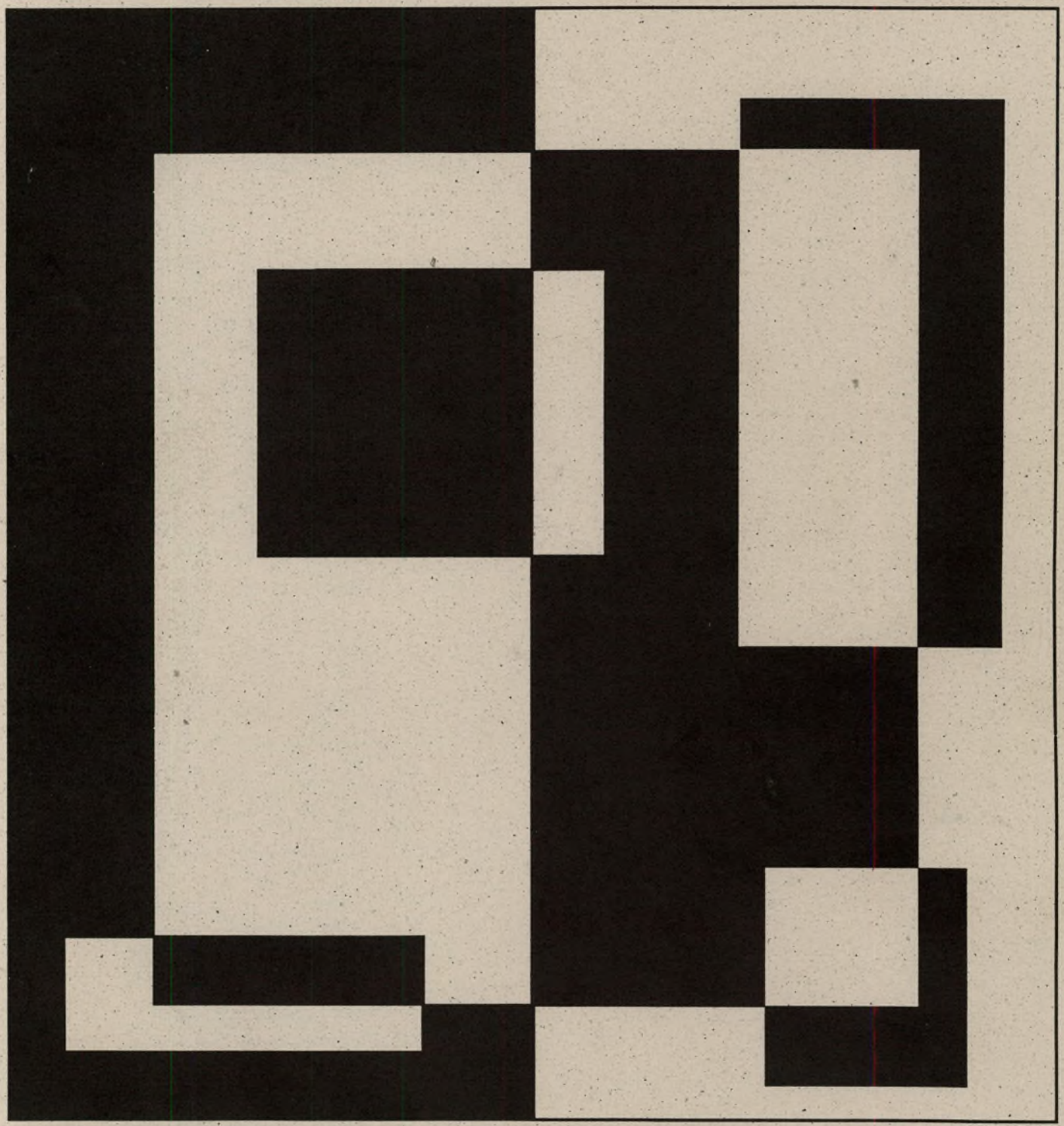
REFLECTIONS:

NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL HELPING



Volume 2, Number 1 Winter 1996

A Journal for the Helping Professions

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REFLECTIONS' purpose is to publish narratives, personal accounts that describe and explain the process of helping others and shaping social change over time. The journal seeks to build a literary tradition and a record of wisdom for critical study and fruitful discovery. It encourages stories that convey a sense of immediacy, portray practice across diverse populations and capture the range and variety of strategies and systems within the helping professions. Priority is given to articles that provide new understanding of practice. The journal publishes stories of professional helpers such as ethicists, psychotherapists, community organizers, case and group workers, policy makers, family and child practitioners, health and mental health care providers; and educators, researchers, and administrators in the helping and academic professions.

REFLECTIONS' central theme is narrative inquiry of professional practice. It publishes personal accounts of professional action designed to aid and support human and social development. The stories have a literary presence, offer new perspectives on practice, and demonstrate the conceit of failure as well as success. The narrator explains the reasons for the action and freely identifies the mistakes made in the practice. The purpose of the narrative is not to demonstrate achievement; rather, it is to capture the experience.

THE NARRATIVE STRUCTURE . A narrative is a story worth telling. Narratives are personal stories that give readers a fresh perspective about the practice of change. Written thematically and/or in a temporal sequence, narratives recount the helping process. Narratives are explored within a contextual frame and supply a rich textual description of the experience: They take into account time, place, action, persons, behavior and interaction. Narratives explain and describe events; results; conflicts; complicating actions; and how, why, and what was done. In narratives the writer evaluates the experience, whether or not there is a resolution. Some narratives end with a coda, that is, a perspective on what occurred.

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1. Authors are expected to use the most recent APA publication format.
2. The manuscript length depends upon the temporal sequence of the event.
3. Include on separate page a brief abstract written in the same style as the narrative.
4. Place identifying information such as name, affiliation, address, phone and fax only on the cover page.
5. Send (3) printed double spaced hard copies of the manuscript to the editor.

Upon acceptance of the article for publication one (1) copy on disk in Rich Text Format (RTF), WP or Microsoft formated for IBM or MAC and one (1) hard copy will be requested.

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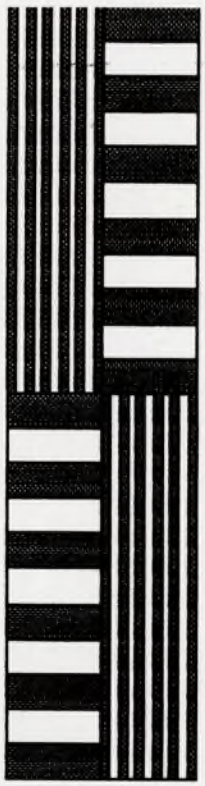
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS, LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA

STORIES FOR THE NEW YEAR:
Second Thoughts

By The Editors



There are some things that don't take any second thoughts, for example a decision not to make any New Years resolutions this year. On the other hand we often run into situations which take second, and third thoughts, and at times haunt us with their potency.

It was Santayana who said that those who forgot the past are bound to repeat it. But what of those who don't know the past, what will be their recompense? Recently, we were faced with a story that will not be forgotten; it has overtaken the thoughts of many New Yorkers, a group that is familiar with, and hardened to an over abundance of tragic stories that daily face that large city (and others as well). A 6 year-oldchild, Elisa, who had, on an earlier occasion, been removed from her family as an abused child, was returned to the mother who had previously abused her. Elisa was born with cocaine in her blood. She was found dead with cigarette burns, broken fingers, and much more. Her mother, a victim of abuse, rehabilitated once, but again a crack addict, believed the child had been taken over by the devil.

Social workers were both on the right and wrong side of the helping process. At school, both the principle and the social worker actively advocated with both the welfare department and with the courts, to no avail. Following one report of possible abuse by an agency, that deals with troubled families, a child welfare worker complained, that she was too busy to deal with Elisa's troubles as she had other emergencies. We don't know what the social workers in the Child Welfare department did. Did a worker visit the home? Was a worker dealing with the situation? In its attempt at a cover up, the welfare department claiming confidentiality, and the law, would not discuss the case. Some facts are clear. We do know that they were informed in advance that the child was in danger, they knew the child previously had been taken from the home because of child abuse. The mother was not fit to raise the child in safety. The child is dead.

In the course of investigation of the case, reporters found an internal memo which showed that the Child Welfare department had been urging case workers to close out two cases for every new case they took. This policy might serve to permit some children to live in danger, and on the other hand, a worker might think twice about whether to open a new case, and risk the agency sanction.

Some might say "it's the same old story." Not quite,

because this story has an odd twist to it that could have turned it into a fairy tale with a happy ending. Prince Charles of Greece had seen Elisa on a visit to her school, and moved by the plight of Elisa, while she was still, alive, had offered to pay for her care and for her schooling. It seems unreal, but true. No, not the same old story, except for the ending. But can we learn from this story? The same newspapers that reported this incident also wrote about how students in survey after survey indicate a lack of knowledge about the history of their country. Does our focus on the future, or the "hear and now," in the jargon of therapy, cause us to ignore our past, our history. It caused us to wonder about what the Welfare Department knows about history. It should have reflected on the data that shows that the child most likely to be sexually abused, is a child who has previously been abused. Of course if the department ignores the past, this story will be repeated, the agency will hide under the protection of confidentiality (a dangerous concept at times) and the law. But it is the child who will pay the price.

We have maintained from our first issue of ***Reflections***, that stories were the narratives of our lives, they shape our lives and help us aim for the type of future we want. We cannot forget our own stories of the past, or the profession's stories of its past. Like the students in school, we are not too up on our history, either. This void may not create problems for us as practitioners, after all, do our clients ask who the famous social workers were, or about the history of the program that provides certain benefits? But remembering can sustain our pride in what we are as a profession. Perhaps we have forgotten our past. It might help to recall the roots that have shaped our professional narrative. It might help us to better understand our commitment and obligation to oppose memos which promote policies we know can endanger the lives of children, and are not in their best interest. It might help us to reflect, "what would Bertha Reynolds have done in this situation?" It might help us save a life. Those are our second thoughts, what are some of yours? □

A LIFE STORY: Told Through the Voice of Dementia

This narrative presents a glimpse of a relationship which developed far beyond the confines of a research study. Roles of clinician, researcher, and loving friend all crossed into one heart.

By Maria C. Bartlett

Maria C. Bartlett, Ph.D., is Assistant Professor, School of Social Service, Saint Louis University, Saint Louis, MO

Above all, this is a love story. I did not intend it to be. The heroine is an old demented woman whose name is Bunny. Like a gossamer romance, she did not know my name but said she loved me. I, likewise, returned the gift. She is the old woman I could become. Based on a life which spans the century, her story tells us much about what it means to be human.

Candid, uncensored and charming, she is both amusing and bemused. Frankness penetrates her reminiscence about life, its mysteries and meaning. I listened to her remarkable account, told again and again in much the same way, over the course of the year she turned 95. Despite the richness of the tale, there was much left untold. I can forgive that she "forgets." In the shadows of her mind lies a graveyard of memories.

"Now is the best time," she says, despite living in a nursing home. "I thought I wouldn't like it and I'm crazy about it. They give you a freedom of speech and freedom of thought and freedom period. They have what they call a brain wash which is wonderful. It's so different." She displays an unusual optimism for someone confined to an institution which sets her apart from the hundreds of other nursing home inhabitants that I have known. Not sad, depressed or melancholy, Bunny is animated, funny, pointed, and affectionate. Her wit and sharp mind are interspersed with occasional memory lapses.

She lives in a nursing home on the same street where she grew up. The home is adjacent to the city park where she was once the superintendent, as was her father and grandfather before her. But she has little memory of that. A street not far from the nursing home and park is named after her family for their civic contributions to the community.

Her stories invariably begin with the introduction of

Henry Shaw, whom she describes as a family friend. A wealthy philanthropist at the turn of the century, Shaw built St. Louis' Botanical Gardens. As Bunny tells it, "He came to this country with nine dollars. He went to New York, 'But they had the Empire State Building.' He went to Chicago and said, 'They've got Lake Michigan'. Then he went to St. Louis and said, 'Well, they're not too bright. I think I'll settle here."

The first time Bunny told me she was "walking on lily pads in Henry Shaw's Botanical Gardens," I presumed this was evidence of the disease at work or an indication of a rather lively imagination. It was neither. Not being a native of St. Louis I was woefully ignorant of this story, which is one of the city's well-known historical anecdotes. Henry Shaw designed an experiment in which the public was invited to 'walk on the lily pads of the pond in the Botanical Gardens.' Context and experience create meaning. It was easy to dismiss the "lily pads" as a sidestep from reality. But whose reality? How often do we discredit others experience when it is not our own?

Growing up she spent much of her time with her older brother, Jim. She often repeats the following advice from Jim, 'Now Sis, you've got a good mind. Always go with someone who has a better mind. There's always somebody that has a better mind than you. So be modest.' Bunny said, "I found myself doing it because I was mad about my brother."

In response to my asking whether she had married she said, "No, I didn't marry. Isn't that terrible? I wonder why I didn't marry. Why didn't I marry? I didn't seem to lack anything. That's where I was dumb I guess." When I asked her if she had a sweetheart she replied, "Well no. Now that's one thing I guess you could say my life maybe lacked. I'll put it this way. Apparently the life I lived I didn't need a boyfriend. I was complete within myself. I sound stuck up. But I wasn't stuck up. I just didn't yearn to have a boyfriend."

She describes herself as having been " a damn good tennis player. Damn good. I'm bragging now, but it's all very true...I was real good. Oh yes, I was excellent! I was considered tops. They couldn't beat me. They said, oh no you'll never be able to touch her, she really can bat that ball. They said don't get conceited and I said, well why shouldn't I, I play tennis better. I accepted the praise. But I never did anything with my praise. I never went out and got a wonderful job and did things like that. Now that's really a point. That's really a funny point that I never really accomplished anything because I didn't have anything in my mind to accomplish. Is that unusual?" I asked her about the tennis competitions and she replied, "I'm not in competition now because I figure that I'm sort of elderly, so to speak. I don't mean that I'm shaking all over or anything, but I guess I lack ambition. I don't want to be. What do I want to be better for? I used to have a fine past. I don't let it go past. At one time I was pretty good."

Her parents are remembered this way, "My father was a wonderful guy. I was very, very, fortunate. I was fortunate in the mother I had and I was fortunate in the father I had...You know I don't know what he did for a living, he must have done something for a living. He just must have been a damn good guy. Maybe there's something that he got himself in a frame (points to his picture). I don't know."

On September 30, 1994, Bunny turned 95. She remembers the date but not the year she was born. "I'm awfully old," she says. I am visiting her in her room at the nursing home with three of her friends, Bunny's lawyer and his wife, and a woman who once took care of her when she lived at home. In the spirit of celebrating Bunny's life, we played my video of her from the previous summer. As she watched herself on the screen she commented, "Why don't you say something... She talks too

much... Why don't you wash your hair... Don't you think she's said enough... Why do I talk so much... Don't tell them everything... Help her God, she needs help... Don't tell it all... I don't like women that talk too much." Midway through we stopped the tape because she did not seem to enjoy it. Her comments were admonitions both to her and about her. To be participant and observer offered her a unique glimpse of herself, but she didn't really care to look. However, the interviews themselves reveal an interest and joy in talking about her life, a thrill that someone cared to listen.

On December 11, 1994, I made a holiday visit to Bunny. Before I had my coat off she asked, "What is dementia praecox?" She had heard the words from an aide, she said. "Of course" she knew what dementia was... and alluded to the loss of the mind. "I'm a little nutty, you know, but does that make me demented?" Her ability to converse about dementia offered a detached analysis from the "observed." The conversation continued with her asking me, "Why don't you move in here? There's room in my bed... We've always liked each other, we're both a little goofy..." "Sometimes I get real smart and you can't follow me. Do I `know it all?' No, I don't want to load up."

At Christmas I brought her a small poinsettia plant, and she thanked me by saying, "I know you love me." As I left she said, "Love me always. I'm so glad we love each other."

James Taylor has said in song, "The secret of life is enjoying the passage of time." I imagine Bunny to have been in on this secret all along.

I saw Bunny many times over a two year period. Most of my visits had no purpose, no research agenda, no clinical intent. I went to see her because she made me feel better about life and the world, and because she was always glad to see me. Like a junky, I would go get a Bunny "fix." She was an anti-depressant with no side effects, and gave new meaning to the term "addictive personality." We would exchange terms of endearment and joke about our "mutual admiration society." I never saw her maudlin, or angry or depressed. There was immediate recognition by Bunny of the context of who I was, "Oh, you're the one that asks me all those crazy questions, who do I like, who do I hate..." but she never once knew my name.

Being in the middle ages, I asked her what I now view as an impertinent and irrelevant question, "what is it like getting older?" I have learned that this is not a subject that engages the older person. The reality seems to be that it is too much to contemplate. In other words, don't ask. Despite not getting a direct answer, I did get the message. Much was communicated to me through the experience of being with and talking to older people. Aging is my struggle now, since I am not quite there. Soon there will be a time when I won't want to think about it either, for it will be upon me.

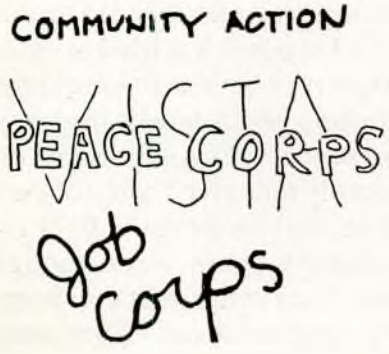
In my search for positive archetypes in aging I have found Bunny. Had I not met her, I doubt I would be so willing to consider the possibility of my own senility and inevitable decay. I was transformed by knowing Bunny and I feel others may be too. □

A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE IN 1990'S COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION: Back to the Future

For most of nearly 40 years in social work, I taught about rather than practiced community organization. It was good to discover, in 1995, during a local dispute over environmental contamination, that much of what I had taught still worked.

By Leon Ginsberg, MSW, Ph.D., ACSW

Leon Ginsberg is Carolina Distinguished Professor, College of Social Work, University of South Carolina, Columbia S. C.



When I was invited to teach at the University of Oklahoma School of Social Work in 1963, it was because I knew about and could teach social group work, a subject which had few adherents in the Southwest of that era. The single specialization at the School was social casework.

The School's faculty assumed I could also teach some other subjects that the Council on Social Work Education Curriculum Policy Statement of 1961 required of MSW programs and for which there were no qualified or willing professors. One was a new course on social science concepts, to supplement the psychoanalytic theory that was the foundation of the School's curriculum, just as it was throughout social work education. Another course was community organization. Although I was well-prepared by courses and practice to teach group work and had some preparation in the social sciences, community organization instruction during my MSW preparation at Tulane was modest.

During my five years at Oklahoma, I enjoyed introducing the social sciences but especially began to appreciate community organization, which had little attention in the 1950's and early 1960's. The community organization literature, which was then just a few books, was easy to master. And I had "done" C.O., as it was then called, by organizing a group work program in Tulsa. In fact, one of my first scholarly articles was called "Mineral City: An Experience in Process-Oriented Community Organization" (1968), which was about that program.

The more I learned about it, the more convinced I became that community organizing had greater potential for solving social problems than the other classic social work methods. Although I was no expert of the sorts I came to know at Brandeis, Columbia, and Chicago, I seemed to know more about teaching community organization methods than anyone else in the area. Some of my students not only learned enough to pass the curriculum's one community organization course but graduated and became leaders in community work. They followed the course's concepts directly, they reported.

Perhaps my star student was Ruth Messinger, who is now the President of the New York Borough of Manhattan. She was "converted" from an aspiring

clinician to a community activist during her second year of studies at Oklahoma.

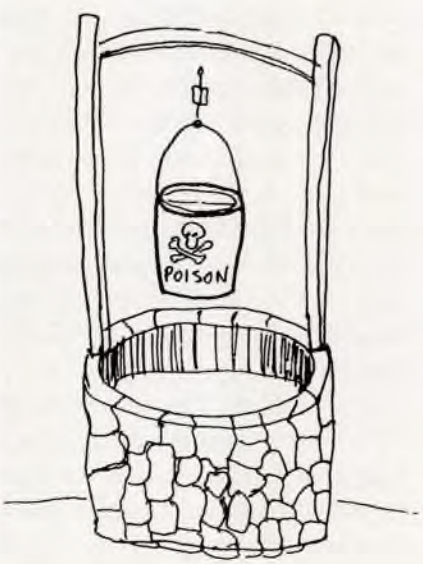
Amazingly, all sorts of other groups suddenly wanted to learn the methods, which they often called "community development." Community organization became a high profile, high priority method throughout the U.S. I spent summers helping prepare people for service in the Peace Corps, Vista, Community Action, Job Corps, and many other programs.

For almost 20 years after leaving Oklahoma, I was more the subject — as a dean and a state government official — of community organizing than a practitioner. I taught tamer subjects when I returned to a faculty position at South Carolina — courses on research, social welfare policy, and management.

Contamination and The Fight Against It

Suddenly it was 1995. The Republicans were in control of Congress and threatening to destroy programs in the arts, human services, and protection of the environment. My neighborhood, an upper middle class Old South suburb of Columbia, South Carolina, was concerned about ground water contamination. A computer component manufacturing corporation a mile away had polluted the neighborhood's many lakes and some of its privately owned water wells with a toxic chemical, trichlorethylene. The corporation, Amphenol, closed the plant with no warning to its employees and withdrew to its headquarters in Connecticut. Several property owners lodged federal lawsuits against the firm for the pollution to their land or lakes. Some business-oriented owners of undeveloped property won their suits and were paid damages by the company. All the individual homeowners whose federal suits were heard, however, lost in sometimes bitter trials.

As soon as the federal appeals court refused to overturn those losses, the company quietly began planning to open a similar plant on the same site, using some of the same toxic chemicals that had been used in the past. Quietly does not fully characterize their efforts. Their moves were secret. Part of their plan involved exchanging pieces of property with the local board of education. Discussions of contracts, prior to specific action, can be secret in South Carolina, so all the early negotiations with the school board were conducted in "executive session." However, a friendly board member told one of the families of the company's plans. That family, which was especially upset by the earlier pollution, reached three others, one of which was mine. Suddenly, we were embarked upon a community organizing episode.



The Organized Discontented

Essentially, our core organizing effort — the discontented group, as Murray G. Ross (1967) might describe it — was seven people. What we did was traditional community organizing, some of it confrontational. It worked, even though the environmental laws were changing and the political trends favored reducing government regulation.

As is often the case in community organizing efforts, we were sometimes frustrated and thwarted by those who were either indifferent to or opposed to our efforts, neutral forces or forces of resistance in community organization language. For example, because we knew how important it was to build broad-based support, we tried to enlist large numbers our neighbors in opposing a new Amphenol operation. However, many, especially those who had lost their cases, had no desire to fight the company again, even though they were sympathetic to keeping Amphenol out. They were

afraid that more publicity would further harm property values or make their homes unsaleable. Others did not want to offend local business people, such as realtors, who saw the plant's promise of 200 new employees a source of lucrative business. Privately, most of the homeowners wished us well but did not want to be involved. They also told us how pleased they were when we were successful, even though they were unwilling to be involved.

Opposition from the Press and Government

The foes were formidable, diverse, and powerful. Amphenol is a $25 million publicly held corporation. We learned that when we asked the local daily newspaper, the state's largest, which is appropriately named The State, to report on the controversy. As mentioned earlier, South Carolina law required no disclosure of the school board's discussions with Amphenol during the contract negotiation phase. The proponents of re-opening the plant hoped that the issue would become public and the property exchange approved by the school board all at the same time, with little chance for public awareness or, especially, protest. The newspaper decided that opening the plant was a good business development for the area and supported the re-opening with columns and news stories that only marginally reported our side, even though they had learned about it from us. Several of us wrote letters of protest to the business editor, who was responsible for the supportive policy. He answered none of the letters.

We wrote and called our representative on the Richland County Council—the county government. She answered no one and supported re-opening the plant as a means of promoting economic development, as did a majority of the Council members, when the economic development authority asked for the Council's support.

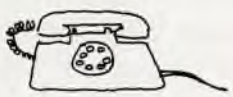
We wrote, on a letterhead calling ourselves "Concerned Citizens of Richland County," to the president of the corporation and told him we wanted the plan abandoned. Similar letters went to the local economic development authority chairman, who was a strong supporter of opening the plant. We also solicited letters from others. Neither the Amphenol president nor the economic development authority chairman answered any of the letters.

We also wrote to other public officials such as the governor and the speaker of the House of Representatives, who had been the leading opponent of a nuclear waste disposal site in another part of the state. Neither answered any of us.

In the process, we seven

opponents of the plan attended school board meetings because the corporation apparently needed the property exchange to make their plan work. One of us was an expert on the school property and reported that the proposed exchange would wipe out an athletic practice field and a day care center. Another of the seven had studied Amphenol and made posters calling the corporation a "polluter" and a "bad neighbor." The posters were placed on the walls at all the school board's meetings. Another of the seven, probably the most important, was a prominent business leader — a vice-president of one of the area's largest corporations. All of us took advantage of the school board's public comment time, but only the business leader seemed to garner the board's interest and attention.

