REFLECTIONS

NARRATIVES of PROFESSIONAL HELPING

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Letter from the Associate Editor

Rebecca A. Lopez, Ph.D.

It is with very great sadness that I have to inform our readership that we have suffered the loss of our esteemed Editor, Dr. Jillian Jimenez. She passed away on October 15, 2009 after a brief, but aggressive illness.

For those of our readers who did not know her well, I can tell you that she was a remarkable scholar, a quick wit, an incisive intellect, and a dedicated professor of social policy. Jillian earned a Ph.D. in both American History and in Social Policy from Brandeis University. Prior to her tenure at the Department of Social Work at California State University, Long Beach, she taught American history at Pitzer College in California. Her love of American history and social policy were interwoven in much of her research and publications, particularly in the areas of mental health and child welfare policies. She had just recently published her new book *Social Policy and Social Change: Toward the Creation of Social and Economic Justice*, in which she offered an historical analysis of social inequality in our country and the economic systems that contribute to the status quo. Jillian was a passionate advocate for social change, whether it was by instilling greater knowledge of historical precedents among her peers, or by training thousands of students in the skills of social policymaking and other strategies for social change.

Jillian lived a purposeful life up to just a few weeks before her death. This issue of *Reflections* was her last; and I know that she would have wanted her final contribution to mean something, to somehow keep us moving forward in reflection and growth. I believe it does.

Most of this issue's offerings express a theme of evolution—of movement from less to more, from ignorance to knowledge, from despair to hope. Julia Archer describes an evolution from established ways of undertaking cross-cultural research and social work in her narrative *Re-positioning Reciprocity: Reflections from a Caribbean Field Study*. It is a movement that employs a dual perspective to recognize and appreciate that all parties in an interaction contribute to growth if the researcher is sensitive to inherent power relations that likely exist between researcher and research subjects. In her exploration of African Caribbean women heads of household in Tobago, she seeks to advance a "new lens" that deconstructs established power differentials between the researcher and the subject—a deconstruction that can result in reciprocal riches for both parties.

Michael Dover's cross-cultural experiences in *Rapport, Empathy and Oppression: Cross-Cultural Vignettes* echo an evolutionary process that must occur if we are to be successful in bridging the gaps between the client's world and our own, perhaps dissimilar worlds. His experiences in New Orleans, New York and Philadelphia provide examples of sometimes painful lessons in confirming that cultural unfamiliarity can be minimized with open attitudes, understanding and empathy by the social worker. An awareness of power disparities between white professionals and non-white clients creates unique challenges in building desired rapport and relational empathy in a variety of client settings.

The other side of the cultural looking glass is contemplated by Woochan Shim as she attempts to reconcile the traditional critiques of her own cultural foundation, that of Confucianism, in her narrative entitled *Gender Balance with Confucian Philosophy: My Own Experience of Empowerment*. She takes us through her evolution as a South Korean who views Confucianism, at first, as oppressive in its treatment and expectations for women, and then moves to an "alternative reconstruction" that uncovers a benevolence and reciprocity in this belief system that can be viewed for its empowering elements. Shim makes her claim that the principles of reciprocity found in the *yin* and *yang* of Confucianism can be compelling tools for those who work with many victimized Asian clients. The evolution of her beliefs through the re-interpretation of her cultural viewpoints is powerful.

The hope for society's evolution is expressed in our next narrative by Catherine Faver, whose focus is our country's practices in capital punishment. In *Forgiveness and the Death Penalty: The Power of Stories*, she describes the social inequality and historic experiences in our country that continue to reverberate as a violent rippling effect that is shared by all of us—not just aggressor and victim. She guides her students and the reader through this difficult, emotion-laden policy area with a careful consideration of the alternatives to execution policies and institutionalized violence, alternatives that could include conflict resolution and restorative justice practices, as well as "letting go" of hatred through forgiveness.

In *Mentorship in Social Work: A Dialogue of Powerful Interplay*, Noell Rowan offers a unique perspective of the power of a mentoring relationship that evolved into personal bonds that nurtured growth and evolution of professional development in her grandmother's career as a social worker in America's south. The author was witness to the lasting friendship and mentoring experienced by her grandmother as an early student in the first school social work program in Georgia. The extension of the relationship between mentor and student evolved into strong personal bonds over 40 years and provides an example of the power of connection among new and veteran practitioners.

Both hurricanes and tempestuous changes in his life and career form part of the basis for evolution of Harvey Heckes, as he shares *From a Series of Hurricanes, a Field Education Coordinator Evolves*. As a medical social worker with 30 years' experience, the author describes his experiences as a new field coordinator encountering the many challenges to building a functioning field program in social work education. His evolution and success only comes of risk-taking and perseverance.

Our final narrative truly speaks to the evolution still very much lacking in our society with an *Overlooked* population. Teresa Mason eloquently takes us into the unique world of the professional whose advocacy of deaf clients provides painful evidence that we still have much to overcome in our treatment of both the deaf individual and those like Mason who passionately carry the message of the deaf population. She speaks of her fragile "straddling" of deaf and hearing worlds from a perspective that few have expressed. She also provides us with a valuable summary of the legislative and incremental advances we have made in this country in our attempts to surmount some of the many barriers to inclusion for all deaf persons. She is hopeful that we as a society can move to a more just treatment of the deaf population.

All of the contributors to this issue express hope and movement and renewal. Just as these articles convey evolution and growth, so too must we move forward in building on the unique legacy of Jillian Jimenez' contributions in providing "reflections" that enrich us all.


DR. JILLIAN JIMENEZ
in memoriam
August 1943 — October 2009
A REMARKABLE LEGACY OF TEACHING AND SCHOLARSHIP

Call for Papers

PROMOTION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

A SPECIAL ISSUE IN CELEBRATION OF THE LEGACY OF PROFESSOR JILLIAN JIMENEZ

Social justice may be defined as the fair distribution of goods, services, rights, and duties. The social expression and societal mechanism for distributing resources, opportunities, and obligations are made manifest through interdependent systems of policies and procedures. Mediated by values and preferences, policies as specific expressions of the public will affect and shape the overall quality of life in society, the circumstances of living, and the nature of intra-societal relations.

Historically, the profession of social work has adhered to philosophical, ethical, moral obligations, and practice principles that bind it to social and civic activism as a means of promoting a society where all have access to the requisites of freedom enumerated in the constitution. The profession's mantra and call to action continue to be anchored in the promotion of distributive justice.

In celebration of Professor Jimenez's scholarly and practice commitment to principles of social activism and advocacy as means of promoting social justice, narratives are invited that:

- Demonstrate the efficacy of strategies that promoted programmatic and organizational changes that facilitated distributive justice
- Depict the self-determined involvement of students, service recipients, or practitioners as change agents
- Provide illustrations of how social and civic engagement may change and actively contribute to the process of educating social workers
- Provide illustrations and practice principles that facilitate the modification of agency/organization policies and programs to affect a just distribution of resources and opportunities

Mail manuscripts by June 30, 2010 to:

Sonia and Paul Abels, Reflections Founders/Past Senior and Associate Editors
Department of Social Work
California State University, Long Beach
1250 Bellflower Blvd. – MS 4602
Long Beach, CA 90802-4602

If you have questions regarding potential ideas for special edition manuscripts or submission details, you are encouraged to email Sonia or Paul Abels at: pabels@csulb.edu or abelspaul19@gmail.com.

Re-positioning Reciprocity: Reflections from a Caribbean Field Study

Julia Archer, Ph.D., University of Kansas

Current Western discourses on reciprocity in the research process situate the responsibility, and thus the control, for creating reciprocal relationships within the realm of the researcher. In the author's reflections in this narrative, based on an extended field study in the Caribbean, reciprocity is re-visioned as emerging from the location of the study participants. Inherent power differentials and the researcher's purposeful process of relinquishing the reins of power are discussed.

The reflections in this narrative are drawn from my experiences with the inhabitants of the small Caribbean island of Tobago during an extended field study. The stories are constructed both retrospectively and through journal reflections written during the study itself. In the telling and the re-consideration, new lenses emerge in my reflective process and shine a different light on a standard concept, that of *reciprocity*.

The concept of reciprocity has long held centrality in my consciousness, although I have not always identified it as such. Growing up in the shadow of southern segregation in the United States exposed me to the dichotomous face of reciprocity. It compelled me to seek out contexts that would enable more equal personal relationships across ethnic and cultural lines than I could find or develop in that environment. Years spent working in a civil rights organization more clearly illuminated the value and richness of such connections in both my personal and professional lives. Later, throughout almost two decades of practicing clinical social work with clients, an essential focus of our work together has been to co-construct as level a base of power as possible, despite the manifest hierarchy of such a setting. And, in recent years of teaching university students (another context framed in hierarchy) to conduct social work practice, the concept of reciprocity stands rooted in the center of our conversation, encompassing both our classroom relationships and the students' relationships with their clients.

During the planning for my ethnographic research in Tobago, I examined the concept of reciprocity carefully. Like the associations noted above, that of researcher-participant is often viewed as an inherently hierarchical condition (England, 1994). I would be conducting research as a Western white woman in a postcolonial setting, creating an additional intersection to the power differential. In the process of conceptualizing reciprocity prior to my study, I revisited my own location and preferred identities in the contexts described above. I also consulted the scholarly literature in depth: feminist scholarship because of my stance within that theoretical umbrella and qualitative methodology due to the nature of my study. From these combined lenses—my own hermeneutic developed over years of working with other people and the attention paid to power relations and reflexivity in research studies by both qualitative methodology and feminist disciplines—I felt fairly grounded as I began my research with the participants and villagers in Tobago. For a full discussion of how my grounding in those combined lenses played out in my relationships and work in the study, see Archer (in press).

However, it is the *new lenses* that are emerging for me, retrospectively, that are the topic of this writing. In order to elucidate them as clearly as possible, they are presented as follows: I refer to the scholarly literature briefly and review the ways in which reciprocity in the research process is positioned; an overview of the Tobago study follows in order to better orient the reader to the context; I then present my reflections regarding a repositioning of the construct of reciprocity—first through sharing journal reflections written during the study that provide a deconstruction of the villagers' efforts toward reciprocity through inclusion—

and then, through exploring purposeful ways in which a researcher can relinquish intrinsic reins of power; lastly, final thoughts are given. Throughout this narrative, the names of individuals as well as villages have been changed to preserve the confidentiality of the participants, members of their households, and other villagers.

Current Discourses on Reciprocity

Reciprocity is a cornerstone of postmodern qualitative research. Reciprocal relationships between researcher and researched are viewed as those built on collaboration, empathy, respect, and recognition of each individual's knowledge and experience (England, 1994; Lawless, 1992; Spradley, 1979). They stand in stark contrast to earlier, modern discourses in which the researcher was situated as the "expert" on participants' lives and contexts. However, while current discourses emphasize a more equal power balance between the two, they often appear to situate the responsibility, and thus the *control*, of creating that balance in the realm of the researcher. Spradley (1979), for example, notes that, "The ethnographer seeks to learn from people, to be taught by them" (p. 3-4). England (1994) states that, "The researcher explicitly acknowledges that both people have skills and knowledge to contribute" (p. 86). Feminist researchers acknowledge that power relations are fluid in nature, reconstructed and renegotiated between researcher and participant throughout the research process (Naples, 2003; Reinharz, 1992). Despite this acknowledgement, however, the researcher's lens on power relations is the one most favored in the discourse, as in Naples' (2003) characterization of feminist researchers:

"*A feminist approach to fieldwork includes a sensitivity to issues of power and control in the research process and argues for a self-reflective practice*" (p. 50).

As a Western researcher entering an unfamiliar culture in Tobago, I too considered that the responsibility for developing and maintaining reciprocal relationships was mine. Upon deeper consideration, I have come to understand that power belonged in larger part to the women participants, not to me. This narrative contests the positioning of control over reciprocity with the researcher. In these reflections, I will deconstruct the participants' and other villagers' remarkable efforts to initiate and maintain a reciprocal relationship *with me*.

Brief Overview of the Study

My goal in this study was to gain a better understanding of the social and economic survival strategies of African Caribbean women heads of household (Archer, 2006). Several intersecting factors led to this research focus and the selection of Tobago for fieldwork. My social work practice over the years, in hospital, clinic, private practice, and wilderness therapy settings, has been conducted primarily with women, many of whom have experienced horrific circumstances. An abiding question in our work together is how they have managed to survive and, sometimes, to thrive. My enduring interest in that question led to the core of this research study on women's survival strategies. Female-headed households are the poorest in the world (Chen, 1995; Katapa, 2006; Zhan & Sherraden, 2003). I sought to learn how women among this population manage to maintain their households despite the challenges they face, to gain insights and specific tools that may serve as model and hope for other women facing often desperate circumstances.

African Caribbean female heads of household have been characterized in dichotomous ways in the literature. The first is that of "the poorest of the poor" (Massiah, 1983, for example), economically powerless, and lacking hope. The second construction represents female heads of household (especially African Caribbean women) as powerful matriarchs (Senior, 1991): poor, but strong and mighty, working long hours, making huge sacrifices for their children, and unafraid to speak out against injustice. Dichotomies invariably define the extremes of a given condition or situation. In this study, I sought to better understand the experience of female headship by observing and listening to the participant heads of household themselves. I was also guided by the question of whether it

is possible that these two constructions, poverty and strong matriarchy, can co-exist.

The lives and identities of Caribbean women of African origin, like women elsewhere, are complex. This study was not an attempt to minimize those complexities or to situate female heads of household within a definitive framework of meaning. Rather, it aimed to extend current matrifocal discourses based on the women's own voices. The final factor that led to the study being conducted in Tobago was discussions with colleagues who had ties in Trinidad and Tobago, which in turn led to my connection with resident gatekeepers in Tobago who believed the study to be of potential value to the island at large.

In 2002, I conducted fieldwork for the study in two different villages on the island of Tobago over a period of five and a half months, living in one village approximately half the time then moving to the other for the remainder. Participants included 23 female heads of household selected through a snowball sampling process; data were collected through archival review, participant observation, and unstructured and semi-structured interviews. The intent was that, through these triangulated methods, an acutely iterative and credible process of data collection would be achieved. In the ethnographic way, my intent was to immerse myself in the culture as fully as possible. I had conversations with local people every day for those five and a half months, each conversation and observation contributing to my understanding of this culture.

Reciprocity through Inclusion

As noted earlier, I approached this study from a feminist theoretical lens. From this feminist standpoint, one of my major objectives was to be vigilant about "creating" reciprocal relationships with participants and other villagers. I also intended to honor the key feminist tenet of "inclusion," which requires that multiple realities be a part of any research endeavor (Abramowitz, 1996; Chowdry, 1995; Naples, 2000). Little did I know those goals would be usurped in a thrice by the participants and villagers themselves. For, as I reflect on the villagers' unremitting efforts to develop reciprocity—whether consciously undertaken or not—I begin to understand that their insistence upon my inclusion in their everyday lives was central to the process.

Initially, from my own perceived reality of what immersion in the culture should entail, I set about to be an earnest "participant observer." I lived next door to some participants and within walking distance of the others; rode in boats, buses, vans, and route taxis; bought food at the tiny grocery parlors and vegetable booths; stood in line with neighbors to purchase fish from the fishermen just in from their day at sea; and conducted numerous interviews with non-participants, including educators, business owners, government representatives, fishermen, local villagers, police officers, agency directors, and so on. I learned about this culture from each of those experiences.

Once the villagers took charge of constructing reciprocity between us, however, the term "participant observer" took on entirely new meanings. The villagers included me in the spectrum of their daily lives. At times, I was actively involved in a variety of events; at other times, I was a "witness." I deeply valued both roles because, in retrospect, I began to understand that my role as "witness" to their everyday lives was just as important to our connections as my day-to-day interactions with participants and villagers. By the invitation of local people and accompanied by them, I was included in birthday parties, church services of different denominations, and evening choir practice. I was invited to go dancing in nightclubs, and was a guest at numerous festivals and holiday celebrations. I ate lunches and dinners in my neighbors' homes and cooked for them in my home as well. I took a daylong journey through the rainforest and "limed" (hung out together) at friends' houses along the way. I also attended the funeral of a village elder, walked participants' children to school, accompanied them to sports games and community meetings, sat with them during regular hair plaiting and braiding sessions on Sunday afternoons, and swam with them in the sea. Both children and adults shared their thoughts, histories, emotions, and dreams with me. In return, I tried to be as genuine and forthcoming with them about my own life. Through their relentless efforts at

inclusion and reciprocity, I had no choice but to be drawn into those deep and vibrant human connections and simple life events that can change our lives forever. My life was changed as I was carried along a continuum from my initial location of participant observer to that of one who feels a true sense of belonging. Through the following reflections, I hope to provide some of the essences of the latter.

Reflections from the Journal

In order to provide a sense of the ways in which Tobagonians gathered me into the very fabric of their daily lives, I have selected a few entries from my journal of over 200 pages. I have included reflections in the areas of food, spirituality, work, celebrations, poverty, and humor. While the female heads of household were the topic of my study, I also share stories related to children and men.

Sharing Food

After I had lived among them for a short time, neighbors in the village often brought gifts of food to me, such as plants gathered in the rainforest with instructions on how to make "bush tea," fresh "bakes" such as coconut bread, or containers of homemade fish stew. After this "modeling" by the villagers, it became a natural, and reciprocal, occurrence to return their containers with food I had made for them.

Marilyn's Soup. Just after I got home, Ronald, Marilyn's son, came and told me through the kitchen window that Marilyn was calling me. I went across the road to Marilyn's and there was a gigantic bowl of soup waiting for me. It had a split pea-based broth, ham, dasheen, Irish potatoes, pumpkin, noodles, and macaroni. It was the best soup I have eaten in a long time. We sat on their front porch at the little table together and Artie sat in the doorway. As we ate, Candace, Marilyn's daughter, brought up a large plastic container. Jones and Gail down the road sent it to them. Artie said, "We are always sending food back and forth."

Cassie's Grapes. Cassie, 10, took me into the back yard. She climbed up into the grape tree, took her long stick used for the purpose, and knocked down the few ripe grapes for me to eat. These grapes are knobby, oval shaped, and harder than the grapes back home. They almost taste like apples. Delicious. Cassie is crazy about mangoes. She cannot wait for the "Julie Mango" trees in the yard to drop their fruit to her. She showed me the lime and lemon trees and the avocado tree as well. She informed me that these avocadoes will grow to five times the size of ours.

Carolyn's Sea Grape Wine. After we went through the material from the interview and Carolyn answered the few other questions I had, I began to get ready to go. She noted the hard rain falling outside and invited me to sit and watch the movie with them for a few minutes. I gladly agreed. She asked if I would like to taste some of her homemade wine. Sure. She brought me a glass of her "sea grape" wine in ice. It was very good, sort of tangy but sweet. Jackie, Carolyn's five-year-old grandson who's been diagnosed as "mentally retarded" sat on the floor in front of me and began dealing out cards to me. He would choose the cards himself and give them to me in various numbers, once ten cards, another six cards. I would look over the hand seriously and declare what I had, "Two pairs, three tens," etc. He would make a sound like, "Want this one?" and I would say, "Sure," and he would give them to me. We communicated just fine, although Carolyn kept saying, "You can't understand him." I raved about getting an ace-high straight, and lo and behold that hand kept coming to me. We settled right into our game.

Carolyn chuckled as she came back in and presented a bottle of wine to me. It was in a Cream Sherry bottle, one of the used bottles she said she used to get from the hotel where she worked and then saved for her wine. I really did not know what to say. I thank her, tell her I am trying to make some "noonie wine" (from William's noonie fruit and directions),

and if it turns out I would bring her some. I was very moved by her generosity. Carolyn let me take a photo of her and Jackie on the sofa. Sitting in that spotless living room in a house that would be called a "shack" in America, with a tropical rain pounding on the tin roof, drinking a glass of homemade sea grape wine, and playing an unknown card game with a lovely little boy is another memory I will hold close.

Taking the lead from the villagers, I began to prepare food for them as well:

Maggie. Went down to the pier to buy fish about 5:00 p.m. to cook for Maggie, as her back is hurt. Bought three pounds of Dolphin fish. On the way I took some of the mangoes that Shawn had brought me to Ernest. He was not at home, but his sister next door was on the front porch, so I left them with her. I took the fish home and prepared the fish broth I have been taught to make by several different people (it is an island favorite). I took it to Maggie. She was on her front porch processing and bagging fly-fish. She laughed when I brought up the market bag with the pot in it. I showed her what I had made and set it on the porch table. She looked at me in a long, quiet way and did not say anything. I wondered if it was not all right for some reason, though I couldn't think of any. So, I didn't say any more about it. . . Later, as I left her yard, Lennie was in front of his house and she yelled to him, "Lennie, meet my mother." It was in that way I realized she appreciated the fish I cooked for her.

Food for Marilyn and Artie. Wednesday night - Had told Marilyn I would cook fish for her and Artie so bought 4 lbs. of tuna from the fishermen and steamed it with lots of spices, carrots, tomatoes, onions, garlic. Took it over to their house in a plastic container. I knew they were leaving for Trinidad tomorrow, so decided to just deliver it on their porch and be gone. But, Artie was at home and immediately opened the container and tried it. First, he said, "Julie, where are the vegetables?" Then, he said, "Mmmm, now you cook local."

Spirituality

The following stories may convey to the reader some notion of my experience of being a *witness* rather than a *participant observer*. For it is in rich and vibrant contexts such as these that the latter term is a singularly inadequate descriptor. In my location as witness, I did not talk with others or interact with them directly. However, I felt intensely present and held a strong sense of communion with those around me.

