REFLECTIONS:
NARRATIVES of PROFESSIONAL HELPING

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Reflections from the Editor

by Mary Ann Jimenez

Stories are fundamental to the human experience. They are indisputably the oldest means of conveying meaning and arguably the most profound. In Western culture, Heroditus and Thucydides captured the histories of the early Greeks as powerful stories of human triumphs and failings, creating the historical narrative. In the same period, Aeschylus and Sophocles created compelling fictional narratives in the Greek tragedies Agamemnon and Oedipus Rex. Religions involve stories of the human relationship to goodness and the supernatural. God, acting in the world, is the storyline of the Old Testament; likewise, the power of the narrative can be vividly seen in the parables of the New Testament. The lives of Jesus, Mohammed, and Buddha and their awakening as enlightened guides to human conduct and godliness are powerful stories that have informed cultures for centuries. The protean Hindu gods and goddesses are endlessly recreated by the stories woven around them. Great narratives have a literary beauty and a sense of chronological time. In a narrative something happens—there is a becoming movement, a sense of crisis. The best narratives convey what we have been, what we are, and what we might be.

Narratives braid the meaning we give our own personal history—they frame our lives and make the knowledge of our inevitable end bearable. As shared stories, our personal and cultural narratives reassure us that we are part of the broader human experience. If we are unable to make a meaningful story out of our solitary experiences, we may be condemned to a terrible solipsism, possibly to madness.

The narrative form saw a decline in respectability in the United States over the last 50 years but has recently reemerged as a vivid and unique means of communicating knowledge and meaning. When the social sciences achieved academic stature in the universities at the end of the 19th century, many of them initially embraced the narrative form as the most natural way of conveying the meaning of inductive research. This was especially true for anthropology, sociology, and psychology—stories of other cultures, our own culture and of our personal histories.

After World War II, the effort to generalize and systematize the inductive data led to a move toward more quantification and scientific research as the model of positivism, borrowed from natural sciences, and infused the social sciences. The narrative seemed a poor relation to the sweeping statistical analyses offered as more verifiable and more accurate renditions of the human experience. Quantification is an important tool to present some aspects of stories about many people. The stories told by quantified data are typically about how many people felt or thought, how they behaved and under what conditions, what qualities in themselves were linked with this or that behavior or attitude. The narrative at the heart of this form of scholarly writing rarely was recognized, because it seemed to diminish the importance of the findings, the narrative having gone out of style.

The helping professions, especially social work, have embraced this scientific trend with elation and vigor, perhaps hoping that the long sought credibility would be conferred when the methods of investigation paralleled those of natural science. Meanwhile, physics moved on to quantum physics (hesitating to embrace the supremacy of linear knowledge), and western medicine's presumed superiority over traditional healing techniques is in question (medicine has been increasingly acknowledged to be an art as much as it is a science). Historians have recently discarded the elusive search for scientific probability in records from the past, and returned to earlier narrative forms. The professions of social work and psychology have witnessed vigorous debates between advocates of the scientific method and proponents of the qualitative method. Were textured stories about

a few as good as the simpler stories about many? The narrative is back in top form in the social sciences, riding the wave of renewed respectability of qualitative research. Impassioned debate about whose voices have and should be heard in literature has given added life to the narrative as a rich purveyor of human knowledge, wisdom, and values. Some may wonder whether the narrative form is muscular enough to sustain real insight and conclusions about professional issues that divide, whether narratives can offer substantive demonstrations of professional and academic merit. Can narratives contribute to professional growth? Can narratives suggest new ways of thinking about ourselves and people we work with? As an historian, as well as a social work educator, I have always believed that the narrative was one of the most provocative means of rousing thought, dispelling intellectual torpor, and inspiring action.

Sonia Abels was one of the first in social work to recognize the power of the written narrative. This journal exists because of her vision., her creativity, her and resourcefulness in making something new where nothing had existed. Few of us have that opportunity in our professional lives. As the succeeding editor, I want to acknowledge Sonia Abels's signal contribution to reviving the narrative as a means of enhancing professional knowledge and development in the helping professions. She played a significant role in the dramatic revival of the narrative in scholarship as well as in clinical practice. I hope to continue to realize her vision and to offer my own perspective as the journal continues to grow and develop. The Associate Editor, Rebecca Lopez and I, along with the Executive Editorial Board, would like to see the narrative forms and voices in the journal multiply. We seek to publish more narratives about the process of doing research, including the creation of a research idea, and what inspires and confounds the researcher. Narratives about policy, practice, and stories about the struggle for social justice at every level of community and political organization will be very welcome here. We solicit more historical narratives—both from written records and from oral histories. We are committed to diversify the voices in the journal. We want to provide a forum and audience for narratives about signal events that have changed people's lives and led to paradigm shifts in thinking and practice, teaching, research, and administration. We want to broaden the journal's audience to all the helping professions, including the health and healing professions, other human service professions, public health and social policy advocates, religious leaders, and practitioners. We are indebted to those who have shared their unique experiences in past journal articles and look forward to new voices which reflect the vitality and commitment to social change of the helping professions. Join us in the compelling human experience of story telling and carry forward the textured reflections of our struggles in the world. □

Corrections: In the last issue, we incorrectly spelled the name of Joanne Riebschleger, author of "A Helper's Treasure Chest: Memorabilia from Special Clients" [*Reflections*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Spring 1999) p. 24] on the table of contents. □

SPECIAL ISSUE
CALL FOR NARRATIVES

Responding to War: Social Workers and War in the Balkans

Co-Editors: Michael A. Dover, M.S.W.; Charles D. Garvin, Ph.D.; Sara Amy Goodkind, M.S.W.;
Marilyn A. Moch, Ph.D.; Michael S Reisch, Ph.D.

During the 1999 war in Yugoslavia, social workers in the U.S. and in Yugoslavia struggled to find ways to carry out professional, humanitarian, and political activities at the same time that bombs were falling. People were being killed, families were being driven from their homes, and hundreds of thousands were fleeing the horror of war. The 1999 war followed a series of civil wars and armed conflicts which have taken place in the Balkans during this decade.

The 1999 war produced profound disagreement amongst social workers. Some social workers actively protested NATO bombing while others supported international action to bring a stop to the atrocities and still others engaged actively in social work and other humanitarian activities. The earlier conflicts also resulted in substantial international social work activity in the Balkans as well as the involvement of social workers from the region.

This special issue seeks to give voice to the reflections of social workers who responded professionally or politically to the 1999 war, and previous conflicts in the Balkans, as well as detailing the accounts of those who have witnessed the terrible suffering in the region.

NARRATIVES:

- Narratives and accounts by social workers about their political views and activism during the 1999 war, including how their responses to previous wars affected their present involvement.
- Experiences of social workers who have directly participated in refugee relief, victims services, and other social work related activity in the Balkans over the past decade.
- Submissions from social workers working for peace, non-violent conflict resolution, and community development in the Balkans.
- Activities of social workers involved in providing services for and raising funds on behalf of victims of bombing, forced relocation, rape, and murder.
- Narratives about ways in which the shadow of war impacted upon practice in settings both close to and far removed from the war itself.
- Witness reactions from the violence of the 1999 war and other conflicts in the Balkans and how the violence and forced relocation has affected the people of the region.

Mail Manuscripts to: Editors, REFLECTIONS SPECIAL ISSUE: RESPONDING TO WAR
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*****Manuscripts Due December 15th, 1999*****

A JOURNEY FOR JUSTICE

Social workers spend their careers driving for change, working to improve the plight of individuals and their social environments. Though this is true, the student or the professional inevitably realizes that goals are elusive and destinations unclear. As is the case in life in general, meaning and identity are to be found in the journey.

by
Jean F. East

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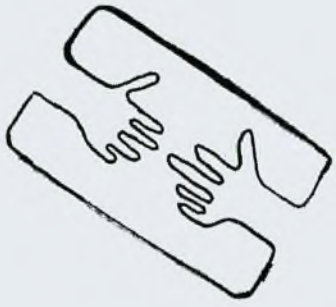

Introduction

I have never received AFDC welfare nor have I been economically disadvantaged. And yet for the past decade I have dedicated myself to the issues of women and families in poverty and the related issue of welfare reform. This story is about a personal and professional journey for justice. My activities of the past thirty years have been varied. Most recently, I have been studying poverty and welfare reform, reading any and all research I can, and doing research: I participate in community groups that care deeply about the consequences of poverty and welfare reform for families in our community, and I provide services to women in welfare reform projects through a small community-based nonprofit program that I co-created. Each of these avenues has provided me with many insights and stories that form my understandings of justice. On my journey I have found the words of Frances Moore Lappé (1989) to be a source of guidance: "Justice derives from our capacity for identifying with each other's pain and from our innate need for community" (p.13). As I relate my story here, her words and their meaning to me become evident.

Origins: Planting Seeds of Understanding

Stories such as this one do not really begin or end at a particular historic point. My story could begin at a number of points in my life, and I have chosen two earlier events that somehow are often with me and that inevitably led to my present actions.

"It was the right place for me to be." It was the summer of 1967, when riots were a common occurrence in the city of Philadelphia and Mayor Frank Rizzo had banned groups of more than 12 from collecting on the city streets. I was part of a group of 19 youth from five area churches, half of us Black, half of us White. Our mission was to work with children and teach about prejudice. As we gathered at city playgrounds and on city streets, heads turned; it was clear we were "different." We defied the rule of 12 and we were racially mixed. It was the right place for me to be, a way to act on my values, to be part of a group that went against the "rules" and to be teaching about prejudice. This experience for me had something to do with justice, even though at age 17, I'm not sure I knew what that was.

"How are you?" Or my story could begin in 1972 in Gurabo, Puerto Rico, a small town thirty-five miles south and "years" away from San Juan. As a VISTA volunteer, I was there acting on a personal commitment to give away to others what had come so easily for me: the opportunity for education. Of course I had to abandon the "prescribed" education my government sent me to give, English as a second language, and decide that the children would learn more (as would I) through our relationship.