Losing seemed inevitable. The school board, if our vote count were correct, was likely to approve the exchange of property that would make the re-opening possible. Local business people attempted to silence our business leader through pressure on his boss, who refused to intervene. The newspaper continued its support of Amphenol and ignored its opponents. When we finally won, the story of Amphenol's decision to cancel its plans was the lead news story. We were described as "small, but vocal."



Among the group of seven, operations of our efforts were largely informal. We checked with each other by telephone, took charge of one task or another, without formal discussions of roles, and rarely held face-to-face meetings. We each performed work that made the most sense for us, because of our community status. For example, the most expert among us — and probably the hardest working — was a woman who had already been involved in an unsuccessful lawsuit against Amphenol. She knew the details of the contamination better than anyone else and had devoted days of study in the Court House and public health libraries. She was a whiz with computer graphics and arranged for the billboard copy as well as the flyers that we widely distributed. The corporation vice-president was probably the most influential person because of his position and his involvement in some school board election campaigns, as well as because he was articulate and passionate about the issue. Another couple in the group were well-informed about the potential impact of the property exchange because she was a teacher at the high school that would be affected. He was from a long-time, prominent Columbia family and, partly for that reason, the school board members and others were especially attentive to his well-presented arguments. I, on the other hand, with three decades of lecturing behind me, some of which people pay to hear, bored the audiences. I was a relative newcomer (nine years is too short a time to establish oneself in many Southern communities) and, one might say, "ethnically diverse." Some of my personal communication with legislators was a bit more successful than my speeches. I did a combination of things such as helping refine some of the materials and positions we took, writing letters, stuffing flyers in newspaper boxes, helping pay some of the costs, and helping exploit our advantages when we had them — such as insuring we had an accurate list of our supporters. But I — and my wife — were far from leaders of the group. I used my professional knowledge to an extent but without the rest of the group members, I would have been looking at a revitalized plant in the neighborhood within a few months.

The Search for Allies

As we worked, we developed a few allies. Two members of the House of Rep-resentatives were sympathetic and told us so — although they also said there was no way that a corporation could be stopped from operating a legal enterprise on its own property in an area that was already zoned for the kind of operation they wanted. Still, our core group remained at seven.

There were three actions that probably made the difference, all of them techniques that are classic in community organization:

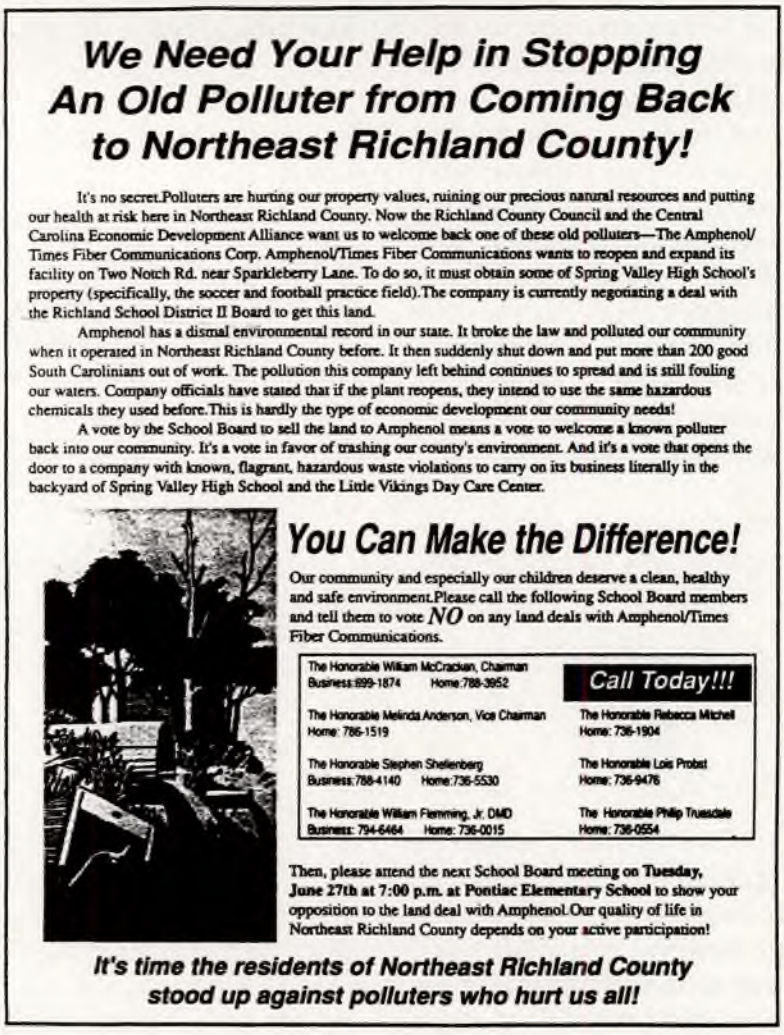
1. We found a billboard for $800 directly across the street from Amphenol's property. We leased it, splitting the cost four ways, and posted a sign notifying the public that Amphenol was trying to re-open, that a similar operation had contaminated the neighborhood in the past, and that those who were concerned should call their school board members.

2. We argued against the property exchange at school board meetings and at a public meeting sponsored in the neighborhood by Amphenol. Our chief spokesperson, the corporate vice-president, made a strong case against the plant. He also demonstrated that his company's employment and in-

vestment in the community dwarfed all the promises of Amphenol.

3. One of our group printed thousands of leaflets explaining the Amphenol intentions and urging people to protest at the next school board meeting. The telephone numbers of all the members were included. All of us took quantities and placed them in the newspaper boxes of residents all over the area. At the last school board meeting before Amphenol announced that it was abandoning its plans, a dozen other families turned out to protest, apparently because of the leaflets. Most asked for a chance to speak during the public comment portion of the meeting, even though the board president said that Amphenol was not on the agenda.

Within a few days of the board meeting, Amphenol announced that they were moving their proposed plant to Arizona, instead. Their property in our neighborhood would be for sale and they would not operate the new factory in South Carolina.



We Need Your Help in Stopping An Old Polluter from Coming Back to Northeast Richland County!

It's no secret.Polluters are hurting our property values, ruining our precious natural resources and putting our health at risk here in Northeast Richland County. Now the Richland County Council and the Central Carolina Economic Development Alliance want us to welcome back one of these old polluters—The Amphenol/Times Fiber Communications Corp. Amphenol/Times Fiber Communications wants to reopen and expand its facility on Two Notch Rd. near Sparkleberry Lane. To do so, it must obtain some of Spring Valley High School's property (specifically, the soccer and football practice field).The company is currently negotiating a deal with the Richland School District II Board to get this land.

Amphenol has a dismal environmental record in our state. It broke the law and polluted our community when it operated in Northeast Richland County before. It then suddenly shut down and put more than 200 good South Carolinians out of work. The pollution this company left behind continues to spread and is still fouling our waters. Company officials have stated that if the plant reopens, they intend to use the same hazardous chemicals they used before.This is hardly the type of economic development our community needs!

A vote by the School Board to sell the land to Amphenol means a vote to welcome a known polluter back into our community. It's a vote in favor of trashing our county's environment. And it's a vote that opens the door to a company with known, flagrant, hazardous waste violations to carry on its business literally in the backyard of Spring Valley High School and the Little Vikings Day Care Center.

You Can Make the Difference!

Our community and especially our children deserve a clean, healthy and safe environment.Please call the following School Board members and tell them to vote *NO* on any land deals with Amphenol/Times Fiber Communications.

The Honorable William McCracken, Chairman
Business:699-1874 Home:788-3952

Call Today!!!

The Honorable Melinda Anderson, Vice Chairman
Home: 786-1519

The Honorable Rebecca Mitchell
Home: 736-1904

The Honorable Stephen Shellenberg
Business:788-4140 Home:736-5530

The Honorable Lois Probst
Home: 736-9476

The Honorable William Flemming, Jr. DMD
Business: 794-6464 Home: 736-0015

The Honorable Philip Truesdale
Home: 736-0554

Then, please attend the next School Board meeting on **Tuesday, June 27th at 7:00 p.m. at Pontiac Elementary School** to show your opposition to the land deal with Amphenol.Our quality of life in Northeast Richland County depends on your active participation!

It's time the residents of Northeast Richland County stood up against polluters who hurt us all!

Some Lessons for the New Century

We learned a good deal from the experience. Perhaps the most salient learnings were these:

1. The classic community organization processes suggested by writers such as Alinsky (1971) and Ross (1967) still work. Identifying and mobilizing discontent; focusing on a well-understood evil (water pollution); and using a variety of public challenges such as writing letters, using billboards, and making statements at meetings are examples.

2. The continuing importance of "elites," especially in relatively conservative environments such as South Carolina, was evident. Although all of the families were relatively prominent and prosperous (a physician, a professor, a public school teacher, a volunteer agency director, and an insurance company owner), only the major business executive appeared to have major influence. Without his support, the outcome could have been different.

3. Some elected officials are likely to be sympathetic to organizing efforts, while others are not. Therefore, the importance of trying to enlist the aid of all of them is clear.

However, the most important lessons were about the behavior of corporations engaged in conflicts with community groups. Most corporations are directed by hired chief executive officers and their staffs, who must respond to their corporate boards. When they are criticized and put into conflict with community groups, they may lose credibility with their

stockholders and boards and, ultimately, may lose their jobs. Therefore, they are probably more sensitive to public criticism than individual owners or entrepreneurs would be. If the pressures are great enough, they are likely to capitulate to those who oppose them. If the community or part of it appears to be hostile to them, many corporations are likely to withdraw or modify their plans.

Even though, under the Gingrich-Dole Republicans, there may be some diminution of environmental regulations and the advent of some public policy choices that provide for fewer restrictions on the uses of property and on enterprise, in general, corporations are still likely to be cautious in their responses to community groups that oppose them. In this case, a few loud families, an $800 billboard, a few letters and telephone calls, and the distribution of some flyers turned a multi-million dollar corporation's plans around. And for one former community organization teacher, the episode showed that the old ways still work. □

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Ross, M.G. (with B.W. Lappin) (1967) *Community organization: Theory, principles, and practice.* New York: Harper and Row.

VIOLET'S SEEDS

This narrative provides reflections by a social worker in mid career on a painful and significant encounter with one of his first clients in London over 20 years ago. Themes of loss, guilt, trauma are uncovered along with an exploration of the meaning and transformation of a helping relationship.

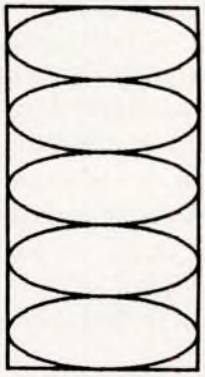
by Joshua Miller

Joshua Miller is Assistant Professor and Director of Fieldwork at Smith College School for Social Work. He would like to thank his wife and children for their support with this project.

Sometimes things happen in your life that change you forever — things that were not anticipated or expected. This is such a story.

In the mid-1970's, I received my MSW from the University of Washington and was assuming that I would spend the rest of my life living and working in the splendid city of Seattle. But a professor of mine, Fred Lewin, who had just returned from a year's sabbatical in England, suggested that I try working in London. The English social service system had recently been reorganized to a generic model, administered by local authorities (like counties or boroughs), and most significantly, there was a critical shortage of trained social workers. Fred gave me some contacts to whom I wrote.

I was surprised when the Assistant Director of Social Services for a South London borough wrote back to me, offering me a six month's probationary job, sight unseen. How could I turn this offer down? I was 25, unattached, not yet professionally grounded, and living and working in Europe sounded romantic and exciting. So I figured that I would go and work for a year, do a bit of traveling, and then return to my home in the Pacific Northwest.



Within 6 months my work permit had arrived, clearing me for employment and in a snowstorm on April 1, I departed by Icelandic Air lines to London.

The social service department for the borough was located in a Town Hall that housed a variety of municipal services. My team covered a vibrant township in the borough that housed Africans, East and West Indians, migrants from Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, as well as an ensconced indigenous working class population. There was a thriving High Street, dotted with pubs and Indian restaurants, lined with street vendors animatedly hawking fruit and vegetables.

There were five social workers on the team, two social work aides, a sector clerk, and the team leader, who was a Senior Social Worker. There were an Italian social worker and a German social work aide on the team, and shortly after I arrived, a Swedish social worker, so we were soon nicknamed the "International Brigade." Within a few weeks, I had clients with mental illness, people with

physical disabilities, couples suspected of abusing their children, adolescents who had run away or had broken the law, and many homeless people. A caseload averaged between 25 and 40 cases. There were few other social service resources (no community mental health centers, scarcely any social service agencies) so that the local authority social worker was expected to provide everything: case management, counseling, information and referral, advocacy, supervision of custody orders, and groupwork, as well as evaluations for special apartments or equipment for the disabled.

Many of my clients were assigned to me when I was a "duty worker," doing intake for new cases, and many were homeless. There was a severe housing shortage in London at this time, but there was also a statutory obligation to house homeless families with children. Social workers were expected to assess whether or not there was, indeed, a homeless family with children and no other options, and then place the family in a temporary shelter, usually a bed and breakfast hostel. Families waited months, even years, before being offered permanent housing in state owned units known as "council housing."

VIOLET

In early May, I met Violet Johnson while serving as a duty worker. It was a random chance that she became my client. Violet

declared herself to be homeless and asked for my help in resettling her and her six children. She was not only asking for help with housing; she was concerned for her life and for the safety of her children.

Violet was an attractive but haggard looking woman in her late 30's. She was dark skinned, with high cheek bones and dark, solemn eyes. She had been born in a West Indian country but had been living in London for about 12 years. Her parents were of African, East Indian, and European descent. There was a mixture of fear, resignation, defiance, and maternal love in her story as she spoke. Her husband, and the father of her six children (aged 5 to 16), had severely beaten her and was at home with the six children. The beating was part of a recurring pattern, and she had finally decided to leave. She was concerned that if her husband found her, he would kill her, and she was also fearful that he would mistreat her six children. However, she was adamant that I should not visit him. Her reasoning was that he would be charming and respectful to me, but he would then take out his anger on the children after I left.

Violet was accompanied by a family friend, Mr. Andrews, who was from the same West Indian country. He confirmed her story and attested to the risks of my visiting Mr. Johnson to check on the children. We worked out a plan. He would visit the house and the children on a daily basis, and I would phone the children's school. I would ask that the Education Welfare Officer visit the home if any of the children were absent. Violet was going to stay with her parents and would stay in contact with me. The plan was for her to collect her children eventually and then to be rehoused in a location where her husband would be unable to find her.

For the next month and a half, Violet lived with friends and her parents. Mr. Andrews visited the home regularly. I phoned the schools on a weekly basis. At my request, the Education Welfare Officer made a home visit and reported, Mr. Johnson is a charming man and that the children seemed to be well cared for. Violet and I would meet on a weekly basis. She had had to leave her job at a government agency because her husband worked there. We discussed her plans to seek new employment, her financial situation, her anguish over her children being cared for by a man whom she viewed as dangerous, and her determination to leave him. She often looked tired and weak, but her will was strong. When she was unable to keep appointments with me, she would send me letters, keeping me appraised of her progress. She eventually consulted a solici-

tor (lawyer) and took out a summons against her husband for persistent cruelty and sought custody and care and maintenance of her children. She was advised that she could not take out a restraining order against him unless she was first attacked and the police were called to the scene.

A few days after the summons was served, Violet came to my office with her oldest child, her daughter Kate. Kate was a tall, thin 16 year old with short, tightly curled hair. Violet asked Kate to show me some bruises on her chest that she alleged had been inflicted by Mr. Johnson. Kate timidly complied. I saw some dark bruises that could have been inflicted by hard slaps or punches. Earlier that day, Kate had gone to her maternal grandparents' house and had reported how her father had beaten her and her sister Laura.

Violet had immediately gone to the children's schools, removed all of them, and took them to her parents' apartment in an adjacent South London borough. After we consulted with my supervisor, all parties agreed that Violet would immediately go to court and seek custody of the children, rather than have the local authority seek a Care and Protection Order.

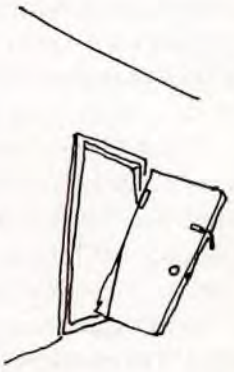
Two days later I accompanied Violet to her court hearing. Unable to sit with Violet, I observed the proceedings from the gallery. It was the first time that I had seen Mark Johnson, her husband. He was a tall, handsome, tan skinned man, also originally from the West Indies; he was dressed in a suit. Violet made a deliberate and detailed presentation of their relationship together. They had met and been married in the West Indies. Their three eldest children had been born there before they immigrated to England. She described how he became increasingly violent toward her, often forcing himself on her sexually. When she was pregnant with her fourth child, she was severely beaten by him. The child was born with profound deafness.

Violet described how the violence escalated and was directed toward the children as well as herself. The courtroom was gravely silent as she described being knocked unconscious by Mark and raped in front of the children, and another time being raped with a Coca Cola bottle. I watched Mark as Violet related all this. The left side of his face twitched rhythmically and uncontrollably. I thought to myself, "He can't take this; his self concept doesn't allow for this; he is going to explode." With the exception of the twitching, he stood stoically. The hearing was continued with Violet being granted temporary care and custody of the children.

Night

Two and one half weeks later, Violet was putting her children to bed at about 10 P.M. on the second floor of her parents' apartment. There was a knock at the door. Violet started down the stairs to open it. Kate followed her, cautioning her not to open the door in case it was Mark. Violet reassured her that she would keep the door on the chain to see who was there.

She latched the chain and opened the door. With a tremendous crack, the door flew open, the chain dangling lifelessly. Mark burst in. Violet screamed.



The remaining children ran to the top of the stairs and started to scream. Mark slammed Violet's head from one wall to another. Then he pulled out the Stanley knife and hammer head that he had been carrying in his pockets and slashed and beat her. Kate tried to intervene and was cut on her hand by the knife.

Mark dropped Violet's limp and bloody body and said to Kate: "Come with me." He took her by the hand and started

to walk down the street with glazed eyes. A few minutes later, a police car pulled up, and Mark was arrested without a struggle. The next day, he was charged with the murder of Violet Johnson.

INNER CITY BLUES

I was sitting at my desk in my team room two days later. We had recently moved out of the gloomy town hall into an area office building that overlooked the High Street. It was a sunny morning, and from my second floor window, I watched a vegetable vendor gesticulating wildly about tomatoes when I took Kate's call. As soon as she identified herself, I felt everything freeze. When she said, "Something has happened to Mom," I still asked her, "What happened?" even though I knew what she was about to tell me.

When I asked Kate if the family would like me to visit that day, she said "Yes." When I arrived, I met all of the children, Violet's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Patel, as well as some family friends, including Mr. Andrews.

Let me briefly describe the family for you. Kate was a very verbal, intelligent 16 year old, an A student and very much the eldest child. Laura, who was 15 at the time, and Sandy, who was one week shy of her 14th birthday, looked more like each other physically, with a strong East Indian influence in contrast to Kate's African features, and were closely aligned with one another. Laura was less outgoing than Kate, more guarded in her demeanor, while Sandy, who looked strikingly like Violet, had a miserable cold and was withdrawn.

Markie was 11, thin, and looked a lot like his namesake, his father. He could barely lip read and was comprehensible only if one stood very close to him and listened attentively. He could not sign. With all of the commotion in the house, he was alert (like a cat listening to rapid noises coming from all directions) but not in direct communication with people. That situation persisted over the next few weeks and, to some extent, for the next few years.

Julie was a gap-toothed six year old with an open face and a winning smile. She was precociously bright and inquisitive. She wore her thick curly hair in pigtails. Peter was an intense, tiny, finely featured 5 year old.

Mr. Patel was an alert man, of East Indian origin in his 70's but weakened from a number of debilitating strokes. He had been the Minister of Health in the West Indian country that he came from and had been awarded an Order of the British Empire. He had his own room and spent much of his time in bed.

Mrs. Patel was a large, imposing woman, who worked weekends as a domestic in a hospital. She was recovering from a recent hysterectomy. She was outspoken and had strong opinions about people. She drank heavily. She was the most openly distraught over Violet's death: weeping, at times shrieking or wailing hysterically, and also expressing her fear and anger toward Mark.

I stayed at the apartment for hours, meeting with each person individually and also conferring with many of the family friends who were present. With the exception of Mr. Andrews and his wife, who were concerned and supportive toward the Patels, many of the friends would grill me about the "psychological dynamics" of the event, and expressed some sympathy towards Mark's position. By the end of the meetings, despite my own shock and sense of failure at having been unable to protect Violet, I had a clear sense that the Patels were prepared to care for the children and that the highest priority for the children was that they remain together, preferably with the Patels. There was one major problem: neither I nor the Patels had the authority to make that decision.

The Patels lived in a different borough from the one where Violet had lived. The new borough assigned a social worker, Jen Nielson who was feeling overwhelmed by the situation and was finding her borough bureaucracy unsupportive. Her superiors did not want to take custody of the children and be encumbered with the obligations that this would entail. She already had a large caseload and did not yet have a personal connection with the family.

I, on the other hand, was concerned that my relationship with the family would cease. I felt that the family had begun to establish a relationship with me, based on my work with Violet. I

also felt an overwhelming sense of obligation to help the children and the Patels, some of this emanating from my sense of guilt and inadequacy over Violet's death. I had been her social worker, she had warned me that this could happen, and it had.

Jen and I struck a deal. She would be the official representative of the state, the outside social worker, who would monitor the legal situation. I would be the inside social worker and provide counseling and advocacy. We would share the case management and meet regularly. We presented the plan to the family and they readily agreed. Our respective boroughs also supported the plan, and I received a tremendous support from my supervisor, who recognized the importance of my continued involvement with the family for them and for me, despite the official termination of the borough's responsibility.

Jen and I also came to share an assumption that became a guiding principle in our work with the family: it was paramount for the children to remain together as a unit and not be placed separately in foster homes. They had in one violent act lost both of their parents, and they were adamant that they would not be separated. There were no foster homes that could take all of the children. There were two maternal uncles: one lived in the U.S. and had a large family of his own, and the other was a single man in his 20's; neither was in a position to care for the children. The family friends quickly drifted away, with the exception of the Andrews, and they could not take the children. This left the Patels.

The Patels were committed to caring for their grandchildren. The two generations, Violet's parents and her children, were bound together in their loss of her and maintained their continued relationship with her through each other. But there were enormous obstacles. The Patels were in poor health and at their age were not expecting to care for six children. Their flat was overcrowded. The four girls shared two beds in one room. Peter slept with Mr. Patel. Markie had to share a room with an elderly boarder, for whom Mrs. Patel was caring and with whom she had some kind of relationship. Within weeks, their landlord threatened them with eviction due to overcrowding.

There were other problems as well. Mr. and Mrs. Patel led parallel, separate lives and sometimes would denigrate one another in front of the children. Mrs. Patel would also accuse some of the children of having the "Johnson in them," particularly directing this at Markie, and to a lesser extent, Laura. She would also frequently harangue the children and was very preoccupied with her own needs. This was by no means an ideal situation, but all of us — Jen, I, the Patels, and the children — felt it was the best alternative available. An unspoken assumption, I believe, was that this was what Violet would have wanted as well.

It was not what Mark Johnson wanted, however. Although he was in prison, he technically had custody and wanted the children placed in foster homes rather than with the Patels. The borough was reluctant to assume the burden of taking custody of the children who were, therefore, made wards of the court, with supervision being given to the Patels. This gave the Patels limited financial resources to care for the children: Mr. Patel's pension, Mrs. Patel's meager wages, supplementary benefits for the children, and the income from the boarder. Eventually, after much advocacy and pressure, the Patel's borough took custody of the children 10 months after Violet's death, keeping them with their grandparents. More resources were then available, including a larger council house.

Jen and I visited Mr. Johnson in prison to discuss the situation with him. He struck me as an intelligent, charismatic man, who radiated an ineluctable destructiveness. He was furious about the arrangements and insisted that the children visit him. He refused to accept that the children did not want to visit him. He hated Mrs. Patel and blamed her for Violet's "provocative" behavior. He blamed me for Violet's death because I had never visited him and tried to help them work things out. He blamed Violet for her death because of the; "awful, untrue things she said about me in

court." He blamed Jen for not forcing the children to see him.

Jen and I left the visit stunned and shaken. We reenacted this ordeal on a monthly basis as Mr. Johnson repeatedly demanded, through his lawyer, that the children visit him in prison. We patiently tried to explain why the children did not want to visit him and why we had placed them with the Patels. Jen and I were both relieved to have each other's company during these traumatizing encounters.

