


Tackling Social Exclusion

A Case Example of Integrated Service Delivery

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Families Empowered to Act Together

FEAT is an early intervention program supporting families in Salisbury North with children 5-13 years at risk of disengaging from learning.

Program partners: City of Salisbury, 5108 cluster schools, Central Northern Primary Health Service, other govt. agencies, NGOs.

School retention as a social inclusion issue

- education is a key determinant of health & social outcomes
- some groups are more likely to disengage than others – equity is an issue
- parents/caregivers crucial
- a whole-of-community issue
- social connection is a key
- life course approach – intervene early & at key transition points

A ‘what’s the problem?’ approach

How the ‘problem’ is defined shapes our:

- Ideas about solutions
- Intervention goals
- Intervention approaches
- Service delivery practices, and systems

(Carol Bacchi)

What’s the Problem? The Evidence

Outcomes for families and children:

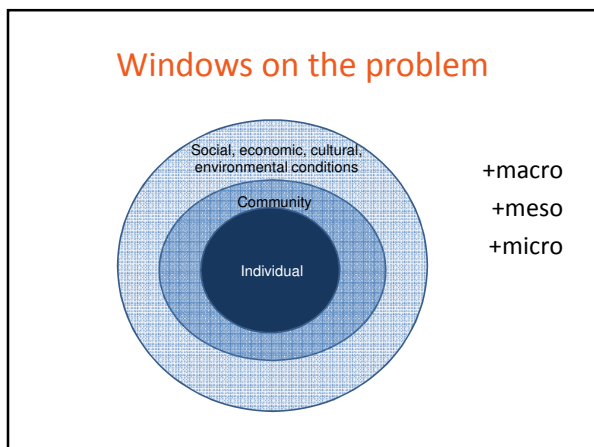
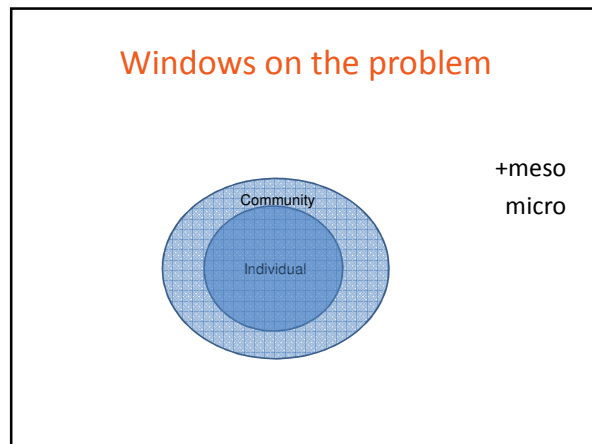
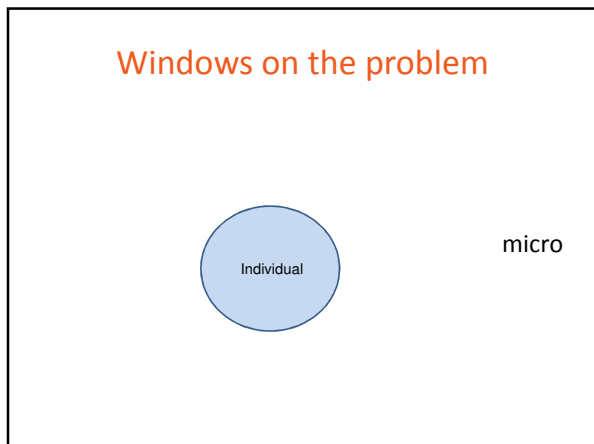
- Follow a social gradient
- Are determined by the quality of social relations and environments

The effects of early developmental experiences are played out over the life course.

Best is life-long advantage; worst is life-long disadvantage; and intermediate is anything that for some proportion of life has shifted the life course from the latter to the former trajectory.

In this sense it is never too late and always good sense, for social policy to give a helping hand.

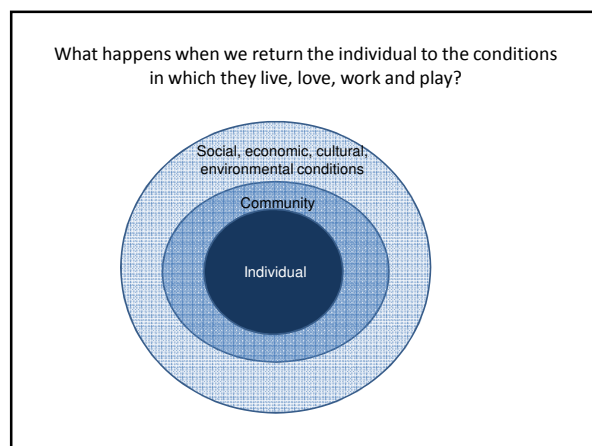
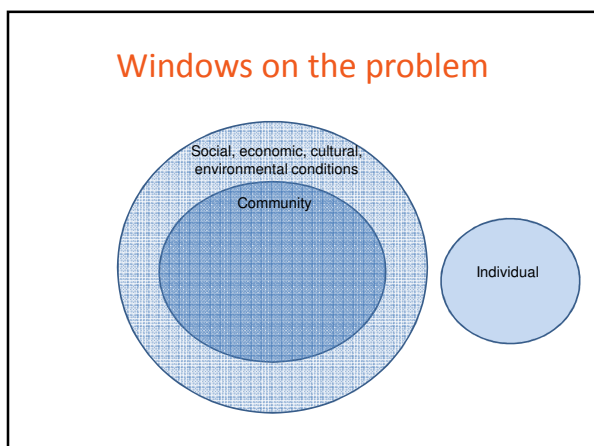
(David Blane 1999)



What challenges are raised?

