially peasant origins predestine him, like most of his Southern European compatriots, to becoming 'grist for the mill' of Australian production lines and other low-paid occupations. Greek immigrants call the General Motors Holden car plant the 'transit camp' while migrants in general are disproportionately represented in the fields of heavy industry, the public utilities, rural labouring and menial domestic and hospital work.[2] This situation reflects official government immigration policy[3] between 1947 and the coming to power of the Labour Party in 1972.[4]

Mrs. P.'s entry into the work force represents a departure from established Greek cultural tradition, and thus may present problems of psychological adjustment for both husband and wife. In traditional Greek culture, the concepts of honour (adrismos) and shame (drope) specify the ideal behaviours for men and women.[5] Broadly, men must be strong, courageous and confident, while women must display 'sexual shame' by disguising their physical attributes, respecting men as befits their superior status and avoiding all situations which could compromise the family's honour. The polysemantic term 'philotimo'[6] or 'love of honour' bolsters these concepts[7], with the preservation of individual and family philotimo becoming a major determinant of all behaviour.[8]

Raised in a culture where women's activities are traditionally confined to the home, with social activities centred on the extended family and female neighbours, Mr. P. must now attempt to maintain his image as provider and protector of the family philotimo in the face of an economic reality which dictates that both adults must work if the family is going to survive. Mrs. P. faces the strain of reconciling her desires to fulfill her traditionally-defined roles as wife and mother with a work situation which takes her out of the house and forces her to leave her pre-school age son in the care of a local child-minder. For the Greek woman, as noted by Turnley, Dunt (et. al.)[9] recourse to the use of non-registered child-minders results from the frequent non-availability of extended family links. This situation arises from the position of the Greek community which represents a more recently arrived group than, for instance, the Italians.

The absence of the extended family also poses a much wider problem of adjustment. In traditional village culture, the family formed the critical unit of social organization, with kinsmen being loved, trusted and cherished, and obliged to offer practical and moral support to each other in what is seen as a hostile world.[10] The individual or nuclear family derives enormous support and guidance from the extended family, and deprivation of this security, brought about by migration, leaves the family feeling very vulnerable and isolated.[11]

The absence of extended family support networks may also necessitate a modification of the traditional marital and parental roles. The 'role strain' mentioned earlier may be aggravated for both husband and wife by the need, for example, of the working wife to ask her husband to assist in domestic tasks — an activity which traditional culture condemns as demeaning for men.[12] The traditional patterns of child-rearing, where the father only plays a kind of stand-by role[13] place an enormous burden upon a migrant mother who attempts to run her home, care for her family and hold down a fulltime job which is frequently dirty, repetitive and arduous. Moraitis[14] summarizes this situation in the comment

> "The migrant and his wife will have to work long hard hours in the most menial of jobs in order to produce the bare necessities. There is tremendous economic stress on the migrant family. Is it any wonder that these parents are often tired and over-stressed or that family life is affected"?

In the case of the P. family, as with many other migrant families, parent-child relationships may be influenced by the child's performance in his Australian school. The Greek parent sees education as a powerful tool in the enhancement of family philotimo and prosperity, and enormous pressures are brought to bear upon the child, particularly sons, to excell academically. According to the Vassilious[15]

> "Maternal, parental in general, plans for the child's future require that he receives the maximum of education in the minimum amount of time."

Parents closely supervise the child's school life, demanding that large amounts of homework be set which they then supervise.[16] A child

whose performance is falling short of parental expectation is considered to be committing "no less a crime than 'high treason'."[17]

The Greek child then is caught between the high expectations of his parents and the realities of the Australian school system which frequently offers the migrant child only a tragic, educationally crippling experience. As noted by Moraitis[18] many migrant children attend overcrowded and under-equipped inner city schools.

> "These schools are inadequately equipped with language teachers, books, space and facilities for play and other activities. The children, as a result are incapable of comprehending or expressing themselves adequately, and they lose interest in school work. School teachers sometimes mistake this for apathy and a desire on the part of the adolescent to leave school. Adolescent children realize that they have little hope of continuing to tertiary level . . ."