Baptism in Maryville. In the early afternoon, I walked down to the beach for a swim. As I got close to the mangrove trees, I saw a few children skipping stones across the water and just up the hill from them were adults standing in a loose circle. It was a church service, and the preacher was talking. There were 18 people, the women in dresses or skirts, the men in slacks and dressier shirts than are usually worn here. I had planned to just walk on by the children and continue down the beach to the place where I usually swim. But, as I drew closer, the preacher stopped talking and the singing began. I sat down right where I was, which was just on the edge of the children playing and in view and hearing of the adults through the trees. I was transported. The rhythm and sound of the singing was like that I heard at the choir practice in Cocoa Bay. There was only a guitar and a gourd-like cucaracha (not sure what it is called here) for accompaniment. The singing was sweet and simple and uncluttered. The dialect adds a certain quality to the words that is indescribable, but very moving to me. The people swayed slightly as they sang and their movements blended harmoniously with the motion of the trees in the breeze off the sea. It was mesmerizing. Meanwhile, the children around me played on, ignoring me after the first few moments after I sat among them. The littlest girls wore long dresses of chiffon-type materials. The boys wore slacks and dressy shirts like the adult males. Most of the boys were skipping rocks in the water. Every now and then, one of the little girls would lift her skirts up to her knees, pick up a rock, go down into the loose sand, and toss the rock in the water. Two girls about 9 and 10 wore

African print dresses and bounced gently up and down on a limb of the large dead tree I was sitting on. The only notice paid me by this time was when one of the little girls touched my hair as she walked by, something that has happened more than once since I have been here, just because it is different from theirs.

The singing stopped and the preacher prayed. I was just thinking that I needed to get up and move on when the preacher turned and, taking the arms of a young man and woman, started walking in my direction. He saw me and changed his course slightly, but headed toward the water. I stood up quickly, slid past the children, and started to move on down the beach. As I turned, the other people were following the preacher down to the water and they were singing. The preacher and the couple continued walking right into the water and I finally realized this was to be a baptism. I stopped again and watched the ceremony. As exotic as the whole scene appeared to me, with the sermon in the mangrove, the little girls' long dresses, the singing in local dialect, and the baptism in the calm Caribbean Sea, it felt vaguely familiar. I realized that it reminded me of the feeling I used to have when we went to our small church in north Alabama all those many years ago. . . the simplicity and the sense of safety and comfort among people who knew each other well. The people began singing as the preacher led the couple out of the water. I moved on to my swim. A little while later, I paused in the water, looked down the beach to the area where the service and baptism took place, and the beach was totally empty, as if it had never really happened.

Bus Ride from Roxwell. 20 seater. Driver is a large African Caribbean woman with braids wrapped around her head. Got in her seat, opened up the floor beside her where the engine partially showed - looked in, said, "Jesus!"- then turned on a sermon on the radio. She left the bus, returned with large plastic container of water, opened the floor again, poured water in radiator, closed it all back up, turned her sermon up louder, and headed the bus up into the hills with a vengeance. Up and down, around hairpin curve after curve, narrow road, hauling a—. She obviously knew her road. Whenever she started to lose the sermon due to static, she turned it up another notch, determined not to miss anything. We traveled for several minutes at a time with pure static blaring in our ears and nobody said a thing.

An old woman flagged the bus down. As she got on, she said, "Wait, driver." She sat down in the seat behind me, yelled out the window, "Alvin, are you comin'?" Alvin didn't appear. She kept yelling for him. Another female passenger chuckled out loud. The old woman turned around to her and said, "What, you tink dey's no udda down nere?" The other didn't show, so the driver slammed the doors shut and hauled out. About 100 feet around the next sharp bend, the old woman yelled, "Heah he be" - Driver pulled over, woman ordered the guy by the door to take the bag the young boy put in the door and pass it back to her. The pass-over went smoothly and off we went.

Then came the spirituals. Full volume. At "Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?" several people sang along. I found myself humming it under my breath. The elderly woman behind me sang harmony. Meanwhile, we were squealing through tiny villages that sit right on the roadside. Came to one long hairpin turn and a young man on a roadside bench waved the driver on, as he could see ahead and she couldn't. She never hesitated, just rolled on into the blind curve. Gave him a brief honk of appreciation as we flew by.

The Children

Cathalina. Home after the interview, then changed into a swimsuit and went to the beach. Had a most enchanting time with my friend Cathalina. We sang and laughed and danced on the beach. This is a powerful and precocious child. When I am out swimming and she grows tired of waiting for me in the shallow water at the beach, she stands up, waves me in with her hand, and says, in her strong voice and imperial manner, "Julie – Come. Come." She was afraid to go into the water today as she saw a "fin" go by while I was out further. It was probably the manta.

For all her imperiousness, she turns quite easily into a squealy little kid when frightened.

This day, she insisted that we sing to each other. We tried to sing "Lean on Me" together and kept laughing when we used different words. She finally said, in her clipped British accent with the dialectical pronouns, "Stop, let I sing it for you." She has a lovely soprano voice and sang the song as we walked along the edge of the waves. We both made sweeping motions with our arms to accompany the highs and lows or the more dramatic parts. When we got to the spot where the rocks begin that she doesn't like to go onto ("there's an eel in there") she turned with a sweeping wave of her hands and headed us back down the beach we'd just walked, without missing a beat. She sings solos in her choir at the Seventh Day Adventist church. We sang song after song, from "Amazing Grace" to "Sixteen Candles" and she knew them all, or large portions of them.

It's difficult to describe an afternoon on a beach that looks like paradise, with a nine year old African Tobagonian girl of great beauty and heart, singing "Lean on Me" just for you, in what seemed, to my untrained ears at least, perfect tune. Of all our swims together and walks on the beach, this time with her was a memory I will always keep.

Walking to School. Walked Joni, Victor, and Junior to school this a.m. The school is a long, narrow one-story concrete building with an outside walkway and several doors into the various classrooms. Actually, it is an open building inside and walls have been created with large blackboards to separate the different classes ("standards" one through five plus kindergarten class). I asked Joni and Victor if it sometimes gets noisy because each class can hear what goes on in those adjacent to it. Joni replied, "Every day." The desks are old, wooden, two-seater benches with a desktop shared by the two students. Each classroom has about eight desks, so up to 16 children can be accommodated. The floor is concrete and the building is shabby. In every classroom the blackboards are full of instructions written with chalk; for example, in one room English rules were written out with examples underneath and, in another, mathematic problems and the times table. We arrived about 7:45 and school does not begin until 8:30. There were only a couple of other kids there before us. A cleaning woman was working in the outbuilding next door, but no teachers had arrived yet.

Men

While the participants in my study in Tobago were women, the hands of reciprocity were extended to me by men as well. Some of them became my friends.

Maryville Shepherd. At first sun, I usually take a walk to the beach through the edge of the mangrove forest. I often pass an older man at that time of day, wearing shorts, a t-shirt, and knee-high rubber boots, leading his goats to a small pasture that gets a lot of moisture. I never see him in other parts of the village at any other time. But, in these early mornings, his standard greeting of "Good morning, dahling," spoken in a gentle, yet lilting, voice, never fails to make me feel welcome in this village.

Fishing with Robert. Tuesday - Fishing! I went out with Robert in his boat. We met at the beach at 6 a.m. The seas were very rough and I asked whether we would still go out. He looked at me questioningly, and I said, "Since the water is so rough, will we go out?" He laughed and said, "Sure." I will probably never idealize the lives of fishermen again. The water only had 6 or 7 foot swells, according to Robert, but they seemed, and felt, much higher to me. The boat would go to the top of a large wave, hover for a second or two, move slightly with only air beneath it, and then, boom! down to the water again. We drove hard for five hours through the waves and wind. We never stopped and the engine was never turned off. I pulled in a three-pound Salmon and a 21-pound Kingfish. With the latter, I must have let out as much line as I pulled in a couple of times, and somehow the fish did not get off the line. But I pulled it in on nylon filament as Robert had taught me - with my bare hands, as the fishermen do. I also threw up three times in a row, leaning out over the water, then scooping up some sea water to wash my mouth

out. Robert asked if I would like to go back in, but I began to feel better and we carried on. After what seemed a long time on the water, I asked what time it was as I didn't wear a watch. Robert looked up at the sun and said, "About 9:00." God. I thought it was noon at least.

The men, like the women and children, were also generous in sharing food. The instances below are only a few examples.

Joel. As I was doing some writing, Joel came by and brought me a large bunch of bananas and said, "They need to be eaten or they will go bad." I was thrilled. All the bananas in back of my little house were still very green. We talked briefly, then I went back down into the village at 10 a.m. to try to catch Corie at home for an interview.

Pops. At the fishermen's tables, saw Pops. Said hello and asked if he finished smoking the fish. He said yes and invited me to go with him to see it. We went to the house just next door to the tables, where one of the fishermen lives. In the back, in a shed, there was a large freezer. Pops lifted the lid and there were over 100 lbs. of fish he had smoked. There was more waiting to be brought to the freezer. He told me, "This is how we preserve the fish – now it can be shipped anywhere in the world. But when people around here find out it's here, it will be gone within three days." He told me how to cook it— put lime juice on it, then boil it and add sugar to the water. Then he gave me a large slab! I walked back home, washed vegetables and fruit and put them away, then settled down to try to describe the day's journey.

Ernest. When I returned, there were several pomegranates on the table in front of my house. I knew they were from Ernest [an elder in the village who suffers from partial dementia] because he has brought them before. I was very moved.

Work

I was invited to go to work with several participants in a broad range of jobs, including a road crew in the rainforest, housecleaning, processing fish, and as volunteer food preparer in a local school. For one housecleaning job, we traveled to the house (villa) on a separate island via a small motorboat. In most instances, I worked alongside the participant. In the following excerpt, I was in the role of witness.

Rhema. Tuesday morning - Rhema picked me up at 5:00 a.m. to go to work with her. She has a government job on a road crew, taking supplies to the men laborers. She has had this job on this particular crew for many years. Rhema usually catches transportation to work. This means she gets up at 4:00 a.m., catches a car that goes to Roxwell, then catches a car in Roxwell that goes to one of the outlying villages in the rainforest. Once she gets to the village, she then has to walk to the site of the work, in today's case about a mile. So, it can take her an hour to get to the work site from her house in Maryville, depending on how soon a car comes along and how far the work site is.

Rhema does not say so, but she borrowed this car in order to take me to work with her. I believe she simply did not want me to have to catch cars at four in the morning and then again back home. I feel chagrined not to have realized that, and, in fact, it probably would have done me good to experience it the way she does. Nevertheless, it was a very kind gesture on Rhema's part.

It was a delightful experience zooming through the countryside (Rhema drives very fast) in the early morning dark, with the windows open, calypso music playing on the radio, and very few cars on the road. Rhema stopped to pick up a man who was headed to his government job. He handed her some change, as is the custom, she took it over her shoulder, and put it in her purse on the floor. I realized that was the first time I have ridden with a woman driver since being in Tobago! I have heard there are one or two women taxi drivers around Roxwell, but I have never seen them.

As we rode through Queen's Bay, she pointed out the house her ex-husband built and she lived in with him. Rhema said he beat her when they lived together. He remarried and lives with his wife there now. After she left him, she ran into him a couple of times and he acted as if he didn't know her. So, she began doing the same thing, and does so to this day if she passes him.

Rhema wore a black halter top with thin straps, jeans, and no shoes while driving. At the spot where we parked, she put on a lightweight jacket because it looked like rain, socks, and hiking boots. She gathered her water container and put her purse in the trunk of the car. I wore long pants, a short-sleeved shirt, and my sports sandals because I did not bring boots to Tobago. I had left my socks in Maryville, so my feet were bare. We began to walk down the steep road to the work site.

I looked around me as we walked. We were right in the middle of the rainforest and it was lush and humid and green, green, green. In a short time we ran into her supervisor, Marcus. He is a tall, slender, amiable man, about mid-forties. He chuckled when he saw me, and Rhema explained that I just wanted to see where she works. He saw my feet and said I should wait at the top because of the mud. I laughed and we started walking. It was indeed muddy as it had just stopped raining there, and mud gathered slowly on our shoes. He said to me, "You want to go down there?" I said, "MmHmm" with emphasis and nodded my head. In a couple of minutes, he said something to Rhema I didn't catch.

Rhema turned to me and said, "He's worried about you catching a cold." I told him, "I'm strong," and he laughed. The mosquitos were all around our heads, but did not land as long as we kept walking.

There are seven men who work on this crew, the male supervisor, Rhema, and Daverne, the time checker. They must cover a specific distance every day, cutting back weeds and growth with machetes and hoes. The supervisor had a long tape measure and I watched him measure off a distance. When this amount of work is completed, the crew can go home, whether it is a couple of hours or several. It is called "Task Work." This road is more like a maintenance road and there was no traffic on it today at all. Service vehicles use it as well as hunters.

Within about 200 yards, we passed the first group of three men. They were cordial and did not act overly surprised to see a strange white woman on the job. We walked on down to the rest of the crew, a total distance of about a half mile (in addition to the mile or so Rhema would have had to walk on any other day when she did not have a car). We chatted briefly with a couple of the men and Rhema delivered supplies to several of them. Then we started back up the road. This is a very physical job. The crew members work outside every day and have no protection from the weather, including the driving tropical rains that soak you to the bone. They often work in areas where the hills are very steep, like this one, and she has to walk up and down, never sitting. There are no toilet facilities. I asked Rhema if we were going back down to take supplies to the others and she said no, that Marcus had told her to bring me back to the top and wait there for the men. About a half hour later, Marcus came up and said the men had finished and had walked out the other side. Rhema's job was finished for today. She said that normally she would stay down with the men.

On the way Rhema found a cocoa for me that she had to go off the road and scramble down the hill to reach. She brought it back up and began to knock it against a tree to break it open. It fell out of her hand and went rolling back down the hill. We laughed a lot at the cocoa's determination "not to be seen," as Rhema said. Finding another one on the side of the road was difficult, as the parrots had eaten them all. Parrots flew in pairs above us as we walked. Cocricos called out on both sides. Rhema picked up a dried "trumpet tree" leaf for me, a large brown leaf that curls in on itself slightly, and is painted at holidays and used for decorations.

Further on, she spotted a cocoa that was not quite ripe. This time it was about 20 yards off the road and down a steep hill in the forest. As she pulled herself back up to the road, I asked if she wanted a hand. She said, "No, I'm strong too," and laughed. Rhema burst the cocoa open for me to see the nuts inside

and showed me how to eat them. It was an interesting texture even though not ripe. We got to the top to the car and Daverne walked up. She is the checker. She takes everyone's times down, has them sign the sheet, then turns in the times each fortnight so they can get paid. She was concerned about Richard, one of the crew, and asked Rhema how long he had been there. Rhema told me later that he sometimes causes trouble and does not want to work. Rhema and Daverne also talked about the current political situation and the possibility of Panday joining forces with the third party. That was a discussion I was able to take part in.

As we drove back down the road, Rhema saw some plants whose leaves are used to make bush tea and she stopped and picked some for me. They are known to be good for colds and general well-being. Rhema then drove me back to my place. I thanked her and told her, "I really enjoyed this morning. I wouldn't have missed it for the world." She had not heard that expression before. I explained it to her and she said she liked it.

Chores and Celebrations

Merlene's Party. Saturday night - to Merlene's at 6 p.m to help her get ready for the birthday party she gave for Kitty as she expected guests about 7:30 or 8:00. Worked hard in the kitchen with the others most of the night. The first job I was given was to make the KoolAid. In at least a gallon of water went three packets of KoolAid, one pint of rapefruit juice, and lots of sugar. Jenny, Merlene's daughter, stood and handed me each package of KoolAid, I stirred it into the water in the large bucket, and then she took the empty packet from me and gave me the next.

Then, Merlene asked if I thought I could handle helping with the dumplings and of course I said yes. I must have rolled about a million dumplings to the others' five million. We all laughed at my first thousand as they were not nearly so smooth as Merlene's and the others'. Then, at one point, Merlene said, "I can't tell them apart, yours and mine." I gave her a high five and she returned it. The dumplings were made into balls, then when ready for cooking, the next step was to flatten them out like pancakes, about 4" in diameter. These flattened pieces were cut in half and boiled over the fire. Then, they were brought back into the kitchen, large pan by pan, and Ronald and I washed the "slime" off them and put them onto a large platter. Ronald and Will cooked the chicken over the open fire outside the kitchen door. Both of them had great problems with the smoke in their eyes as the space outside the door (blocked in by trees) was small. I brought them eyedrops from my place and they said they had never used them before, so I showed them how. They both expressed relief after using them. Portions of the chicken and dumplings were placed on Styrofoam plates and served to the guests. I then began washing the plates as they came in and they were refilled for someone else and went back out again. I must have washed a hundred plates – or many plates a hundred times. I don't know how many people Merlene fed that night but it was at least that many. At the last birthday party I went to, crab was served to the adults as well as chicken. There was also cassava and coo coo. I will have to find out who and what determines what is served, whether finances alone, or other factors.

At this party, as at the last, the women came first with young children, then some adolescents trickled in, then older teenagers, and finally the adult men. When I left at 11:30 p.m., a whole new group of people had just arrived, mainly young couples who had left their children sleeping at home with another adult to oversee them, and I was told today by Kitty when I saw her on the road that the party went on until 3:00 a.m.

Poverty

Tobago is a popular tourist destination for visitors from other Caribbean countries and from around the world. The participants in this study, their families, and the majority of their neighbors do not stay overnight in luxurious suites at the grand resorts and spas, nor do they dine out in the restaurants and trendy tourist cafes. The cost of two nights' lodging in a medium-priced hotel is more than most of them earn in a month's salary. The majority of participants voiced that there are sometimes days when there is no food in the house for themselves and their children because there is no money to buy it. Being invited to share the true substance of their lives meant being a witness to the extent of their poverty as well.

Ada's House. Ada's house is a tiny, box-like, clapboard house with faded and peeling paint in the poorest area of the village. The house, approximately 18 feet by 18 feet, sits on low stilts. There is no grass around the house, just bare dirt. Three cracked and crooked wooden steps lead up to the platform porch that is about 3 feet x 3 feet and not covered. Four sets of well-worn "flip-flops" are lined up neatly on the steps, one pair obviously an adult's, the others belonging to three lovely children who meet me at the door. The fourth has gone to his father's house for the day.

Ada is standing in the kitchen, which is right inside the front door, and invites me in. The front room of the house is about 6 feet by 18 feet, long and narrow like a wide hallway, and consists of the kitchen and a sitting area. In the sitting area, a small sofa and two chairs are squeezed into the space along with a tall cabinet that holds sets of plastic bowls, a bouquet of plastic flowers, and a radio that is playing calypso music. The kitchen comprises about four feet by six feet. On one side of the kitchen is the front door in which I came (the only door to the house) and on the opposite side is the door to the large bedroom in which Ada and her four children sleep. The kitchen consists of a stove, an icebox (about 2 feet wide, 18 inches deep and 18 inches high) and a table about 3 ½ feet long. The middle of the table holds a drainer with clean dishes in it, and various sizes of plastic containers of water are on and below it at one end. The other end of the table is where Ada does her food preparation.

The one and only light in the house is a single light bulb on the wall above the table. There is no running water. Ada hauls in water from the neighbor's standpipe in the plastic containers that sit under the table. She and the children share an outdoor toilet with neighbors. She washes clothes at the neighbors' standpipe or at the creek nearby. She hangs the clothes under the house. In order to do this, she must bend over almost double because the stilts on which the house sits are only about five feet high. Because the section under the house is open on three sides, the wind and rain whoosh through without interruption. In the rainy season, Ada says, it often takes several days for clothes to dry. Ada pays approximately $17USD per month for this house. Her income is more than 80% below the poverty line and she does not have hope of moving into a more comfortable house any time in the near future.

Being a witness to the poverty also meant awareness of sharp contrasts that tourists missed:

Carl and the Visitors. My friend Carl lives in a one-room shack with no electricity or running water and tends goats for his meager existence. I was struck by the scene this morning of Carl walking two goats close to the small fishing pier, wearing the same plaid shirt he wears every day, just as a group of Asian tourists disembarked from a large party boat they hired at the beach near the airport. They heard there is a fete this afternoon and they wish to attend.

Dion's Shoes. I stopped at Venita's small parlor to chat before noon but she was away. Two tourists from Germany dropped in to buy snacks for their scuba diving trip. Then they jumped into their rented four-wheel-drive jeep and drove away. I looked at Maggie's son, Dion, the 17-year-old boy behind the counter, who is over six feet tall and still growing. And, in my mind's eye, I pictured Dion's shoes, which are worn and ripped so badly he can hardly keep them on his feet when he walks.

Humor

Of all that I was invited to share, being included in local humor ranked right at the top of my list.

From Silliness with Del & Grace... At one point, as we discussed staying in touch after I return to the U.S., Del said, "Leave us your address. I will write you a letter." As we talked, he repeated it, jovially, "Yes, I will write you a letter." And Grace piped in, "And what will you say in this letter, 'I Love You'?" We all laughed and I added, "My dearest darling," and we laughed harder.

...To Lennie's Little White Lie...Met Lennie walking toward me on the beach road. He had a bag over his shoulder whose contents were long and narrow. It looked suspiciously like the shape of an iguana, illegal to hunt on the island. I said, "Hi Lennie. What's in the bag?"After only the briefest pause, and with a straight face, he answered, "Driftwood." I just grinned and said, "Okay." He laughed out loud as he kept walking.

...and on to Elizabeth's Quintessential Tobagonian Humor... As I stood with Elizabeth waiting for the bus that would take us to the market in Roxwell, Elizabeth spotted her friend Addie up the hill on her front porch. Elizabeth called a greeting to her. When Addie had not heard, Elizabeth yelled again, "Addie, aren't you saying hello this morning?" Again, no response. Finally, in local dialect, Elizabeth shouted at the top of her voice, much to the delight of bystanders: "What, you tink I kill your mudda?"

