chapter one

VALUES, ETHICS AND PROFESSIONALIZATION: A SOCIAL WORK HISTORY

Adam Barnard
It has long been argued that social work is a value-based and professional activity. In the field of professional ethics, ‘values’ usually take the form of general ethical principles relating to how professionals should treat the people they work with and what sorts of actions are regarded as right or wrong. Vigilante (1974) calls values the ‘fulcrum of practice’; Bernstein (1970) suggests that they offer ‘vision and discernment’; and Younghusband (1967) suggests they are ‘everywhere in practice’. Timms (1983) pleaded for ‘value-talk’ to be central in social work. Values have a rich and detailed history and an exploration of the historical emergence of those values allows us to gain some purchase on the present, and to explore contemporary controversies and dilemmas.

There are four spheres of values within social work. The first is the more abstract field of moral philosophy that forms a backdrop to ethical debates in social work. The second is the distinct forms of legislation that have created the context for social work practice alongside providing legal responses to particular social work issues and cases. The third is the domain of political ideologies and the way that these have shaped and sculpted social work models, methods and practices. The final sphere is the historical emergence of social work as a profession and the struggle for a professional identity that has engaged social workers. Shardlow (2002: 32) refers to these spheres as extended (social work as a social activity), mid-range (nature of social work as a professional activity) and restricted (professional ethics and behaviour with clients) definitions of ethics and values. This chapter attempts to address the last sphere of values and provide a flavour of the debates that surround the developments in social work ethics. Broad reviews of ethics and moral philosophy can be found within Russell (1961), Hamlyn (1987), Rachels (2003) and Grayling (2004). Legislation is ably discussed by Brayne and Carr (2003), while political ideologies are considered by Heywood (2005).

Firstly, a word on how we can understand the change in ideas about values. Thomas Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1970) became one of the most influential books of the twentieth century. Kuhn, as a physicist turned philosopher of science, conducted research to teach a course on the history of science to humanities students at Harvard in the 1960s (Holloway 2005: 63). Kuhn’s picture of the development of scientific ideas and, by extension, ideas in general, did not fit with the ‘common sense’ or ‘customary’ view. This would suggest that ideas develop in a piecemeal, evolutionary and cumulative way, each idea building
on the contribution of previous generations. The £2 coin enshrines this view with a quotation, attributed to Isaac Newton, stamped on its rim. It reads: ‘Standing on the shoulders of giants’, suggesting that Newton’s progress in ideas and intellectual development built on the previous achievements of great thinkers. Kuhn’s work revolutionized this common-sense or customary view by suggesting that ideas develop in a much more dramatic and interruptive way. He used the term ‘paradigm’ to express the ‘constellation of beliefs, assumptions and techniques’ that hold sway at a given point in time. People are socialized into a paradigm and it becomes the accepted ‘world view’ or ‘received idea’ (Rojeck et al. 1988: 6) of a particular community. Paradigms dominate a period of ‘normal science’ where a community engages in simple puzzle-solving rather than raising any challenging or difficult questions about the paradigm itself. There is a high degree of social control in the adherence to the paradigm. The growth of anomalies, which do not fit this paradigm or received idea, stand out due to the strong attachment to a paradigm. Kuhn argues that when these anomalies become unbearable, science enters a period of crisis when a more far-reaching and speculative acceptance of a new paradigm emerges. This process results in a ‘paradigm shift’ or scientific revolution that overthrows the previous world of knowledge and replaces it with a new world view.