Embarrassed and hampered by their lack of facility in English, migrant parents cannot communicate with their childrens' teachers, and are left baffled and confused by the workings of the Australian education system. A small survey conducted by John Santa-Isabel[19] amongst 30 migrant families who had children attending a state school in an outer suburban area revealed that only 2 of the families had any knowledge of the school. None of the families knew anything about the education system in general. This parental ignorance of the school system and lack of English make it impossible for them to help with homework or to assist the child in working through problems he may face at school.[20]

At a policy planning level, Education Department officials seem to consider the problems of the migrant child 'curable' by

> "intensive treatment in 'withdrawal classes' or by similar stratagems which have as much affinity with fever hospitals or reformatories as they have with normal schooling processes".[21]

Further, in Victoria the small number of teachers of migrant English are effectively prevented from teaching English to migrant children by a web of out-dated, ill-informed and biased Education Department regulations.[22] Finally, failure to recognize overseas teaching qualifications represents a tragic wastage of bi-cultural and bi-lingual teaching personnel who could ease the plight of the migrant child and his family enormously.[23]

The school, in providing the main, and often the only, significant source of socialization into the Australian community for the migrant child[24], adds another dimension to parent-child relationships. Through interaction with teachers and other pupils, the child becomes aware of other social 'worlds' and may come to doubt or reject parental attitudes, values and standards. The problems of 'culture clash' thus generated seem to particularly affect girls rather than boys, and children who come to Australia before rather than during adolescence. A study of young adolescent migrant boys showed that while their norms differed from those of their parents, this fact was accepted by the boys and did not form the basis for conflict with their parents.[25] The age of the under-14 arrival means that experiences crucial to the development of personal identity will take place in an Australian context. If the playgroup, neighbourhood group or school exert pressures to conform which are in direct contradiction to attempts made by the parents and the Greek community, then identity crises based on culture clash are likely to ensue.[26] The migrant girl is in a particularly vulnerable position, caught between a culture which may restrict the activities of women and girls, and the Australian culture which emphasizes freedom of choice and of social relationships. Considerable concern is felt by most Greek families about the 'laxity' of Australian child-raising practices, and an adolescent daughter's request to be allowed to join her Australian schoolmates in a 'mixed' social activity will almost inevitably be refused. The Australian school's encouragement of self-expression is also inimical to Greek parents who insist on 'respect' from children who must never dispute parental opinion or authority.[28] Parents expect to supervise their children's peer group contacts closely, with restrictions greatly intensified as the young person reaches adolescence.[29]

To return to the misfortunes of the P. family, Mr. P.'s illness represents disaster in the family's struggle to establish some degree of financial security.[30] The costs of rent and food and the needs of three growing children are barely covered by the low wages paid to migrant women in the textile industry, and any extra expenses incurred by the family such as repairs or school levies are almost impossible to meet. Further, loss of income as well as of the status of breadwinner represents an attack on both Mr. P.'s philotimo and that of his family, as the poor man is dependent upon others and cannot insist upon equality of honour.[31] Mr. P.'s reduced physical capacity is also stigmatizing as now only 'half a man' in terms of traditional cultural attitudes.[32] Self-doubts and insecurity, coupled with extreme anxiety about the family's future may plague Mr P. and adversely affect his interaction with his family.

Denied the support of an extended family in this crisis situation, Mr. P. may turn to his brother for help. In general terms the ability or willingness of relatives to render assistance is often problematic, as they may be trapped in similar economic circumstance and struggling to support their own family. Greek culture specifies that a father must always put the interests of his own family of marriage before the needs of even a brother.[33] Concern for philotimo may make it impossible for Mr. P. to approach neighbours and friends. Recourse to the Greek Orthodox Church is usually not feasible as the Church traditionally does not concern itself with the provision of social welfare services.[34] This is further aggravated by the fragmentation of the Orthodox church in Australia,[35] and the fact that a number of migrants are non-or anti-religious.[36] In turning to the established ethnic social welfare

agencies of the Greek community, the newly-arrived, impoverished migrant may be inhibited by the middle-class tone of an organization established and supported generally by affluent and highly integrated and successful first-and second-generation Greek businessmen and professionals.[37], [38]. For the migrant in the outer suburban areas such ethnic agencies are non-existent. However, while the ethnic agency may still be able to offer considerable direct service and support, the migrant will still usually be referred to the Department of Social Security for help with his most pressing problems, that of obtaining financial assistance.