I grew a particular attachment to the group of "lowest" girls in the seventh grade. They had a quest for knowledge that went beyond their struggle to distinguish "How are you?" from "How old are you?" (I would ask them, "How are you?" and they would respond, "12.") I will never forget when I decided to take them on a field trip to San Juan. It was hard for me to believe most of them had never been there before. They were so excited when they saw things they had never seen, such as a nun in full habit walking down the street, or the McDonalds. I hated seeing McDonalds in San Juan; it reminded me of the exploitation of Puerto Rico, but the children were so excited we had to drive by. We did not stop, however, because none of them could afford to buy anything, another injustice I am not sure I fully understood at the time (East, 1995).

For the past 15 years I have had a sign in my office: "If you want peace, work for justice. -Pope Paul VI." It joined my office repertoire of inspirational words in the early 1980's when I was working for Catholic Charities and involved in the anti-nuclear movement. At the same time I was, on a daily basis, meeting families who needed emergency food, clothing, rent assistance, and other basics of survival. By then I understood enough about justice to know there was a relationship in these two activities—and that the peace I hoped for, and therefore the justice, in my own community had something to do with poverty. As my understanding of the connections grew, prejudice, riots, McDonalds in San Juan, the nuclear arms race and poverty were no longer isolated events on my journey. And my need for community grew.

Standing with the Pain and Building Community

Three Episodes on the Journey

During the last ten years, since 1988, my work has been a continuation of my personal journey of action for justice. This work has included a commitment to learning and teaching about the issues of women and their children in poverty, primarily from a feminist perspective. My journey has also included a commitment to being involved in my community to effect change. My choice of actions and involvement on this journey mirror Lappé's words as a guiding principle; I wanted to stand with the pain and I wanted to do this in the context of community. Standing with the pain for me has meant being with the people that are represented in statistics I so often quote. As Ruth Sidel (1986) notes, "statistics are people with the tears washed off" (p. xvi). I do not abandon statistics, but I am impelled to move beyond the statistics to relationships and stories of women and their families. My study of the research and issues of women and children in poverty gives me a voice, a way to present arguments for justice in my community. My experience of women's lives and voices bolsters my arguments; not only can I make the statistics real, I can present them with a passion that helps me engage others in the discussion.

I have chosen three stories of community efforts related to women, poverty, and welfare reform to represent my journey for justice. Through each of my three community stories, I have tried to pay close attention to both women's voices and the impact I might make in an advocacy and policy agenda. These involvements, as a whole, are an example of how a social worker can live out the journey for justice.

The Community Council: 1988-1997

On October 14, 1988, the day President Reagan signed into law the Family Support Act, a welfare reform bill, I am among about 100 individuals who have been invited to a meeting to hear about welfare reform. I am there as a repre-

sentative of Catholic Charities. The meeting is located at Clayton College, at one time an orphanage and boys' school. We are in the center campus building. It has a large entryway with high ceilings and a wide circular staircase. As I go up the steps for the meeting, I can picture the young boys of earlier years marching up the steps two by two for an event in the upstairs auditorium. I wonder if times have changed for children or if it is all another version of "reform." At this meeting there are pictures around the room drawn by the children of AFDC families. I wonder how these children are different from or the same as the boys whose steps have preceded me.

The meeting is the kick-off for the development of a Community Council in Denver, Colorado, in which I participated for its nine years of existence. There is lots of energy in this room and many ideas about what we should do in Denver about reform welfare. There are many important community figures: the Mayor, agency directors, foundations, and the like. We hear Linda Wolfe, President of the American Public Welfare Association, tell us we are in a new era of the social contract; individual responsibility and social responsibility will work together in ways to make it possible for families to leave the welfare system and become self-sufficient. It sounds a bit like the justice I hope for, but I am skeptical. After all, these are just words and I know that putting words into practice can bring about unusual transformations. I am also skeptical about top-down approaches to changing people's lives. Despite my skepticism I am glad I am here. As I leave the meeting, I feel connected to something that could make a difference if it were centered in the local community.

Over the next nine years, until the council's dissolution in 1997, I spent hundreds of hours in meetings, listening and discussing how to make welfare reform work for families. There were times when I felt hopeful; the project had many successes such as developing new programs, creating alliances and resources, educating the community, and influencing legislation. From my perspective, one of the greatest successes was that our community worked very hard to define welfare reform and the process by which families become economically self-sufficient in a broad context. Self-sufficiency was viewed as an outcome that could be achieved only by creating a system of services to address the multiple barriers an individual family might face. This is a contrast to the much narrower perspective, which many communities choose, which is "jobs are the route to self-sufficiency."

There were also times when my involvement in this kind of community initiative was discouraging; we lost some legislative battles, the bureaucracy of the welfare department at times seemed unworkable and too slow to change, success for the women was too often defined as a low-wage dead end job, and finally in the end the Council was not sustained.

If I remember one moment during my Council involvement when I was clear about the pursuit of justice standing with pain as part of community, it was at the Annual Meeting of the Council in 1993. A welfare participant stood before a group of 150 community leaders and described her difficult journey to give up welfare assistance. I was not the only one in tears with her—the community was a part of her pain and as a community we were working to change the systems that had oppressed her.

All Families Deserve a Chance (AFDC) Coalition: 1990 - present

December, 1990: A good friend of mine (also an MSW student), Mary Beth, is starting a project to form a coalition of women on welfare called the AFDC Coalition. She has designed this project as part of her second-year field placement and as a student in my Seminar in Community Organizing. She has asked me to help her facilitate the meeting. We are in a community room at a low-income housing development and there are about 20 women there. There is an energy in this room also, and the women are quite articulate about their concerns. They know what they need to become self-sufficient and they also know there are many barriers. We conclude the meeting by getting a list of names of people

interested in participating in the effort. I leave this meeting excited about the potential that has begun with this small seed and somehow knowing this will make a difference.

March, 1998: There have been many meetings since December 1990. In addition to meetings, there have been rallies and actions where women speak out. Now the welfare rolls are dropping at great rates all around the country. At an AFDC Coalition meeting, we are discussing how to monitor the effects of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, the latest welfare reform legislation that went into effect in Colorado in July 1997. We are all very concerned about what is happening to families and we are planning our research/advocacy strategy. Being part of this community effort over the past eight years has been very rewarding. There have also been many successes. Women with little voice have grown into leadership roles, legislation and policy implementation have been influenced, and a power base has evolved. The women often express how their involvement in the coalition has led them to feel more empowered (Parsons, East, & Boesen, 1994). One said when interviewed, "I know that people in the Coalition are ready to back me up anytime I need it, so I really feel a sense of community... that I am actually accomplishing something and that I haven't given up makes me feel good." In addition, the Coalition has developed a power base and has been successful in influencing the policy agenda of the State. For example, in 1995 the Coaliton lobbied the State Legislature to get renewal of drivers' licenses contingent on the applicant being current in child support payments. The bill passed and the bill sponsor noted that the Coalition was a major influence. As part of an advocacy coalition, the most significant events for me are when women tell their stories of pain and the community must listen. In this case their pain has been mobilized to collective action—another way to express justice.

Project WISE: 1994 - present

My third story on this journey has been the creation of a community based program for women who receive welfare. In October 1994 I am with a fellow social worker who is also a friend, Susan. We are in her basement and we are creating a project, a dream we have had for the past 18 years since we were M.S.W. students together. The dream is to provide an avenue for women who have low incomes to experience a sense of empowerment. The philosophy of the project will be to connect individual change and social change so that women can find their voices and reach their goals. As we give life to our ideas, I believe in my heart that this project, which we eventually name Project WISE, A Women's Initiative for Service and Empowerment, can and will make a difference.

Now in June 1999, Project WISE has been officially a non-profit organization for four years. We have talked with and met over 300 women who are living the experiences of poverty and of welfare reform. We created this project based on both an identified need and a philosophy of services. The need was in response to the past experiences and present realities that confront women receiving welfare assistance. These realities included domestic violence, past abuse, lack of support systems, lack of self-esteem, and a system of policies about which they had little say. We saw a need for women to gain a sense of personal self-sufficiency that went hand in hand with economic self-sufficiency. We started with a practice model of empowerment (Gutierrez, 1990) and from that developed a program of services that includes strengths-based counseling, support groups, and leadership development for advocacy. Each of these activities is aimed at enhancing the personal, interpersonal, and political empowerment of women with few economic resources (East, in press). We too have had successes; women have left abusive relationships, returned to school, increased their self-esteem, and spoken out on behalf of themselves and others. The women's voices speak to these changes:

> *"I was very withdrawn... shy. I never wanted to be heard and through counseling I have become more outspoken."*
>
> *"Having a lot of women together you know that other people have problems and you are not the only one out there."*

"The Project WISE retreat changed my way of thinking. There is more out there to achieve. I want to go back to school and get my GED."

We have also had setbacks. Some women do not trust, are too afraid to speak out, or cannot face their pain. Esther, for example, has sunk into deeper depression, her physical problems have required surgery, and she quit counseling saying, "I just can't face it." The creation of Project WISE has been very rewarding and has taught me a lot about what it means to be in a community. While the community coalitions focus my action on larger systems' changes, it is in my direct contact with women, not only in *our* pain but in the strength of a community we co-create, that my journey for justice is made real.

The Lessons. . . the Meaning

The lessons I have learned on my journey are many, and I will highlight four of the most significant. The first lesson is that community involvement to bring about change in poverty or welfare reform requires tenacity, patience, and a long term-commitment. The issues are complicated and easy solutions do not exist. My belief in the community's capacity for justice means the tenacity to show up, not just for the big events, like city-wide kick off meetings or rallies, but to persist in almost daily conversations in small group meetings. Creativity can and will likely emerge in such forums where ongoing participation is demanding (Bellah, 1992). This requires my patience: "Patience has the time and strength to recognize complicated conditions and people, [and] to engage them in cooperation and conversation. . ." (Borgman, 1992, 124).

The commitment is part of the journey. My willingness to stay on this path is strongly rooted in my social work values and the importance to me of being part of a value-based profession. A discussion of values in the context of social work is common and there are many definitions of values (Loewenberg & Dolgoff, 1992). For me, a value is something I hold as essentially important. I am interested in my own choice of the word "hold." My image is that of "holding" in my hand, my heart, my head, my soul (East, 1995). As reflected in this narrative, the one value that seems to be most significant in relation to my choice of social work as a profession, and my work for women in poverty and welfare reform, is the way in which I give meaning to the value of justice. That meaning has evolved through my commitment to staying with the journey. This lesson is one I often share with my students. When they are anxious for answers and change, I respond with the story of my journey and how one must commit to the long haul.