The classic paradigm shift in science was the move from Aristotelian to Copernican astronomy. The classical world view saw the cosmos as a series of concentric circles with the earth fixed at the centre. The planets moved around the earth with nothing beyond them except the realm of God (Holloway 2005: 65). This was the big story throughout Europe for centuries until the anomalies identified by Copernicus prompted the search for a new paradigm that could accommodate them. The Copernican revolution shifted the paradigm of the universe to locate the sun at the centre of our system and develop a ‘helio-centric’ world view. We could suggest Einstein overturned the world of Newton and brought about a new paradigm in physics. It is now widely accepted that a vision of a ‘flat earth’ is discredited and we accept the shifting ground of plate tectonics as the composition of the world.
Social work and its connection to the history of values

A further example of the power of the paradigm can be drawn from childcare policy. Lorraine Fox Harding (1997) has identified four paradigms or value positions in childcare policy. The first is the *laissez faire* and patriarchal approach applied up to the mid-nineteenth century that sought to preserve family privacy, and by which parents, particularly fathers, had power over children with minimal state intervention. The image of a disciplinarian Victorian patriarch held sway. This is ‘the view that power in the family should not be disturbed except in extreme circumstances, and the role of the state should be a minimal one’ (Fox Harding 1997: 9). Towards the end of the nineteenth century, state paternalism and child protection emerged. This saw the protection of children by an emerging group of (female) professionals, and is associated with the growth of state intervention as the twentieth century progressed. State intervention is often authoritarian, with the result that biological family bonds can be undervalued and good quality care substituted. Criticism of state paternalism in the post-Second World War period attempted to defend families from heavy-handed state intervention and offer greater levels of help and support. This saw ‘kinship defenders or defence of the birth family’ emerge as a dominant paradigm. The final paradigm in relation to child protection is the children’s rights and child liberation perspective, in which children are seen as the bearers of rights and able to participate in decision-making processes.

Fox Harding’s work shows the historic paradigmatic shifts of value positions in relation to childcare policy in social work theory and practice. Having examined the way in which ideas develop, we can turn our attention to the paradigm shifts that are evident in social work and social care values. We have provided a flavour of this process with Fox Harding, above, but will extend this argument. The following discussion examines the broad historical changes in values within social work, social care and human services. Further reading is provided at the end of the chapter for those wanting to examine the philosophical basis of values, ethics and social work.

There is a multitude of varied value systems that could have been selected. For example, the Arab world, Africa and China, have all contributed philosophical discussion to questions of values. However, in terms on the impact and contribution made to social work, the selection for discussion is always going to be
partial. This is not to do a disservice to the contribution made by a diverse range of thinkers or to devalue the knowledge they have produced, but to map out a digestible survey of the terrain of values that have a continuing legacy in the helping and social professions. Useful and wider ranging commentaries on this subject are Yelaja (1970), Midgley (1981) and Osei-Hwedie (1990, 1993).

Social work values defined: an emerging story

The profession’s early concern with the value of charity has its roots in the Bible and religion. All the world’s religions uphold ethics of duty, mutual responsibility, care, compassion and concern for others (Horner 2006: 16). Reamer (2006: 15) argues that acts of charity were meant to fulfil God’s commandments. The Elizabethan Poor Laws of 1598 and 1601 consolidated welfare legislation of the Tudor period and have their origins in the systems of relief provided to the poor by the parishes of the Church of England.

The seventeenth century saw the emergence of what we could call ‘modern values’, with the intellectual, cultural and political movement that is collectively referred to as the Enlightenment. This was characterized by an increased emphasis on the values of tolerance, freedom and reasonableness. Authoritarianism, particularly of a religious kind, was rejected in favour of respect for lay opinion, increased scepticism and a belief in progress, emancipation and scientific understanding (Brown 2003: 4). For some, social work stems from these roots (Payne 2005: 15).