Purposefully Relinquishing the Reins of Power

There is an intrinsic power differential in the qualitative researcher's ability to construct the participant's life story when, presumably, the participant does not construct the life story of the researcher for academic or other purposes. Is it possible that participants' taking charge of the reciprocity building process, as in the events and actions described above, serves to level the playing field, thus generating a more equal balance of power? *I believe it is possible, provided that the researcher is willing to relinquish the reins of power that is intrinsic to the role.* If there is a moral to be crafted from this writing, for social work researchers and those of other disciplines, I believe it is most evident within this metaphor. As I reflect on my own process of relinquishing the reins, I realize that I utilized both my own hermeneutic regarding reciprocity, grounded in life experiences and my feminist theoretical location, as well as my intuitive responses to the efforts of the participants to engage me in their lives. Perhaps the following illustrations will help to de-construct my process.

Awareness of Intrinsic Power

As a first step, I allowed myself to recognize and be continually aware of the power embedded in my research role to tell the participants' stories. Individuals have asked whether I was "afraid" of a variety of experiences during this field study: going into the rainforest, living in an unfamiliar environment, potential conflict with others or between others, maintaining personal safety. Certain experiences generated discomfort: fishing in rough seas from a small boat, finding a large gecko on my kitchen wall, and, on a more personal note, telling a participant of her son's verbal abuse of a younger child are just a few. However, after years of experiences with a myriad of individuals in my social work career, I have come to trust my own intuitions among new people and circumstances, and I was able to do so during the field study as well. As disconcerting as some of them were, I did not feel afraid of those experiences. The thought that actually did cause me to be fearful emerged from the reality of my intrinsically-located power to tell the participants' stories: I was afraid that I might inadvertently misrepresent their stories. As a result, I did all I could to ensure that the participants' voices came through clearly. For example, I was transparent about the entire process and how their words would be used. I typed notes from our interviews, pored over them with the participants, and made any changes they requested without question; then returned to share the re-typed version with them,

sometimes involving several rounds of changes or additions. I talked with them about my initial analyses and asked for their reactions and contributions; I then returned to Tobago with the final version and shared it with them individually and in small groups. In the end, however, the final construction of the stories was mine. In considering such an unequal allotment of power, I believe that fears about misinterpreting or misrepresenting another's life story can serve as a necessary safeguard in a researcher's consciousness. And being intensely aware of one's own power is the first step toward being open to a *shift* in the power differential between researcher and participant.

Emerging from behind the Academic Mask: Sharing My Own Stories

Another way in which I relinquished the reins of power in this experience was through *not hiding behind the academic mask of a qualitative researcher.* First, just as the participants modeled for me the authentic sharing of their life experiences, I reciprocated by being genuine with them in sharing my own. For example, my being a white Western woman generated questions about my personal views and the conditions of my life. I told them of growing up in a small cotton mill town in the south and the experience of not realizing my family was poor because the entire community was poor; of what it has been like for me to live through segregation, the processes of change, and the things that have not changed; of being raised in a fundamentalist church, later choosing agnosticism, and then moving to other avenues of spirituality; of the inordinate number of deaths among my family and friends and my ongoing efforts to reconcile the losses; of my education and the reasons I made my career choices; and, of the kinds of relationships I have had with others. As we are trained in the earliest lessons of social work, I was prepared to "set boundaries" by not answering questions that might feel inappropriate. I was never asked a question by participants or villagers that I felt compelled not to answer, largely, I think, because of the degree of candor they modeled for me.

Finding Common Ground

A second essential element of removing the academic mask, for me, was being open to *identifying with* the participants' experiences based on my own life stories, and to check out the possible common spaces with them as well as the differences. Some say it is presumptuous, at best—and more often essentialist thinking—for a Western researcher in a postcolonial environment to even conceive that there may be similarities in experiences of researcher and participant, given their very different socio-political contexts. I did not find that to be true in this study in Tobago. To be certain, I never forgot that I had the freedom and resources to move about the island, to come into their lives and leave at my own choosing, while their circumstances prevented similar choices. I was deeply cognizant of the chasm of differences that can be generated by that power differential. Nevertheless, I found that when I was forthright with participants about my life, our conversations took off into sparkling paths of recognition, understandings, and sameness, as much so as of perplexity and differences. My childhood in a cotton mill community led to shared remembrances from both our lives: of being looked out for by an entire village rather than by a single caretaker or family; of that reality co-existing with a strong cultural taboo against asking others for help, even when there is no food in the house; and on to the trials of having everyone "know your business." My descriptions of the realities of segregation caused perplexity and further questioning by some participants who had never felt racial discrimination, yet sparked recognition in the minds of those who had. Of the latter, one individual said he had never known what it felt like to be hated because of his skin color until he went to America. Even though we viewed that reality from opposite locations on the power-oppression landscape, we were still able to share our mutual sorrow about it and our dreams for more acceptance and respect among people of different circumstances. In both these instances, and in hundreds of others, our conversations were enriched because each of us, researcher and participant, were willing to take the risk that

there might be some common essences, despite the vastly different contexts of our lives outside that space. Within such essences, I found that the reins of responsibility can be removed, and the power differential suspended.

Final Reflections

It is hoped that, through these glimpses into ways in which the women participants in Tobago invited me into their kitchens and porches, shared their children, friends, churches, gatherings, work, humor, thoughts and dreams with me, the reader will understand that the building of reciprocity was positioned primarily in their hands, not my own. It seems implausible now to have ever perceived the latter. In further reflections about the reciprocal process the women and other villagers initiated, I find myself re-visiting a feminist notion mentioned earlier in this narrative: that of the fluidity of power relations, involving reconstruction and renegotiation throughout the research process. The ways in which the women included me in their lives felt like that, fluid and graceful. I wonder what the experience might have been like had I not been willing—or not known how—to re-negotiate my own perceived role of responsibility for creating reciprocal relationships. What if I had only given and not received... or only received and not given? Even as these questions emerge, the answers begin to crystallize. These women modeled for me how to re-construct my role. It was an elegant modeling.

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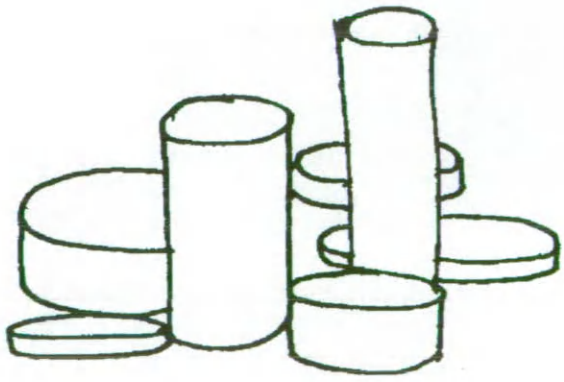

Rapport, Empathy and Oppression: Cross-Cultural Vignettes

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This narrative focuses on cross-cultural vignettes from the author's practice in New York City during three periods in his professional life: (1) while working at a group home and studying for his BSW in the late 1970s, (2) as an MSW student in his first year placement in a child psychiatry setting, and (3) ten years later while working in a union-based social service program and teaching a course on oppression at Fordham University. The narrative explores cross-cultural social work by focusing on the themes of rapport, empathy and oppression-awareness.

** All names have been changed.*

Vignette One: "Let the Music Play"

We called them the kids, although in many ways they were wiser in the ways of the world, and of the streets, than we would ever be. We were the staff, the "crash pad counselors," who lived two of every six days and nights with this group of ten primarily African-American and Puerto Rican adolescent boys and girls who resided in a settlement house-operated short-term group home. As the only white staff person, I was told by Robert, the Director, that I was hired because in all their lives these young people may never have met a white representative of a societal institution who was anything but an enemy in their eyes. He hoped I could be otherwise.

I was trying, but it was the noise that bugged me the most. On one end of the long, narrow basement living room the radio played at maximum volume, while at the other end there was nearly always someone transfixed in front of the television. When we went upstairs for the night, the radio went with us and stayed on all night in the boys' room. This routine went on for quite some time after I began working there. Since this was the practice with the other two shifts as well, there was little I could do without setting myself up as the bad guy.

Finally, I raised it in a staff meeting. I said that I felt that it was bad mental health to have constant music, and that to have the television and the stereo playing created a cacophony inconsistent with the kind of quiet atmosphere needed for residents to study, or just to have a quiet conversation. I didn't even get to first base.

One night after bedtime the radio was extra loud and one of the residents shouted to turn down the radio. That did it: I walked in and shut off the radio, and said as far as I was concerned the radio would be put on automatic shut-off so that it turned off one-half hour after bedtime. I would bring it up in the staff meeting the next day, I said. Terrence complained in a hurt tone, and I told him that the mind and ears needed a rest and that was what sleep was for. The next day I went straight to the director and told him that we simply had to provide some structure with regard to the radio, and he agreed with me. In the staff meeting, we agreed to formulate a new policy of no radio and T.V. at the same time, auto-shut-off at night, and volume never higher than number seven except with permission. Finally, we had a little peace of mind. I was pretty satisfied with myself.

Then one hot summer evening we were all sitting around. Angel had gotten a job, and everyone else was depressed because they couldn't find summer jobs. "Do you want to play some spades?" someone asked. "Naaa", everyone said. Finally, William got up and went over and turned on the radio, way up loud. He looked over at me, and I nodded my consent. I just sat there and listened to the music. I thought maybe I would try to understand the words for once. The big hit of the month came on: "Let the Music Play," by Barry White. The words repeated, "Let the Music Play..." over and over, then finally: "Let the Music play/I

just want to dance the night way, here, right here, is where I'm going to stay, all night long. Let the music play, just until I feel this misery is gone, keep the music on, let it play on, let it play on, let it play on. Please! Let it play on."

One brief refrain from a disco album taught me more than I had learned so far in almost two months of working there. One line from the lyrics illustrated the tremendous gulf that existed between my world view and theirs. For the residents, oppression was not an abstract concept; it touched every aspect of their lives. For them, the music represented a brief respite from the constant reminder of their plight: no homes, no jobs, no one person in their lives who really cared, and little hope of a turn for the better except that maybe one of the permanent placements would turn out to be not so bad.

I realized how far I had been from seeing the depth of this oppression. For regardless of the rightness or wrongness of my thinking about the music policy, something else was responsible for the intensity of my discomfort with the music. And that something was that I hadn't really completed the process of learning to empathize with the kids; I hadn't yet connected fully with the residents. And the reason I wasn't really able to empathize fully with them was that I hadn't yet understood the enormity of the suffering they were going through, and the differences between our situations.

The words to that song made me realize that I had failed to understand why they needed to hear that music. From that point on, whenever I became irritated, I tried to remember the source of the strong forces which were saying to me: don't get involved, stay away from that suffering. Today, when I want to be reminded of that, I listen to Richie Havens sing "On the Turning Away," from his *Wishing Well* album: "No more turning away, from the weak and the weary...no more turning away, from the coldness they feel."

I was reminded by recently participating in the Undoing Racism training of the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond (www.pisab.org): only by understanding clearly the nature of racism and the way it permeates our institutions and shapes our attitudes and perceptions can helping professionals maximize our effectiveness in providing service to people in need and also work together with poor people themselves to make fundamental changes in the system of economic exploitation, which is at the root of the oppression our clients face.

Setting Two: Field Work at Inner City Hospital

As a first year student in the direct practice track of the Columbia University MSW program, I was thrilled to be assigned one of the coveted psychiatric placements. But it soon became apparent that I had a lot to learn. For instance in one case I was assigned early on, I was clueless as to the cultural significance of death and the fear of death in the African-American families I worked with at Inner City Hospital. During one of my sessions with a particular client, I finally came to understand the high illness and death rates in the black community. Given the higher infant mortality and reduced life expectancy, I realized this must have influenced the way my client's fear of death was being picked up on by the six year old grandchild she was raising. This was instilled fear in the child that she would lose her grandmother, just like she had lost her mother when she was two years old.

Seen retrospectively, this realization came during what has been called a "present moment" within an intersubjective dyadic or group experience (Stern, 2004). As such moments are considered in retrospect, clients and workers come to new understandings of themselves and their present relationships, as well as of past moments in their personal and professional lives. Because of our longstanding practice of writing the kinds of process recordings on which this narrative is based, social workers have long given attention to such moments. The realization I came to in this case was the equivalent of my realization of the significance of music to the group home residents. In each case, the discovery of the culturally-specific meaning of a universal human experience (death and music) helped to deepen my empathetic responses to the client population.

As the following vignette from my field work at Inner City Hospital shows, cultural unfamiliarity adversely affected my practice with Mrs. G., a 35-year-old African-American mother of four living in a housing project in central Inner City. Her eldest son resided with relatives in the South; her youngest son, who was born with a severe cognitive impairment, died at age five in November 1977. Her household consisted of herself, her ten year old daughter Patricia, and her eight year old son James. James was referred to the Inner City Hospital Child Psychiatry by his school in May, 1978, following the school's decision to hold him back in the second grade for academic problems and immature behavior.

Mrs. G. reluctantly assented to weekly sessions, which is agency policy for all parents. She was extremely depressed and withdrawn, rarely leaving the house except to fulfill household responsibilities. While there were indications that she never fully adjusted to her move to the North from South Carolina in 1965, her isolated behavior was exacerbated by the death of her mother in January 1977, her uncle in July 1977, and her son in November 1977, all following on the heels of separation from her husband in November 1976.

She did have a number of relatives in the New York City area who took the children frequently on weekends. She also had a boyfriend who was a subway motorman; he visited frequently, but did not take her out socially. She had several girlfriends who regularly urged her to go out, but as of the beginning of the sessions she had not done so. Mrs. G.'s behavior in the first several interviews was rigid but cooperative. She sat erect with her pocketbook in her lap and said as little as possible. She willingly talked of James's problems, and demonstrated an extreme negativity towards him, both verbally and non-verbally. She steered away from any discussion of her life until the end of the second interview when she described her separation from her husband. Little rapport was established in the first two interviews.

In a subsequent interview, I awkwardly suggested that I would like to get to know her a little better rather than talking only about James. She asked me what kind of questions I would like to ask her. Embarrassed that she framed it as an interrogation, I redirected the question and said there might be some questions I would like to ask, but did she have any questions. She said that Dr. W. had told her James would see the doctor and she would see the social worker. "I saw her once," she said meekly, referring to the African-American chief social worker who had done the intake, Miss G. I softly asked her what she had spoken to Miss G. about. She said she had spoken with Miss. G. about the deaths in her family and her separation from her husband. When she stopped talking, I asked her if there was anything else she talked with Miss G. about, and she would continue. Finally, she said it had been a difficult time for her. I said I could see why it would have been, and asked her if she found it helpful to talk about these things and she said— first hesitantly and then with conviction—that it did. I said I was available to talk with her about whatever she wanted, and said, "You understand, I'm a social worker and that's my job." She appeared to accept that I would be the social worker, although I did not address her apparent desire to see Miss G.

In this interview, I missed a perfect opportunity to discuss frankly her apparent desire to see the black social worker. I reacted out of fear that she might actually state a preference. Were she to have done so, I would have been presented with an ethical dilemma as to whether and how to raise her request with the agency. One alternative would have been to help her see that I had been assigned and that this could not be easily changed. Instead, I denied her the opportunity to express or clarify her feelings. In Gitterman and Schaeffer's terms, I failed to struggle to close the gap of social distance and unknownness. As they pointed out, to avoid the pain is to avoid the humanness of the situation (Gitterman & Schaeffer, 1973, p. 158).

Clearly, rapport was slow to develop in my work with Mrs. G. As the counseling proceeded, she slowly began to open up verbally, but rapport was still limited. However, empathy is not the same as rapport. Rapport is typically defined in terms of the presence of

empathy, harmony, and compatibility, whereas empathy itself involves understanding and responding to the feelings of another (Barker, 2003). Empathy is seen as enabling the empowerment of a client and moving beyond class and other social distance (Keefe, 1978; Solomon, 1976). Pinderhughes also said that empathy "neutralizes the client's powerlessness" (1979, p. 316). Clearly, empathetic communication is important to achieving practice effectiveness across cultural boundaries. But as these narratives suggest, empathetic communication may be possible even when some aspects of rapport are limited due to cultural differences.

As work continued, "treatment" was geared towards building a supportive relationship to encourage her to get out of the house. When this began to happen, her new behavior reinforced itself and by the third month she entered a job training program. Finally, there was a significant lift in her depression, although her symptoms returned shortly before termination. By the last interview she had entered driver's training and had joined a friend's social club. Although Mrs. G had expressed occasional insights and sorrow about the deaths in her family, she continued her reluctance to share personal information and feelings in general. While there was trust, there was not the comfortable and unrestrained atmosphere seen as part of rapport (Vontress, 1976).

As the termination proceeded with Mrs. G., I anticipated that she might express gratitude for my work with her, and I tried to prepare myself for how I would handle that given my overall problems with accepting praise. There was a basis for my anticipation, for when I had visited Mrs. G. during a brief hospital stay she had begun talking about how she had never met a man like me, etc. In the next to last interview, Mrs. G. asked me if she could ask me a question. I said sure, anticipating she might ask me to stay in touch after termination. She asked me if it would be okay if she got me a little something, not too much. I said of course it would, and she said it was the thought that counted, not how much, and I agreed. She said that I had been very good to her; I nodded and muttered "thank you." She continued by saying that I was "so interested in people and it was from the heart." I was going to turn it back to focus when she said, "It just goes to show it's not the color of your skin which counts. It's that you care about people. I can see it in your eyes." She said she told her daughter Tanya this, and that she said, "Oh Mommy, he's just a man doing his job." She said she told her, "You know you're right, but there's something different about him." I thanked her again.

As the above account shows, Mrs. G. perceived an empathetic response on my part, even though rapport was never fully established. This observation is valuable for understanding the potential of cross-cultural relationships. Cultural unfamiliarity may produce awkwardness which inhibits the compatibility seen as part of rapport. But the shared recognition of the caring attitude of the worker, one rooted in an understanding of the impact of oppression, dehumanization and exploitation on the life of a client, can go far towards producing an effective working relationship. In other words, mutual recognition of cultural differences and even difficulties in verbal communication can be overcome by the transmission of empathy, which is largely non-verbal. The implications of this observation are discussed further in the concluding section.

Although Mrs. G said there was something different about me, I would ask this question about that: how many times in her life had she had the opportunity to sit with a white person and really talk? If she had had that opportunity, if a white person had had that opportunity to relate to her, if segregation and racism had not prevented previous intimate contact with a white person, might she have long ago come to the conclusion that "it's not the color of your skin?" This is precisely why it is so important for professional social workers to study cross-cultural social work, because so many of us have been denied the opportunities for cross-cultural social living.

Setting Three: Union-Based Social Work Program

After I graduated, I spent 10 years practicing social work with multicultural client populations in New Orleans, New York, and

Philadelphia. Actually, my clients were not just clients, they were members of several different trade unions, and I was literally "their" social worker, since their union contracts provided for my services. In several positions, I was a program director doing advanced generalist practice (casework, groupwork, supervision, program development, policy advocacy, community organization.) But now I was working full-time as a caseworker in a union-based social work program, and loving it! In most of my positions, my experience had primarily been with a very culturally diverse group of predominantly male union members. Suddenly, most of my clients were women: African-American women in particular. Not since my work at Inner City hospital had I worked primarily with black female clients.

My work seemed to be going well, but after a few months I was assigned the case of a member who was in job jeopardy. She was in danger of losing her job due to absenteeism and showing up under the influence of alcohol. She was also at risk of eviction for being behind in her rent. The "presenting problem" was her wish for a referral so that she could get public welfare funds to prevent eviction. But our policy was to do a full psychosocial assessment and see if we could address any other problems. Accordingly, I felt it was my responsibility to engage her and refer her to treatment for any alcohol problem she might agree that she had, in addition to helping her access the public welfare funds. But this wasn't a formal employee assistance program in which the referral is often made by a supervisor. So we had no leverage from that standpoint. The only leverage we had was the unit's policy to do our best to engage members about any serious personal problems which might precipitate the need for eviction prevention funds or any problem with job jeopardy.

But I was having a hard time getting to first base with this client, who we'll call Shanice.[1] Shanice was denying the severity of her job jeopardy, saying that it was an unsympathetic supervisor who was the problem and that, yes, she had come back from lunch one day after having had a glass of wine, but that she didn't really have an alcohol problem. She said it wasn't her fault that her child was sick a lot, and that she needed time off from work. She had needed money to attend a funeral in North Carolina when her aunt passed away, and this had also resulted in a few missed days from work. And she's been sick a lot herself, she said. I didn't try head on to address the clear expression of denial.

I explained that given the presenting problem, my role was to refer her to the public welfare eviction prevention program, but that our policy was to complete an assessment prior to making the referral in order to ascertain if she had any other service needs. She could, if she wished, apply directly to the program, I pointed out. But if she wanted us to broker that referral and if necessary advocate for her, we'd need to spend a couple of sessions completing the assessment process. And I pointed out that we were also there to help members with any other issues they might wish to address. Our services were one of her union benefits, I reminded her, and so she might as well take advantage of them. We agreed to a follow-up appointment.

However, the second interview didn't go very well. I was able to gather some basic information about the nature of her current living situation, and I suppose we could have completed the process and made a referral to the eviction prevention program. But I felt that I hadn't been able to help her, and that no real rapport had been established. I would be selling her short if I were to just refer her. Besides, I explained, it wasn't an emergency, since we had a week or ten days in which to do this before action might be taken to evict her.

Still, I could see she was worried we wouldn't help her with the eviction. I explained to her that it seemed to me that we were in fact going to be able to refer her to the eviction prevention program, and that we did have time. But I directly addressed the problem. I said that I felt I hadn't been able to help her in the way I was accustomed, and I felt that perhaps it was my own inability to work effectively with her. I said I was wondering if we could have one more session prior to the referral, but that first I wanted to get some advice from my supervisor about how to be of better help

to her. We made an appointment for later in the week.

At the time, I was teaching part-time at Fordham University in addition to working full-time at the union. I was teaching a course, Oppression of Diverse Populations, and dealing with the many problems encountered in diversity and oppression education (Garcia & Van Soest, 1999). In that course, I was trying to find ways of making the course content more relevant to practice concerns, and to bring the discussion of theories of oppression down to a more micro level. But I had found very little literature that got at the actual feelings that people experience at the moment of acts of oppression, as this was before the advent of the now substantial literature on everyday racism (St. Jean & Feagin, 1998).