The second lesson is that while it is clear that my profession supports my actions for justice as congruent with its value base, the definition of justice as a value and a goal is complex, and so are the choices for my action. Justice can be defined as an impartial administration of reactions to conflicting claims, or the establishment of rights according to laws or rules, or as a device that keeps "transgressions against each other in check" (Lappé, 1989, p.13). While I accept those definitions of justice, my justice is also about equal, although not necessarily the same, access to and distribution of rights and resources for all peoples, based on what those people desire. This meaning of justice includes a means to secure individual and subsequent community rights (East, 1995). This perspective on justice keeps me centered as a social worker.

The context of welfare reform challenges my value of justice on an almost daily basis. For example, throughout 1996, as we fought to get the most humane possible welfare reform bill passed in our state, I often felt far away from justice. How is trying to make the best of a situation that does not stand with the pain of women and children receiving welfare contribute to justice, I asked myself? Such questions do not stop me, however; I continue to act, and my involvement in various welfare reform activities keeps my passion and urgency for justice rooted. However, in my many roles I often wonder if I am making the right choices for action. Should I be more advocate and

less researcher? More practitioner and less policy analyst? I used to be troubled by such questions. Now I realize I must keep asking them and not become complacent about my choices, for justice is much too complex for complacency.

A third lesson is about the need to make a difference. I heard this often from community members as I asked them about their involvement in community work (East, 1995). I hear it from my students regularly. As part of the Community Council, the AFDC Coalition, and my work at Project WISE, I, along with others, have been working to influence legislation and local implementation of welfare reform, from the Family Support Act of 1988 to the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. I am representative of a number of other individuals who, over these years, have been trying to "make a difference" in the welfare reform discourse, in the subsequent actions, and ultimately in the lives of people in our community. I have learned that an advantage of a long-term perspective centered in one local community is that I can see small steps of influence and how we have made a difference along the way. For example, in the early nineties, one of the emerging issues coming both from our own experience and from national research was the connection between domestic violence, mental health, and welfare use. Following our experience of building community collaboratives, three of us formed a small mental health task group. Now, five years later, the group no longer meets but a continuum of services is in place specifically designed for welfare families. When seen cumulatively, small steps, such as forming a task group, creates differences that may not be so small. On this journey for justice, I find I need to remind myself and others of the significance of small steps. The meaning of making a difference is best seen collectively, over time, rather than individually—and therefore is best fostered in community.

My final lesson is about community. No matter what role I have, I must act. To value justice means to act justly and the test is measured in my actions. As I reflect on this journey, it has also confirmed for me that such a journey is rooted in my being a part of my community. My actions in a community context mean a context greater than my immediate personal world, a context that puts me in a relationship with others who are "strangers." To be part of community also means to be with women and families experiencing the pain of poverty, as they are my community. By being with them, listening to their stories, and using my gifts to bring their stories into the discourse of the political community, I experience the innate need for community. Community is the place where my individual values and social work values meet.

An example of this comes to mind. In my work with women through Project WISE, I listen to women, and one day this is what I hear. Maria says:

> *"I have ten children, four little ones still. I'm a good mother and now welfare is telling me I can't stay home and watch them or be with them. I worry constantly.*
>
> *"I've tried to work before but my daycare experience has been terrible. I started with one center and my little girl just didn't fit in. I transferred to another center and when I went one day to pick up the kids, my little boy was almost blue. He has asthma and was having a reaction. The daycare said they just thought he needed to rest. I rushed him to the emergency room. So I decided no more strangers and I asked a long-time friend to watch the kids so I could attend here. Yesterday I went home and my friend has boyfriends over, drinking beer."*
>
> In tears Maria continues, *"I need to be home with my kids."*

The same week I heard these stories, our local newspaper took a call-in poll and 87% of those who called thought welfare mothers with children under one should work. I hear

the concern of women for their children and I contrast that with the state opinion poll. I am left, as we all are, with a great challenge on this journey for justice. All of these words and conversations are a part of my community. Action in the context of community is not about agreement, but about being there for the conversations. In these community conversations, my journey for justice, as a social worker, meets its test.

Closing Thoughts

Often when I think of a journey, I think of a destination. But on this journey, the destination seems elusive. I dream of a destination, like ending poverty as we know it. And yet I realize that the commitment to stand with others' pain and our innate need for community means that it is the journey, and not the destination, that I must stay focused on. The words of Denise Levertov (1978) speak to me:

How could we tire of hope
- so much is in bud.
How can desire fail?
- we have only begun...
Beginners

I have already begun and I have only begun. Yet there is a continuity to my journey; it is rooted in who I am personally and professionally. I will stay in it for the long haul in as many roles as I can. I will be my voice, and I will work to clearly represent those who do not have the access to policy makers that I do. And finally, I will encourage others, especially social workers and social work students, to join with me, to stand with the pain and in community, and together we will create more journeys for justice. □

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What a Long Strange Trip It's Been

This paper attempts to examine and reflect on my experiences of being a beginning social worker and beginning teacher. I describe the similarities between the two processes. In many respects they were painful experiences, fraught with disappointments, frustrations, and, at times, loss, sadness, and anger. Yet, out of these painful experiences, there are many humorous events and many different, diverse, and interesting opportunities. All these experiences enriched my learning, and produce a worker and teacher who is able to draw on all these experiences for the benefit of his clients and students.

by
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ITHAKA

Keep Ithaka always in mind.
Arriving there is what you're destined for.
But don't hurry the journey at all.
Better if it goes on for years so you're old by the time you reach the island, wealthy with all you've gained on the way, not expecting Ithaka to make you rich.

-Constantine Cavafy (1975)

In late August of 1996, I received a call from the Social Work Department of Lehman College in the Bronx. "Der-Bronx." I conjured up the image of the Bronx from the Goodyear blimp as it looks down upon Yankee Stadium, surrounded by high-rise apartments, narrow streets, congested traffic, graffiti, violence, crime, the subway, and noise. Having listened to the Yankees' principal owner, I was under the impression that the surrounding area was unfit for a major league baseball team, let alone the seriousness of higher education.

Yet, when I walked onto the campus at Lehman College, I found tree-lined walkways, gardens, flowers, birds singing, and one gothic structure that captured my attention and made me believe I was still in England.

The college in England where I had undertaken my social work training is located in an old stately home with spiral staircases, balconies, and beautiful rose gardens. So when the Lehman faculty asked me what I thought of the campus, I said I felt like I was back home.

But the recollection triggered sadness, feelings of self-doubt, and some painful memories. Above all, I recalled the fear of beginning, the fear of becoming an apprentice.

In both my social work training and beginning teaching, I undertook an apprenticeship. In both settings I encountered the same feelings, such as wanting to be liked, not wanting to make mistakes, or not wanting to do the work for the client or student, and the same feelings of fear, trepidation, and self-awareness.

This paper examines and reflects on the two experiences of being an apprentice, an extremely painful process characterized by both personal and professional change and growth.

Fear of Beginning

Sitting on the seafront wall at Southend-on-Sea in England, overlooking the Thames Estuary, I stared out at the water and thought to myself, "What the hell am I doing?" My palms were sweating. I constantly rubbed my face and ran my hands through my hair, and I felt like I wanted to throw up. All I could keep thinking about was this first home visit which I was going to make within the next thirty minutes.

I kept going over in my mind all the things that could go wrong. In social work, I was told I had the power and the authority to make things happen, but now all I could feel was fear. The client would not like me. The client would slam the door in my face. The client would not be home.

In beginning my teaching career several years later, I again went through a similar experience. I recall packing my bag and putting on a tie with pictures of kids on it, a souvenir of my child welfare work. It felt like Christmas morning, and I couldn't wait to get to school. However, as 2:00 pm drew closer and closer, I felt more and more nervous. Walking down the hallway to the classroom, my hands were sweating. As I got my materials out of my bag, I could feel myself shaking. I knew everyones' eyes were fixed upon me.

In both instances, I was so worried that I did not know enough, that somehow I should know more. I was the social worker, I was the teacher. Not only should I have the answers, but I should also be able to resolve all the problems.

Start at the Bottom

In 1981, I came to the United States for the first time. My first experience of New York City was being propositioned by a hooker on 42nd Street. As a twenty-two year old and having been in the country for only about an hour, I said to myself, "What a place!" This experience was soon to be replaced by a much more humbling and realistic one.

I was a summer exchange student working at a camp in the Catskills for the mentally and physically challenged. Busload after busload of handicapped people arrived. I was assigned two men, both in their mid-twenties, who required total assistance with feeding, dressing, and toileting.

No big deal, I thought. I would have a good time and the work wouldn't be too strenuous. By the end of the summer, no longer did I see them as handicapped. They were Keith, Joey, Paul, Herbie, Howie, and Steven. I don't remember how many bums I wiped, or how many showers I gave, or how many meals I fed, or how many times I lifted someone out of a wheel chair. All I know is that I had to go back for more.

In 1984, before entering social work school, I worked in a residential program for mildly to moderately retarded adults. Once again I was wiping bums, dressing, feeding, and teaching daily living and social skills. If you will pardon the pun, by starting at the bottom, I really gained some first-hand insight into what it must be like to be handicapped.

I was also required to start at the bottom as a teaching assistant. Word had got around that I was somewhat competent in using computers, particularly SPSS and single subject research design. My responsibilities were, I thought, as follows: 1) To ensure that all the computers were on and were working; 2) To have the programs all ready to go when the students came down to the computer lab; and 3) To help the students with some data entry.

That all seemed simple enough. However, just as in the Catskills, reality was somewhat different. Each class consisted of between 25 and 30 students. But, there were only enough computers for 20 students. The noise was deafening. "Paul, Paul, my computer just crashed." "Paul, I just lost my data." "I'll never be able to do this!" "Why do we have to do this?" Some students would burst into tears, others would shout at me, others would accuse me of losing their data.