Modern values have been concerned with addressing the questions, ‘What is the right thing to do?’ or ‘How should I act?’ Early contributors to such questions were Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. They developed an ethical system based on the consequences of action and hedonism, and the promotion of happiness as the basis of ethics. People should always act in ways that make the largest number of people happy. This form of utilitarianism (Bentham [1789] 1970; Mill [1848] 1972) had a significant impact on social, political and legal reform (Sen and Williams 1982; Glover 1990; Crisp 1997). Philosophically, the 1800s were significant in terms of Immanuel Kant’s contribution. Kant’s challenging philosophical system gives us an ethics based on duty, moral motivation and ultimately a respect for other people (Paton 1948).
During the Georgian period, social welfare systems were most concerned with the threat to public order presented by those in poverty. The workhouse was the eighteenth-century response, with 2000 existing in Britain by 1776 as a result of the General Workhouses Act of the 1720s (Horner 2006: 18). The Poor Law Report leading to the Poor Law Amendment Act in 1834 saw the consolidation of workhouses across the country, acting as harsh and deterring institutions encouraging moral restraint. Foucault (1961) refers to this as the ‘great confinement’ that spread across Europe from the mid-seventeenth century and found its fullest expression in the ‘institutional mania’ of the Victorian era (Horner 2006: 19). ‘Lunatics, idiots and imbeciles’ were confined to institutions, away from the celebratory grandeur of Victorian public buildings. Horner (2006: 21) suggests that this period threw up a range of middle-class reformers including Elizabeth Fry, Florence Nightingale, Mary Carpenter, Octavia Hill, Dr Barnardo, General Booth, Edwin Chadwick, Edward Foster, Dr Thomas Arnold and Lord Shaftesbury. Although moral education was part of these reformers’ programmes there was a growing awareness of other sources of difficulty for people. By 1900, the essentially religious base to charity gave way to secular ideas of social welfare.

Reamer (2006) provides an insight into the historical emergence of the values base in social care. Values and ethics have been the cornerstone of social care’s mission and have involved normative considerations of what should be done in terms of its ethical orientation. Reamer argues that the evolution of social work values and ethics has had four distinct stages: the morality period; the values period; the ethical theory and decision-making period; and the ethical standards and risk management period (2006: 5).

The morality period, when social work became a profession, was more concerned with the morality of the client than with the values of the practitioner. Responding to the ‘curse of pauperism’ (Paine 1880) and organizing relief was the principle mission. Reamer (2006: 5) suggests that this led to paternalistic attempts to strengthen the moral rectitude of ‘wayward’ clients, and social reforms reflected this – for example, the ‘settlement house’ movements in the USA. The Society for Organizing Charitable Relief and Repressing Mendicity, later to become the Charity Organization Societies in the UK, aimed to raise the moral stature of individuals and society (Bisman 2003). ‘The most important insight charity organizers left us was their view of society as a moral community … a body of people held together primarily by
intimate sentiments of responsibility, love and duty, caring and sharing’ (Leiby 1984: 535). These moral concerns laid the foundations for some of the primary values of social work, emphasizing the importance of individual worth and dignity, and service to humanity (Bisman 2003: 112).

The early part of the twentieth century saw a shift in concern from the morality of the client towards the structural problems of society such as housing, healthcare, sanitation, employment and poverty. In a UK context this culminated in the Beveridge Report of 1942 that declared a ‘War on Want’ to address these structural problems. An emerging class of welfare professionals developed what we might call ‘traditional social work’.

‘Traditional’ social work is seen as ‘the technical management of personal problems and the maintenance of order’ (Rojeck et al. 1988: 1) and has normally been composed of ‘received ideas’ relating to professional values and standards of practice. These have often taken a list-type approach. Bisteck, a Catholic priest, drew up one of the early and influential list-type approaches to practice that included: individualization; the purposeful expression of feelings; controlled emotional involvement; acceptance; non-judgemental attitude; client self-determination; and confidentiality (Biesteck 1957).

In the USA in the 1950s, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW 1958) listed social work’s basic values as: respect for ‘individual uniqueness’; the right to ‘the realization of the full potential of each individual’; and tolerance of ‘the differences that exist between individuals’ (Rojeck et al. 1988: 6). The main opposition to this approach developed in the 1960s with radical social work, a broad church that drew from labelling theory, critical psychoanalysis, Marxism, feminism and discourse theory. The criticism of traditional social work was that it held an ahistorical view of social work values and neglected the context in which social values emerge and change. A further criticism was that the structural forces which give rise to personal and social problems were being neglected (Rojeck et al. 1988: 2).

