REFLECTIONS

NARRATIVES of PROFESSIONAL HELPING

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REFLECTIONS
NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL HELPING

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Letter from the Editor

Jillian Jimenez

While story telling is a fundamental part of life from childhood through senescence, written narratives come from a privileged space, where the luxury of creating a reflective persona necessarily resides. A good narrative tells a story that has been refracted through time and thoughtful meditation on its meaning for ourselves and others. While published narratives, such as those in ***Reflections***, are crafted with literary intention, informal stories we tell others about our life also share in the selective reordering of events and emotions that characterize all presentations of self and articulated memories of the past. Narratives are linear and intentional; their worth is often judged by their grace and meaning for others. Thus ***Reflections*** asks its authors to move from the immediacy of their lived experiences to find in themselves a narrator with the perspective to make a larger sense of things.

Yet these literary narratives are only one aspect of storytelling. Others, who do not have the privilege of crafting their stories, but tell them in an unmediated fashion, are often excluded from professional narratives. I think of the ex-slave narratives collected by the WPA in the 1930's; personal recollections I have borrowed to tell a larger story of the history of the grandmother in the African American community. These and other stories found in primary historical documents are powerful evocations of lived lives distinct from the ones I have known. These stories are startling and moving precisely because their meaning was not evident. They were mysterious and called to the occasional reader who came upon them to reflect on their meaning. The individual stories I found in historical documents allowed me to tell a larger one, for which I crafted a narrative voice with a larger sweep that offered the reader a set of guideposts to interpret the experiences of the women who lived lives so different from my own.*

Having now been the editor of ***Reflections*** for three years, I am struck increasingly by how important it is for this journal to include voices like the ones I found in doing historical research on African American grandmothers. Primary historical documents are one method of finding narrative voices unconstrained by the distance implicit in rendering stories into literary pieces. Our clients are other avenues for these voices, along with all those who are disempowered, struggling without the privileges that professional lives offer. While stories that offer beginnings, middles and ends and carry meanings mediated through the authors' narrative voices are the foundation of ***Reflections'*** mission as a professional journal, I hope that narratives published here will increasingly include the voices of persons who do not have the privileged space in their lives to craft a formal coda to their stories. I hope that the voices of African American grandmothers from the rural South during the Great Depression will be echoed by the voices of women in danger of being cut off TANF in the next year, voices of homeless persons and others who face increasingly diminished resources in a country with a shrinking domestic policy agenda, voices of adolescents leaving foster care with uncertain plans for their futures, voices of prisoners suffering from unjust sentences and prison conditions, voices of persons encountering discrimination and oppression—of those the helping professions are committed

to empower. Giving a voice to the voiceless is a first step in the struggle for social justice. As editor of ***Reflections*** I welcome this challenge and opportunity, and invite our readers and authors to do the same.

* "The History of Grandmothers in the African American Community," forthcoming, *Social Service Review*

Reflections welcomes letters to the editor. Please address all comments to:

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Silence Over Kosovo: Social Work and Self Interest

By Jerry L. Johnson, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Social Work, Grand Valley State University

In the spring of 1999, the United States government and NATO launched a devastating military attack agains[t] Serbia for the stated purpose of saving Kosovar Albanians from persecution and savagery at the hands of th[e] Serbian police and military. Amazingly, there was little public debate and dialogue about the affair. Public suppor[t] for the attack on humanitarian grounds was quite high. In this narrative, the author explores his personal an[d] professional connections to the region, and how personal loyalty caused a momentary lapse in judgment, leadin[g] him to first support, and to then oppose the military action. As such, in this narrative he questions both his ow[n] judgment and the role of social work as activists in the 21st century.

The social work profession has a long history of social activism, dating to its beginning early in the twentieth century. Activists like Mary Richmond and Bertha Capen Reynolds paved the way for social work to be an active and powerful voice for social, political, and economic justice in the United States and now, with globalization, around the world. During the 1960's, social workers were often at the forefront of community activism and change efforts in the civil rights and anti-war efforts of the day, despite the fact that these actions ran contrary to prevailing dominant ideologies of the era.

In my nearly twenty years as a social worker and community activist, I, along with others, have watched with dismay as the spirit of activism has slowly been replaced by professional and personal self-interest, primarily related to third-party reimbursement, public funding, and managed care. Slowly but surely, I believe that social work has lost its way, abdicating the role and responsibilities that brought it to the forefront of the great issues of the day. Whether it be managed care, welfare reform, tax policy, or foreign affairs, it seems that social workers, as a group, have recoiled into a protective shell, overwhelmed by large caseloads and budget concerns, leaving activism and public discourse to others.

In 1999, the United States, under the cover of NATO, launched a devastating military campaign against the Serbian people in the Kosovo region of the former Yugoslavia. This campaign was publicly defined as a humanitarian mission to stop widespread ethnic cleansing in the region. For months before the action began, our media were filled with horrible scenes and reports of atrocities committed by the Serbian military and police force against the Albanian people in Kosovo. The action received widespread public support and was not, in my opinion, adequately debated on the public stage. It seems that the vast majority of the American people agreed that this was the right thing to do.

What was more alarming to me during this time, and something that has confounded me ever since, was the lack of effort and involvement of social workers and the social work profession in creating a public dialogue during that time. We, as a profession, were "missing in action." Therefore, as I prepared to reflect on my actions, I kept returning to the following larger question: Was the loud silence of social workers and the social work profession during the military action in Yugoslavia an aberration, or did it mark a change in social work's fundamental mission of social activism?

Yet, because of personal self-interest, I too found myself in an unfamiliar position during that period. As I explain in this personal narrative, in the beginning I favored the military effort in Yugoslavia. However, my position and praxis shortly changed. As such, this is the story of my personal struggle with loyalty, critical thinking in the face of mass pro-

paganda, and ethical decision making as I traveled the path toward activism. In the end, I offer a personal reflection of my praxis and the lack of activist efforts by the social work profession.

The Kosovo War

The so-called humanitarian war against Yugoslavia to free Kosovar-Albanians from a campaign of ethnic cleansing was widely considered an acceptable military action by a majority of American citizens, including social workers and the profession of social work. Very few challenged the action or the United States and Great Britain's self-appointed role as the world's police force. Those who did challenge—at least in the United States—attracted few, if any, followers and received no media attention.

Specifically, from my perspective as a social work educator, the apparent lack of involvement by social workers in the process of informed and critical dialogue about the military action was particularly troubling. To me, our professional silence was deafening—and quite telling. On public issues of importance, according to Alinsky, (1971) silence signals assent. So, what did the silence really mean? Perhaps the majority of social workers agreed with military intervention in Yugoslavia, believing in the notion of a humanitarian war. Maybe social workers had grown too comfortable in the booming economic times of the late 1990's to worry about government action beyond stimulating stock market growth or providing grant funding. On the other hand, perhaps the profession felt too threatened to directly oppose a popular government action for fear of losing its standing in the competitive healthcare system.

Whatever the reason(s), the overwhelming political support for the bombing was not surprising, given the government's power to shape public opinion and because of the economic comfort of all but the powerless and voiceless in America over the last decade. Yet, the way in which the American public fell silently into lockstep with the government's position and logic, and the lack of critical action by social workers to offer a dissenting voice, concerns me. As a profession, we should be worried about what appears to be a naïve political approach, an overwhelming lack of what Mills (1959) called the sociological imagination. Is there a wake-up call on the horizon?

As I began looking at my own beliefs and actions during that period, I realized that I was not above reproach. I, like many others, was caught up in the prewar hype and, because of personal reasons, an uncomfortable supporter of military intervention in the region. To be fair, much of the criticism I level at others begins with a self-critical review of my own praxis. As such, this is a story of how the build up to war, and the war itself, had a dramatic impact on my thoughts, feelings, and actions related to activism.

The Seeds of Personal Conundrum

The bombing of Kosovo really placed me in a conundrum because I routinely stand opposed to the United States' self-appointed role as the world's peacemaker whenever it uses military force, paradoxically, to keep the peace. From the dark days of the Vietnam War through the "police actions" (i.e., Panama, Haiti, Grenada, etc.) to the Gulf War, I have stood, along with far fewer likeminded people with each passing year, against the use of military force for reasons other than imminent national self-defense.

I scoff at the oft-used phrase "national self-interest" as justification for military intervention. Self-interest, as it applies to U.S. military and diplomatic initiatives, has little to do with real threats to the integrity of the United States and more to do with blockading perceived enemies of the state (Russia and China), capturing scarce natural resources, creating new markets, or locating cheap labor. The national self-interest justification provides nothing more than a socially acceptable license to overpower cultures and nations whenever and wherever the ruling classes see potential economic benefit. In other words, I do not see self-interest as a justifiable reason for war.

For example, destroying Native American homelands and cultures may have been in the national self-interest of the era, but it was certainly not for national self-defense. A national self-defense threshold for use of military force provides a more clearly defined approach with narrow parameters that should stimulate an interesting national dialogue whenever military action is proposed. Unfortunately, the government never seems to ask my opinion on the matter.

Having said that, the Kosovo affair placed me in personal and professional turmoil because of my deep personal connections to the region. Beginning in 1992, the school of social work where I teach helped create the first social work department in Albania at the University of Tirana, its capital city. Since 1995, I have worked in Albania several times, including a lengthy stay in early 2001. In 1997, I was in Albania during its civil unrest, brought on by collapsing pyramid schemes. I lived with Albanian friends through round-the-clock gunfire, mass demonstrations, and the total collapse of its "democratic" government. As a result, I forged the kind of close friendships that result from living together through social anarchy.

Beginning in 1995, I was inundated with information about various Serbian atrocities against Kosovar-Albanians. They had, reportedly, been occurring since the late 1980's when Slobodan Milosevic took power. I watched nightly news reports showing compelling footage of student riots, protests, government crackdowns, and alleged mass graves in Kosovo. I know many Albanian citizens—young and old—who actively supported the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) by running weapons across the border and/or leaving their families to fight. Albanians, to a person, believed the Serbs were persecuting the Kosovars and that the west—especially the United States—was ignoring their plight. They wanted military action.

In other words, what was "new" news of Serbian atrocities in the U.S. in late 1998 was old news to Albanians. So, as our government began building its case for military intervention to save the Kosovars from the Milosevic regime, it was apparent to me there was more to the "national self-interest" than saving people that the world had ignored for centuries and that our government and media had ignored for at least a decade. Let's face it; the U.S. Government has never, in its history, invoked military action simply to protect people from other countries. This includes the Jews during World War II. There is always an economic reason, or one of national threat. If people are saved from tyranny during the process, it's an added propaganda bonus.

Therein lay the sources of my turmoil. First, I am normally opposed to this type of military intervention for the reason stated above. Second, some my best friends are Albanian citizens, many among the first group of social workers in that country. These friends were clamoring for the United States to punish the Serbs (mainly Milosevic) for committing atrocities against the Kosovo-Albanian population. Albanians believed that the massacre and oppression in that region could only be stopped through U.S. military action. Moreover, my Albanian friends expected me

to carry their message back to the American people, to make it clear that they welcomed, supported, and applauded massive military intervention to punish the Serbs. When I returned from Albania in February 1999, I felt a deep sense of loyalty and responsibility to support the needs and wishes of my dear friends. I would not only support military efforts, but also be a spokesperson advocating the action.

Personal loyalty versus moral and professional integrity? All social workers face this bind at some point in their professional life. For example, do I go along with an unethical agency policy, or challenge it and risk losing my job? Do I continue to deliver inadequate treatment services even when I know they are ineffective? This dilemma—whether they know it or not—faced by social workers in all fields of practice was my personal dilemma during the build up toward military action and the first days of the bombing campaign.

Denial

At this point, I must make my position clear. Based on the evidence, I fervently believe that the Serbian police and military were committing atrocities against the Kosovar-Albanians. About this, I have no doubt. As such, my firm beliefs in the atrocities and my immersion into the Albanian perspective about the Kosovo question combined to overpower my ability to critically think through the situation, leading me to join the masses ready to place Slobodan Milosevic alongside Hitler, Stalin, and Saddam Hussein in the U.S. anti-Christ hall of fame. I was a full-blown, card-carrying military hawk!

During the weeks leading up to military action, the U.S. government propaganda machine worked overtime to convince us that it was our moral calling to, in fact, cleanse Kosovo of a Serbian presence. The propaganda machine did its job to the fullest. By the time the bombing began, most Americans (and I) believed this action was part of a new, enlightened approach to the world "...where the brutal repression of whole ethnic groups will no longer be tolerated" (Tony Blair, quoted in Chomsky, 1999, p. 36).

Yet, even as I was doing live interviews for several local television stations on the day the bombing began, my doubts crept forward. While I agreed—then and now—that the world community has an obligation to intervene where genocidal actions occur, I questioned whether bombing was the appropriate route to take. I also wondered why we should bomb Kosovo when these same events were happening in other parts of the world at the same time. Why not intervene in Columbia, East Timor, or in several countries in Africa living through the same—if not worse—campaigns of state-sponsored (often U.S. funded, in the case of Columbia) terror? Kosovo was (and remains) a bad situation, but did it demand action of this magnitude in comparison to the other humanitarian disasters occurring in all hemispheres of the world? Had the U.S. done enough on a diplomatic level to warrant taking the extreme step of all-out military action?

Yet, I said nothing publicly. In the early days of the war, I kept my opinion to myself. When asked, I played the safe middle, trying to see both sides. I was shameless. Then, something happened to dramatically change my thinking and, in the end, level of activism. A local media "expert" on Kosovo came to interview me one day during the first week of the campaign. Now, mind you, this was the only reporter assigned to the issue from the largest, most powerful NBC affiliate in an influential Republican community.

Following the interview—where it was abundantly clear this reporter supported the bombing—they took me aside and said, "Please don't tell anybody, but where is Kosovo, anyway?" With a look of incredulity, I said it was north of Greece, which prompted the response, "Where's Greece?" Now angry, I said, "Do you know where

New York is? Keep going in that direction and you will find it."

Sadly, I cannot think of a more apt representation of the news media's role in shaping public opinion: uninformed talking heads with perfect diction speaking with socially constructed authority, perpetuating "Truths" fed them by the prevailing political powers of the time. Their job is to teach the public how the State Department and Pentagon want to define "national self-interest" at any particular moment in history. The sad, yet undeniable truth is that these reporters speak to a citizenry trained by years of conditioning to accept what they hear without question.

My astonishing discussion with the news reporter offered a moment of badly needed personal clarity. This reporter's ineptness smacked me squarely between the eyes; it woke me up, lifting my heart and mind out of the loyalty bind that caused me to turn against my better judgment. That evening, I called my friends in Albania and had a long, serious dialogue about the war, my position, and my dilemma. After a while, they understood that my position against the bombing on moral and ethical grounds was not a position against them or the Kosovars. I was relieved. We agreed to disagree on this very important subject.

Later that week, I asked my graduate social work students to dialogue about the bombing. According to my count, all but two students (out of over 100) favored the bombing despite being unable to articulate clear reasons for their positions beyond what they had heard from the media. For social workers, the public campaign to define the national self-interest in this case used the "perfect" message—help the helpless, feed and protect refugees, and stop genocide. These efforts were creatively designed to quash any guilt people might experience from living in such a wasteful and dominating country (America) at the expense of the domestic poor and the rest of the world. It tapped the patriotic idea that the U.S. is the best, most caring protector of the downtrodden in history. How could we say no for heaven's sake?

As such, it was clear that the American people (including social workers and I briefly) silently agreed with the military strategy for "world-wide containment and control" (MacCannell, 1992, p. 5) to develop future labor and raw material markets while isolating Russia from the west. The two-track policy of extending the reach of western capitalism and isolating a significantly weakened Russia dominates western governmental foreign policy. Ironically, this *modus operandi* can continue only if government has the cooperation of a silent public.

Taking Action

After my awakening, I began meeting with a small group of local activists to plan strategy for action. In the beginning, the major barrier to action was a lack of historical knowledge about the roots of the conflict. Therefore, our first step was to stimulate dialogue between our group members and then with the broader community in hopes of creating a critical dialogue that would lead to action strategies. Ultimately, public dialogue became our primary goal, necessitating the inclusion of people with differing opinions.

This we accomplished through a series of public teach-ins, producing and airing two cable television programs, developing and disseminating a paperback reader on Kosovo, and conducting a weekly rally at the Federal Building in Grand Rapids. Few attended the weekly rallies. However, we did attract the attention of the mainstream media early in our efforts. Yet, the tone of the reports marginalized and diminished our efforts by presenting a there-they-go-again attitude, instead of offering a serious look at the issues compelling us to act. Ironically, we drew the attention of local police. During the first rally, the police stopped four times in two hours, twice asking if there were any "angry Serbs"

in the crowd. Moreover, the police ordered us to remove our signs from Federal grounds.

The teach-in was helpful in our larger efforts, not because it attracted large numbers (approximately 40 people), but because of the quality of the dialogue. Speaker panels were composed of representatives from Serbian and Albanian organizations, and the debate was lively and informative. Of course, mainstream media would not cover the event but, because it began the process of community dialogue, the teach-in was a success.

We also produced two cable television programs about the war. The first was a pretaped, two-hour dialogue between a colleague and me, mainly to provide historical and political background for the crisis and to suggest possible action. It ran on the public access cable television channel several times over a three-week period.

The second program was a live, viewer-call-in format that took telephone calls on the air. This program provided a lively dialogue between colleagues on-air and callers, many of whom supported the Kosovo war effort. While the programs aired on local cable and therefore did not attract a wide audience, they served an essential purpose to jumpstart public discourse at the local level.

Our final action during the bombing campaign was to produce and disseminate a paperback reader about the Kosovo crisis. We compiled a series of articles presenting the issues from different perspectives into a 26-page magazine. We gave the magazines to attendees at the annual arts festival in Grand Rapids in early June. We disseminated most of the 2000 readers produced, but also had many people refuse to take them, becoming angry at the content before they had to chance to read it.

Was it Worth it?

Well, good healthy activism is always worth it. Obviously, we didn't prevent the bombing or help end it. Just as obviously, and more pertinent, we were not able to convert many people into changing their perspective about the conflict. However, our goal was to stimulate dialogue and engage as many members of the public as possible in the process of looking for truth in the western media barrage, touting the value of destroying Yugoslavia to punish its leader. Were we successful? I guess that depends on one's definition of success. We were able to present alternative information and to engage some people in a serious discussion about a serious issue. In that way, we were successful.

Yet, I was most disappointed in the lack of involvement and support of organized groups of social workers, both locally and nationally. I called various schools and contacted interest groups, only to discover that most in the profession were more interested in preparing grant applications for refugee support than considering the fundamental issue of whether we should be bombing in the first place. I believe the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), whose public position on the Kosovo war was late coming and weak, established the tone of apathy at best. It was clear to me that our national organization abdicated its responsibility to inform and stimulate debate amongst a group (social workers) founded on the principals of social change and activism. There wasn't even room for discussion. I was left wondering how NASW and social workers would react if the same action was taken by a Republican instead of a Democratic president? Would we feel differently about it? I certainly hope not.

Consequently, I wrote a long letter detailing my disappointment and, when it was not included in the national newsletter, quit the organization. Now, I am sure NASW will not fold because of my action, but I believe it has become more interested in ensuring that social workers achieve the same status as psychologists than in taking on the controversial political issues of the day. I could no longer justify being a paid member in an or-

ganization that supports, in my view, the selling out of the social work profession in the name of self-interest.

The apathy toward the war by social workers, beyond which agency would get the biggest grant to place refugees, is deplorable. It spread from the top to the bottom of the profession and into our schools and classrooms. At my school, colleagues and students did not participate, and no issue discussions occurred. Although invited, few educators or students acted with us to question the war, while others supported the government's cause by raising false charity to support refugees (Friere, 1970).

I, like others (Fisher & Karger, 1997), believe the social work profession has been co-opted by the American individualist obsession. Unfortunately, the profession is in serious risk of making itself non-essential to most average people at the same time that it is becoming viable as a professional and academic discipline.

Through the efforts of government and groups like NASW, it appears that social work has become an official "arm of the state," succeeding in qualifying its members for third-party insurance reimbursement panels and enforcing violent national and state family policies at the expense of its foundational, community-based activist roots. As a profession, social work has sold out to capitalist greed for acceptance. For that, we should be ashamed.

Why the Silence?

I believe there are three primary reasons why the American citizenry—including social workers—is largely silent with respect to world affairs and politically disinterested at home. I have room here only for a brief discussion, however, I have written at length about it elsewhere (Johnson, 2000).

First, we live in an epoch where American citizens, living in the majority culture at or above the "middle" of the middle class, can lead a culturally-defined "successful" life without paying attention to the politics, the people, or the world around them. This is a uniquely American way of life. No where else in the world—or perhaps in the history of the world—can people thrive while being naïve and isolated from the larger circumstances of their world. How can this be true?

For one, American capitalism encourages obsessive self-interest, rampant mobility, and a lack of concern for others. Americans are taught to strive to join the social class above, while ignoring or marginalizing people in lower classes out of a selfish need to lay claim to their place in the predatory capitalist hierarchy. Moreover, there is little at stake in American politics for the majority. Compared to the rest of the world, national and state elections mean very little in terms of radical choice or change. Elections do not require Americans to vote for the continuation of their fundamental way of life or form of government. As Ralph Nader eloquently stated on the stump during the 2000 Presidential campaign, the United States has two political parties that are so much alike that there is little, if any, practical difference no matter which party is in control. In other words, contemporary political parties are fundamentally the same, with agreed upon differences at the margins only to make elections necessary and further each party's financial self-interest.

Of course, people outside the majority culture or those living below the middle of the middle class have much at stake politically and cannot afford to live in a naïve, narrow social world. Yet, the political system is accessible only to those with the financial resources to participate in any significant way. Moreover, marginalized and oppressed people are unable to look beyond their immediate life circumstances to the bigger issues of the day if they want to survive. Life's daily challenges—often humiliating, emotion-

ally violent, and inhumane—ensure political silence as the marginalized and oppressed try to feed their kids and pay the bills. This, of course, is in addition to the *a priori* exclusion they face based on the fundamental fact of their race, class, or other non-majority social status.

The second reason for public silence and passivity stems from the process of "Othering" (Johnson, 2000, p. 35). Throughout its history, the U.S. government has practiced "Othering" as a primary public relations framework for handling foreign policy issues, military action, and domestic social problems. Through Othering, the United States can claim national self identity, overlook social issues in the name of patriotism, and define the national self-interest.

What is Othering? American elites (and certainly elites in other powerful countries as well) socially construct "Absolute Others" by demonizing another country, form of government, leader, or group (Johnson, 2000, p. 36-37), making the Other the focus of concern to the exclusion of all else. Any problems America may have presently, or in the future, are blamed on the Other or ignored because contending with the Other is more vital to the national self-interest.

As such, America's ruling class (European-Americans above the middle of the middle class) feel better about them by emphasizing America's (their) righteousness versus the impending threat or gross immorality of the Other. It is important to note that the chosen Other does not have to pose a real threat. A perceived threat that can be publicized and used as a patriotic rallying cry is all that is required.