Now, these were master-

level students, future social workers. I kept thinking, "If I have to wipe away their tears here, how will they ever be able to help others in the field?"

I tried to look at the situation from their perspective. For me, the computer and research had come fairly easily. There had been a great deal of trial and error, and on numerous occasions I had lost data. However, for some of the students I was attempting to assist, their only encounter with statistics was on Thursday nights. They were genuinely afraid; this was the subject that could perhaps prevent them from graduating.

In the handicapped camp and in the classroom, I began to see what life was like from the bottom. The campers I came into contact with really gave me an insight as to what it was like to be handicapped and the day-to-day struggles and problems they had to endure. The students taught me that just because I understood didn't mean that they did. Their fears were real: I had to accept and respect them. To say, "Don't worry," was meaningless.

Give Me Your Magic, Oh Master

Sitting like a puppy dog at my field instructor's side, I hoped her magic would rub off on me. She made the work and the decisions look effortless. Often I would accompany her on a visit, to observe her interviewing a client. She just made it look so easy and almost effortless.

Hence, I imitated her. I would ask questions the way she did. I would speak softly like she did. I would introduce myself the way she did. I found myself using her terminology and phrases. Hey! If it worked for her and she had been doing this for over twenty years, then it should work for me. I thought that if I copied her style, I was bound to pass.

However, over the course of the placement, it dawned on me that this was not working. When I asked a question, I would frequently receive strange looks. Finally, one client said to me, "You sound and act so like your supervisor." I then realized I had to ask questions in my own way. That I had to develop my own approach and style.

Later on, as a teaching assistant, I was able to observe first hand, two different professors with contrasting styles. What was alarming about this was if I was working with either one, I would begin to imitate their individual styles. I would talk like them, use the same phrases that they used, and even act like them. To use a social work phrase, I was mirroring them.

I became really conscious of this when a number of the students in the class started calling me "junior." I asked them what they meant, and they replied, "The only difference between you and Auerbach is that you have more hair."

Over a period of time I had to learn that it was all right to be me, to have my own style, my own way of saying things, and that I can connect with both my clients and my students by just being me.

Try it My Way

During my first student placement, I worked with three mentally ill men, each in his late twenties to early thirties, who lived together in a community residence. Every Monday afternoon I would visit them with the intent of utilizing this or that skill that I had learned in the classroom. However, when I would get to the home promptly at two, I would be met with the following scenario. Peter, taking five minutes to come to the door, would say: "I didn't know you were coming." I was now confused and puzzled; just two hours earlier I had seen Peter at the day center and he would say: "See you at two."

I would then ask for David. Peter would say that David was upstairs sleeping. Twenty minutes later, David would come downstairs dressed in a suit and tie, smoking a cigarette. It was as if he didn't see me. He would stand in the middle of the room, rocking on his heels, laughing and talking to himself. He would then walk in and out of the kitchen about a dozen times.

Mark, the third member of the household, was the invisible man. He would come into the house with numerous plastic bags, saying that he had been out shopping and that he had to go out again. He also told me that he was extremely busy and that he would try to see me next week.

At times I thought I had dropped into "The Mad Hatter's Tea Party." The words that kept going around in my mind were "I'm late, I'm late for a very important date, no time to say hello goodbye, I'm late, I'm late, I'm late." (Carroll, 1946)

I was also aware that I had to demonstrate to my supervisor the social work skills we were discussing in school. In supervision, we had discussed some of the possible interventions: go out for a walk; attempt to get all three of them to sit down together. "I know," I said, "why don't we attempt to get them to clean up their flat?" Task-centered casework, I said!

Well, the harder I tried to get the men to undertake any task, the more and more distant they became. Perhaps I was asking them to do something that was really just beyond them. Eventually, I had to accept that seeing them on Monday afternoons and maybe getting them to interact with me was as far as we were going to get.

In my second-year placement at the local Social Services Department in the Intake Department, the team supervisor walked over to my desk one afternoon with a large grin on his face. "Paul," he said loudly so everyone in the office could hear him, "I am assigning you DOLLY!" Everyone in the room started laughing.

Dolly's file was thick, and every worker's name in the team was also in the file. She was referred to as "Dolly with her dogs." On my first home visit to Dolly, I was met by two large dogs barking loudly and throwing themselves at the window. When I looked through the window, I could see dog feces all around the room. Then an elderly frail lady came to the door and invited me in. The smell! I thought I was about to throw up. All I could hear were the dogs barking and occasionally a thud, as one of them would collide with the wall. "I love my dogs," she said.

With my second-year assessment skills, I could see that Dolly required and was entitled to a host of services. I'll get right on it, I told her. Yet everytime a service provider came to her flat, she was not home.

I mentioned this to my colleagues. Once again there was laughter. "Try the shopping plaza," they suggested and indeed there was Dolly, talking to everyone who would stop and listen. When I walked over to her, she introduced me as her social worker and told everyone what I was trying to do for her.

An issue of my early teaching days was getting through the syllabus. In each class I was given a course outline; I was under the impression that I had to follow this religiously. I found myself doing most of the talking. I did not give my students enough opportunities to talk and ask questions. Or, if I did, I found myself cutting them off, and saying, "We need to move on." Or, "We will get back to that issue later." Of course, we never got back to the issue.

I now think of Dolly and wonder how the work would have developed if I had asked her. "How can I help you?" "Would you like a little air in your flat?" Dolly and my students have the same message for me: *"Listen to us."* I still had to realize that it was not necessary for me to impose my desires, priorities, or wishes on my clients or on my students. On the contrary: it was productive and meaningful *only* when I was able to listen to my clients or students.

Listen to My Clients/Students

After graduating from social work school in Great Britain in 1986, I decided to immigrate to the United States. I had approximately $500 to my name and two bags of belongings. I had to get a job. Eventually, I obtained a position with a program for the developmentally delayed, a fifty-two bed adult intermediate care facility. On my first day at the program, several of the staff asked me how long I intended to remain. Why had they asked? Over the past years two social workers had been employed at the program. One lasted two days, the other lasted one week. I soon found out why!

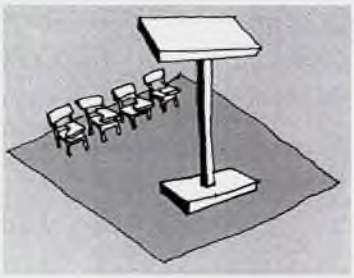
The program had not had a social worker in over a

year; hence all their bio-psychosocial evaluations were out of compliance. In addition, the program was under state mandates to reduce the size of the population at the facility because it was "inappropriate" for diverse clients to be residing in one facility. For example, the program had mentally handicapped clients, physically handicapped clients, autistic clients, mentally ill clients, and dual diagnosed clients all under one roof.

The facility also had very involved parent associations that were extremely angry at the agency. They constantly complained that their sons or daughters were not receiving adequate care, that they were not receiving necessary services such as physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, and ADL skills. They also constantly complained that residents were being over medicated. Those clients who were mentally ill were physically abusing many of the severely handicapped clients.

I was no longer overwhelmed by all the problems. *I was* able to listen to what the different clients/groups and individuals were saying to me and, in a systematic manner, address their concerns and issues. On occasion I would have to tell them that I could not provide immediate results but that their concerns were legitimate and I would get back to them.

I realized I could not wave a magic wand. My work needed to be incremental. Problems were numerous, but little by little changes occurred. Some of the mentally ill clients, who did indeed pose a risk to some of the physically handicapped clients, needed to be transferred to more appropriate settings. Though as a social work student I had many misgivings and ethical concerns about the use of psychotropic medication, I began to see the benefits of utilizing certain medications. I began holding parent meetings and established a neighborhood advisory council, a client counsel, and a sexuality awareness program in response to direct care staff complaints about the inappropriate sexual activity of cer-



tain residents. It was also necessary to establish groups with direct care staff and parents.

A year after I had been working at the residence, the program went through a re-accreditation process. For the first time in several years, the program was taken out of sanction. The auditors reported that the program was attempting to address issues of concern.

When I began teaching full time, I was also aware that I was able to listen to my students. No longer was I so preoccupied with getting through *my* agenda. Although I would always prepare notes for my classes, often I would use only a fraction of the material that I had prepared. Frequently, students would raise questions in the class; this would then lead to another question or issue.

No longer was I dictating the pace of the class; the students were. This was particularly apparent in my social work practice class. For example, when we were discussing the ecological systems perspectives, the students themselves would raise practical examples. They would talk about their own families. They would talk about where they worked and how the ecological perspective could be applied to their places of employment.

When the class addressed the question of values and ethics, I presented the following conceptual framework: Preferred Conceptions, Preferred Instrumentalities, and Preferred Outcomes. I put forward the notion that if we thought about the client in a certain way, this would determine the way in which we would work with the client and affect the eventual outcomes and services the client would receive.

Again, it was the students that came up with the practical examples: abortion, the death penalty, substance abuse, assisted suicide, the elderly, foster care, the mentally ill, mentally handicapped, and physically handicapped. The way in which they viewed these populations really determined how they would work with them.

This was further reinforced at Lehman when I was teaching two classes of Human Behavior and the Social Environment. The syllabus for both

classes was exactly the same. However, both classes responded differently to what was being said. I would teach one class on a Wednesday evening and initially assumed I could teach the same material on Monday afternoons. However, the students in the respective classes would come up with different questions. Something that worked in one class did not necessarily work in the other.

In both instances I provided the framework, I used my authority, I was guided by my knowledge but not in the service of a pre-ordained specific end, but rather in a particular direction (re-accreditation, education), the content of which was supplied by staff/students. I was staying where the client was. But on this occasion, the client was not one individual, or a group of ten, but a class of thirty students.

I had reached a point in my professional development where the issues no longer overwhelmed me. Despite what was going on around me, I was able to actively listen to what my clients and students were saying. They were the ones who were directing my work; I was responding to their concerns and needs. No longer was I an apprentice.

Journey's End?

What has this long, strange trip taught me? Well, it began with numerous fears and a great deal of trepidation. It also began with my focus being on my clients and students. I am also aware that in many respects it has been a painful experience, fraught with disappointments, frustrations, and at times loss, sadness, and anger. Yet, out of these painful experiences there have been many humorous events, many different, diverse, and interesting opportunities by which I have been enriched.