The radical challenge emerges

Humanism and existentialism also exerted an influence as well as being established philosophical theories. Humanism argues that human beings have the capacity to reason, make choices and act freely, independent of religion. Payne (2005: 182) argues that
humanism gained favour as part of the secularization of welfare that separated it from the churches in the 1800s. Carl Rogers (1951, 1961) is the most influential writer on humanistic and person-centred ideas. He suggests three elements to relationships, stating that clients should perceive workers as genuine and congruent (reflecting real attitudes and a personality not imposed on clients), that workers should have unconditional positive regard for clients, and that they should have empathy for clients.

Existentialism is built on the notion of humans as free, unique individuals whose ‘existence precedes essence’. Sartre’s imperious *Being and Nothingness* (1943) is focused on this notion of free will and the meaning that people create. Existentialism’s contribution to social work came through the anti-psychiatry movement and the work of R.D. Laing. Its fullest recent application to social work is by Thompson (1992).

By the 1960s social work as a profession had become self-reflective and the ‘values clarification’ movement (Reamer 2006: 6) examined the value base of social work. It drew on developments in related disciplines such as psychotherapy and social policy, and from social and political struggles such as the civil rights movements and women’s liberation. Social workers became more reflective about their own value base and their relationship to the profession. Social work training examined a broad set of emancipatory issues such as social equality, welfare rights, discrimination and oppression.

In a UK context, radical social work informed by Marxist social and political theory viewed received ideas of ‘care’ and ‘concern’ as part of social work’s historical mission to aid capitalism by ensuring a compliant and healthy workforce and addressing the worst excesses of capitalism (Corrigan and Leonard 1978). The ideological smokescreen of social work was to ‘blame the victim’ and locate social problems as instances of individual failing, not structurally defined problems. The central concern of the value base of radical social work was a focus on equality, understood in the Marxist sense of redistribution of income and wealth, and a notion of justice built on that redistribution. Bailey and Brake (1975, 1980) argue that radical practice is ‘essentially understanding the position of the oppressed in the context of the social and economic structure they live in’ (Bailey and Brake 1975: 9). Marxist-informed social work was criticized by feminists for focusing too heavily on class and for neglecting the family, gender, sexuality, patriarchy and domestic violence, as well as questions of culture and ethnicity (Ahmed 1990; Martin and Martin 1995).
The 1970s saw a surge of interest in the broad subject of applied or professional ethics, that Reamer (2006: 6) suggests also influenced social work ethics. High profile cases of social work failure consolidated this process. The ‘ethical theory and decision-making’ period characterized this boom in applied ethics and greater ethical consideration. In terms of social work ethics, Plant’s Social and Moral Theory in Casework (1970) represents one of the first sustained attempts to examine the philosophical value base of social work. Previous attempts had been less philosophically informed (Biestek 1957; Hollis 1964) and took the form of ‘list approaches’ to the types of values to which social workers should be committed. Hunt (1978) attempted a philosophically justified examination of the value base of social work and suggests that it is comprised of the uniqueness and worth of each individual human personality, the right to self-determination, the existence and value of freedom, the existence of obligations, plus a host of beliefs about the ‘good life’ and ‘good society’.

In 1970s Britain, the British Association of Social Workers (BASW 1975) drew up a list in their code of ethics that included the principles of ‘self-determination’, ‘non-judgementalism’, ‘compassion’, ‘professional responsibility’ and ‘confidentiality’. The end of this era was signalled, for Payne (2005: 233), by the general political developments in many western countries that gave rise to the ‘New Right’ of Conservative administrations. Conservative approaches to social values are built on the two tenets that the individual is paramount and that private activity should address social problems. Individual failures are to blame for a person’s situation although there is a key role for the family and society’s morality in socializing individuals into the correct forms of behaviour.