Luckily, in the process of compiling Volume Three for the School's Self-Study, consisting of a master bibliography of the readings in the School's course outlines, I came across a book I wasn't familiar with, *Direct Social Work Practice* (Hepworth & Larsen, 1990; Hepworth, Rooney, Rooney, & Strom-Gottfried, 2006). The authors emphasized the importance of enhancing empathy, and the role in that of understanding the words and affective phrases which described the feelings which emerged from people's experiences. They presented a list of more than 250 words and affective phrases, grouped into ten categories.

As the instructor I realized that as a class we might try to generate our own words and affective phrases related to oppression and the various kinds of specific oppressions we in the class may have experienced. Using 3x5 cards, which were written on by students and then handed in anonymously, we identified nearly 100 words and affective phrases - only six of which matched the text's list. This list has since been expanded and developed over the years by my students into a Compendium of Words and Affective Phrases on Oppression, Dehumanization and Exploitation. It was presented at a conference (Dover, 2006), and is now also available in published form (Dover, 2008). But at the time, it was just a list of words and affective phrases. For example, just from the B's, there are words like beleaguered, belittled, blamed, and phrases like beaten down, being left behind, being used.

It had occurred to me during that second interview with Shanice that perhaps I should consider using the list, somehow, to help me get through to my client. I showed the list to my supervisor and pointed out I was failing to develop an atmosphere in which the client felt comfortable sharing what was really happening in her life. I proposed first explaining to Shanice that I wanted her to feel comfortable telling me more about the problems she may have experienced. Then I would relate to her that in teaching at Fordham I had been working with my students to develop a list of feelings that many people have, and would she like me to show her the list in case she had been feeling in any of those ways. We agreed that no harm would be done as long as I made clear this wasn't any kind of psychological test, that it was just a way to break the ice and get some communication going. The next day, I explained this to Shanice and she was actually eager to look at the list.

Pencil in hand, she started down the list, checking one word after another and becoming animated as she began to comment on some of them. This quickly led to a few probes on my part, asking her if she would like to tell me a bit more about when and where she felt this way. Soon, it was off to the races. She was raised by a single mother in an apartment above her uncle's bar. She was sexually abused as a child by bar patrons, and had begun drinking early in her teens. She knew she had an alcohol problem, but it hadn't caused her problems on her job, since she only drank at night after her child was in bed...until recently. After her aunt died, her drinking became worse: beginning at the funeral and continuing after she returned home. Yes, she had come to work having had more than one drink, and it wasn't wine; and it was in the morning, not after lunch. The reason she was behind in rent was in part the money she was spending on alcohol, which was considerable.

In this vignette as well, there was a crucial present moment: the very few seconds after she saw that list and realized it was okay to open up, even with this white guy in the button down shirt. This story had a happy ending.

We were able to make arrangements, not just for a referral for eviction prevention, but for the alcoholism treatment she needed. She was referred to one of the first programs designed for women substance abusers, and the program had a group for women who were also adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse. The union benefit fund paid for her detox and rehabilitation.

Conclusions

Solomon noted that in the black community, most referrals are the result of pressure from social institutions, such as the school in the case of Mrs. G. (Solomon, 1976). Thus, Mrs. G. approached the agency in a situation of relative powerlessness. Although Shanice came to her union-based program on her own initiative, she was clearly under pressure both from her landlord and her job. The group home residents, of course, were all involuntary clients.

Pinderhughes described the manner in which the concept of power relations is useful in stimulating discussion of cross-cultural relationships in social work education (Pinderhughes, 1979). Gitterman and Schaeffer also noted a power relationship (1973, p. 154): "Both parties perceive that the white professional has the upper hand." These views also dovetail with Solomon's central focus on empowerment of the black client (Solomon, 1976). Solomon pointed out that the client perceives the white worker as an extension of powerful institutions that devalue the client. In such an atmosphere it is difficult to establish the trust to engage in self-disclosure. Solomon pointed out (1976, p. 315): "Rapport is extremely difficult to achieve across racial lines." Vontress also pointed out (1976, p. 81): "White counselors find it difficult to establish and maintain adequate rapport with black clients."

With the group home residents in this narrative, rapport was not as difficult to develop, in part because our ages were not so far apart, and in part due to my previous experience in group homes. But it took time for empathy to deepen. With Mrs. G., a higher level of rapport could have been achieved had there been a frank discussion of her desire to see the black social worker from the outset. Her behavior resembled that previously noted for some black clients assigned to white workers during the 1970s, namely submissiveness, fear and distrust, accommodation, and secretiveness (Cohen, 1976). My behavior at Inner City Hospital was perhaps typical of novice social workers with limited experience in cross-cultural social work. But 10 years later, I still had difficulty fully engaging Shanice and establishing rapport in the first two interviews. Short-contact interviewing in which the presenting problem is the need for so-called "concrete" benefits always presents a challenge in terms of moving to address other issues.

However, all three vignettes also provide examples of the manner in which rapport and relational empathy are not always positively correlated. Empathetic communication may be the key to achieving practice effectiveness across cultural boundaries, even when full rapport is difficult due to compatibility-inhibiting cultural unfamiliarity on the part of either worker or client. Recent research suggests that rapport is an achieved therapeutic alliance that is established between the professional and the client, but that it is ultimately produced by the quality of empathy (Norfolk, Birdi, & Walsh, 2007). One implication of this research is that rapport isn't a prerequisite for empathy, but a product of it. This is consistent with Solomon's earlier observation that accurate empathy is highly associated with success in treatment (1976, p. 300). Solomon felt this involves clear communication between worker and client. More recently, Freedberg has pointed out that empathy is relational in nature (2007). In other words, like rapport, empathy arises in the context of a relationship.

The main conclusion of this narrative is that, although there can be limits to rapport when there is cultural unfamiliarity between worker and client, this doesn't necessarily prevent the establishment of relational empathy, especially if the helping professional is aware of the impact of oppression, dehumanization and exploitation on the client and the client's community. Clearly, there are limits on the ability of helping professionals to

overcome fully all the barriers posed by cultural unfamiliarity and institutional racism. For instance, Vontress recently pointed out how difficult it is for a helping professional to engage in effective cross-cultural practice with people from dozens of immigrant groups whose cultures differ in too many ways for the helping professional to comprehend. He advocated for renewed attention to "cultural common denominators that unify the human race," and for other "cultural similarities that they share with their immigrant clients rather than differences that separate them" (2001, p. 96). A return to recognition of the common human needs of all persons and enhanced attention to basic human needs within social work practice could also enhance empathetic understanding (Dover & Joseph, 2008; Towle, 1965[1945]).

Finally, increased awareness of the nature of injustice—theoretically and in terms of the words and affective phrases associated with the experience of three sources of injustice (oppression, dehumanization and exploitation)—can enhance our ability to establish empathy in our helping relationships (Dover, 2008). By understanding these feelings in ourselves and in our clients, we may be able to be more effective in our work with our clients. It also helps to write narratives and process recordings of those "present moments" in which we arrive at valuable realizations about ourselves, about our work with clients, about the lives of our clients, and about the nature of the injustice they face. I know it helped me. After all, as Bertha Capen Reynolds has pointed out (Reynolds, 1963, pp. 29-30): "We need to take exercises in being helped, as well as in helping. We must learn in order to give. Indeed, we must receive from those to whom we give, in order to give to them."

Author's Note: For a website copy of the Compendium of Words and Affective Phrases referred to above, please see: http://www-personal.umich.edu/~mdover/

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(Footnotes)

[1] Why call her Shanice? Clearly, I am seeking to give her a disguised name which may be used by African-Americans. For a fascinating account of the causes and consequences of distinctively African-American names, see Fryer and Levitt (2004).

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Gender balance with Confucian Philosophy: My own experience of empowerment

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In this narrative, the author shares her still-evolving ideas of using Confucian philosophy when empowering victimized women. She describes her journey of searching for alternative ways of viewing this philosophy, with the hope that social workers will be encouraged to find creative ways of working with clients from Confucian-influenced cultures, especially when assisting those who have been oppressed and victimized by such cultures. While still resentful about how it has been practiced and taught since the Joseon dynasty (1392-1910 CE) of Korea, the author has learned to embrace the essential thoughts behind the philosophy and utilizes it to empower herself and others who have been hurt by misapplications of Confucian philosophy.

Introduction

I was brought up in a Confucian belief system while growing up in South Korea. Unfortunately, I grew to be resentful towards Confucianism, particularly when I began to explore the roots of Korean traditional culture critically and learned that most of it is rooted in Confucianism. I thought that most of the Confucian rules for the proper ways of being a girl or woman came with oppressive restrictions. But in the past couple of years, I have tried to understand it from a broader perspective than what I was led to believe while I was growing up. As my understanding of this philosophy broadened, I learned that some of the ideas I believed were oppressive Confucian principles in fact represented biased interpretations or misapplications. With such realization, I decided to write this narrative to reflect upon how I finally came to terms with Confucianism.

I thought I had come to terms with Confucianism, but I soon realized that I am still confused, frustrated, and resentful about how it has been practiced and taught since the Joseon dynasty (1392-1910 CE) of Korea, which was almost 2,000 years after Confucius (552-479 BCE) conceptualized the philosophy. I shared my frustration towards Confucianism and my developmental process with my colleague, Dr. Edward Canda, who has studied Confucianism and its relationship with social work (Canda, 2002a and 2002b). He suggested that I reflect on a way to be at peace with where I stood in relation to Confucianism, rather than feel obligated to be at peace with Confucianism itself. That helped me to be more at peace with the flow of my developmental process and to write honestly about that. Finishing this narrative gave me a metaphor of meaning in my life: it closed one door before opening another door that will lead to a new phase in my life dedicated to reconstructing Confucianism.

In this narrative, I candidly expose my journey of searching for an alternative way of viewing Confucianism, especially for those who work with oppressed and victimized women from cultures influenced by the philosophy. My personal effort connects with a recently developing philosophy called Confucian feminism (see Yin, 2006; Rosenlee, 2006). By sharing my thoughts about the phases of my developmental process, I hope to connect with others who have similar interest in deconstructing and reconstructing Confucianism.

First Phase: Consciousness-Raising about Misogynistic Aspects of Confucian Culture

I lived the first two-thirds of my life in South Korea. At home, I did not feel like Confucianism was emphasized by my parents. When my parents taught me and my sisters to be benevolent, courteous, modest, and respectful, they never explained that these values were coming from Confucianism even thought they are important Confucian virtues. I thought these teachings were coming from Catholicism, as my parents were Catholic. My mother is a head-strong career woman who not only survived but thrived in Korean academe and in society despite their patriarchal structure. She became a well-known professor in modern literature, as well as a founder of a domestic violence shelter. My father is also a well-known established linguistic scholar who is, to my mind, very conservative. But I think he intentionally kept his conservative male voice weak to maintain peace in a home full of very opinionated women: his wife and four daughters. My parents always told my sisters and me that each of us was better than ten sons. Their statement was empowering for us and carried a lot of weight because our society generally valued sons over daughters. Men had more opportunities in the workplace to be promoted while women faced a glass ceiling. In Korea, there was a slogan everywhere that read, "Regardless of the gender, be happy with one child." This slogan reflected the value system in the 1970s and 80s. The goal of the slogan was to encourage people to have only one child in order to control the birth rate after the baby boom during and after the Korean War. This slogan also encouraged people to care less about the gender of the child because sons were overly valued, while girls were often considered useless or a burdensome for the family. Female infant abandonment, infanticide, and abortion after identifying the sex of the unborn child were social problems of the 70s and 80s. There was an imbalance of gender in elementary schools, where there were at least five to ten more boys than girls in each class. There were 112.4 boys for every 100 girls in the 1980s, according to the available data from Korea National Statistical Office (2007).

In the late 80s, under the influence of my mother, I began committing myself to justice for women, especially around issues of women victimized by intimate partner violence. With this focus, I decided to enter the social work field. Since the grassroots movement against wife abuse and other types of abuse towards women was initiated and organized by feminists who were strongly influenced by Western feminism, I also aligned with Western feminism. By Western feminism I include variations of feminism that are based mainly on the experiences of women in Europe and North America. The more I aligned with feminism, the more I criticized patriarchal Asian culture, Confucianism, and Asian men in general. I eagerly sought evidence that Confucianism was opposed to empowering women or ensuring women's rights.

Some of the old Korean proverbs I heard as a child in school and from the media included: "Upon reaching the age of seven, girls and boys should not sit at the same table."[1] This saying was influenced by the classical Confucian emphasis on differential education and roles for males and females. I was taught that it also emphasized the importance of keeping your virginity and chastity, especially in the case of girls. Also, "If a hen crows, the house crumbles," or "Homes perish when the hen crows," were sayings often used to slow down ambitious girls and to discourage wives from challenging or questioning their husbands' authority at home.[2] In preparing girls for young adulthood, the culture I was brought up in made it very clear that we were to follow our husbands[3] and become sacrificial mothers and submissive wives.[4] These proverbs and virtues were described by the general public as Confucian philosophy. If so, I could only think that Confucianism was the main instrument for implementing a patriarchal society and family structure, and thus women's oppression.

It is not very difficult to prove that such proverbs oppressing women are indeed an influence of Confucianism. For example, the principle of the Three Bonds[5] and the Three Obedience Rule[6] receive most criticism for suppressing women. The Three Bonds are the

legacy of Confucian ethics and they dictate that citizens to follow as rulers lead;[7] sons to follow as fathers lead;[8] and wives to follow as husbands lead.[9] In the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910 CE)[10] period of Korea, women were required to be obedient in three ways, which is also the legacy of Confucius teaching: obedience to the father before getting married, to the husband after getting married, and to the son after the death of the husband. The Three Bonds and the Three Obedience Rule consistently require women to be submissive. Although a "youth" (according to Legge, 1971) or "persons" (according to Ames & Rosemont, Jr., 1998) or a "man" (according to Ho, date not clear) were taught to be filial at home, to respect elders outside of home, to be earnest and truthful, to love all, and to be intimate with the good (refer to Analect 1:7), there were no specific rules for men to follow in relation to significant women in their lives.

While I was working at domestic violence counseling centers in Seoul and in New York for Korean women, I heard many personal accounts from my clients that their abusive partner would often use a "cultural defense" to excuse his violent behavior. The abuser would claim that in Confucian culture, men have the right to discipline, control, own, and expel their wives. Such personal accounts only solidified my negative perception of Confucianism. When wife abusers claim that they are supposedly teaching their wives to follow the basic human relationship principles taught by Confucianism, their abuse may sound justifiable. Indeed, this cultural defense was taken into consideration in the court system in the late 80s in Los Angeles when dealing with wife battering and raping cases among Asian immigrants (Rimonte, 1991). According to this defense, when domestic violence occurred in an Asian family, it was understood to be a cultural difference rather than a criminal activity against a woman. Thus, the cultural defense became an example of how some legacies of Confucianism could be used to sponsor violence against women.

In the early Joseon dynasty, in order to stabilize the nation, the government tried to restrict divorces based on the Confucian notion that family is the smallest unit of the society, and that stable families would create a stable society and nation. For example, separation and then abandonment of wives were regulated with strong punishments, according to the early Joseon Dynasty statute called, *Dae Myong Ryul*.[11] As part of the regulations on marriage, there were certain occasions where a husband could expel a wife, such as when a wife ran away, had an affair, battered a husband, or committed on of the Seven Unforgivable Sins.[12] The Seven Sins included: disobedience to parents-in-law;[13] inability to bear children, particularly sons;[14] promiscuity;[15] extreme jealousy;[16] incurable disease;[17] engaging in gossip;[18] and thievery.[19] To prevent husbands from abusing this law, there were three occasions where a wife was protected from being expelled even if she committed one or more of these seven sins. Three unexpellable occasions[20] included: a wife having fulfilled her duties as a daughter-in-law for three years after her parents-in-law's death, a wife having contributed to the wealth of the family; and a wife no longer having family of origin to return to. According to *Dae Myong Ryul*, if you divorce your wife without legitimate reasons or if you do not divorce your wife regardless of legitimate reasons, either way, you would get punished with exactly the same sentence. This statute was called "failure to righteously abandon a wife,"[21] and it lasted until the end of Joseon dynasty (1392-1910 CE).

While a husband had all of the above mentioned reasons to expel his wife, the legal system made it far more difficult for a wife to leave her husband, according to *Dae Myong Ryul*. Only if a husband ran away could a wife file for divorce. If a husband battered his wife, the wife was to ask for an agreement from her battering husband for a divorce in order to get approval from the government. Regulations regarding divorce laws seemed to reflect stiff application of one of the Three Bonds Confucian principle mentioned previously of a husband leading and a wife following[22] regardless of the husband's virtue or the wife's well-being. Divorce laws have been changed considerably since then, and yet wife abuse cases today still reflect the application of rules around the Seven Unforgivable Sins and punishments given to wives by their husband.

For example, precipitating factors for wife abuse are identified from a study of women's hotline users in South Korea (Women's Hotline, 1997). Out of 734 cases of serious spousal abuse reported, reasons victims gave for the abuse they have experienced included: talking back to the husband (42%), complaining about a husband's drinking (24.7%), interrupting a husband's behavior (17.5%), and telling a husband that they despised him (15.7%). All of these reasons suggest relationship difficulties when cultural norms are violated.

I also felt confident that Confucianism was a major instrument in establishing laws oppressive towards women during the Joseon Dynasty because there were some passages in the *Analects of Confucius* that appear to be misogynistic. In one such passage, Confucius removed a female minister from his list of able ministers; perhaps he did not view the woman, the wife of King Wu, as capable of the job. Confucius stated, "In King Wu's case with a woman, perhaps his wife, among them, there were really only nine ministers (Analects 8.20[23] translated by Roger & Rosemont Jr., 1998)." This seems similar to the practice of making women invisible in modern customs. For example, my mother-in-law to this day says when describing her grandchildren, "I have three grandsons and a girl," as if there is no term for granddaughter, or as if a granddaughter is not counted as a grandchild. Another passage that included Confucius' perception of women is the following: "Only girls[24] and petty people[25] are hard to rear. If you are close to them, they behave disrespectfully; if you keep a distance from them, they become resentful" (Analects, 17.25[26] translated by Ames & Rosemont, Jr., 1998)."

In addition to two passages found in the Analects, I believed that the concept of the cosmic forces *yin*[27] and *yang*[28] contributed to women's oppression. This concept became widespread by the Han Dynasty's (202 BCE-220 CE) Confucianism in China, and the Joseon Dynasty's (1392-1910 CE) Neo Confucianism[29] in Korea. The term, *yin* and *yang*, originally represented two of the six cosmic forces during the Spring and Autumn period[30] in China (722-481 BCE; Yee, 2003). As two opposite and fundamental forces of the universe, in popular thinking, *yin* has been aligned with female gender and *yang* with male gender. While growing up, I felt that the beneficial functions of *yang*— sun, top of the hill, warmth, light, strength, and masculinity— have been emphasized, glorified, and valued by Korean society. I thought that characteristics of *yin*— moon, valley, coldness, darkness, weakness, and femininity—were not perceived as necessary or good forces in the society. Feminist scholars often criticize the problematic gender stereotypes associated with *yin* and *yang* as supporting a cultural climate for degrading women and violence against women (e.g., Song & Moon, 1996; Son, 2006).

Second Phase: Lost and Rootless

Bashing Confucianism slowly led me to reject my history, my upbringing, and in the end, myself, for being part of a chauvinistic and misogynistic Confucian culture. This created a sense of emptiness and rootlessness in me. I began feeling burned-out and helpless as a social worker and advocate for Korean women. I did not know how to empower and heal survivors of intimate partner violence who were coming from the same Confucian cultural background as mine. That was when I became curious about modern Confucian scholars' perceptions towards women. I thought that if there are still male and female scholars studying and teaching Confucianism today, there must be something valuable to offer that can help me feel less rootless.

I began observing the work and lifestyles of male and female Confucian scholars, which portrayed an alternative practice of Confucianism. I realized that I might be taking in some feminist discourses that discounted the whole of Confucianism philosophy without

thinking critically. So I began studying Classical and Neo-Confucianism and realized that many Confucian principles criticized by certain feminists were not consistent with the other main principles of Confucianism. For example, I remember learning in high school that we ought to cultivate ourselves to become benevolent,[31] righteous/appropriate,[32] courteous,[33] and wise[34] which is a way[35] to become a virtuous person or noble-minded person.[36] I learned that these were the cardinal virtues of Confucianism. As I thought more about this, I was confused about the disconnect between how I was taught to be virtuous through adherence to Confucianism, and how chauvinistic and abusive men claimed that their privilege to dominate came from Confucianism. It seemed as if there were two very different forms of Confucianism at work.

I began to realize that some of the tensions or self-contradictions that arise from simplistic criticisms of Confucianism were the main cause of violence against women among East Asians. For example, it accepts the demeaning stereotype of East Asian cultures used in the so-called cultural defense by abusive men. It has the danger of encouraging women's oppression, devaluing Asian heritage, and destroying culture-specific styles of women's identity. On a personal level, I felt that it demolishes my own identity, where I've come from, and the person I've become. If in fact Confucianism values men over women and gives rights to husbands to control their wives, then East Asian victims of violence against women can only be healed by disconnecting themselves from their own heritage and feminine identity. This process further victimizes women. It allows no room within our cultures to escape from the violence. Though it may sound too extreme, the only choice seems to be to sever their relationships with the batterers as well as the traditional cultures, thus also with the family and the community as a whole. This leads to further isolation for the victim which is self-defeating and unhealthy. This is what I have observed while working with Korean American survivors of intimate partner violence in New York. I have seen them leaving their husbands, their neighborhoods, and their Korean churches claiming that they cannot possibility associate with people sharing a belief system that condones wife abuse and women's oppression.