Yet, this journey has not been about my clients' or students' changing, but about a parallel process in my own growth and professional development. I am the one who has changed and developed. I am no longer the nervous and anxious student, social worker, or teacher! I now have mastery and competence, I no longer feel overwhelmed by the situation, I am able to deal with the situations that I am confronted with. I am also aware that one does not have to have all the answers. It is more important that I am able to actively listen to what my clients or students are telling me.

In looking back, I have come to the realization that I am still on my journey and that I have not yet reached Ithaka. My journey has taken many twists and turns and I have experienced some exciting, stimulating, and rewarding experiences. It has occurred on two continents; it has involved diverse populations. The clients and students with whom I have come into contact have been from many different countries, each bringing with them their own values, creeds, and cultures.

Just over the horizon, however, there is another Dolly, another student group eager to embark on its own journey. They continue to challenge, develop, and enhance my knowledge and skills. They provide the impetus for the journey to continue.

Ithaka gave you the marvelous journey.
Without her you wouldn't have set out.
She hasn't anything else to give.

And if you find her poor, Ithaka won't have fooled you.
Wise as you'll have become, and so experienced, you'll have understood by then what an Ithaka means. □

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Lessons From the City of Angels

This narrative examines how discussions dealing with diversity can turn intense and uncomfortable. Not only my peers, but also my students, advised me to exert more control over the discussions in class. However, by listening to my instincts and allowing the students to continue to express themselves, I introduced an exercise that allowed them to discuss diversity from their personal viewpoints. This was a turning point, for myself and the class, teaching the need for unity in a multicultural world.

by
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with
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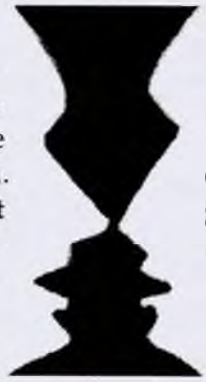
I started my undergraduate practice class with some excitement. I had volunteered to teach this class as a diversion and respite from teaching the graduate practice classes. I anticipated a very basic curriculum and felt great freedom to draw selectively from my materials in response to the needs and temperament of the students. I could focus on my favorite areas, which are communication and experiential exercises. I was also excited by the diversity in the class, over 60% minority—a classroom of faces from many countries, backgrounds, and languages.

Sometimes I walk against the tide of CSULB students toward the food plaza at lunchtime. I see young people representing many cultures and reflecting the shifts in immigration, which are characteristic of Los Angeles. Although graduate students are diverse in age and ethnicity, they are typically career tracked and well socialized as students: they are meticulously cooperative and responsible about assignments, classroom attendance, and discussions. Undergraduates at this state university are vibrant, academic novices and represent a broader array of nationalities, ages, and levels of maturity and experience. They are often untutored in classroom procedures, uncertain, and unpredictable.

The class started smoothly, without conflict. About six weeks into the class, it began. We launched into a discussion of child abuse reporting and child discipline practices. Two African-American students, Zackery and John[1], took issue with Gloria, a white student, who had suggested defusing angry parents (such as those you might see about to hit their child in the supermarket). The seating in the classroom influenced the discussion. There was a projection booth in the middle of the rear wall. The class of 40 students was tightly squeezed, with quieter students hovered to either side of the booth, who were completely invisible to each other. Zackery and John typically sat near the door to the right of the booth. The discussion grew more heated. Zackery was a mature single father: his position was that people shouldn't

[1] With the exception of John Casey, who played the central role and collaborated in the production of this article, names and identities have been changed to protect the privacy of the students.

interfere in other people's family business. He spoke longer than he needed to make his point and was basically holding the floor, repeating himself, excited and frustrated—still invisible to students in the rear on the opposite side of the projection booth. One of the themes that followed was that people wouldn't dare to interfere in others' conflicts—they could be the target of violence themselves. This position was countered by the image of the placated parent who had been distracted from lashing out by the sympathetic words of a stranger.



John, a tall, stocky young man, emerged shortly from the invisible spot to the right of the projection booth and came to the side of the class. He stood, bold, defensive, and angry, feeling that he needed to defend his right to discipline his children as he chose. We had already established that injury was illegal, but corporal punishment was not. He waved his arm and said he could hit his child in public if he wanted, and he'd hit anyone who stood in his way. He stood towering over students on his side of the class, immediately next to Fortunata, an older Filipino student who had been injured and was on crutches.

The discussion erupted, students raising their hands in protest. I counted off the hands in order as to who would speak. Ann Marie, a Latina leader of the student organization, made a fine, impassioned statement about the need to take a public stand to care for others in spite of urban malaise and indifference. Someone made the point that many parents don't know what's best and need to learn more humane ways of disciplining their children. Thu, who had immigrated from Vietnam, said she was hit as a child and, in resentment, turned away from her parents. Other students also said they were hit as children but had continued to love and respect their parents.

I was taken aback by the intensity of the discussion, but I had been part of other intense discussions. I felt that having a say was the most immediate need of students and continued to count off. Beyond establishing what was or wasn't legal, I didn't direct or comment on their remarks. It set me thinking about my own experiences: I had never been spanked myself and I refrained from spanking my own child after one or two mild taps as a trial.

As the class ended, Fortunata accosted me and said that I should not allow such a discussion. I was still flustered from the intensity of the class session. When she cited another instructor who insisted on more order, I said that I wanted students to be free to express themselves. Instructors had different styles, I said. This, however, was just the beginning.

I had hardly reached my office when Zackery and John, who had been the center of the corporal punishment and family rights position, came to visit. As we talked, John intimated he felt defensive, called on to speak for African-American people. He also said that I should take greater control of the class to prevent side conversations, though he admitted he, too, was an offender. I appreciated his candor and thanked him. Not much later, José and Gloria visited. José had demonstrated that he was a mature, patient, and reliable class participant. They explained that there had been conflict amongst students in this class since it began. There was subgrouping... and again they said that I needed to take more control.

I was now convinced that I was the newcomer in this group. The dynamics had been well established over the past year, and the students needed greater safety. I greeted the students at the next class session and presented a method of control, explaining that several students had requested it. When I needed their attention, or felt side conversations were disrupting the class, I would raise my hand and they would also until the room was silent. They readily agreed. I asked if any students had wanted to say something but felt intimidated by the intensity of the discussion. A cluster of hands went up. I asked if anyone *was* comfortable with the level of intensity. I really should have raised my hand myself.... but no one did. I thought that if

they couldn't understand each other's strong feelings and opinions, they would be ill prepared to understand their clients' feelings. I explained that the class was about understanding differences, learning empathy, and that members of their own class didn't feel understood. *All* of the students who had come to see me had said something to this effect, and this need set the tone for the coming sessions.

In the next sessions we worked on empathy and reflective listening. Then I discovered Rogerian rhetoric. This is a method of discussing controversial topics in which no one can state his or her own position until successfully restating the opponent's position—to the satisfaction of the opponent. If another intense discussion arose, I thought that we could resort to Rogerian rhetoric. This would surely slow things down and force understanding before moving on. But I was disappointed: I'd lost the sense of freedom. Class attendance was uneven.

Somewhere along the way, two students who had played little role in the tense discussion spoke to me about an exam. Rhonda was an African-American student and employed mother of three, and Jennifer was a white student active in the student association. They volunteered their views on the tense class session: They thought the tension wasn't really a racial issue. I also saw that much tension was a result of an isolated subgroup, and over the next several weeks, Zackery and John were often missing from class. I tried to connect with them. I spoke with Zackery before class one day and he assured me he seldom missed class. However, 15 minutes after I started the session, he was not present. John sulked during one class when I showed a video. He couldn't possibly see the screen from the corner behind the projection booth and I motioned for him to come forward. He declined but looked depressed.

After empathy and Rogerian rhetoric, I turned to an ethnic exercise that had always produced an opening to personal aspects of diversity in my classes. Students traced their ancestors, elicited the response of others to their ancestors, and examined their family strengths. Ethnicity applies to everyone, although white students may take it for granted more than people of color who must deal with racism and discrimination. During the next session, I introduced the exercise by explaining the clumsiness and travesty of the simple census classification system that forces people into a few categories. I stressed our own diversity—the multiple ethnic influences that were part of most families and the inadequacy of any classification system.

The session was good. I was delighted that Zackery presented first. This indeed was a shift, since he had been absent a lot over the past several weeks. He was eloquent: he spoke of White and Black ancestors, including a famous political figure. Estella spoke about listing herself as Mexican-American, but her heritage was really Native American and Spanish, and she and her ancestors were all born in the United States. Then the students digressed to a discussion of skin color, and I felt immediately uneasy. A Latino student whose family was prejudiced in favor of lighter skin introduced the topic. Others—Japanese and African-American students—also talked about their family's prejudices. But I was worried because of the sensitivity of the topic. I didn't want anyone to feel disparaged and I sharply felt my own "whiteness."

Several White students entered into the discussion during this session, telling of their own European-American heritage. Marina in particular was a recent immigrant and wanted to tell the story of her immigration from Russia. She was clear that she had not been discriminated against because she was white. After class, she approached José saying she felt guilty because she hadn't had to deal with ethnic discrimination. Again, I recognized this as a necessary and constructive part of the discussion. But I felt uneasy because so many students had been critical of the previous tense discussion. Miraculously, the response was a complete re-

versal. Students approached me in the hall after class to tell me how much they had enjoyed the session. I tried to calm myself and told them we would continue on the topic during the next session.

It was the second session of the "ethnic exploration" exercise that was beyond my imagination. I must admit, I had feared a repeat of tense conversations and had daydreamed a solution in which I took John's hand and brought him to the front of the class, calming him and allowing him to tell his side without the edge of anger. In my own WASP family, I tried for a mediator role when tensions were high.

I opened the class by summarizing common reactions to the exercise: bicultural students sometimes feel they belonged to both and neither group; minority students may need to tell their story of discrimination; and White students sometimes feel guilty or like "ethnic orphans," taking ethnicity for granted. I looked out at the class. In this session there were close to forty students whereas in the previous session there had been a little over twenty. I had planned to say more but I didn't. They were expectant and full of their own words and I invited them to speak. After a tentative hush, Nancy, an effusive and warm White woman came forward and told her story, drawing her genealogy on the board. We all applauded as we had the previous session for her risk taking and contribution to the class.