For many migrants the existence or operation of social welfare rights in this country remains a mystery. While some multi-lingual information about welfare rights is now being published, it is poorly distributed and frequently fails to reach the migrants whose need of information is greatest. Having obtained the information, the applicant is still faced with the problem of completing the forms in English, an impossible task for many migrants[39]. Eligibility criteria for benefits contain a number of inconsistencies and injustices in relation to the situation of migrants, particularly the length of residence required to qualify for benefits such as the invalid and age pension.[40] The reception afforded the migrant by Social Security counter-staff is often arrogant and insensitive. This may reflect a situation where counter service is the bottom rung of the promotional ladder, occupied by only the most junior and those whose lack of ability had led to non-promotion.[41] As noted by Augoustakis

> "Both the personnel and the rationale behind the structures were geared to serve the public and made few allowances for minorities such as the migrants from various ethnic backgrounds and the special needs they faced."[42]

Migrant experiences of dealing with societal resource systems[43] such as Social Security highlight two of the major problems confronting the non-English migrants — inability to communicate and the attitudes of the Australian population. These problems have a common origin in the Australian devaluation of ethnicity, and insistance on the maintenance of a mono-cultural conception of society. The migrant must assimilate or face hostility and rejection from most Australians. The hardships imposed upon migrants by this insensitive ethnocentrism is little understood by Australians whose insularity generally protects them from gaining first hand experience of being 'strangers in a strange new land'. The refusal to acknowledge multi-culturalism marks most major social institutions in Australia, and is particularly obvious within the operation of the education system where migrant children are inexorably pressed into the Anglo-Saxon mould. This is achieved through offering teaching only in English and based curriculum content based on Anglo-Saxon history, values and social norms. Generally permitted no option, the migrant child must reject his ethnic origin in order to gain social acceptance from both teachers and Australian peer group.[44]

The non-English migrant is condemned for his failure to learn English but very few facilities of a realistic design are provided to assist in this task. While other countries which encourage large-scale immigration, such as Israel, provide extensive support services to enable the immigrant to learn the language and ways of the new society without also having to cope with the tasks of finding a job and accommodation,[45] Australia does little or nothing to assist the new migrant. The few migrant English classes which are provided usually take place in the evenings, when adult migrants after working all day on a production line or similar job, are expected to be able to leave their young children and spend hours concentrating on imbibing the vagaries of the English language.[46] The development of translation and interpreter services has been seriously neglected,[47] so that the individual migrant, faced with the need to be able to communicate with teachers, doctors, social workers or government officials[48] usually has to provide his own interpreters — relatives, neighbours or his bi-lingual children. This situation has a number of undesirable consequences, restricting freedom of expression and interfering with parent-child relationships by disturbing patterns of authority.[49]

The Social Worker who attempts to meet the needs of the migrant family must first clarify his thinking on the implications of the ethnic diversity of the Australian population. In such a situation, the primary social work values which state the worth and dignity of each individual and his right to social and personal fulfilment can be relevant only if the value of multi-culturalism is also acknowledged. Kovacs and Cropley[50] define multi-culturalism as the situation in which

> "groups of differing ethnic backgrounds are permitted to retain a separage ethnic identity but are encouraged at the same time to develop a sense of national unity with all other ethnic groups to form and maintain the single united political state."

At the personal level, the migrant does not have to reject his cultural origins in order to find a place in the new community. Rather, security of ethnic identity will ease and foster integration,

> "Far from promoting estrangement from the dominant social order, the sense of personal identity, selfworth and belonging, generated by recognition of one's ethnic background, greatly reduces social alienation and thus fosters assimilation".[51]

A well-developed infra-structure of ethnic organizations and social life cushions the 'culture shock'[52] suffered by the migrant, providing support networks and a group of 'old settlers' who can interpret the language as well as the customs of the country[53]. Thus much of the anxiety and fear of the isolated newcomer is overcome.