Ironically, often the very beliefs and practices of the Other(s) that become grounds for public demonization are beliefs and practices used by the U.S. Government in domestic and world affairs. To rectify the apparent contradiction, the United States simply omits the parts of its history deemed undesirable (see the Cold War, Slavery, and the FBI's covert activities during the late 1960's and early 1970's) or uses a patriotic rationalization (i.e., humanitarian war) to justify its actions *vis-à-vis* the actions of the enemy. For example, as I implied above, the Kosovo action cleansed Kosovo of Serbs through brutal military means. Our cleansing was justified, while theirs was immoral.

For over 40 years, America's Absolute Other was the Soviet Union. Yet, throughout history, the ruling classes have constructed campaigns against many other so-called Others, both foreign and domestic. Native Americans, Blacks, Mexicans, Communists, and, ironically, protestors and activists have all taken their place as the evil Other, out to destroy the European-American upper-middle-class way of life. Since the end of the Cold War, Saddam Hussein, Slobodan Milosevic, and the Chinese are our foreign Others, while the poor, HIV/AIDS victims, and homosexuals have become our domestic Absolute Other(s).

The net result of Othering on public discourse is stifling. Central to the process is defining the Other as evil, immoral, and "un-American." This also applies to any majority person or group that supports the Other's position. Opposing the Other and all it stands for is the only acceptable American position. Those with the courage to oppose suffer consequences. One only has to recall how people who dared challenge have suffered—for example, during the McCarthy period in the 1950's or on freedom rides in the 1960's—to understand the social power of Othering.

For American citizens who are Others, this process perpetuates their silence in a similar way. People of color and the poor remember assassinated leaders, jailed marchers, concentration camps for Japanese-Americans, and stolen native lands. These historical tragedies remind people in oppressed groups of the consequences of organizing against the dominant ideology of the state and

the elite group of citizens it serves.

The third reason for public silence makes the first two possible: the power of the elite to control information and its delivery. As Americans, we do exactly what the government and elites want. Silence and under-participation in the political system is the desired state. It allows the ruling class to worry only about satisfying its patrons while operating primarily out of self-interest. In other words, we are good "students." We act as we are taught to act, with assenting silence.

From the moment of birth, via schooling and media, written materials and film, we are indoctrinated by messages that "prove" that America is a privileged country, its people anointed by God with the unique skills and abilities to create this special place in the history of humankind. Of course, this overlooks the fact that America became an economic power because it was the only country left with an infrastructure after World War II. The lifestyle of the Caucasian upper middle class is as much an accident of history as anything else. Yet, that is not what Americans are taught.

The news media, school curricula, community meetings, and politicians encourage us not to think, question, or speak out. Moreover, we seem all too willing to cooperate. Daily news reports tell us how grateful we should be, how conservative "America" is, and how we should all be patriotic and support the military. This is how patriotism came to mean "supporting war." In contemporary America, one cannot be patriotic and against war. Anybody willing to support this notion of America—whether through denial, ignorance, silence, or paranoia—is a "true American." Everyone else is suspicious.

These three issues - social and political stability, demonization of "enemies" through Othering, and cultural domination by elites - conspire to keep Americans silent and the elites in power. It is only through informed dialogue that results in concentrated activism that we have any hope of challenging this foolproof system at any level. However, most Americans are too comfortable, busy, or uninformed to participate in creating the sources of their own power and freedom. Generating this energy through critical education, dialogue, and action is supposed to be our primary task as social workers. Instead, it appears we—as a profession—agreed that Milosevic was indeed an evil-enough "Other" to justify the bombing of innocent civilians in Yugoslavia. In other words, regarding Kosovo, I am sorry to say that we "dropped the ball," abdicating our fundamental mission to offer voices of dissent and vehicles for healthy, critical dialogue, to become full-fledged residents in the "house of the oppressor" (Freire, 1970).

Where Do We Stand?

Despite the political rhetoric, calling the bombing a successful campaign waged against a genocidal maniac, and the fact that the region has fallen off the national news and to the back pages of newspapers, the situation in Kosovo, Yugoslavia, and the Balkans remains ominous. This region was one of the poorest in the world before the war. Now, it has become even poorer and less stable.

Because of the war, hundreds of thousands of Kosovars were displaced and then replaced back into their homeland. Moreover, Yugoslavia is now partitioned by ethnicity and religion, a country segregated, if you will, without the hatred that began the crisis solved. Combine this with the partitioning of Bosnia and Croatia after the Bosnian War, the recent change of government in Serbia, and the arrest of Slobodan Milosevic for war crimes, and the result is that western armies now dominate the region. What was in the national self-interest, obviously, was completing the takeover of Yugoslavia, not saving the Kosovars. Now the U.S. can complete the goal of spreading its values by creating a region dependent on the west for its existence. Simultaneously, Russia is further isolated

should it ever seek to expand in the future.

Pertaining to the humanitarian issue that supposedly began this war, almost immediately after the bombing ceased the United States Congress began discussing ways to limit humanitarian aid to the region, and the newly seated Bush Administration has clearly stated that it wants out of the region. Immigration officials allowed just enough refugees into the country to demonstrate humanitarianism and to dissipate any potential guilt in local communities, in churches, and among social workers over the fact that they silently supported the destruction of a country and the killing of thousands of innocent civilians. In the end, the humanitarian project was a credible cover for the U.S. and British governments' neocolonialist designs on the Balkans. This war, in effect, allowed the U.S. and its western allies to finish the job started during the Bosnian War in the early 1990's.

Regarding the present and future, the time for activism with respect to western policy toward Yugoslavia, Kosovo, Albania, and the rest of the region is just beginning. As activists, we should hold the United States to its promise to commit for the long haul, to rebuild and revitalize an area of the world destabilized by this neocolonialist war. If this were a humanitarian effort, then the "investment" by the United States just began. We shall see.

There is still time for social workers and the social work profession to recapture its calling. While it may sound like I am advocating one position over another in matters of war and human rights, I am not. That is not my intention. What I am advocating is critical education, reflection, and public action. I want social workers and the profession of social work to join the dialogue and speak out on behalf of people and governmental actions even if the actions fall outside of personal or agency self-interest.

Social work has the foundation, methods, and size to have a significant impact on the debate—any debate—should we decide to invest. Public involvement is our job and our professional calling, while private practice and an obsession with self-interest is what the system that relies on our silence expects from modern social work. Common people all around the world need us, with our unique training and talents, to speak for and with them until they can forcefully speak for themselves.

Does anybody care?

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A Spiritually Sensitive Social Work Response Following A Traumatic Event

By Gary Behrman, M.DIV., doctoral candidate, School of Social Welfare, State University at Albany, New York

This narrative describes the role of social work when a traumatic death occurs in an elementary school. It is a personal account of a social worker's experience of maximizing the strengths of these particular students by exploring their environment for relationships, resources, strategies, and spiritual values that support and nurture these children. The author explains why this particular intervention was chosen among many options, and explores the meanings attached to both the event and the intervention.

For most of my 15 years as a social worker, I have been engaged in facilitating services following a traumatic event. I have witnessed how trauma can devastate individuals, families and communities. Just as powerfully, I have experienced how trauma can transform and unite families, and communities. One reason why I remain committed to this work is to help lower the risk of individuals, families, and communities being ravaged by the consequences of trauma that run the gamut from substance abuse to debilitating depression. Since September 11, 2001, numerous people have been reeling in the aftermath of trauma. Now more than ever, the social work profession is being challenged to examine its role and responsibilities in responding to the human needs of persons following trauma.

Competent social workers turn to well-documented, empirically researched theories of how people effectively heal after trauma and what to do with a particular group at a particular time. I am learning from my professional experiences that, as social workers, we need to be flexible and adaptable, tapping into our personal sources of wisdom regarding what to do in each unique context. There is no one way of providing post trauma services and we must be careful not to rely upon one method for every person or group we serve. We may create intricate interventions that look dynamic on paper and read well as theories, but without listening deeply to the meaning that survivors give to their experience and without adequate input from those affected by the trauma, our interventions may not match the needs of those affected. Keeping our interventions focused amidst very complicated feelings and needs is one of the social worker's tasks.

There are many methods by which people heal after trauma. As social workers, we are being nearsighted when we rely only upon psychotherapeutic models of post trauma interventions. Often, rituals such as drama, dance, music, poetry, painting, and pilgrimage can help people identify their experience of loss and reconnect themselves with others. Ongoing research is needed to assess what tasks are most effective in maintaining and enhancing overall health following trauma.

Timing of services is also an important consideration. Rushing in to "make it better," or wanting to "fix" the situation is not always the best response. Some people may need a day, a week, or months before they are receptive to interventions and are ready to embark upon the healing journey. "Telling their story" and listening to what might be helpful in creating new meaning out of what initially appears meaningless is a lifetime process.

When working with traumatized adults or children, the social worker creates a sacred space that respects the developmental needs of everyone involved, knowing that each per-

son brings with him/her unique religious, social, and cultural paradigms about what is meaningful and how healing is best facilitated. Simultaneously, we must identify and nurture what people have in common, connecting their experiences in a meaningful way. I believe that isolation, more than anything else, destroys people following trauma. The following are creative tasks that I have utilized in providing effective post trauma services. I will demonstrate this by narrating the story of a group of third grade students at a Catholic elementary school who witnessed the death of their classmate when he was struck and killed by a truck.

I received a telephone call from the school counselor in my neighborhood. I could sense in her voice that something traumatic had occurred. I waited between the pregnant pauses for her to speak the words that are the worst nightmare for any neighborhood school. "One of our students is dead." I waited again for more of the story to be spoken, understanding her reticence in naming the unbearable, knowing that to speak these words would make the event more real than it already was. I understand deeply why people who are traumatized do not want to talk initially about what happened. There is an unconscious hope that if we do not speak about the trauma, then maybe it will not overwhelm us.

The story was told. A third grade student, leaving the gym after basketball practice, was hit by a truck. Six of his classmates were the first ones to reach the little boy. After several days in the intensive care unit and being diagnosed as brain dead, the parents agreed with the medical staff's recommendation to discontinue respiratory therapy and physical death promptly followed. The school counselor's question still rings in my ears, "Now what do we do?"

My first "response ability" was to listen with compassion, empathy, and encouragement. All of the details would come later. After hearing her concerns, fears, and sorrow, we agreed to meet the next morning to design appropriate and effective interventions, anticipating the needs of the children and their parents.

When I entered the squat, two-story, old, red brick urban schoolhouse I was bombarded with a waft of smells consisting of chalk dust, radiator steam, and chocolate milk. With each step I felt an intense sadness brewing inside of me that culminated in tears trickling down my face. I entered the principal's office with these tears and faced a staff sitting around a table with either blank expressions or tears on their faces. I gave myself permission to cry with them, reminding myself once again that expressing genuine sorrow is sometimes just as important as remaining professionally distant. Who can accurately measure if crying with deeply committed, hurting teachers is an effective task of the social worker? In retrospect, the staff commented how safe and connected they immediately felt with me, that my tears communicated more than any words ever could have. Making this into a rule of thumb for all social workers is not the point of this story. The point is being genuine, compassionate, and effective.

Because it was a Catholic school, and I am also Catholic, the principal asked that we join hands, and we silently prayed for wisdom to guide us. This is not warranted for all social workers, but contextually it was meaningful and made sense for all of us. Next, we created a series of interventions that we hoped would be helpful and spiritually sensitive. This we did together, recognizing the expertise and wisdom of the teachers. We decided to inform parents of my professional background and that I would be meeting with their children. They were given a general description of what would occur. We emphasized that this would not be group therapy. Parents were able to contact me prior to the intervention to voice any concerns that they may have. One child was removed from the session at the

parent's request.

At the time of this event, I was teaching Crisis Intervention at Saint Louis University's School of Social Service and two of my MSW students were able to attend the session. I introduced the students to the teachers and briefly described why they were present and later obtained permission from the teachers and children for these students to be in the room with us. Their presence provided support and encouragement, but their role was only to observe and report back to our class what occurred.

We scheduled the session with the children the day before the funeral. The judgment of the teachers was that children needed to talk about their experience before the funeral. When I entered the classroom with my two graduate students, 20 third graders warmly greeted me. They appeared eager to tell their story. I looked at them with wonder and deep compassion. We sat on the floor in a circle and they huddled very close to me. It had been over a week since the accident, and the children had questions about what had happened in the Intensive Care Unit. After careful introductions and a simple explanation of why my students and I were there, we began by answering any questions that they might have. It is important to create a safe space with the children, to report the facts accurately so that their imaginations do not escalate into gigantic nightmares. We talked about what happened in the hospital and what to expect during visitation at the funeral home. Parents decided whether or not their child would go to the funeral home. It is important that children take the lead when asking questions about death. Too much information may frighten them, and not enough information may lead to confusion and distortions.

Next, we also talked about what was different since their classmate's death. We explored physical, emotional, and social changes that were disrupting and confusing them. We then created together simple tasks to address these changes. Parents were mailed guidelines and were given community resource information.

We also discussed plans for the funeral service that would take place the next morning at the Catholic Church. All the children would be there, except those children whose parents decided against this. They selected songs and scripture readings and created other rituals that could make this meaningful for them and their classmate's family.

The students decided that they would keep their classmate's desk in the room. During the following days, students could contribute memorabilia and artwork to remind them of their ongoing relationship. Within days, the teacher reported to me that the desk was beautifully decorated and all of the children had contributed something meaningful.

I believe in the power of ritual to express deep-seated emotions and to facilitate meaningful connections among people who are grieving a common loss. In order to ritualize the intimacy that we had just shared together, I suggested that we create a play. The children responded with enthusiasm, and we decided to dramatize their classmate's first day in heaven. Considering that the context was a Catholic school, their desire to do this was appropriate.

I was caught off guard by the wave of excitement that filled the room. The children broke into small groups and decided upon the dialogue, setting, and roles. Students themselves volunteered to play self-assigned roles. I was surprised how many eagerly volunteered to be the deceased. The outcome was

a sensitive, meaningful creation of what these children hoped for their classmate. The stage setting would be an imaginary heaven and in the cast were God, Peter, angels, and various saints familiar to Catholic children.

The play was magical, completely created by the students. The number of theological and psychological issues that were expressed through their roles fascinated me. "Angels" escorted the child up to the gates of heaven and "St. Peter" proclaimed a long litany of the wonderful accomplishments and characteristics of this young man's life. Saints chimed in about how proud his classmates were of him. There was a secret password that one of the angels had to whisper into his ear before he could enter heaven. "God" asked him if he was mad at "God" for not being able to grow up and what would he miss about his life on earth? The intimate responses revealed a lot about how children interpret loss and experience grief. When "God" inquired about who were his favorite friends in his class, the children giggled with mischief. The drama concluded with the entire class creating a circle around their classmate and singing their favorite song about unity and taking care of each other. We ended with a group hug.

This is one example of post trauma services provided by a social worker. This is not a proven formula for effective interventions, but there are distinguishable tasks that can facilitate post trauma services. These tasks require a competency of the social worker that involves specific training, skill development and a grounding in social work and post trauma theory. Together, the students, teachers and I named tasks that we could do alone and together to help one another get through this painful experience. These tasks were generated by the group and guided by the social worker. It was important to obtain and secure the necessary resources to successfully complete these tasks. This is a social justice issue. It is not fair to enter people's lives and visit their traumatic experience and name the tasks that need to be done in order to heal and not provide them with the support, strategies, and resources that they will need.

Weeks later, I returned to the classroom for a closing ritual that consisted of reading a story about new life after tragedy and singing more songs. We then removed the desk from the classroom but kept his picture and shared memorabilia in the room. A tree was planted on the playground in his memory with the entire school participating in the ceremony.

I witnessed the healing power of shared grief at this Catholic school. It is humbling to listen to children create meaningful ways to help each other heal and remember their classmate. From the religious stories of their childhood, these children were able to create a mythical heaven, a sacred place where they could still be connected with their lost classmate. The drama gave the children the safety they needed to ask questions about death and to express feelings that otherwise may be suppressed. This intervention would have to be designed very differently in a public school setting, taking into consideration the plurality and/or lack of religious experiences.

Lastly, my graduate social work students and I explored our own issues of loss and what might be helpful in our lives as caregivers to lower the risk for vicarious traumatization.

The death of an eight-year-old boy will remain a tragedy for many people. But this event does not have to destroy these people's lives as well. As social workers, our challenge and responsibility are to create meaningful connections that break down the isolation that prevents people from healing. We are called to unite people in a way that brings hope and creates new possibilities that might otherwise go unrealized. Trauma can transform a community, and I have witnessed this.

Reflecting on the Death of a Colleague and Teacher: Lessons Learned

By Barbara A. Candales, Ph.D., Assistant Professor and Director, Social Work Program, Central Connecticut State University, and Evelyn Newman Phillips, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, Central Connecticut State University

Death creates opportunities for growth and reflections. Dying also generates questions about our relationship to the deceased and our mortality. When a colleague in the authors' social work program died after surviving 15 years with cancer, without allowing time for those around her to prepare for her death, the remaining colleagues and her students were left with many unanswered questions. This reflective paper draws on a retrospective analysis of the authors and students who experienced the death of Ilana Hendel. The authors' use of the Generalist Practice with Families, Groups, and Communities course identified their unresolved grief and informed their future practices when coping with terminal illness and death.

"To weep is to make less the depth of grief." Shakespeare- King Henry the Eighth

How does a social work program face the unexpected death of its program director during the semester? How does the program prepare students to cope with the loss while maintaining intellectual continuity and programmatic integrity? Furthermore, how do faculty grieve while sustaining program needs? Social work curricula often include death and dying. However, seldom do students confront death and dying in more than an intellectual exercise. Unfortunately, for students, the unexpected death of the director of the social work program of a state university turned the scholarly issues of death and dying into a personal tragedy.

In the late fall of 1997, Ilana Hendel[1], the Director of the Social Work Program at a school in the northeastern section of the United States, a 15-year cancer survivor, became critically ill and died two weeks before the fall semester ended. Without an opportunity for students, faculty, the campus, and the social work community to say goodbye, her death shocked us. Two weeks prior to her death, Ilana taught her class. The unexpected death of the program director created anxiety among the students. Some wondered how her death would affect their class credit and questioned whether they would have to retake the class. In addition, students expressed a desire to commemorate their professor's memory. Recognizing such consternation as a normal aspect of the grief, the remaining two faculty members, the authors, created an opportunity for students to mourn their loss and to calm their fears about the stability of the program. The Generalist Social Work Practice with Families, Groups, and Communities class became the medium by which students could organize activities to remember the Program Director. The grief process of Ilana's students and her colleagues shapes this narrative. In addition to providing a contextual understanding of the events, we analyze our responses to this death in light of the literature and the implications it has for social work practice.

Perspectives on Death and Dying

Social work students are trained to help others to cope with death, detachment, and losses. Seldom are they educated to contend with the dying and death of their professors. The absence of research addressing bereavement in the academic setting among social work faculty and students attests to the domi-

[1] Ilana Hendel is a pseudonym.

nant quantitative paradigm that devalues reflexive research. Therefore, a dearth of research exists concerning grieving the death of a professor or colleague in an academic setting.

The limited research concerning college students primarily addresses how culture influences the mourning process in this age group. For example, Oltjenbruns (1998) examined broad-based grief responses among Mexican-American and Anglo-American college students. The research led to development of intervention programs for bereaved university students. To guarantee that the support met the cultural needs of the students, the researcher differentiated between psychopathology and culturally bound beliefs and behaviors (Oltjenbruns, 1998, p. 142). This study addressed the loss of family members and close friends.

Types of losses

Most grief research focuses on loss of kin— primary "relationship of attachment," rather than "relationship of community" grief (Weiss 1988, p. 37). A preponderance of data explores the death of parents, children, and spouses (Raphael, 1982; Sanders, 1999). The strength of the bonds of attachment determines the severity of the grief experiences (Parks, 1998).

Despite loss of kin being a major focus of grief studies, the recent high profile deaths of Princess Diana, Mother Theresa, and John Kennedy, Jr., along with the September 11, 2001, World Trade Center catastrophe make obvious that people grieve for mythic and ordinary figures they do not even know. People feel connected to others beyond their families. When someone famous dies or a tragic event occurs, such as the bombing of the Oklahoma federal building and the planes crashing into the World Trade Center, popular media create and recreate a sense of community and intimacy among strangers. This process gives permission to people to publicly grieve by placing flowers and photos at sites of death or creating a larger memorial visible to everyone who passes (Howarth, 2000). Weiss (1988) characterizes such demonstrations of grief for non-kin as "relationships of community" (p. 37).

Public grief moves mourners to advocate, create awareness, seek answers, and change the conditions that caused the deaths. It also allows the communities to ensure that the needs of family members of loved ones are met. For example, the September 11th fund was established to help mediate the immediate and long-term financial loss that families suffered. Race for the Cure and the AIDS Walk, for example, use the loss of individuals to breast cancer and AIDS to highlight prevention, increase awareness, and raise funds for new treatment initiatives. These communal entities illuminate the magnitude of bereavement caused by these fatal illnesses and tragic deaths.

The examination of grief among non-kin community members rises as partners and caregivers mourn the loss of individuals who die of AIDS (Ross, Greenfield, & Bennett, 1999). The increase in such a genre of research does not indicate that non-kin grief is a new phenomenon. Instead, this research demonstrates that non-kin are merely asserting their right to mourn, to be publicly acknowledged, and to be supported in workplace policies (Ross et al., 1999). Davidson and Foster (1995) perceive that social movements of the 1960s fueled these changes. As a result of this social phenomenon, a small

number of researchers now investigate grief in the workplace (Eyetsemitan, 1998). Given that approximately 3,000 people lost their lives while at work in the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, we can only imagine that this genre of research will grow.

Work is organized to provide services and products and in some cases to make profits (Eyetsemitan, 1998). Grief in the workplace is often stifled. Philip and Stevens (1992), both therapists, write about a dying colleague. They emphasize that inhibitions prohibit colleagues from confronting co-workers when their physical or mental state no longer allows them to serve patients' needs. Philip and Steven (1992) note that Philip, who was dying of cancer, often withheld information from her clients about her illness, and therefore, "deprived them of a manageable mourning process" (p. 418). Work is an environment where a person is expected to produce and be effective; therefore, challenging colleagues about their illnesses and death approaches taboo.

In many cases, a special bond can develop over time with a colleague (Stein & Winokuer, 1989). The reaction to a sudden death of a colleague can be as distressing as the death of a relative. Employers must recognize the importance of the working relationship and provide for a supportive environment where employees can openly express their loss.

Bereavement and Grief

Many factors shape how individuals grieve a loved one (Parks, 1998). Gender, religious beliefs, mode of death, personality, support, and social class are among the numerous variables that shape individuals' responses to death. Research shows that the death of a friend, a colleague, or an adult sibling living in a different household tends to be followed by distress and sadness but not usually by severe and persistent grief (Weiss, 1988). When a colleague or a teacher or a friend dies, usually a diminished sense of community results and a feeling that a valued person has been lost. Of course, one cannot predict how each individual will mourn the death of a loved one (Parks, 1998).

Grieving individuals address the death of loved ones in various ways. Howarth (2000) notes that "contemporary survivors might seek to continue the relationship with the dead and work toward keeping them alive [by] . . . talking about the dead; anniversaries; self-help groups; constructing biographies; commemoration; and communication" (p. 5).