"Next?" I said. I had already attempted to rid the room of the projection box obstacle by bringing the seats somewhat forward. To my surprise, John, who was usually barely visible, was sitting in front of the booth instead of behind it. He raised his hand and when I called on him, he walked slowly to the front of the room. He started tentatively and then said, "I want to apologize to the class." He explained that he realized some people felt threatened by his behavior during the child discipline discussion. All eyes were fixed on him and when he paused, the class applauded. I stepped in to say, "It took a lot of courage to come forward and apologize." As he continued, I was again looking at the faces of his fellow students. Rhonda was smiling with pride at him. Jennifer, who sometimes looked sullen, was also looking with pride at him. Somewhere along the line, he said how different we all were, "We have to all get along." These words came back to me as a primal inter-ethnic cry for unity since Rodney King had said the same words after being beaten by the police and after the resultant wrenching Los Angeles riots in 1992. When he was finished the class clapped again and he returned to his seat—in front of the projection booth.

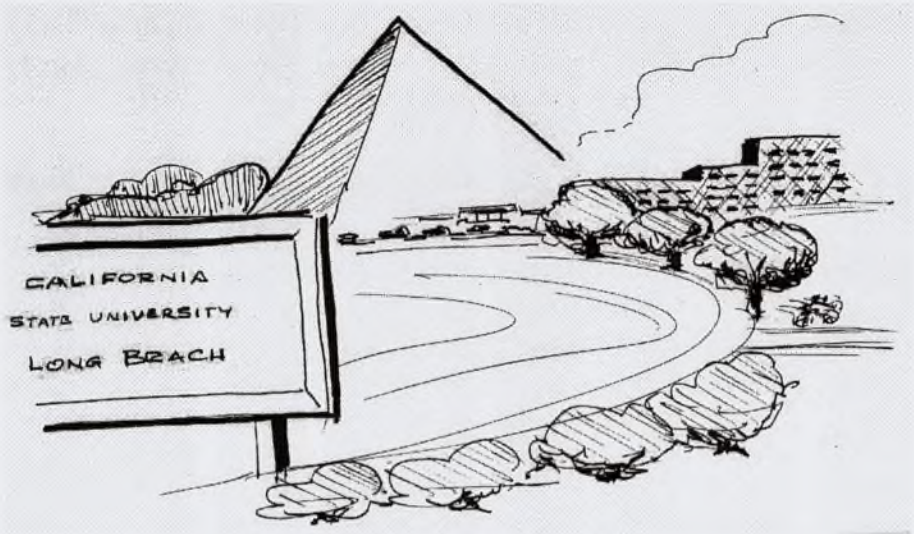
And then they spoke, one after another. Students took turns coming to the front of the class. One told how she emigrated from Rumania to escape communism. Two students discovered they had come from towns nearby in Mexico. Fumiko, a Japanese student, told of her marriage to an American husband. She had tried being a traditional wife at first, serving him, and he wasn't used to being given so much help. He asked her, "Do you think I'm disabled?" Her presentation was polished, humorous, and the class roared with laughter as she described some of the misunderstood phrases and words during her early months learning English. Then came Melanie, a European-American student who had no sense of heritage. "I was adopted. Although I love my adoptive parents, I feel I have no biological heritage. I'm fascinated with family resemblance, because I don't know anything about my genetic ties." The class ended with Tenoa, a Samoan student who has a German relative somewhere in his past and whose entire extended family lived together.

When our class time was gone, I asked how many more wanted to speak. Again hands went up and I promised to return again to the topic. As the class closed, I explained to them that I had felt excited about teaching undergraduates partly because of their diversity, and that I had been disappointed by the constraints that came in the aftermath of the tense family discipline discussion. I told them how deeply grateful I was

that John came forward, and how satisfied the session had made me. Applause again. I walked out of class into another world, found a colleague, and burst into tears... tears of pleasure at their pride, the complexity of their allegiances, and their disarming portrayal of family life. This was a scenario even better than I had imagined, and John's heroism had carried the day.

The story wasn't only a story about my class. There was a well-functioning institutional network of concerned faculty and administrators that provided a backdrop against which my class drama took place. Faculty had discussed the "difficult class of undergraduates." Different approaches had been put forward to deal with the subgrouping and dissonance in this group of students. Some of the groundwork for the shift took place in field seminar, where students revisited the tension that had erupted in my class. The result had been additional conflict and some counseling of students. John had been encouraged to take a chance with the other students and to come forward with his own feelings. And he did, in an effective and dramatic way in my class session.

This was a turning point for my class as it was for me—a point of inclusion and unity, of belonging in social work, belonging to this group of students, belonging in a complex multicultural world. For me it was one glorious event to symbolize our shared need to belong to the family of humans. It also symbolized the wondrous and unexpected experiences which can unfold and which exceed expectations. It bears testimony to the versatility, resilience, and creativity of people in situations, struggling with daily challenges. There were lessons about teaching too: This class cued me to new areas of controversy, which I have since revisited. It led me to expect and embrace conflict from possibly irreconcilable and deeply held cultural perspectives. The class was a demonstration of the multiple classroom styles and expectations of today's vibrant, diverse students and an example of the creative potential that emerges in the face of diversity. Living in Los Angeles, as its population character has shifted and it has become an international city, I have often felt that I am part of an important phase of history. I'm the teacher in title, but really I'm the learner, privileged to be part of these shifting times. □



Calling Students to Serve the Homeless: The Reflective Research Story

The effective social work researcher engages in systematic, objective, deductive, quantifiable, value-free, self-less, and emotionally placid scientific inquiry. At least that's the lesson I was taught when reading hundreds of research studies during my graduate and doctoral education. And as I began my dissertation, I learned that the lesson was an apostle's creed, a dogma to be embraced and challenged only at risk of excommunication. My first major independent research project in the early 1990s undermined all my convictions in this true faith. The following narrative highlights some of the interactional dilemmas, cognitive puzzles, and distressing emotions that led me to a more complex understanding of the scientific enterprise.

by
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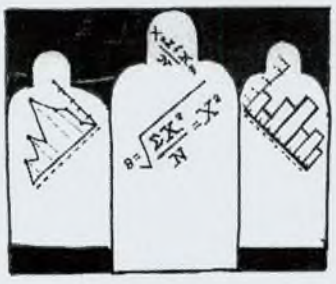

Background for the Reflective Story

Social work research can contribute both to the knowledge base of the profession and to the self-understanding of the researcher. Typically, however, our colleagues, journal editors, and sponsors of research do not encourage research processes and accounts that fully report what was actually done and how subjective factors affected the inquiry, the researcher's hunches, and the actualities of scientific inquiry including the false starts, miscues, minor setbacks, and other variations from the original plan. As social work practitioners we use various writing devices such as case notes, process recordings, case studies, critical incident analyses, written supervisory agendas, diaries, logs, and practice stories in order both to achieve agency purposes and to further our professional growth. These tools enhance professional reflection and reflective practice.

While our profession promotes reflective practice, how are we encouraging reflective research? We are not. My professional socialization, for example, prohibited such an approach to research. One research instructor brought me to the attention of the school's dean for using the pronoun "I" in a research report. During his long tenure as Director of the Ph.D. program, another research mentor persuasively directed me to a positivist research study (his implied message: "This is the only legitimate form of research"). He clearly indicated to some of my bolder peers that innovative studies or accounts of those studies would not be tolerated (his explicit message: "Do it my way or I will guarantee that it will take you many years to complete your dissertation").

The dictates of conventional social science writing seem to preclude narration by the researcher as a whole person participating with others in a particular research environment. Social work researchers continually think, sense, and feel as they inquire. They are influenced by their personal values and they are responsive to the pressures and constraints presented by the research setting. Researchers probably use their imagination in all phases of a project. They fre-

quently struggle to manage their emotions, whether positive or negative, emotions such as anger, amusement, anxiety, loneliness, affection, fear, trust and mistrust, excitement. Yet, I have found that many frown on accounts of these complex and almost invisible aspects of the research process.

Fortunately, I am not alone in questioning the code of conduct by which errant researchers of earlier generations were disciplined. Postmodern scholars have called into question the entire way that we generate knowledge. They invite us to examine the socially conservative, power-maintaining practices of the leaders of our scientific communities, universities, and other knowledge industries. They also suggest that control over the forms of representation of scientific activity (the nature of an acceptable research report, for example) is a way to maintain control over the way social reality is defined. Feminist researchers are supporting inquiry that gives "voice" to the researcher and to others not often heard from during the research process. Researchers committed to symbolic interaction promote a naturalistic inquiry, one requiring immersion in the lives of those studied, and one acknowledging the diverse ways a research story can be told.

Postmodernists, feminists, and symbolic interactionists gave me permission to break the old rules. My training as a social work practitioner provided a framework for such creative deviance. This narrative, then, is my effort to extend the reflection-in-action model of social work practice (Harrison, 1987; Papell & Skolnik, 1992; Pray, 1991) to research. It applies strategies used by "reflective practitioners" towards the goal of becoming a "reflective researcher." It intentionally relates the personal and practical issues that I faced during research, the compromises made during the research process, the influence of my private experience on topic choice and research efforts, the importance of social memberships—gender, occupation, social class, ethnicity—to my research decisions, and the interpersonal and organizational context of the study. In short, this story attempts to capture some of the "lived experience" of conducting scientific inquiry and to promote greater tolerance for innovative social work research reporting.

The Reflective Research Story

The following story is an account of a two-year evaluation project. Details and impressions are drawn from notes of key meetings, early drafts of research documents and reports, conversations with colleagues involved in the project, and memory. This reflective story offers a brief and alternative version of the conventional research report (Forte, 1997). As a social work researcher trained in the logical-positivist methodology, I began this project intending to follow the steps traditionally designated as essential to program evaluation (Ray, 1993). I will organize this story, however, by relating some of the dilemmas, relationship issues, contextual factors, and reflections on my not-so-step-by-step progress.