Mrs. Patel expressed fears to me, in front of the children, that Mr. Johnson would be released from prison and would kill her. There was also a family rumor that friends of Mr. Johnson might try and kidnap the children.

From the time of my first visit to the home, after Violet's death, I had worked out an intensive visiting schedule with the family at home and at the schools of the younger children. At the home visits I would see Mr. and Mrs. Patel individually and also meet with the three older girls as a group. The group meetings focussed on shared reactions and ways that they could support themselves and their younger siblings. I would also touch base with the younger children at home. The family work involved a great deal of ventilation, clarification, and mediation. Obviously, grief work was a central theme in most of the sessions. But I also had to work on very concrete concerns with the grandparents, such as finances, the housing situation, the children's schoolwork. It was not possible to have the entire family sit together with me for sessions, and I did not try to push this. Rather, we would work in linked sub-units.

Much of my work with Mrs. Patel involved her grieving, but I also tried to mediate and buffer her destructive projections on to the children of her hatred of Mark. I, as well, had to confront her about her drinking and yelling at the children. With Mr. Patel, we developed a father and son type of relationship. I relied on him to provide consistent limits and support for the children despite the fact that he was frequently bed-ridden. He developed a deep relationship with Peter, and to a lesser extent, with Julie. They were often in his bedroom doing their homework. I experienced him as a wise and gentle presence.

A great deal of conflict surfaced during my visits, usually between Mrs. Patel and the children. Tension would also erupt among the children. I would try to mediate but would leave each visit with at least one of the older girls not speaking to me. Fortunately, I managed to offend everyone more or less equally and was able to maintain my individual connections with all of the children.

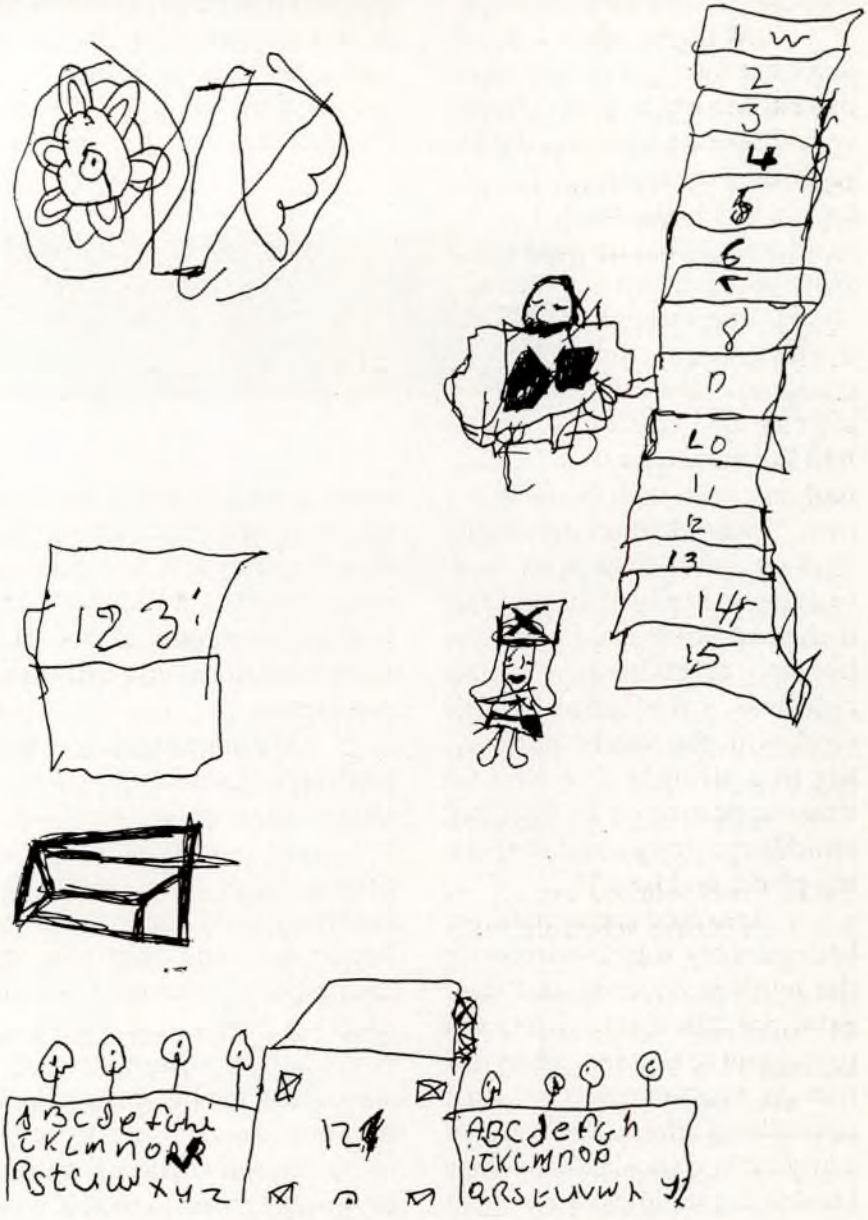
Over time, the children began to use me in different ways and for different needs. Kate and Sandy would use me to share their feelings of loss, grief, and anger and would avidly seek out our individual sessions. Laura came less often and would sit more silently; when she did talk, she would describe more how she was coping than how she was grieving. Sandy developed a crush on me and would walk me to the bus stop at night when I would leave the home visits. In between visits she would write me notes, describing her sadness, how her stomach aches, and her fights with her friends. Once she described being punched in the stomach by a girl and retaliating violently because she said she felt like killing her. In her note she linked this to her memories of her mother's death. She signed it "Sandy — the beautifulest girl in the world — not really (I'm ugly)."

Julie and Peter would draw pictures for me, and we would tell stories to one another. Figures A and B are facsimiles of drawings that I found them doing at home, a week after Violet's death. Both depict the murder. Julie's drawing shows the stairs where it occurred and has pictures of her mother and a monster. Peter's picture is of the actual stabbing.

It is not possible or helpful to say who suffered the greatest loss when Violet died,

but Markie's life changed dramatically. Violet was his main confidante, the person in the family who made the greatest effort to communicate with him. She would talk with him and read with him every day. Not only had he lost her, but he was now living in a chaotic situation, often overlooked, frequently confused, with one grandparent who feared him because he reminded her of her son-in-law and another grandparent who ignored him. The older girls were supportive of him, but they had their own adolescent lives to lead.

The school personnel were very cognizant of Marki's situation and made a special effort to be available to him. In addition, I would take him to professional soccer games on weekends and to karate classes during the week. For obvious reasons, it was important for Markie to feel as if he could defend himself. Although I spent more time with him than with any of the other children, I never felt as if I were reaching him in the same depth.



Two major rituals and events that punctuated our work were Violet's funeral and Mark's trial. Violet's body was badly damaged and the police needed to retain it for evidence for the murder trial. Although a memorial service was held shortly after Violet's death, there was a sense of unreality surrounding it and the children remained detached. Finally, five weeks after her death, Violet's body was released, and the funeral was held. The older girls were able to view the body before she was cremated. At the service, at first there was little visible reaction. Then Laura began to cry uncontrollably. As the grief slowly spread to all of the children, they all let go, wept without restraint, and bid Violet farewell.

Mark's murder trial was held in January, six months after Violet's death. Kate had to testify. This was traumatic for her, but she also felt as if she were contributing to justice on behalf of her mother. Mark was defiant and leered sexually at a woman, who sat next to me at the trial. However the trial was fairly straightforward, and Mark was found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment. This seemed

to be a source of relief for both the Patels and the children.

At night when I would leave the family, I would take a bus back to my bed-sit. The trip would take an hour and the bus would meander from one neighborhood to another, up High Street, down a church lane, through a dark, deserted common. The bus kept shifting direction but somehow it took me from their home to my own. I would sit on the second deck, passing their apartment (waving to Sandy at the window if she had not walked me to the bus stop) and think how the bus ride was a metaphor for my work with the family: not moving in a straight direction (at times appearing to be lost), but steadily moving on and connecting places and lives.

I realized that my life had become very intertwined with the Johnson children and their grandparents. I still was a recent immigrant to London. I had few friends, was involved in some unfulfilling affairs, and lived in a miserable, damp bed-sit, where I had to put shillings in my meter to get electricity and hot water. I was far away from my family. The Johnson children and the Patels had become my family.

I was also stressed out. I had one record which I listened to over and over again, Marvin Gaye's *"What's Going On"* — "Mercy, Mercy, Me," "Inner City Blues," "What's Going On," "Make Me Wanna Holler," and "Save the Children." I developed insomnia. When I did sleep I would have dreams about endangered pet birds that I would frantically and futilely try to save. My sister sent me a book about a baby gorilla at the Central Park Zoo that was separated from its mother and then reunited with her. When I read it, I found myself weeping uncontrollably, something that I had forgotten how to do. That night I dreamt about Julie losing her mother.

My supervisor was supportive but unable to provide clinical supervision, and I felt as if I could not afford to let my vulnerability show with her. Knowing that I needed clinical supervision and help with my counter-transference, I scheduled a meeting with a psychiatrist, who served as a consultant for the borough. In my one session with her, I found myself spending most of my energy trying to remain composed, as I outlined the situation. She was supportive of what I was doing and expressed concern about how it was affecting me, but I was too proud and well defended to respond to this. I did not see her again.

About a year and a half after I met Violet, I visited Ireland and fell in love with an Irish woman. I decided to move to Ireland. I rationalized to myself that the Johnsons and Patels were through the worst. Laura told me that I was abandoning them. I responded that they were stronger now and needed me less. What I didn't say, that was implicit in my actions, was that I had my own life to lead and that it was taking me away from them. Despite all of my rationalizations, I still felt deeply guilty about leaving them.

SEPARATION AND RE-CONNECTION

Jen remained as the family's social worker for a few months, but then she became pregnant and a new worker was assigned. After another few months, another worker was assigned. Social service reality was sinking in.

The children and I corresponded regularly. Kate and Sandy were particularly reliable letter writers, and both would use their letters as a continuation of our counseling sessions together, sharing profound feelings and current life dilemmas and struggles. Kate visited Mr. Johnson in prison once, on behalf of all of the children. She made it clear to him that none of the children ever wanted to see him again. They never did. Kate, Laura, and Sandy became involved with steady boy friends.

My relationship did not work out. After 18 months, I was desperate to leave Ireland. I debated about whether I should return to the United States after

three years abroad or go back to England. I ultimately decided to return to England, partially, although not exclusively, swayed by my concern for the Johnson children. I knew that I was no longer their social worker, but felt that our relationship was still important, for all of us. A close relative in the United States questioned my professional boundaries. It was a fair question.

I returned to London and started a satisfying job for a family service agency in the same section of South London where I had previously worked. A few months after returning, I met my future wife and stepdaughter and moved in with them.

I remained in regular contact with the Johnsons and Patels but in a new role, as a family friend. Actually, I was more like a member of their extended family like a close uncle or cousin. They would seek my advice about intimate concerns or mundane matters. They would feed me meals. I would have the kids over to my house for supper. They all came to my wedding. My stepdaughter and Julie attended the same summer day camp program that was run by the agency where I worked and where Kate was employed as a counselor.

After three years, my family and I decided to relocate to the United States. This felt less like an abandonment than had my previous departure for Ireland. Everyone in the Patel/Johnson family seemed more settled, although Mr. Patel was not well and Laura (who was in a steady relationship) was pregnant. Still, everyone was moving on with their lives, in school or in jobs and with relationships, as was I. We were all still close, but less dependent on one another.

My wife and I held a going away party with our friends a few nights before we left London. The older children came with their boyfriends. It was an intimate and sad leave-taking. The morning that we were departing, and a couple of hours before leaving for the airport, I received a call from Kate, she had two things to tell me: Mr. Patel had died the day before, and the day before that, Laura had had her baby, a girl.

REFLECTIONS

Writing this story has been both painful and liberating. It is a story that I have carried around with me, for better or worse, for my entire career. For a few years after meeting the Johnsons, I was engaged in clinical work with very disengaged, disadvantaged families, and I threw myself into it. I had not learned to do clinical work in a more detached (professional?), self protective way, and although the intensity of my involvement with the Johnsons was never replicated, I would become very involved with the families with whom I worked. Partially, this was a function of my style, and it was also influenced by the agency that I worked for, which encouraged such intensity. It was no accident that I was working there. But this took its toll and I progressively worked my way into supervisory and administrative roles and eventually went on to do community organizing.

As my own family life developed, I realized that I would not have been able to do what I did with the Johnsons had I not been so alone at the time. Clearly, it meant a great deal for me to work so closely with them. They were a special family, and in our own ways we needed one another. I also think that, in some ways, we helped to heal one another. I hope so. I am painfully aware of the professional boundaries that I crossed in this work and still berate myself for things that I did or did not do.

Mark was in prison for seven years. Rumor has it that he remarried and has another family. Neither Mrs. Patel, the children, nor I regret not knowing for sure.

The three oldest girls are married to loving, gentle men. All three of them have children, six in all. Kate has worked for a multi-national corporation in a managerial capacity for many years. Laura and Sandy are devoted mothers. Julie became pregnant while in school and now has two children. She too has a stable relationship with a man and has been taking college courses in accounting. They all live within a few miles of each other in South London and

remain in close contact.

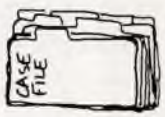
Markie and Peter still live at home with Mrs. Patel. Peter has a steady job and a girl friend and financially supports the family. Markie had been in a job training program for people with special needs, but the program was cut by the Thatcher government, and Markie has not worked or gone to school for years. His sisters are concerned that he uses drugs, but he denies it. Mrs. Patel is still alive. She is virtually blind after two cataract operations and drinks openly and regularly. Despite the difficult times that she has had with the children, she cared for them and she endured. They are devoted to her. She states that Markie is the most loyal of all of her grandchildren and is the one who takes care of her.

My family and I visit England every couple of years, and when we do, we always visit the Johnsons. We all get together in Mrs. Patel's council house, the same one that the children grew up in, and have what my wife has termed "a family reunion." My kids play with their kids. We cook food and reminisce, sharing memories of Violet and of our many experiences together. We joke about how Sandy used to "fancy" me. We take lots of group pictures. By the end, the sheer numbers of all of us in the tiny house become overwhelming, and we say tearful, hugging goodbyes.

We exchange Christmas cards and Kate and Sandy and I correspond, particularly after visits. Kate and her husband have visited us in the States.

I think of them at least every week, often more frequently. My thoughts are often tinged with regret and sadness, of ways that I let them down or didn't do enough. I worry about some of them. Sometimes I cry. I also feel a sense of pride about my work with them, as unorthodox as it was. I admire them. And of course I feel a deep sense of love and affection.

It strikes me as being ironic that I was Violet's social worker for only a few weeks and that I have loved her children, whom I know so much better than her, for over 20 years. And they still fondly think of me as their mom's social worker! And so, our chance meeting, that began as a professional encounter, in the Town Hall many years ago, changed all of our lives. And I am grateful for that.



POST SCRIPT

Since writing "Violet's Seeds," a great deal has happened, both between me and the children portrayed in the narrative, and within my self.

I mentioned the narrative to Sandy and to Kate in letters that I wrote to them, and Kate and I then became hooked up on e-mail. (We now correspond electronically at least once a week.) Kate conferred with two of her sisters, Laura and Sandy, and they asked to see the narrative. I initially felt some anxiety over this. Would it re-traumatize them to read it? Was I taking them on a journey that I was ready for but that they had not planned on? Would they like it? My wife reassured me that there was nothing in it about their mother's death that they did not already know and encouraged me to share it with them. Sonia Abels also urged me to do the same.

So with some trepidation I mailed them each a copy with a cover letter. I warned them of the painful content, explained why I felt the need to write it, predicted that some of my recollections might be faulty, and teased them about their aliases. I also suggested that they get together to discuss their reactions to it, which they agreed to do.

When they received their copies, they told Julie about what I had written, and she read the narrative as well. She was initially hurt that I had not sent her a copy of her own. The women also informed their brothers, who at this point asked not to read it. I am planning to contact them in the near future). We mutually made a decision, via e-mail, not to share it with Mrs. Patel, who might be upset by both the content and some of my comments about her.

I later learned that when Laura received the manuscript, she could not open it and telephoned Sandy. Sandy had been feeling sick with anticipation when the mail had been delivered the same morning and had initially resisted opening her copy. Sandy then read it to Laura over the phone. Kate e-mailed me, stating that they had

all read and discussed it and that although they had many questions(why the title, why the names, why had I gotten certain facts wrong?) it had been a powerful yet positive experience for them. She also informed me that she was having Sandy and Julie and their children over for dinner on Sunday and that she was cooking them chili and banana bread, which is what I used to cook them when I would have them over for dinner.

So I phoned them on Sunday, and we had a very emotional, intimate conversation about the narrative and their reactions to it. I have since received lengthy letters from Sandy (who has also relayed Laura's reactions and Julie. Kate, Sandy and Julie all have described how reading and talking about the tragedy has helped them to feel more connected with one another and that their private grief has moved to a shared bond of mutual loss and support. They had been in touch with their own reactions but had lost contact with what had happened to their siblings. Julie (who) told me that she still has a "winning smile" but is no longer gap-toothed) described it as, "hanging on to our personal loss when it comes to Mum, instead of coming together and recognizing our collective loss." She was reminded of what it was like to have been six at the time, anguishing over her inability to protect Peter, who was free, from the pain, now that she is revisiting those critical years from the perspective of a mother in her late 20's. Sandy shared how she had often wished that she were a boy, so that she could have protected her mother from her father. Kate has been reminded of the meaning of the scars that she carries on both of her hands from that fateful night.

Our letters and conversations have also focused on our relationships with one another. They have been struck by how young I was when I first met them We have all let each other know how important we have been and still are to one another. The metaphor of "being like family" has been frequently invoked.

Sandy has been keeping her own journal, and Julie and Kate have some ideas for narratives of their own. We are corresponding regularly now, and I am encouraging them to write about what happened. I have described for them how I did not know what I was going to write or what I would learn from it until I actually wrote my piece. And I certainly did not know how it would re-invigorate our relationships and perhaps help them to explore their past and their deep attachments to one another together. Julie told me what happened has always been a secret that she could not share with others, but that she now feels less inhibition about talking about it, it wasn't her fault; it was and is an important transformative part of her life, and some good things have even accrued from the tragedy. I appreciate her wisdom. □

REDISCOVERING MY SOCIAL WORK ROOTS: A Professor's Odyssey to the Practice of Juvenile Law

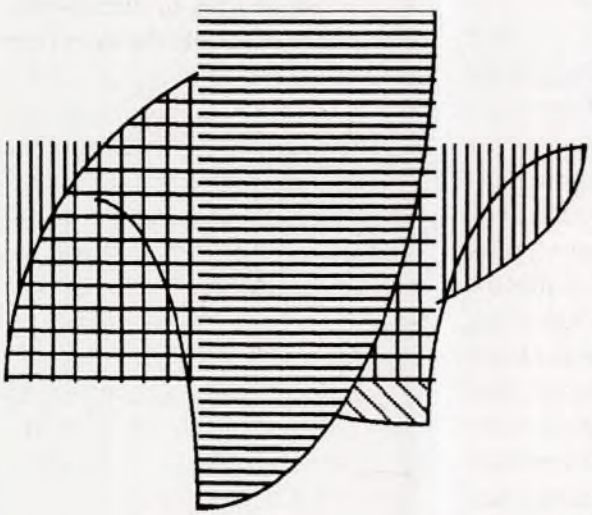
I trace my odyssey from my early years as an academic failure and a "disgrace to the Irish" to the profession of social work, an academic life, and to graduation from law school and the practice of juvenile law. My life-long quest for self-respect, largely and finally achieved, and the need to be of service to others and to make a difference again, provides my life with meaning that led me into the arms of social work 30 years earlier. The practice of juvenile law has resulted in new appreciation for the importance of the social work profession and the essential and valuable services of my social work colleagues. My debt to my law and social work profession is being repaid, I hope, through my work as an academic, in the classroom, and in the practice of juvenile law.

by James G. McCullagh

James G. McCullagh is professor, Department of Social Work, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

PROLOGUE

My life has changed dramatically — and yet it's not obvious — since the day I decided to apply to the state law school. Doing more of the same at the University just didn't make sense any more. I had just been promoted to Full Professor, having discharged my obligations with the requisite quantity (and perhaps quality) of publications, served on (too many) committees, and received student ratings sufficient to satisfy the Assessment Committee and the various administrators at each of the levels up to the Board of Regents. The struggle for acceptance and recognition from my initial letter of appointment as an Assistant Professor to promotion as Full Professor was not cause for celebration, just relief tinged with sadness and hurt I had arrived at this point and place with mixed feelings - so many positive but also many nega-tives for this transplanted kid from New York City and San Francisco.



I would retire here within 10 to 15 years or "drop dead" from a heart attack. My cardiologist had often told me I had heart problems. I was having a "mid-life crisis," my son had commented thoughtfully, after I had shared numerous feelings and thoughts with my wife and son. My existential despair presented an opportunity for self-examination and assessment. I could continue doing more of the same. I would get my one to three published articles per year and modest merit increases. So what! Cranking out papers didn't seem to matter anymore. Yet, I didn't want to drift, nor despair, nor become embittered.

Becoming an attorney had been a dream since I was 15 years old and first met my future Could I get a decent score on the

brother-in-law, then a second-year law student. But I knew, as did he and everybody else who counted, that I would never get into law school, let alone graduate from high school. No one had any positive expectations for me. I was the son of Irish immigrants. After being kicked out of my first Catholic grammar school, a school controlled by an Order of Polish priests and nuns, and then flunked out of Catholic high school after my freshman year, I was dumped on the local public high school, where semester after semester I flunked two or three courses. Each summer, for four years I attended various high schools and passed courses previously flunked. Much of the time after school was spent in the vice-principal's office for one infraction or another. My lasting memory of that SOB, a successful Irish American, was the humiliation of his constantly saying to me, "You're a disgrace to the Irish." I was steered into the non-academic track - the dummy track: bookkeeping, typing, woodworking. Some teachers were kind; I cherish their memory. Others, including some school counselors, were disinterested or nasty, and I, in rage, responded in kind.

The early school years were a disaster. I was stupid — and I knew it — and "written-off" by family and teachers. I did finally pass enough courses to graduate after four years of summer school, but the administration refused to grant me a diploma. I had too many behavior demerits. Some months later, while in the U.S. Army, I got a friend to speak to the Company Commanding Officer about writing a letter on my behalf, affirming my character. The Officer, of course, who had never met me, wrote the letter on my behalf. I received my diploma in the mail some months later. I was finally a high school graduate.

I was honorably discharged three years later on my 21st birthday. Somehow, I had avoided the stockades and military punishment, but I was an alcoholic with a criminal conviction for driving while intoxicated, having lived a debauched life. Believe it or not, I had become a personnel specialist and later a supervisor. Taking those typing and bookkeeping courses for "dummies" had actually paid off. I had been assigned to a barracks that included only enlisted men who had gone to college or had graduated from college with, of course, one exception. While I was a proficient personnel worker, I was surrounded by men and officers whom I did not understand — neither their topics of conversation nor their vocabularies.

I had quietly promised myself over time that if I were alive, not seriously ill, and not in prison or the stockades upon the end of my three-year enlistment, I would strive to become a decent person and also try to attend college. The path since then has been uneven and need not be told, other than to note that I discovered the profession of social work some 27 years ago as I repaired my despair. A Children's Bureau Traineeship — my benefactors — facilitated my way through the M.S.W. program, and, since then, my professional focus has been directed toward children and youth.

Memories of clients and university students dance on my brain at odd moments, and I know that leaving management (complete with clean shaven face, white shirt and suit, and hierarchy) to become a welfare worker, a supervisor at a state training school for boys, a school social worker, and later a professor was the right choice for me. After all, I have an authority problem. But, more importantly, every so often, I made a positive difference in people's lives.

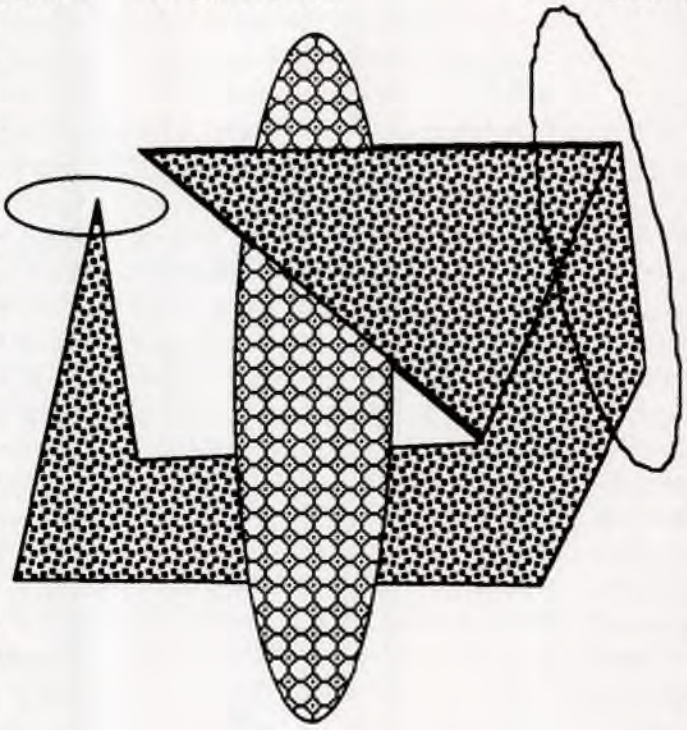
The last hurdle — the one that might finally erase the stigma of being declared "stupid" and a "disgrace to the Irish" — seemed impossible to achieve. Could I, in my mid 50's "get accepted" into one of the best public law schools in the nation?