Rituals

All cultures perform rituals when mourning the deceased. How each culture enacts the ritual is influenced by various factors, such as history, religion, spirituality, and status of the individual for which the ritual is observed. Rituals heal and allow individuals to relinquish relationships and transition to new social roles (Romanoff & Terenzio, 1998). Death rituals provide an approved collective means for individuals to express their emotional ties to the deceased person while maintaining social cohesiveness and preventing societal disruption (Romanoff & Terenzio, 1998).

Searching for Answers

This reflective paper draws on a retrospective analysis of the authors and students who experienced the death of Ilana Hendel, the social work program director. We employed different methods to gather data concerning the students' and our bereavement. Sixty-four members of three classes that graduated between 1998 and 2000 received surveys, and 15 females and 1 male alumnus responded. The questions explored their religious background, their beliefs about life after death, and how Ilana's death affected them. For each question, we categorized and analyzed the data by class, age, and gender. Finally, together we discussed the events surrounding our colleague's death, and separately

we wrote how each was affected. We taped, transcribed and coded our discussions. In addition, we collected materials from our files that documented the memorial service.

Encountering Death: Reflections of Loss

In 1985, doctors diagnosed Ilana Hendel with breast cancer. Publicly, she acknowledged her battle with cancer as she went through various treatment procedures. During various periods, she entered hospitals for treatment and returned to school. Seldom did her body appear to be ravaged by cancer. A bone marrow transplant left her with a fresh short hairstyle and renewed vibrancy. Ilana lived a full life; she directed the social work program, taught classes, and coordinated the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) accreditation self-study. Her battle with cancer seemed to infuse and inspire her life. Outwardly, she lived a life detached from cancer.

The first real, visible sign that Ilana might lose her battle against cancer appeared on a Wednesday morning in November in 1997 like the first hint of a New England winter—a dreaded inevitability. On that day, all of the social work students met for her senior seminar to hear a former student discuss issues of ethics and spirituality. Her yellow-hued complexion and slowed gait betrayed her jubilant spirit. Her physical appearance signaled that Ilana was very ill. Her looks did not alter our hopes or imply an uncertain future. Despite physical signs warning the faculty of her deterioration, we denied the severity of her illness.

Perhaps the faculty's denial was facilitated by the hopeful mood of Ilana and her family. Ilana, who communicated with Barbara as long as she was alert, instructed Barbara to tell the seniors only that she was ill. Even after hospice care entered the picture, Ilana's pending death was not shared with the remaining students. Furthermore, despite Barbara's close relationship with Ilana, Ilana never acknowledged that she would soon die. Barbara explains her impression of Ilana's confrontation with cancer:

> *I knew that she was struggling with what was being done [treatment] and whether it was in fact going to work. I don't think that we talked about it not working. They talked about it as if it [the treatment] was going to work as a way of really holding on. Fifteen years she had been struggling with this. (Barbara's reflections)*

Reality erased our hopes and denials the Friday after Thanksgiving. That day around 5 pm., Ilana's spouse called Barbara to say that Ilana had died. The word of our loss moved us to quickly inform students so that they could mourn the death of our co-worker and their teacher. The family invited the seniors to attend the funeral service since they were most familiar with the deceased director. Barbara, who was more directly involved with the deceased, passed the word of Ilana's death through a telephone chain system. All students were provided with names and addresses of the family members to send their personal condolences. Approximately six seniors contacted during this holiday weekend attended the Sunday funeral service.

Realizing that the funeral service expressed and reflected the emotional attachment of Ilana's family and intimate friends rather than her university community, we determined that we had to allow the students to voice their grief. Therefore, we encouraged the students to plan how they wanted to commemorate their memory of Ilana. The Generalist Social Work Practice with Families, Groups, and Community, composed mostly of seniors, seemed the most logical venue to organize activities for the memorial service.

Organizing a Community

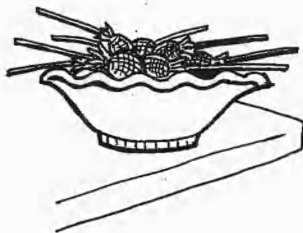
Appointing the seniors to create a vehicle

that would allow others in the university and program to grieve served three purposes. The first objective was to permit students a means to honor their relationship with Ilana. The second objective was designed to teach students how to organize a community and solve problems during a crisis. The third objective was to address students' inability to concentrate. Apart from these objectives, the faculty served as consultants to the students.

The senior class comprised approximately 20 students. Their ages ranged from late 40s to early 20s. The class comprised mostly women, including three men. Ethnically, the majority of the students were Euro-American Protestants and Catholics. One student was Jewish.

Consultation and group consensus formed the foundation of the planning for the memorial services. During the first planning meeting, students discussed their memories of Ilana and brainstormed about what they wanted to do. Such ideas in addition to the memorial service included requesting the university administration to declare a day of mourning, buying a bench, planting a tree, getting a memorial plaque, and placing ribbons around campus. During this period, no one person emerged as "the leader." Instead, various students initiated the projects that interested them.

During the second planning session, the class listened to the individual reports and prioritized what could be achieved before the semester ended and which symbols honoring Ilana's life required more funds and time. Given the constraints of time and money, the class agreed to hold a memorial service, make a video, wear purple ribbons (Ilana's favorite color), tie purple ribbons around trees throughout the university campus, and give lollipops to the students and attendees of the service. Ilana often had a bowl of lollipops on her desk and generously shared them with her visitors. Once the class members finalized their decisions, they identified how the staff and the other students could assist them in implementing these activities.



While Evelyn helped the seniors to plan and organize ways by which they could memorialize Ilana, the external community was simultaneously responding as well to the news of Ilana's death. Barbara's role was to develop the memorial service program to include not only students, but also colleagues and friends.

Memorial services embody "psychological and symbolic meaning" that focuses on the "beauty of the relationship" with the deceased (Oaks & Ezell, 1993, p. 43). In this case, many individuals shared their memories of Ilana. For example, one student who had been diagnosed with cancer the previous year and was touched by Ilana's support and encouragement wanted to recite a poem in her honor. Other students, mindful of Professor Hendel's Jewish identity, recited prayers, one of which was an excerpt from the Psalms. On-campus co-workers spoke about their relationship with Ilana. Her social work colleagues talked about her contributions to the profession and to the social work students. Letters from friends and colleagues were read. Throughout the memorial service, 150 students, friends, colleagues, and family cried, laughed, told stories, and shared memories that helped everyone to mourn the loss of Ilana. A video produced by the seniors brought closure to the memorial service. This video signified the students' emotional acceptance and acknowledgement of her passing.

In summary, the memorial service was primarily to help the students to relieve their distress and anxiety while mourning the loss of a teacher. This was accomplished first by

enlisting seniors to use their social work knowledge of community practice to plan and organize ways to memorialize their professor's life.

Students' Perceptions

Religious beliefs often inform or dictate how individuals respond to death. When students responded to our questions about what they believed about life after death and how it affected how they grieved, all of the respondents except two individuals considered that the spirit of the deceased was eternal. For example, a 45 year old Catholic male said, "I believe that all life has a soul and at the end of life the soul enters another realm—i.e. heaven/ hell." Also, a 23-year-old female Christian expressed, "I believe if you believe and accept Christ in your life, you will have eternal life in heaven. If not, eternity in hell." Another 22-year-old Catholic female thought that "your spirit lives on" and a 35-year-old Seventh Day Adventist said, "I believe in reincarnation." A 25-year-old female proclaimed that she was unsure about life after death. Also, a 27-year-old female said that she did not have any beliefs about eternal life either way. The majority of students identified themselves as moderately religious and Christian. Their faiths included Catholicism, Adventist, Church of Christ, Congregational, and Unitarian.

The students did not openly express religious beliefs as a major facet when planning the memorial services. Religion arose as an explicit factor only when selecting the appropriate readings to commemorate Ilana's memory. However, in their survey responses, students addressed their spiritual beliefs. Faith in the immortality of the human spirit seems to reduce the pain in students' grief. For example, a 29-year-old female said, "I am not sure how this affects my grieving, but I pray a lot to God and to whom I believe is the higher power other than myself and this provides me with comfort and reassurance. I guess it says life and death is [sic] not always in our hands and is in the hands of a higher power." A 22-year-old Catholic female said, "It is reassuring to think that you live on in some form. I feel that it helps the grieving process because you can just think of the person as alive in spirit." "My beliefs give me great comfort knowing that someone that I have loved is still 'there' as part of heaven and as part of my continuing life on earth," suggested a 51-year-old Unitarian female.

The length and the nature of the students' contact with Ilana differentially related to their sense of loss. For example, pre-social work majors had known Ilana for only eight weeks, whereas juniors and seniors had been acquainted with her for two to three years. The pre-social work majors appeared to have less need to grieve. Comments such as these reflect how they were affected: "I was saddened because she was my teacher." "It was sad .... Although I did not know her, I could tell from others' reactions that she was much loved." The students that knew her longer than the new majors expressed profound grief. Their expressions of loss included "sadness," "shock," "disbelief," "confusion," and "incompleteness."

For juniors, not only the length of relationship but also their lack of information about the seriousness of Ilana's health status affected their mourning. For instance, one student shared that she "felt sorry that we did not know her [Ilana's] condition was so grave and could not lend some support to her, her family, or the faculty closest to her." Another junior revealed, "Total shock, utter disbelief. One day we were told 'she is stable,' the next couple of days dead and buried." A 23-year-old female felt that the faculty tried but the crisis warranted more sensitivity.

The majority of the students felt that the social work program and individual faculty members assisted them during their grief. A 51-year-old pre-social work major proposed that "it was good that the memorial service was held and that the professors were avail-

able to students." Another 24-year-old pre-social work major revealed, "The social work program [and those involved] contributed greatly to the grieving of each student." A 27-year-old female junior explained that the department addressed her grief in class and left time for discussion. "We talked about the funeral after our professor explained everything that had happened," said a 25-year-old female junior. "This was used as a learning experience." The seniors provided more details about how the program addressed their grief. A 29-year-old female explained, "Everyone, including the staff and the students, supported one another. We had a service for her and us and the students were encouraged to plan the ceremony." A 50-year-old senior said the social work program encouraged us [the students] to come together as a group to support one another...The program went beyond and above what I had anticipated!" A senior, 25-years-old, indicated, "Ilana's death was discussed in class; several class times were devoted to talking about our feelings and reminiscing about Ilana. I felt that I could have talked with anyone about my feelings." Plus, seniors expressed that informed field instructors provided them more time to deal with the shock. Overall, students' responses suggest that appropriate measures were taken.

Even though the majority of the students felt the faculty tried to ease the burden of their grief, some students did indicate how the intervention could have been improved. For example, a 27-year-old pre-social work major said, "Grief counselors should have been provided because staff was also grieving. Communication that Ilana had breast cancer and had expired should have been passed around to all social work students, no matter where they were in the program. Honesty about the situation would have been helpful." A 23-year-old female advocated that individual counseling and issues concerning death, dying, and grief should be integrated into classroom lectures.

Barbara's Reflections

In the fall of 1997 I would not have known the ramifications the death of Ilana would have on my personal and professional life. During the 1995 Spring semester, I accepted a position as Field Coordinator. After assuming the position, the then director told me that the Program needed an experienced person that could step in, should Ilana's cancer reappear. I did not feel the need to probe any further, nor was any additional information shared with me. Ilana attended my job interview but she was still on medical leave. Ilana wore a wig, due to her hair loss; however, she appeared to be in good spirits.

Ilana was back to full-time work in the fall. Her face glowed and she looked vibrant. Ilana joked about her new crop of hair and appeared to be energetic. The year went by without any major health worries and Ilana planned and organized the present program director's retirement party. The following fall, plans were made to cover Ilana's classes because she would be out for another six weeks for medical care. Ilana described this as "just one of those things" that women have to deal with. When she rejoined us in the spring semester, another health problem surfaced. Ilana was now a diabetic.

At the beginning of our third academic year together, the program completed the first phase of the accreditation process. We submitted the self-study materials. Ilana and I then focused our attention on finalizing an invitational paper that we were to present within two months. It wasn't until the week before our presentation that I realized something was wrong. Ilana was not her usual cheerful self, yet we continued to make plans for our trip. When I arrived at the conference, I received a message to call Ilana. With a hint of weakness and sadness in her voice, Ilana informed me that she could not make the trip. She said, "I know you will do a great job, and I look forward to hearing the feedback." Immedi-

ately after sharing this information, Ilana happily informed me that the University had approved another tenure track line for our Program. We were both elated!

A week later back on campus, Ilana's weakened body indicated something was very wrong, yet I did not dare to ask questions. Perhaps, it was out of fear that I did not probe deeper, and Ilana did not share any information. Her visibly changed appearance worried me. That week was the last time I saw Ilana. The following Monday, her husband telephoned to tell me that he, Ilana, and her daughter were on their way to visit Ilana's doctor in New York City. They hoped the noticeable signs that we all had witnessed were related to her medication. Unfortunately, this was not the case. Ilana's husband called me a few days later and said that Ilana had only a few weeks to live. This horrible prognosis shocked me.

Over the next two weeks, I would check in with Ilana at home each Monday morning as was our regular pattern when she was not scheduled to be on campus. This time my calls focused on how Ilana was doing, on program related issues, and finally on what Ilana wanted to share with the students. Over this period, Ilana gradually relinquished her directorship, and one morning she said, "You're the boss now." All I remember saying was "OK, Ilana, I'll take care of things." It was now final that Ilana was never coming back! I processed this sadness and the burden I felt at having to help the students to cope with this loss.

Evelyn and I drove that weekend to the funeral home for the service, to the cemetery, and finally to Ilana's home. During our drive, we realized the need to have a memorial service for the students and divided the responsibility of organizing the service. In the two weeks that followed, we all prepared for the on-campus memorial service. I consulted with the students as they planned to celebrate Ilana's life. Among the goals they wanted to achieve was to produce a video. It showed a glimpse of Ilana's professional and family life. I chose not to preview the video before the memorial. At the memorial service, I was able to absorb the positive and powerful energy of the many contributions Ilana had made over her short lifetime. I was able to assist a student who broke down and cried as she read a poem dedicated to Ilana. However, after seeing the videotape, I allowed myself to cry.

As the semester quickly ended, I realized the magnitude of the responsibilities that lay ahead; therefore, I put aside my grief. Meanwhile, I helped the students to grieve as they prepared for their final exams. Then, I put into motion plans for the program accreditation site visit, hired an emergency adjunc,t and organized and chaired a faculty search committee. In addition to these demands, I faced a deadline to complete the remaining work for my doctorate. Mourning Ilana's death was not an option for me at that time.

Evelyn's Reflections

When Ilana died, I was stunned but not totally surprised. A few weeks before she died, I observed how jaundiced her body had turned and how slow her gait had become. However, I thought that her health would return and she would triumph against this latest hurdle. Only when discussing my observations with a friend who works at the American Cancer Society, I began to face the dreaded reality of Ilana's disease. As I explained to her Ilana's appearance, she said, "Evelyn, don't you realize what is happening?" "No," I replied, "What do you mean?" She clarified, "When the body becomes jaundiced, that means that the liver is failing. That is usually one of the final stages of the illness." A few years earlier, this friend had lost her father to cancer, so her wisdom was based on more than professional knowledge. That information helped me to see clearly the challenges that Ilana faced. I was shaken by her

explanation but tucked it away in the back of my mind, hoping that her prediction was not true.

Unfortunately, one Friday evening after I returned home, I received this message from Barbara: "Ilana passed. We need to talk about making arrangements for the students." When I heard the news, I was surprisingly calm. Perhaps, my belief in an afterlife reduced some of the anguish. I returned Barbara's call and we began to plan what to tell the students and how the University would be involved in the ceremony that the family planned for Ilana's memorial.

The dawn after Barbara notified me that Ilana had died, an unusual event occurred while I was in bed. Suddenly, I felt Ilana's presence; she appeared in a blue and green stylish Carol Little-type-dress at the head of my bed, walked to the foot, and then disappeared. She did not say anything. In this liminal state, I awoke feeling totally tranquil about her leaving. I felt reassured that her pain and suffering no longer embodied her spirit.

My spiritual encounter carried me through the hectic planning for the celebration of her life, organizing the students, and adjusting to changes in the program. Given that I taught the Generalist Community Practice class, I assumed responsibility for guiding the students as they planned ways to commemorate Ilana's life. I oversaw the organizing without being overwhelmed by grief. I did not cry.

However, entering her home after the funeral service felt surreal. Life seemed incongruent without Ilana as host. Prior to her death, twice we held a staff retreat at her home to prepare the accreditation self-study report for the Social Work Program. Standing there in her kitchen and seeing her dogs belied her absence.

Spiritually, I felt connected to Ilana because she respected my faith as a Baha'i. Often when she traveled to Israel, she would mention that she had gone to the Baha'i shrines in Haifa. During one of her journeys, she brought back a cobalt glass dove suspended on a pink ribbon. That dove hangs from my glass living room door and catches the sun along with an Arabic Baha'i suncatcher that symbolizes "God is Most Glorious."

Lessons Learned

Reflecting back on the events surrounding Ilana's death, lessons emerged. First, we recognize that although we are social workers and train students to become social workers, we guardedly responded to our ill colleague. With Ilana, we cautiously ignored and denied her illness. Given her denial, we failed to discuss openly her advanced fragility. Instead, we responded to her cloak of privacy and shrouded our feelings and her condition. Even when Ilana brought in a special lecturer to discuss ethics and spirituality, we never saw her actions as an attempt to forewarn us about her own mortality. In the midst of this crisis, we failed to see the need to call in an outside grief counselor to assist the students and us with Ilana's death. Perhaps, the urgency and demands of the task eluded our need to call in others. Grief may be sublimated when the demands of caring for others is a priority.

Respecting boundaries and being responsible for training students pose dilemmas. The faculty remained conflicted about how we should have responded to Ilana's illness. Should we have encouraged Ilana to discuss the latter stages of her illness with the students? Would such openness have allowed students to say good-bye or to thank her personally for her support? The final day she was on campus, we all ignored her illness and acted as if everything was fine, although we observed that her vigor and energy increasingly slipped from her body at least a month or so before she died. We can only wonder if it would have been easier for Ilana to share information about her diminishing health and possible death if we, the faculty, had shared with her our fears about her health and our

wish to honor her life. On the other hand, were we respecting her style of coping and supporting her hopefulness for a full recovery? Would acknowledging her possible demise undercut her inspiration for recovery? Would openly discussing her illness cross the boundary of respect? Of course, we will never know the answer. This dilemma shows that although we are social workers, our concern for intruding on the personal boundaries of our colleague undermined our professional duties to the students who were anxious and bereaved. The need for a grief counselor arose long before her death. Just as doctors should not treat themselves, neither should social workers.

An examination of the way in which Ilana confronted her chronic battle with cancer gives us some possible perspectives about why she did not want to discuss the latter stages of her illness with the students. Being a cancer survivor was a major aspect of Ilana's persona. She joked with students and colleagues about her illness and she accepted the side effects as a part of surviving. She informed students when she entered the hospital for new treatment. She lived a very public life as a cancer survivor. As Barbara says, "For Ilana, living was her only option."

Perhaps Ilana chose not to alter her self-image despite what her body showed. The chronically ill grieve their former selves and do everything possible to hold on to their humanness (Stephenson & Murphy, 1986). Often, the chronically ill adapt to the behavior of those around them. Commonly, friends either distance themselves from their sick loved ones or deny the severity of the illness. In our case, we employed both strategies. We rejected what our eyes revealed and distanced ourselves by pretending Ilana was fine.

Despite our timid responses to Ilana's illness, the memorial services allowed us to celebrate her life and provide students an opportunity to grieve. The events planned by students and others served as rituals to facilitate the mourning process not just for one evening but also throughout the following semester as the purple ribbons remained attached to the trees. Romanoff and Terenzio (1998) remind us "[too] often, bereavement rituals are one-time events that fail to acknowledge grieving as a process that occurs over time" (p. 699). Rituals can provide the opportunity to maintain order and "expression and transformation" (Kollar, 1989, p. 281). Today, we can reflect on the wonderful connections with Ilana through our program web page and by attending the annual State University system social work conference named in her memory. Student involvement in the planning process and University collaboration provided many opportunities for social support and mutual aid to assist with the grieving process. Worden (1991) identifies the provision for continuing support as one of his guiding principles in providing grief counseling.

Finally, writing this paper helped us to face the truth of our lives. This process allowed us to grieve the loss of a colleague but also to consider ways to intervene should such an event occur in the future. We hope that our experience will benefit others as well. The following quote sums up the purpose of this paper:

"The mourner who plants a seedling in memory of the deceased acknowledges the loss, and waters and nourishes the sapling. Later, he or she sits in the shade of the tree" (Romanoff & Terenzio, 1998, p. 709).

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Babes in the Classroom: Reflections on Accommodation

By Janet C. Bussey, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, Cleveland State University

This narrative describes the influences that personal and social work values can have in determining how a college professor resolves dilemmas of accommodation that arise when students bring their infants and young children to college classes. The article discusses the impact of the reduction of childcare assistance available to college students as a result of provisions of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 and the new opportunities provided through the Child Care Access Means Parents in School Program for expansion of on-campus childcare services.

Soon after becoming an assistant professor in a baccalaureate social work program four years ago, I realized that neither my experiences as a student nor my experiences as a social worker had prepared me for the accommodation dilemmas I now face when my students bring their children to class. My university does not offer on-campus childcare services. This article discusses my reflections on the contextual and affective difficulties inherent in one professor's efforts to provide classroom accommodation of students that do not have adequate childcare arrangements. The issue of childcare, as a needed student support service is discussed, as well as the availability of federal funding to support universities in the development of support services that allow student parents to access high quality child care while they attend college classes.

The Perspective Underlying my Reflections

Prior to becoming an academician, I spent twenty-three years as a social worker in public and private sector agencies. My experiences included direct service, management, and administration. I worked within the mental health and criminal justice fields of practice. In these settings no one brought their children to work. Apparently the prohibition was implicitly understood because the practice was not addressed in any of the agency policies and procedures manuals that governed my employment at various social agencies. Although I am aware of a trend within some smaller private companies to accommodate new mothers by allowing them to care for their infants in their offices while working, such practices are not likely to become much wider spread.

My experiences in the student role also failed to provide me with a frame of reference for the management of babes in the classroom. None of my fellow undergraduate or graduate students ever brought a child to the classes that I attended. During my doctoral studies in the late 1980s and early 1990s when a study group was scheduled at the home of a student with children, that student always arranged for childcare in order to avoid distractions from the child. Children were not even a factor during my undergraduate days at the close of the 1960s and the early 1970s. I was typical of most "traditional" students: young, naïve, and unencumbered by marriage or children. My student role began as a kindergartner in Georgia and continued uninterrupted for nineteen years until I completed my master's degree in Ohio. My academic life in those days was a happy-go-lucky good life. The nostalgic appeal of that wonderful period, coupled with a desire to have a direct impact in shaping the educational experiences of our next generation of social work professionals, made me long to return

to the academic environment after a seventeen-year hiatus. By midlife, the desire was strong enough to propel me into a doctoral program, which was necessary preparation for a career as a social work educator.