How do we connect the micro, meso and macro factors in practice?

Even if it were possible to isolate the micro from the meso and macro...



Basic logic: what good does it do to treat people's illnesses or problems ...



...then give them no choice but to go back to the conditions that made them sick?



FEAT : An example of an integrated approach

Aspects of 'integration' -

- What you think about the problem
- What you do about it
- Who is involved in the solutions

...and enhanced if underpinned by an agreed set of values

FEAT: Thinking about the problem

Unequal access to resources & opportunities for health and learning across the life course.

Unfair expectation of responsibility for children given to mothers/caregivers.

Commitment and capability of caregivers are often not recognised nor celebrated.

Social exclusion is a dynamic process in which we are all actors.

They're more family based as well like not just with kids at school and stuff but she tried to help us get into Housing Trust accommodation... She was trying to get someone in to try and do some housework once a week or something... she got some food vouchers and things at Xmas time ...the washing piled up, she organised to get the Laundromat, she paid to get that all washed and dried and that so it was all done.

(Mother)

FEAT: Services

Micro

Meso

Macro

- Individual and family counselling and support
- Case management
- Specialised program development
- Brokerage
- Development of partnerships
- Community development
- Advocacy for systems level change

So how is FEAT different?

'What [FEAT] does primarily which is so unusual is that it works with families at the far end of the edge of disadvantage, and stays with them until they're supported to be in a different space. That's really unusual because in society they're often really hard to get to, nobody hears them, and it's often only through their children, who have to attend school, that we start to develop a relationship and start to make connections to FEAT, and then FEAT work with those families.' (Stakeholder Interview)



FEAT: Relationships are key

Challenging unequal and unhelpful relationships

Respect
Recognition
Reciprocity

Build bridges rather than dig the divide

'I think one of their extraordinary skills is that they stay with families through all sorts of issues, no matter what. They develop degrees of trust with families. I say that quickly, but that's really hard to do with families that have been associated with lots of agencies and may not have experienced respect there. They can do what other agencies can't do in building relationships.' (Stakeholder Interview)

I actually find now I am more comfortable approaching the school about things because (FEAT worker) used to come to suspension meetings and re-entry meetings for (child) at the school and because I used to feel overwhelmed and I was looked down upon and having her there as a back-up person and I could just sort of look at her and she would take over and I learnt a lot about standing up for myself and saying 'No I don't agree.' (Mother)

FEAT: Partnerships

Enlisting partners for family-centred practice

- Partners in planning and governance
- Building service relationships & pathways
- Changing the ways agencies engage families

'... there's the service agreement which is overarching. Then there's additional links between the project and specific organisations ...around specific ways of working. Community Health has developed links with Families SA around issues ...which relate to the FEAT project... same with Community Health and Housing SA. They're worker to worker links that people hope will become organisational links.'

(Stakeholder Interview)

'I've got so many people that I can work with now regarding (issue). The partnerships and interpersonal links have been developed so that we can confidently contact each other with an issue. So it's definitely had some good spin offs for other programs and for capacity building in the community in general.'

(A different Stakeholder...)

'It might take a while to engage the family and for things to move. It needs to be deliberately like that because we don't want to be paternalistic about it or focusing on deficit. It has to be voluntary and it has to be about strengths. Therefore there can't be a one size fits all solution. People can accept that on a theoretical perspective but in reality they want quick fixes. I think FEAT has stayed true to the model of not looking for a quick fix. They've kept integrity on what strengths-based approaches really mean and what engagement should mean.'

(Stakeholder Interview)

Generalising from FEAT

- Critical understandings of 'wellbeing'
- More equal service relationships - sense of fairness & mutual respect
- Nurturing people's access to opportunities and resources wellbeing
- Service organisation systems & processes to support 'joined-up', flexible responses

To advance children's wellbeing... 5 cornerstones of social inclusion

1. **Valued recognition** – diversity, common worth, universal programs
2. **Human development** – early learning, opportunities across life course
3. **Participation** – in decisions & community life
4. **Proximity** – reduce social distance
5. **Material wellbeing** – to enable participation in community life

Canadian Laidlaw Foundation 2002

Connecting micro-meso-macro

- Societal , community-level and individual level causes & effects of inequalities are multi-layered and interlinked – *a web of causation*
- Causes & effects are 'wired' together by the social relations of inequality
- Unequal social relations are the 'electricity' which connects/feeds this web

... poverty and social isolation are not 'object states' but unequal and corrosive social relations

(Lister 2002)

What are the implications for your practice?

More about FEAT?

*Families Empowered – A
strengths based approach*

<http://som.flinders.edu.au/FUSA/SACHRU/Publications/resources.htm>

Or 'Google' SACHRU...

*Time's easier like, whenever problems are
shared with somebody it's easier.*

(Child)