→ TO P 25

LSAT? Would they really accept an older student with a rather undistinguished undergraduate career? And, could I handle law school studies while working full-time at the University, for I could not and would not give up economic security and, for the most part, satisfaction. Would I be able to compete with classmates? I also knew that more was at stake; I imagined that I represented older people (I did become the oldest student in my class of 250), social workers, and my university. If I failed, would others similarly situated be denied acceptance?

I was determined to make it; from colleagues came doubt, skepticism, and, from one, even hostility. My wife, an excellent social worker, was very supportive, while my son, a freshman in high school, was intrigued, worried about the possible loss of his father, and accepting.

Preparing for law school ranged from reading *One L* by Scott Turow (1977), a description of the author's first year at Harvard Law School, to watching the "Paper Chase" series late at night on cable TV, to sitting in on a number of law-related classes for undergraduates, to studying many nights and weekends to prepare for the feared LSAT. The letter of acceptance came in late March. Elation was quickly followed by anxiety. Did I really want three more years of intense pressure as a student, thousands of dollars in expenses, incredible isolation, many nights away from my family, seclusion in a tiny room, and study that meant going through thick volumes with hard-to-read print? I couldn't turn back. To turn away from this opportunity would be to admit failure.



I began law school in May, 1990, and graduated in December, 1992, while working full time at the University. I did no dishonor to myself nor my imagined constituent groups.

Only the "Bar" remained to be conquered in late January, 1993, the ordeal all law students fear. First came Bar review school for nine days, coupled with volumes of material to be digested, and then the two and one-half days of written examinations on 26 different law subjects — from Criminal Law to Torts and many fields that I refused to study while in law school. In law school, I chose such elective courses as Juvenile Law, Poverty Law, Comparative Constitutional Law, and Education Law, none of which are tested on the Bar. My social work roots ran deep. My classmates, intending to become the "complete" lawyer, grappled with Commercial Transactions ("I've got CT this semester," said a classmate. "Is that a disease?" I asked), Corporations, Federal Income Tax, and Debtor Creditor Law. I reasoned that I would never use all that "stuff" and, besides, I owed my profession — my first and lasting profession of social work - the more related knowledge that would come from my smorgasbord selection.

The pass rate for my cohort group was just 59 percent. Somehow, I passed, but some friends did not; some retook the exam six months later and passed, thereby moving beyond the agony of failure to share and rejoice; others left the state; and some chose not to become lawyers. I was "sworn" in by a Justice of the State Supreme Court. I was an attorney! . . . and still a professor in a Department of Social Work.

Not quite ready to "solo," I became a volunteer Assistant County Attorney in the Juvenile Division for the County. For one year — ranging between 8 hours and 20 hours a week — I almost became a "real" attorney. After awhile I was given sole responsibility for the entire afternoon docket — typically — 10 to

12 delinquency and children in need of assistance cases (CINAs). I was on my own. I sat side by side with a worker from the Department of Human Services or from Juvenile Court Services. I was their attorney and, for many, their former professor. Role confusion needed to be resolved. I was no longer "Dr." but Jim, the Assistant County Attorney.

We quickly disposed of the various cases. Clients' names and their situations blur. I would quickly speak with the assigned social worker or the juvenile court officer to clarify the proposed recommendations to the Court. Next, I would determine if clients were present including their attorneys. If everyone were ready, we would get them into the court room. Staying on time was critical while recognizing and accepting that, at times, agreements had to be worked out among the parties. Once all were seated, I would quietly knock on the door of the judge's chambers and announce: "Your honor. We're ready." With respect bordering on reverence, I was honored to refer to the judge as "Your Honor." Court, for me, then and now, is a solemn occasion; it is the protector of children's futures.

I knew I was becoming an accepted Assistant County Attorney when attorneys representing children and youth charged with delinquent acts (really crimes) would try to work out a plea. Few youth charged with delinquent acts ever have the equivalent of a trial. The system would come to a complete halt if contested hearings were held to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the youth committed the delinquent acts. Plea agreements are the norm. Court time can range from 15 to 30 minutes. An adjudicatory hearing can take anywhere from a few hours to a few days. Often, it is a simple swap of similar offenses. For example, the youth will admit to two simple misdemeanors and the State will dismiss one or two simple misdemeanors. Plea agreements were invariably accepted by the presiding judge.

The year passed quickly. My confidence increased as we flowed through the afternoon docket. The work became routine. Anxiety in the beginning was almost turning to boredom. Children, parents, attorneys, and social workers or juvenile court officers paraded through the court room. With each case came the accompanying "piles" of reports, albeit important, to be read — or at least scanned to find the important parts. I increasingly became aware of community resource providers, the quality of their work, and their reports. I reacquainted myself with the DSM-IV, various psychological tests, current therapies, the different types of family foster care and group care, and a range of other services to families.

I "tried" (went to trial) three cases and won; the cases were admittedly not complicated. I was ready to "solo" in Juvenile Court and to accept court appointments and assume all attorney responsibilities.

THE PRACTICE OF JUVENILE LAW

I received my first case from the Clerk of Court. I would be representing the children in an abuse case. I read the petition and supporting documents, and reviewed the appropriate Code sections. My first letter to a client was typed, with another letter to the mother. I devised a system for billing the State and keeping track of my time. The administrative/clerical aspects are necessary but a nuisance.

Since that time, phone calls from the Clerk asking me to accept a new case occur with just the right frequency. I now represent parents or children in CINA proceedings and juveniles who are alleged to have committed delinquent acts. My role as attorney and guardian ad litem is the most meaningful, challenging, and invariably satisfying, but it also can be the most painful and difficult.

The guardian ad litem is expected to conduct "in-person interviews with the child and each parent, guardian, or other person having custody of the child; "visit "the home, residence, or both home and residence of the child and any prospective home or residence of the child;" interview "any person providing medical, social, educational, or other services to

the child;" obtain "first-hand knowledge, if possible, of the facts, circumstances, and parties involved in the matter in which the person is appointed guardian ad litem; " and attend "any hearings in the matter in which the person is appointed as the guardian ad litem" (Iowa Code, Chapter 232.2(22)).

To be truthful, the role is not dissimilar to what a social worker might do when conducting an assessment. I interview children, parents, foster parents, therapists, and various service providers; I visit a variety of social service agencies; the youth shelter; the homes of parents, grandparents, and foster families; and prospective homes for the children that I represent. And, then, professional judgments must be made. As a child's attorney I represent the child's interests, but as guardian ad litem, I represent the child's best interests.

Role conflict between the child's interests and, in my judgment the child's best interests can and does occur, especially when I represent teenagers who, for example, either do not want to be adjudicated CINA, have their relationship rights with their biological parents involuntarily terminated, or do not want services that will restrict their freedom (such as demanding their mandatory participation in an after-school day care program five days a week). I offer no simple solutions, and I certainly feel much anguish when there is conflict between roles. Sometimes, I state both my clients' positions as their attorney and, in my professional judgment, their best interests.

In my heart, sometimes I become very close to the children I represent. At times I have said to my wife, "Let me tell you about a couple of children I saw today... I'd like to take them home." Of course, I cannot. For other children, making connections is much more difficult. A 13 year-old young man, whom I have seen a few times, is probably doomed. After I "made the case" in the Judge's chambers, with all the relevant parties present, that at this time my client is not a CINA under any of the stated provisions in the Petition, even though his school attendance record is dismal, we proceeded into Court. There, during the proceedings, the Judge told my young client that he was expected to attend school and that if he refused, necessary judicial action would ensue. My client quietly and defiantly said, "Do what you gotta do." Silence. I was stunned. The Judge, turning to the social worker for the Department, said: "Place... in a youth shelter after the hearing. If the local shelter is full, check around, but get him into a shelter today." Afterwards, there were conferences with the young man and social workers, preparatory to his trip to the youth shelter, to see what we could do to help him change his "attitude" and get him out of the shelter before the next hearing in two weeks. Two days later, I spoke to him at the shelter. He was content to stay for the full two weeks. This arrangement was better than staying at his cramped apartment! He will stay for almost a month.

I represented a mother who is young, attractive, and very poor. She lost her job, had been cut off from various welfare programs, and was unable to provide the necessary documents to receive Title XIX and food stamps. Now she is dependent on her new boyfriend and her father. Her child is placed out of the home because of two recent founded child abuse reports that determined that the child was denied critical care and that the parents failed to provide adequate supervision. Before the hearing I had read the two reports, the petition, a prior temporary removal order, and other documents. I met her for the first time at the court house, although my letter had requested that she call me to arrange a conference. I explained what may/will happen at the hearings, asked numerous questions, including whether she wanted her child back in her home and how visitation was going. Yes, she badly wanted her child back at home. She agreed that her child was a CINA. At the hearing, we stipulated. I spoke with the Department of Human Services (DHS) worker; she had concerns — no way would she support a recommendation that the child be allowed to go back home after the hearing. I spoke to the Assistant County Attorney, the attorney and guardian ad litem, the father's attorney, and the DHS service provider. I noted among the family in attendance a personal acquaintance of mine from years ago who supports the father. Awkward. I explained our position and worked

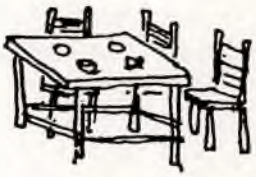
out the stipulation. All attorneys agreed. I, on behalf of my client, agreed to services offered (really, have no choice) even the dropping of UAs (urinalysis), though nothing in the record suggested substance abuse is a problem. The father's attorney stated that his client wanted his child. Impasse. We worked out visitation arrangements.

We're all in Court sitting crowded around two tables awaiting the Judge's arrival. The Judge arrives and the plea is accepted. The Judge admonishes each parent to spend as much time with the child as possible. The child will not be returned home to either parent. We await the disposition hearing eight weeks hence. After the court hearing is concluded, I meet with my client and attempt to stress what she must do to get her child back.

I wonder as I leave the courtroom if my client will make the efforts to see her son, complete the application process to get food stamps, etc., or perhaps find a job. A family member commented that neither parent should have the child. Services will begin. Now the providers — social workers and others with various types of training and education — step in to work their "magic."

My job is over until just before the next hearing, absent a phone call or a crisis that will bring us back before the court. I'll see my client in eight weeks, again for a brief period, and the process will continue every six months until successful reunification and discharge or, perhaps, termination of parental rights.

As an attorney, I increasingly am aware of the limitations of my role. I protect my clients' legal rights; represent their interests and/or their best interests; explain the juvenile justice system and, more importantly, the social service system and how it impacts on their lives from the perspective of the court; try to shape numerous decisions in my clients' favor; and, when I can, try to "social work" my clients.



One example of "social working" a client: After sitting at the kitchen table for about an hour with my client and her boyfriend, discussing an alleged incident of physical abuse of her son and whether we should contest the Department's founded report, it became increasingly obvious that their relationship and the way they communicated would lead to another separation and would only perpetuate relationship and communication problems for my client and perhaps delay the return of her child. I risked sharing my observations of what I saw in their relationship and interpretations of what I heard. The father — her boyfriend — quickly agreed, and the mother did not challenge him or my observations and interpretations. I suggested therapeutic interventions and services. Later, I spoke with the Department worker and suggested services. In time, my recommendations, as stated by the State, were accepted by the court.

Tears almost came as I recently left the courtroom and drove back to my office. The courtroom had been packed with family members and attorneys for this review hearing of two girls who have now been placed out-of-home for almost nine months. They have thrived and wanted to stay in their current home. Attorneys for the mother and then the father made the case for their children. I spoke on behalf of the children as their representative and, if you will, protector. I fear that if these children are returned to either parent, they will once again be witnesses to violence — violence to their mother and the ensuing and continuing trauma that each child lived with daily prior to removal. In three months a permanency hearing will be held to determine, at least, a permanent home for an extended period. I dread the uncertainty, especially for the children, wondering what the court will decide. For the next few months, those children will have an uncertain future.

I now enter the lives of clients and their families as their lawyer and, for children and youth, as their guardian ad litem. My social work colleagues — many of them former students — are there to mend the lives of my clients. They have the harder challenge. My law work is much neater; I revolve around the movements of the court - temporary removal, initial, adjudicatory, disposition, review, and termination hearings. I am in my clients' lives, and then I am out of their lives. The providers

— many social workers — are there before, between, and after court hearings. My respect for their labors as they work under very difficult circumstances again reminds me of why I chose social work as my first and enduring profession.

POSTSCRIPT

Balancing a modest solo law practice with the University's demands of teaching, writing, and service means that I work (by choice) seven days a week. I am driven. The mix seems right for me. I believe that I can make the combination of law and social work serve each in their respective domains.

I have gained new appreciation for the importance of the social work profession and the essential and valuable services of my social work colleagues. Doing family preservation, family centered services, and group and individual counseling for a host of social and personal issues are so much more difficult than what I do as an attorney in Juvenile Court. I walk my clients through the system, making sure that their rights are protected, while also addressing their interests, and, as appropriate, their best-interests.

As a professor, I had lost touch with the "hurt" of so many that I had discussed in the aggregate. Now I am in touch again. My comfortable life — the two-professional-earner-household — is a privilege, and, to be honest, I benefit from the misery of others. The social work courses that I teach are enhanced by my juvenile law practice. I am more at peace with my new marriage of social work and the law and the respect that I need from both professions. □

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THE JOSHUA STORY:
How Personal Experiences Can Inform Professional Work

This narrative describes the way in which experiences with my son, Joshua, who has multiple handicaps, have informed my understanding of the true meaning of social work. Through the process of becoming a recipient of help, I have developed new insights into the helping process and a deeper commitment to reforming our formal networks of care so that they more effectively assist people in finding their own voice within a community of others in the midst of suffering.

by Kathleen H. Powell

Kathleen H. Powell, M.S.W. is Chair, Department of Social Work, Frostburg State University, Frostburg, MD

Frederick Reamer (1987) writes about social work as a "calling" similar to that traditionally linked to the ministry. This principle has been true in my own experience. I wanted to become a social worker before I even knew what social work entailed. I don't quite know how to explain this. It's not that I had any personal experience with a social worker. Perhaps my "calling" came out of growing up in an area with a high poverty rate. Or perhaps, it came out of growing up in the 60'S during a time of great social change. Whatever the reason, for me, social work is a master status — part of my identity, my soul, my life. I can't imagine being anything else.

Despite my close identification with the profession and years of education and practice experience, I don't think I fully understood social work until recently. This narrative is about the lessons I have learned regarding the true meaning of social work and about my teacher, my son, Joshua.

For most of my life, I have led a relatively charmed existence. I have always enjoyed the benefits of a stable family, a comfortable home, a fulfilling career, and a decent income. Because these benefits were never threatened, I was able to take them for granted.

Four years ago, however, with the birth of Joshua, my life changed dramatically. Over these last four years, my husband and I have logged hundreds of hours in doctors' waiting rooms, frequented the lobbies of numerous hospitals and clinics, spent many sleepless nights, and cried oceans of tears. The reason is that Joshua is multiply handicapped. At four he is unable to sit up, roll over, crawl, walk, or talk. He does not use his hands partly due to a condition the therapists have called sensory defensiveness in which normal sensations are experienced with displeasure and pain. He has between three and eight seizures a day that are interspersed with "myoclonic jerks," a series of startle responses stimulated by internal "misfirings" in the brain. He is chronically constipated which, I have come to understand, is a common problem associated with severe physical handicaps. Several times each year he is hospitalized with pneumonia due to his tendency to aspirate his own secretions. The worst part of all is that Joshua rarely smiles. He

Author's Note

I am grateful to Dr. Suzanne England for her many kind comments and helpful suggestions in the incipient and final versions of this paper.

is frequently miserable — moaning and crying. When he is happy, he seems to be completely oblivious to his surroundings. Our family album is filled with pictures of Josh sucking his thumb and staring endlessly into space.

The doctors (and we've seen many) have not been able to determine the cause of Josh's problems. I had a normal pregnancy and delivery and family histories on both sides are devoid of problems. About two years ago, two MRI's, four tissue samplings, and countless blood and urine tests, we were told that Josh had a relatively rare genetic disorder known as Batten's Disease in which the body's cells slowly die due to an accumulation of a fatty substance. Being an academic, I immediately went to a genetics text which provided the following information:

Batten's Disease *(neuronal ceroid lipofuscinosis: NCL) A group of invariably fatal childhood neurologic nervous system disorders. The first symptoms are deteriorating vision or seizures, progressing to personality and behavior changes, loss of communication skills, increasing spasticity and loss of motor skills, facial grimacing, abnormal body movements, and mental impairment. Affected children eventually become blind, bedridden, and demented. . . Currently there is no treatment available. Research on animal models is being conducted. . . (Wynbrandt and Ludman, 1991, pp. 37-38)*

The news was so horrifying that I skipped the rest and went to the last section of the text that described the type of Batten's Disease the doctors thought Josh had. It read:

Infantile (Santavuori disease). *Age of onset is about eight months and progresses rapidly. Infants fail to thrive, head growth slows, resulting in an abnormally small head (MIcrocephaly), and they exhibit shock-like muscle contractures (myoclonic jerks). Death usually occurs by age five, though some have survived a few years longer in a vegetative state (Wynbrandt and Ludman, 1991, pp. 37-38).*

I remember sitting on the floor of the library, hidden in some out-of-the-way stacks, sobbing for what seemed like an eternity.

Over the last year, Josh has not deteriorated as the textbook and the doctors said he would. In addition, subsequent tests and medical consultations have indicated that, in fact, Josh probably does not have Batten's Disease. While we were glad to learn this, we received the news with mixed feelings. We were in limbo once again with no label to assign, no one to blame. We have given up (at least for now) the hope of ever knowing the cause of Josh's problems. In some ways, it doesn't really matter what the cause is. The only thing that matters is the result.

In my quest to discover ways to cope with this situation, I have consulted many people from many different disciplines, some of them social workers just like me. I have read many books, some of them written by social workers just like me. But, true to the old adage, experience has been the best teacher. My experiences over the last four years have taught me what it feels like to be caught totally off-guard and stripped of normal coping mechanisms. In addition, my personal experiences have given me deeper insights into the helping process; insights that have impacted on my professional work. Probably the most significant lessons in this regard have come about through the process of becoming a recipient of help.

Learning how to ask for and accept help requires a resocialization process. I suspect that this resocialization is difficult for most independent people; however, it is particularly difficult for one who has been socialized (formally and informally) to be a giver of help. Through my experiences, I have

learned how to sit humbly at a church dinner to raise money for Josh's medical expenses. I have learned how to become an advocate when, in meetings with school personnel, it was clear that they felt they alone were the experts in determining Josh's educational plan. I have learned how to be on the other side of the therapy room and describe my rage, my pain, and my never-ending sadness to a mental health professional who concluded that I was depressed and needed to be on medication. I have learned how to smile and say thank you to the neighbor who brought dinner for our family or the friend who offered to babysit our older daughter while we took Josh to the hospital for tests. I have learned how to bare my soul in support group meetings as the other members tried to "solve" my latest problem. In short, I have learned more about helping from these experiences than I have through my education and years of social work practice.

Admitting to one's need for help is a disquieting experience. Our society is not kind to people who are unable to deal effectively with their own problems. While we social workers give lip service permission to those who seek help in whatever forms, the fact of the matter is that we are part of a residual "system" of care that operates on the principle of "less eligibility." We live in a confusing world where reaching out for formal help is viewed either as (a) a sign of weakness, (b) an attempt to secure more than one is legitimately entitled to, or, at best, (c) a trendy journey to what Harry Specht and Mark Courtney (1994) have termed, "The Church of Individual Repair." Regardless of which label is applied, the bottom line is that the systems within which we work often blame people for their problems. This blaming operates in very subtle ways even in situations where there is a collective compassion at work.

For the most part, people have not held me accountable for my son's disabilities. They recognize that I took appropriate precautions during my pregnancy and delivery, all meant to ensure a healthy child. Generally speaking, most people feel sorry for me. They see our family as people who had the poor misfortune of being the carriers of a genetic malfunction. Despite these compassionate stereotypes, people still hold us accountable to a standard of healing which specifies a time limit on mourning as well as specific coping strategies to deal with losses such as ours. Our being depressed (past the period of initial grief) has not been viewed as socially acceptable; therefore, the suggestion has been to medicate it away. Our being angry with the school system about the fact that our son is without physical therapy services has not been viewed as socially acceptable; therefore, the suggestion has been made that the anger we feel toward the school system is merely the displaced anger we feel about the fact that we have a child with special needs. The fact that we have problems that are likely to get worse rather than better has not been viewed as socially acceptable; therefore, some have chosen not to relate to us at all, or at least, to relate to us in limited ways. Being deviant is a lonely place in which to find oneself.

Don't misunderstand me. Not all of the help I have received has been controlling and blaming. Some of the most meaningful kinds of help have been those that have validated my feelings as normal, been patient with my own process of healing, and not attempted to offer pat solutions and quick fixes. Through my own personal experiences, I have learned that social work is not about rescuing people from their pain in an artificial sense. Rather, it's about helping people find ways to learn from their suffering in their own due time. A very wise clinical supervisor of mine once reminded me that sometimes things have to get worse before they get better. As a result of my experiences, I now have a deeper understanding of what she meant.

Thomas Moore (1992) in his book, *Care of the Soul,* applies the principles of Carl Jung and James Hillman in discussing the distinction between care and cure. He writes:

It [care of the soul] appreciates the mystery of human suffering and does not offer the illusion of a problem-free life. It sees every fall into ignorance and confusion as an opportunity to discover that the beast residing at the center of the labyrinth is also an angel (p. 20)... I often think of this paradox as I sit with someone with tears in her eyes, searching for some way to deal with a death, a divorce, or a depression. It is a beast, this thing that stirs in the core of her being, but

it is also the star of her innermost nature. We have to care for this suffering with extreme reverence so that, in our fear and anger at the beast, we do not overlook the star (p. 21).

I think that in my practice as a social worker and in my experience with my son, and others I have been too quick to "slay the beast," that is, to remove the pain. The most meaningful kind of help, however, is that which is offered within the very context of that pain. It does not pretend to offer externally produced answers but rather enables people to discover themselves within their own suffering. Part of this journey, I have come to understand, is exploring our own personal mythology, especially as it relates to that which causes our pain. In my family, we now have an addition to our mythology. We call that addition the Joshua story. If I cannot have control over the cure to Joshua's misery, then at least I can have control over how his (and our) story is told.

I have found techniques such as storytelling, visualization, journaling, creative writing, art, and music to be enormously helpful in embracing my own "beast" and in telling the Joshua story. I now find myself using these same techniques in my work with others. Tools such as these seem to help in interpreting the subjective meanings we attach to our experiences. In transcending the objective facts, we enter a world that is surreal, wherein we can begin to see the "angel in the labyrinth." In sharing our stories, our pictures, our poems with others, we begin to build a community of hope and despair. We begin to put aside the awful details of the experience itself in order to gain a new perspective. It has been through telling the Joshua story that I have been able to rediscover a sense of power through the experience of being powerless. The story has helped me to make friends with the "beast" in both Joshua and myself. It has also enabled me to form connections with others in ways that I would not have otherwise.

My experience with Joshua has helped me to understand in an experiential way what I guess I have always known intellectually: It matters how help is given. Alan Keith-Lucas (1972) in his classic text, *Giving and Taking Help,* cautions us not to confuse help with control. He writes, "help is something a person finds... Control, on the other hand, is society acting on him(sic)." (p. 9) I now know that much of our "helping" is control rather than help. In formal helping, our clients become objects to be acted upon rather than people in control of their own feelings and decision making processes. As practitioners, we make preconceived judgments about how people are "supposed" to feel under certain circumstances. We pretend to be the experts and in so doing forget that clients are the experts in their own subjective experiences. I have come to understand that much of our formal helping is not helpful at all. Rather, it is disempowering, stigmatizing, and punitive.

I am reminded of

Dr. Bernie Siegel's (1986) description of the point in his career as an oncological surgeon when, instead of recognizing the personhood of his patients, he had come to view them as though they were broken cars in need of repair. All humanity, both his and theirs, was lost. He hadn't planned for things to develop in this way. They just did.

