It is only in the last 20 years that Third Sector Research has emerged internationally as a recognised research field and researchers at SJSC have taken a significant role in its development. Third Sector sometimes called Not-for-Profit sector, refers to all those organisations which are not part of the state or the market (for example; arts, sport, religion, community, employment, childcare, private schools, many aged care facilities, welfare, advocacy, and unions). The sector has grown exponentially in the last 30 years in most developed countries as governments at all levels have contracted Third Sector Organisations (TSOs) to deliver human services. The ABS (2009) has identified 59,000 economically significant NFPs, contributing $43 billion to Australia’s GDP, and 8 per cent of employment in 2006-07 and $15 billion worth of volunteering. In recognition of the growth the ABS now produces a Satellite Account to the National Accounts for the sector (although ongoing funding is currently being debated).

Research has also grown exponentially led by the International Society for Third Sector Research (ISTR) and national organisations. As a reflection of its commitment to Third Sector scholarship SJSC members have had positions on the Board since 1999 including my appointment as Chairperson from 2000 to 2004. Our current representative, Dr Roumen Dimitrov, started his involvement in his native country of Bulgaria as part of an international comparative study of the sector and we are delighted that he has brought his expertise to UWS and to SJSC. SJSC also hosts the secretariat for ANZTSR, ably administered by Dr Natalie Scerra.

ANZTSR pre-dates ISTR and continues to be an international leader. Professor Gainer President-elect of ISTR addressed the 2008 ANZTSR conference: “Your work is in the vanguard of global research on the Third Sector and you are part of a ‘global conversation’ in which we look to you for leadership in many areas.”

The Productivity Commission report into the NFP sector was a milestone for the recognition of the importance of the NFP sector and ANZTSR is now actively lobbying for an ABS Field of Research code for Third Sector Research so the commonality of work currently attributed to many disparate disciplines can be recognised.

The DEEWR recognised refereed journal Third Sector Review also has had a major role in the development of scholarship in the region. As Editor and now Managing Editor, I have seen both the quality and quantity of articles continuing to grow but we continue to maintain the importance of our developmental role. Encouraging research from NFPs and post-graduate students is essential for the continued growth of the field.

Associate Professor Rosemary Leonard,
Leader, SJSC


**Impact! A National Male Health Policy**

SJSC Member: Professor John Macdonald

On the 6th May the Prime Minister launched the first ever National Male Health Policy.

For Professor John Macdonald a member of SJSC based in the School of Biomedical and Health Sciences and his colleagues, this is the culmination of many years of work, both directly with the government (both Federal and State) and with many Area Health Services, running the national Men's health Conferences, working with men’s groups in the community, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and with individual men. Professor John Macdonald was with the Prime Minister and the Minister with the portfolio for men's health, the Honourable Warren Snowdon at the launch. The work of the Men's Health Information and Resource Centre (MHIROC), UWS and Professor Macdonald is acknowledged in the text.

The MHIROC sees the publication of the policy as very significant cultural shift, both in the Health Services and in society at large.

For a long time, male health, when mentioned at all, was often seen as having to do mainly with physical conditions like the prostate or with “masculinity”, often referring to men: reluctance to seek help or some other inadequacy.

Prime Minister Rudd and Minister Snowdon talking with Professor John Macdonald

For the first time in about 20 years of research in the field, male health has been acknowledged as very significant cultural shift, both in the Health Services and in society at large. It is a move towards more positive views of boys and men and away from blaming them for any ill health that they experience. There is a strong emphasis on the social determinants of health and the work of Professor Macdonald in this area is acknowledged. Also, the policy speaks of the need for “male-friendly” health services, challenging services to reach out to men. These are all markers of a cultural shift and perhaps a new era in men’s health in Australia. There is considerable international interest in the policy.

Attention is also drawn to the need to address the poor state of Indigenous male health, and the document draws on Aboriginal views of health as offering lessons of us all. Again, the work of MHIROC in Mt Druitt receives a positive mention.