As a practitioner and a scholar, my priorities have included preventing intimate partner violence and identifying culturally competent practice for people affected by intimate partner violence. While doing this work, I wondered if there were any possibility to utilize the cultural backgrounds of Asian women to empower them and to assist them in fighting against gender inequality and violence against women. As a Korean woman, I felt that this could also help me personally move beyond feeling lost and rootless between the Confucian and feminist aspects of my identity.

Angella Son (2006) argued that Confucianism has been a major influence in creating a subordinate role for women in Korea. She applied Kohut's psychology (1971, 1977) to explain how the societal expectation of women's subordination and societal disdain towards women's ambitions contribute to their arrested development of the self. She concluded that Confucian-influenced society prevents women from developing a cohesive self and causes women to experience a split between feelings of grandiosity and low self-esteem, as well as a pervasive sense of shame which may lead to a narcissistic personality. Her observations helped me understand why I felt pulled between Confucianism and feminism while feeling shame and guilt over either aspect of my identity. Yet, she suggested that women influenced by Confucianism can preserve the constructive aspects of the philosophy while freeing themselves from its patriarchal influences. Then they may be able to celebrate the feminine self with pride and joy. However, she did not explain what these constructive aspects of Confucianism were. Therefore, I recently have begun to explore the positive contributions of Confucianism and to understand its fuller meanings and historical contexts.

Third Phase: Expansion

As I recall my childhood, I remembered that my parents were modeling ways of keeping balance between a husband and a

wife, or *yang* and *yin*. My mother has always worked outside the home as a prominent Korean modern literature scholar. While she was away for conferences, my father prepared meals for me and my sisters. Often it was my mother who disciplined us, and my father who quietly and gently consoled us when we were grounded. However, such role behaviors were not static; the *yin* and *yang* sides of both my parents were constantly shifting to keep our family going. After reflecting on my upbringing, I realized that there must be an adaptive way to interpret the relationship between a husband and a wife dictated by Confucianism.

Indeed, many Confucian scholars argue that roles of men and women, such as *yang* and *yin*, should be complementary rather than hierarchical (Guisso & Johannesen, 1981; Black, 1986; Pao, 1979). Misinterpretation and application of the *yang* and *yin* concept on my part as, well as by many people with limited understanding of Confucian teaching, can be explained by the fact that there are significant differences in the historical context between social and cultural practices in the Joseon dynasty in Korea and Confucius's original teachings. For example, the Three Bonds should not be interpreted without the context of Mencius's Five Relationships. The principle of the Three Bonds—namely, the authority of the ruler over the minister, the father over the son, and the husband over the wife—emerged in Confucian literature almost four centuries after Mencius's (372-289BC) Five Relationships (Tu, 1998). The Five Relationships are love between father and son, duty between ruler and subject, distinction between husband and wife, precedence of the old over the young, and trust between friends (Mencius 3A:4, cited in Tu, 1998). Unlike the male dominating conception of the husband-wife relationship in the Three Bonds, Mencius's idea of the distinction of the husband and wife is based on the principle of mutuality; the underlying spirit is thus not dominance, but division and complementary aspects of labor. In other words, the husband and wife have equally important though different roles.

This functional distinction alludes to "male activity" as existing in the public, economic, and political domain, and "female activity" as existing in the private, family, and household domain. This did not require a hierarchical meaning in an agrarian economy, because in Confucianism the concept of family is seen neither as completely separate from nor as secondary to the public domain. Indeed, family is the center for cultivating benevolence and good character for individuals and society. The separation of men and women's spheres as outside and inside the home before the rise of a market economy was not problematic, since both functions and roles were valued equally. However, in a market economy, the outside function of making money naturally began to carry more weight than the inside function of taking care of children and doing the household chores. With the rise of modernization and development of a free market economy, the characteristics stereotypically connected with *yang*—earning power, leadership, aggressiveness, and being involved in the outer world—were valued more than characteristics of *yin* and women's domestic roles. Thus Confucians who are not willing to adapt to changing modern circumstances should be criticized for condoning the subordination of women, but not the whole of Confucianism.

On a personal level, this more nuanced understanding has aided my own identity clarification. I am exploring how to reconstruct a cultural view of Confucianism based on its virtues of benevolence and reciprocity, including the complementary and equal relationship between male and female. Balance is the answer I found in one of the Confucian Classics.

The Doctrine of the Mean[37] is full of Confucius teaching on keeping balance; cultivating oneself to be without excessive inclination to either side of a dichotomy and to admit to no change. He elaborated the importance of being in "the state of equilibrium and harmony" (Mean 1.5, translated by Legge, 1971). After reflecting on the following words of Confucius reported in the Doctrine of the Mean, I found it difficult to argue that Confucianism endorses violence against women or wives. Confucius said, "When one cultivates to the utmost the principles of one's nature,[38] and exercises them on the principle of reciprocity,[39] one is not far from the path.

What you do not like when done to yourself, do not do to others" (Mean 13.3, translated by Legge, 1971). "It is said in the Book of Poetry, 'Happy union with wife and children, is like the music of lutes and harps. When there is concord among brethren, the harmony is delightful and enduring. Thus may you regulate your family, and enjoy the pleasure of your wife and children'" (Mean 15.2, translated by Legge, 1971). Although Confucius did not specifically dictate men to follow women as he did women to men,[40] he did emphasize that a man should cultivate himself before imposing regulations onto others. A wise man would cultivate himself to please his wife and children and to keep his home harmonious.

The more I reflect on the notion of justice and relationship rules taught by Confucianism, I realize that *yin* and *yang* are indeed complementary. One is not better than the other or in control over the other. Without *yin* force, *yang* alone will not bring equilibrium and harmony to the society. In Confucianism, neither husband nor wife has the right to coerce or control the spouse. Both should complement each other's function in the family and society. Further, according to classical Confucian teachings, traditional life styles, family roles, and social patterns need to be adapted as circumstances change (Canda, 2002b).

As Tao (2000), Ni (2002), and Yin (2006) argue, I have gained awareness that oppression against women is not necessarily a fundamental part of Confucianism. Tao, Ni, and Yin also suggest that both Confucian ethics of benevolence and the care-oriented feminist ethics focus on human relatedness and mutual care and nurturing. Both emphasize the importance of situational and personal wisdom to connect with the others, character building through self-cultivation to be humane, and flexibility rather than rigid rule-following (See Li, 2000). Ni (2002) states that if we understand the human-heartedness as the general principle of Confucianism, we cannot possibly say that the oppression against women is an indispensable part of Confucianism. A truer understanding of Confucianism led Ni and me to discard the discriminatory element and replace it with the recognition of women's equal status. This is not only possible with Confucianism; it is arguably something society must teach to make Confucianism more self-consistent (Ni, 2002). Ni's argument empowers me and gives me a direction for further reflection and research. I now have a better understanding that Confucianism contains women-empowering elements. I hope to utilize the common cultural heritage I share with my clients from Confucian cultures to assist in healing their wounds.

Fourth Phase: Reconstruction

In both South Korea and the USA, I observe a common attitude that anything new is valued and glorified while anything old is thrown away. I wonder, then, how we can utilize the teaching of classical Confucianism, which I have discussed above as containing time-tested truths much needed today, in re-socializing our youngsters, in empowering women, in establishing balance between women and men, and in cultivating the complementary roles of women and men in a way that is relevant to contemporary life. Confucius stated that "Reviewing the old as a means of realizing the new or cherishing one's old knowledge, so as continually to be acquiring new[41] (Analects, 2.11; translated by Ames & Rosemont, Jr., 1998)." Classical Confucianism teaches us to be flexible in accord with the time, place, and circumstances when applying traditional principles (Canda, 2002a).

My wedding ceremony comes to my mind as an example of adapting a beautiful tradition to modern times. My wedding included both Western tradition (Catholic mass) as well as some parts of Korean tradition. At the Korean traditional wedding ceremony, commonly only relatives of the bridegroom are honored by receiving bows from the newlywed couple while relatives of the bride either work in the background or watch the ceremony among

guests. At our wedding, my parents-in-law invited my parents to be honored and to receive our bows. This was the very first time my parents were ever included this way, even though my three sisters got married before me. This is what I would call a reconstruction of the old tradition to value gender equality and balance.

Some Confucians value the sacrifices our mothers have made and still are making. They argue that sacrificial mothers hold homes together. If half the population is constantly requiring sacrifice from the other half of the population to maintain equilibrium and harmony, I wonder how long society will last. It seems more appropriate for both men and women to cultivate themselves to be virtuous, benevolent, righteous, appropriate, courteous, and wise, before imposing these Confucian principles on others. Dr. Yi Dong-Jun (2007 February) elaborates on the original teaching of Confucianism, particularly the principle of cultivating oneself, which enhances people's welfare (see *Analects,* 14:42[42]). This is a strong message that can be utilized to prevent violence against women. Detailed directions on cultivating oneself are described in the Great Learning; the following passage is just one of many examples:

> *"The ancients, who wished to illustrate virtue throughout the kingdom, first ordered well their own States. Wishing to order well their States, they first regulated their families. Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivated their persons. Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts. Wishing to rectify their hearts, they first sought to be sincere in their thoughts. Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they first extended to the utmost their knowledge. Such extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things"* (The Great Learning, I.4, translated by Legge, 1971).

Through reconstructing Confucianism by expanding my understanding of it, I have learned to appreciate where I come from, how I was brought up, and who I have become. I have come to appreciate my *yin* and *yang* characteristics. This appreciation allows me to utilize both energies to keep balance within myself. This change also has an impact on my husband. As I constantly assess my part in keeping equilibrium and harmony in my marriage, I have noticed that he too reflects on his function and roles in our relationship. By realizing this whole process, I have reached new ground in feeling that I have been empowered by Confucianism. By being empowered, I feel more confident that I can assist other women in their healing process.

Conclusion and Implications for Social Work Practice

The process of self-cultivation in Confucianism is a social act because it requires us to see ourselves in interactions with other human beings (Chang, 1998). Self-cultivation requires a social order that enables the development of a person, while it simultaneously contributes to develop and maintain that order (Cheng, 1987, 1998). Moreover, the goal of self-cultivation is not merely personal growth or moral perfection. It is not just for a person's self interest. Rather, self-cultivation is a way for a person to make herself or himself available to the society—to contribute to the social order that makes moral transformation of everyone possible (Cheng, 1998). "Self-cultivation inspired by *ren* is not only a means for Chinese and other Asian women to gain a sense of agency but also contributes to the development of agency of other female members of the society" (Yin, 2006, p. 14).

Although I have more learning and cultivating of virtue ahead of me, I now have a better and broader understanding of what Confucianism is and can be. I continue to oppose misogynistic misuse of Confucian teachings or popular customs. I am still resentful that historically and currently, there are so many women who are victimized and oppressed. The distorted and wrongful use of Confucianism provided perpetrators some

grounds for rationalizations for their abusive behavior towards their wives. However, I will not let misinterpretation and malpractice of Confucianism destroy my whole cultural heritage or my self identity. As I develop a perspective as a Confucian feminist, I can enhance my culturally sensitive practice with clients who come from Confucian cultural backgrounds. Interventions for intimate partner violence perpetrators and survivors could include reconstructing people's understandings of Confucianism, especially the concept of *yin* and *yang* and how Confucian philosophy guides men and women to be complementary and adaptive. By doing this, a misogynistic "cultural defense" is less likely to be used to justify violence against women. Survivors can find strength and resources to overcome abuse by drawing on their heritage rather than being ostracized and re-victimized under negative cultural stereotypes.

Truly culturally competent intervention for both victims and batterers would not simply blame Confucianism for violence against women. Instead we can identify specific cultural traditions, social institutions, and individuals' abusive behaviors that come from misinterpretation and malpractice of Confucianism. In helping both men and women clients to re-envision Confucianism, we may actually help them to decide whether they wish to adapt Confucian tradition in a healthy way or to depart from it. In either case, this will be a matter of client self and family cultivation, rather than cultural and identity confusion or destruction, as I have learned through the stages of my life outlined in this essay.

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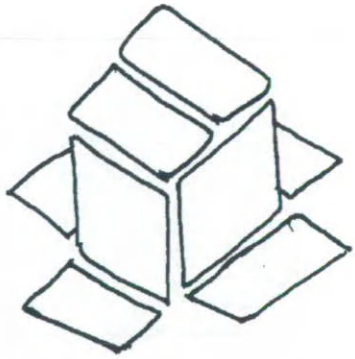

[1] 男女七歲不同席 mentioned in chapter 內則 (Chinese Pinyin Romanization—C: *Nei ze*) of 禮記 (C: *Li ji*)

[2] China has a similar saying, "If married to a rooster, a woman should follow the rooster, and if married to a dog she should follow the dog (嫁雞隨雞, 嫁狗隨狗 C: *jia ji sui ji, jia gou sui gou).*

[3] 女必從夫 (Korean new Government Romanization—K: *yeo pil jong bu*)

[4] 賢母良妻 (K: *hyeon mo yang cheo*)

[5] 三剛 C: *san gang*

[6] 三從之道 C: *san cong zhi dao*; cited in 儀禮, chapter 喪服禮, which is Zhu Xi (朱熹)'s report on Confucius teachings

[7] 君爲臣剛 C: *jun wei chen gang*

[8] 父爲子剛 C: *fu wei zi gang*

[9] 夫爲婦剛 C: *fu wei fu gang*

[10] 朝鮮王朝

[11] 大明律 C: *Da Ming Lü*; This was the statute of Ming Dynasty (明 1368-1644 CE) of China and King Taejo (太祖 1335-1408 CE) of Joseon Dynasty translated and implemented it in Korea during his sovereignty.

[12] 七去之惡 or 七出; K: *chil geo ji ak*, cited in 儀禮, 大戴禮, and 孔子家語 as general principles

[13] 不順舅姑去 K: *bul sun gu go geo*

[14] 無子去 K: *mu ja geo*

[15] 淫行去 K: *eum haeng geo*

[16] 嫉妬去 K: *jil tu geo*

[17] 惡疾去 K: *ak byong geo*

[18] 口舌去 K: *gu seol geo*

[19] 竊盜去 K: *jeol do geo*

[20] 三不去 K: *sam bul geo*

[21] 疏薄正妻罪 K: *so bak jeong cheo joe*

[22] 夫爲婦剛

[23] "Only when the dynasties of T'ang and Yu met, were they more abundant than in this of Chau, yet there was a woman among them. The able ministers were no more than nine men (according to Legge (1971) translation)"

[24] 女子 C: *nu zi*

[25] 小人 C: xiaoren

[26] "The Master said, 'Of all people, girls and servants are the most difficult to behave to. If you are familiar with them, they lose their humility. If you maintain a reserve towards them, they are discontented.'" (according to Legge (1971) translation)

[27] 陰

[28] 陽

[29] or the doctrines of 朱子學 (C: *Zhuzi xue*) or 性理學 (C: *Xingli xue*)

[30] 春秋時代

[31] 仁 C: *ren*

[32] 義 C: *yi*

[33] 禮 C: *li*

[34] 智 C: *zhi*

[35] 道 C: *dao*

[36] 君子 C: *junzi*

[37] 中庸 C: *Zhong Yong*

[38] 衷 C: zhong

[39] 恕 C: *shu*

[40] The obedience in three ways; 三從之道 C: *san cong zhi dao*; cited in 儀禮, chapter 喪服禮, which is Zhu Xi (朱熹)'s report on Confucius teachings

[41] 溫故知新 C: *wengu zhixin*

[42] "They cultivate themselves by bringing accord to the people" (修己而安百姓 C: *xiuji eran baixing*) translated by Ames & Rosemont, Jr. (1998)

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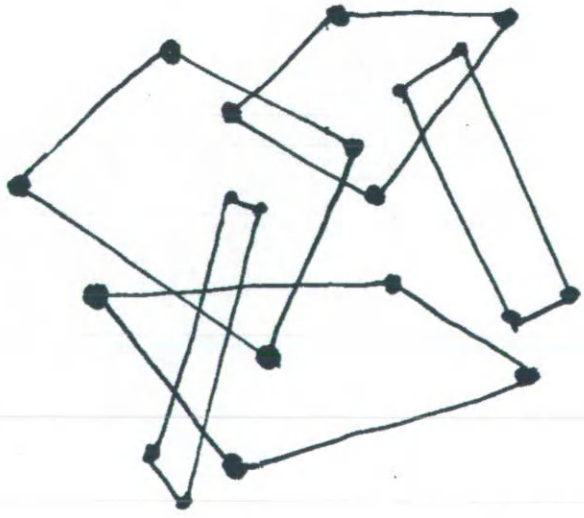

Forgiveness and the Death Penalty: The Power of Stories

Catherine A. Faver, Ph.D., University of Texas Pan American

Statistical information adequately demonstrates racial, regional, and social class biases in implementation of the death penalty. Testimonies and stories, however, are needed to portray fully the deleterious effects of capital punishment on families of victims and defendants, on those who implement and witness executions, and on society at large. Narratives also reveal the role of forgiveness in transforming tragedy and providing strength and meaning in the aftermath of murder. Utilizing narratives in teaching about the death penalty helps students analyze the web of relationships in which offenders' behavior and societal responses are embedded.

On March 18, 2009, New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson signed a bill repealing the death penalty, making his state the fifteenth to abolish the death penalty since it was reinstated by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1976 (CNN.com, 2009). Observing that the number of exonerations in the past ten years exceeded 130 (including four in New Mexico), Governor Richardson stated that he lacked "confidence in the criminal justice system as it currently operates to be the final arbiter when it comes to who lives and who dies for their crime." In addition to noting the number of death row inmates who had been wrongly convicted, the governor expressed concern that minorities are "over-represented in the prison population and on death row." In affirming the governor's decision, state representative Gail Chasey noted the state would be relieved of costly death penalty trials, and families would not have to endure the lengthy death penalty trial and appeal process which "reopens wounds."

Meanwhile, in the neighboring state of Texas, my social work students were in the midst of a discussion of the death penalty as part of our unit on the criminal justice system. Taking social work's mission as a starting point, this course in human behavior and the social environment (HBSE) focuses specifically on the impact of social institutions on human well-being. Thus, the course emphasizes "the well-being of society" as a whole in addition to "individual well-being in a social context." We analyze "the environmental forces that create, contribute to, and address problems in living" especially for "people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty" (NASW, 1999). Against this backdrop, it can be argued that the death penalty is detrimental to the well-being of society for at least three reasons.

First, the death penalty raises ethical and legal concerns about whether the state has a right to kill its own citizens and whether the means used to do so are cruel and inhumane. Second, the death penalty reinforces and perpetuates social inequality through racial/ethnic, social class, and regional biases in its implementation. Finally, the death penalty negatively affects the larger community, not only by diverting resources that could be used to prevent crime and help victims, but also through its impact on families of victims and defendants and on the people who implement and witness executions on the state's behalf (Johnson & Rhodes, 2005; Death Penalty Information Center, 2009; MVFR, n.d.; Abramson & Isay, 2000; Diss, 2002). Indeed, examined in light of social work's commitment to human well-being, the evidence against the death penalty seems overwhelming.

But we are in Texas, which leads the nation in number of executions (Death Penalty Information Center, 2009). Each year some students in my HBSE class are adamant in their support of the death penalty. As a social work educator, I respect their right to an opinion; at the same time, my job is to encourage students to think critically in light of relevant research and social work values. Determining the best way to encourage students' critical thinking about the death penalty has been a continuing challenge.

Social Inequality: Statistics Tell the Story

We begin with facts and figures. Students readily grasp the evidence of race, regional, and income inequality in implementation of the death penalty. Race of defendant and race of victim biases are particularly striking. Of 1,165 executions occurring between 1977 and May 29, 2009, 35% of the defendants were Black. Although approximately half of all murder victims are White, 78% of murder cases ending in executions during this period involved White victims, strongly suggesting that the lives of White victims are valued more highly than the lives of Black victims in the application of the death penalty. Over 80% of all executions occurred in the South, and Texas alone is responsible for over a third (37%) of all executions since 1977 (Death Penalty Information Center, 2009). Low-income defendants usually rely on state-appointed lawyers who often have little experience with capital cases (Johnson & Rhodes, 2005).

In terms of the impact on the larger society, the death penalty system costs states more than incarcerating an offender for life without parole. Moreover, although the question of deterrence continues to be debated, leading academic criminologists deny that the death penalty is a deterrent to murder (Death Penalty Information Center, 2009).

Still, despite the evidence the death penalty reinforces and perpetuates social inequality, some students maintain their support of the death penalty for one of two reasons: (1) an ideologically based belief in "an eye for an eye" with respect to murder, or (2) a belief that executing the offender brings "closure" to the victims' families.

The latter view is no doubt influenced by media interviews with victims' families during the peak of their anger and anguish. But does this snapshot tell the whole story of the process of grief and healing? Does "an eye for an eye" serve the interests of victims' families and society as a whole? What are the social costs of executions? Who, besides the convicted defendant, is victimized by the death penalty? Facts and figures can reveal injustice, but stories are needed to convey the full impact of the death penalty on families, executioners and witnesses, and indeed, on society as a whole.

Victims of the Death Penalty

To help students grasp the effects of the death penalty, I ask them to listen to the audiotape or read the transcript of *Witness to an Execution* (Abramson & Isay, 2000), a Peabody award-winning documentary which first aired on National Public Radio on October 20, 2000. Narrated by Warden Jim Willett, the documentary takes the listener inside The Walls, a maximum security prison in Huntsville, Texas, which encompasses the small brick building where executions are carried out. Warden Willett "wonder[s] whether people really understand what goes on down here and the effect it has on us," and listeners are introduced to the warden's grim reality as guards, chaplains, and journalists describe the inmate's final hours and their own roles in the execution process.

Prison guard Terry Green says his work as a member of the "tie-down team" (those who strap the inmate onto the gurney for the execution) is "just another part of what I do as a correctional officer." He adds, "It's what the vast majority of the people want done," thus distancing himself from the process and assigning responsibility for his actions to society.