The 1980s was ‘a watershed moment that dramatically changed social workers’ understanding of and approach to ethical issues’ (Reamer 2006: 9). The Barclay Report (1982: 145) into the future of social work argued that social workers should work in ways that recognize people have a need for ‘respect’, ‘understanding’, ‘justice’ and ‘equality’. Respect (the value of the innate dignity and worth of human persons), individualization (the uniqueness of individuals), and confidentiality were central to the language of social work (Timms 1983; Clark and Asquith 1985). From the 1980s onwards there was a growing concern for social work to respond to ethnic and cultural dimensions by addressing anti-oppressive approaches and cultural and ethnic sensitivity (Thompson 1993, 2003a, 2003b; Darymple and Burke 1995; Dominelli 1997, 2002).
Developments in philosophy and social theory have also contributed to the paradigmatic change in social work values. Discourse analysis has displaced the idea that the language of social work is neutral or a formal and technical exercise of intervention into people's lives. The notion of discourse suggests that power relations are inherent in language and help to shape the reality that individuals and groups inhabit. As such, language is central to the power of social work – for example, by defining people as ‘abnormal’, ‘deviant’, ‘delinquent’ or ‘at risk’. The simplest example of this is to consider the terms ‘man’ and ‘woman’. Woman is comprised of ‘man’ ‘wo(man)’, she always needs ‘man’ to be present to define herself, man comes first. French poststructuralist philosophers who have informed discourse theory, such as Jacques Derrida (1976), suggest that to clearly display the power relations inherent in social life, ‘man’ should be written as ‘wo(man)’. Women are presented as passive, maternal, submissive, docile, virtuous and emotional whereas men are active, businesslike, decisive, rational and reasonable (Spender 1980). Postmodernism, ‘not so much a theoretical perspective as a style of theorizing’ (Thompson 2003b: 55) is the culmination of these developments.

The contemporary situation in the helping professions

The 1990s saw the emergence of a further paradigmatic approach with anti-oppression, empowerment and advocacy emerging as themes. Anti-oppressive practice (Thompson 1993; Dominelli 1996) locates the worker and service user in a broader structural context, focusing on social difference, personal and political relationships, power, history and reflexivity (Clifford 1995). Empowerment involves supporting service users to identify the full range of possibilities, strengths and qualities required to meet their needs. Solomon (1976), Lee (2001) and Gutiérrez et al. (1998) are representative of attempts to develop empowerment as a central approach as well as a fundamental value. Advocacy as a positive sense of self, knowledge, and strategies to gain goals is central to Rose and Black's (1985) argument, and Brandon et al. (1995) placed this value at the heart of modern social work and social care.

Professional competences have also added to the present climate of social work values such as compassion, discernment, trustworthiness, integrity and conscientiousness. Compassion is a
trait that combines an active regard for another’s welfare with an awareness and emotional response of sympathy, tenderness and discomfort at another’s misfortune (Reamer 2006: 31). Discernment is being able to bring ‘sensitive insight, acute judgement, and understanding into action’ without prejudice (Reamer 2006: 31). Trustworthiness is the reliance on another person to act with the right motives and appropriate moral norms (Reamer 2006: 31). Integrity refers to the soundness, wholeness and reliability of the moral character of an individual who has a coherent understanding of themselves in terms of their emotions, aspirations and knowledge, with a commitment to moral norms (Reamer 2006: 31). Being conscientious is to do what is right and exerting appropriate effort to do so (Reamer 2006: 32). These are focal virtues that Beauchamp and Childress (2001) offer as critically important in work carried out by professionals.

There are dangers in this type of list approach in that it leaves practitioners with little more than a set of fixed values that they should bring into complex situations. Beauchamp and Childress (2001) argue that such values are linked to four core moral principles. **Autonomy** is self-direction and self-rule free from controlling interference. It is to become an author of your own destiny free from the control of others. **Nonmaleficence** is the obligation to do no harm to others. **Beneficence** includes altruism, love and humanity and connotes acts of kindness, mercy and charity (Reamer 2006: 32). **Justice** is a difficult term that refers to fairness, equity and appropriate treatment in the light of what is owed to a person. It is closely connected to equality and rights. This cluster of values includes professional competencies and core moral principles that cover Shardlow’s (2002) expansive, mid-range and restrictive values.