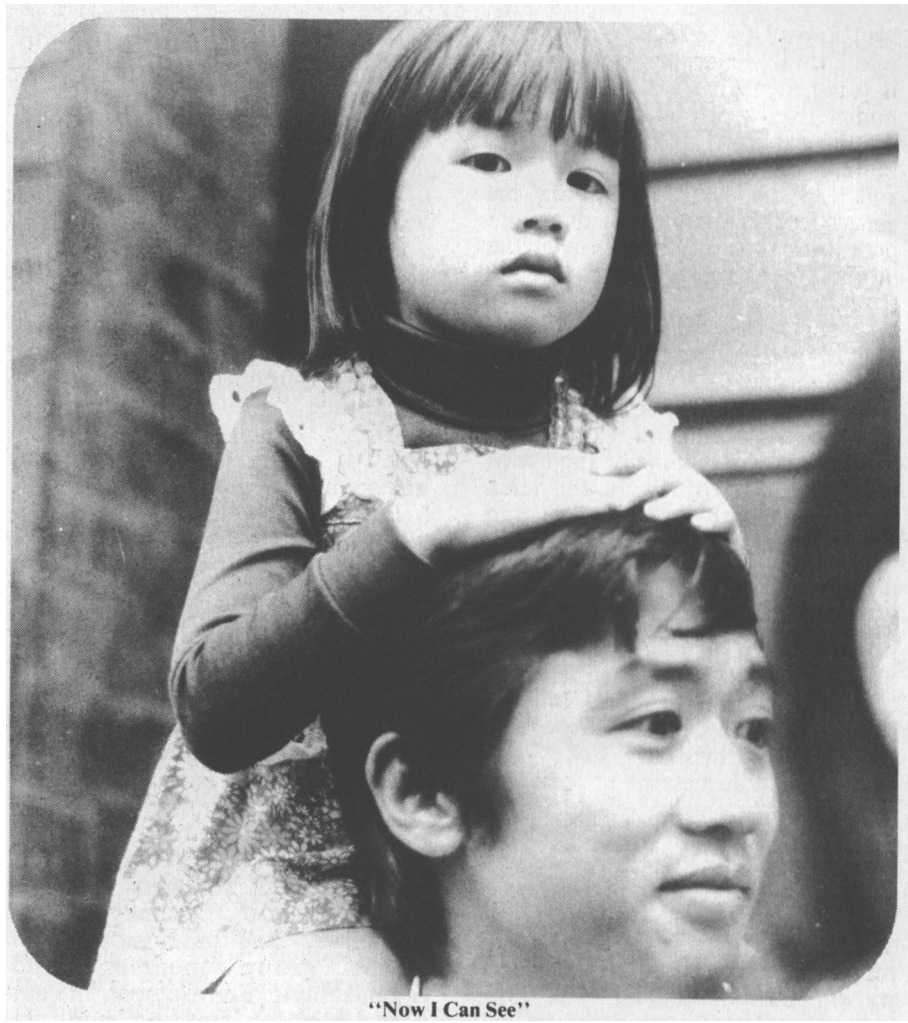
Acknowledging the value of multi-culturalism, social workers are then faced with the task of examining their own professional activities for possible ethnicentrism which must be eliminated. The evolution of many of the traditional

techniques of social work practice took place in a basically Anglo-Saxon society, where homogeneity of cultural values was unquestioned. Uncritical application of such techniques can lead to the situation where a Greek woman, raised in a cultural tradition which emphasizes the group rather than the individual and restricts the freedom of women, may be encouraged to be self-determining as an answer to her problems[54]. In preparing for any planned change program the social worker must also carefully consider the relevance of roles and action strategies and their consistency with the principles of multi-culturalism.

Ron Baker has suggested 14 common social work roles, covering direct, indirect and merging service roles. The service roles are those of supporter, advisor, therapist and caretaker. Researcher, administrator and consultant comprise the indirect service roles, while the merging service roles consist of enabler, broker, advocate, mediator, co-ordinator and community worker.[55] In dealing with migrant clients, the choice of roles, like the setting of goals, must be based on a sound knowledge of the client's cultural background and the particular stresses and strains imposed on the migrant and his family by the experience of migration and the tasks of adjustment to the new society.

Direct service to the non-English speaking migrant is deeply affected by difficulty in communication, differing cultural attitudes and expectations of the social worker's role. The lack of Greek-speaking social workers or welfare workers[56], coupled with the lack of adequately trained professional interpreters[57] means that communication between migrant client and social worker frequently has to be achieved through the use of untrained interpreters such as family members or friends. Language difficulties make the role of therapist particularly difficult. Even with the use of a skilled interpreter, it has been noted that

> "Counselling with complicated social and emotional problems cannot be done through an interpreter . . . (b-cause) . . . the presence of a third person must completely alter the nature of the relationship."