Kenneth Dean, another tie-down team member, says, "It's a very unique job...Not many people are willing to do this or can do this. I do believe in what I do." Yet other statements belie this apparent confidence. He reports that after inmates are strapped onto the table, some will "look at you in the eye and tell you 'Thank you for everything that you've done.' And you know, that's kind of a weird feeling...It's kind of hard to explain what you actually feel, you know, when you talk to a man and you kind of get to know that person, and then you walk him out of a cell and you take him in there to the chamber and tie him down. And then a few minutes later he's...he's gone."

Obliquely referring to how tie-down team members cope, Dean notes that participating in executions is "something that everybody has to deal with...in their own way." The doubts,

discomfort, and strain reflected in their descriptions of their duties are too unsettling for these prison staff members to acknowledge openly or express directly. It could be argued that rationalizations and justifications are psychological survival mechanisms that make it possible to continue participating in the execution process.

The journalists who cover executions for the news media have their own coping strategies. After witnessing her first execution at age 26, Leighanne Gideon "felt numb" but discovered, as she was assured she would, that the numb feeling "goes away." John Moritz added that "at some point there's a detachment." Wayne Sorge finds that "it's easier now" and wonders whether he was "right to make part of my income from watching people die." Nevertheless, his job is to "hold up a mirror to people of what their world is" and "capital punishment is part of that." Thus, the journalists also use distancing strategies and rationalizations to come to terms with their involvement in executions.

Most unsettling to the journalists are the mothers' reactions to their sons' deaths. Journalist Michael Graczyk said that he "had a mother collapse" right in front of him. Wayne Sorge agreed, saying, "I've seen them fall into the floor, totally lose control." And Gideon added, "You'll never hear another sound like a mother wailing whenever she is watching her son be executed."

Not everyone can maintain psychological and emotional distance from what they are actually doing. Former chaplain Carroll Pickett said, "I've had guards—lots of guards quit...Some of them couldn't take it."

Apparently Fred Allen, a former member of the tie-down team, did not quit soon enough. After participating in about 120 executions, he was working in his home carpentry shop one day when "all of a sudden something just triggered in me and I started shaking." He began to cry uncontrollably and explained to his wife that he suddenly saw in his mind's eye the person he had helped to execute a few days earlier; soon he was seeing the eyes of all the men he had tied down over the years. Fred thinks his experience was a form of "traumatic stress" and believes that sooner or later, "everybody has a stopping point."

Warden Willett concludes by acknowledging his own discomfort and ambivalence: "I'll be retiring next year and to tell you the truth this is something I won't miss a bit. There are times when I'm standing there, watching those fluids start to flow, and wonder whether what we're doing here is right. It's something I'll be thinking about for the rest of my life."

In class discussions of this documentary, several points are crucial. By allowing capital punishment to persist, we as a society are contributing to the psychological pain and conflict experienced by the people who must implement and witness it. Desensitization and a degree of callousness may be unavoidable for those who are directly involved in executions. Detachment and desensitization are methods of coping with an overwhelming event, but at what cost? Separating mind from emotions may protect the self in the short run, but in the long run this strategy is emotionally deadening and devastating to relationships. The effects of executions on prison staff members and witnesses reverberate in the lives of their families, communities, and social networks.

"But what about victims' families?" my students often ask. "Don't families have a right to a death sentence for the person who killed their loved one? Doesn't the execution bring closure?" Indeed, some murder victims' families may believe that revenge will quell their anger, calm their minds, and facilitate healing. In reality, however, many victims' families argue that an execution accomplishes none of these things.

"The death penalty is such a false thing to offer to victims' families. We have to ask ourselves, 'What really heals a human heart?'" This question, posed by Sister Helen Prejean (Diss, 2002), is important for social workers to consider. Prejean, author of *Dead Man Walking* (1993) and leading opponent of the death penalty, speaks from her experience of working with families of both defendants and victims, beginning with her service as spiritual advisor for defendant Patrick Sonnier. Prejean reports that the father of one of Sonnier's victims said that continuing to hate the

murderer "would eat away at his soul." He told Prejean: "They killed my boy. I wasn't going to let them kill me" (quoted in Diss, 2002).

This father's perspective is echoed by many other victims' families who jointly assert that healing is not achieved by executing or hating the offender. Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation (MVFR), founded in 1976, "is a national organization of family members of victims of both homicide and executions who oppose the death penalty in all cases." The members endeavor to "help their friends, co-workers, media, and policymakers understand the negative impact that capital punishment has on the families of murder victims and the executed" (MVFR, n.d.).

When the death penalty was repealed in New Mexico, it was replaced by a sentence of life in prison without parole. Clearly there is consensus in our society that those who commit murder should be held accountable and that the community should be protected from harm. The question is: How can we accomplish these goals without perpetuating violence? What role, if any, can forgiveness play in healing individuals and society in the aftermath of murder?

To help students think about these questions, I turned to an award-winning video documentary. *The Power of Forgiveness* (Doblmeier, 2007) draws upon diverse faith traditions and scientific research to explore forgiveness in contexts ranging from interpersonal relationships to national and international conflicts. Two segments, in particular, offer compelling, life-affirming perspectives on murder and forgiveness.

Murder and Forgiveness

> "It is not possible to achieve by vigilance in anger and revenge what the soul is longing for. The soul wishes peace."
>
> The Reverend James Forbes in *The Power of Forgiveness*

What do we mean by "forgiveness," and what can it possibly accomplish in the wake of a brutal murder? Psychology professor Everett Worthington, whose story is depicted in *The Power of Forgiveness*, had been conducting research on forgiveness for about five years when his mother was brutally murdered by an intruder in her home on New Year's Eve, 1995, in Knoxville, Tennessee. Although a young man was apprehended and confessed to the crime, the physical evidence in the crime was found to be contaminated. Thus, the young man recanted his confession and was released from custody. In Worthington's account of the crime and its aftermath, he explains that "within a month" he and his siblings

> *"...independently forgave the murderer. Furthermore, in honor of Mama's memory, we wanted to do what she had taught us—to honor life rather than dishonor it. Independently, each of us decided that if evidence could be uncovered so that the youth could be prosecuted, we would not advocate the death penalty"* (Worthington, n.d.).

In an article reflecting on his experience in light of his research, Worthington (n.d.) elaborates on the meaning of forgiveness, especially in response to heinous crimes. In his view, forgiveness does not "change anything about the crime, its morality or moral consequences, or the perpetrator. The murderer would still be accountable to God and to civil authorities." Thus, forgiveness does not ignore or deny that a real offense has occurred and that people have been harmed. Instead, forgiveness transforms the one who forgives. According to Worthington, there are two levels of forgiveness. The first "is a decision about one's intention for future actions toward the offender, with the possibility of renouncing vengeance and advocating benevolence." The second "is an emotional change from negative, unforgiving emotions like resentment and hatred to either a neutral state...or a positive emotional state."

In other words, forgiveness involves a decision that individuals can make. We can

choose to "renounce vengeance and advocate benevolence." The second aspect of forgiveness, which involves letting go of negative emotions, may seem more challenging. Sometimes when people are harmed, they feel as though they can't forgive; they can't let go of their anger. In reality, however, taking step one in the forgiveness process by making the decision to renounce vengeance makes it more likely that corresponding emotions will follow those positive behavioral intentions. In addition, it is possible to train our minds to focus attention where we want it to be. Withdrawing attention from negative emotions and focusing instead on a spiritually meaningful word or phrase is a well-worn path to peace of mind (see Easwaran, 2008, 2009). Online resources emerging from research on forgiveness are also available to help people release negative emotions and practice forgiveness (see, e.g., www.loveandforgive.org).

Forgiveness is a sign of strength. The person who forgives is in control of his or her own emotions, initiating a positive response to an offense, rather than simply responding or reacting to the actions of the offender. As Worthington (n.d.) explains, forgiveness does not short circuit the grief process, but it does provide strength to the grieving person. According to Worthington:

> *"Part of grieving is telling a story repeatedly about the loss. If the story is spiced by bitterness, resentment, and rage, the griever makes his or her self-image more negative. But if the griever can rise above the suffering to forgive, he or she sees the self as a stronger person. Grief will not be shortened but one's sense of self will be different."*

In recent years the concept of restorative justice has been promoted as a more satisfying alternative to typical criminal justice procedures for the purpose of remedying harm done by criminal offenses. Restorative justice addresses what Worthington (n.d.) refers to as the "injustice gap" because it "advocates restitution to the victim by the offender" (Maiese, 2003, p. 1). In so doing, restorative justice makes explicit the idea that offenses have been committed against people rather than the state, and that the harm affects family members and the community as well as the primary victim. The general aim of restorative justice is restoration of healthy relationships rather than revenge (Maiese, 2003).

Forgiveness is often part of the process of restorative justice. Through dialogue, the offender offers an apology, makes restitution, and may receive forgiveness from those who were harmed. Although restorative justice may include forgiveness, it should be emphasized that forgiveness can occur quite apart from restorative justice. Indeed, as described by Worthington (n.d.), forgiveness involves the victim's decision not to seek revenge and to let go of negative emotions toward the offender. Thus, forgiveness can occur regardless of whether the offender is apprehended, apologizes, or makes restitution. In this perspective, forgiveness is not dependent on the actions of the offender.

Through testimony and narrative, *The Power of Forgiveness* (Doblmeier, 2007) makes three crucial points about forgiveness. First, Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hahn, who is featured in the documentary, explains that "forgiveness will not be possible until compassion is born in your heart." Through compassion we see offenders' vulnerability and are more able to forgive. Second, forgiveness is essential for the well-being of the one who forgives. As the documentary explains, a growing body of scientific evidence demonstrates the physical and emotional health benefits of forgiveness. Finally, forgiveness can soften the heart of the offender and set in motion a process of transformation.

All three points are beautifully illustrated in a true story depicted in *The Power of Forgiveness* (Doblmeier, 2007). On January 21, 1995, 20-year old Tariq Khamisa delivered pizza to a home in San Diego where four adolescent boys had been drinking and taking drugs. When Tariq refused to relinquish the pizza without payment, one of the boys, 14-year old Tony Hicks, shot and killed him. Tony,

who had been abandoned by his parents and had witnessed a fatal shooting at age nine, was living in San Diego with his grandfather, Ples Felix. When Tony killed Tariq, Ples felt betrayed and was "burdened with guilt." Tearfully confessing to the murder in the courtroom, Tony said that he prayed that Tariq's father would forgive him.

Azim Khamisa, Tariq's father, did indeed forgive Tony. Despite their overwhelming loss and grief, Tariq's parents perceived their son's death as part of the larger tragedy of children killing children. Azim said that from the beginning he saw that there were "victims at both ends of the gun: my son a victim of his assailant; his assailant a victim of society." Through the lens of compassion Azim saw the effects of an oppressive society on Tony as a young African American. As a Sufi Muslim, Azim completed a 40 day period of grieving and then his spiritual mentor advised him to do a good, compassionate deed. Azim established the Tariq Khamisa Foundation to "stop kids from killing kids" and asked Ples Felix to help him. Ples saw this request as an answer to prayer because he was eager to do whatever he could to support the Khamisa family.

Together Azim and Ples visit schools, tell their story, and show children that there is an alternative to violence. They are introduced to school children with the words, "This man's grandson killed this man's son," and as Azim explains, "this is the first time in their young lives they've actually seen an alternative to violence. Mostly what they see in our culture is an eye for an eye." Addressing the middle school children, Azim asks: "Would revenge bring Tariq back? Would revenge stop the pain and the grief that I feel?...Forgiveness is something you do for yourself...If I did not forgive Tony I would be very angry...and if I am angry who does it hurt? It hurts me...because anger is not good for you." Azim urges the children to reach out to forgive and to think about how to heal relationships when there is anger.

Meanwhile, Tony is serving a prison sentence of 25 years to life, but Azim has asked that the sentence be reduced and has offered Tony a job at the foundation when he is released. Tony says that he had never known forgiveness prior to this experience and that Azim's forgiveness was not something he expected. "I had a man forgive me for taking the life of his son. The least I can do is forgive people who have wronged me or not been there for me in my life." Ples explains that in forgiving Tony, Azim began a healing process, but in addition, Azim's forgiveness "had the unintended benefit of helping Tony because Tony was burdened with guilt." Ples adds, "The long-term benefit of that forgiveness is that Azim and I are brothers."

The experience of these two families demonstrates that any differences can be overcome to resolve conflicts. Azim explains, "Ples grew up as a Baptist from the South, and I grew up a Sufi Muslim...This is not Mother Theresa meeting the Dalai Lama...If he and I can come together in spite of all of these differences, we can all do it...Stretch your imagination. If all the conflicts in the world could be resolved like Ples and me, what would our world look like?"

Viewing this story with my HBSE students, I hoped that the words and images would seep into their minds and hearts: "Victims at both ends of the gun...an alternative to violence, to an eye for an eye...long-term benefit of forgiveness." This story did not involve the death penalty, but it did revolve around a heinous crime. The type of transformation that Tony experienced does not always happen, but forgiveness stops the cycle of violence and facilitates the healing process. In this instance, forgiveness made it possible to transform tragedy into hope not only for one troubled young man (Tony Hicks) but also for all the young people who learn an alternative to violence through the testimonies of Azim Khamisa and Ples Felix.

In social work terms, the stories in *Witness to an Execution* and *The Power of Forgiveness* demonstrate the interdependence of individuals, families, and the larger society. To foster "individual well-being in a social context and the well-being of society," social workers must consider the entire web of relationships which produce violent behavior and shape reactions to it. Neither murders nor executions occur in a vacuum. Their effects reverberate throughout society. We are all

implicated in creating conditions that make aggressive behavior likely to occur, and we share responsibility for responding to aggression with penalties and procedures that do not perpetuate violence.

Abolishing the death penalty would not change the offenders' accountability to victims' families or to society. However, by refusing to respond to violence with violence (through killing perpetrators), we are acknowledging that behavior has multiple determinants and that offenders are also victims of society's failure to create the conditions necessary to inhibit aggression and foster pro-social behavior.

After sharing the narratives in *Witness to an Execution* and *The Power of Forgiveness*, I did not survey the class to determine whether attitudes toward the death penalty had changed. Anecdotal evidence indicated that students were quite moved by both documentaries, and I did not want to take advantage of their emotions to change their opinions. I preferred for students to simply reflect on the stories and allow their messages to take root in their minds. What I hope will emerge is a conviction that as social workers and members of society we are all responsible and accountable for cultivating the soil in which kindness and compassion flourish while hatred and violence wither and die.

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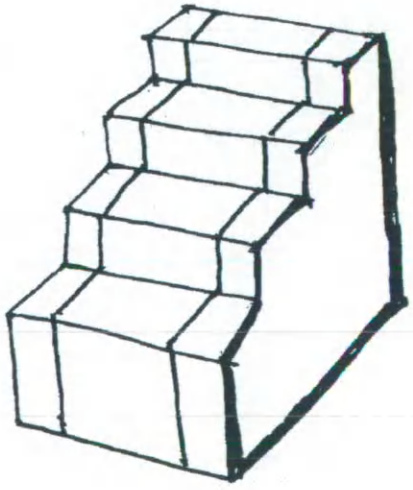

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Mentorship in Social Work: A Dialogue of Powerful Interplay

Noell L. Rowan, Ph.D., University of Louisville

This narrative is a reflection on the experiences and awareness of a social work mentoring process. The historical background of two social workers is presented through the lens of a mentoring relationship in an attempt to provide services to troubled youth and families in the State of Georgia. Based on many discussions over several years with both social workers, this narrative serves as a testimony for the positive contributions that can develop from mentorship in the field of social work.

Introduction

This is the early morning of what would have been Jeannette Comer Noell's 95th birthday had she lived past age 93. Her time ended after a serious fall, subsequent surgery, and a respiratory embolism. Mrs. Noell (my maternal grandmother) was often referred to as "wise beyond her time." She was a skilled social worker and educator in the State of Georgia for many years. However, if you were to talk with her, there would be a sense of humility about her wherein she would give credit to many other people who gave her a helping hand along life's journey. One of the special people she often mentioned was her mentor in the field of social work, Ms. Elsie Nesbit, whom I always refer to as "Elsie."

According to Mrs. Noell, whom I always call "Nette," there was a time in her life—after the death of her husband, Willis Newton Noell—that she had to change careers and earn a higher income to support her two daughters. Due to the high demand in the late 1940s and 1950s, social workers were paid more than school teachers. She was asked to pursue a new position that the State of Georgia created, which was referred to as a "visiting teacher" or "school social worker." In order for Nette to enter this new position, she had to successfully complete more education from the University of Georgia. When she entered the University of Georgia, she was introduced to her instructor Ms. Elsie Nesbit. Little did they know that their connection would carry meaning well beyond their work.

This narrative describes the more than 40 year connection between Nette and Elsie, which includes a reflection from the author's perspective about the impact of their connection and focuses primarily on mentorship in social work. It has been suggested that such a long, close friendship established from mentoring in social work is a rare gem that must be documented. Therefore, this work purports to make transparent their connection such that other mentors and mentees can have knowledge about making a powerful impact on another social worker's life.

Reflections on the Impact of Mentorship: The Author's Perspective

Being the granddaughter of a social worker who was so involved and committed to service in the early years of education and social work has given me much to be grateful for. The impact of mentorship that my grandmother shared with me, as well as her values and her sense of loyalty to serving the underprivileged in society, has certainly contributed in large part to my career in social work. Nette did not urge me to pursue social work as a career. In fact, I do not recall her ever mentioning that I might explore social work as a college major. Instead, she shared her experiences and values with our family. She explained her views about helping the economically challenged segment of the population, and the importance of respecting the privacy and integrity of those in need of clothing by giving clothing inconspicuously through the use of a "clothes

closet" organization and personal delivery. She shared the importance of perseverance with people in authority in order to stand up for social justice, or to speak for people who were not able to speak for themselves. These and other lessons that I later learned were pertinent to the profession of social work are firmly rooted in my being. I still feel her sense of value in giving kind and thoughtful service to others in my everyday commitment to social work practice.

When it was time to make a decision about declaring my college major and career decision, I was drawn to social work because of certain related coursework and instructors that I was involved with in courses like Introduction to Psychology and Sociology. I investigated careers and college majors through the career development center at the University of Georgia, where I was tested to match my interests and skills to certain careers. Social work was clearly in the forefront of discussion in those days, and I thought that the systematic, methodical steps I'd taken to reach my decision—as well as my test results—were what made me destined to pursue social work as a career. It has since become quite clear that the influence of my grandmother's values and the love and respect that she earned in our family were what gently nudged me to become a social worker more than anything else.

Getting to know Elsie through my grandmother and hearing about their professional history and personal friendship made a profound difference in my career choice as well. Both were very warm, approachable ladies who always made time to sit and talk and solve or prevent problems. Listening to their exchanges, having the great fortune to be in the company of one or both of them has meant the world to me in my personal and professional development. These two ladies instilled in me basic social work values and a commitment to serving others that leaves me grateful beyond words.

I have since encountered an abundance of other mentors on my journey in the field of social work, from many different facets of the profession (e.g., academia, mental health inpatient/outpatient settings, both urban and rural). Thanks to them, I have learned to appreciate discussions about ways to critically evaluate client systems and issues. Some mentors have guided me by sharing empirical research methods and opening my eyes to the world of evidence-based practice. Others have guided me through honest, direct, and high level trust exchanges about ways to navigate complex social service systems, and to improve self-care in order to better serve our clients. I have encountered many mentors who have spent countless hours with me in both professional and personal discussions where, in the moment, I have been increasingly aware of the value in trust, openness, support, and sharing. These encounters have been invaluable in terms of developing my ability to be present and honor the sacredness of the moment; the meaningful connection I witnessed between Nette and Elsie was evidence of how rewarding this can be. It is with this immense gratitude that I share this manuscript with the larger world in an effort to transmit what has been freely given to me.

History of the "Visiting Teacher" or "School Social Worker"

During the early 1940's, the Georgia Education Association, the Georgia Teachers and Education Association, and other organizations began urging policy makers to raise standards in education throughout the State of Georgia (Nesbit, 1976). Some of the major concerns were the need to raise teacher salaries and teacher qualifications, as well as to increase funding to schools across Georgia. In an effort to improve education and educational outcomes, the Compulsory School Attendance Law was passed in January, 1945 (Nesbit, 1976). This law established Georgia as the fourth state in the United States to pass legislation which created a statewide, school-related occupational position which is now

known throughout America as a "school social worker" (Nesbit, 1976).

Elsie was a pioneer in bringing social work to the educational system in the form of the visiting teacher/school social worker (vt/ssw) program to Georgia, and was very enthusiastic about it. In 1945, there was no school of social work in Georgia. On scholarship, she went out of state to earn an MSW. Upon her return, she was appointed director of the vt/ssw training at University of Georgia College of Education. Nette had been employed by her school in Cleveland, Georgia as a vt/ssw, and was in Elsie's first class.

The name "visiting teacher" was established in the early stages of the public welfare system, when use of the term "social worker" was not widely accepted at that time (Nesbit, 1976). As a result of this new legislation and failed attempts to mandate school attendance, it became important to the State of Georgia Department of Education that there be a well-trained professional to assist in the welfare of children and their education. In 1945, the Georgia Department of Education voted to alert every school superintendent in writing of the policy to hire a visiting teacher/ school social worker that met specific guidelines. This included providing a professional service concerned with compulsory attendance, removing the causes of absenteeism, and promoting child development and regular school attendance (Nesbit, 1976).

Nesbit (1976) noted that this school attendance law acted as a profound catalyst to alter the use of children as laborers on farms and other work places by placing them in schools to learn. Visiting teachers or school social workers found themselves in the midst of multiple conflicts related to farmers and other Georgia citizens not wanting to abide by the law. While the purpose of the law was to *help* families get their children to school, there were many times when vt/ssws were placed in challenging positions having to hold the need for school attendance against the wishes of the family. In addition, the social and economic problems of the state affected children, and consequently became issues of the vt/ssws (Nesbit, 1976). For example, in order to perform this job well, a reliable car was necessary to travel throughout communities and new cars were not readily available after World War II. Thus, many vt/ssws expressed feeling very blessed to be some of the first community members to get new cars after the war (Nesbit, 1976).