Identify the Evaluation Purpose

In the Spring of 1993, many in the United States were considering a revision of the concept "government" and a new understanding of the obligation of the nation to its poor and undervalued members. Those promoting a society committed to increasing profit for the economically clever and to eliminating sympathy for citizens less able to compete presented the loudest arguments. I felt angry at such narrow-minded Social Darwinians and worried that the quality of our community life might worsen.

During this time, two representatives of Home Base, a Newport News agency coordinating regional efforts to help the homeless, invited themselves to my undergraduate social work class. They spoke eloquently for 50 minutes, documenting the dramatic increases in the number of homeless in our area, the inability of service providers to meet client needs, and their troubled feelings about moving possessions of the newly homeless to a storage facility. They almost begged for assistance. Because my family had lost its home when my parents divorced and several of my siblings were sent to an orphanage (while I resided with an uncle), I was receptive to their plea. Also, I resisted the idea that our country should abandon its com-

mitment to mutual aid processes and systems. For their own reasons, many of my social work students were also receptive. Together, my students and I decided to recruit other volunteers.

Soon after, a sociologist colleague fortuitously gave me a Request for Proposal. As part of the National Service movement stimulated by President Clinton, the Virginia Campus Outreach Opportunity League (VACOOL) had offered to fund innovative efforts to engage students in service learning. The sociologist conveyed that since the funds available were meager (less than $3000 per year) and the topic was not academically prestigious, the project did not merit her attention. However, as a younger pre-tenure social work professor, I might consider it. For several weeks, I felt much ambivalence. On the "no" side, other teaching, service, and scholarship duties would be more difficult if I took on this project. My worst vision—I would be distracted from accumulating the dossier evidence ensuring tenure. At least, failure would damage my fragile reputation. (How trivial these concerns seem now when weighed against the needs of people sleeping on concrete and eating endless meals of macaroni and cheese.) On the "yes" side, there was a louder inner calling. Our program chair had been offering an innovative "Volunteer Services" course that could be expanded with VACOOL help, so I was amenable to the idea of mobilizing students. Symbolic interactionists, my favorite theorists, were doing interesting work on altruism that I might use for this project (Piliavin & Callero, 1991). Moreover, I had fond memories from my earlier efforts as agency director when I worked to forge school-agency partnerships and recruit volunteers on behalf of persons with serious mental disorders. Finally, raised Catholic, the oldest of five, I had a strong sense of responsibility for others. Recognizing that little additional government aid was forthcoming, I anticipated irritating guilt pangs if I said no and looked forward to the moments of pride associated with meaningful service if I said yes.

From such personal and interpersonal deliberations and assurances of help from several social work students and faculty, a sense of purpose emerged. We agreed to design and implement a one-year pilot project involving Christopher Newport University (CNU) students and area agencies serving the homeless. Our ambitions were not modest. We hoped to increase student commitment to service, aid service providers in helping the homeless, and start a campus-wide service-learning center.

Establish a Research Team or Organization

Contrary to the stereotype of the lonely researcher pursuing his or her individual dream, our inquiry involved many people. Trained at the graduate level in group work, I recognized the power and excitement of creative group collaboration. As a doctoral student, I participated on a research team organized by an industrious researcher. That team effort was successful and served as a model for later research teams that I led, teams composed of graduate social work students. As a field instructor with 10 years experience, I also knew that students can bring a fresh perspective and vitality to any venture led by more seasoned social workers. VACOOL's Request for Proposal required student involvement in every aspect of the program and its evaluation. Therefore, I decided to create a three-person research team including myself and two social work seniors. Additionally, to maximize the involvement of the local practice community and the university, we created a project advisory board of 14 concerned social workers, faculty, student life administrators, and students.

Unfortunately, we did not anticipate some group composition problems. I am White, male, and 45. The two students were White, female, and in their early twenties. Later, I discovered that I had underestimated possible difficulties related to differences in social position (full-time, full -pay professor contrasted to full-time, minimal pay, meager stipend students). The students were not aware of issues of the accountability and program reputation foremost in my mind. The team struggled to agree on the desirable level of commitment and time and energy expenditures. The students argued that they wanted to do more but were limited by other school obligations, while I believed that without more effort on

their part our successes would be very limited.

Naively, I also failed to foresee all the research implications of developing a team that would both implement the program and evaluate it. In regard to mixing the two roles, our VACOOL research consultant advised us to consider the pros (higher level of enthusiasm and rapport with study participants if we collected our own evaluative data) and the cons (research bias and expectancy effects that could weaken the validity of evaluative conclusions based on data collected by program administrators). In short, he suggested that we only implement the program and leave program evaluation to an outside expert. After informal weighing of our options, we discovered that there was no money for more "neutral" evaluators and that no faculty would volunteer for the job. We felt compelled to assume both administrative and evaluative duties.

My group-work teachers had taught me the use of symbols and labels in fostering group solidarity. As the first step in creating a group culture and sense of project identity, the team and social work program director deliberated until we arrived at a suitable name. We decided to call ourselves Creative Response Empowering Worthwhile Volunteer Activity (CREW-VA). "CREW" had an association to the university's proximity to the James River and to the image of energetic and precise rowers. "Empowering" symbolized the social work auspices of the program, and "VA" placed us in our home state.

Decide on What Outcomes Are Being Evaluated

After approving our proposal, VACOOL orchestrated a planning session for participating colleges. As a new funding organization committed to programs harshly criticized by conservative politicians, VACOOL was determined to be accountable. It mandated that our outcome data would include counts of students involved, service hours, number of service recipients, and of collateral support volunteered, and also include extensive demographic and academic information about all volunteers. Recording requirements included regular monthly reports with three major seasonal assessments. My students and I already felt overwhelmed and wondered how we could develop and support a new program while collecting so many numbers. The difficulties of satisfactorily documenting our achievements never lessened.

As a researcher hoping to demonstrate the utility of the symbolic interactionist framework, I believed that we might accomplish more than simple increases in service activities. Piliavin and Callero (1991) developed a field-tested conceptual model for understanding the process by which novices develop a commitment to the volunteer role and service identity. Their identification of key variables—community support, the development of interactional capacities, and personal transformation in internalized norms, volunteer role salience, and self-identifications—seemed a helpful way to organize program goals. Reluctant to forsake my theoretical bias, I hoped that our use of such a framework would recruit more social workers to the symbolic interactionist school.

Unfortunately, my excitement about the framework and theory-driven evaluation was only partially shared. A helpful social work research consultant at the annual Bachelor of Social Work Program Directors conference liked the social constructionist view of social problems and gave a strong endorsement. The VACOOL psychologist/research consultant wondered about the complexity of the framework and about problems related to operationalizing key concepts. Students were generally unfamiliar with symbolic interactionist tenets and concepts. Known by my Italian-American and Irish-American loved ones by the Italian word for "thick headed," I was not deterred.

Decide on the Standards of Success

Being a novice program evaluator with beginning-level student researchers, I felt that we were continually improvising. What would qualify as a program success? Scripts for our action were unavailable. VACOOL had no information about pilot programs offered at small liberal arts colleges like ours—located in a suburban area populated mostly by lower working class white students who often attended college while they held down part-time jobs and tended to their families. No VACOOL grantee had focused attention on the homeless, a population that many students find

scary, incomprehensible, or undeserving. We knew of no published research report on our kind of project that we might use as a model. How eagerly might our students respond to a call for service to the homeless? Since I enjoyed the new and innovative as well as the tried and true, the extemporaneous as well as the routinized, I felt scared but also pleasingly challenged.

Our practical concern, however, was "what might we actually achieve?" The VACOOL director wanted specific estimates for each of the outcome categories. My previous experience as an administrator in a mental health clubhouse provided some guidance. There, the executive director's motto for dealing with demanding bureaucracies was "when in doubt, make it up and trust that you can deal with the consequences later." Such administrative folk wisdom seemed relevant. So, we guessed. We guessed on the high side and hoped to avoid embarrassment at the end of the evaluation year. Ironically, this became a powerful motivating factor and fortified our determination to triumph.

Choose and Select a Research Design

Rigor in the research design requires control of all extraneous factors. Many controls (random sample, laboratory conditions, multiple measurements) can be bought. However, little money was available to our service-learning pilot program. Painful compromises were inevitable—painful to a new professor equaling diminished likelihood of publication of the final report in a top-level journal. We had no list of all potential student volunteers nor any likelihood that an experimental procedure with random sampling and random assignment was doable. A non-probability approach was necessary. We were uncertain whether we could obtain any sizable pool of students, let alone enough for a control and an experimental group. Thus, random assignment was impossible. And we doubted that students would cooperate in single-system repeated measurements over the program's course or in a follow-up after graduation day. So, we settled for a pre- and post-intervention quasi-experimental strategy. Frequent consultation with the VACOOL consultant and one invaluable 90-minute consultation with the BPD expert fleshed out the sketchy details of our original design. Finally, extensive qualitative data collection and analysis—although encouraged by VACOOL and valued by our team—was beyond our capabilities. So with a forced sense of humility, we planned a small pilot study.

Develop a Sampling Strategy

Brainstorming an alternative to random sampling, the research team decided to compare a convenience sample of CREW-VA recruits with a purposive sample of seasoned VACOOL volunteer program leaders. The purposive sample would consist of college students who not only had a history of volunteering but were so committed to service that they were recognized statewide for leadership. In theory, their scores on our measurement package could serve as a standard of full commitment to service. CREW-VA recruits would progress from novice to full-fledged volunteers emulating the highly experienced leaders. All VACOOL service leaders were invited to a two-day conference in the Virginia mountains in late Fall 1993 and thus, with minimal trouble, we expected to administer our survey instrument to over 40 mature volunteers. This plan looked great on paper.

The day before the conference, the largest state snowfall in five years blocked all access to the retreat. We listened to the radio for hours hoping for an indication that the highways had been cleared of snow. Weather conditions did not cooperate and the conference was canceled. Disappointed, we settled on a much less desirable quota approach to sampling. In the end, we sampled a small but equal number of CREW-VA volunteers and of Circle K volunteers (Circle K, a national organization, offers altruistic college students an established support mechanism for ongoing community service). And we hoped that the comparisons between our volunteers and Circle K members would be informative.