"Now I Can See"

Jill Williams goes on to suggest that interpreters can be usefully employed to help the client where there is a need for a more practical kind of service.[59] This re-orientation towards more limited, practical service may actually meet the client's wishes to a greater extent. Rodopoulous[60] points to the close relationship between economic need and the general inability of the Greek family to cope in other areas because of their meagre or disrupted income. She adds that

> "My general feeling is that economic security would alleviate many of the stresses which may require counselling and that counselling may be totally inappropriate without economic security."[61]

This comment raises the important concept of 'need'. Bradshaw has identified four types of need — normative, felt, expressed and comparative.[62] The migrant client may express a need but the social worker may have his own ideas about what the client 'really' needs, in a normative sense. Thus the social worker may be asked for material assistance but decide that the client also 'needs' counselling. This represents not only a denial of the client's right to self-determination, but also attempts to impose Anglo-Saxon values and techniques on the situation ignoring that when the Greek migrant client wants assistance, he sees it in practical, not psychological terms.[63]

The Greek client brings a number of other cultural attitudes to his interaction with the social worker. The role of the social worker is not

well known in Greece, particularly in the rural areas. The social worker is often identified with officialdom and authority[65], and is correspondingly expected to be directive. Failure to fulfill this expectation will lead the client to identify the social worker with inadequate or permissive institutions.[66] Given the possible need for directiveness, the social worker may be of much more assistance to the client in the roles of advisor and supporter, rather than that of therapist.

The joint problems of language and differing cultural expectation can be partly overcome by the use of a team approach, where the team consists of both Anglo-Saxon and ethnic group members. The bi-lingual ethnic group members contribute linguistic and cultural knowledge and lessen the dangers posed by the position of the Anglo-Saxon social worker as an external caretaker[67]. Teams such as that set up by David Cox at European Australian Christian Fellowship have proved successful in their endeavour to provide a service which is relevant and readily accessible to their migrant clients.[68]

The development of teams including ethnic group volunteers has also proved useful in a number of programs. Overseas experience has shown that bi-lingual and bi-cultural volunteers can work to improve relationships between schools and parents[69], and between courts, police and ethnic groups.[70] Improved linkages between the migrant parent, his child and the school would result from the use of a team of volunteers who could offer translation and interpreting services at a general level, as well as visiting parents in their homes to explain the school system and to answer questions.[71] Such volunteers could be recruited from university students[72] or older bi-lingual members of the ethnic community. In summary, the direct service role of therapist seems best left to the bi-lingual bi-cultural social worker, who, even then, needs to be wary of imposing a 'need' to casework the client over the client's expressed need for more direct help. This specialist work could be done by the ethnic agencies, and supported by the Anglo-Saxon social worker by referring only those clients who needed highly specialized casework help.[73] The roles of supporter and advisor may be facilitated by the use of a team approach, in which the Anglo-Saxon can call upon the help of the ethnic professional or volunteer member. The recruiting of volunteers can be pursued through appeals to local ethnic organizations, service clubs and groups and through publicity in ethnic newspapers. Adequate training, support and oversight must then be given by the social worker[74] who thus moves into the roles of consultant, supporter and advisor to the volunteers.