I think that's the way things happened for me. I was numb to my own humanity and I had become numb to the humanity of others. I had begun to see my clients as objects to be processed on a social service assembly line. I had gotten caught up in the system. I had begun to confuse help with control.

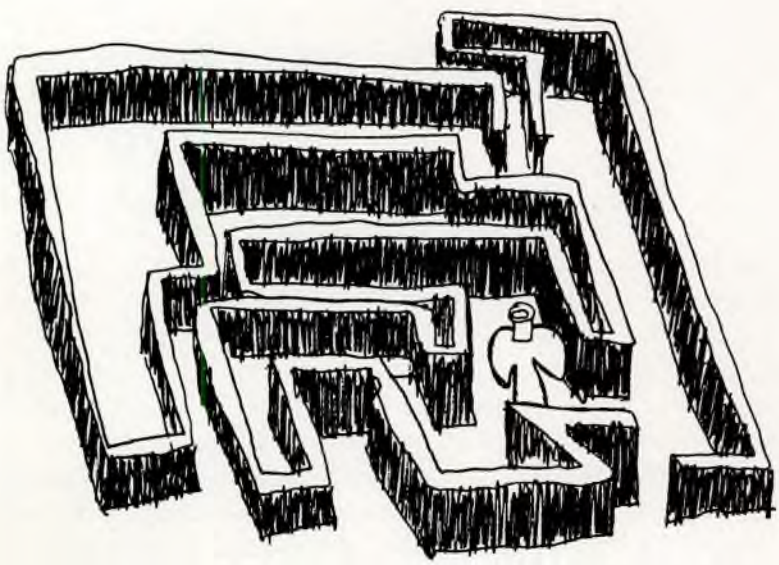
It seems ironic in a profession such as social work, so heavily committed to people, that practitioners and the organizations within which we work can become so inhumane. Although some may laugh at my naiveté, I truly believe that it was my own over-identification with

my profession that blinded me from seeing this process at work in my own practice. The evolution of my experiences with Joshua has enabled me to become more thoughtful about the nature of social work as a humanistic profession. The development of my understanding has been analogous to focusing a camera. At first, my anguish over Joshua obscured my ability to empathize with anyone else. After all, I reasoned, no one could possibly be suffering as much as I was. Everyone else's experiences paled in comparison to my own. It is only recently that the picture through my camera's lens has come into clearer focus.

I now know that comparing the details of one person's experiences to another's is meaningless. Your own problems seem worse than other's simply because they are *your* problems. I am troubled, however, about the way in which we invariably get trapped in this arbitrary and meaningless comparison. Much of the research that provides our knowledge base in social work attempts to do this by applying positivistic methods that overlook the contextual meaning attached to human events. The treatment modalities we use often pre-suppose that certain techniques are the only viable methods to use in working with people who share common characteristics. The organizations within which we work attempt to categorize people in various ways because of their funding and/or regulatory requirements.

If you had confronted me several years ago about the nature of my own practice, I would have denied owning most of the problems I have just described. Not me, the woman who always tried to practice from an empowerment model. Not me, the woman who always tried to give people choices. Not me, the woman who attempted to be eclectic and utilize whatever techniques (micro and macro) might work in a given situation. Not me, the woman who tried to take my cues from my clients and bow to their infinite wisdom. Not me, the woman who chose to work in small, community-based agencies that seemed closer to the clients served. I now know, however, that a kind of numbness was exactly what had beset me. As in Bernie Siegel's case, it happened before my very eyes despite my best intentions. My commitments to others, it seems, were merely words and token actions. I had no experiential understanding of what it meant to be vulnerable and in need of help.

In my work, I am now better able to understand that, despite all my years of education and experience, I am not the expert — the client is. In my pre-Joshua period, I didn't know what it was to look death in the eye and mentally plan my own child's funeral realizing full well that, in the end, if I called 911, the rescue personnel would be legally obligated to resuscitate him against my wishes. I didn't know what it was to face the possibility that, if I lost my job, my family would be unable to secure health insurance for all our members because my son would be labeled a "bad risk." I didn't know what it was to complete a 10 page application for financial assistance complete with all the accompanying documentation only to be denied due to the fact that my family wasn't considered "destitute." I didn't know what it was to make five telephone calls to social service



agencies only to find out that my son was ineligible or, at best, would be put on a waiting list for services because his needs were not considered to be critical at this point in time. Although I had gone through similar motions with clients, up to that point, my work had been a purely academic exercise.

My experience with Josh has transformed me in some very profound ways. I have come to the conclusion that one cannot be a truly effective social worker unless one has experienced a major problem in one's life for which one had to seek help. I would almost advocate that we make this a prerequisite for admission to social work education. What is a major problem? Well, who knows? We must leave the definition to people themselves. All I know is that, before Joshua, I was not fully able to understand my clients' experiences in becoming a recipient of help. I wasn't able to empathize with them fully because I had come to see social work as an act performed on behalf of other people rather than as an interactional process that required some give and take on the part of both parties.

I look at things differently now. I have a greater appreciation for the precarious nature of life — the delicate balance in which we live out our existence. I understand that we are all one step away from potential catastrophe. But, I also understand that even in very dark places, there is light. I now know that, as people, we have untapped capacities — strengths that we didn't even know we had. I also know that our communities have a wealth of resources both formal and informal that can work if we only hold them accountable.

I seem to have more questions now about my practice than I have answers. Perhaps it's progress that I am at least able to raise the questions. I do know that I have a greater appreciation for the need to recognize clients as experts and a belief that, as practitioners, we should avoid imposing our own professional hegemony. I also have a deeper commitment to reforming our system of care so that it recognizes clients as people first and affords them with opportunities to accept help on their own terms rather than ours. I now know that my clients and I have something in common. We both make mistakes. We both struggle to find answers. We are both afraid. In short, we are both fully human. □

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RETROSPECTIVE

Mirrors are cruel things, best turned towards the wall,

As practiced by a poet famous for work on images other than her own.

I made a similar choice — therapy, not poetry, but what's the odds?

Professions both, and they accomplish the same purpose.

Eventually of course, the disowned image comes back, either way.

Esther Fibush

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The Poem is from *Instead of a Journal*

REFLECTIONS

This is a narrative of my 50 years in social work. The stories told are intended to reflect the times and the then current issues. Through this device, I have discussed my practice and academic career with a view toward finding my own coherence and offering to others a sense of hope and vision

by Carol H. Meyer

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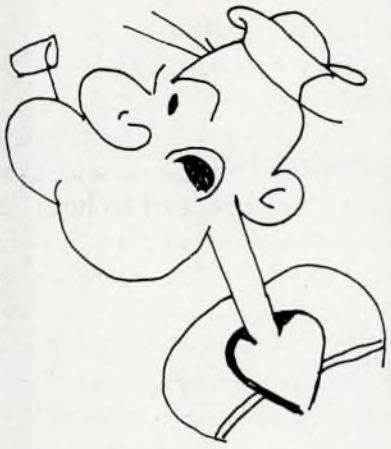


"All writing derives from, is the product of, helps to construct, lives... autobiographical writing centres the knowing subject and makes the basis of its knowledge-claims available for analytic scrutiny."[i]

"I yam what I yam."[ii]

WHO, ME?

Reflections on what? My critiques of the profession? My obsession with preserving practice? My impatience with pretension? My rebellious conceits? Perhaps these quibbles are all threads in the same weave, and as I reflect upon them and see how they all played out in my practice, teaching, and writing, I will learn something about myself. A few things I know already, and I learned them the hard way. One of my work evaluations included the comment that "she doesn't suffer fools gladly." I resented that criticism a lot, and it still rankles, although it was said eons ago. But it is probably true. The flip side of that idea is my impatience, always wanting to move on even before an idea has been digested. This flaw probably explains why I have always been a little "outside" of the professional mainstream. Then (and certainly not finally...) there is my tendency to make light of things, to joke when things are serious. For those who do not know me, this can create some misunderstanding.

This is the context of what follows. I am glad to tell this story, because it allows me to derive some personal and professional coherence from looking backward. I also want to offer to the person who reads this the assurance that one can span 50 years in the profession of social work and come out of it only slightly scathed, not burned-out, and still hopeful. If that reader connects with some ideas, gains some of her or his own insights, and finds courage to push on, then these reflections will have been worthwhile.

Note

REFLECTIONS invited Dr. Meyer to write this "Brief Reflection."

THE PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY

Contrary to the experience of almost everyone I know, my school and work experiences were always unplanned, and happened mostly through accident. I am not even sure that I can dignify my professional journey as one where I took advantage of opportunities. This view of the randomness in life experience has led me to pose the question "Who, me?" when I have been favored with chances... some of which I took. It was not so much luck as it was the unfolding of new discoveries; something always seemed to lead me to something else. Perhaps, as I re-trace my steps here, I will find an explanation... but I doubt it. I tend to believe in accidents and unintended consequences; there is too much uncertainty in the world for one to be able to plan very much. Also, I think it is one of the joys in life that there are always surprises around the bend, and that we cannot foretell the future. My comfort with unpredictability has allowed me to take (safe) risks, never really knowing where my choices would lead. This is definitely a non-linear way to live one's life.

SCHOOL AND BEYOND

I was a college drop-out before it was common to be one. Erik Erikson spoke of the "adolescent moratorium," and that offers me a socially acceptable excuse if I were to need one. The truth is that it took me three universities before I found it possible to remain long enough to graduate. I went to New York University [NYU] (briefly) and got a job at Greenwich House (one of the earliest settlement houses), where I was a kind of gopher for the director Mary Simkovitch. Among other things, I led my first group, of 10 year old boys, helping them to make model airplanes, and I delivered milk to people living in tenements in Greenwich Village. No one told me this was social work, perhaps because Mrs. Simkovitch was not too kindly inclined toward social workers. It was at The University of Pittsburgh that I accidentally discovered professional social work. Ruth Smalley, a leading scholar of the Functional approach to social casework, then Dean of the School of Social Work, gave some lectures on Human Behavior in the Social Environment in one of my undergraduate college courses, and that did it! I became one of the student groupies of a house in which lived some of the leading social workers of the World War II era. My strongest memory of Pittsburgh is the taste of the soup Gertrude Wilson (a professor of group work) always had hot on the stove. I worked as a group worker at Soho Community House, where I thought then that I had learned everything there was to know. Part of my job was to bring food to the steel workers who were on strike. I suppose that in the beginning, social work meant to me distributing food; come to think of it, that isn't a bad definition.

Before I was graduated, Dean Smalley invited me in for an admissions interview for The University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work, where she would soon become the Dean. Ever since then I have had as an intellectual hobby the study of Functional Casework. My admissions interview was surely "an experience in form" as the Functionalists might say. It was intended to take the applicant (student, practitioner) through the "pain" of taking help so as to develop empathy for one's clients. In that admissions interview, I cried, I laughed, I perspired, I regressed and matured in the space of an hour or two, and when I was finished (or when Dean Smalley was finished with me), I took to my bed. It may have been cowardice, but I decided upon the New York School of Social Work (NYSSW). A footnote on the incomparable Ruth Smalley: Twenty years later I wrote my first book and she was asked by the publisher to review the manuscript. I received a copy of her six handwritten page response, and although her name was cut off, I recognized her tough, analytic thinking and her inimitable prose. The following year I met her at a conference and asked her if she were the one, and I had guessed right. No ambiguity there; she was a person who left

her mark!

Perhaps I should have gone to Pennsylvania, because it was just after the War, and the NYSSW was over-stocked with returning veterans. I was turned down several times, never considering the preference given to male veterans as a contentious issue. The School was on the quarter system then, so I reapplied four times all within the same year, and was told to "go away and grow up." First I worked at the National Recreation Association as a program developer and copy editor, but it was boring. I returned to the summer camp where I had been a counselor, and placed an ad in

The Survey. (Then, the only journal of social welfare that I knew of.) It said something like... "wanted... job in a social agency; will do anything." To my surprise, Elizabeth Chichester, the director of The Bridgeport (Connecticut) Family Society answered, and through this accident, I became entrenched in the field of family and children's services. I remember my salary... $1800. I commuted to the NYSSW for a part-time course in Public Welfare, given by Alpha Pepper (who had once been a police woman). I was seriously hooked on social work then, and so began my torturing of the admissions committee. I was totally untrained in social work, having majored in history and sociology, and having had only peripheral jobs in settlement houses. The professional staff of the Bridgeport agency were role models, and I tried to copy them. This was a community based agency, so I generally "walked over" to my clients' houses. Why is it we remember our first clients so well? My favorite activity was the evening hours when the agency took on the Travelers' Aid Society function and we chased runaway kids (to save them) who were on the train from New York City.

After a year, the NYSSW succumbed to the regular pressure of my applications, and my real intellectual life began. In the time I attended the school (1947-49 and 54-56), among the great teachers were: Gordon Hamilton, Lucille Austin, Florence Hollis, Fern Lowry, Eveline Burns, Virginia Bellsmith, Marion Kenworthy, Clara Kaiser, Mitchell Ginsberg, Herman Stein, Alfred Kahn... and the brilliant curmudgeon Philip Klein. I can never over-estimate their influence on me. They were so committed to developing social work theory and practice, so insistent upon standards, so demanding that students think, that there was no room in our minds for anything but applying ourselves totally to the task. But more, each of them was a philosopher of his or her subject: a humanist? a romanticist? a scholar? Each intermingled his or her interests with those of others. Their professional and intellectual boundaries were permeable; it was social work purpose and knowledge, not only methodology, that were deemed important. Later, I will comment on social work education today; here the reader should note the way it used to be, and cannot be again.

My field work experiences also were formative, changing the direction of my interests and commitments in life. First, I was placed in what was lamely called The New York Section (of the Council of Jewish Women). This was a social agency that focused on immigration problems of Jewish refugees from the Holocaust in Europe. There were three students there, and we firmly believed that unless an agency had the titles of family, children, or psychiatric as part of its name, it just wasn't a social agency. So we complained to our field advisor and asked to be replaced. Our "hearing" took about one minute, and we were returned without discussion to "The Section." Such peremptory

advisement would be unthinkable in today's student-as-consumer environment. How fortunate it was! Our clients opened up the real world for us, and we grew up.

Just as I was leaving the placement, I met a French social worker from Oeuvres de Secours des Enfants (OSE) who was accompanying boatloads of orphaned refugee children and adolescents to their American relatives. All of these substitute family arrangements did not

work out of course, for after their concentration camp experiences, the children were under-developed, uneducated, and almost totally lacking in social skills. It was obvious that they needed social and psychiatric services, and they wanted to stay together. I was asked (who, me?) to work with them as a group... a group that kept growing as more children arrived. I happened to be taking a group work class with the director of the Bronx (NYC) YMHA, and he agreed to offer the Y's facilities for the group to meet. I had never been to the Bronx before, I could not speak half of the languages the group members spoke, my field placement was over and I had no direct supervision, and I was almost overwhelmed by the children's Holocaust narratives. Their family adjustment and psychiatric problems were severe, and there were few resources available to them. Through some mixture of youthful naiveté and desperation, I called upon the New York Psychoanalytic Institute for help, and the first person who came to the Bronx on a Sunday morning was the famed psychoanalyst Ernst Kris. He was so moved by the experience that he induced a dozen or so other members of the Institute to join him, and they volunteered countless hours of their time, talking with the children there at the YMHA in the Bronx on Sunday mornings in the summer.

This refugee group became my masters thesis project. I interviewed them and discovered that the United Services for New Americans (USNA), the agency that was working with their families (their aunts and uncles and cousins), had overlooked the particular needs of the children... now in their teens. The families often felt guilty and inadequate to the task of relating to the children, and the children felt alienated. The thing I am most proud of in my professional life is that I presented my masters thesis to USNA's director, and convinced him to develop an independent youth service. I was beginning to understand what it meant to be a social worker.

My second field experience was at the Neurological Institute of Presbyterian Hospital. There, I was in a student group that included, among others, a Catholic Priest, a Baptist Minister, and a Reform Jewish Rabbi. In 1949 we were in the middle of the psychiatric deluge, and my memory is more of seminars than of clients. This was a rigorous experience, and it probably served as the foundation of my clinical knowledge. Yet, I knew that hospital/clinical work was not to be my future. I missed the messier, generic world of family and children's services, with its undefined problems, its uncertainties, and its diversity. Also, I didn't like it when physicians and psychiatrists had the last word in my cases.

THE WORLD OF WORK

After graduating, I got a job as a beginning caseworker at the Community Service Society

(CSS). Rumor had it that it was a very traditional, proper, and "lady-like" place, but also that it was an agency where the "best of casework" was practiced. (It was all of these things.) Having once been the primary training agency for the NYSSW, it seemed like the logical place for me to continue my learning for a while. My first day there was representational of the next five years. I arrived at the Riverside District Office to meet my supervisor, the unrivaled Frances Scherz. I had been mildly terrorized by the restrictive atmosphere I had already detected in my "downtown" hiring interviews, and I didn't know who Frances Scherz was. (She was to become one of the first theorists of family therapy, but more importantly, she was a brilliant renegade.) She asked me how things went downtown, and I remember saying "I am not going to wear hats and gloves here. They are not going to make me into a lady." "O.K., " she said, as she put on one of her famous hats and her gloves as she went out to lunch.

At the time I went to the CSS, it was just giving up its relief function, and it was still supporting selected clients who were motivated to "use" casework. I had an aged client who had been supported in this way for several years, and it was my task to help her turn to the Welfare Department. She was a very proud woman, a refugee from Germany, and a doctor's wife, although he had not practiced in America. When her husband died, she was terrified of his having to be buried as a pauper. I

asked a family friend who owned a funeral parlor to take care of the funeral, and I found a German Landsman group to donate a cemetery plot. The agency sent flowers. A year later it was time for a stone to be placed at the grave. I knew the agency would not absorb this cost, so I called a stonemaker and talked him into making a tax deductible charitable contribution. I was impressed that he was so agreeable, but when the stone was ready he called to arrange for his picture to be taken with the client for the newspaper. I had to tell my supervisor, because confidentiality was a religion at the CSS. I was sent downtown to an administrative council, where I was all but tarred and feathered. The agency paid for the stone, and five dollars was withheld from my paycheck forever more. My salary was $5,500.

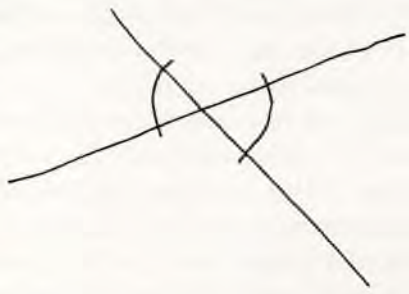
BACK TO SCHOOL

While I was a field instructor at CSS, I talked with the School's field advisor, Dorothy Sumner, about the profession and what I ought to be doing. She said off-handedly, "Why not take a course, it might give you some ideas." So I took an anthropology course at Columbia University, and got a C+. Perhaps a course closer to my line of work? Then, surprisingly, I received a letter from Lucille Austin telling me that I could have an National Institute of Mental Health Fellowship (NIMH) if I applied to the Columbia University School of Social Work (the erstwhile NYSSW) doctoral program. Who, me? There were no casework doctoral candidates, and I guess they wanted to use up the fellowship they received. I left CSS and took my retirement money with me. I think I left the agency with my unpaid and permanent five dollar debt. I had no idea what a doctoral program was about, nor why I would be attending one.

Neither the profession nor social work education were quite ready for a caseworker in a Doctor of Social Welfare program. As the first laboratory rat, so to speak, I was subject to some curious tests, when measured by today's doctoral educational processes. For example, there was a matriculation conference where 17 faculty members attended to determine if I were qualified to continue past the first term. I remember that it was the time of some important Public Welfare Amendments, the announcement of which was front page news on the morning of my matriculation conference. Eveline Burns was the Chair, and naturally, she asked my opinion of the

amendments.(I had remembered Dr. Burns from my masters seminar seven years earlier, when, as an economist, she had just joined the faculty and really didn't know the answer when she asked me, "Casework? What is that?") I had not read the newspaper that fateful morning, but I had done the crossword puzzle, and I explained that to Dr. Burns. Philip Klein, a philosopher and researcher was my advisor, and he was sitting next to me trying to help. He whispered to me, "Tell her you did the puzzle in ink." I did, and I passed the examination. I still can't imagine why. At my final oral comprehensive examination, the same 17 faculty members attended, probably two thirds of whom were still skeptical of the validity of casework in a doctoral program. I still have nightmares recalling how Forence Hollis (perhaps wanting me to demonstrate my grasp of casework theory) asked a question I have never overcome. "Name two concepts and trace them historically." What? First, I couldn't bring to mind what a concept was, so of course I couldn't answer the second part either. It was the longest silence I have ever participated in. The committee murmured things like "blocking? anxious?" The Chair later explained to me that I had passed the examination, because they knew that if I couldn't talk about something there had to be an unusual organic reason.

My dissertation was about the development and application of the concept of "complementarity" in casework practice. This term was used by the physicist Robert Oppenheimer, and I had become interested in the idea of interactional "fit" that it conveyed. (Concrete examples of the term complementarity might be a railroad coupling, the two halves of a fountain pen, or the intertwining of the fingers of both hands.) I remember the best library experience I ever had when I did my search for literature on the terms "complementarity," " fit," " balance," or anything comparable. (Systems thinking was not yet in the mainstream literature, although von Bertalanffy had already published his General Systems Theory. I had not then discerned an association of complementarity with systems thinking.)



The School was then housed in the Carnegie Mansion, and the best thing about that place was Andrew Carnegie's personal library space, which contained a most comprehensive social science, social work, and social welfare collection. Remember, this was decades before computers, and it was also long before the card catalogue listed any topics related to my idea. Thus, I spent a summer looking directly in books, any book that might harbor an idea that was even tangentially associated with complementarity. I experienced the joy of discovery, almost feeling like an archeologist turning over the earth to come upon an antiquity. When I was able to define my project, I was fortunate to have Florence Hollis as my Chair and Nathan Ackerman, then an adjunct faculty member at the school, as a consultant. He was then involved with his own definitions of family interaction, and we had a lot in common. I applied the concept of complementarity in the analysis of cases of marital conflict, and found it to be a useful tool in the assessment of why combative couples stayed together.... because their needs met each other, even when they were irrational (or as we used to say then, "neurotic.") When I passed my dissertation defense, I went to teach a class at NYU, and my students presented me with a child's toy doctor's bag. What I remember most about my graduation was that it was in the garden of the Carnegie Mansion, and that Gordon Hamilton was honored because she retired that evening.

While I was in the doctoral program I was asked by a funding agency to take a position as director of a small children's residency, for the express pur-

pose of finding evidence that would close it. (Who, me?) I found that the director was a bookie (I figured that out when I saw the telephone bank in his office) and that conspiring with his board of directors, he was keeping about a dozen little girls there who might have been returned to their parents. Both the Bureau of Child Welfare and the voluntary funding agency were supporting this program, but they were suspicious of the enterprise. I worked with the girls, visited their parents, and with the help of a placement agency, finally emptied the agency. Most of the children went home, and the rest went into foster care. At my exit interview, the director naturally refused to write a reference for me, and in fact told me he would kill me if he ever saw me again. Thus, I waited 30 years before I put that position on my Curriculum Vita, although we will see that the connection to this agency later legitimized my standing as a child welfare worker.

ACADEMIC DISILLUSIONMENT

My first teaching job was at the brand new Graduate School of Social Work at NYU. One summer in this period I taught at Smith College School of Social Work, but I found city life to be more interesting. The NYU experience was very exciting because it was new and the small faculty had a strong sense of mission. Among the faculty were Tessie Berkman, Ralph Pumphrey, Samuel Mencher, Jean Maxwell, Rose Segal, and the noble Esther Hilton. But it was a troubled school in those days, because it was then part of (and competitive with) the School of Public Administration. My three years there were exciting, but they ended in disaster. The cold war between the two schools was concretized in the shared brownstone building, where "they" (2 full-time faculty) got the air-conditioned front, and "we" (15 full-time faculty) got one big, hot room in the back. New students were told to take "their" catalogue instead of "ours," and so on. The Council on Social Work Education had its finest hour in the year that Fidele Faurie, then the Dean of The University of Chicago School of Social Administration, served as chair of the accrediting committee. When the committee heard our story, they investigated the situation, and heeding our pleas, refused to accredit the school. This meant that it was over, that all but one of us would lose our jobs. (The one person, Tessie Berkman, stayed on to hire new faculty and to continue the program through what proved to be the second of three or four later generations of new faculty.) The decision we made to expose an unethical situation and a bad educational environment, and thus to lose our jobs, was probably one of the most principled and unselfish actions any group of people have ever taken. However, the loss of accreditation meant that the second year students would be in danger of losing the value of their diplomas. A second principled action occurred when The Columbia University School of Social Work offered the students the opportunity to attend Columbia, without admissions interviews. Columbia's Acting Dean Sidney Berengarten knew an ethical issue when he saw it, and managed the complicated transfer of the students who chose to leave NYU. The day I packed up and left NYU, I was certain that I would never again teach in a school of social work.