Vt/ssws began to join together and learn about one another through a workshop held at the University of Georgia (Nesbit, 1976). At the workshop urgent needs were made known, methods were shared, and they all came together in support of each other. After many years dealing with racial segregation and other issues in professional organizations, many vt/ ssw's joined the National Association of Social Workers. Nesbit (1976) reported that Georgia became a front runner in America for developing state-wide professional school social work services.

The establishment of a specific training and certification program for vt/ssws was a lengthy process. After many gradual changes due to ever-increasing standards of certification set by the State Department of Education and the demands of the vt/ssws, the Georgia Association of Visiting Teachers worked to improve training opportunities (Nesbit, 1976). Through a joint effort and much work, the College of Education at the University of Georgia and many others made it possible for continuous graduate school education for vt/ssws, and a standard for obtaining a Masters of Education degree was put into place.

Even though the vt/ssw's program of study was based in social work philosophy, the education took place in the College of Education. Nesbit (1976) reported that in the year of 1964, the vt/ssw's graduate program was moved to the newly developed School of Social Work at University of Georgia. In her book *Nesbit Family History*, Elsie stated that she sat on the search committee for the first dean of the newly opened School of Social Work at University of Georgia, and was in the president's office when he was hired (Schwinn & Nesbit, 2000). She noted that having a school of social work where the vt/ssw's program could be based was a necessary beginning (Nesbit, 1976).

Mentorship in Social Work: Reflections of Nette and Elsie

On multiple occasions, Nette spoke of the importance of her education in the field of social work. The focus on community outreach in the form of assistance to vulnerable populations was paramount to meaningful social work. Both of these social workers were involved in the development of social work programs at schools to assist youth who were showing signs of difficulty in a variety of areas. During the time when Elsie mentored Nette, they discussed many cases and brainstormed approaches to assist the troubled youth and families in Georgia. In accordance with the compulsory school attendance law, the mission of the school social worker was to assure that a) children attended school and b) to investigate solutions for children who were not present to learn each day. As was previously discussed, this work was not easy but Elsie reported, "My memories of that time are almost entirely positive...the long, honest discussions, the way people interacted with each other, the way they handled emotions..." Elsie concluded her reflections by stating, "...some lasting friendships were formed" (Schwinn & Nesbit, 2000, p. 158). Through paving the way for school social work to happen in Georgia, new approaches to dealing with real life situations were forged and maintained, and many enduring friendships were established.

Throughout discussions with Nette, she repeatedly emphasized her concern for children who were marginalized due to poverty. She later developed a way to provide clothing for disadvantaged youth by putting nearly new clothes in plain paper bags to disguise the contents from peers who might ridicule their circumstances. The bags of clothing were distributed by the school social worker and were made possible through local community donations. This practice became popular and led to the development of a used clothing shop housed on the grounds of a local church. This enabled economically challenged people to obtain clothing in a dignified way.

As previously mentioned, the mentorship between these two women began when Nette was training to become a school social worker, and their relationship lasted for more than 40 years. Nette reported that they spoke on the phone weekly, and that they would take turns initiating the calls in order to share the expense. From discussing cases of troubled youth in a professional context, to updating each other on the current happenings in their lives—ultimately helping each other endure personal life challenges such as transitions in where each lived, health issues, and family challenges—these two southern ladies remained well connected via telephone and letters.

Implications for Social Work Education and Practice

The capacity of a mentorship relationship to expand into an extended meaningful connection is important for social work education and practice. According to Stakrava (2005), many persistent social and cultural barriers can potentially impede the success of new teachers and students. There are many potential multi-cultural issues beyond economic problems that may pose barriers to social workers and educators. For example, racial and ethnic issues, language barriers, sexual orientation, and identity issues are of increasing concern in social work communication styles and approaches to dealing with potential social problems (Ambrosino, Heffernan, Shuttlesworth, & Ambrosino, 2008; Hepworth, Rooney, Rooney, Strom-Gottfried, & Larsen, 2006). A seasoned social worker can assist in educating students about possible barriers in such a way that solutions can be created, and what appear to be barriers can be turned into fruitful discussions.

Mentoring may bridge the new teacher or student into positive career experiences and can be vital to a successful career. Stakrava (2005) also emphasizes the importance of the mentor describing his/her own experiences with basic life struggles so that the mentee can be allowed to have and feel a human connection. According to descriptions from Nette, Elsie was open about her personal challenges and welcomed Nette to do the same in an effort to foster meaningful connections between them. These discussions provided Nette with an opportunity to open safely up to

Elsie as a human being in addition to a professional seeking advice.

Collins (1994) produced empirical evidence about whether or not mentorship between social workers really makes a difference. This study demonstrated that while there was no causal link between mentorship and career success, there were positive outcomes for both sides. The evidence emphasized that the investment of time and effort involved in a mentoring relationship in social work can benefit all parties involved in career satisfaction, income levels, and overall success. Hence, mentoring in social work practice has the potential for positive change.

Conclusion

Mentoring in the early days of school social work meant a great deal to Nette and Elsie and apparently to many other vt/ssws. There is an unspoken yet deeply felt sharing of support and common philosophy between social workers. From the wise words of Elsie Nesbit, "No two vt/ssws are exactly alike in what they think and feel and do, and yet no one is entirely different from all the others" (Nesbit, 1976, p. 1). Through sharing common experiences and philosophy, there is still room for flexible variations on how to approach a situation.

While joining together in a pioneer journey toward better educational experiences for all children, the dedication, struggles, and many shared emotions and experiences enabled many vt/ssws to form lasting and meaningful connections that made a difference in their lives and many others. One social worker helping another may have a ripple effect more powerful than can be imagined, and many lives may be improved by participating in the process.

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From a Series of Hurricanes, a Field Education Coordinator Evolves

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This narrative describes the author's transformation from a licensed clinical social worker to a field education coordinator in Southwest Florida, following the devastation of four hurricanes.

Setting

My journey began in August 2004 when I changed jobs from a medical social worker at Health Park Medical Center to a Field Education Coordinator at Florida Gulf Coast University after four separate hurricanes (Charley, Francis, Ivan, and Jeanne) hit Florida. Changing jobs provided a wonderful opportunity to change the direction of my career. By this time, I had over 30 years experience in the profession. The medical social work position provided a diversity of work experiences, but did not provide challenges that would enable me to grow. In further considering a job change, I reviewed my thoughts and experiences about teaching as an adjunct professor. The experiences had been positive and fulfilling. It was a good feeling to contribute to the social work profession by educating the next generation of social workers. The opportunity seemed perfect since a Ph.D. was not required. Past experiences and the MSW degree would satisfy the job requirements.

Destruction from the hurricanes was widespread. People in my Southwest Florida community had lost their homes. Loss of electricity and non-working phone lines created communication challenges. As a social worker, I understood the impact these traumatic events were having on the community; daily functioning and coping with relationships were affected by the hurricanes which brought new losses to grieve.

Academic Experience

Prior to becoming the undergraduate field education coordinator, I served as an adjunct and visiting professor at Florida Gulf Coast University. During 2002-2003, I was a visiting professor. I taught three courses per semester (a traditional assignment) in academia. In addition, it provided me with the experience of teaching full-time. Indirectly, it affirmed that my past social work experiences contributed to my development as a social worker. I experienced some apprehension about moving from direct practice experience to academia. As I thought about this change, I wondered if I were up to the challenge.

Through teaching, I had enjoyed interactions with students, faculty, and staff. Although my experiences in the classroom were positive, I sought a new challenge, and the coordinator position fit the bill. I could help students get the practical experiences necessary to becoming social workers. I had some previous experience with internships and field placement agencies. One genuine asset was living in Ft. Myers for several years and having an active role in the local social work community. It was up to me to shake off the disorientation from the hurricane activity and figure out a path forward.

I learned quickly that there was no guidebook for me to follow as a field education

coordinator. Because of major hurricane damages to her home, my predecessor was generally unavailable to train me or answer questions. A cursory search of other programs yielded a few ideas, but nothing resembling a road map.

My mental challenge involved identifying what past knowledge and experiences I brought to the new position. The world of full-time, permanent academia was still new to me. Social work practice was my focus for many years. I was anxious and overwhelmed about making this change because of the contrast in the work setting. For example, in social work practice, I had a good understanding of my responsibility to the agency and clients. At the university, I needed to develop a better understanding of my responsibilities to the Division of Social Work and students.

What Is a Faculty Liaison?

The role of faculty liaison was not familiar to me. Placement involves matching a student's learning needs with an agency and field instructor. The faculty liaison interprets university policy and procedures, understands the expectations of the agency and assesses the best fit for the student. Field education evaluations are used to evaluate the progress of the student and used as feedback to the student about his/her field placement experience.

Field Instruction: A Guide for Social Work Students states: "The primary job of the faculty liaison is to see that students' practicum experiences are educational. The faculty liaison functions are: 1) Practicum placement, 2) Linkage, 3) Administration, and 4) Evaluation" (Royce, Dhooper, & Rompf 1996, p.3).

Figuring Out the Puzzle

The social work profession had taught me the importance of first assessing a problem. This involves gathering appropriate information, talking to others, and developing a plan of action.

One immediate question was this: How many students were waiting to be placed in social service agencies? How were the students and the agencies functioning in the aftermath of the hurricanes? Would agencies continue to be receptive to students? Naturally, social service agencies were also profoundly affected by the natural disasters. Many agencies were without power for seven days or more. Phone service was disrupted. Extensive physical damage to homes made living in them unhealthy and risky. For example, roofs, walls, pool cages were blown apart. Some interns were living with relatives or in hotels/motels temporarily. Since agency buildings had windows blown out, water damaged equipment in the agency needed to be replaced. My previous experience, and network of social workers and agencies in the community, made exploring these questions much easier. When phone service was restored, I contacted field instructors by phone.

Next, I contacted students and shared the information that I had gathered. To prepare for the phone calls, I reflected on how the hurricanes may have affected the students. I was aware that the university had been closed during the height of the hurricane activity, and now they were working with a new faculty member after experiencing back-to-back hurricanes and the subsequent changes. Making phone calls was challenging because university phone service was interrupted by the hurricanes. The phone in my office was not operational, so I used my own cell phone to make the calls. Thankfully, I managed to contact everyone and provide students with support and encouragement.

Garthwait talks about the community as a context of practice. The term "community" refers to a group of people brought together by physical proximity or by a common identity based on their shared experiences, interests, or culture. Two major types are: 1) Communities of place or location and 2) Communities of interest and identification (Garthwait, 2005, p.94).

I recognized the value of providing the context of community for my students. I was providing community to the social work students by reaching out and assisting in placements in social service agencies in the community. The hurricane activity united the community because of location.

During the initial stage of placement, students attend orientation, read and review agency policy manuals, develop their learning contracts with their field instructor, and shadow the professional staff. After the orientation stage, they have the opportunity to conduct assessments. This is often the first time the students have interviewed a client, so they typically find their own values and ethics challenged. In field seminar classes, students talk about the challenge of asking questions that assist in gathering information and report their reactions to client experiences during the interview. Some students feel angry or like crying depending on the information being shared. During this time, the concepts of "transference" and "counter transference" becomes better understood. Students are encouraged to journal about the field placement experience because it provides an opportunity to reflect on their experiences and their own personal feelings about the agency experience. Some are surprised to learn about the social problems that exist in the community; others become aware of the contrast between their lives and the client's. Class assignments focus on the application of ethics to experiences in the agency, reading journal articles and case presentations, and classroom discussions. Classroom discussions provide opportunities to share experiences with other students, discuss the issue of boundaries, learn to deal with feelings in reaction to the client's situation, and the issue of confidentiality when a neighbor/friend seeks services from the field placement agency where the student is doing his/her field placement. Students also discuss agency meetings and what they learn from them as well as the impact of dealing with needy clients.

When students talk about their first-time experiences, I find myself reviewing my own student field placement experiences. I attended a graduate school in Ontario, Canada, so I learned how to adapt to a different social service system. I recall feeling dependent on my field instructor to help me learn the skills I needed to be a social worker. In many ways, my experiences were not any different. There is another aspect indicating the difference between a field education coordinator as opposed to a social worker in direct practice. In direct practice, you selected what to share with your clients and evaluated the purpose for the disclosure. In the world of academia, this sharing is less complex. Sharing my own past experiences can serve as an example of the learning process social workers experience. It is important to realize that students may have different or similar challenges and need assistance in dealing with them as they conduct psychosocial assessments, make referrals to community agencies, counsel individual clients, and conduct group sessions. They also participate in weekly supervision and in-service agency trainings. Through these experiences, students develop an appreciation for supervision, as the field instructor provides support and guidance. These activities allow interns to experience the role of a social worker, which is exciting for them when they come to realize how their work impacts a client and his/her family. Students often report that this is the best time in the field placement experience, so it's not surprising that they often have a hard time when the end of field placement arrives. It's hard for them to say good-bye to their clients, field instructors, and agency staff, but unfortunately, termination issues need to be addressed. At the end of the field seminar class, the coordinator helps students to recognize their own thoughts and feelings about the termination process, and evaluations are filled out.

The field seminar class taught concurrently with the field placement also focuses on the termination process. In the classroom, it is important to have student participation in learning about this process, with the challenge to integrate theory and practice. Many students were working with clients for the first time so they were not aware of the attachment that develops between themselves and the client. When it's time to end the relationship, students may experience intense feelings and perceive their leaving as a type of abandonment which may cause problems for the client. In classroom discussions, we discussed how to deal with these feelings within themselves and with clients, and how to reconnect the clients with staff in the agency. Termination is a type

of ending and sometimes students have not had positive endings in their lives; therefore, the students may not understand that the emotions they're experiencing are left over from past events.

Ending discussions continued during agency visits with the final evaluation providing an opportunity for the student to evaluate his/her own field placement experience. Some students reported that previous courses prepared them for direct practice, while others experienced difficulty connecting knowledge from previous courses to direct practice. This was a time to recognize the support and encouragement the field instructor had provided the student. Listening to the students reminded me of an earlier struggle I'd had with termination.

In addition to the hurricanes, I was coping with a loss that had me thinking too often about the termination process. In November 2004, I lost my brother to skin cancer. This experience heightened my sensitivity and awareness to the importance of endings. "Termination means the ending, limiting, or concluding of services" (Royce et al, 1996, p. 127). Many students were completing their degrees and graduating. Graduation is a ritual for saying "good-bye."

Danowski states: "This is a time when students often reflect on their social work internship and ask themselves: as a social worker am I good enough? Do I like what I am doing? Is there a place for me in the field? Where is my niche?" (Danowski, 2005, p. 97). At the university, endings were exciting because another group of educated social work professionals would be entering the field. It was a time of joy and sadness.

As I continued my journey, I began to see that assessing the learning needs of students and assessing the service needs of clients were similar. However, student learning needs were not always obvious and had to be individualized. For example, there was one student who was constantly questioning an agency procedure despite having had several supervisory sessions on the issue. It took time and further experience for the student to better understand the agency procedure. In direct practice, symptoms would help identify the client's problem. In this case, it seemed appropriate to consider the constant questioning as a means to identify the student's problem.

An important aspect of being a field education coordinator is interacting with students. Frequently, students are seeking information about the field placement process via email, phone, or office visits. I created a log for tracking daily activities with students and to assure a timely and appropriate response. Similarly, in direct practice, an appointment book was used to schedule client appointments, while case notes recorded the specific activity. Best practices indicate that learning is the major task of the field education placement experience. Benjamin and Ward state: "Field practicum is where the classroom comes alive. It is important that students understand the role of class work in the field practicum. Students become adult learners who become invested and responsible for their own learning. The field instructor is the guide and mentor in this process" (Benjamin & Ward, 2005, pp.6-7).

The second semester ended with students completing their degrees and graduating, and new students were placed in agencies for the summer.

Developing the Administrative Role

As my journey continued, it became apparent that being a field education coordinator involved several administrative responsibilities. At first, the terminology was very confusing; it took time to learn that "practicum," "field education," and "field placement" all described the same educational experience. "Field education" was the term I chose to convey the idea that students were being educated in the setting of a community social service agency. It was important to understand the most crucial administrative aspect of field education: identifying tasks that were absolutely essential. Students completed forms such as their applications for field placement and submitted them to the field education office, which were to be kept on file during the field placement experience. Therefore, it seemed obvious that comprehensive student files needed to be developed for the purpose of storing information on field placement activity. These

files included: 1) application for field placement, 2) the unofficial transcript, 3) confirmation of placement form, 4) learning contract, 5) field placement evaluations, 6) notes, and 7) copies of emails. The evaluation could be used to write a reference letter to an employer or to a graduate program. Similarly, in direct practice, a new client would require a comprehensive file. This would include the initial assessment, a service plan, and case notes recording activity with the client.

Poulin (2005) refers to three types of macro-level social work interventions: 1) Education and Training, 2) Program Planning, and 3) Community Development. Another administrative task is planning Field Instructors Training Workshops for new field instructors and those who want to update their certification. This involves planning, preparation, and facilitation by the field coordinator. In the process of preparing to implement a plan for Field Instructor Training, I identified a resource for educational materials. The Consortium for Field Placement Coordinators/Directors had developed training modules for field instructors. Implementing the modules involved requesting assistance from faculty to teach a module. Because of the newness of my role, my anxiety level was high. I had never done this before, and I felt uncomfortable asking faculty to participate. In reflecting on past social work experiences, I realized there had been many times that I had presented professional workshops both locally and nationally. Therefore, I could take the learning from workshop presentations and apply it to the field instructor training. This realization helped to decrease my anxiety level.

As the journey continued, I identified a major administrative task. The Division of Social Work at Florida Gulf Coast University planned to implement the BSW program in Fall 2005. There were many tasks to complete in order to prepare for this new program, including developing a BSW Field Education Manual, revising field education forms, and developing BSW course syllabi. I was able to review manuals from existing programs via the internet, which made the task less complicated since the current Human Service Program had a social work focus.

During the informational meetings, students were given appropriate field education forms and encouraged to ask questions. There some changes were required, such as the educational background of the field instructor (BSW or MSW). Previously, this had not been a requirement. It involved educating students and clarifying whether or not they were transferring to the BSW program from Human Services.

The BSW program places students at the beginning of the fall semester, which was different from the Human Service program where placement of students was a year-round process. When I started my position in August 2004, I found that there were students waiting to be placed; therefore, finding placements quickly was a priority. To avoid repetition of this experience, I wanted to plan the placement process differently. My goal was to prepare students to start their placements at the beginning of the fall 2005 semester. I thought it would make this task easier.

Community Educational Resources

Community education resources on field education helped enormously. Faculty colleagues had informed me about the Florida Field Placement Consortium, the Baccalaureate Social Work Program Directors Conference, and the Annual Conference of the Council on Social Work Education.

Participating in these three groups created the feeling that I was a part of the world of higher education. Meeting other professors from various universities was distressing. I wondered how people in academia interacted with one another. I wanted to make a good impression, but I knew that, for me, this was uncharted territory.

Personal Reflections on the Evolving Process

Leaving direct social work practice and entering the academic world was an anxiety producing experience. Direct practice provided a variety of challenges which were familiar to me. The full-time academic world had challenges unknown to me. The adjunct professor experiences were very different. Since I had several years experience, I had

achieved a level of respect from my peers. Being a new faculty member, I felt the majority of faculty had more education and experience, and would therefore be better teachers. I wondered if I could find my own place here.

Teaching was a major challenge. Although I had some awareness of learning processes, I had not understood students learn at different paces in different ways. Starting where the student is at and starting where the client is at present similar challenges. One challenge was to schedule classes that provided students with a variety of learning opportunities. It also involved being flexible, taking a chance on different approaches, and consulting with faculty colleagues on different teaching methods. For example, each course has course objectives. So it is imperative that textbook readings, class projects, and assigned papers fulfill the course objectives.

Although I participated in faculty meetings, the acronyms used were unknown to me and therefore confusing (i.e., CSWE, BPD, FAR, PDP, etc.). One professor asked me about my "strategy" for a project. It was unclear to me what this meant. If I had been asked what my "plans" were, I could have responded more confidently. In meetings, I would be afraid to ask questions because I wasn't sure how to phrase them. Although I knew curriculum was important, I did not know there were standards to follow or who or what developed the standards. I later learned to evaluate curriculum from other members of the curriculum review committee. I was aware of the importance of accreditation from my experience with the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) when I worked for a medical hospital, but I had no experience with a Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) site visit. Fortunately, faculty educated me about the process and my role in the site visit.

A lesson learned from this experience is that familiarity with direct practice helps in teaching social work knowledge and skills. Sometimes in academia, it is easy to lose sight of the challenges social work practitioners face every day. The academic material taught should be transferable to direct practice. Internship is about the application of knowledge to client situations. Being a field education coordinator and working with students during their internship enables me to remain up-to-date on current practice and knowledge.

It is important in BSW education to remember the beginning days of your social work career. The students share their excitement and anxiety about field placement in the field seminar course just as I shared my excitement with faculty about the new job, but not my anxieties. In order to prepare the students, it is important to remember these moments in our careers.

Closing Summary

In making this career change, I had to be willing to take a risk. The risk was in changing work environments and becoming more deeply involved in higher education and the learning process. It required changing the focus from clients' service needs to students' learning needs. It also involved learning how to transfer knowledge and experiences from one setting to another. I found myself needing to learn the language used in academia and the thinking process involved in teaching. It meant learning how to write articles for publication and utilizing results from research completed in the social work field. Having made the change in positions, the reward is hearing from students about their own experiences and realizing the

student has used something that I taught in class. That makes it all worthwhile.