When I began my doctoral course of study, my personal life was not as simple as it had been during my earlier years as a full-time student. I was employed in a stable and well-paid position. I had been divorced for some time and did not need to worry about securing the buy-in of a spouse. My adolescent daughters were reasonably independent, busy with their own interests, supportive of my ambitions, and not at all opposed to the thought of having a mother whose full attention was no longer focused on them. The graduate school that I attended had adopted a program for doctoral study that allowed me to schedule my course work around my full-time employment. I had enough vacation leave and money banked to cover both the time and financial demands of the program.

Great karma was emanating from every front. I found myself singing a familiar 1960s song of self-determination made popular by James Brown: " I don't want nobody to give me nuthin', just open up the door and I'll git it myself." Very quickly, however, I found that getting back into a theoretical and intellectual mode of thinking was not easy. During the first few months of my doctoral studies, I felt like a cross between an aging Alice in her Wonderland and a fearful Lioness on the yellow brick road to Oz. Fortunately, I was able to reconsolidate my personal identity and reactivate my brain cells quickly enough to earn my doctorate within four years.

Reluctant to accept the reduction in earnings that would accompany my transition to academia, I delayed seeking a faculty position until four years after earning my doctorate. I arrived in my new position more than just a little out of touch with the current demographics and the associated needs of urban public college students. I had no frame of reference given that my undergraduate and graduate degrees were completed at private universities.

Profile of the University and Its Students

The enrollment at this metropolitan, Midwestern, state-supported university is approximately 15,700 full- and part-time students. The university distinguishes itself from other area schools by its "urban" mission and by being a university where almost all of its students commute to school from home. The University's urban mission is advanced by its policy of offering admission on a first-come, first-served basis to all graduates of the state's accredited high schools. The average age of our undergraduates is 26.5 and the average age of all students is 28.7, with the majority being above 25 years of age. Women students represent 55% of the student population. For the majority of our students, more than five years pass between graduating from high school and entering college. Between 1995 and 1999, the six-year graduation rate for cohorts of first-time, degree-seeking freshmen ranged from 25% to 30%. For undergraduate transfer students, the six-year graduation rate during the same period ranged between 41% and 46%. Our students' extended undergraduate matriculation is most often due to the need for remediation, financial problems, and other social problems that include those associated with balancing multiple social roles.

The courses that I teach are required for completion of the social work major. Consequently, all of the students enrolled in my

classes have achieved the designation of junior or senior. Our social work students range in age from 20 to 70. Over the most recent five years, women represented 70% to 86% of our baccalaureate social work graduates. Most social work students are also employed and head single-parent households. Despite this student profile, childcare services are not among the student support services offered to students attending this university.

Lack of On-campus Childcare Services

Although the growing trend among universities in the 1980s was to sponsor on-campus childcare, this university closed its childcare center in 1983 due to the "extreme stringency" of the university's operating budget. While the National Center for Education Statistics (1999) indicates that 56 percent of our sister four-year, postsecondary public institutions offer on-campus day care for the children of enrolled students, my university has not elected to reinstitute such a center. We are, therefore, among the minority of universities that do not offer on-campus childcare programs to enable parents to further their education. In 1993, the university trustees did revisit the childcare issue. However, they only decided to enter into a joint use agreement with an off-campus, privately owned and operated childcare facility. This off-campus childcare center offers care to children ages 18 months to 5 years during the traditional hours of Mondays through Fridays from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The center charges students fees of $132 to $142 weekly, $29 to $32 daily, or four dollars per hour. This arrangement does not accommodate the needs of evening students, weekend students, students with infants, or low-income students. This day care facility is licensed to accommodate only 24 toddlers and 54 preschoolers. In the summer months, the program does expand to accommodate 14 children at the kindergarten to third grade age level. This center may accommodate the needs of some faculty. However, due to its limited operational hours, fee schedules, and limited slots, it does not meet the needs of most student parents. Although many of our students had previously been able to secure on-campus day care services while taking classes at three of the two-year community colleges that feed students into this university, once they transfer to this university, these services are no longer available to them.

The Professor's Dilemma

When the student has no childcare for her child, she will bring her child or children to class. Since I began teaching at this university, at least once each semester one or more students arrive at the classroom with children in tow. I consulted colleagues about their experiences with the children of students and learned that they face similar challenges. I was informed that I must determine how to manage these classroom situations. Perhaps because the university does not offer students any real assistance in obtaining childcare, it has not established any policies regarding children attending classes with their parents. Rather, the responsibility for the management of these situations is deferred to each instructor. Instructors are to detail their policies regarding classroom behavior in a section of the course syllabi for each class section offered.

Although I provide a written statement within my course syllabi that clearly addresses a laundry list of prescribed classroom behaviors, I have yet to develop a policy regarding children in the classroom. Each time a parent brings a child into my classroom, I feel con-

fronted by a dilemma. Should I ignore, support, or resist the child's presence?

Appeasing Five Constituencies

After reflecting on the reasons why I have not banned babies and children from my classes, I recognized that my conundrum is consequent to my efforts to accommodate the needs of five constituencies. First, I am concerned about meeting the needs of the degree-seeking student mother. Second, I recognize that I must be responsive to the needs of all students enrolled in the course. Third, I am sensitive to protecting the welfare of the child. Fourth, I am aware of the enrollment and retention concerns of the university, as well as its desire to be perceived by the community as an institution that is easy to access and responsive to the needs of non-traditional students. Last, I must maintain classroom decorum that is conducive to my teaching style as well as to my own needs and effectiveness as the instructor. As I contemplate these dilemmas, I am aware that my thinking is influenced by both my personal history and values as well as by my social work professional values. As a result of these personal and professional frames of reference, I am burdened by sensitivity to some issues that might not necessarily factor into the thinking of other professors at this university.

Empathic Connections to Student Parents

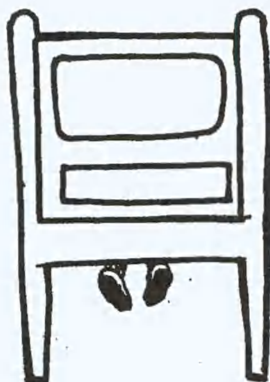
As a social worker, I belong to a profession that has a defined body of values and ethics that shapes my worldview and behavior in human interactions. Part of my obligation to students is to model these values and ethics. My personal values and experiences also strongly influence how I understand and deal with students. I am a single mother, as are the majority of my social work students. I strongly identify with the struggles of my parenting students. Because most social work majors are women, these student parents are almost always mothers. As is most common in our society, these student mothers carry the greater responsibility for childcare arrangements rather than the fathers. Consequently, when childcare becomes a problem, the responsibility for the resolution generally rests with the mother.

I empathically connect with these student mothers as a result of my own experiences balancing the roles of social worker and single mother. However, I must often remind myself that my experiences as a student were very different from the experiences of the students that I now teach. I was advantaged by desegregation opportunities, affirmative action policies, and generous scholarship assistance while pursuing my own education. In contrast, my students are heavily dependent upon tuition loans and work-study commitments and often must maintain full-time employment. Yet my most recent experience as a non-traditional student has served to heighten my empathy for older students who have already learned a great deal from life experiences. I can identify with these students' frustrations upon entering the higher education arena and discovering that no credit is offered for the knowledge they have gained in the "school of hard knocks." In fact, these students may be socially and educationally stigmatized for such aspects of their personage, which may often include histories of abuse and neglect, substance abuse and addiction, incarceration, unwed parenthood, poverty, and dependence on welfare support. It is within this contextual and affective framework that I endeavor to handle the potential conflicts among these five constituent interests. I will share specific examples of these conflicts and my reflections upon them.

Invasion of the Babes

Generally, the student that arrives at my classroom with a child in tow has not sought my prior approval. These scenarios tend to unfold in several ways. I may arrive at the

classroom and notice a child seated at a desk or in an infant seat. The registered student generally does not approach me to request that her child be allowed to stay. I generally do not comment upon the child's presence. I cannot really explain why I take this avoidant approach of pretending not to see what I do in fact see. I do know that it does get easier with practice.



Recently, a social work major asked my permission to bring her seven-year-old son to each class session. She explained that she relies upon public transportation and that her son's summer childcare program closes at 6:00 p.m. My twice-weekly class was scheduled to run from 4:00 p.m. until 5:50 p.m. It was clear to me that this student needed this accommodation. I gave her permission to bring the child to class, provided that his presence was not disruptive to her fellow students. During examinations, I kept her son engaged in quiet activity so as not to disturb the other students or his mother. Once he unwittingly facilitated an unplanned opportunity for me to demonstrate to the class a point that I was making about cultural differences in methods of redirecting children's behavior.

A student bringing her child to class troubles me less than discovering that a student has left her child unattended in a common area near the classroom. This arrangement does not work well for younger children or for children with special needs. When students elect to handle their childcare problem in this manner, invariably the child interrupts the class and seeks the attention of the mother. In some instances, however, this arrangement may work with older children.

The case of 11-year-old twin boys provides one example of older children being able to wait alone in the lounge area while their mother attended class. The youngsters were contented, quiet and self-disciplined, and they occupied themselves with games and reading materials brought from home. They never required anyone's attention during class time. I developed a positive identification with their student mother, based on the presumptive opinion that these boys' behavior was a validation that my student was an excellent parent.

A third babe scenario was attended by a bit more drama. The scene begins with a clearly distraught mother arriving with her child in tow after the class session has begun. She plops the child down in a desk, removing his hat and coat with one hand and wiping his nose with the other hand. She then sinks into her own seat and looks at me with an exasperated plea. Although some of her fellow students' attention is clearly diverted by the late arriving entourage, I feel disinclined to interrupt the flow of the class session to address the presence of the child. I do not address the issue unless the extent of the distraction requires me to address it.

Each of these scenarios typically occurs as a result of some type of breakdown in the student's childcare arrangements. Perhaps the usual childcare provider cancelled. Or there may not be any accessible childcare resources available to the student who is taking evening, weekend, summer, or intercession courses. The student may not be eligible for assistance provided through Federal childcare funds. Further, The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 has served to make childcare assistance unavailable to low-income college students because the pursuit of higher education does not count towards satisfying the Act's work requirement (Snowe, 1997).

Regardless of which of these scenarios confronts me, I recognize that each student felt that her best available alternative for childcare was to have the child accompany her to class. When this happens, I feel rather like the hostess at a dinner party when invited guests bring along their uninvited friends with-

out calling ahead to warn the hostess or gain her consent. Being socialized to be a good hostess, I feel that I should be as gracious as possible and "make do." Like the dinner hostess, my class preparations are made based upon the registered students. Not all of my college-level lecture content and teaching materials could pass a "general audience (G)" rating. When such adult fare is planned, I do find my spine, take a firm position, and ask the student to take the child out. When such discussion occurs spontaneously, I leave it to the parent to deal with any questions the discussion might generate for the child.

Often as she appeals for my forebearance of the child's presence the student stresses her desire not to miss class sessions. Class attendance does impact a student's final grade. However, regardless of the nature of the appeal, my conscience is always pricked by my identification with the role conflicts inherent in her status as a non-traditional student. My experiences as a working parent certainly have included the distress associated with a failed childcare plan. In my current role as an educator, I want to make allowances for the differing needs of my students and I want to facilitate the success of each one. As a social worker, I want to assist each student to develop her highest potential and to ensure that she has equal access to a career in social work. I want to be supportive and non-judgmental of the student. For these reasons I almost always allow the child to stay, either by assenting or by declining to object.

The Erosion of My Empathic Responses

When the child is able to sit through class, causing only minor or no disruptions, I feel comfortable that all five of my general constituent concerns will be reasonably satisfied. However, when a baby starts crying or a young child gets restless, I am forced to make a decision that is going to displease one or more constituents. On these occasions, I have observed that I become judgmental in my view of the student as a mother. One insidious creep to judgment comes when, based perhaps upon a single observation, I engage in a highly subjective analysis of the student's parenting skills. I begin to reflect upon my experiences in managing the behavior of my own children (now young adults) in public settings. As a single parent, I, like many of my students, had a very limited informal childcare support network. My own children had to accompany me to many professional and civic meetings where no other children were present. Of course, *my recollection* leads me to feel cocksure that I trained my children to behave properly and thus I was able to take them with me almost anywhere I went without infringing upon any other adults who might be present. I was reared within the context of a traditional Southern African American extended family and these experiences heavily influenced my own ideas about childrearing techniques. I frequently ask myself: "Why can't these young mothers control their children as I did my own?" After all, is it not true that "good" parents can effectively control their children at all times? These factors, perhaps in combination with my current stage of life development as an "empty nester," serve to reduce my tolerance of behavior in children that many others now consider to be acceptable.

I could excuse my thoughts as simply selective memory or I could claim to be experiencing "senior moments," but of course I know that I am being inexcusably ethnocentric and judgmental. I am blaming the victims. These student mothers put me in positions that force me to own a decision that is indeed mine to make but which I would prefer not having to make. I have to consciously work in order to achieve the level of tolerance and understanding that I feel I should *naturally* have consequent of my position, professional training, values, and ethics.

Modern technology, i.e., the student mother's cellular telephone, can bring children into the classroom even in instances when the children are not physically present. I view the cellular phone as America's new number one device of nuisance, now that smoking inside public buildings is largely banned. I refuse to own one. The ringing of telephones in class, with their nauseatingly "cute" melodies, is an annoyance that I have chosen not to forebear. I have added the ringing and use of cell phones to my printed list of proscriptive classroom behaviors. I recognize these phone calls are for some students a vital link to latchkey children during times when adequate adult supervision is unavailable or when emergencies arise. However, I do feel that the needs of both the student and her child could be adequately met if calls were made and received before or after classes or during break times.

Safeguarding the Rights of Other Students

The rights of the other students enrolled in the course must take precedence over the needs of the parenting student, especially when the visiting child is not able to exhibit the necessary classroom decorum due to physiological, developmental, or psychological reasons. I am sure there are students who object to the presence of children in the classroom, but none has ever taken the social risk of verbalizing an objection. It is my responsibility, as the instructor, to ensure that these students' rights are safeguarded. I consciously stay attuned to students' nonverbal expressions, noting any indication that the presence of a child in the classroom is bothersome. The student mothers are seldom oblivious to the disruptions caused by their children. Most mothers gently escort their children out of the classroom without my having to instruct them to do so.

Generally, I have observed that fellow students identify with and desire to accommodate the needs of their peers. Many times the students are more aware than I will ever be of the nature and extent of the problems that caused the student to bring the child to class. In one such instance, I observed that the same infant arrived at the classroom fairly regularly but was brought in variously by four different women. It was several weeks before it was clear to me which of the students was the mother. The other women were part of an informal cooperative on-campus day care service for the infant's mother. Based upon their availability, they helped the mother by taking turns caring for the infant throughout the day. However, they all had my class at the same time and this common scheduling made it necessary that the infant be brought to class.

The child usually slept through the class sessions; with two notable exceptions. The first incident occurred during one of the peer evaluations of my teaching. These evaluations are one of the requirements of my tenure review process. I had prepared the class and students were exhibiting their best student behaviors. I was skillfully employing all the techniques known to modern pedagogy when the baby awakened and began to co-lecture. The mother and child quickly exited without any direction on my part. The occurrence of this brief disruption by the child was noted in my teaching evaluation. Although the comments were supportively and empathically phrased, I felt some anxiety upon seeing the incident recorded in print. I wondered how the departmental and college peer reviewers, and ultimately the dean, might view my allowing children to be present in my classrooms. The second incident occurred when the infant began to cry during an examination session, perhaps in response to her mother's test anxiety. The other anxiety-laden students, being too big to cry themselves, immediately shot daggers at the mother. Fortunately, there was a vacant adjacent classroom to which I

suggested that mother and child make a hasty retreat. Consequently, the mother and her fellow students were able to complete their exams without anyone committing homicide or *hara-kiri.*

Beyond the Campus Classroom

The problem of childcare for social work student mothers can also extend beyond the campus classroom. A critical component of social work education is the field practicum. Most of our students must balance their practicum requirements with full-time or part-time employment, other coursework, and family responsibilities. The most unpleasant conflict that I have experienced with a student concerning the presence of her young child actually occurred at a field practicum agency. I had come to the agency in my role as field liaison. A meeting had been scheduled for the purpose of developing the student's learning contract. When I arrived for my appointment with the field instructor and the student, I observed a child trying to answer an agency telephone while in an unoccupied office. It quickly became apparent that this was the student's child. The student indicated that she brought her preschool-aged child to the agency because the child had a medical appointment later that day. The student had not sought prior approval from her field instructor to bring the child to the agency. My assessment of the situation was that the student had exercised poor judgment and inadequate problem solving in planning, given her multiple responsibilities. She had not successfully balanced her requirements as a mother with those of her student role. At the time of our scheduled meeting, the student instructed her child to wait outside of the conference room. As could be expected, the child was at the door almost as soon as it was closed, requesting to be escorted to the restroom. The student was expressively annoyed but did take the child to the restroom. Although she returned to our meeting without her son, the child was soon at the door again. When the exasperated student began to raise her voice at the child, I intervened and suggested to the student that the child might be more comfortable remaining in the conference room while we met. Initially the mother was not inclined to accept my suggestion, however she became persuaded by the field instructor and me to relent. When the child came in, I modeled behavior that I hoped would set an appropriate tone for both mother and child. I explained the purpose of the meeting to the child in developmentally appropriate language. I told him how I wished for him to behave. I gave the child a pad of paper and a pencil. The meeting was not very long, as the student had not prepared for her role in the conference. The child was well behaved and at the conclusion of the conference relished in the praise he received from me. In this instance, the incident of the student's bringing the child to her field placement was one of a series of progressively serious problems that ultimately resulted in the student's dismissal from the program. However, the student did not go quietly. Rather, she filed a grievance against me, stating that I had treated her with prejudice and failed to appreciate the necessity and priority of her efforts to take proper care of her child. Although her grievance was dismissed, somehow I did not feel better. Yet even after this very unpleasant experience, I am still not inclined to make a rule that unilaterally bars children from my classes.

Reflection Increases Understanding

As I reflect upon these situations, I have come to realize that in trying to be supportive of students, I may at times be skidding down a slippery slope towards enabling the student to delay developing the problem-solving skills necessary to satisfactorily resolve personal issues. As a supporter of students, I try to provide what Kegan (1982) refers to as a "bridging environment" for each student (p. 186). I recognize that students who are car-

rying babes along with their textbooks can be expected to struggle. Such students need time and support to develop the problem-solving skills necessary to achieve the sense of psychological and lifestyle balance that become necessary for the effective management of their student role. This view is supported by Madden (2000) in his observation that "even a junior-level student who is absorbed with personal issues [will commonly have] difficulty in class and field placement. With support, however, many of these students gain the ability to manage their own issues…" (pp. 145-146).

I feel that I should do my best to offer "bridging" support to students, whether working with students in my role as their classroom instructor or as their field liaison. I have allowed students to bring their children into my classrooms. How then can I, when functioning in the capacity of field liaison, justify becoming critical of students' judgment if they show up at their field practicum with children in tow? The field practicum courses are required for social work majors. However, field instruction is not conducted within the more casual university environment. Rather, field instruction is conducted in a host social service agency that maintains a professional decorum. Students are required to spend between sixteen and twenty hours each week during the semester at an assigned agency in order to learn the practical application of social work theory and interventions. By contrast, students spend only three to four hours per week in class for each course. I am beginning to think that I should seize every opportunity, whether in my role as a classroom instructor or as a field liaison, to prepare students in our pre-professional program to better manage their personal issues and to conduct themselves in a manner that would be expected of professional employees. Students need to be assisted early in this program of study to effectively problem solve and negotiate systems so that both the care requirements of their children and their own career objectives are met.

The Dilemma of the Child's Best Interest

I also must consider the welfare of the child in weighing my decision about whether to allow him or her to stay in my classroom. Student mothers have brought children who were clearly ill to class; often the student was equally ill and/or very exhausted. In such instances, it is easy to anticipate that little learning would take place but that quite a few germs would be circulated. In these instances, cloaked in the ardor of humanitarianism and playing the role of "the kind and wise grandmother," I experience no dilemma. As quickly as possible, I excuse the parent and encourage her to take the child home or for medical attention. This protects not only the welfare of mother and child but also the health and welfare of the other students and me. Everyone is happy.

I recognize that my position on sick children may run counter to contemporary trends among parents in the workplace. For example, a report from the Bush White House indicated that Vice President Cheney's press secretary had "her sick two-year old daughter sit in on three vice-presidential interviews, waiting until [her mother] could take her to the doctor for her ear infection and fever" (Williams, 2001, p. 7-B). I believe the Vice President should have insisted that his press secretary take her child for medical assistance rather than remaining at work while the child possibly was getting sicker and certainly spreading her germs to others.

Another value-laden dilemma involving the welfare of the child occurs when I am cast in the role of "censor." In that role, I feel a responsibility to assist the parent in developing an appreciation of the reality that some college-level lecture content, discussion, and films could be rated as "Parental Guidance Suggested" (PG). When confronted with this

situation, I make it a point to conduct the discussion about a need for parental guidance in open classroom. I indicate to all of the students what my thoughts are about the importance of parental screening of what children hear and view and what factors I consider in reaching a decision regarding the child's presence. A parent occasionally disagrees with me, but I always advise the parent at what point I will be requesting that she leave with her child. In all instances, the parent has taken the child out. Perhaps compliance generates from concern by the mother that she will be judged negatively as a mother. I do view these discussions as consciousness-raising opportunities for all students and not just for the focal student mother.

Occasionally, a child in class becomes a delightful presence. I had one twelve-year-old who regularly attended classes one summer. He enjoyed the content and looked forward to listening to the students' discussions when permitted to stay. His most favorite class session was the viewing and discussion of the classic film, *Lord of the Flies*. The youngster was, however, very agreeable to leaving the classroom when I conveyed that any day's material would not be age-appropriate. I must admit that I viewed this boy's interest as very refreshing. However, this child had two younger siblings who always needed to sit out of the classroom. Their student mother frequently had to leave the classroom to attend to the pairs' behavior in the common area. Since it never appeared to occur to this mother to seat herself near the door, at times she was as disruptive in her leaving and returning as was the children's activity.

When by the middle of the summer semester this student mother had not made an alternative childcare arrangement for her three children, I engaged her in a brainstorming process. My goal was to assist her in resolving her childcare crisis. Despite our best efforts to generate alternatives, I had to finally acknowledge that she truly had no support system. She would have to drop the course if I did not allow her to bring the children. I was aware that she was trying to graduate before the expiration of her family's welfare eligibility.

Although I truly hope not to be confronted with making such a decision again, I do not regret deciding to allow this student to bring her children to class. My decision was based on three factors. First, it was clear to me that her classmates wished to help her and did what they could to accommodate the children's needs. The students brought treats and games for the kids, and chatted with them before the start of each class session.