Ethnic community resources can also be tapped in the development of community support services and self-help groups. Here again the nature of need must be carefully considered. The present popularity of 'group' and 'community' work must not lead the social worker to ignore the relevance and cultural acceptability of plans for group action. Where the social worker as researcher or community worker feels that a need has been identified, consultation should be sought with the would-be recipients of the proposed service. This may be done by survey and discussions with ethnic group members and organizations. For example, the apparent need for improved child-care facilities in the study by Turnley, Dunt[75] (et.al.) revealed that the majority of Greek women, unlike their Italian counterparts, wanted child-minding facilities established within their own ethnic group. In this situation, the social worker in the role of enable consultant, supporter and advisor could assist working mothers employed in a particular factory to approach their employer about the provision of child-care facilities within the factory. Alternatively, mothers could be assisted to arrange a roster system of child-care within individual homes where all the children could be cared for by a minder employed by the group. Petitions and requests for financial assistance from funding sources such as the Australian Assistance Plan and the Children's Commission could be prepared. Assistance and support could be sought from the unions representing the women workers with the social worker acting as researcher and advocate in preparing and putting the women's case if necessary. Other areas where self-held groups could be developed include volunteer teaching of English, particularly to house-bound migrant women. This type of scheme has the added advantage of linking Australian and migrant women in a joint endeavour, promoting friendship and mutual understanding. The social worker as broker can inform members of ethnic communities of the little-known provision that if there are nine people in an area who wish to learn English, they can contact the Education Department which will provide them with a teacher and someone to look after their children.[76] As enabler, consultant, supporter, adviser and community worker, the social worker can stimulate, encourage and advocate the establishment of other forms of self-help such as credit unions. This type of involvement is only possible to the Anglo-Saxon social who demonstrates a genuine and unambiguous commitment to the principle of multiculturalism, a necessary prerequisite to the establishment of the social worker's credibility in the eyes of the ethnic community.

A further aspect of the social worker's role in the development of services to migrants consists of working for the modification and restructuring of those organizations which have become outdated or ineffective. The Good Neighbour Council may be seen as an example of such an agency

> "composed largely of prominent and respectable citizens representing established Christianity, industry and the network of Australian welfare and social organizations."[77]

Based on assimilationist and social welfare attitudes[78] its voice still carries great authority in the distribution of funds to ethnic and migrant welfare organizations. The social worker can act as supporter, advisor, enabler and consultant in assisting ethnic group members to gain election to the Council in order to influence its activities. The social worker could also advocate change within the organization at an of-

ficial level.

The plight of a migrant child within the education system forms another area for social work concern and action. While a growing number of teachers are aware of these difficulties, many still do not understand the full dimensions of language difficulties or the child's difficulty in reconciling the 'two worlds' of home and school. By offering to act as a resource person and consultant, the social worker could provide information about ethnic background and migrant problems which might serve to 'educate the educators' about the children in their care. As mediator, the social worker could identify some of the areas where the school's organization may particularly penalize migrant children, and suggest ways of modifying these practices or instituting new concepts. A small example of this type of intervention was John Santa-Isabel's suggestion to a primary school teacher that migrant boys might show more enthusiasm for physical education classes if other sports, as well as the inevitable game of cricket, were to be offered.[79]

Teachers who are attempting to promote the principles of multiculturalism in educational philosophy and practice should be supported by the social worker by providing research data and 'expert testimony' to support their campaigns. Such inter-profession co-operation appears to be an underdeveloped but potentially fertile area for further development.

The general inaccessibility of consultation with the teachers of their children confronting migrant parents could be considerably lessened by the development and use of teams of mult-lingual volunteers. These people could translate school information and notices into the language of the parents as well as visiting migrant homes as described earlier. Here, the social worker could approach local ethnic organizations for their co-operation and assistance on the basis that much hardship for members of the group could be eased. The underuse by social workers of ethnic organizations as 'ethnic middlemen'[80] represents a waste of existing resources which frequently offer elaborate and extensive networks of communication through which information could be quickly disseminated. As community worker, enabler, supporter and advisor, the social worker can also help migrant parents begin to take some forms of collective self-help action. For example, the Victorian Education Department, (Primary Division) has given official encouragement to the schools to set up their own machinery of parent consultation. Given the support of interpreting facilities, migrant parents could thus begin to have a voice in the running of their children's schools.[81]

"SOCIALIZATION"

Finally, as a major source of socialization for all children, the implementation of teaching policies, practices and curriculum content which fosters respect rather than distaste for cultural diversity must be advocated and supported by all social workers.[82]