The most recent stage of social work ethics is the maturation of ethical issues and the significant expansion of ethical standards to guide a practitioner’s conduct and increased knowledge concerning professional negligence and liability (Reamer 2006: 9). The risk management period has been consolidated by events such as the General Social Care Council’s code of conduct for social care workers. This code (General Social Care Council 2004) contains six statements that should guide and inform social work’s values and social workers’ practice. These are:

1. Protect the rights and promote the interests of service users and carers.
2. Strive to establish and maintain the trust and confidence of service users and carers.
3 Promote the independence of service users while protecting them as far as possible from danger or harm.
4 Respect the rights of service users while seeking to ensure that their behaviour does not harm themselves or other people.
5 Uphold public trust and confidence in social care services.
6 Be accountable for the quality of your work and take responsibility for maintaining and improving your knowledge and skills.

The changing nature of social care, human services and social professions has promoted two further contemporary developments in values. The first is the trend towards ‘interprofessional’ working. Collaborative working arrangements mean that problems or services are addressed or delivered by groups of professionals working together. Health visitors, social workers, educational psychologists, and the police would be one example of interprofessional working. Regeneration partnerships to tackle social problems within a community or neighbourhood often involve ‘interagency’ working between professionals. The ‘modernization’ or ‘modern management agenda’ of New Labour places a stress on ‘joined up’ policy and practice. This interprofessional working demands a focus on the values of each profession and the possibility of conflicting values between each profession.

Similarly, more defensive ways of working have emerged. Banks (2004: 8) argues that the ‘new accountability’ encapsulates a host of accountability measures that have developed with the growth of ‘new managerialism’ or ‘new public management’ from the end of the twentieth century. Major changes in the delivery of welfare and the introduction of internal markets pose interesting challenges for the values base of professions working in social care. Working with first-year students there is a worrying trend towards what Reamer (2006: 19) calls an ‘amoralistic paradigm’. This is characterized by the absence of value-based or normative concepts or orientations and is evident in a technical, managerial or procedural approach to social work. The act of ‘rule-following’ or upholding a duty to the regulatory framework, uncritically and without question, would be an example of such amoralistic working. The concern is that contemporary developments in the field of social care have returned us to the starting point of traditional social work as the technical management of personal problems and the maintenance of order. The challenge is to move beyond this paradigm and reinvigorate the value base of social
care. The challenges of globalization, new technologies, regulation and government policy will set the agenda for new developments in how we define values.

To return to the notion of a paradigm shift in professional values, Banks (2004) argues that changes in values have ‘not signalled a revolution’ but a ‘series of tremors, rocking the foundations, requiring some rebuilding and restructuring, but based on the solid traditions of the past, constantly evolving and changing’ (p. 194). It is this common but shifting ground that makes up the terrain of values. Our task is to map the route and enjoy the journey.

References

The Value Base of Social Work and Social Care


Values, ethics and professionalization: a social work history


The Value Base of Social Work and Social Care


Further reading

EXERCISE 1

The historical context of values – poster presentations

This exercise requires a group of at least 10–15 students, but works best with a larger group (40–50 is excellent). If you have a smaller group then you will need to select a range of names and concepts which cover a wide-ranging continuum – for example, from Socrates through to the present day.

The objective is for participants to work in pairs, each being given a key thinker or concept specific to the notion of VALUES. They take that name or concept away and ‘map’ the key thinkers/ideas that have contributed towards our thinking about what has shaped the helping professions as they are today, in the form of a poster presentation.

Students need to be randomly given a name or concept which relates to the exercise – for example, Plato, Thomas Hobbes, R.D. Laing, the civil rights movement, professional codes of practice. They need to then obtain as much information as possible about this person or concept and display it in artistic form on a large A1 poster.

If you are the teacher, lecturer or trainer and have a particular orientation in your teaching (psychology, criminology, nursing etc.) you will need to add names of individuals specific to your profession.

Students should be given at least two to three weeks to prepare their poster and then on the day of presentations all posters need to be put on a ‘time continuum’ in relation to the historical context of the subject. This creates a very powerful sequencing of ideas in a historical context and helps the students to make links with historical struggles in their profession. This session can take up to three hours to complete (e.g. if you have 50 students each producing one poster each) because all students have to ‘visit’ each poster. Hence the exercise needs to be structured so that all the students get a chance to ask questions about all the poster topics.