Second, from my position as a social work educator, I felt an obligation to provide the support she needed to remain enrolled in my class. I am very much aware that under The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, recipients of funds through the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Act are being discouraged from completing higher education. TANF allows States to count only one year of education as "work" (Sturnick, 1999). The negative effects of this Act on students who are seeking higher education are documented. According to an August 1998 report of the American Council on Education's Office of Women in Higher Education:

> *Since the 1996 federal welfare reform law went into effect, thousands of recipients have had to withdraw from higher education because they do not have the time or other resources to meet the new work requirements and carry out their school obligations at the same time (Hoffman, 1998, p. 1).*

I certainly believe that this young mother would stand a better chance of sustaining her family without public financial assistance if she were to complete her Bachelor of Social Work degree. As reported in analyses of the

1990 Bureau of the Census data: 1) the average income of employed high school graduates was just under $18,000, 2) workers with one to three years of college earned an average of $24,000, and 3) workers who had college degrees earned an average of $31,000 annually.

The third factor that figured into my decision to accommodate this student and her babes was deeply personal. This young woman's struggle to achieve a professional degree reminded me of my mother's struggle to earn her undergraduate degree in elementary education while balancing the roles of wife and mother of four elementary school-aged children. As there was no local college in our town, my mother took the majority of her coursework through the local extension campus program. However, she was required to complete her final year "in residence." In order to allow my mother to complete her degree, my parents had to temporarily disband our family. She moved to the nearest college town, taking with her my two brothers because she knew she'd have no childcare and they'd have to occupy themselves after school on the playground while she was in her classes. She viewed such an arrangement as too risky for girls, so she placed my sister and me under the protective care of our maternal grandmother. Our father remained in our home, working and renting out the rooms in order to generate the funds needed to pay my mother's college tuition. My mother was able to achieve her goal largely due to the support of my father and grandmother. My student had no such support system.

The Dilemma of Maintaining Enrollment and Retention

Every faculty member and staff person working for any university is aware of the importance of recruiting and retaining students. Institutions of higher learning are engaged in a vigorous and very open competition for students. Data reported by the states of New York and Massachusetts indicate that the implementation of The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 has already had a devastating impact on the postsecondary enrollment of welfare recipients (Hoffman, 1998; Sturnick, 1999). My university is also facing the additional challenges of severe financial stress due to decreased government subsidies, limited alumni contributions, and significant unanticipated expenses stemming from the introduction of a campus-wide computer software system. Despite these fiscal challenges, the university must keep tuition affordable for its target pool of students. We are very concerned about maintaining student enrollment as tuition and state subsidies represent our bread and butter. At the departmental level, the social work budget is based upon the number of majors we have and the number of students we can retain as full-time enrollees from semester to semester.

Research has demonstrated that student parents with childcare have higher graduation rates, have higher retention rates, and have a higher grade point average (National Coalition, 2001). Therefore, the provision of on-campus childcare would be an excellent recruitment and retention strategy. However, it is unlikely that such services will be instituted at this university due to fiscal constraints, lack of facility space, and liability and management issues.

The Fifth Constituent

I see myself as the fifth constituent, one who is experiencing the strain of trying to please many masters. As a junior, yet-to-be-tenured faculty member, I strongly identify with my university's concerns. I have a vested interest in making sure that the student grapevine conveys positive communications about my classes so that students will sign up for my course sections and write positive evaluations of my teaching. I also have a vested interest in helping to ensure that students' de-

mand for classes stays high so that I can remain employed. Sometimes I feel as if I should have taken instruction in the art of tightrope walking.

I must struggle to avoid giving short shrift to my own feelings about having children in my university classes. My elementary and secondary educational experiences occurred during the age of the "closed classroom." During that period, every classroom had four sturdy walls, a ceiling, and a door that remained closed. I was taught that all students had a responsibility to maintain a level of order that promoted an atmosphere in which all could learn. A large component of such an environment was understood to be silence. At home I was encouraged to select a quiet atmosphere when doing homework or studying; there were to be no distractions from radio, telephone, television, or stereo. This early conditioning places me at a disadvantage in many contemporary learning environments. I experience cognitive dissonance when placed in a classroom that is noisy or in which others are behaving in a distracting manner. I must admit to being rather easily distracted by such environmental factors and to having a low natural threshold for selectively disregarding simultaneously delivered auditory and visual cues. Many of my students, however, were educated in "classrooms" open to the sights and sounds of the areas adjoining their classrooms. These are students who cannot study without having some steady form of stimulating external auditory input. What I find to be a distraction often is desirable or of no consequence to these students. While I do cater to my own preferences in my personal space, I am aware that the classroom is not my personal space but rather a learning environment that should be structured to meet the educational needs of the students. As I abhor the stereotypical image of professors as persnickety old codgers, I have consciously worked to strike a better balance between my needs and the needs of my students. I have also striven to increase my ability to understand and work through minor disruptions with good humor and without suffering a reduction in my effectiveness as a teacher.

Conclusion

My dilemma would be most satisfactorily resolved by the development of a range of university-sponsored childcare services for use by student parents. To provide these types of student support services as a matter of university policy would shift the issue of on-campus childcare away from professorial discretion and back to its proper place. The university cannot continue to declare its urban mission while standing firm in its position that it is fiscally unable to sponsor on-campus childcare services. To continue this stance places the university in a position of turning a deaf ear to the needs of students who must care for their children while attending this university.

My university is eligible to participate in but has not applied for the funds that became available with the passage in October of 1998 of the Child Care Access Means Parents in Schools Act (CAMPUS Child Care Act). This Act amends the 1965 Higher Education Act and authorizes $45 million nationally to support the startup or operation of campus-based childcare services. The purpose of the law is to support the participation of low-income parents in postsecondary education through the provision of childcare services (H.R.6, SEC.410, Subpart 7, SEC. 419N.). This university should join the ranks of 87 other colleges and universities in helping low-income student parents attend postsecondary schools by providing them with campus-based childcare services.

The University has failed to accurately address its students' need for on-campus childcare. No professor should have to accommodate babes in the classroom, except for laboratory purposes. The institution's failure to take leadership and ownership in this

critical component of student support services serves to shift the issue from its rightful position as a university policy making function to an ill-placed position as a classroom management function.

However, the current reality is that babes in the classroom will continue to be a classroom management function. I will not be able to look to someone else to resolve this problem for me. I do not expect that I will ever develop written proscriptions against children in my classrooms. I will, however, in the process of my initial contracting with students, include a discussion of my preference that children not accompany parents to class. I will also state clearly my expectation that requests for individual exceptions must be discussed and resolved with me in advance of the start of the class period. I will continue to do what I can do to balance the needs of the five constituents impacted by my decisions regarding accommodation of babes in the classroom. In a small way, achieving this balance may help my students to better understand and deal with the conflicts in values and ideals that they will surely encounter when they enter the social work profession. It is my expectation that as they learn to become effective advocates, they will help to shape childcare policy changes that will decrease the need for student parents to bring their babes to the classroom.

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An Ethical Journey: Discovering Social Work – An Examination of My Helper Role

By Brien L. Bolin, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Wichita State University, School of Social Work

The end of the author's graduate school experience was the beginning of his social work journey. This narrative describes his experiences working as a mental health crisis worker before returning to school for M.S.W. training, and his realization of how the NASW Code of Ethics is applied to practice.

In the aftermath of comprehensives, a dissertation defense, and graduation, being finished with a Ph.D. was surreal. Earning another graduate degree was remote, especially in another field. My goal was to be a professor of sociology. The long work days with unpredictable schedules were now in my past. However, where past and present meet, the reality of one's journey becomes the future. My past was about to become my future. Gaps between real and ideal became my motivation for self rediscovery. In the months that followed my graduation, desire to be a professor of sociology was suppressed by meager academic openings. Reality took hold as the inner social worker stepped forward. This journey would take me down a curious path.

In late July, after a storm of job interviews and rejections, I accepted a position providing mental health services in the rural Northwest. It was a relief to be employed, yet unsettling not to be in academics. This would be the beginning of a hiatus from my intended career as a sociologist to practicing social service work and learning the structures of helping. The helping self would not be silenced as my journey led me through a year of social service work.

My days of academia seemed years away on Monday, my first day as a crisis worker. Fall marked a dramatic change in the color of the foliage. I would also change my colors over the next year and my perception of what it meant to be an academician. I had embarked on a journey in a foreign world, ripe for new challenges but with no idea of how I would be tested. During my initial job interview, I was told that the position would involve mental health crisis work inside the county jail, crisis counseling in the field and in the office, and civil commitment investigations. With confidence in my abilities to master new tasks, I enthusiastically set out to conquer this foreign world of social services with individuals with mental illnesses.

Training began with the customary rituals: employee orientations, introductions to the office staff, review of policy manuals, sitting in on staff meetings, familiarization with community resources, reviewing cases, and finally meeting clients. My graduate training in sociology coupled with several social service jobs provided a foundation to build upon for professional helping. My work with families as a reunification worker, with juveniles as a group home worker, and with institutionalized

people with developmental disabilities as a quality assurance agent for the state, along with my own immersion in bureaucracy as a graduate student, had provided a broad experiential practice base. The colors of fall were beginning to show as my helping skills were emerging. Training concluded quickly as two Mondays had come and gone. Uninformed about the realities of helping in this role, but familiar with the procedures, I began.

The duties of the crisis worker included many rituals, responsibilities, and procedures. My job description was clear. The reality of being a crisis worker reflected personal beliefs, values, ethics, and norms of how to respond to those in need. I was provided with training on the state law of commitment to psychiatric institutions. Two licensed counselors provided me with helpful information on psychological assessments. Collaborating with a variety of professionals at the agency allowed me to view a range of professional behaviors. I found, though, that instead of these individuals being a source of explanation for my questions about how to help others, they only added to the enigma of how to respond to those in need of assistance.

My state certifications came after several months of probation, a request to the state from the director of the agency, and approval from the county commissioners. I now had authorization to perform my duties. Still, the job was unclear. The laws of commitment, definitions of persons with mental illness, and even how to determine who was at risk of self harm were all subjective matters. I felt both prepared and unprepared. I had mastered all the appropriate survival skills, job rituals (paperwork), and responsibilities (procedures). The rituals were not the crux of the job. The vagueness in my mind about the finer points would become a specter as I came to discover more about helping. What I would later discover, while obtaining an M.S.W. degree, were the ethical principles of social work. The following are reflections of ethical encounters which illuminate the principles involved in my transition from sociologist to social worker.

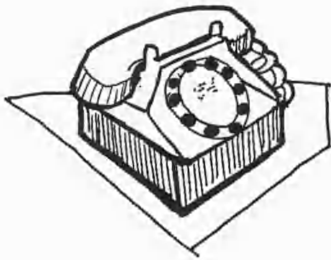
The Principles of Ethical Social Work: A Quest with Structure

The role of a county crisis worker was clear: my primary role would be the investigation of individuals who were deemed by family, by law enforcement, or by the community to be a danger to self or others. This would occur in multiple settings including, but not limited to, the community, county jail, courts systems, social service agencies, and a state psychiatric hospital. The mission was also clear. I would protect individuals from themselves. The state and county certification authorized me to carry out the agency's mission. But, clear skies precede storms. That fall I felt the chill of a conflict mounting. I had more questions than answers: How should I treat others? What is my role in helping? What is my personal mission? Should I be acting in strict accordance with the law, or was there a higher level of action of which I was unaware? Past, present, and future were colliding in a psychedelic blur of purpose and direction. It was to be my personal autumn, a search for an ethical structure not yet found in the principles of social work.

Service: How Should I Help Others?

I would encounter the meaning of service many times on my journey of self discovery. The incongruence between beliefs, values, and the treatment of others was at the heart of my struggle. According to the NASW (1999) Code of Ethics, the "Social workers' primary goal is to help people in need and to address social problems...a social worker should elevate service to others above self interests" (p. 4). My job description listed five distinct roles for the crisis worker. Service did not appear on this list although it could be found in the state commitment laws, the county job description, and the agency's interpretation

of this role. But, these were the safeguards for the agency, the county, and the state. Rather than elevating service, these documents elevated the agency interest above all else. I felt that there should be more to service than the black and white print of a job description. My inability to formulate a clear understanding of service became a sort of colorful foliage that became a distraction in my efforts to help others.



Nowhere had the lack of service been so poignant as in my first case as a crisis worker. I had been asked to assess the mental health needs of an elderly woman. The elderly woman's children made the referral, stating that she had exhibited signs of depression, hostility, delusions, and an inability to care for herself. After several phone calls from the family, their frustration had grown with the lack of attention given to their case. I had been on the job for less than a week and had arranged a home visit along with my supervisor and an adult services representative. We would be meeting the woman and her two daughters. As we left the agency, my supervisor stated this will be "baptism by fire." Our meeting lasted approximately one hour in which few options were discussed. We were there to observe and assess the situation, not provide services. The following week a staffing of the case took place with my supervisor and other members of the crisis team. I was astounded to hear comments such as, "They're on their own," "It's not in my job description," "The behaviors do not warrant further actions," "That is not how we have done it in the past," and "We cannot do that here." As solutions were offered, each met with its fate, a lack of service.

The resolution came with the woman being turned over to adult services and the daughters becoming her guardian. This was the real wake-up call, because in my mind this was not service. I had just witnessed service being lost in the system, caught between the gaps, and just short of meeting criteria. This was unacceptable. This was a case that was opened and closed with little more than a facade of service rendered. Haunted by the silence of the void in service, I began to question this system's values and priorities.

Clarification of the Concept of Injustice

Fulfilling the role of a pre-commitment investigator began to breed dissonance within my transforming self. It was my task to investigate individuals who were alleged to be a danger to self or others or who were unable to provide for basic personal needs. The social work value of social justice demands challenging social injustice (NASW, 1999, p. 5). One of my first thoughts during a civil commitment hearing was that the rights of an individual are lost in the process. It was not a grand leap from academia to the reality of injustice, but it showed the great divide I was to cross. One side of the divide was the recognition of injustice and on the other side, resolution. In the service world, I was confronted by the realization that an individual's presentation of self will not always fulfill the criteria for commitment, but being powerless will. Textbook pictures of antiquated mental health procedures raced through my mind. Social injustice and inequality were concepts discussed at length in the academic world. But in the real world of commitment, these concepts were momentary reflections that disappeared under the weight of bureaucratic rules and procedures.

Lack of clarity surrounding the meaning of social justice became apparent to me following one of several commitment hearings

in which I was the investigator. As a pre-commitment investigator, I had prepared court documents and presented my "expert" testimony on an individual's danger to self or to others or inability to care for basic personal needs. I had exercised this authority within the letter of the law. As commitment proceedings came and went, the futility of my struggle over "the meaning of justice" became nebulous. If an individual were a threat to self or others or was unable to provide and was living in poverty, a commitment of up to six months would be the expected outcome. Was this justice? Legally justice was served. Individual freedom was a casualty. Society somehow had reached an odd equilibrium on the dichotomy between safety and freedom. I came to realize that issues of social status were the key, not some ideals about law, textbook justice, or equality.

Two cases accentuate this dichotomy. The first case was of a business owner and her private lawyer. On several occasions, she (the business owner) would have peculiar behaviors that would be reported to local authorities. She was observed wandering on the highway searching for aliens, standing in wheat fields waiting for space ships, and waving sticks and telling authorities that these were ray guns and "they better get back." This would lead to the involvement of the crisis team and a mental health hold. Her private lawyer would swoop in and gain her release. Thus, justice was served. The second case was of a pauper who walked the sidewalks of downtown and yelled at his hallucinations. The longstanding relationship between the community and this individual was one of commitment and release, a relationship that had placed the man in the state hospital, in jail, in drug and alcohol rehabilitation centers, or under the supervision of the county mental health. He was destitute, penniless, and powerless. His life was spent in and out of institutions. His commitments were routine and without incident. Commitment workers could refine their beginning courtroom skills on this powerless individual. There was no justice for this individual. The man would continue to spend his life, far beyond this season, yelling at his hallucinations.

Respecting the Dignity and Worth of a Person

My experiences working in the county jail provided ample opportunities to evaluate my respect for the inherent dignity and worth of individuals. As the social work value states, "Social workers treat each person in a caring and respectful fashion" and "Social workers seek to enhance clients' capacity and opportunity to change..." (pp. 5-6). Working for the county mental health agency required that I spend approximately 20 hours a week in the county jail providing crisis services. A new perspective on the meaning of the dignity and worth of individuals emerged from this time spent in the county jail.

The question of the dignity and worth of an individual is never more apparent than when freedom is taken away. Individuals suffering from mental illnesses who are incarcerated in a jail would often lose more than personal freedoms. They would often find their dignity and worth stripped away in the name of safety. The role of the mental health crisis worker in the jail is to make a recommendation to the jail staff concerning the inmate's safety based on an evaluation of mental health. If there were some questions of safety, the individual could be isolated, have all but the most minimal items taken from the cell, be deprived of clothing, and, as a last option, be

restrained to a bed. These individuals were literally in a fish bowl, observed by cameras and correctional officers every minute of the day. The loss of self became an indignity against the individual. Somehow, it was for his/her own physical safety. The individual and his/her psychological issues were not relevant to the process as long as everyone was physically safe. Dignity and worth were reduced to time served. I had become part of this cold equation.

Denial of Human Relationships

The questions of dignity and worth soon become interlinked with my growing understanding of the importance of human relationships. The NASW code of ethics states as an ethical principle, "Social workers recognize the central importance of human relationships" (p. 6). I would often spend time in the jail listening to the stories of inmates who craved human relationships. Inmate stories were compelling testimonies to the human need for relationships: a young man incarcerated for violation of a restraining order who carried a picture of his daughter, and was jailed for trying to see his little girl; an 18-year-old male charged with statutory rape of a 17-year-old, both with developmental disabilities, whose need for relationship was denied because of legal definitions and a need to protect those "at-risk" populations; a 30-year-old victim of domestic violence, who was isolated and estranged from her family, arrested for vandalizing a police cruiser after the officers failed to assist her; a young immigrant who had been jailed for trespassing in a train's empty box car who was looking for a means of transportation back to his family after laboring in the fields and orchards. During visiting hours, families and significant others connected to these inmates were seen huddled around small plexiglass windows struggling to maintain their relationships via a telephone receiver. To be jailed was to be denied contact, connection, and support. This was the essence of punishment: the denial of relationship.

My job description did not call for establishing relationships. In fact, it was discouraged. My job was to ensure safety. Be that as it may, I was compelled to do more. I could not let individuals languish without relationships. Passions over the lack of meaningful relationships had brought them to the jail for "corrections," but "corrections" could not be made without relationships. My job became one of a listener, a small investment on my part in order to allow another to have connections through relationships. For better or worse I would not deny relationship, which would only promote further dysfunction and despair in the name of "corrections." Through response to human need, I had begun to initiate change in the climate of the jail, but there was still a long way to go.

Confronting the Meaning of Integrity

The ethical edict for social workers to act with integrity would provide the insight necessary to complete my journey. As stated in the NASW Code of Ethics, the value of integrity is that "Social workers are continually aware of the profession's mission, values, ethical principles, and ethical standards and practice in a manner consistent with them. Social workers act honestly and responsibly and promote ethical practices on the part of the organizations with which they are affiliated" (p. 6). Confronting my professional integrity was never so poignant as on the day a defense lawyer acted the role of a social service provider. The outcome of a commitment hearing had been resolved with the individual's release. The hearing was a success, of sorts, for the young woman. Nonetheless, she was still unable to provide for her basic personal needs. There had been a lack of evidence in the case. Justice had prevailed and her rights were intact. I was not left to reflect on the

meaning of justice but on my own integrity. At the end of the hearing, I was plagued with questions of ethics. Should I have taken her to court? Was there a just way to meet her needs? Did this court proceeding violate her dignity? Would she seek services from those who had just tried to take away her rights? Her lack of ability to care for herself was the reason we had gone to court. She now refused an offer of voluntary mental health treatment. My job description prevented additional action. It was then that the court-appointed defense attorney began making plans for our client to have shelter, food, and transportation. I was left with a feeling of professional inadequacy. As I reflected on this experience, I knew that this was not the way I wanted to help others. I began to wonder if I would be the type of helping professional who turned my back on individuals in need, or if I would be the type to complete the range of services I had begun. I was at the periphery of understanding what I needed to accomplish to reclaim integrity. Spring marked a shift, a new beginning. It was time to challenge myself, the system, and my sense of dissatisfaction.

How Did I Become Competent?

My job description as a mental health crisis worker had provided little guidance in the pursuit of ethical treatment of others. The answers were not to be found in my academic training as a sociologist but in my training as a human being. As a sociologist, I was competent in theories, concepts, understanding of society, human behavior, and the objective, quantitative methodologies of research. Becoming an ethically competent provider of human services to individuals in need or "at risk" required a subjective analysis of my past year as a mental health crisis worker and my collective experiences as a sociology graduate student.

The daily tasks of reports, data gathering, and paperwork were tasks with little challenge. My observations of those around me engaged in the helping profession provided the data for my understanding of how others should be treated. Trying to infer meaning from others' actions or lack of actions proved to be a difficult way to find answers to questions concerning ethical treatment of others. I found myself conferring with psychiatrists, psychiatric nurse practitioners, licensed practical counselors, family therapists, and social workers to validate my observations and my treatment of those in need. However, it was in my consolations with social workers that I felt the most satisfaction. Their examples, both in word and deed, spoke to the nature of my quest. I felt an alliance with the social work perspective. This was the congruity that I had sought.

Summer was growing to a close and my year as a crisis worker with the mental health agency was about to end, and I had grown increasingly uneasy with my role. My questions about the system and feelings about the changes that would be necessary to ensure that service be conducted with justice, dignity, and worth had brought me to a crossroad. My values had changed. In order to ethically "provide for clients," more knowledge about the provision of social services was needed. Thus, I did not feel fully competent, but at the same time I was convinced of what I would be required to do. The NASW (1999) Code of Ethics calls for social workers to "...practice within their areas of competence..." (p. 6). I would return to academia to teach sociology and earn an M.S.W. degree. My role as a crisis worker was ending, but my personal and professional journey was continuing.

Conclusions

A turning of the seasons came as my community mental health experience ended, and I returned to academia both as student and professor. As I adjusted to the world of academics, social work again called. In the year following my Ph.D. in sociology, I had be-

come aware of social work and ethical foundations of the treatment of others found in the NASW Code of Ethics. The code was an embodiment of how I aspired to treat others and advocate for their ethical treatment. As stated in the NASW Code of Ethics:

"The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty" (p. 1).

This opening statement on the mission of social work fit with my own discoveries of how others should be treated. The ethical dilemmas I had come to grips with in the year as a crisis worker now augmented the sociologist.

Three years after a Ph.D. in sociology, I received an M.S.W. The ethical principles of social work had provided me with a structure for my reflections on how others should and should not be treated. I continue to evolve as an academician. I have discovered that the quest for personal and professional service to self and others, justice, connection, integrity, and competency, faces recurring challenges from bureaucratic and institutional structures. My search for knowledge and awareness will continue as I reflect on my past, present, and future. I often reflect on my year as a crisis worker, knowing that it was the beginning of a new direction in a process of self discovery, not found in that year but in a lifetime of reflections, change, and growth.

Reference

• National Association of Social Workers. (1999). *Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers*. Approved by the 1996 NASW Delegate Assembly and revised by the 1999 NASW Delegate Assembly. School of Social Work, Michigan State University.