The social worker also has a number of important roles to play in achieving change for the individual as well as the community in relation to welfare rights. First, as broker, the social worker can inform individuals of their rights. Many migrant clients, as mentioned earlier, are ignorant of or unable to claim their entitlement. Benefits can be publicized through social work agencies, ethnic organizations, ethnic newspapers and unions with memberships of migrant workers. The individual must be supported in his struggle to negotiate the intricacies of the system, while at the same time efforts are being made to persuade the bureaucracy to simplify its procedures and to publish information in a number of languages. The system can be modified by the social worker acting as educator, especially in the field of staff ignorance of ethnic cultural values and modes of expression, as mediator and co-ordinator in the rationalization of conflicting and overlapping services, and as researcher and consultant in identifying gaps in service and by suggesting ways in which the needs of migrant clients could be better met. Where systems prove obdurate or insensitive, the social worker can adopt the role of community worker and advocate, supporting and encouraging clients to insist upon their rights to welfare. Panitch[83] suggests that advocacy may ultimately involve demonstrations and protests as a last resort. Despite Matheson's charge[84] that professionally educated social workers make poor advocates, due to their general ignorance and avoidance of conflict strategies, the need for such social work involvement seems to be inescapable in situations such as the Department of Social Security's recent record of making benefit payments some six weeks or more behind schedule.

This example draws attention to the existence of areas of unmet need which affect the migrant in the wider context of socio-economic class. The migrant, like many Australians may be trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty, deprivation and powerlessness.[85] The social worker, with his knowledge of the nature and extent of these problems as they affect migrants can join forces with other professionals or action groups to research and publicize the problem, act as educator and consultant to policy planners looking at the problems, and as an advocate of change within organizations.

As a public educator, the social worker can perform a valuable service to the fostering of public support for multiculturalism. As noted earlier, Australian attitudes to migrants are partly based upon suspicion induced by ignorance. Social workers who work with migrants may be frequently called upon to address local groups and organizations as 'guest speaker'. This provides an invaluable opportunity, in a non-threatening atmosphere, to suggest ways in which the general public can ease the lot of the migrant. Media publicity also fulfills this function, reaching a much wider audience. Encouraging the development of schemes such as the home tutor system mentioned earlier also serves to foster community understanding and tolerance.

In reviewing this discussion of social work practice with migrants, a note of caution must be sounded against over-concentration in in-

terpretation and analysis upon the role of ethnicity to the exclusion of other factors. The wide diversity in background and situation of the various ethnic groups within the Australian population makes blanket statements about the 'needs of migrants' rather dubious. Further, clients' needs may range from the specifically culturally determined to needs shared by many others in the wider community. For example, the combined evils of deprivation and powerlessness reflect socio-economic rather than ethnic factors. In addition, the primary social work value of the individuality of the client, dictates that the 'person-in-situation' focus must not be abandoned. Regardless of ethnic background the individual may be confused, lonely, sick, isolated, deprived of his rights or suffering injustice. Ethnicity will influence the social worker's thinking about the most appropriate ways in which to extend help.

In terms of social work values, a commitment to multiculturalism will lead the social worker to a critical re-examination of social work theory and practice to identify and reject those concepts which are ethnocentric or otherwise inconsistent with the values of multiculturalism. Further, social workers will have to critically examine their participation in social processes and institutions which seek to enforce cultural homogeneity. They must also work for the removal of those forces of discrimination and coercive assimilation as they are proposed or manifested in the political arena, agency, goals or practices and in the functioning of the wider social institutions such as schools, legal and health services. In conjunction with this, the social worker must seek to support and encourage the development of ethnic services and institutions which facilitate the expression of cultural and social identity based on ethnicity. Thus a sense of security and well-being will be promoted within the individual migrant as a participating member of the wider community, entitled to the full rights and responsibilities held by all other citizens.

The whole issue of social work practice with migrants raises a number of much wider issues, such as the significance of cultural difference between social worker and clients of a different socio-economic class or racial group. Further the future direction of professional development is under question, with some social workers insisting that practitioners must turn their attention to group work, rejecting the individualist perspectives which may have very limited use beyond the Anglo-Saxon, middle class context. Third, the role of the professional social worker in relation to that of the indigenous leader or ethnic volunteer must be further considered and clarified.

While the social worker is sanctioned by, and works within the context of, both the wider society and a specific agency, many avenues for change may be found if the social worker takes a systematic, flexible and imaginative approach to problem-solving. The multi-role model, within a generic approach to social work practice, allows the necessary flexibility for adjustment to the realities of a multi-cultural society. It provides the practitioner with the basis upon which to adapt his practice to use his resources to serve the best interests of the client.

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FOOTNOTES

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