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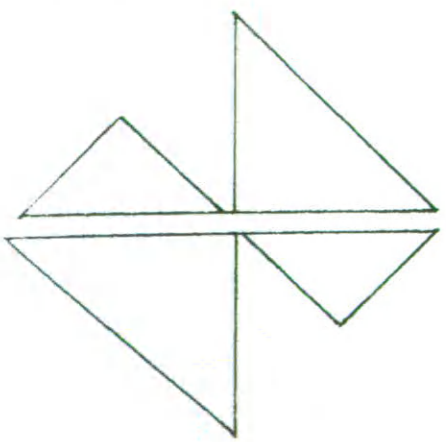

OVERLOOKED

Teresa Crowe Mason, Ph.D., Gallaudet University

This narrative portrays aspects of the deaf community through a lens that is both personal and social work oriented. The author frequently finds herself straddling uncomfortable roles between the deaf and hearing worlds because of communication difficulties between deaf clients and hearing service providers. She is often faced with the awkwardness of hearing intimate information about clients before they do. At times she is unsure how to interpret insensitive or derogatory comments spoken by hearing people, and other times she is unsure about whether or not to act on behalf of a deaf person in the face of overt discrimination. This narrative describes several incidents that involved the author personally or as a social worker, and a deaf person. Historical and social knowledge is drawn upon as a way to reflect on and understand these experiences.

** Names have been changed to protect privacy.*

Patty* and I sat in the small, dingy, gray office at the D.C. General Hospital awaiting the doctor's arrival. Patty, a 40-something African American woman, hadn't been feeling well for a while. The staff from the group home where she lived asked me to schedule a doctor's appointment. When I called to make the appointment, I asked for a sign language interpreter. The curt woman on the phone asked if I could be her interpreter. I explained that I am a social worker, not a certified interpreter. I explained that according to the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act, they were under legal obligation to provide the interpreter. She reluctantly told me that she would see what she could do.

On this afternoon, Patty and I waited in the sterile, gray office, suspecting that an interpreter would not be coming. This was nothing new. I have been in this situation too many times to count. They knew as well as I did that the likelihood that Patty will file a civil action lawsuit was slim to none. She fit the profile of those who were least likely to complain about not having an interpreter. Patty lived in a supervised community group home. She is African American and deaf. She graduated high school, but schizophrenia soon took over her life. Patty didn't understand English very well; she signed and wrote in American Sign Language. Doctors rarely understood her written ASL because her grammar wasn't connected in ways that make sense in English. They thought she was illiterate. Patty did not seem the type to them who would raise issues of discrimination. In the busy D.C. hospital, it was business as usual for everyone, except for Patty. She knew something was wrong with her body.

While I waited, I reflected on the various appointments Patty and I had been to recently. Sometimes the doctors and nurses insisted that she could read lips, mistaking her nodding head for comprehension and agreement. Patty nodded to be friendly, to give the appearance that she understood, but she really didn't. Patty and her health care providers rarely wrote their conversations on paper. Patty had difficulty understanding the doctor's written English. They struggled with the slow back and forth writing that interfered with their busy schedules. The doctor wanted to use his voice with her. I explained to him that if he spoke to his deaf patients without an interpreter, the patients wouldn't know what was happening. The doctors from private practices were often reluctant to provide sign language interpreters. They didn't want to pay for the service, and felt frustrated at the slow, tedious style of written communication. My role as the social worker was not to be at the disposal of the doctor; my responsibility was to advocate for my client. Deaf people with additional issues like mental illness or developmental delays often did not understand their rights as patients. My primary role was to help make sure they have access to services. I also helped practitioners understand the consequences of not obtaining interpreters. So, I sat back and observed Patty's interaction with the doctor. I

would only assist with communication when my client asked me for help.

On this day, Patty's life would soon change. Patty asked me to interpret the conversation. The doctor opened the door and mumbled something unintelligibly while looking down at her chart. Patty looked at me; I shrugged. I told the doctor that I didn't understand what he said. He ignored my statement and hurried to Patty who was sitting on the tissue-covered table in a white cotton gown. With his stethoscope he listened to her heart and lungs. He looked at me.

"Tell her that her tests don't look good. She has cancerous tumors in her lungs. She needs to be scheduled for radiation therapy."

I was shocked, speechless, and signless. Patty kept a close watch on my facial expressions and asked, "What? What's he saying?"

I translated what the doctor said word-for-word. Patty, who was prone to agitation and anxiety even on a calm day, signed very rapidly.

"Me die? What you mean tumor? What you talking? What radiation? What mean? Me die? Me die?"

She looked back and forth from the doctor to me. Her signs were accompanied by shrill vocalizations that became louder as the urgency of her unanswered questions progressed. I told the doctor that she didn't understand; she had some questions. The doctor, pressed for time, told me to make an appointment with the oncologist at Washington Hospital Center then abruptly left the room. The entire exchange happened in 10 minutes.

Patty and I left the doctor's office in a cloud of disbelief and fear. She asked me repeatedly if she was going to die. I told her that we should first talk to a "cancer doctor" and see what the treatment will be. The Washington Hospital Center, I knew from previous experience, would provide sign language interpreters. Indeed, at Patty's first appointment, the interpreter was already there when we arrived. Even when Patty decided to stop radiation and chemotherapy some time later, the interpreter translated her wishes to the oncologist.

I hate the awkwardness of hearing intimate information before my clients. I've learned of cancers, HIV-positive results, family deaths, loss of jobs, and loss of children before the owners of these unfortunate circumstances knew it. I've overheard the not-so-soft whispers of people around me making fun of the way someone signs or interpreting a non-response as just being an asshole. Even the most educated, most articulate, most successful deaf people are faced with others' assumptions. They are left out of conversations, negotiations, and private jokes. Many times, unbeknownst to the deaf person, he/she is overlooked and ignored. Only when the deaf person uses his/her voice or pounds his/her hand on the table will he/she be regarded by his hearing counterpart. People will think a deaf person is rude or even violent, not realizing that table-pounding is often used to capture the attention among those in the deaf world.

I frequently find myself straddling awkward roles between the deaf and hearing worlds. Do I interpret the ugly remark that the person standing next to me just said? Do I ignore the person's rude behavior and continue as if I, too, am deaf? Do I turn to the person making the remark and confront the idiotic behavior? The truth of the matter is that I may do any one of those things depending upon the situation and circumstance. Sometimes, I find it easier just to pretend that I am deaf too and walk away with my secret tucked safely inside. Other times, I turn to the person next to me and tell him/her what an idiot I think the person is. Still, sometimes I choose to interpret the comment even if it means interrupting something important and special.

One warm May afternoon, I stood in the courthouse parking lot with my soon-to-be husband, Paul. We had the jitters, like many couples. We talked about how excited and happy we were. We hoped the interpreter arrived to translate the ceremony. We wondered how long we would have to wait to see the judge. We were engrossed in the excitement of the moment when a slender woman approached us. She asked, "Are you getting married?"

I interpreted her question to Paul and replied, "Yes." She paused for a moment looking at Paul and at me.

"Is he deaf and dumb?" she asked pointing her finger at Paul.

Again, I interpreted what the woman was saying to Paul. I told her and signed at the same time, "He's deaf, not dumb. You know, he has a Ph.D. and teaches at a university."

She paused even longer this time, seemingly unable to comprehend the implications of what I said. Paul said nothing and he and I stared back at the woman. She looked again at us, the minutes unwinding slowly.

Finally, she said, "Well, you know, I am just amazed at how those deaf and dumb people can even drive cars. You'd think they'd get into accidents and all. Bless you child. You're doing such a good thing." The woman flashed a brilliant smile and gave my shoulder an affectionate squeeze before hurrying off. We stood in the parking lot shaking our heads. I was incensed.

I signed to Paul, "Wow, she's really stupid. I can't believe that woman. Who does she think she is anyway? Does she even realize how stupid she sounded? What's the matter with people these days? They act like they've never seen another deaf person before. Geez, I just can't believe her."

"Yeah. It happens all the time," he replied.

Paul's resignation coupled with my outrage made me feel indelibly sad. No matter what I said, the image of him as some sort of freak laid firmly in her mind.

The woman's pairing of the words "deaf and dumb," is telling and old fashioned. It is hard to trace back the term's origins. As early as the 1800's, the term "deaf and dumb" was used commonly among deaf as well as hearing people. In reports and addresses, even those with highest esteem and education used the term. Gradually, the term "deaf-mutes" began to replace or run alongside deaf and dumb. From the frequency with which it appears in early documents of deaf archives, it appears that this seemingly demeaning term was used and accepted as commonplace.

In 1816, Laurent Clerc, a deaf Frenchman, came to the United States in an effort to establish the first school for the deaf. Clerc attended the Institution for the Deaf and Dumb in Paris first as student, then later as a teacher. On a trip to France, Reverend Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet became entranced with the manual conversational language of the deaf and sought to bring Clerc back to the United States to set up a similar school. In an address to the Governor of Connecticut, Laurent Clerc, along with his friends, Reverend Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet and Mason Cogswell, addressed the Connecticut delegates:

> *"Gentlemen – You know the motive which has led me to the United States of America... It is to speak to you more conveniently of the deaf and dumb, of those unfortunate beings who, deprived of their sense of hearing and consequently of that speech would be condemned all of their life, to the most sad vegetation if nobody came to their succor, but who intrusted [sic] to our regenerative hands, will pass from the class of brutes to the class of men. It is to affect your hearts with regard to their unhappy state, to excite the sensibility and solicit the charity of your generous souls in their favor; respectfully to entreat you to occupy yourselves in promoting their future happiness* (p. 6)."

As Clerc pointed out, the idea of establishing a school was seen as an act of charity for "those poor, unfortunate wretches who might otherwise lead a vegetative life." Even though Laurent Clerc and Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet were both traveled and learned men, they played upon the ignorance and stereotypes held by officials in order to receive support for the deaf school. Was this an intentional ploy? Or were they simply using the language in the fashion of the day?

Whatever their plan, in 1817, the American School for the Deaf and Dumb located in Hartford, Connecticut was established, making

it the first school for the deaf in the United States. Though the very idea of establishing a school for deaf children was seen as an act of charity, a new seed would be planted. Those poor, unfortunate wretches who might otherwise lead a vegetative life would later prove to not only be educable, but very clever indeed.

In 1858, talk of a new state, a community of deaf-mutes, began to circulate. Printed in the American Annals of the Deaf, letters between J. Booth and Edmund Flournoy (1852) prompted a heated discussion about the creation of a separate state where deaf people could have control of their world. Flournoy's idea was to purchase a large parcel of land and sell it to deaf people who would come from all over the world. He promised to establish a democratic voting system, including giving women the right to vote. Determined in his resolve, Flourney wrote:

> *"If mutes cannot do this they are justly held as inferior and useless in the world. For they ought not to present to be any body among hearing men, who do what deaf 'dogs' shrink from achieving alone. Even should the contemplated colony fail, as Mr. Booth predicts, one great utility to ourselves will have been derived from practical experience. We shall have proved to other nations and our own that deaf and dumb people are capable of many things; and to our successors in misfortune, office and employment may be opened. They may be treated as men and women of some use to society and to the country, and respected accordingly* (p.15)."

The deaf-mute colony was never established, but the idea persisted for a number of years. Clearly, the men involved in this endeavor did not support the notion that they were inferior, unteachable, and incompetent. Their goals were lofty and idealistic, reflecting a deep-rooted pride and strength that can be seen running through the deaf community today. If the larger society would not recognize their worth, then they would create a society of their own. Mired in the complexities of power and ownership, several issues caused dissension among the visionaries. What would happen, one argument went, if the hearing children of deaf parents inherited the property? Within one generation, the community would be primarily hearing.

In a letter published in the *American Annals of the Deaf*, the writer, referred to as a deaf-mute, addressed a matter of great concern among the deaf community. H.M. Chamberlayne (1859) asked that the matter of deaf peddling and vagrancy be addressed. Deaf peddlers, sometimes seen today selling signed alphabet cards, even then were considered an embarrassing aspect of the deaf community to its members. Chamberlayne wrote in 1859:

> *"Dear Sir- I wish to inform the teachers of the deaf and dumb, through your useful periodical, that several northern mutes have visited Richmond and some other cities as vagrants. Indeed, my object in doing so is to call their attention to the fact that it is absolutely necessary for them to impress their pupils with the value of character* (237)."

A couple of years ago, I passed a deaf man selling alphabet cards outside a nearby Dunkin Donuts. After ordering my coffee, I stopped outside to talk to the man. He explained that he was retired from his government job and receiving a small pension. I asked him why he was selling those cards - didn't he feel embarrassed? He replied that he spent his check as soon as he got it. Selling those cards helped bring in extra cash.

Historically, deaf people were lumped into a category with people who were mentally retarded. (Bragg, 2001) As late as the 1890's, they were prohibited from marrying one another for fear that a breed of uneducated

heathens would be created. They were offered menial jobs with less than menial wages. However, within their community, they recognized their untapped potentials for honor and equality. Many knew of themselves what others didn't know: they were productive, bright, articulate, and creative people. They were not mentally retarded or deficient. They had much to offer to society.

Eventually, protections were put in place to address the struggles of disabled people. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act was established in 1973 by Congress to protect the civil rights of people with disabilities. The act covered all services that received Federal money, or in other words, public services. For deaf children, it meant that they could receive special services at no cost to them—like attendance at deaf residential schools, sign language interpreters in the classroom, and Individual Education Plans. These educational plans listed specific learning objectives, the method an instructor would use to help the student achieve the objectives, and ongoing reports documenting progress toward those objectives. The idea behind these plans was to ensure that all students with disabilities receive a proper education. (Bragg, 2001)

In 1990, Congress passed the Americans with Disabilities Act, legislation to prevent discrimination of people with disabilities from private services of society. This law required that appropriate accommodations be made, including handicapped accessible bathrooms, ramps into public buildings, and a fair shot at employment opportunities. This law enabled deaf people to request interpreters or other accommodations—like closed captioning or TTYs (text telephones)—at hospitals, private doctors' offices, theaters, job interviews, and on public transportation. The legislation was wide-sweeping and was intended to allow disabled people full integration into society. (Bragg, 2001)

Despite the government protections put in place, deaf people continue to have limited access to communication, education, and opportunities. Even today, use of the label "deaf and dumb" by some hearing people is not uncommon. Within the past year, I've heard deaf people referred to as "deaf and dumb," "deaf-mutes," and "death" people. A common reference term is "hearing-impaired," a label that has also lost favor among many in the deaf community because of its connotations of disease and dysfunction. Sadly, instances when the deaf people are subtly excluded continue.

One winter evening, I attended a fundraising event for Arundel Lodge, a community service agency that provides support for adults with mental illness. The deaf program at Arundel Lodge was small, with only about 25 clients and staff members. The room was packed with family and friends of Arundel Lodge. Among the hundred or so attendees, ten deaf clients sat in their reserved front-row seats so they could see the sign language interpreter. The interpreter sat rather than stood. As a result, the deaf man sitting next to me in the middle of the room and the two deaf staff members sitting in the back couldn't see what was being said. The deaf man next to me tried to initiate a conversation because he didn't understand what was happening at the front of the room. I was self-conscious because he was also voicing his words – albeit unintelligibly. Those sitting around us turned and stared. I put my hands to my lips. Embarrassed, he abruptly turned away.

As the event continued, I turned around to look at the two deaf staff members who sat behind me.

I signed, "Why isn't the interpreter standing? You can't see her, can you?"

Both of the women signed simultaneously, "No, we can't see." They shrugged their shoulders.

I noticed that the interpreter didn't bother to sign the musical performances. Instead she sat at the front of the room watching the musicians perform. I suspected her signing skills were limited. From where I sat, I could see that she didn't sign very well. I have had the pleasure of watching some of the best interpreters sign theatrical and musical performances. Some, if their skills are highly trained, can even sign instrumental music by using their body, hands, and faces to interpret the rhythm and emotion of the music. They can look like they are dancing an emotional, passionate performance following the flow of

the music. This interpreter sat in the front, occasionally smiling at the deaf people in the audience who were clearly bored. They conversed among themselves, talking about mutual friends and counselors and the next day's plans.

When the performances were finished, the executive director of Arundel Lodge, Mike Drummond, stood to present awards to meritorious staff and members. He announced that the award for the employee of the year went to Dawn Padon, the deaf program manager at Arundel Lodge. Dawn, unable to hear Mike or see the interpreter, was engrossed in a conversation with the deaf woman sitting next to her. A hearing colleague tugged at her sweater and pointed to the front of the room. Dawn lifted her hands, gesturing "What?" Others tugged and pointed to the front of the room. Dawn, uncertain about why she was being called to the stage, approached the front with a fearful and anxious look on her face. Only when she arrived at the front of the room did the interpreter explain why she was beckoned. The hearing audience was silent; they didn't understand what was being signed from the back to the front of the room. Even the executive director looked tense. It was clear to me that there was a divide between the deaf program and the rest of the agency.

The story of the deaf community is not all pessimistic, though. In recent years, deaf people have become more visible in the public media. Television programs now have deaf actors in their shows (e.g. a deaf doctor on *ER*, a deaf lawyer on *My Name is Earl*, a deaf actress on *Dancing with the Stars*.) Deaf people and sign language aren't seen as a side show in the carnival anymore to most people. Deaf people have increasingly become activists and lobbyists, lawyers and dentists, teachers and television celebrities. Their increasingly visible presence in society means that they will not be easily overlooked.

In 1988, the Board of Trustees at Gallaudet University appointed Elizabeth Zinzer to be the university's president. Within a week, students and faculty protested the appointment. She was a hearing woman and she couldn't sign. Deaf people on campus and worldwide felt strongly that in the 150 year history of Gallaudet University, it was time to have a deaf president. The uprising of the deaf community symbolized their anger and refusal to be seen as a handicapped, incapable group. This protest became known as Deaf President Now, and is compared to the Civil Rights movement by scholars of deaf activism. The struggle to evict Dr. Zinzer from her post was seen as an act of civil rights. When the campus shut down in protest, Dr. Zinzer resigned her post. The protest resulted in the appointment of a deaf man, Irving King Jordan, who became the University's first deaf president. Similar to the ideology behind the deaf-mute commonwealth, Irving King Jordan's appointment represented the possibility of success in the broader world. Deaf community members now had one of their own to act as a role model and liaison with the hearing world.

King Jordan's appointment was not small potatoes. King, as the community refers to him, became deaf in his 20s and uses sign language fluently. He understood what the deaf community was about and what it needed. King often called upon the words of Frederick Schreiber, the first executive director of the National Association of the Deaf, in speeches: "Deaf people can do anything that hearing people can do, except hear..." These words, seen as a rally cry, energized and motivated the deaf community to continue the fight for equal access to employments, services, and communication. King was not only a university president, but was seen as a leader of the deaf world. Gallaudet is not merely an educational institution; it is the hub of the global deaf community and is seen as the single most important influence in deaf education, and thus deaf culture, in the world. There is nowhere else comparable.

I feel like I belong to two worlds simultaneously. In the hearing world, I am a part of the majority culture. I move easily through the tangles of society without much trouble. It's easy to assume the posture of one who is confident and perhaps even arrogant, though I don't intentionally do so. In the outside world, I am white and hearing and female. I like to think that most times I am aware of my privilege. Only when I go to work am I

reminded of my blind spots. At work, my status in the community turns upside down. I feel the loss of visibility and the sense of importance. Regardless of what I tell myself about being aware of my privilege, I struggle with giving it up, of moving from a position in the majority to one in the minority.

When I go to work at Gallaudet University, I am keenly aware that I am hearing. I am sometimes seen as symbolic of the oppressor; I carry within me the ancestry of all of the injustices and ill-treatment given to deaf people over the centuries. Every time I converse with a hearing person who knows how to sign, but doesn't, I know that the deaf community is watching. Deaf people interpret that behavior as at best insensitive, at worst "audist." They say that at Gallaudet, everyone should have equal access to communication. Hearing people can see what deaf people are saying, but deaf people can't hear what hearing people are saying. They have a point; it's important to show respect and cultural sensitivity in that situation. So, two hearing people should sign and speak their conversation.

The environment at Gallaudet is so unique and powerful that one can easily forget that most deaf people in the country work outside of the confines of the university. What happens to those deaf people who don't have college degrees? Who are unemployed? Poor? Who have additional disabilities? What about deaf people who are mentally ill or abandoned by their families? What happens to the average deaf Joe when the world isn't watching? They have medical procedures for which they are not adequately informed. They go forth into the world with only partial information. They are talked about and sometimes made fun of behind their backs. They are skipped over for jobs, seen as too needy, or too angry, or too dependent. They are cast aside by many, who may not even realize their prejudice and discriminatory acts.

Even as the battle for equality continues, no one denies the improvements that have been made over the centuries. With the passage of the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act, all television programs are closed-captioned. Technology for deaf people continues to develop rapidly. Deaf children now have choices about where and how to be educated. Though divisive in the deaf community, cochlear implant and hearing aid devices are improving by leaps and bounds. Class enrollments for those seeking to learn sign language are increasing. Many high schools and colleges now offer American Sign Language as a foreign language. Deaf people are now seen as a community of consumers with money to spend. Competing companies

for pagers, videophones, fire alarms, and phone light systems are popping up nationally. The story of the deaf community as a strong, visible minority group has many more chapters to it.

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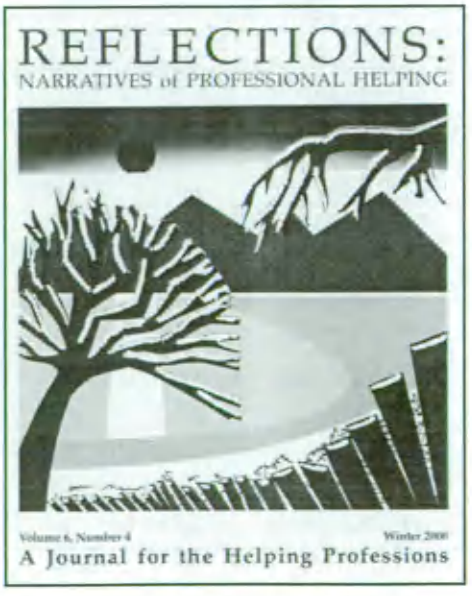

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