THE REAL WORLD OF WORK

I decided to begin my career all over again, to work in public welfare where a social worker could do real things with real people. I needed to reassure myself that social work was about something besides petty politics, competition, and personal aggrandizement. I was desperate for a social purpose in my life, so I called the personnel department of the New York City Department of Welfare to find out what was required to get a job as a social investigator. I was told that I was over-qualified for the job; too many academic degrees. I had the impression that this was not a legal requirement... to be non-educated. Irate, I put in a call to the Commissioner's office to see if I could use his influence to get an entry level job in his agency. I

had known the Commissioner, James Dumpson, as an adjunct professor at the now defunct NYU Graduate School of Social Work , and I felt that he would understand. To my surprise (Who me?) his secretary told me that Dr. Dumpson had been trying to reach me for weeks, to propose a position. It turned out that the United States Children's Bureau wanted to fund a staff development program in the Bureau of Child Welfare(BCW) , and when their representatives talked with me, they said it was my "child welfare experience" (!) along with other things that qualified me. After two years at the BCW, I was promoted to Assistant Commissioner in charge of staff development for the Department of Welfare. James Dumpson may have been the most enabling "boss" I have ever had. His administrative gift was his absolute confidence in the professionals who worked for him, so that whether we made good or faulty decisions, he stayed with us and never wavered. One day I met Eveline Burns waiting to see the Commissioner, and the first thing she asked was, "Have you found out what casework is yet?"

My years at that public agency were the most interesting and fulfilling in my career. (I wrote a book about the experience.[iii]) Although I lived on valium and was in serious combat with senior civil servants and the police department's "training program," I discovered how even a small intervention can have a ripple effect in a system. I think that one of the most significant things I accomplished there was the removal of the time clock on one floor. In those days, the Children's Bureau gave full scholarships...tuition, board and travel expenses...to workers who wanted to attend graduate schools of social work. This meant that people who had never been away from New York City could attend school in California if they chose to do so. Never before or since was I able, through the distribution of these awards, to make such a marked difference in people's lives. My job there included development of all of the staff, and I was able to accomplish an extraordinary thing when I helped a receptionist at the central office to stop thumbing her nose at clients. I had found my calling again.

A NEW BEGINNING

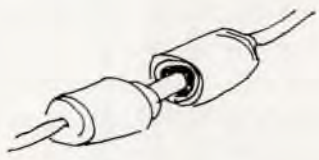
In 1962 I attended a meeting one evening at the Columbia University School of Social Work(CUSSW). I was not prepared (Who, me?) when Dean Fred DelliQuadri and Associate Dean Mitchell Ginsberg took me aside, each holding one of my hands, to ask me if I would like to join their faculty. Knowing that politics usually reigned in academia, I stupidly asked if Lucille Austin and Florence Hollis knew they were asking me, (as if a hiring decision could be made without them). Earlier that year I had shared an airplane ride with Isabel Stamm, a member of the CUSSW faculty search committee, going to a social work conference. I didn't realize then that our conversation was actually an interview, but I later learned that my appointment was held up while the casework faculty considered whether or not it would be "safe" to hire someone who was "either too impulsive or too compulsive." At least I didn't have to hide the fact that I was some kind of activist, even though it wasn't clear which "ive" I was afflicted with. So began the rest of my social work career, with a decrease from my munificent Department of Welfare salary of $11,000 to $9,000 as an associate professor.

Being an academic in a professional school may be the best of all worlds, for it allows for a life of breadth and autonomy, the two features of a work life that have significance to me. Autonomy has meant the freedom to be myself, to be mobile, inventive, and when necessary, lazy. It took a while for me to realize that there was no one (but myself) to whom I was accountable. In the early years, I would telephone my secretary regularly to report on my whereabouts, probably confusing her with a supervisor or a boss. Then I discovered that I was my severest supervisor, and that I could be trusted to work on my own... an important quality for a faculty member at Columbia. In the course of my work as Chairs of the Council on Social Work Education's Commissions on Educational Planning and Commission on Specialization, I visited many schools of social work throughout the country and abroad, so I have had opportunities to compare the CUSSW with other places. Columbia is best understood as being reflective of its location in New York City.

Thereby, it suffers some of the same criticisms as does the City. Too fast, too noisy, too big, too pushy. If these things are so, then it requires a certain kind of toughness to be a part of it. More than anything, it demands of faculty members that they know who they are, what they believe in, what they want to accomplish...it is not an easy place in which to feel insecure. Once on the faculty though, it is a place where academic freedom is taken very seriously, and this covers one's pursuit of possibilities, the freedom to take a wrong turn, the institutional support of one's work, and a healthy collegiality. The price one might pay for this open system of thought and action is that it can be professionally lonesome at times (if everyone enjoys autonomy). Here, as I try to sort out the threads in my professional life, I realize that it is because I was left alone that I could branch out into so many interesting activities.

ROAMING IN THE PROFESSION

In almost four decades I have lectured; conferred; given workshops; and trained at approximately 150 social agencies, universities and conferences. Reflecting on these occasions, it is interesting that while I don't remember all of the subject matter I covered, I can recall special things about many of the visits. For example, I remember some of the people who have driven me to and from airports, tours in Utah, Arizona, and New Orleans; campuses like Tuskeegee, Sherbrooke in Canada, and Sussex in England. I remember a bomb scare on the plane on my way to University of Southern California, and I still mourn for the school that was dismantled between the times of my invitation and my (forgotten) arrival. Mostly, I remember the New York State Welfare Conference in Buffalo, when we learned after lunch that President Kennedy was killed. Traveling to other places for professional reasons is something like being a field work advisor... you make connections with new people, and you have experiences that teach you new things and enrich your life. Also, it gives reassurance that you are indeed part of a unique and definable profession, when social workers talk the same language and consider exactly the same issues everywhere you go.



I took my turn on the Board and chaired several Commissions of the Council on Social Work Education during the years just before the expansion of BSW programs. Generally speaking (as this narrative has already shown), I am not a joiner. I am not patient enough with organizational politics, nor do I do well when committees detour from their assigned tasks, or when members have hidden agendas. These may be structural features of committee life, so it is just as well that I have come to terms with the fact that there are just some things I shouldn't do.

On the other hand, when Ann Minahan and Bea Saunders spoke to me about becoming the Book Review Editor of *Social Work* (Who, me?) I reveled in that opportunity. When it came time to select books for review, the staff would place them all on a huge table, spines up, in double rows. I had mixed feelings... one of power, where I could actually decide which books were to be chosen, and another of guilt, where I complained of feeling like a murderer when I didn't choose a book. The entire process was wonderful... skimming the books, corresponding with reviewers, seeing the completed reviews. Perhaps it had something to do with the beginning, middle, and end idea and the fact that there was a finished product, and of course, that it all had to do with books.

The invitation by the NASW to be the Editor-in-Chief of *Social Work* (Who,me?) was another wonderful surprise, and although it was hard and tedious work, it engaged me with authors' new ideas (and delicate egos), and the spectacular NASW publishing staff. My strongest impression of those years is of Linda Beebe, in the editorial department then, and her ubiquitous coca colas. I soon discovered that writing editorials was a serious risk-taking affair, and that any editorial decision could appear to be a life or death matter. Nothing in life is without its politics, and edit-

ing a professional journal is no more sanguine a job than is committee work or teaching. The scariest thing about participating in putting out a professional journal is that once it is published, there is no way to erase anything.

AFFILIA

Soon after leaving that post I was asked by the Editorial Board of *AFFILIA: The Journal of Women and Social Work* to join them, and a few years later to be the Editor-inChief. (Of course, who, me?) I had no idea then that I was a feminist, and in fact I had been reprimanded by some members of the first NASW Women's Conference for a paper I had written that was deemed to be critical of the women's movement.[iv] (It wasn't true.) Members of *AFFILIA* , particularly Naomi Gottlieb and Diane Bernard, convinced me that I had feminist leanings, and in fact I immediately realized that it was only through a feminist lens that I could make sense of my personal life history. The *AFFILIA* adventure has been unique for me. The Board is the only committee I know where people fight to remain on it, and where I, the non-joiner, have had the most enlightening, educative, and life-affirming experiences of my career. I am not entirely sure even now how I would define feminism, because I think it has many different meanings depending upon context/standpoint/situation. But my association with the AFFILIA Board has convinced me that there is such a "universal" as being a feminist, if it can be likened to equality, fairness, and consideration. When the editorship becomes taxing in caring for the details, inevitably, some member of the Board will offer help or carry out the task. When mistakes are made, the members sympathize rather than criticize. This feminist thread, although a fairly new addition to the tapestry I am weaving here, has provided a certain kind of platform, where standing on tiptoes and leaning over, I can peer down on the career I am trying to describe, and begin to find some explanations for things that went right and wrong. That feminist analysis of my professional career will have to wait for me to re-think my professional trajectory... a story always left unfinished. As I mentioned earlier, the feminist lens has helped me to re-interpret my personal history, but that is not exactly the topic here.

POLITICS

Politics governs everything we do and to not consider them is to travel on a deceptive high road. Things are not looking too encouraging for social work in today's political atmosphere, and as always, the consequences are being felt within and without the profession. The attacks on the poor, on racial minorities, and on women are outrageous, and before this country returns to its senses and to a more humane politic, many people are going to be badly hurt by the cuts in social welfare, health, and education. It is hard to know what any professional group can do in this reactionary environment, where the Congress knows right from wrong, and is deliberately choosing the wrong. This Congress doesn't need education; it needs to be voted out.

I was fortunate to have entered social work after World War II, when the reactionary political forces were ineffective in overthrowing The New Deal. Racism, classism, sexism, and ageism were certainly rampant, but there was, after the War, always a sense of hope and possibility. Social work was more valued as a profession, perhaps because it flourished in the shadow of Roosevelt and Truman, and because veterans (men) entered it on the GI Bill of Rights. Social workers like Bertha Reynolds were active in the labor movement, and as a student at the NYSSW I was part of a vocal political majority (even though I was CO-editor of the student newspaper called "The Id"). We once invited Bertha Reynolds to speak at school, expecting an imposing and aggressive figure to match her activist reputation. I was shocked to see a diminutive figure, wearing a tiny straw hat with a flower in front that bobbed when she spoke in a New England whisper. When the Community Service Society, then one of the most powerful social agencies in New York City, had its 75th anniversary, there was some labor strife, and students and faculty marched on a picket

line around the Roosevelt Hotel in the mornings, and in the afternoons we all attended the professional meetings. Everything we did made sense to us at the time.

"The 60's" (and 70's) were different. Nothing made sense...the assassinations of the Kennedys, Martin Luther King, and Medgar Evers, for example. The protests for Civil Rights and against the Vietnam War...these were clear issues in which we could actively join, but the students' struggle against "the establishment" was a problem for me. I was a professor at the Columbia University School of Social Work then, and I was part of the establishment! Again, who, me? Students threw themselves in front of my classrooms and wouldn't let others in. We held classes in our homes, and students accused me of bribing them into submission when I passed around cookies. Sometimes on picket lines, other times peeking out through windows at the mayhem on the campus, I felt that I flunked "The 60's and 70's," perhaps because I could not identify with the students' assaults upon me (!) who was on their side.

Then came the 80's and the 90's, and I found my voice again, and have complained because students haven't reacted strongly enough against "the establishment." Did I learn from the 60's test through which I had suffered? Was my academic perch so comfortable that I could afford to be radical? Were the lines drawn between progressive and reactionary more clearly defined? Were the issues more local and manageable? Perhaps this time around, the attacks on health, welfare, and education resonated so sharply with the time I began in social work, when it was certain that government had a necessary role in enhancing the social and economic fabric. I think this idea is built into my character. When I was 20 years old, I told my father that I wanted to be a social worker, and he said" I always knew you would become a socialist." I am not sure I knew what it meant then.

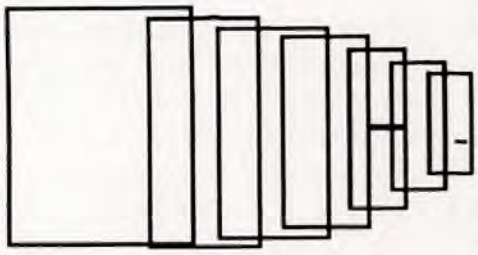
The politics of feminism were concealed from me in the beginning of my career. I didn't know until as late as the 1980's that there were alternate (sexist) explanations for my own construction of my personal and professional worlds. Upon reflection, I now recognize that men controlled the terms of debates, and that it was a given that men would be in charge of most things. It is hard to believe now, that early on we never questioned that. Further, in the beginning, before Brown vs. The Board of Education and the Civil Rights movement, racism was not defined as something to be addressed, although we all recognized its presence. McCarthyism and the activities of the House Un-American Activities Committee radicalized me, and my first public political protest was to join thousands of others at Union Square in New York City at a vigil when the Rosenbergs were put to death. Thereafter, there have been many (Civil Rights, Women's Rights, the Vietnam War) vigils in Washington, and I now realize that although these actions do not have an immediate effect, they always leave an impression... to resonate later

TEACHING

So much has been written about teaching that I am not sure that there is much that I can add to be helpful to anyone. I remember that before my first class at NYU, I was having coffee at Nedicks, and someone I knew sat next to me and asked about my thoughts on teaching. Distance from the occasion allows me to repeat what I said then... "My vision is of students as little birds with their beaks open, waiting for me to drop in worms of knowledge, but I don't know what to tell them." I don't know where such an idea could have come from, because I had had wonderful teachers, and I had never had such a patronizing teacher. Since then, after Would student doctors dare to complain because their professors didn't make their anatomy class exciting enough? I wouldn't go to a physician who had learned about disease through role play. (You be the germ and I'll be the tummy.) Often, when I look out at a classroom of students, I think of their clients who need them to be competent, and then I get serious. I don't know if it works for all students, but I generally

"teach to the top" so as to induce students to reach, and reach more. There is no universal way of learning, and we don't always know which approach is best for a single student or a classroom. That's why teaching is fun; after every class when I think that if only I had done it this or that way... there is always the next class to try it differently.

Education in social work has changed radically since I was a student, and although it isn't relevant to make comparisons, it does sharpen the focus of analysis. Earlier I mentioned the holistic orientation of my teachers at the NYSSW For example, it was Gordon Hamilton, a major casework theorist, who analyzed and supported the idea of entitlements in public assistance in her editorials in *Social Work*. Philip Klein made research so integral to practice, that one could hardly distinguish between them. Lucille Austin, known as a casework theorist/ practitioner, introduced social sciences along with Freud into her classes. In the decades since, social workers have necessarily become more specialized, because areas of practice have proliferated, knowledge has increased, funding for research is sectored, and research methodology in particular has taken off on a trajectory of its own. It is no longer easy, if it is at all possible, for either academics or practitioners to have generic competence, or broad interests. Perhaps it is true that we are coming to know more and more about less and less, but this is inevitable when there is so much to know, and when we are paying so little attention to the purposes and meanings of it all. Dinosaur-like, I continue to press for those purposes and meanings in the books and articles that I write, and I am well aware that I may be among the last of those who still seek the messiness of real-world practice, and who revel in the idea of the unknowable. As my story, told thus far, should make clear, I am not a strong believer



in predictability; I care more about processes than outcomes; I am perhaps over-cautious about social workers being authorities about the "objective" world; I don't think that there are "truths" out there that can be found if we were only to polish the lenses on our microscopes. Also, I am not convinced that acquiring knowledge (endlessly and a-contextually) is the best way to engage social workers in effective and meaningful practice.

A final thought on social work education is a sad one for me. I foresee (in an all too near future) the "down-sizing" if not the elimination of masters level programs. Ph.D.'s will be emphasizing research, and BSWs are already outnumbering MSW programs. Entry to practice will be at the BSW level, and (as in psychology) the next level will be the Ph.D. How the Profession itself has created this pending scenario is a topic for another article. I am continuing to struggle with the origins and meanings of this shift in educational focus, but I fear that the outcome is inevitable, no matter the causes. I once took a doctoral course in administration and chose as the topic for my term paper the story of an administrator I knew who had behaved badly in her job, which itself was probably set up for her to fail, and was subsequently fired. I entitled the paper "Was She Jumped or Did She Push?" Perhaps that will be the title for my epitaph on masters level social work education.

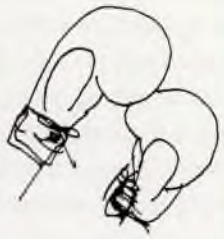
WRITING

All social workers do not write, although I wish they would, because it is the only way to spread the word about what practitioners do. Academics call this disseminating knowledge, and now that scholarship is so closely tied to numbers of reading references cited and to statistical sophistication, it has become intimidating to those who have something to say, but do not have the academic skills. I regret that we do not hear the practitioner's voice, because I have always used writing and publishing as an outlet for my ideas and convictions. It is as if I cannot help myself; writing is a way of sorting things out, of talking to colleagues, of framing debates, of arguing issues.

Practitioners' experiences, ideas, and convictions must be equally pressing, but they are inhibited by "official" writers, who may have less vital or interesting things to say. Writing often seems to me like playing the piano; when one has mastered the score, the music just goes through one's fingers onto the keys. It is almost an unconscious process (not mastering the ideas, or the piano score) that the words come because they insist upon it. So, since 1959, when I wrote my first article,[v] I used publishing as one might use a log to write about what was important to me in social work.

Writing these "reflections" has caused me to look at what I have written in over four decades. It is not easy to do such a review. Times and ideas have changed, and it isn't possible to take anything back. Could I have been that concerned about so much in social work? Are there contradictions? Did my articles get better or worse? The list seems long when compared to its impact on the profession. Six books, 46 articles and chapters, uncounted editorials, and about a dozen monographs, in addition to the drawer full of speeches and articles that didn't get published. So why didn't social work always do what I wrote about? I conclude that writing... even publishing... is a private matter. It has everything to do with self-expression, and that is why it is gratifying. Beware of the illusion that anyone listens!

Reflecting upon what I have chosen to write about, I am not sure of the impetus. Sometimes it had to do with what I was doing or thinking at the time, or with my response to another's work. Once in a while someone would ask for something. So, there are the staff development articles, vi and the work in child welfare,[vii] and a variety of subjects that were "hot" at the time, but that I did not pursue further. My field of practice interest was always family and children's service, and as in all the other social work fields of practice, the arena changed, and changed, and changed. What does stay the same in social work? Always its purposes and values, and its psychosocial emphasis. When these components are stable, then the profession can adapt to changes in society, family structure, life-styles, diverse populations, and problem definitions. My preoccupations have been more with the application of those stable components to a range of substantive matters. In other words, I have argued on behalf of some aspects of practice theory in many different contexts.[viii] The invention of the eco-systems perspective was a way of extending my interest in the "psychosocial" focus of practice.[ix] It took a very long time for the idea to take hold, partly because it framed a way to look at cases and it didn't tell practitioners what to do, and partly because it was at first viewed as "anti-clinical." (This caused me to respond with a book that would challenge that criticism.[x]) It has often seemed to me that going public through writing is, like a crisis, as much a hazard as an opportunity.



PICKING FIGHTS

Each of us muses about the way we would like things to be. Some of us are more patient than others about the direction and pace of change, and whether or not we should enter public debates. Perhaps because I have always been "hooked" on social work and have wanted it to be "right," I have been one of the impatient musers and have entered debates perhaps too often. The first one I remember was about the once popular idea that poor people should be called "muti-problem families." I have always been impatient with undocumented, over-generalized labeling of people. Euphemisms so often serve as escape hatches and distort reality, and I prefer to confront things as they are. [xi]

Of another order, a long-standing debate has been about private practice. This has been sort of a "fools walk in..." effort, and the debates in the journals[xiii] were often carried over into personal exchanges. My concerns about private practice in social work are of two kinds... ideological and practical. As for the ideological issues, they are not provable, and my values can

only share space with the values of private practitioners. I believe that social work's historical mission has been to ameliorate the condition of the poor, those who have been discriminated against, and those who need supports so as to cope with social and economic failures in society. Private practice in social work, by definition, means that fees are charged and this has to exclude many of the very people social workers are supposed to serve. Also, in order to be a viable for-profit enterprise, private practice must "cream" the help-seeking population for clients who are healthier, are more motivated, have more self-defined problems, and so on... leaving out many of the very people social workers are supposed to be serving. Finally, as a consequence of for-profit practice and the "creaming" I mentioned, social work private practice inevitably comes to resemble psychotherapy. (If one leaves out clientele who have environmental difficulties, then what is left are cases often defined as having "only" psychological problems.) This process narrows the focus of intervention, and redefines the purposes of social work. Given the proliferation of private practitioners, it is obvious that perhaps most of my professional colleagues do not share my beliefs.

This leads to my view of the practical implications of private practice in social work. When comparisons are made to medicine, which offers the model of private practice, we should look more closely at what the profession of medicine does. I am not referring to individual physicians, but to their profession, which is accountable for the health care of the public. In over hundreds of years physicians have carved out their domain, which today covers a broad range of health care services from public health to brain surgery. Whether the medical profession does this well or not is not at issue here; what is important is that the public expects it to, and the profession claims its universal domain. Turning to social work, let us assume that the profession is accountable for providing social services to the public, and that (would it were so) the public expects this and turns to social workers to address the psycho-social needs of people in a range of areas. Does the profession meet this obligation? Does the public turn to skilled social workers to deal effectively with problems in these fields? When social work is visible, as in public child welfare, are there any professional social workers left there? My practical point is that social workers in private practice have skipped the necessary step in the process of "maturing" into private practice (if that is how it is perceived) and that until the profession assumes responsibility for social services that are delivered, recognizable, and valued by the public, then there will be no core professional identity to which private practitioners can be attached. In this political era when social work services are being cut it has been difficult to convince the public that social workers are necessary. Can we imagine the public questioning the value of physicians? The invisibility of highly trained professional practitioners in the central public and voluntary service institutions in this country will not promote the future of professional social work. There will always be a need for social services, but we are already noting that non-professional practitioners are functioning with lowered educational standards and with titles such as human service workers. Will the profession of social work ever take back its function? And will there be any professionally educated practitioners left?

Any social worker who has worked in organizations knows how hard it is to practice well in a bureaucracy, and it is probably this more than any other reason that has driven practitioners into private practice. But this is an organizational world (ask any physician in a hospital or teacher in a school) and agencies will remain a fact of life. So social workers will have to learn how to manage them just as have physicians. My practical concerns are based upon data, not ideology, and ironically, it is toward the goal of their self-preservation that I have been nagging at practitioners to think hard about the erosion of professional social work. It has been a career-long struggle to make the case for the profession, but I now feel great sadness when I view the down-grading of organizational social services, the trend toward using non-MSW practitioners, and the parallel up-grading of individual private practice of psychotherapy. There may not be a direct causal connection between

these phenomena, but there does seem to be a reciprocal contributory effect.

CHANGE WAS COMING

"The 60's" introduced radical changes in society, and social work needed to find new ways to adapt to those changes. The professional literature addressed many aspects of the impending changes, and naturally, I worried a lot about the future of practice.[xiii] Social workers were still focusing narrowly on intra-psychic change, and in my view, many did not notice that the client population was become culturally diverse, that once-overlooked poor people were becoming articulate about wanting social services, and that the emerging public and academic interest in social phenomena was having an impact on all professions. In 1970 I wrote a book about broadening the scope of casework practice and its methodology of study, diagnosis and treatment. I proposed changing the terminology and substance, to call it social work practice and exploration, assessment, and intervention. My intention was to encourage practitioners to be more inclusive of client problems, and less medicalized in their thinking. This book[xiv] did not interest many people at first, and in fact, a close colleague complained to me that "You don't tell practitioners what to do." (That has always true of my writing... and my teaching. I am a strong believer in framing the topic, identifying choices, and relying on people to be guided by their own judgment, values, and experience. That is the only way I have ever learned to do anything.)

The response to the book that had the greatest effect upon me came in an experience that reflected the very reasons that I had written the book in the first place. Florence Hollis and I went to lunch one day (in 1970) so that she could find out why I had written the book, which she thought would be damaging to practice...while I, in my missionary's zeal, believed that I was trying to save practice. As we were returning to school across Broadway (a six lane avenue with an island in the middle), I noted that on the south island there was a large group of Columbia students, some of whom were carrying placards, while others were throwing tomatoes. Their target was what seemed to be a small battalion of New York City policemen on horses, lined up on the north island. Florence Hollis and I were deep in conversation about the book....she asking, "What social changes?," and my saying hesitantly, "Everything..." (Professor Hollis had been my mentor and was a senior colleague, so this was not a comfortable conversation for me.) As we crossed the street, we dodged tomatoes, but kept on talking. I don't believe that she noticed the students' demonstration, and I remain convinced that she did not understand my reasons for writing the book.