EXPERIENCING AN EXPERIENCE-BASED LEARNING APPROACH TO SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

By Jill Gibbons Ph.D., Lecturer, Department of Social Work, University of Newcastle, Australia

The four year social work degree program at the University of Newcastle, NSW, Australia celebrates its first decade this year. The program began as, and has remained firmly grounded on, an experience-based model of learning. In 1993 the five members of the teaching team received an Excellence in Teaching Award from the University of Newcastle. There are now 8 full-time faculty and about 40 students in each of the four years of the full-time program. The author, one of the three inaugural faculty, reflects on her experience of applying this model of learning to social work practice.

My first experience of teaching was as a thirteen year old teaching Sunday School and trying to instill in a mob of unruly kids a mish-mash of muddled Christianity with no sense of why it might be relevant or important or even interesting, and no understanding of the difference between beliefs and facts. Teaching Sunday school consisted of having as many tricks as possible to keep kids quiet and happy: games, coloured pens, pictures, prizes. It's not surprising that from that time forward I never wanted to teach, seeing it as some sort of nightmare struggle to maintain control amidst chaos.

Many years later as a social work practitioner in health care, I was called upon as one of several experienced group workers to put together the group skills course for the new medical school at Newcastle University. The medical course was breaking new ground in Australia by using a problem-based learning model. This was the first time I came into contact with the idea that education theories and models were as diverse as the theories and models of social work. In first-year medicine, students began to work in small groups of about 10 students on real problems and issues of medical practice. The challenge was to assist them in developing the group process skills they would need to undertake their tasks. Faculty of the medical school recognised that social workers had this expertise and employed a number of us to both write the group skills component of the course and be group facilitators in that part of the program. I was reminded that many skills social workers took for granted, such as empathic listening, group facilitation, and problem-solving, were highly valued and coveted by other professions.

Over the years, Newcastle University became very well known for its problem-based learning model in medicine and later in architecture. So when Brian English, the founding professor of the New School of Social Work, took up his appointment in July 1990, he was in a setting conducive to designing and implementing a four year degree program using a problem-based learning model. After nearly 20 years in social work education, with a research background in family demography and a passion for photography and motor bikes, Brian wanted to take a different and creative approach to the development of the course. He was critical of what social work education had become and, in the experiential learning tradition of Dewey, he wanted to focus on the process rather than the content of learning. Making social work practice the central organising feature of the course, he selected his new faculty members for their substantial social work practice backgrounds.

I joined the department as one of three foundation staff in November 1990. Although I had never wanted to be a teacher, I had been a field educator, a supervisor of social workers, a coordinator of staff development programs, and a tutor in the medical school program. Newcastle, a large industrial city, is my home town and the city where I had practised as a social worker for 15 years. I was incredulous that, after many years of lobbying, the local branch of the Social Work Association had finally managed to convince the University to start a school in social work and excited that there was a possibility that the region could address its chronic shortage of qualified social workers. It was like a dream to then be offered the opportunity to work with people I admired with an open charter to develop a course to produce the sort of social workers I thought were needed in the field. I was not going to let it pass, even though I still had great reservations about being a teacher. I could never have entered academia if I had been expected to lecture, to stand up in front of a classroom of students as an expert and tell them what I thought they needed to know. However, the possibility of teaching in a workshop format as a facilitator, rather than as a lecturer, appealed. Group facilitation had always been both my interest and my particular skill.

It was a memorable first few months. The city of Newcastle was recovering from its first major earthquake (in December 1989), and many of the buildings at the University were still under repair. In January 1991 as we prepared to take our first students, the Gulf War began. It is hard to describe the seeming insignificance of our ideas as we gathered around the radio and wondered how relevant social work education would be if the world erupted in war. The air of world crisis probably aided our creativity and preparedness to depart from traditions, because it was immediately obvious that teaching content to students may not prepare them for whatever their world would be in four years time.

Moving from practice into academia required a long period of personal adjustment for me, some of which was painful and depressing. I left a high profile practice career of 18 years and a senior position in an agency in which I had a lot of status and influence because of the programs I had developed and run. I entered academia with none of the qualities valued in this new culture: a doctorate, a publishing record, and research grants. For a long time I felt like a non-person and spent a lot of money at the naturopath trying to deal with my 'fatigue'. I missed working with client groups and was embarrassed to acknowledge this: was it ethical to have received so much gratification from working with people in trouble? Students did not offer equivalent rewards and were very inclined to complain a lot about everything and to be very challenging to someone very fragile in her teacher status. I missed my colleagues from health services. Although organizational relationships are never perfect, I realised that in all my years in health services, our focus had been on service and on the client. Most of my professional colleagues had had reasonably good interpersonal skills. It was a shock to join the larger academic community and to be with people who seemed so focused on themselves and the advancement of their career, that they might not even acknowledge you if you passed them in the corridor.

The initial group of three faculty began the process of developing the course with a commitment to a four-year full-time program and an 'experience-based' model. Like other social work programs that set out to imple-

ment problem-based learning, our initial problem was with the word 'problem'. This did not reflect a strengths approach that we thought was a fundamental principle of social work practice. We settled for the term 'experience-based', seeing it as representing Dewey's original ideas about education for social justice, education by 'doing', and respecting that students bring their own knowledge and experience to their education. Then, setting aside all our knowledge and experience of social work education as we had known it, we spent many hours articulating what we considered to be good social work practice. Having been social workers for many years, we had many firm ideas about this. The first curriculum planning was, therefore, not based on traditional notions of social work education, but began from our own experiences and observations of the strengths and weaknesses of social workers in the field.

My involvement in experience-based learning has made it incomprehensible to me that social work is taught in any other way. A profession that is concerned with social justice, empowerment, skills, and process requires a congruent model of education. So many social work skills are those highly valued in an experience-based model of learning: reflection, self awareness, observation, critical thinking, problem solving, and group work. We live in a world where knowledge and information are immediately accessible in large quantities and changing on a daily basis. All we can do is to equip students with the skills to sort through and apply this knowledge in order to make sound judgments about the situations they encounter. When I came to read more about Dewey, seen to be the originator of an experience-based approach, I was excited to find that he had been a close associate of Jane Addams and one of the first trustees of Hull House. He acknowledged Addams' influence on his thinking and they each participated in the other's programs.

In our experience-based model, each learning unit (about 60 class hours) begins with a 'trigger experience'. After the 'trigger', student groups, with a facilitator, reflect on their feelings and thoughts and examine their values, beliefs, and assumptions. The facilitated group process creates safety to express honest thoughts and feelings as well as challenges students to consider alternative views. Students are then provided with learning themes, goals, and group and individual tasks. The course focuses on assisting students to develop the skills required to undertake the tasks: library, internet, and literature searching and appraising; drama workshops to develop creativity; input on critical reasoning skills; written and oral presentation skills; and interpersonal and groupwork skills. Students present their group task to the rest of the class and the reflection and feedback from this experience is also used as a major part of learning.

As a facilitator of the experiential learning process, I encounter many challenges. I expend much anxiety and creative energy devising new and currently relevant 'trigger' sessions that will engage students. The trigger may be a visiting (a jail or juvenile detention centre, going to the local shopping centre in a wheelchair, attending clubhouse programs for people with a mental illness); attending a session run by consumers or people from a particular client group (people who are deaf, people with acquired brain injury, or people recovering from substance abuse); watching a relevant documentary or current news program or a play about a social issue; reading a piece of literature or an autobiography. The session should confront students,

engage their experience, and cause them to challenge their beliefs, values, and assumptions. It should be a powerful and memorable learning experience. 'Processing' the trigger session in the large group is one of the most exciting and rewarding parts of this model of learning for me. Just as in group work in social work practice, I am working with the immediate experience of the class group and drawing their initial learning from this.

A second year unit, with one of its themes 'work in society', involved a visit of about 30 students and 3 faculty to the blast furnace of the local steelworks. The idea was to confront students with the day-to-day working conditions of people in heavy industry as a trigger to their examining the role of work in people's lives and in the distribution of wealth in society. It was hard to recognise each other behind the hard hats, heavy woollen coats, and safety glasses as we tramped through that fiery and hell-like environment. The steelworks (which has since closed) had been the major employer in this city for the last century. Many of the students' fathers and grandfathers had begun their working lives there. Students (and faculty!) were shocked by the harshness and danger of the working conditions and brought this experience to their campus learning.

Devising group tasks is more difficult. A task has to relate to current practice, to engage students' interest, to be current, and to have embedded in it the need for students to seek particular knowledge and to acquire practice skills. A task might be the planning, organization, and running of a meeting to gain community support for the establishment of a drug rehabilitation facility in a local area (a real and current local issue), which the students will prepare and then run using other members of the class as their 'community'.

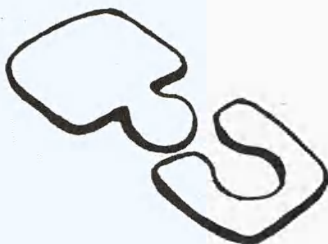
I find it hard to strike an appropriate balance between facilitating the small groups as they work on their tasks and leaving them to be 'self directed'. It is not intended that all of the small group time be facilitated by faculty, so we are not always aware, until they present their task, that a group may have misunderstood an important aspect of the issue. They can experience this as being 'set up'. Much of my current learning is in developing better ways to assist students to deal with the process of doing, critically reflecting on and learning from feedback, in the face of their expectations that tasks will have outcomes specified by faculty and therefore perfectible by students. It is certainly easier to tell students how to do something than to encourage them to find and then struggle with the material they need to grasp in order to successfully do the task. Two areas I continue to work on are to further integrate field placements with campus learning and social work research as progressive learning within each of the practice-based learning units.

For five years in the middle of the ten-year development of this degree, I worked part-time on my Ph.D. With this completed, I finally achieved a sense of entitlement in academic culture. I had entered the survivors club. I had demonstrated that I was capable of the self-discipline of several sustained years of focused learning, research, and writing, and had joined 'the others'. With this came new confidence as a teacher. For the first time, in that first semester after completing the thesis, I began to enjoy teaching and to relax with students. Feedback from students such as 'chill out' and 'why don't faculty use their practice skills more in the classroom' helped as well. I could finally let go of the vestiges of my need to control the classroom and work with whatever was happening in the students' learning process. My anxieties about our existing program in critical thinking skills led to a university grant to further develop this area of our program.

The joys I now experience in continuing to develop and teach in this course derive from the practice context of the learning, the group work, the emphasis on creativity, and the free-

dom to change the content of learning modules over time, keeping pace with current social issues. Our experience-based approach encourages learning through working with group process in the classroom ('being where the student is at') and there is freedom to spend more time, if required, to explore in greater depth issues of immediate concern or puzzlement to students. Best of all is the noise and laughter. Walking down the sombre corridors of the university and hearing animated debate or raucous laughter bursting forth from a room, I know it will be one of our classes with the students thoroughly engaged in some aspect of their learning. We have even had the occasional complaint from other departments about the noise emanating from our classrooms and lots of complaints about the furniture being rearranged.

This is not to say that an experience-based program is always joyful. Like all university courses, ours has its share of difficult students, grievances, and challenges to our learning approach. What do our students find difficult and complain about the most? Self-directed learning requires them to take a great deal of responsibility for their reading and research in relation to each learning unit. Not all students like taking that responsibility, preferring the security of prescribed reading and activities. Despite the structural focus of our



course, many students still struggle to take a larger political perspective on the issues they encounter. Some students dislike small group work and all of them find dealing with the conflict that inevitably arises in small groups difficult.

The other day my class of students was revolting. Back after the Winter break, with some of them annoyed about receiving poor results from first semester assessments, restless and apathetic, they were a reminder of those long ago Sunday School classes. My old group work rule came into play: when it seems to be falling to pieces, process! So I said to them that I could see that they were 'out of sorts' and I wondered if they would be prepared to tell me what that was all about. Out it all came: they had no confidence that they were learning their theories and able to apply them to practice. Many of them had received comments on their last assignments that were critical of their grasp of the theories and they were concerned about this. They were not finding it easy to learn theory through their independent reading and then application to case studies in class. I listened. I managed to stop myself from being defensive. Some students wanted lectures on theories. The discussion proceeded and I kept facilitating, resisting an overwhelming urge to suggest solutions. Having clarified what the problem was, the students themselves began to come up with possible solutions. They eventually decided that they would like to have a 'theory' day once a week with a specific theory designated for those days. They would come to class having done preparatory reading on the theory and we would examine main tenets, strengths and limitations of the theory by applying it to a case study. This was not too different from how I had planned for students to learn theory, but it would go at a pace that they felt they could manage. We then went on to have a very energetic discussion about grief and loss theory and went away from the class thinking that learning theories was something we would be able to successfully do together.

I have come a long way from Sunday School when the only tool I had at my disposal was to entertain with toys, books, and games. There have been many times when I

could have succumbed to a failure of nerve about this model of education. I can see why innovative education has often reverted to just shovelling the information into students and having them regurgitate it back in their exams and assignments. But I have let go of the need to control. I have developed a strong sense of the common elements of social work and teaching: the personal growth that is part of both teaching and learning, the importance of process, the usefulness of group skills, the role of a strengths perspective, and a framework of social justice values. I am as energised and stimulated by teaching as I once was by social work practice. Still, there are many moments of self doubt, especially as the number of things I know nothing about seems to be increasing exponentially. However, most of the time I feel, almost 30 years into my career in social work, a sense of fulfillment to be a part of preparing the next generation of social workers and confident that the values and processes of social work remain as relevant as they have always been.

Call for Narratives

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NARRATIVES:

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Manuscripts are due by October 30, 2002

Revisiting "The Case for the Contract"*

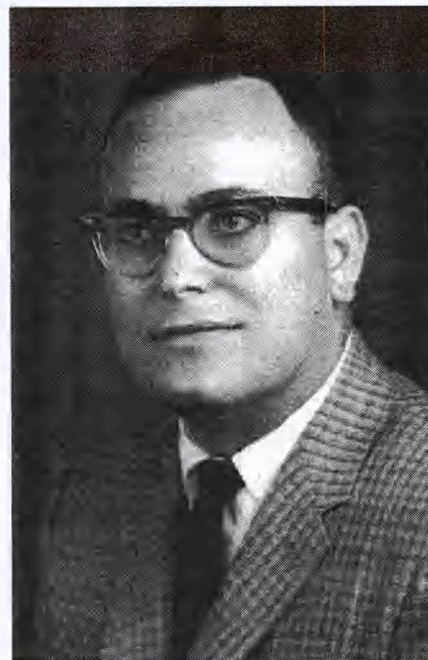
By Anthony N. Maluccio, D.S.W., Professor, Boston College Graduate School of Social Work

In this narrative, the author re-introduces his article, "The Case for the Contract," co-written with Wilma D. Marlow, and discusses its relevance to current social work practice. The article following this introduction has been reprinted in its entirety from the Journal of the National Association of Social Workers.

In the late 1960s, I went through a period of recovery from a prolonged dosage of psychoanalytically-oriented social work training in graduate school, and then practice in an exciting child welfare agency where "psychoanalytic work" was clearly *de riguer*. One outcome of such recovery was the re-discovery of my earlier interest—and indeed roots—in cognitive psychology and learning theory along behavioristic lines, which had been the focus of my undergraduate major in psychology nearly two decades earlier.

In this process I "discovered" the writings of such authors as Helen Harris Perlman (1957) on the problem-solving process in social casework; Ruth Smalley (1967) on the functional approach to social work; and William Schwartz (1971) on the use of the "contract" in group work. Suddenly, I found that my long repressed cognitive and behavioristic impulses came alive even more vividly and began to influence my practice in social work with families, teaching of clinical social work, and research in the area of family and children's services.

Then in the early 1970s, as a doctoral student at the Columbia University School of Social Work, I was privileged to become associated with such scholars as Alex Gitterman, Irving Miller, and William Schwartz, who helped expand my horizons through their emphasis on group work – an area that had not been part of my earlier training or practice in *clinical* social work. In particular, in a course with Schwartz, I became interested in the use of the contract not only with groups but in social work in general and in diverse agency settings.


Anthony N. Maluccio, 1973

One outcome of this process was "The Case for the Contract", an article which I co-authored with Wilma D. Marlow, a dear colleague at the University of Connecticut School of Social Work, who at the same time was confronting, with courage and dignity, her struggle with a newly-diagnosed terminal illness. Our collaboration on this article was most meaningful for both of us. In my case, it refined and strengthened my commitment to cognitively-oriented social work practice. In her case, and more importantly, it provided a context for her determination to live fully even while confronting death, which indeed came shortly before the article was published in *Social Work*.

In re-reading this article nearly three decades later, beyond the flood of personal recollections and emotions, I feel a sense of satisfaction in having contributed to the development of a central construct in social work theory. At the risk of sounding immodest, I see the article as continuing to be timely and useful. There is little that I would change in regard to its basic contents, beyond trying to be a little less dogmatic or certain about the value of the contract as a practice tool. Also, I would now place more emphasis on the less

"tangible" components of the process of formulating and using the contract in practice, such as the value of the perceptions and feelings of clients and the role of the social worker's intuitive sense regarding the client's readiness to participate in formulating the contract and her or his possible need for more time, support, and encouragement.

As for application of the contract in social work practice, I would of course also consider what we have learned more recently—or have appreciated more keenly—about the needs and qualities of vulnerable populations, the significance of human diversity, and the role of knowledge about race and ethnicity in our theoretical perspectives and practice approaches (Gitterman, 2001). In addition, we have seen how important it is to assess any potential risks in cases involving substance abuse, family violence or child maltreatment, and the consequent urgency of considering safety issues in contract negotiations within agencies serving children and families.

In my own research and writing I have also realized even more clearly the importance of thoughtful application of our "cherished" concepts in our practice. For example, in my later studies of client and worker perspectives on the helping process, the contract emerged as a much more complex concept than Wilma and I had originally envisioned. In particular, I appreciated more than previously that in interpersonal practice "the contract apparently serves not only *instrumental* functions (such as clarification of mutual tasks) but also *expressive* functions (such as provision of attention and interest by the worker to the client)" (Maluccio, 1979: 187). In other words, the process of contract formulation is not only a prerequisite to effective practice but also may be "therapeutic" in and of itself.

Later, through Germain and Gitterman's (1996) formulation of the life model of social work practice and my own work on a strength-oriented perspective in social work, I learned to appreciate the value of focusing on the potentialities, strengths, and resources of clients and their social networks: the contract can be used as a means of involving clients as partners in the helping process – rather than viewing them as carriers of pathology (Maluccio, 1981). Especially crucial in this regard is the following:

> *"...obtaining client feedback so as to engage clients more actively in the helping process, enhance their self image, and improve practitioner skills"* (Maluccio, 1999: 362).

As an example from family preservation services, the emphasis on the contract and its underlying principles and values can serve to guide and reinforce the worker's efforts to involve birth parents and their children in the process of formulating and achieving the goal of maintaining the child within the family or providing a more appropriate permanent plan. In particular, contract negotiation helps to bring out and clarify different perspectives or substantial disagreements in planning, specify mutual expectations, and reach agreement regarding the best plan for the child and family.

As a result of experiences and lessons such as those noted above, along with other theorists as well as practitioners I have increasingly appreciated that the contract—as with other tools—is something that should be considered and applied not as rigidly as implied in my original article, but thoughtfully and flexibly on the basis of our understanding of each person as well as her or his readiness and motivation to engage in a "helping" endeavor. May the contract and its use in social work practice continue, but with full awareness of the potential for its corruption by the contemporary emphasis on managed care, move toward greater accountability, and other dangers in our supposedly enlightened post-

modern society!

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The case for the contract*

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The client-worker contract is potentially a dynamic tool that can contribute substantially to the effective outcome of social work intervention. It can be used to clarify objectives and encourage clients to participate in the entire process of intervention.

The case for the contract

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The contract is among the basic concepts utilized in social work that are inadequately formulated and incompletely incorporated into practice. There has been little effort to clarify its theoretical foundations, delineate its uses, and test its validity. It has been mentioned frequently in the literature as a pact, working agreement, or therapeutic alliance. Referring to clients' and workers' hidden or double agendas, writers have spoken of covert, implicit, and "corrupt" contracts. However, a review of the literature reveals no comprehensive discussion or formulation of a conceptual framework.

Lack of clarity about the contract, its limited development, and its restricted application to social work practice may be factors that contribute to the clash of worker-client perspectives, client discontinuance, and the frustrations that clients and practitioners encounter when they try to work together meaningfully and productively.

This article attempts to stimulate interest in examining, conceptualizing, and using the contract. To do so seems timely in light of the current critical reassessment of roles and methods of social work, changing attitudes toward consumers of services, and new ideas about the helping process.

A pertinent aspect of changing theory and practice is the growing conviction that the client or consumer has an important role in formulating policy and planning program. One model of service delivery proposes that the consumer have a choice in what services are provided, some control over how and by whom services are delivered, and a real opportunity to participate.[1] It is logical to extend the concept of "maximum feasible participation" in policy-making and planning to direct and personal interaction between social workers and clients, whether the latter are individuals, families, groups, or communities. Clearly conceived and properly used, the contract can serve as an important tool in helping consumers achieve such participation. It might also become an integral feature of the emerging "life model" of practice, which stresses optimum utilization of the client's own life processes and resources.

THE CONTRACT IN THEORY

The origins of the term "contract" as applied to social work are not clear. Writings on group work in the 1940s and 1950s include implicit references to the contract, as seen in Coyle's discussion of the "grouping process" in group formation and Trecker's formulation of the group worker's role as "agent of the agency." [2] In 1951, Hamilton alluded to the contract, without naming it, in discussing the application process. She saw as fundamental the worker's responsibility to make explicit the conditions and the terms of help available from the agency.[3] In 1957, Perlman made one of the earliest references to the contract as a pact.[4]

Major social work scholars gave the contract some attention at a 1969 symposium on comparative theoretical approaches to casework. In formulating the problem-solving model, Perlman indicated that the person establishes a contract when he decides to use the agency and the worker for help in coping with his problem, thus moving from the role of applicant to that of client.[5] Rapoport identified the contract as a significant step in crisis intervention, noting that by the end of the initial interview goals should be agreed upon and mutual expectations spelled out between client and worker.[6] Scherz defined the contract in family therapy as a "conscious agreement between family and worker to work in certain ways toward certain goals." [7] In the behavior modification approach to casework, Thomas saw validity in an explicit contract and spoke of written as well as verbal agreements.[8] In Smalley's discussion of the functional orientation, the concept of the contract is implicit in her use of time phases related to beginnings and endings of treatment; according to her, a time-limited contract may be fulfilled, renewed, or renegotiated.[9] In the psychosocial approach, Hollis acknowledged that the term was widely used and that practitioners increasingly preferred to state explicitly the end results of the initial phase of casework before engaging in treatment.[10]

Although these scholars represent differing philosophical and theoretical orientations to casework, the concept of the contract appears compatible to practice within the separate frameworks. In particular, they convey a sense that the client is emerging from his traditional role as a passive recipient of service to an active, self-determining person who cooperates with the worker more and more consciously and deliberately in the helping process.