This exercise is exciting and powerful, and rarely fails to exemplify in vivid and dramatic form the development of key thinkers and ideas from the earliest of times to the present day.

The exercise can conclude with a brief presentation by the lecturer/trainer on how our ideas about values now can be traced back in time.
EXERCISE 2

The history of my own value base

This is a complex and challenging exercise for students which is primarily reflective in context (there would be an expectation that students have some understanding of reflective practice). In a sequence of structured exercises, the students explore how their own value base was formed and developed.

SOME ISSUES:

- Because the exercises are very personal, the facilitator assists students in terms of the need to maintain their own boundaries and remain ‘grounded’. By grounded, we mean that the student is able to explore issues and will be able to cope with the emotional content. This is not an opportunity for therapy or a ‘therapy’ group.
- If the session is facilitated, there needs to be clear contracting around the students taking responsibility for self-regulation. At times we can be taken by surprise by ‘hidden’ feelings, or experiences which we had not fully comprehended. Indeed, some students will be survivors of child abuse, may have experienced recent loss, or find exploring their ‘family’ or origin overwhelming. The facilitator should help students to self-monitor and take care when undertaking this exercise. If there are issues that come up, the facilitator should take responsibility for checking the student is OK, and whether they need to just have a breathing space or take time out. Other students should not be drawn into the issues. Please don’t let this put you off what can be a very enriching exercise!

EXERCISE 3

Orientation

Students should find a photo, object, poem, song, book … anything that is important to them, and share it with a group of up to five other students. The facilitator should set ground rules where all other students must listen and not interrupt. It’s useful
for the facilitator to provide an example themselves; here is Jim Wild's, a poem by Jorge Luis Borges, about belonging, and much, much more:

**Plainness**

The garden's grillwork gate
opens with the ease of a page
in a much-thumbed book,
and, once inside, our eyes
have no need to dwell on objects
already fixed and exact in memory.
Here habits and minds and the private language
all families invent
are everyday things to me.
What necessity is there to speak
or pretend to be someone else?
The whole house knows me,
they're aware of my worries and weaknesses.
This is the best that can happen –
what Heaven perhaps will grant us:
not to be wondered at or required to succeed
but simply to be let in
as a part of an undeniable Reality,
like stones of the road, like trees.

When the students have completed their contributions there should be time for them to share their thoughts in the wider group.

**EXERCISE 4**

**My family of origin and values still retained**

The facilitator should assist students in thinking about an important family value from their childhood. This should also be a value that the students hold central to their lives now. This can be shared with the whole group if they wish. Examples might be ‘all people are equal’ or ‘nuclear war is bad’.
EXERCISE 5

My values unpicked

The facilitator should help the students to think about a value from their childhood which they rejected, and explore what has replaced it. This should again be shared with the whole group if they wish.

EXERCISE 6

Mapping out my value base

The facilitator students direct the students to take a large sheet of paper and think about it as a map for their values. The centre represents ‘fundamental’ things that they consider will always be a part of them. They then map out other issues until they reach the edge of the paper where there are words, issues and ideas that are vulnerable or not as important. The facilitator could help by providing a list that the students use as a primer to expand on.

The exercise can last up to 30 minutes. It can be simple, with words in one colour, or extensive, with pictures, patterns, quotes etc. – the more elaborate versions may require students to work on them away from the teaching context before bringing them back to share. It’s a great exercise to help students really think about the issues and experiences that hold our values in place. A variation of this is to put around the edge of the paper the things that destabilize or threaten our values, which creates some interesting points for debate.

All these exercises can be designed to act as ‘stand alone’ forms of learning or as part of a module where students can use these experiences in an assignment or portfolio. Values are fundamental to the development of good practice, but they are also constantly challenged by the society we live in and need to be re-examined by students and then affirmed throughout an individual’s career.