Six years later I wrote a second book about practice, this time introducing systems theory and eco maps, in hopes that theory would help to support my point about the necessity for practice to become more adaptive to the real world.[xv] This time the response was slightly better, and it laid the foundation for later writing on the eco-systems perspective. I am certain that many colleagues still believe that I have been "anti-clinical" in my writing, and I have argued that my attention to individualizing practice is clinical, and all that I have done has been to broaden the definition of clinical to include individuals' environments. I also remain a Freudian, in my belief in the unconscious and in the structure and functions of the ego. Perhaps the criticism of my clinical treachery has more to do with my nettling about private practice. In my recent book on assessment [xvi] I hope I have laid to rest some of the criticisms, for we all want to be liked. After these years of writing, wherein one puts one's ideas out for public review, analysis, and criticism, I am pretty much convinced that the academic's motto should be "Publish and perish!"

CODA

There are always new frontiers in which professionals can find issues ripe for debate. Currently, shifting epistemologies as they affect feminism and research are among the most interesting. As for feminism, it is encouraging that feminists, since 1973, have recognized that feminism is not only about white middle class women, that poor women's bread and butter issues are deserving of attention, and

that there must be common cause with the plight of women throughout the world. The directions to be taken in social work research are less certain[xvii] Will there ever be more attention paid to discovery than to proof? Will research move toward more holistic and denser models and become less fragmented and narrow in its focus? Will the language of research become more comprehensible? Will statistics become the servant rather than the mistress of projects? Will practice become the mistress rather than the servant of research? Will we ever give up the search for absolute validity? As one who has always insisted upon viewing events and processes in context, I cannot imagine what universal, objective "truths" would look like if they were not situated.

And that applies to this narrative. The "truth" of my story is not universal; it can only be recognized as a reflection of my life and the times in which I lived. When I entered social work, I thought that it was about settlement houses and concrete services, but when I went to graduate school, I discovered that practice theory, heavily influenced by Freudian thought, was more influential than the ideology of social activism. All was not lost, however; Gordon Hamilton taught and lived out her commitment to psychosocial practice, and as she was undoubtedly the greatest intellectual influence upon me, this idea probably kept me centered. I have never found it necessary (or even possible) to think separately about clients' motives and feelings and the provision of services. Because of my grounding in social casework (albeit narrowly defined in the 1940's), its approach to problems... study/explore, diagnose/assess, treat/intervene... has served me in each professional situation, even when it was not a clinical one. I used it to figure out all of my experiences with the OSE children, the bookie's agency, the NYU debacle, the glorious clutter of the Department of Welfare, the organizational work I did, editorial problems, and even daily life at Columbia. Social work **values** cannot be overlooked, either, for the role they have played in my life. Although we have not always used it as a governing principle, the Golden Rule... do unto others as you would have others do unto you... has always guided me. Its observance could account for my impatience with those who disrespectfully remove children from their parents, who tell people how to lead their lives, or who relate to others as if they were objects.

I have learned something from writing these reflections. I have recognized a kind of coherence in my social work career. Often I think that I have both practiced and written the same things over and over again, although at different times, about different topics, in different places. I have also been pretty much the same person no matter when or where. Does this depict stubbornness or commitment? Perhaps both. I have lived through a lot of change in the world and in the profession, and I am often surprised at how easy it was to adapt. Happily, I have kept most of my friends and I have never, ever been bored or have felt that I chose the wrong path in becoming a social worker. For this I have to thank the entire cast of characters in this play. □

August 1995

do unto others as you would have others do unto you

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NARRATIVES AS A MEANS TO SUPPORT LATINO/A STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

This paper presents a culturally grounded approach that supports Latino students entry into the university. A narrative approach, its links the students cultural legacy and their college experience, and their home and the outside world. Narrative fiction is used as a teaching tool to validate and develop the students' knowledge and transform the college culture. A case study illustrates how the approach was used in a Midwestern college. A summary of ethnographic and outcome data is presented to show the impact of the approach on the participants. Implications for social work education and other helping professions are drawn.

by
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THE CONTEXT

College education in the United States is a rite of passage for students which can ease the transition from home/youth to worldliness/adulthood. Going to college and succeeding in it, does not occur in an imaginative vacuum. Myths, lore, and the artifacts of Latino families often create the emotional and imaginative context for the college novice. The prank that made uncle's graduating class a legend in its own time; the trunk in the attic that went to college along with grandfather; and the mother who almost went to college, but was derailed by a prejudiced counselor, serve to inform the imagination of the young person .

Unfortunately, the web of narratives that connect home and college for the vast majority of students, is absent for the Latino student, an absence that is not easily identified. The network of narratives that defines "what is" for most college youth, although powerful, is invisible, and its very invisibility erases the markers in the narrative void experienced by the Latino youth. Nothing seems to be missing.

Many demographic factors determine the imagined proximity of people to college, and the Latino population itself is far from homogeneous in this regard. The status of being an "internally colonized population" (Blauner, 1972) with a cultural and linguistic tradition of its own, is a shared condition for many Latinos in the United States in general, and for Latino college students in particular. Under this condition, the college experience has a quality of alienation/separation in which home and culture are negated. For example, Latino students tell us how they have to "explain themselves" to their non-Latino classmates and instructors. They often use phrases such as: "not belonging," "being alone," and "feeling as a guest" to describe their lack of connection with higher education institutions.

Latino student's culture/language tends to be perceived, and represented as exotic/primitive, and in need of redemption. Certainly, not a language in which college stories are told, nor one in which thought and creativity could be embedded. Latino students often internalize this negative perception, and

when they reach into their knapsack of sustaining and relevant stories, they often sense its emptiness. The old stories in which they used to be the central character do not translate in the college culture. Those stories enter a state of hibernation, and they may remain so if opportunities for their awakening are unavailable.

FOUNDATIONS OF THE NARRATIVE APPROACH

Literature in the humanities persuasively argues that persons organize knowledge as novelists, rather than as scientists, and they think, perceive, imagine, and make moral choices according to narrative structures (Sarbin, 1986). It is as story tellers, that individuals know themselves and others, interpret the past, imagine the future, make decisions, and justify their lives. The narrative assists individuals to interpret and give meaning to their life experiences (Kurtz & Tandy, 1995). As Darrel Fasching (1992) argues, individuals are not just story tellers but story dwellers.

Persons' stories are not just individually invented worlds of meaning that guide their day-to-day social relationships and negotiations, if this were so, the role of social workers, educators, and other agents of socialization would simply consist of teaching individuals to be better dreamers or better story tellers. Latino students would only need to appropriate a language of aspirations and success in higher education and create success story. Individual stories inscribe themselves in larger narratives that provide and distribute the operative vocabularies, define "what is," and the range and distribution of possibilities. These narratives identify the forbidden and determine to whom the prohibitions apply. As Gregg (1992) argues that stories are also ideological structures produced by, and permeated by a political reality that establishes non-negotiable privileges and boundaries of freedom. Power relations, according to Gregg, are the solid, external reality which individuals confront in everyday life. The self is a byproduct of this struggle to make that empirical reality work to their own advantage.

Gregg's analysis warns against an apolitical view of the construction of the self and of individual and collective stories. We agree with Gregg in that, access and success in higher education, for instance, depends in great measure on master narratives. Those encompassing master narratives supply a ready-made grid to encompass the neophytes' story. Narratives furnish socializing mechanisms and justify power relations. However, if this was all, then the Hobbesian view of human relations suggested by Gregg, (that the preservation of one's own dignity is commonly predicated in the denying of that dignity to others) would seem to be the only available alternative.

We propose an alternative view to an apolitical approach in the construction of the self, and to the view that the self is merely a by product of power relations. Our alternative explores narratives honoring individual and collective stories of liberation from being oppressor or oppressed (Freire, 1979). To learn to dream better, and to create better stories is essential in the creation of the self. It is also essential that in the process of doing so, a liberating cultural transformation of the larger narratives be envisioned and integrated with the effort of personal affirmation and liberation. What follows is an explanation of our attempt to put into action this perspective.

THE NARRATIVE APPROACH TO INSTRUCTION

Post-secondary institutions are significant agents of integration of minority students into the benefits of the mainstream society. Integration interpreted here as a process by which students' narratives transform the dominant ideology. These stories, rooted in their collective memories are used as the spring-boards for learning (Vygostky, 1979). The narrative approach aims to create cognitive, emotional, and social links between Latino students and their college learning experience. Students who find their culture and learning styles reflected in both the substance and the organization of the instructional program are more likely to be motivated and to benefit from their learning experience (Kuykendall, 1992).

Linkages are created by exploring: a) the network of stories of the students, and b) the dominant narrative of higher

learning. As students' narratives are shared, and their commonalties become explicit, this network of stories is strengthened, expanded, and enriched. For instance, when students use words such as "casa" (meaning both house and home in Spanish) they may discover that the word has a different connotation than for their non-Latino classmates. Latinos often feel a devotion and loyalty to "la casa" that is easily understood among themselves (network of meaning) but which is difficult to explain to others. This understanding is rescued and valued as actual knowledge by the class. This discovery expands the expressivity of the students in both languages.

Maximizing the potential of the students' linguistic and narrative legacies furthers their cognitive development. Narrative traditions (fiction, proverbs, stories, songs, biographies) with which the students are familiar provide a cognitive link for acquiring new and unfamiliar knowledge (the cognitive link). By using accessible and familiar narratives, students can venture into the unfamiliar and become committed to their own educational process (the emotional link).

Narrative traditions locate Latino students as historical and social beings connected to communities. For example, going to college is often a collective endeavor. The choice of profession frequently responds to a felt need of the community, and a sense of obligation on the part of the student (the social link). Expressions such as: "to give back to my people," "to change things," and "to defend my community" are often used to explain career choices.

The students' narrative network is further enriched and validated by introducing short stories written by authors whose biographies resemble the students'. It is also enriched by the examination of sociological concepts traditionally applied to Latino communities. The literary works and the sociological concepts guide the students in achieving successful expressivity and in expanding their analytical abilities. These two sources, the literary and the sociological, assist students in making connections between the academic world and home. Literary and social sciences sources are used to illustrate shared experiences such as "casa." For instance, "familism" (Yep, 1995) captures some of the meaning of "casa." The instructor uses this concept to bridge the gap between academic and experiential knowledge. As students appropriate the sociological term, it becomes a tool for their own usage, rather than a potential diagnostic tool or instrument of oppression. For example, "familism" is sometimes used by practitioners and researchers as a diagnostic label implying dependency. Used in this way, the label is emptied of its richer meaning and distorts the Latino experience of "casa." Through their narratives, students question this usage of "familism," and add complexity to the term. As a result the words "casa" and "familism" are compared and used dialectically. Students use the experience of "casa" and the concept of "familism" to question themselves and each other. They use their shared experiences of "casa" to provide meaning to the concept of "familism." At the same time, understanding "familism" helps them to be analytical of their experience of "casa."

The dominant narrative of higher learning embedded in the educational institutions and is expressed by its guardians is also explored. This can only take place if instructors assume leadership in the process. In order to be agents of change, teachers need to be engaged in their own transformation, scrutinizing their own narratives. This can be facilitated by the formation of inquiry teams of instructors where they are able to discuss their own reality frame, biases, pre-conceived ideas, and fears about change. As part of the dominant narrative, there is a generalized belief that non-English speakers are, by definition, foreigners. Instructors often share this belief. For example, in college, Puerto Ricans among other Latinos, are frequently defined and treated as foreigners, even though they are born

American citizens. This misconception generates attitudes and behaviors on the part of the instructor that attempt to melt away the students' cultural differences. The inquiry teams function as a sounding board for the instructors to examine and challenge each other's perceptions and practices, and often begin to experience the same conflict vis-a-vis the institution that the students experience. Thus, the culture of the higher learning institution is questioned.

NARRATIVE COURSE

Dominant and other narratives are explored through a Spanish language course. The fact that this course is taught in Spanish gives students permission to use their home language as an alternative instrument of memory, thought, and expression. Additionally, it gives permission to access a universe of biographical material and the memory of their communities. This course validates the students knowledge and recognizes the student as a source of knowledge, rather than as a blank slate. The student interprets, transforms, and challenges the cannon at the same time that the cannon transforms the student's story. This collective experience benefits the individual and enriches the narrative tradition of a community.

The Spanish language narrative course is articulated with other courses through team teaching. The themes originating in the narrative course are carried into other courses complementing or challenging dominant narrative content. In English language classes students will continue the culturally grounded discussions that began in the Spanish language narrative course. For example, if the short story and discussion of the week related to "spiritualism," other courses pick up the theme, and approach it from a variety of perspectives. The instructor depends on the knowledge of the Latino student to connect their culturally narratives to the dominant narrative.

This course, in coordinating with other courses, provides an environment where students can combine indigenous concepts, based on their cultural and social practices, and on written stories — with those introduced by teachers. This approach follows the basic tenets of Paulo Freire's pedagogy (1979). This environment bridges the gap between college and home, and makes Latino students feel welcome and part of the higher education institution. The expectation is that these efforts provide students with true access to colleges and universities and will ensure their retention.

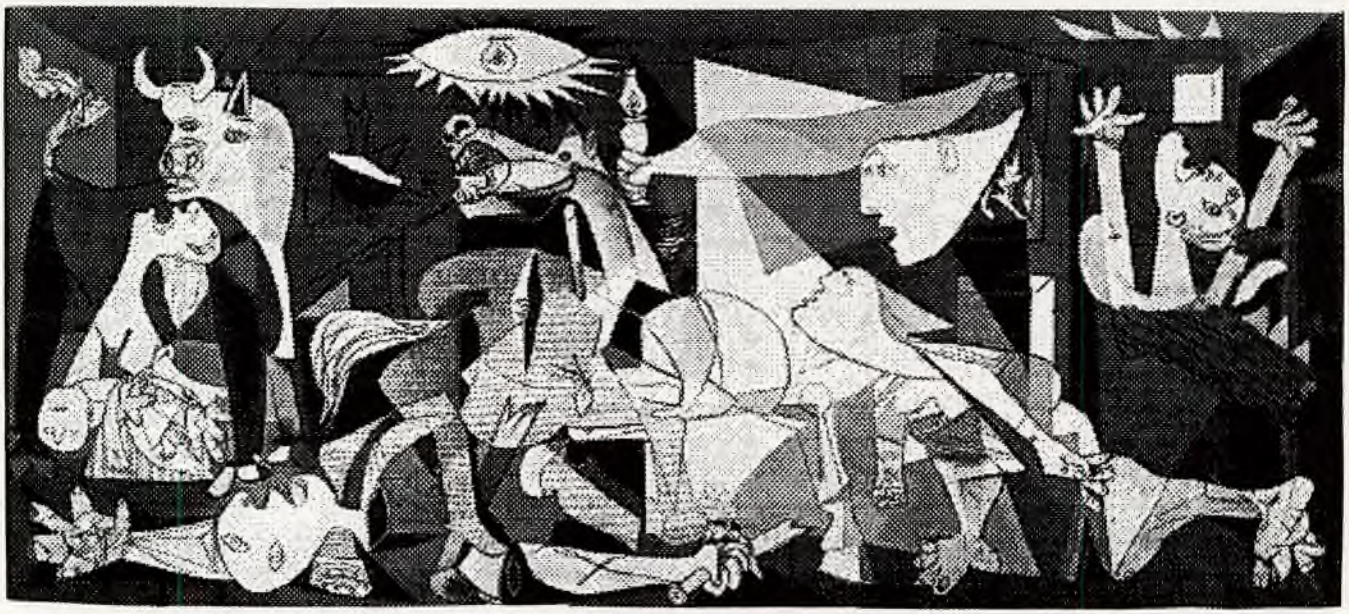
AS A WAY OF ILLUSTRATION

In a community college of a major Midwestern city, Latino community leaders and some instructors had expressed concern about the college's lack of effectiveness in retaining Latino students. One of the authors was approached to design a program to support Latino student retention. His original plan was to enter the scene, design the project, and detach himself from it. As the process began, the author's story interfered with this "generic approach" to consulting. He had been a student in that same college more than a decade before, and had dropped from the program, which had not engaged him then, and was not engaging the current Latino students.

Instead of designing a project in isolation, interested faculty members were invited to participate in the assessment and design process. A faculty inquiry team was formed with a group of eight professors teaching in the department, with the largest concentration of Latino students. The instructors began to discuss their own perceptions and biases, and as the group developed, the intensity and depth of the discussions increased, and the instructors' own stories began to unfold.

The initial sessions centered around Puerto Rican/Latino cultures, students' learning styles, and the status of Latino students attending the college. Instructors shared their classroom experiences from an ethnocentric point of view. They recognized their lack of success in reaching Latino students, but they were unable to identify instruction or college culture as barriers. Originally, the students were blamed for their own lack of success. They were the ones who lacked motivation, were immature, were too involved with their families, and were not ready to benefit from post-secondary education.

Picasso



As the inquiry teams proceeded, faculty members not only became more aware of their own biases, but started to question each other's attitudes and behaviors toward Latino students. The consultant acted as a group facilitator and provided his own acculturation experiences as material for group discussion. The instructors began to reframe some of their perceptions. For example, they used to complain about Latino students talking too much in class, identifying that behavior as "disruptive." Later, they refereed to the same behavior as "collaborative learning." They began to glimpse how their own teaching style and narrative impinged on the learning style and narrative development of their Latino/a students. The team concluded that:

"Latino students enrolled in the college have disproportionately low retention and academic success rates. Their diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds have not been systematically recognized and/or integrated in the past as resources for their academic success. A pervasive lack of recognition of their cultural distinctiveness has had a negative influence on their attitudes towards the institution. These students often perceive the college as an uncaring environment where they are not welcome."

The inquiry team recommended that a culturally grounded pilot program be designed and implemented in response to the identified needs. The program's purpose was to specifically increase the retention rate of Latino students enrolled in the college.

The approach used collaborative learning and team-teaching; small class size; and psycho-social support services. It was academically challenging, bilingual, and culturally grounded by the stories students brought to the classroom.

An all-Latino students narrative course (4 hrs. per week) was developed. Taught in Spanish, it employed a social work with groups approach. The narrative course instructor introduced a theme of the week (e.g. "machismo" and "fatalism"), with presentations by the students, so they could regain ownership of the cultural descriptors and provide starting points for discussion. The theme of the week was explored in every class, regardless of the language of instruction. Needless to say, this was possible due to a commitment by the faculty to team teaching. Weekly faculty meetings were used for planning and discussion of progress.

The presentations in the Spanish language narrative course were interactive in nature and introduced "words" and "meaning."

José, one of the participants commented: Mucho le agradezco al profesor por darnos vocabulario que nunca habíamos oído en nuestras vidas. (I much thank the instructor for giving us a vocabulary that we have never heard before in

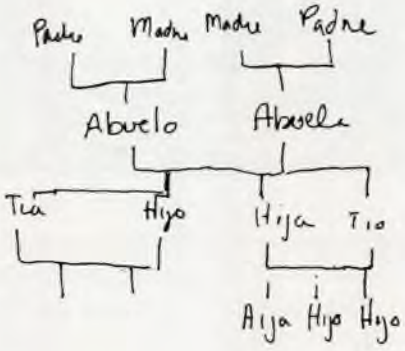
our lives.)

Learning and incorporating this vocabulary provided the participants with a sense of ownership and control over their lives. A dialectical process emerged and a "counter definition" of what it is to be a Latino/ a student was developed. The words were no longer diagnostic, they were interpretative of the students' realities. Students quickly appropriated the terminology and used it with each other. There was a reason to believe that the classroom dialogue carried outside the class. Students, not participating in the program, approached the instructor inquiring about topics discussed in the class.

The opportunity to discuss the cultural descriptors gave students the power to transform them by ownership. They challenged them, enriched them, discarded them, or appropriated them, and the instructors could no longer use those terms as reified, dehumanized products. As part of the process, members started to identify and name concepts. They began to "discover" names for strengths and barriers present in their culture. Stephanie commented about "fatalism" as follows:

Del cuento aprendí que uno no debe ser fatalista. No importa cual sea el problema, sea grande o pequeño cada uno de nosotros tenemos oportunidades de buscar una solución. (From the short story I learned that one cannot be a fatalist. It does not matter what type of a problem we may face, big or little, each one of us has opportunities to look for a solution.)

In addition, topics were enriched and critiqued by short stories. Most of the stories used were written by young Puerto Rican women writers and can be described as part of the "magic realism" literary movement. The short stories provided a culturally grounded context to discuss issues. Although there was a clear feminist approach in the students' analyses of certain topics, it was not an Anglo middle class feminist approach.



Luz commented after presenting a short story to the group:

Esta historia nos enseña valores, por ejemplo, que las mujeres se hagan respetar por los hombres para que ellos no piensen que pueden jugar con las mujeres. Tenemos que empezar a tener respeto por una misma para que los hombres nos respeten y nos valoren, es decir darnos el lugar o el puesto que nos corresponde. (The story teaches us values, for example, that women need to make men respect them, so that they stop thinking that they can mess with women. We need to start having respect for ourselves then they will start respecting us, in other words, giving us the place or position we deserve.)

The "voice" of the writer and her characters became a source of inspiration, often serving as models. Students learned to connect the story with the theme of the week and to connect both to their own lives. As they identified with a character or characters of the short story, the topic began to take a human dimension. Students found commonalties between those characters and their own lives, with others; and the universality of the issues being discussed. In her final paper María wrote :

As Hispanic students, we often underestimate ourselves and feel intimidated by others. We must be realistic and accept that we will overcome the language barrier someday.

With this comment, María created a new awareness for her and her classmates. She also created a category of experience that transcended the here and now. Other Latino students were able to relate to Maria's experience or organize their experience around her statement. In one of the group sessions Aracelis added:

En la universidad, no por el color de mi piel, sino porque al no saber inglés me siento inferior a los demás y no me siento entre los míos. Pero en el grupo me siento entre los míos, porque todos sabemos la cultura, el idioma... (In the college, not due to the color of my skin but due to my lack of English, I feel less than other people and I don't feel among my people. But in the group I am among my people, we all know the language/Spanish, the culture...)

Aracelis' comment illustrates the concept of "casa" (house & home) and what it can do for the student. To verbalize that one feels inferior is very difficult by itself but impossible vis-a-vis the culture one feels inferior about. The course provided a home-like atmosphere in which something as dangerous as feelings of inferiority could be shared. By participating in the

group students realized that they were not alone or "strange." They developed alternatives and started to model new behaviors in the safety of the classroom. Mariccelli's comment illustrates this experience:

I have learned in group that we have to try harder sometimes because we are Hispanic. We need to be together, like a family. I would like to see us as one, staying together and succeeding.

As the process of mutual aid began, a sense of accountability towards the group emerged. Culture was celebrated and was used as a resource to improve the student's quality of life. In the last session of her group, Carmen said:

Como mujer y mujer hispana puedo lograr muchos cambios y lograr una vida mejor, no solo para mí sino también para mi comunidad. Si yo soy feliz, todas las personas a mi alrededor podrán compartir esta felicidad. (As a woman, a Hispanic woman, I can achieve many changes and attain a better life, not only for me but also for my community. If I am happy, every one around me can share that happiness.)

The group work modality used in the narrative course provided a space to try new behaviors in terms of participation, expression, and decision making. Students experienced the democratic process in the group and developed skills that they were able to use in other environments. Katherine spoke about this in her own terms:

Como estudiante latina siento aún una mayor responsabilidad de expresar y defender mis ideales pues al ser minoría siento que debo hacerme escuchar, solo así podré defender, mantener y poner mi raza, mi cultura y mis ideales en alto. (As a Latina student I feel even a greater responsibility to express and defend my ideals. Due to the fact that here I am considered minority, I feel I need to make myself heard. Only then, I would be able to defend, maintain, and put my race, my culture and my ideals up high.)

Leadership skills developed or reinforced in the group were used by the students in different ways. Some students became peer facilitators, others ran for office in college organizations, and still others got involved in community organizations. In class many students for the first time in their college life felt like the adults they were. The Spanish home-language became adult, transcending family and childhood, and a source for expression of important ideas.

RESULTS

The primary purpose of this program was to improve retention of Latino/a college students. An 89% overall quarter completion rate was attained, surpassing the goal set for a 70% quarter completion rate. College persistence, was at 80% after one quarter, and 60% after two quarters. This compares favorably with the 20% persistence rate before the implementation of the program. A faculty member speaking about the program commented:

These students definitely worked harder in general than most other Hispanic students I have taught at the college.

Other instructors reported that students supported each other in mastering course content both in and out of class to an unusual degree.

A questionnaire was used to assess changes in the students' attitude towards college. Students were asked to rate a set of statements written in English and Spanish using a Likert scale (1= strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Questionnaires were administered to the two cohorts during the first week and last week of each quarter (pre-post test). No differences were found between the pre and post-tests. The data suggests that Latino students enrolled in the program were motivated and wanted to succeed, as reflected by a 3.5 pre-test cumulative average score. This initial high level of motivation did not decrease. It can be surmised that project participation assisted Latino students to maintain their positive initial attitude towards college.