The literature on community organization has given limited consideration to using the contract for reaching a working agreement between the worker and the client. On the contrary, goals and roles have usually been analyzed from the perspective of the worker.[11]

In group work, Schwartz has stressed that the establishment of a "working agreement" is a fundamental task of the worker. According to his formulation, the rules and boundaries within which worker and group members operate determine their working contract and influence their functions.[12] The contract essentially corroborates the convergence of the worker's and the client's tasks and "provides the framework for the work that follows, and for understanding when the work is in process, when it is being evaded, and when it is finished." [13] Other writers on group work concur with Klein that the contract is "an agreement about expectations of the reciprocal roles of the worker, the members, and the sanctioning agency." [14]

Thus the contract has received some attention in social work, but its elaboration has remained at a limited and simplistic level. In general, theorists have tended to equate it with the working agreement that concludes the initial, exploratory phase of social work intervention. Similarly, writing from a psychoanalytic perspective, Menninger has argued that the contract can be used to clarify the mutual expectations of patient and therapist, reach agreement about appropriate expectations, and spell out the conditions of their cooperation.[15]

The underlying thesis of this article is

that the contract has potential value as an ongoing, integral part of the total process of intervention. Further elaborated in theory and deliberately applied to practice, the contract can crystallize and exploit to the maximum degree the process and substance of the work in which practitioner and client engage. The use of a contract can help facilitate worker-client interaction, establish mutual concerns, clarify the purposes and conditions of giving and receiving service, delineate roles and tasks, order priorities, allocate time constructively for attaining goals, and assess progress on an ongoing basis.

THE CONTRACT DEFINED

Although it is a much-talked-about term among practitioners, the contract has not been clearly defined in social work. The legal profession has attempted to define it since the contract constitutes the basic framework for a substantial portion of legal practice. Although the diversity of elements and perspectives inherent in the concept has prevented the devising of an entirely satisfactory or universally accepted legal definition, one that is widely quoted is the following: "A contract is a promise, or set of promises, for breach of which the law gives a remedy, or the performance of which the law in some way recognizes as a duty." [16] Except for the idea that the contract is a legally enforceable agreement, the elements in this definition are pertinent to social work, especially the notions of mutual promise and duty between the contracting parties.

Webster's *Third New International Dictionary* defines contract as a "covenant," a "compact," or "an agreement between two or more persons to do or forbear something." These words suggest mutuality, participation, and action.

For the purposes of social work, the contract may be defined as *the explicit agreement between the worker and the client concerning the target problems, the goals, and the strategies of social work intervention, and the roles and tasks of the participants.* Its major features are mutual agreement, differential participation in the intervention process, reciprocal accountability, and explicitness. In practice these features are closely interrelated.

MUTUAL AGREEMENT

Mutual agreement between worker and client concerning the nature and course of interaction is an essential component of practice. Many writers agree that mutuality must be established at the outset and maintained throughout contact.[17] Agreed-upon goals, roles, and tasks are fundamental in determining the direction, quality, and content of intervention.

Research studies and clinical reports substantiate the fact that difficulties and frustrations result from a lack of agreement between client and worker or from a clash in their perspectives.[18] Worker and client may be operating under different assumptions—especially if varying expectations were not adequately discussed—and thus may not always have the same perception of what constitutes help or treatment.

Practitioners often find it difficult to establish mutuality in the crucial areas of goals and methods. Some resort to a double agenda, in which the worker formulates for himself a set of goals that is different from the one he shares with the client. Greenhill reports that he used to set up therapeutic contracts with families that included agreement to work together in relation to a child's problems. Covertly, however, he would intend to work with the entire family's problems, a plan he divulged to family members only after they became involved in treatment.[19] Greenhill was referring to experiences of his early years in family therapy, but seasoned practitioners sometimes superimpose their own goals on those of clients. Beall warns of the dangers of a "corrupt contract," when the client's stated goals conceal implicit and opposing ones. Operating with such a contract in a clinical setting can reinforce neurotic aims rather than promote therapeutic change.[20]

Deliberately considering the contract in each situation can help reduce clashes in perspectives, clarify vague or confusing expectations, and enhance the possibility of meaningful cooperation in working toward realistic, mutually agreed-upon goals. Client and worker must share their understanding of assistance sought and to be given. Without this, the concept of mutuality is hollow. Furthermore, exploring and spelling out mutual expectations can help client and worker stay attuned to the reality of the current situation and can reduce the tendency toward regressive transference and countertransference.[21]

As Schubert notes, the contract is useful at an early stage for formulating certain basic understandings in order to determine whether the client has come to the appropriate agency, whether the service needed can be offered, who is going to give it, what if any are the conditions for providing the service, whether any eligibility requirements are to be met, what fees if any will be charged, and what other persons may be involved.[22] Client-worker agreement about these important aspects can be a powerful force in mobilizing energies for a common cause.

In group work, Garvin describes research showing that agreement between the worker and the group member on their expectations of each other is positively correlated with the worker's performance and with progress in group problem-solving.[23] Similarly, Brown's intensive investigation of early group sessions reveals that developing mutual expectations as early as possible is significantly related to later group functioning and member satisfaction.[24] The findings of studies of small groups support these results. They indicate that members' agreement about a group's goals and means of achieving goals leads to improved motivation and functioning.[25]

In community organization, the contract might be applied, for example, when worker and clients are preparing to negotiate and bargain with their change target. It is essential that group and worker agree on proposed demands, lines of attack and defense, potential concessions, allocation of roles, and choice of strategies.[26] Discussing and adopting an explicit contract that establishes consensus on these points could clarify planning and give the participants a sense of solidarity.

DIFFERENTIAL PARTICIPATION

Practice theory has focused primarily on the worker's functions and responsibilities, devoting limited attention to the client's role and tasks. The respective contributions of client and worker to social work intervention have not been clear, especially with regard to the client's perception of the worker's role.

The concept of the contract not only emphasizes the importance of *joint* participation in the common enterprise of intervention, but also highlights the *differential* participation of client and worker. As Grosser points out:

> A view of worker and client as having different but equal roles is not simply a theoretical concept; it is a practical prerequisite to operationalizing such innovations as worker partisanship and client participation.[27]

The worker has a major responsibility to delineate with the clients the unique aspects of their participation at each phase of the process. The contract is a tool for such delineation, and for both client and worker it is an ongoing reminder of their collaborative relationship and different responsibilities.

Efforts have been made recently to differentiate between tasks and roles of clients and workers. Reid formulates the worker's primary roles as follows: to define with the client the most effective course of action in resolving the problem and to direct his intervention toward helping the client achieve his necessary tasks.[28]

Vattano speaks of the "power-to-the-people movement" as a challenge to traditional practice through its emphasis on self-help groups. Members of the groups provide direct services to each other, while

social workers function as peers, catalysts, researchers, or theory builders.[29]

Zweig depicts the role of the legislative ombudsman, in which the worker is a bridge between the client and his elected representative. The worker may motivate the applicant who initially is seeking help with his own needs to deal with policies affecting him. The client then becomes an activist rather than a target for intervention. As an administrative ombudsman, the worker expedites the bureaucratic processes involved in service delivery and guides the client or consumer through them.[30]

Studt proposes a basic framework for social work practice that incorporates the following features: (1) The client is the "primary worker in task accomplishment" and carries the major responsibility. (2) The social worker has a secondary responsibility "to provide the conditions necessary for the client's work on his task." (3) No one but the client can perform the tasks that his own life-stage and specific situation require.[31]

Implementation of the contract is founded on the belief that the client ultimately must exercise his right to self-determination. When the client assumes the responsibility for choosing among alternatives and using his own skills and resources to deal with his agreed-upon tasks, this enhances his motivation, investment, and self-esteem. The client's meaningful participation in making decisions and formulating the contract is based on the recognition that people are spontaneously active, seeking, and striving beings. The insights of ego psychology highlight the fact that the active, seeking person who carries out his commitments and who takes responsibility for his actions experiences a sense of achievement and competence in performing his role. In the process of developing the contract, the worker can discover ways to enhance the client's sense of identity and independence by offering opportunities for choice, self-determination, and self-mastery.

The possibilities inherent in this approach are increasingly evident as social workers move away from the traditional view of service planned for and provided to the client by a worker who is more knowledgeable, objective, or expert. For example, involuntary clients in a correctional setting were able to engage in meaningful decision-making once the opportunity was offered and stimulated.[32] In a child care agency an innovative focus on decision-making was constructive, time saving, and advantageous to adoptive applicants and children awaiting placement. Applicants were given the responsibility for deciding, on the basis of photographs shown them early in the adoption process, which child they wished to adopt—a decision traditionally made by the worker at the end of the evaluation process.[33]

RECIPROCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The client and the worker are accountable to each other in various ways, each having an ongoing responsibility to fulfill agreed-upon tasks and work toward agreed-upon goals. The contract can help make both parties as aware as possible of their reciprocal obligations.

The client's responsibility must be emphasized. Insufficient attention to it may partially account for the limited involvement of some clients in the helping process or their withdrawal from it. In child welfare settings, this lack may help explain parents' psychological abandonment of placed children. A contractual alliance with parents of emotionally disturbed children in residential treatment would clarify their accountability, bring into sharp focus their role in treatment, and make the concept of a family-centered program more dynamic.

Beck points out that "professionals tend to be accountable to other professionals rather than to the consumers of their services." [34] In social work, accountability has typically been related to the worker's role as agency representative and to the agency's mandate from the community. It has been stressed that being within an agency complicates the worker's efforts to be account-

able to the client. But this view is changing. Patti and Resnick argue that, although organizational expectations realistically constrain workers, "the professional can work within an agency and retain his primary commitment to client welfare." [35]

The increased responsiveness to clients that is inherent in the use of a contract helps shift the worker's sanction away from the community toward the client. This is especially evident in situations of advocacy, in which a worker's engagement by the client system is established through a contractual alliance featuring mutual accountability.

EXPLICITNESS

Explicitness is the quality of being specific, clear, and open. Although its importance is obvious, the degree to which it is implemented in practice is debatable. Frequent double agendas, implicit or covert contracts, and discrepant client-worker expectations have been mentioned. Often in casework practice the client sees one problem or target of intervention, while the worker sees another—usually related to a subtle or underlying difficulty. The client is interested in obtaining tangible help with an immediate need but "the caseworker doggedly pursues a different agenda, namely one of trying to get the client to see the 'real' problem underneath it all." [36]

The contract offers an opportunity to spell out as openly as possible the conditions, expectations, and responsibilities inherent in the planned interaction. Therefore a fundamental task of the worker is to clarify contractual expectations and obligations. Research on brief treatment has corroborated the value of formulating explicit and specific goals.[37] To the traditional exhortation to "start where the client is" might be added: "and let him know where you are, and where you are going." An explicit contract can help give the client more ethical protection than is possible through unspoken or covert contracts.

The client must be explicit as well as the worker. Emphasis on explicitness in contract formulation would actively engage the client's cognitive functions and resources—and such engagement has proved valuable in crisis intervention. In addition, the worker would be more likely to be continually "tuned in" to the needs that the client feels. In his formulation of task-centered casework, Reid suggests requiring "that the client himself explicitly acknowledge the problem and express a willingness to work on it." [38] The rationale is derived from evidence that in social work practice the client's perception of his situation is more important than the worker's view of the problem.

APPLICATION TO PRACTICE

Little experimentation with the contract has been reported in social work practice. At present, its formal use appears to be atypical or innovative rather than regularly incorporated in practice.

Child welfare workers have used a written contract to delineate mutual responsibilities between agency and foster or adoptive parents. However, no published account of their experiences is available.

In a mental health setting oriented toward transactional analysis, the concept has been used with patients briefly hospitalized following a crisis. The initial interview was focused on establishing "a clear verbal contract" that outlined specific problem areas, appropriate goals, and methods of treatment. The contract alleviated

> . . . many of the fears of the patient concerning "strange" things that might happen to him on a mental health unit. The patient knows exactly the nature of the therapeutic contract and realizes that he will have an important role to play in determining the course of his treatment.[39]

A family agency serving an upper-middle-class community reports successful experiences with the written contract as an integral tool in treatment. Goals and tasks of participants, schedules for contacts, fees and methods of payment, options for renegotiation, and other pertinent factors are spelled out. The agency has noted a

clearer understanding of treatment goals by client and worker, wiser use of time, and greater awareness of time limits. There was also a growing realization that the contract could be used in setting boundaries for the treatment relationship.[40]

The written contract has considerable merit with clients requesting help with interpersonal problems. Whether it can be validly adapted to others needs further testing.

FLEXIBILITY

To be a truly dynamic tool, the contract should be used flexibly. If either the worker or the client rigidly adhere to its conditions—which they may tend to do with a written contract—this limits its usefulness, especially when the client's or the worker's perception of the situation changes. The binding restrictions and penalties of legal contracts would be inapplicable to social work and would constrain the creativity and spontaneity of both client and worker.

To guard against rigidity, there should be provisions for reformulation or renegotiation by mutual consent as circumstances change, problems are resolved, or the focus of intervention alters. Changes in the contract should be based on open discussion by all parties and should not be subverted by client, worker, or agency. Emphasis should remain on the client's perceived need rather than on the worker's interpretation. When a short-term contract expires, a client wishing further help over a protracted period could ask to negotiate a new one.

Questions may be raised in connection with flexibility. How meaningful is a contract if its breach does not incur some form of punishment, loss, or suffering? Will contract modifications be discussed so frequently that the real issue of working on the problem is delayed or avoided? Will the contract become the goal of client-worker interaction rather than the means of attaining the client's goals? These are potential problems to explore.

As social workers formulate contracts more actively and deliberately, they should also consider the legal ramifications. In our society a contractual agreement may be legally binding even when it is not written. Will partial or total failure to fulfill its terms therefore render the practitioner or agency subject to law suits or malpractice claims?

It is evident that much more must be done in exploring the use of the contract, putting it into operation, and developing principles of action applicable to different client populations in diverse settings. Implementation must take into account the client's characteristics, capacities, and motivation. For example, using the contract with children or with involuntary clients may require special modifications of techniques and procedures.

In effect, the contract can be more or less complex, depending on how ready and able the client is to engage in formulating and utilizing it. In many situations, the client's social, physical, or psychological characteristics limit his ability to formulate an explicit contractual agreement. It is important to experiment with use of the contract to test its validity, identify its limitations, and derive specific operational guidelines.

POTENTIAL OF THE CONTRACT

The contract can contribute significantly to the positive outcome of social work services. In particular, it can bring focus and meaning to inherent values and principles implicit in social work practice and make the contracting parties more aware of them. If the worker has conviction about the contract and implements it fully, he can help the client participate more actively in dealing with his own situation. In so doing, he can affirm the client's preeminent role in social work intervention.

The contract has the potential to serve as an active instrument for engaging worker and client in meaningful and productive interaction for the following reasons:

- It is derived from their shared expe-

rience in exploring a situation and reaching agreement on goals and tasks.

- It gives both practitioner and client a sense of immediate involvement and meaningful participation and signifies their mutual commitment and readiness to assume responsibility.
- It provides a base line for periodically reviewing accomplishments, assessing progress, and examining the conditions of agreement.

At its present stage, the contract does not offer specific propositions and principles of action for use with different types of consumers of social services. But there is sufficient evidence from clinical practice and from research on crisis intervention, brief treatment, and client discontinuance to suggest that the use of some form of contract in social work merits systematic experiment and research in various settings, with varying periods of service, and with clients having different characteristics and problems.

This article aims to contribute to developing cumulative theory for practice in this important area. Analysis of practice experiences and research findings could refine the concept further, formulate its specific components and operational guidelines, validate its incorporation into the helping process, and explore its efficacy in enhancing the client's perception and use of social services.

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THE LOSS OF A LANGUAGE THAT I NEVER HAD: A STORY ABOUT LINGUICIDE

By José Sisneros, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work

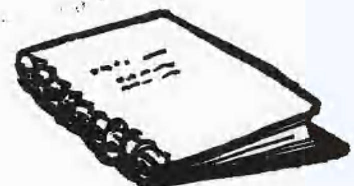
The loss of a language is a complicated process. When the loss occurs because of linguicide, it is profound. This arrative talks about linguicide as a form of cultural genocide, and the author's experience with losing the Spanish anguage. The importance of keeping the language alive is discussed, and the author offers ideas as to how social vork students should be encouraged and provided with experiences where they could learn or re-learn the Spanish anguage.

It is 2:05 pm in this affluent city located against the mountains in Colorado. The sky is clear but it is chilly. I enter McDonalds; the restaurant is almost empty. The smell of french fries permeates the air. I see only one man; who spends a moment looking at me and then continues eating his hamburger. There is no one at the counter; I hear several conversations that seem to be going on at one time, all in Spanish, coming from the kitchen. I make an immediate assumption that they are mainly Mejicanos/as (Latinos/as from Mexico)*. When I first hear the words in Spanish, before the sounds change to understand the content, they sound like music. It is as though listening to an Italian opera; I don't understand the words but the music is beautiful and creates images in my mind. This "opera moment" lasts only a few seconds and then I begin to understand the words. A young Mejicana comes to the counter to take my order. I order in Spanish and once she hears my words, she begins speaking in Spanish. I imagine that she is laughing at me because of my broken Spanish.

I begin to wonder why I am embarrassed about my Spanish fluency. I look out of the window and see two Mejicanos picking up the trash in the parking lot. I remember the several "dirty looks" that were thrown at me in a community meeting when I said that the Mejicanos/as were the new servant class for this community. Despite the strong reaction to my statement, I stand by it. One would have to be in strong denial or completely naïve not to see the Mejicanos/as being the servants – they clean the homes, work in the fast food restaurants, work in the kitchens of major restaurants, serve as the janitors. The Mejicano/a servant class is not isolated to this community; it occurs in many communities across the United States. Despite the public outcry about immigration, we don't hesitate to use their labor and to recognize the market value of this population. It is estimated that in the United States, Latinos/as have 350 billion dollars in purchasing power.

The number of Mejicanos/as has increased in this community to about 10% of the population, but there is general agreement that this may be a low estimate. Besides providing the labor, they are introducing the Spanish language to the community. Like in McDonalds, you can hear Spanish spoken in stores, restaurants, in most parts of the community. I think that when a new language is

* The term latino/a is an umbrella term which is used to describe the different groups from Latin America who now live in the United States. The term Mexicano/a means that the population are from Mexico.



introduced into a community, it should be a vibrant experience. But historically the United States has not been fond of languages other than English. I wonder how the community will accept the Mejicanos/as. Will they be able to keep the language and teach it to their children, or will it be lost?

I make some notes of my thoughts in the small 5 by 3 inch notebook that I carry with me at all times in case an idea comes to me. I have filled up many of these notebooks on daily observations, a habit I initiated when I began my dissertation, a grounded theory study of the Latino/a family. One of the principles of grounded theory is the idea that "all is data," so, as we live our everyday lives, many important things occur that could be considered data. I find documenting the day-to-day experiences keeps me alert and helps me read the world.

As I write my thoughts in my small notebook, I reflect on my dissertation. I defended in August and it was one of the best days of my life. I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to complete the process, but it was by no means easy. My experience was profound. In gathering my data, I interviewed Mejicanos/as from Colorado and New Mexico and did participant observation in New Mexico. The intensity occurred from the power of the stories of many participants. The stories of poverty, racism, and ethnicism were overwhelming, and at times I would cry. All of the participants talked about the importance of the Spanish language and their concern about the loss of the language in their families.

I notice the time and begin walking home. In the hour that I spent in the restaurant the temperature has dropped. My apartment is about a ten-minute walk, and I walk briskly, looking at the mountains, which are spacious. I remain in deep thought and actually walk past my apartment until I come back to reality, retrace my steps, and as I enter my apartment, turn on the lights. The apartment is almost dark since the sun is now gone, the sky is white, and it looks as if it might snow. I immediately turn on the computer and then go into the kitchen and boil some water so I can make a cup of instant coffee. I turn on the stereo and put in a disc of Roberto Griego, a well-known singer from New Mexico whose music is distinctively Mejicano/a New Mexico. I was introduced to his music during the dissertation process. The first song on the disc is called "un pobre nomas," a story about a poor man who wants to marry the woman he loves even though she has the attentions of another man who has money. I sit down, take a sip of my coffee, and begin with four magic words, "Once upon a time." By writing this, a cessation of present time occurs and I enter another time (Maestas & Anaya, 1980).

"Once upon a time" in New Mexico, Spanish was a major language along with the languages of the Native Americans. In 1848 after Mexico lost the war, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed. The spirit of the treaty was that the culture of the residents would not be disturbed. However, this did not occur and a process of cultural genocide began. Part of the cultural genocide was the attempt to get rid of the Spanish language. This is called linguicide, not a common word but a powerful concept. It comes from the human rights literature and is one part of the cultural genocide, which is defined as "Ideologies, structures, and practices that are used to legitimate, effectuate, and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources between groups that are defined on the basis of race/ethnicity or language" (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1995, p. 105).

Linguicide is important because the importance of language in any group of people is profound. Language is a code of communication, but it is more; it is the basis of human existence as social reality. The human condition is grounded in belonging to a particular linguistic community (Valdes, 1998). As Sabine Ulibarri, a writer, a poet, a man of letters stated:

"In the beginning was the word and the word was made flesh. It was in the beginning and it is so today. The language, the word, carries within it the history, the culture, the tradition, the very life of a people, the flesh. Language is people. We cannot even conceive of a people without a language, or a language without its people. The two are one and the same. To know one is to know the other." (Quoted in Sisneros, 2000, p. 103).

The enduring concern of this story is the loss of the Spanish language or, more specifically, the taking away of a language by the process of cultural genocide. Language is also tied to identity construction (Molinero-Mar, 2000). As one of the participants in my dissertation research stated, "If we don't preserve Spanish to some degree, we will be in trouble in terms of cultural identity" (Sisneros, 2000, p.103).

My own experience with linguicide is told within the geographic reference of southern Colorado and northern New Mexico. This is important because the experiences with the Spanish language vary in different geographic locations. My story begins in northern New Mexico in the early 1940's where my parents met. They lived in two small villages located next to each other. They were raised in large families (my father was one of 20 siblings; my mother was one of 10 children) and were rural poor. They moved to southern Colorado after my father returned from overseas after serving in World War II. After their marriage they moved to southern Colorado in order to work in the fields, which they did for a period of years until my father found employment in a steel mill where he remained until he retired. Both of my parents grew up speaking only Spanish. My father was introduced to English when he went to the military; my mother learned English when they moved to southern Colorado where English was already the main language in the community.

My first world, my first geographic reference (Freire, 1997), was a small barrio located on a hill next to an industrial plant where rock wool was manufactured. It was also located next to the railroad tracks. My mother would at times feed the hobos who would come to our door looking for food. Our home had four rooms, with running water but no indoor bathroom. The neighborhood consisted of people who migrated from New Mexico plus some Italian immigrants. I remember playing outside and smelling fresh bread that my Italian neighbors made. When I was nine years old, we bought a parcel of land and moved to the country. My father, my older sister and I, along with some of my father's brothers, built our home. It took several years to complete, working everyday after work and school, including weekends. The house was built with no blueprints, and when the home was finished it looked uneven. We made the roof of aluminum and when it would rain we could not hear each other speak. I remained in this geographic reference until I left home at 18.