The Penrith Photo-voice Project

Summary

The Penrith Photo-voice Project began in April 2007. Its aim was to support people labelled with learning difficulties to explore what they thought were the things stopping them from living life their way and from having control of their lives. The project aimed to use self-determination research as a tool for developing self-determination skills in the project participants.

Using disposable and digital cameras the group looked at many different areas in their lives where they felt there were unnecessary barriers. One barrier they explored in detail was public transport. Together they worked out a plan and then implemented that plan to change the way things are so that things could be better for people with learning difficulties.

Their public transport concern

An excursion on Sydney’s public transport system provided opportunity to photograph a plethora of inaccessible technology, and signage that assumes all the travelling public can read. However, not everyone can read and so not everyone has access to public information. The group saw these as safety and civil rights issues since all the public should be able to access public transport information and technology such as timetables, ticket machines and indicator boards (in addition to safety signs, toilets, disabled seating, etc.).

What the group did about it

The group wrote letters to all the transport utilities in addition to the State and Federal transport ministers. They also raised their concerns with Australia’s Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Graeme Innes, discussed these issues with their local State MP, and contributed to the Allen Group Review of the ‘Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport’. In each of these instances the group were able to demonstrate photographically their concerns, while offering suggestions for improvement, from the perspective of citizens with different learning abilities.

Outcomes

Through participating in this project the group have all gained a deeper understanding of citizenship and democracy. The group exercised their rights as citizens to communicate with their elected representatives and to speak out on issues. They learnt to recognise discriminatory social practices, and that they do not have to put up with these. The group’s thoughts are now a public document that has been reviewed by the government. Furthermore they have been consulted by the Independent Living Centre, who were interested in what they had to say on this issue. Their voices have been heard.

SJSC Seminar

Professor Judith E. Phillips

SJSC recently hosted a collaborative seminar with the Social Work Field Education unit - School of Social Sciences. The key note speaker was visiting scholar Judith E. Phillips, Professor of Gerontology at Swansea University UK

Judith E Phillips is doing work in environmental gerontology looking at how older people negotiate and navigate unfamiliar spaces, a significant project on service development, social work and extracare. Professor Phillip’s background is in Social Work education.

This seminar offered an opportunity to discuss an exciting integration of the work done by practitioners and academics in developing research capacity amongst community and social workers in the UK, focusing on social and community workers working with older people in particular, maintaining and enriching their quality of life and independence through effective service provision.

YPOP: Innovative Program Supports for Western Sydney Youth

SJSC’s Dr Gabrielle Gwyther and Sharon McGee of the School of Social Sciences and SJSC member, have been evaluating Richmond Fellowship’s ‘Young Persons Outreach Program’ (Y-POP). The purpose of this pilot program is to develop an early intervention, recovery and empowerment model of non-clinical, outreach support for young people (16-24y) diagnosed with a mental illness. It was expected that the young people participating in the program would experience improved autonomy and social inclusion outcomes through individualised, goal oriented, outreach support.

The program is founded on the principles of: early intervention, understanding the complex issues involved in being a young person in contemporary society, rehabilitation, and self-empowerment. Early intervention is becoming increasingly recognised as important to young people’s recovery from certain mental illnesses. By supporting young people at the early stages of their illness, Y-POP hopes to prevent issues involving their social, emotional and educational development from impinging on their recovery.

The purpose of SJSC’s evaluation is to examine the impact and outcomes of Y-POP utilising standard assessment tools of the Department of Health as well as innovative, qualitative methods involving community integration diagramming and network mapping from the perspectives of the young people involved in the program. Early findings of the evaluation suggest that Y-POP is very effective in re-engaging mentally ill youth with aspects of their community, particularly in regard to developing social networks and re-connecting young people with education and training. Other outcomes include increased self-esteem, confidence and a sense of wellbeing.

This SJSC evaluation was integral to further funding from the NSW Government to continue and expand the program in Western Sydney.