It can be further hypothesized that the strong support system for Latino students developed in the program may have contributed substantially to improved retention and academic performance. The narrative course appeared to have strengthened and supported a culturally based tendency to advance as a group. Without this program, entry level students would not have had the opportunity to be together and benefit from this support system.

Implications for the Education in the Helping Professions

Social work, nursing, education, and other helping professions have been traditional entry professions for women, first generation college educated

persons, and members of disenfranchised groups. These professions have captured the imagination of many people of minority status, not only as accessible careers — ones with less institutional barriers than the more lucrative ones, but as careers of social commitment to, and solidarity with, oppressed groups. Ironically, little has been done in these fields to develop culturally grounded educational practices (Carter, 1995). For instance, social work curriculum development often proceeds from a master narrative. That master narrative displaces the cultural background and knowledge of social work minority students. We think that the proposed approach, with due adaptations, can be applied in the education of helping professionals.

It is not only Latino students who may benefit from this approach to education. Other groups who are underrepresented or invisible in colleges and universities could benefit from a similar program. We think that the approach can be specially useful not only as means of responding to the educational needs of minority students, but also as a means of modeling culturally grounded professional practice for all students.

The approach is cost-effective and requires only a slight curriculum reorganization. Listed are specific conditions for an effective replication of the approach.

- A coordinated college-wide awareness effort is needed.
- The involvement of the targeted community is vital for the success of these type of efforts.
- Once this process begins, constituencies that were traditionally voiceless start to play an advocacy role. College administrators need to welcome these dynamics and sincerely engage in dialogue.
- As the approach is replicated, the whole process needs to be documented and evaluated.
- Comparison studies will be useful in increasing the understanding of what works and under what conditions.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the home-college link allows students to be learners and producers of expertise, and therefore gives them the power to transform their environment. Instructors become allies in this transformative process. This transformation can only materialize if there is an institutional commitment to support it. This commitment needs to take place at all levels, especially at gate-keeping points, such as admissions, financial aide, student support services, faculty recruitment, and academic resources.

The cost of exclusion is much higher than the uncertainty of innovation in this area. Latino students and other unrepresented groups deserve a dignified place in higher education. They have an important contribution to make and the whole college community has much to gain from the experience of inclusion. □

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PERSONAL NARRATIVES DO NOT COME EASILY TO THE PROFESSIONALLY TRAINED SELF

The growth of philosophical and cultural views challenging the hegemony of our modernist perspective comes from a variety of directions and defies description under any one unifying banner. The most commonly used word we have for referring to these broad changes is "postmodern," an umbrella term with a very unclear definition. It is not surprising that we tend to evaluate our narratives by the criteria we have inherited as part of our tradition. Often we are not only uncomfortable with the new emphasis on subjectivities, an area previously taboo in professional writings, we find it almost impossible to avoid conventional evaluations, judgments and conceptualizations rooted in our Western philosophical heritage.

by Roberta Wells Imre

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Interest in writing narratives within a professional context has arisen at a time of ferment and changing perspectives within the academic world. Western philosophical and historical traditions that have provided the grounding for much of modern thought are being questioned, and different ideas, languages, and points of view are surfacing amid the dominant stories in the culture. New voices are increasingly being discovered as narratives make it possible for those previously silenced to tell their stories. The growing literature on the lives of woman, past and present, provide notable examples of this trend (Conway, ed., 1992). We are only now discovering some of the broad dimensions of human life that have been hidden by the ways so much of the population has been defined as Other, not really part of "us" (McKenna, 1991). As many individuals and groups formerly considered to be Other come to be recognized as worthy of being heard (Delaney and Delaney, 1993; Kotlowitz, 1992), the Other in ourselves breaks through in unexpected ways in our own stories.

Unfortunately these growing opportunities to explore stories in new ways can arouse internal conflicts for human service professionals. Stories are a major part of the lives of people who do social work, but it is the nature and formatting of these stories that presents problems. For the most part, our education has been essentially "modernist," a term generally used to apply to Western philosophical and historical ways of defining and describing the world in which we live. Long historical roots have brought us an intellectual world in which knowledge is considered to be "objective," something outside ourselves, reflecting a reality already there, awaiting discovery by prescribed methods thought to provide universal avenues to truth. In this view the techniques of the physical sciences are necessary even in the social sciences in order to minimize, if not eliminate, "subjective" factors rooted in persons involved in the research.

From this kind of perspective stories are suspect. They are "anecdotal," a term that has become pejorative in professional education. That which is anecdotal is considered to be unproved, not objective, and particularly suspect because of the unabashed inclusion of the feelings and personal perspectives of the narrator. Definitions of anecdote found in Oxford and American Heritage dictionaries refer to stories that are interesting, often having historical connections, and, significantly for our purposes, unpublished. If asked to really think about it, very few of us would be prepared to say that publication is necessarily the best criteria we have for judging value in our work. Too many factors influence what gets published, where, when, and by whom. Actually the reference to something unpublished in the dictionary definitions probably refers to the ways anecdotes have so often been part of an oral tradition that was not committed to writing for any of a variety of reasons.

The changing environment that has reawakened interest in narratives and other opportunities for exploration suggests that it may be time to rescue the word anecdote, to restore it to its proper place in the intertwined narratives of our personal and professional lives. As the intellectual foundations upon which we have depended seen to be eroding, and we get an uneasy feeling that we may be standing on unstable terrain, our narratives, including anecdotes, can help us understand what really grounds our work.

We have labels for aspects of the current upheaval, and general terms like modernism and postmodernism are often used to describe some of the philosophical changes taking place. Professional vocabularies tend to reflect modernist views. Descriptions incorporate terms like objective, unbiased, rational, and that equivocal word "intersubjective," often used by researchers. These words are designed to reflect a world described to us in ways not requiring the participation of our selves, a world known through the techniques and discoveries of science. In this context moral issues, while usually not considered to be objective in the same way as science, have been seen to be best settled through a rational decision making process based upon an established hierarchy of values (Reamer, 1990). As we explore the uses of narratives, our own and those of others, and experience their often emotional impact, we very quickly discover that they do not fit well with our modernist heritage. We find that our emotional responsiveness collides with attitudes that over the years have been ingrained in us and as a result have been incorporated into the professional languages and ways of thinking about things that structure our understanding of our raison de 'etre.

The growth of philosophical and cultural views challenging the hegemony of our modernist perspective comes from a variety of directions and defies description under any one unifying banner. The most commonly used word we have for referring to these broad changes is "postmodern," an umbrella term with a very unclear definition. Different people mean different things when they use the word. For our purposes here, however, it is useful for the ways in which it recognizes and accredits the importance of what has been considered to be subjective in human life, even calling into question the subjective/objective dichotomy itself. The subjective it turns out is not a neat category in contrast to what is thought to be objective. We begin to see the extent to which our world and our view of it has been constructed by human beings, and how many aspects of this world have actually been structured by those whose privileged positions have given their particular constructions power.

It is not surprising that we tend to evaluate our narratives by the criteria we have inherited as part of our tradition. Often we are not only uncomfortable with the new emphasis on subjectivities, an area previously taboo in professional writings, we find it almost impossible to avoid conventional evaluations, judgments and conceptualizations rooted in our Western philosophical heritage. Given this context, writing personal narratives is difficult and often painful. We tend to think a narrative is good if it follow traditional patterns and meets certain pre-established standards of rationality, logical progression of thought, and what has been assumed to be objective reality. Within a professional context we also have expectations that a story will be useful in a concrete sort of way, i.e., aid us in our goals of the conceptualization of methods, techniques and outcomes, all terms reflecting the conventions of our Western heritage and its modernist views of science, rationality, and our ability to know an objective world without being personally involved in the knowing.

One of the dangers resulting from this situation is that our stories will sound like tales designed to reinforce our culturally inherited values and ways of thinking. A good narrative, however, must be allowed to test and sometimes threaten these conventional boundaries. In social work the effort to tell a story by way of a personal narrative often can slide into a mea culpa about having given rein to subjectivity, an apologia for letting ourselves be seen and heard in ways we have been taught are inappropriate. Our first impulse is to suppress such transgressions of professional expectations by way of learned responses and conceptual and linguistic framing. Confronted with the emotional impact of a good narrative, we become like the exasperating music commentator who cannot let the music speak for itself, but must explain it ad infinitum. The meanings in narratives have some of the same kind of vulnerability. As in music something important gets lost in translation when artistry is encased in linguistic conventions.

In writing narratives it is hard to let go. To let things be. To stop intervening and trying to rearrange the thinking of ourselves and others, and to just listen and let meaning seep into the cracks and spaces around our concepts and expectations. We can sometimes do this with the narratives of others, but most of us have not learned how to listen to our own lives and stories without having to frame in advance what it all means. We are often at risk of shutting down our stories before they come fully into being, changing them where necessary so that they fall safely within the allowed conventions.

Individuals who are human service professionals may personally enjoy reading fiction, but there are not very many writers of fiction or poetry in social work and similar fields, perhaps because of some of the same problems we find in writing narratives. We have been taught that there is a clearly distinguishable reality that must not be tainted by fantasy in our writing. It is felt that all kinds of dangers lurk in blurring the line between clearly demonstrable facts and imaginative

interpretations. If we intentionally encourage mixing fact and what might be fiction in our stories, how will any of us know where we are and how we should conduct ourselves in the "real" world? We worry that we will be saying that there are no standards, that all ideas are equal, and there are no moral responsibilities. We fear loss of the power of grand narratives, often religious stores, that we have been taught are literally true and that we depend upon in our lives (Parry and Doan, 1994). We look at the changes in the world around us and do not like what we see. We are surfeited with stories of self indulgence and/or victimization and the all too frequent loss of any sense of communal responsibility. So we tend to see danger rather than hope in anything that seems to threaten to further shred our heritage.

At this point in our thinking we confront the impoverishment of our present situation with its limited languages and concepts in the face of inevitable change. The kinds of rationality and scientific and technological thinking embedded in modernist views have been ingrained in us and have offered security that we could know our world, that there was a grand design out there just waiting for us to identify it. Many of the ideas associated with what has loosely been called postmodernist thought are experienced as a mixed blessing. Even though costly in terms of conceptual security and comfort, we can see that potential rewards are immeasurable, a word that in itself strikes fear in our hearts since we have been taught that measurement is the ultimate test of reality.

Thus, while we become fascinated with narratives as part of a new, "postmodern" milieu, we straddle two worlds and are constantly being pulled back into the old while tentatively stepping into the new. Addressing the complex issues involved in postmodernism and the social sciences Rosenau (1992, p. 173) speaks of what she calls "affirmative" post-modernists whose focus is on people on the margins, on those whose lives have been controlled by others. A goal of some of these postmodernists is to encourage "those who have never been the subject (active, human), but who are rather so often assumed to be objects (observed, studied). They would include new voices and new forms of local narrative but not in an attempt to impose discipline or responsibility."

If we are going to be able to plumb the depths of wisdom that is available through narratives, our own as well as those of others, we have to somehow learn to let go of our conventional professional ways of thinking and framing long enough to hear and see what has previously been hidden from us. Stories can do this if we can just learn to let them emerge. For those of us in human service professions moral imperatives do not disappear, but our comprehension and understandings of them change. In learning to acknowledge our own subjectivities our whole outlook is broadened. We do not have to abandon rationality and all we have learned, but we do need to recognize that "reason explains the darkness, but it is not a light" (ben Shea, 1989). Light has to be found elsewhere—perhaps in a story. □

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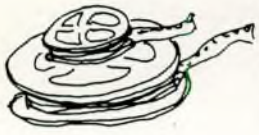
* In "REFERENCES," the author of this essay seeks to identify each authors' gender by citing his/her full name.



FILM REVIEW:
"Leaving Las Vegas"

Ben Sanderson, who is an alcoholic, is the hero of the movie "Leaving Las Vegas." His heroism is accomplished without romanticism and in the face of the full physicality of end stage alcoholism. This extraordinary feat is accomplished by the terrific director Mike Figgis, who offers us a look at a human being struggling with many demons; the most powerful, but not the only one, is demon rum. Unlike most other movies about human pathology, addiction and self destruction, "Leaving Las Vegas" doesn't patronize the characters or the audience. Figgis won't allow us to reduce Sanderson to a dysfunctional caricature — the bitter pathos of "The Days of Wine and Roses" is thankfully absent. Instead we have a man struggling to love and maintain a sense of honor, however diluted, while he deliberately drinks himself to death. Ben Sanderson chooses his fate and through that choice Figgis allows us to witness his character's complexity and to accept his improbable authenticity .

The storyline of the film is deceptively simple. Sanderson, having washed up in an ocean of alcohol in the movie business, burns his bridges and all his possessions, and leaves Los Angeles for Las Vegas, a place he will never leave. Once there he checks into a seedy motel and proceeds to systematically drink himself to death. He estimates this task will take four weeks. Along the way he meets a prostitute, Sera, and falls in love. The rest of the film portrays Ben and Sera's relationship on its vertiginous course during the final weeks of his life. Nicholas Cage as Ben offers one of the great film performances of the last two decades. He inhabits the spacious character fully, allowing us to see all the contradictions and passions of a man in a headlong pursuit of both death and love. Elisabeth Shue is equally brilliant as his companion and would-be lover. Her directness and lack of acting mannerisms render her performance chillingly authentic. Together, their intensity of purpose melts our initial skepticism that a film about a such a sad and depleted subject could be compelling.

"Leaving Las Vegas" turns hedonism on its head— lush scenes of a glimmering, phantasmagoric Las Vegas at night are interspersed with scenes, both inside and outside the casinos, of the misery and banality that necessarily accompany a direct, 24 hour pursuit of pleasure. Streetwalkers, drunks, vicious mobsters and rapists, suggesting all varieties of pain, humiliation and death are the leitmotif of Las Vegas; Figgis acknowledges the desperation at the heart of the town. Surprisingly the dark side of Las Vegas

By Mary Ann Jimenez
Arts and Media Editor

and its mindless pursuit of distraction serve to underscore the essential decency and potential for happiness of Ben and Sera's relationship.

The riveting nature of the film comes not from the plot(the ending is clearly foretold from the first scenes of Ben crashing around Los Angeles in full alcoholic fettle), nor is it from our hope of his redemption through sobriety (Ben tells Sera early on, "You can never, never, never ask me to stop drinking"). We are pretty sure, even though the film offers a momentary quickening of hope when the two declare their love, that Ben will allow nothing to save him. Instead the film's power comes from its refusal to equate Ben with his pathological behavior. Popular psychology promises that to know a person's label or dysfunction (I'm an alcoholic, drug addict, compulsive overeater, codependent and so forth) allows us to obtusely dismiss all his or her complexity, contradictions and capacity for surprise. It is the utter predictability and implicit reductionism in these labels (alcoholic, prostitute) that this film, like all great art, rejects. Ben is a man who is drinking himself to death; he is also a complex, fully realized character whose humanity makes his devolution all the more tragic.

Ostensibly about alcoholism, suicide, and the exploitation of women, "Leaving Las Vegas" forces us to look beyond these tragedies and celebrate the vibrancy and nourishing potential of human relationships. The film reminds us that we are ineluctably social animals— Ben needs to be with Sera even as he tries to destroy all human connection; Sera comforts him as he is dying regardless of the pain their relationship has caused her. The last scene in the film is immensely moving, as Ben and Sera connect intensely in the minutes before his death. Though deeply damaged, the characters as played by Cage and Shue demonstrate the strength of the human spirit. This is especially true for Sera, who during the course of the movie survives the brutal domination of a pimp, a gang rap by college students and a heartbreaking relationship with Ben. The film's story is told by her, who begins and ends the film, perhaps appropriately, talking to an unseen therapist.

"Leaving Las Vegas," which won the New York Film Critics Award as the best film of 1995, courageously leaves us with an uncomfortable ambiguity which it never offers to resolve. This is a rarity in mainstream films and, like Ben and Sera's relationship, it deserves to be celebrated. □

BOOK REVIEW

Mario Vargas Llosa

The Story Teller. **Penquin Books. N.Y., N.Y. 1989. Paper. $8.99. 246 pages.**

There are some stories worth telling over and over, and there are some books worth reading over and over. For me, *The Story Teller* is such a book. Anyone in the helping professions interested in the power of narratives, and how they might be used to help people, will find this a mysterious, absorbing and fascinating fictional account of innocence and greed.

There are universal stories, which all cultures tell in their own ways. How the world was created is one such story. How the world was saved by some heroic act is another. *The Story Teller* deals with the tragic universal story of the conquering of one's native land, by a group with a powerful technology, a group that usually destroys what it has conquered.

The setting is Peru, could be anywhere. The time is now, could be yesterday or tomorrow. The indigenous populations are being driven deeper into the jungles by developers and gold seekers. They are at risk of extinction and loss of all cultural heritage. Travelers, returning from the depths of the jungle, begin to tell stories of a red-headed man who wanders from small village to village, warning the people of the coming dangers, gathering and retelling them the stories of their heritage, and of other groups like themselves in other parts of the country. Is this merely an attempt to help maintain their culture, or is there more at stake? People in the city begin to wonder about this stranger who is living with, and being accepted by the native population, as one of them.

The writer, an old friend, recognizes the red headed man from a picture brought back by a traveler, and recalls his past. The story revolves around the uncovering of this man, a university educated anthropologist, who has been able to transform himself out of the modern mode to live and contribute to people who were there long before the invaders, or his own ancestors. We learn of the myths, traditions, and the mysteries of these tribes. Their belief systems and why they do the "strange" things they do. We learn about these people's closeness and dependency on nature for survival. We learn how the educated class, from where the story teller emerged, is shaken by his acts, and sees him both a hero and a threat. If we want to, we can learn how close to the mark this book was, by the *New York Times* of Tuesday, December 12, 1995. The headline read:

"In Peru, a Fight for Fresh Air. U.S.-Owned Smelter Makes Residents Ill and Angry."

□

By Paul Abels,
Book Editor

BOOK REVIEW

Ruth Martin

Oral History in Social Work: Research, Assessment, and Intervention.
Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1995, 144 pages, paper

By John A. Kayser

Ruth Martin's *Oral History in Social Work* is a concise and timely treasure. This fascinating book is written on several levels, beginning with Martin's own personal and professional story of her introduction into personal narratives and oral histories. As a child, she recounts her first exposure to the power of stories, through listening to African-American kin tell stories of the life and approaching death of her father. Later, through her subsequent experience as a practitioner and educator, Martin skillfully demonstrates how she became grounded in oral history methodology and began to forge conceptual and practice linkages between oral history and social work.

Oral History in Social Work is divided into two major parts, the first of which establishes the theoretical and research dimensions of the oral history approach. Martin locates oral history methods within the qualitative, constructivist approach to examining individuals' subjective experiences. She develops a multi-dimensional theory base, drawing on Kurt Lewin's (1951) seminal field theory of impelling and restraining forces affecting human behavior, Germain's (1979) ecological perspective which emphasizes the goodness-of-fit between individuals' adaptive capacities and the "nutritive" qualities of the environment, and Germain and Gitterman's (1980) life model framework which examines psychosocial stressors between individual needs and capacities and the environment—particularly during periods of life transitions.

Martin then proceeds to demonstrate how to apply this theory framework to oral history research. Particularly valuable is her clear outline of "how to" design and implement oral history research projects. Martin guides the novice researcher through the various steps of selecting a project, reviewing the literature, developing research questions and topics, formulating tentative assumptions, sampling, interviewing, transcribing, analysis and interpretation, and dissemination. This section also includes a very helpful discussion about ethical considerations which need to be addressed in oral history research, as well as practical suggestions about how to gain access to knowledgeable informants in a community. In addition, there is an in-depth discussion of how the oral history researcher may use a grounded theory approach to search for individual respondents' narrative themes and topics, as well as patterns and themes across respondents. Several innovative suggestions are given for dis-

seminating information from oral history projects, including both the traditional scholarly forums (e.g., peer-reviewed journals, professional conferences) and newer creative approaches (e.g., writing scripts for television shows, creating a museum of oral history repositories for a community).

As an social work education text, Martin has provided detailed accounts of how oral histories can be a rich source of learning for students, both experiential as well as didactic. Particular attention is drawn not only to the content of formal courses in oral history research, but also how students' field practicum experience can be used to understand the subjective realities of individuals and families, organizations and communities. Further, Martin links the concept of the helping relationship and direct practice skills in social work with the type of rapport and interviewing skills used by the oral historian. A recurring emphasis is the need for students to have direct experience with people who have felt the effects of discrimination, so as to link the larger social justice mission of the profession with the face-to-face interventions of micro-level practice.

In Part II, Martin provides numerous examples of her own and her students' research projects with diverse client systems. These projects range from young women who earlier experienced teen pregnancy, to elderly African American "wisdom keepers" sharing stories of family adaptation and survival, to recent Jewish immigrants from the Soviet Union, to understanding the community leaders' experience of settlement house movement, to understanding the experiences of elderly residents in a low-income, urban neighborhood community. These projects show how oral histories can illuminate the adaptive strengths of historically oppressed populations as well as those whose lives have experienced major disruption and upheaval. In particular, Martin emphasizes the need to obtain the personal meanings of minority respondents—their own interpretation of experiences—which so often have been excluded from mainstream research and historical accounts. In this way, the oral history approach can be used to build new knowledge inductively, similar to other qualitative methods such as the case study and grounded theory.

In summary, *Oral History in Social Work* takes an activist approach to gathering, analyzing, and disseminating the oral histories of a wide spectrum of clients. Educators may profitably use this text in a variety of courses, including qualitative research, history of social work, community organization, and direct social work practice. The social work profession owes a debt of thanks not only to Ruth Martin and her students for showing how to bridge the gap between oral history methodology and social work, but also to the many individuals who generously shared their stories and first-person accounts of strength, courage, adaptation, and resilience. □

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FORTHCOMING
Special Issues: Call for Narratives

TEACHING AND LEARNING: THE COMMUNITY TRAINING EXPERIENCE

Janet Black, Editor

Most educational programs for the helping professions provide hands on training for students, i.e. field work, internship, residency, fellowship, legal clerkship, student nursing, student teaching, etc.

The teaching and learning experiences provided within the various settings offer a rich arena to develop narrative, personal accounts of the process of teaching and learning, from the perspective of the training teacher and the student in training.

This special issue invites professionals that teach and learn in the context of the community, such as training supervisors, field work instructors, clinical instructors, residency training chiefs master teachers; and students in training in community settings such as courts, clinics, schools, hospitals, social service agencies and community organizations, to submit narratives that describe and explain their teaching and/or learning experience.

We encourage teachers and students to share their experiences in the teaching and learning process. Examples of specific issue or interest areas include:

- identification of successful and unsuccessful teaching and learning approaches;
- exploration of the conflicts and concerns that emerge in the teaching/leaning process;
- amplification of the teaching/learning experience through the use of client/patient focused practice examples;
- examination of the external and internal forces that support and/or hinder the teaching/learning experience.
- discussion of the process of integrating theoretical and practical application concepts in the community experience

Send manuscripts to:

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Submissions due March 31, 1996 □

LOSS OF A HOMELAND: INSIGHTS OF 'STRANGERS' FOR TEACHING AND HELPING

"...displacement provides unique opportunities for new vision"
Janet Wolff. In: Resident Alien (1995)

Golie Jansen and Marian Aguilar

Being born and having lived outside the United States offers a certain experience of being a stranger. The manner of loss of one's homeland colors one's outsider status and reflections depending on reasons for being in the U.S.: as an exile, a refugee, a permanent alien, an immigrant. In addition, being white (mainly of European descent) or being a person of color (Asian, African, Latin/Central descent) impacts how one finds one self responding to the contested historical and contemporary politics of accommodation, integration, resistance and transformation within the United States. In particular, involvement in the helping professions and social change activities in one's country of origin also colors one's perceptions and perspectives on human services in the Unites States. As the helping professions increasing commit to a focus on cultural diversity and diversity of color, the voices and perspectives of those we serve are getting more prominence. What is lacking in the genre are the voices and insight of faculty and practitioners in terms of what being an outsider means to them in the context of teaching or working in the helping professions.

In this special issue we invite academics and practitioners to share narrative personal accounts of their lived experience as "outsider/stranger" and how this identity affects their teaching and practice. Suggestions for specific topics include:

The personal meaning of cultural (linguistic and geographical), economic or political marginality for teaching and practice

Identity politics:

- Displacement and self recovery;
- Revisions of home and a new homeland;
- "Home is (not) where the heart is;"
- Private and public issues of being Ethno-American.

Color politics:

- Stories of "passing" but not belonging;
- Stories of resistance and conditions of Americanness;
- The meaning of being a stranger and a person of color;

Politics of solidarity:

- Contributions of strangers to a transformative political agenda;
- Beyond color for social justice

Send manuscripts to:

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