I attended Catholic schools in both worlds. The schools were located in barrios and English was the main language. Catholic nuns staffed the schools and Catholic values were taught. Although no signs or rules stated that we should not speak Spanish, we just knew it was not allowed. Our Mexican names were changed to the English translation; my name was Joe, not José, and my friend's name was Mike, not Miguel. We knew that when

new students came to school who were monolingual Spanish, that they were from Mexico and probably extremely poor. The Spanish language was seen as tied to poverty. One of my dissertation research participants stated:

"When I was in grade school my brother and I were a year and a half apart in age. He might have been in kindergarten, and I was not yet in school. I remember us making a conscious decision not to sound like dumb Mexicans." (Sisneros, 2000, p. 97).

The Spanish language was associated with being a dumb Mexican; in contrast, English meant being a smart White.

During those elementary years, our family would make visits to New Mexico to visit my grandmother who lived on a *rancho* (small ranch) near several small villages in northern New Mexico. My grandfather died before I was born (I was named after him, including my middle name). She lived with one of my uncles who was unmarried and remained on the ranch. To make these visits, we would get up at midnight, pack our 1953 blue and white Chevrolet, and begin the journey, usually arriving around daybreak. As soon as we would enter the car, the children would fall asleep. We would sleep until we were close to the rancho, then my mother would wake us up. We had to drive several miles over rough dirt roads with large gates that needed to be opened, and this was my job. My grandmother, an impressive woman in her seventies with long white hair that fell to her waist, would be waiting for us. We would get out of the car and stand in line. My parents went first to greet her and then the children would kneel before her and she would bless each of us by making the sign of the cross on our foreheads. Her home was made of stones and kept together by adobe; there was no running water or electricity.

Kerosene lamps lighted the house at night

as we sat around the table and talked. As I remember, there were three different variations of English-Spanish conversations: one in Spanish by the adults; one in English among the children; and one in English between the adults and children. The exception to this was my grandmother who never learned to speak English, although I think she understood it because we would talk to her in English and she would respond in Spanish. Despite the variations, one experience remained a pure Spanish language experience, the nightly saying of the rosary. Every night after dark, the family would gather around a small home altar that had a cross, a statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and many candles – votives in small jars. Before the rosary was said, all the candles were lit and the kerosene lamps in the rest of the house were turned off. We would all kneel down in front of the altar with our individual rosaries. For a moment, time stopped. Then my grandmother would start with the words, "Santa Maria, Madre Dios...." and then the rest of us would answer in perfect cadence. It was as if we had rehearsed. This experience always remained in Spanish; there was not even a suggestion of saying the rosary in English. In the rosary experience, the language was not negotiated. It was such an important event that none of the children would even dare to misbehave.

My first memories were of English, not Spanish. By the time I was born I had already lost the Spanish language. The adults would speak Spanish to each other but not to the children. It may have been that they knew that if the children were to succeed,

that they would have to know English. There was also a strong external pressure that the Spanish language should not be spoken in public. What was confusing was an expectation that we should know the language. It was as if it should be natural, that just because of the biology, we should have the language. When we made attempts to learn the language, they would laugh at us. This remembrance is not comfortable; it weakened our attempts and it tied the language to shame. When I asked my parents about this, they stated that they did not mean to tie it to shame; it was just that our attempts were humorous. One of my dissertation participants felt that is a form of internalized oppression. It may also have been that we were hypersensitive because of how the Spanish language was seen in society. We were in an impossible bind: Spanish was not spoken at schools or in public, it was spoken at home but not to the children, but we were expected to know the language. The "not knowing" was given symbolic meaning, that it was tied to essence and identity.

In high school I transferred to a public school where English was spoken everywhere for everything. My parents continued to speak Spanish to each other and to continue the practice of laughing at our Spanish. I was becoming involved in marginalized activities and spent as much time out of school as in school. My friends and I would make up Spanish words such as the word "scagz" to refer to ourselves. It was a derogatory term and self-defeating. There were clear separations of groups in high school; the Latinos/as hung around with Latinos/as and the Whites would hang around with Whites. I took Spanish in high school and received a D; none of my friends did well in Spanish class. The Latino/a kids were made fun of by the Whites for taking Spanish!

After high school I tried to find work in the steel mill but was not accepted because of my poor eyesight. To this day I realize that it was probably the best rejection that ever happened to me. It kept me out of the cycle of factory work. I entered the local college at the time when the consciousness raising of groups of color was taking hold. The Chicano movement was in force and the Spanish language now was given new life. It was tied to our identity and Latinos/as were now encouraged to speak the Spanish language as a way to counter the cultural genocide.

The "not knowing" became even more important because it became a point of reference of who was Latino/a and who was not. It was again an essence point. One of the dissertation participants stated, "My parents asked me how I could be involved in the Chicano movement if I did not speak Spanish" (Sisneros, 2000, p. 98). Another participant who did not learn the Spanish language and started taking Spanish classes was disappointed after she was told by her father, "*!Que verguenza!* (what a shame) that a Mexican has to take Spanish classes" (Sisneros, 2000, p. 98). Another of my participants took Spanish in college, but she received a D (Sisneros, 2000).

After undergraduate school, I was drafted into the military service. The Vietnam War was coming to an end, but I was high on the lottery list. I had to present a copy of my birth certificate, which clearly stated that my name was José. I had never really seen my birth certificate so as I entered the military I reclaimed my name and began signing all my documents as José. What I didn't realize was that the name would also be a racial marker, and I was viciously made fun of because of it. In basic training, the drill sergeants would call me Mexican. In my assignment, which was a mental hygiene clinic, the professional social workers, psychologists, and psychiatrists also delighted in telling Mexican jokes. They said these were only jokes, not realizing the power of negative words.

I went to a graduate school of social work in an area close to Mexico where some of

the Latino/a students were products of different geographies and spoke Spanish fluently. They had not lost the language like I had; they were bilingual and couldn't understand how Latinos/as could not speak Spanish fluently. This is an important point since Latinos/as are a heterogeneous population and some of the differences among Latinos/as are reflected in different geographical references. The experience of Latinos/as in New Mexico is different in many ways because of the different history of living in the United States since the fifteenth century. For many years Latinos/as in New Mexico were isolated from Mexico and unique cultural patterns developed (Roberts & Roberts, 1986). This included the experience with the Spanish language that I described earlier in the paper. The Latinos/as whom I encountered in graduate school were from the border communities on the Mexican border. In this geographical reference, the closeness to Mexico is such that there is a constant replenishing of the Spanish language. These two different references collided and Latinos/as from Colorado were labeled as not being fully Latino/a because we were not fluent. The "not knowing" was again applied. How could one be Latino/a if one does not speak Spanish?

After graduate school I began a twenty-year career working in community mental health centers. I was expected, as many Latinos/as are when they work in agencies, to be an "essence expert." What I mean by the use of this concept is that when an institution or agency hires a Latino/a there is an assumption that that person is an expert on Latino/a life and therefore is fluent in Spanish. This assumption is based on the concept of essentialization, which is the belief that there is a monolithic experience, in this case, that of Latino/a. It is as if one voice speaks for all (Harris, 1995). This assumption was reinforced in the social science literature that cultural groups are homogeneous (Buriel, 1984). I was made an essence expert the day I walked into my first job after graduate school. Although this was an unfair assumption and responsibility, I accepted the role since I was socialized in undergraduate and graduate school that Latinos/as had one essence. I think that many times when I gave workshops, I reinforced stereotypes about Latinos/as.

One position that I held for four years was as clinical director of a Latino/a service agency whose clients were about 98% Latinos/as. In this agency the Latino/a "opera moments" were many. The Spanish language was spoken everywhere – in the waiting room Latino/a families were speaking Spanish and the receptionist was speaking Spanish on the phone. The culture was vibrant. Every morning we would anxiously await the "burrito lady." When she came into the building, a phone tree started; meetings would stop as we went down to the waiting room to buy a burrito.

The dilemma was that a professional Spanish speaking staff was difficult to find. Many of the applicants were Whites that had the experience of traveling to Latin American counties and were able to immerse in the Spanish language. Many of the Latino/a applicants did not have the Spanish language. A friend of mine, a Latina who also lived through linguicide and understands some of the Spanish language but is unable to speak it fluently, had a job interview with another Latino/a agency that provided mental health services. The four people interviewing her were white and all were fluent in Spanish, and she, a Latina, did not know the language. She did not get the job. She laughed as she told this story, but it is a sad story. The problem with this scenario is that by not hiring a Latina, the agency is missing a presence of Latinos/as. In my experience, many Latino/a clients want to work with another Latinos/as. The other dilemma is that in helping agencies, knowing the Spanish language is a prize. To speak Spanish could give someone a boost in finding employment. But because of the linguicide,

many Latinos/as are not getting that prize of knowing the Spanish language.

I am now 51 years old, an assistant professor at a major university in a school of social work. I also consider myself to be a Latino scholar. I am well read in Latino/a theory, and have conducted a Latino/a dissertation. The Spanish language is more important to me now than ever before. Since I am the only Latino professor, many of the Latino/a students seek me out. I see the same pattern continuing: young Latinos/as who are very much into the culture but don't know the language. I see the same lack of confidence. The stories are different, but it is clear that we have let another generation of non-Spanish speakers emerge. I also have white students approach me, asking how they can learn to speak Spanish without going to a four-year program, and I also get many calls from community agencies seeking Spanish speakers.

It strikes me that we, at least in this school and perhaps many other schools, don't have a structure to deal with this issue. How realistic is it that the students have the time, energy, and money to complete a four-year college program? Few have the resources to travel to Latin America. Even though it is generally agreed that immersion is the best way to learn another language, I submit that linguicide is a major oppressive tool that needs to be addressed. I also submit that from an ethical standpoint, and out of human dignity, we should be able to speak to Latinos/as in their native language. One of the reasons that I have spent a career in social work is my attempt to help eliminate oppression. I suggest that we could provide "small immersion experiences" for the students.

Some of the ways that I keep the Spanish language alive is to immerse myself in Univision (Spanish speaking television network). I asked a Latina who has been in this country for one year how she became fluent in English so quickly. She said television. This was only one of many experiences that helped her become fluent, but it is a powerful experience. I also read Spanish texts; currently, I am reading *cuentos* (stories) from the southwest in Spanish. I also speak it as much as possible. I find that if I don't do this, I lose it. Using this as a background, I am currently working with a student who has a passive knowledge that she acquired from college classes and some travel into Latin America. I structured some experiences so that she could become more fluent. As part of her assignment, she is to complete a Spanish course that has tapes and a book. She is also to listen to Univision for two hours a week and take notes. And she is also to understand the phrases in the book *Spanish for Social Workers*. This little book is out of print, but it is a gem (Portuondo & Singer, 1981).

This is one example of how we could structure some experiences, but I am sure that there are many other ways that this can be accomplished. I also suggest that we seek out Latinos/as who have a passive understanding, and then we create a program to help the students learn the language. When I brought up this idea in our curriculum committee, the faculty was excited and verbalized a realization of the importance of helping the students learn the Spanish language. In the fall, I will present a proposal on some ways that this may be accomplished. If we address this issue, we could increase the presence of Latinos/as and others in helping agencies that serve Spanish-speaking clients. My point is that we could provide a program that consists of structures and experiences to help our students understand the Spanish language and be more prepared to serve the increasing number of Spanish speakers coming from Latin America.

I will pause here, but the story is not ended. I will write a follow up article one year from now and continue the story.

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In Memory Of Peter Biehl

Transforming Private Issues Into Social Development: The Role of a Professional Journal

By Sonia Leib Abels, Paul Abels, Peter Biehl & Linda Biehl

Peter Biehl died March 31, 2002 in CA at the age of 59. Peter and Linda's daughter Amy was killed by four youth as she worked in outh Africa, to aid in securing social justice. Her death, and its meaning, led Linda and Peter to reconstruct their lives to carry out their aughter's mission. Initially, they established the Amy Biehl Foundation in La Quinta, California, where they were living, and then in ape Town, South Africa. Together they built a legacy of social, economic, and recreation institutions under the auspices of South fricans, and their sculpted imprint of justice and forgiveness affected many. As Nobel Prize winner Desmond Tutu said, "What was so emarkable was not only that they forgave the killers of their daughter, but they went so far as to rehabilitate them."

In the summer of 1998, The Biehls, Paul and I, presented a version of the paper published here at the International Conference of ocial Development in South Africa. As part of the Biehl's presentation, they welcomed one of the young men who had killed their aughter. Peter initiated the original contact with the journal. He wanted his daughter's story told, as a means to create social change n South Africa, and looked to ***Reflections*** *as one vehicle among many for this to occur. This paper honors his work and his memory.*

Linda and Peter Biehl

There is a dynamic interaction and interdependence between despair and struggle of persons as they search for ways to improve social development to meet head on the factors which cause that despair, and give meaning and purpose to action. How are private struggles transformed into recognized and attended to social development concerns? We suggest that social development and transformation are interactive processes. Both may occur when individual transactions take on public significance. Transformation is a metaphor for significant conceptual shifts in human perspectives and social structures. Shifts in perspectives are pliable, neutral concepts; they can move toward evil or toward justice. These shifts, though often enhanced by external forces, are dependent on the power of persons and communities to transform their situations. This internal power is as true for nations as it is for individuals. Framed in the landscape of recent South African experiences, this essay seeks to show and explain how one such shift in perspective emerged from evil, and gave greater meaning to the desire for justice.

Our (Abels) account of the story to be told starts with the origins of ***Reflections***, now in its eighth year. Its creation in the United States, far from the culture and traditions of South Africa, began as a result of the then editors' experience with another nation, Lithuania, a country which had been free from Soviet occupation for one year (1993). We had been asked to help start a School of Social Work in Kaunas, Lithuania, a country whose experiences and culture were different from what we experienced as educators in the United States. Lithuania was obviously different from South Africa, but the people's hope and despair were similar in their quest to become a democratic nation. The desire for transformation was the same.

In professional literature the emphasis on the scientific, on quantitative research, precluded interest in publishing narratives of helping and social change, and its meaning to those helping, as well as those helped. While most narratives in ***Reflections*** have come from social workers and social work educators, those of medical practitioners, lawyers lay people, alternative healers and others have been welcomed within the same set of standards.

When ***Reflections*** published the story of Amy Biehl's work in South Africa and her tragic murder, the editors had no idea that its impact would reach beyond its readership. The narrative, accompanied by commentaries, became a catalyst for change (Fall, 1996). It was partially a narrative of a social development project in South Africa, but at the heart, it illustrated how the project emerged out of a private, tragic, personal event, the death of Amy Biehl, whose work as a volunteer in South Africa continued through the project's social development efforts.

This presentation is a creation of the parents of Amy Biehl, Linda and Peter, who authored the ***Reflections*** narrative that initiated a transformation process by the editors; by the unseen hand and work of Amy; and by the historic events in South Africa. It humbly explores how private troubles/public issues full of loss and discontinuity can be transformed into new structures of meaning, and how attachment allows sense-making of the world, allowing connections with uncommon others in a common cause. Isak Dinesen noted, "All sorrows can be borne if we can put them into a story." ***Reflections***, by publishing the Biehl's narratives, became a vessel for transformation, leading to new opportunities for expanding resources for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) in South Africa. We saw a responsibility, beyond just publication, to assist people to make connections.

It helped us understand the advanced, creative, though controversial thinking of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Amnesty Committee, which supports the idea that private troubles made public have transformative power. It led to an examination of forgiveness, a vital force in South Africa's reconciliation efforts, and to our connecting it to the Biehls' work in their second article for ***Reflections*** on Forgiveness (Fall, 1998). It involved their presence on the CSULB campus and led to the engagement of students and faculty in a discourse about forgiveness; a concept transformed from psychological narrowness, to social, spiritual, political, and educational consciousness. How did it happen?

Peter and Linda requested that ***Reflections'*** editor (Sonia Leib Abels) consider publishing the narrative about the creation of the Amy Biehl Foundation and its purpose to carry out the meaning of their Daughter's life. Amy, killed by four young men in South Africa during a time of searing unrest and upheaval, was a Fulbright scholar—an advocate of human rights who worked to empower women and children in South Africa.

Archbishop Tutu of South Africa

Although the article was accepted, one reviewer raised concern about the Biehls' use of South African township community vernacular, and in general, the issue of ethnic power relations. Following an approach to such concerns, several people were invited to write their comments, and these comments were published along with the narrative. One reactor, Kenneth Lutterman* (National Institute of Health), contacted the Biehls, encouraged them to follow up with U.S.AID, and sent the journal to Tipper Gore (former V.P. Gore's wife) and Donna Shalala (member of President Clinton's Cabinet), who was preparing to visit South Africa. They visited the NGO (Mosaic), partially funded by the Biehl Foundation. The Biehls had earlier connections to U.S. AID through a contact Amy had made with Brian Atwood, and soon developed a new South African foundation with AID support.

In 1998 the Biehls were invited to appear at the Amnesty trial of the four youth that had killed their daughter. They gave their testimony, and congruent with what they believed Amy wanted, did not oppose amnesty. The following is an excerpt from the Biehls' thoughts on testifying before the Amnesty hearings:

"There was no question of our participation in the hearing, Amy had informed us four years earlier that the Truth and Reconciliation Process was a pre-negotiated condition upon which free elections for all South Africans could be granted by the National Party-in power at that time. More importantly, a procedure for granting amnesty in forgiveness of politically directed crimes was essential to the pro-apartheid regime before it could open the ballet boxes to the certainty of Black majority rule. Given this background insight and Amy's passionate efforts to gain free and democratic elections for all of South Africans, we could not ignore the Amnesty Committee. In his statement at the hearings we noted Amy would have embraced your Truth and Reconciliation Process. We are present this morning to honor it and to offer our sincere friendship. We are all here in a sense to consider and value a committed human life which was taken without opportunity for dialogue. When this process is concluded we must link arms and move forward together (*Reflections*. Fall 1998).

The editors believe that the journal, serendipitously, created the potential for transformation. We know that it may have aided in promoting some connections and funding of the NGO through the Biehl foundation. We believe the students and the faculty participation in a presentation by the Biehls on forgiveness, transformed, or created a different discourse on the meaning of forgiveness. We also knew well before the debacle of the Congress and Clinton, the importance of forgiveness as an issue within the helping and social change process. We also knew that the issue had a profound effect upon the students at CSULB—they had never heard anyone talk before about the experience of forgiveness with the Biehl's authenticity and meaning. Not only did the students and faculty participating at the conference gain new understanding and new confusion about the ability to forgive, they carried these ideas into their classes and out to their field experiences. This was the kind of dialogue we had hoped would occur. Some went through their own transformations. Distributing copies of articles from the issue on "Forgiveness," and in particular, the Biehls' article, served to reinforce the process.

Going public with an intense private or personal experience can facilitate transactions in groups, even in entire communities of people. News media with a sound-bite approach can inflame and at times stimulate public transformation; a journal using a narrative

After the presentation: the Chair Person, Sonia Abels, Peter Biehl, Linda Biehl, and Paul Abels

structure can create a broader public identification with a private experience sharing a story by chronicling a process or journey. A number of authors have spoken to the impact that stories have on the lives of persons, and how the stories we have been led to believe in shape our lives and therefore our actions. The way we tell these stories, retell these stories, and modify these stories can influence our view of ourselves. We might say that they could help us remake ourselves.

It is possible that some narratives can move persons in new directions. The Biehls' sharing of their story, and the decision to imagine the narrative that their daughter Amy would have wished them to pursue, not only shaped their lives, but the lives of the young men involved in her death. There are stories, too, of all the people touched in someway by the programs they developed, and by the Journal, ***Reflections***, its editors, and its readers. Reflecting on this potpourri of interaction, one gains a sense of the mystery of transformation and the cosmological forces at work.

With identification, a true conversion or transformation is possible because a connection is made with the once private experience. The deeper and wider the connection, the more pervasive the transformation. Research has indicated that when persons get information only from TV, their views on a particular subject are narrow. In fact, the media's power to control our thinking and formulate the stories we believe in has been blamed for everything from youth crime and the acceptance of murder and mayhem, to the willingness to intervene in saving thousands of lives when the suffering is viewed on TV. What a reflective journal can do is just that: help persons reflect on the narratives they read about. Reflecting gives the people the power to transform themselves. An editor is a powerful person and can control what the reader reads; not necessarily what they "read into" the article. The editor's decision to have reactors to the Biehls' first article was a willingness to extend more power to readers, providing access to people whose ideas might differ from that of the authors. Of course that is exactly what occurred. Some of the commentators questioned the Biehls' motives and actions; some were in wholehearted support. But whatever the position, the reader was invited not to privilege any one position, but to reflect on the ideas expressed and to gain new knowledge. And knowledge is power. The Biehls' willingness to accept the conditions under which their story would be told was in keeping with what Amy would have wanted, and reflected her openness to minimizing others' control over peoples' lives.

A party after the conference in Cape Town. The band instruments were furnished by the Biehls.

One might legitimately wonder whether a professional journal shouldn't just present the "facts." That is what most professional journals do, and in fact, that is a responsible approach when the "facts" are known. By now, most of us are aware that there are very little facts as we think of them in the physical sciences. More often, everything presented is observed by an observer. The adage "what the thinker thinks, the finder will find" helps us realize just how tentative facts might be and how they are created.

The "Narrative is an iconic social representation of moral action, an expression and

preparation, therefore, for the largest such representation – the democratic political community" (Brown, 1998). We believe that a professional journal has responsibility to contribute to social development within a disciplined framework that defines the profession. Narratives are central forms of knowing and communication in the lives of a people. They shape individuals and nations. (Paper conclusion)

Following the original paper presentation, the Biehls spoke about their programs in South Africa and about Amy, and read part of a letter she had sent to the *Cape Times* on June 21, 1993, quoting a poem by Victoria West, a South African poet:

They told their story to the children.
They taught their vows to the children,
That we shall never do to them
What they did to us.

* Kenneth Lutterman , a strong supporter of social work, died last year.

References

• Brown, R. (1998). *Toward A Democratic Science: Scientific Narration and Civic Communication.* Yale, University Press. New Haven

The Amy Biehl Foundation, La Quinta, CA. Memorial donations may be made to the Amy Biehl Foundation c/o Steve Schwartz, 29 Independence Drive, Hillsborough, N. J. 08844

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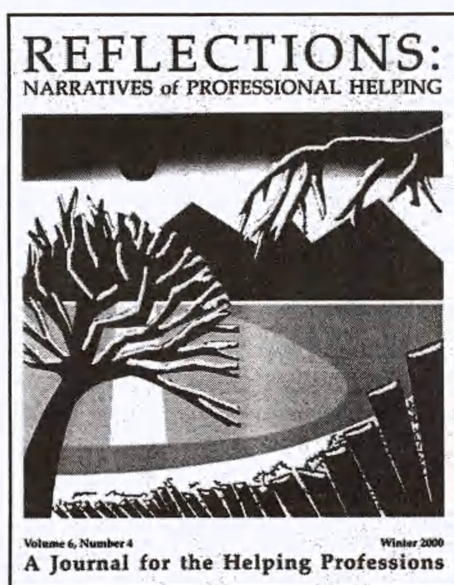

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