In our original strategizing about sampling, we aimed also to attract faculty and students of all disciplines, both genders, and various ethnic-racial memberships. Despite creative recruiting tactics (rewards for volunteers who enticed their friends, school newspapers stories, frequent e-mail announcements, and students masquerading as homeless women with cardboard advertisements for the program), our final CREW-

VA group was hardly representative of the university. Our campus, and consequently our program, had too few people of color. Moreover, the disposition towards altruistic activity seemed distributed at the University in patterns suggestive of the whole country. Young female students attracted to the helping professions (social work and psychology) and to sociology accepted most of the service burden. No male served on the research team or the Advisory Board. Despite numerous requests, we could not convince one of 20 business faculty to offer a 50 minute presentation on the economics of homelessness. The research team members and I struggled to contain our dismay, our anger, and our critical feelings towards the non-volunteer "free riders" at our university.

Select Measurement Tools

While symbolic inter-actionists have developed grounded theories and interesting, sensitizing concepts, most are allergic to operationalizations. Using symbolic interaction as a base for a mostly quantitative evaluation project was tricky. Fortunately, Piliavin and Callero (1991) had done some groundwork in specifying measurement strategies for many aspects of the "transformation to an altruistic identity." These we borrowed. However, they failed to provide evidence that their ad hoc measurement procedures had validity and reliability. Review of Corcoran and Fischer's (1987) measurement book and other collections of social work measurement tools indicated that there were few validated competitors available for appraising goal achievement. Since time constraints made a pilot test of the instruments impractical, the Piliavin and Callero tools were used as they were.

Several supplemental tools were chosen but here, too, compromises were made. The self-report altruism scale seemed solid but had an item that team members and volunteers considered odd. It equated disposition to service with frequency of blood giving. We left it in. A scale appraising the congruence between respondent's image of the volunteer role and his or her self-image used a complex semantic differential format, one that later proved perplexing to many of our volunteers. So, its format had to be slightly changed for the post-test measurement.

Decide on Specifics of Data Collection

With hindsight, it is clear that our data-collection plan was too ambitious. Our overall survey instrument was eight pages long and took almost thirty minutes to complete. Probably, because of the rapport felt with the research team, study participants obliged and only voiced soft grumbling. We also planned to meet regularly with all volunteers and collect data about program integrity—quality of match up, frequency of service activity, and so on. Twenty students could fit volunteering but not support groups into their busy schedules. Attendance was so low that we improvised a back-up monthly phone call system. Ongoing weekly service was the mode of choice, but due to students' busy schedules, we created and monitored several full-day one-time projects. We also anticipated that it would be relatively easy to collect data from our comparison group—20 members of Circle K. However, concurrent with our evaluation project their club went through a leadership crisis. A faculty advisor quit and a new student assumed the president's position. Club attendance was very sporadic. Numerous follow-ups were required to obtain pre- and post-program data from all of Circle K. My student research assistants nearly resigned over these data gathering difficulties.

Our plan might have paid closer attention to temporal issues, for example, the typical semester calendar and its possible influence on data collecting. At semester's beginning, the pretest period, students had few competing demands and were very excited about our service-learning program. At semester's end, students were swamped with term paper and exam expectations. The initial "halo effect" and final "reverse halo" effect appeared to affect our findings dramatically.

Here is a brief alternative portrait. The reflective research story so far reports on mistakes, mishaps, and troubling emotions.

Such research difficulties and departures from the ideal emerge most vividly during recollection. However, positive images also emerge. By the end of the first semester, our team was proud of some notable accomplishments. The advisory board had met three times to assist in program design. Volunteers had conducted a remarkably successful fall coat drive for homeless children and an extravagant Christmas party and meal for a dozen homeless families. (Imagine here the dozen posters of homelessness drawn by the children and displayed through the campus center. Imagine also the collection of hundreds of coats and sweaters to be distributed at the local shelter.) CREW-VA had attracted a dedicated core of service learners and the plan for the formal evaluation of the second semester service learning seminar seemed promising.

Develop or describe the treatment/program.

I dreamed of finding a detailed intervention protocol like Sheldon Rose's unpublished 20-page curriculum for multi-modal stress management groups. While Piliavin and Callero's (1991) model offered a framework for program goals, it offered no guidance for developing the intervention. Only after our study have some symbolic interactionists returned to their roots as applied sociologists. A careful review of the social work literature provided little help. In fact, not only have social workers failed to develop detailed and tested models of altruistic socialization, the literature indicates conflicting views on the value of supplementing social work efforts with volunteerism.

Drawing on my group work training and the school's flexibility in offering innovative "topics" seminar courses, I decided on a sixteen-week structured and educational service-learning class on "Homelessness." With the help of student assistants and two social work faculty, we developed a clear, organized scheme for the class-based socialization process. Conceptually, this included recruiting, showing and shaping, placing, certifying, and internalizing as the key phases. This was straightforward. However, in terms of the details, we took a large leap of faith. We trusted in our capacity to create an ideal combination of didactic presentation, modeling, empathy-building activities, group support for altruism, and public and private service reflection for each seminar session. In most cases, after one class we created the lesson plan for the next week's class. To aid in determining what part of such disciplined spontaneity worked, I kept copious notes on session by session curriculum decisions and class reactions.

Obtain Approval for Human Subjects' Safeguards

Due to the nature of our topic, our self-report survey instrument, and our continuous monitoring of student reactions to our project, we anticipated few ethical problems. We had none.

We failed, however, to anticipate the length of time required to obtain the green light from our Institutional Review Board. This committee consisted of overworked faculty members who volunteered to review research proposals. They had other proposals to review. This stalled progress for three weeks.

Implement the Intervention and monitor Program integrity.

Program implementation presented expected hassles. These included coordinating seminar leadership with the two other faculty, attracting faculty for presentations on selected topics, matching students to out-of-class placements and then, trouble shooting in regard to the match, and keeping records on all this. Any time spent on dealing with such hassles meant time neglecting other academic responsibilities.

But the joys and satisfactions were great as students began to respond to the program. Three students at their own initiative spent a below-freezing night with homeless adults at a local mall. My two research assistants prepared a dramatic role-play for the other students demonstrating the way some burned-out workers callously relate to the homeless. Our reports at interim meetings with VACOOL member schools were very well received. One seminar episode was even a "peak experience." By chance, a CREW-VA volunteer had told her mother who teaches at a local grammar school and who knew of the success of the geography club in studying homelessness (They won a national competition) about our project. The geography club, composed of 4th and 5th graders, joined our seminar to

share their maps, their interview data, and their analysis of the geographical correlates of local housing problems. The following 30-minute discussion engaged three generations—the children, the college students, and the college and public school faculty—all concerned about our community, all committed to helping the homeless.

Analyze and Interpret Data

Data analysis was expedited by the use of two statistical software packages. Additionally, I am fortunate in that a famous sociological statistician works in the office next to mine. Entering and analyzing the quantitative data was, therefore, time consuming but manageable. However, at first and repeated glances, our results were disappointing. CREW-VA students had not internalized the hoped-for personal norms, empathy for the homeless. Few had fully developed a service identity. Moreover, CREW-VA students changed somewhat in many measured ways but not dramatically more than Circle K students. Failure to include enough empathy building, the brevity of student involvement, and the possibility of an artificial high in the pretest scores were all suspects explaining our minimal impact.

Yet, we couldn't believe that our program had failed. Only after working at the data analysis for more than a month, organizing VACOOL reports on basic service activity, and presenting preliminary findings at a national social work conference did we see that the program had achieved some noteworthy successes. Statistics on attendance, hours of service, number of people served, and intention to volunteer again were quite high for our type of student body. For example, almost all CREW-VA students had served more than the recommended hours and with the exception of one student starting a new job, all had indicated a desire to soon volunteer again. Several of the statements culled from transcripts of the qualitative data also indicated success (Forte, 1997). One student wrote, "This was my first actual awareness of the homelessness problem in the Peninsula region and the rest of the country. It helped me to learn the way citizens and especially private organizations are trying to deal with the problem of homelessness. Most importantly, on a personal level, this course allowed me to feel a need to volunteer in any way possible." Another volunteer wrote that the seminar increased her "awareness of the homelessness situation in the area as well as the country...the importance of [her] involvement in community projects."

Report on Evaluation Process, Findings, and Conclusions

According to the research texts, science operates as a self-correcting community and researchers are aided in the pursuit of truth by educated peer criticism. Such texts do not realize how cluttered the marketplace of ideas has become. At the first public report on our project, a national conference of 500 plus social workers, only five (none of them researchers) attended. Perhaps the working title, "Calling students to serve in a capitalistic society," scared them off. Perhaps, the competing workshops were more "jazzy." Maybe social workers don't care much about research. Yet, despite the small turn out, participant views were quite useful. Sadly, VACOOL's reactions to the final program report were also limited in that the director took a new job and the contract with the research consultant ended.

Plan Strategy for Knowledge Utilization

Choosing a research topic like "Service to the Homeless" reflected our hopes to lessen local suffering and to make sympathy for the downtrodden more popular. Based on the pilot project, a detailed budget and proposal for a staffed University service-learning center was presented formally to the University president. He was impressed and promised to find us $30,000. But before he could act on his promise, the new Republican Governor challenged our University restructuring plan and threatened to withhold essential funds. Political battle beckoned and service-learning disappeared from the president's priority list. The next president has had no interest in funding a service-learning center.

However, our story continues. A campus minister inspired by the CREW-VA pilot project is facilitating varied service-learning projects. We have presented information about our project at one regional conference for social work students and one for service-learning organizations.

Many service-learning programs survive, although with limited funding, and conservatives may still criticize national service programs, but more students are pitching in to help.

Lessons

My reflective research story, as an exercise in professional risk taking, is an effort to demonstrate that research writing might serve to integrate the dichotomies identified by the profession. In this story telling, I learned that objectivity and subjectivity, deduction and induction, rationality and imagination, practice and research, reflection and action are intertwined during the research process. If I were to live the experience again I would, of course, do so differently. The story is based primarily on retrospection and includes only my viewpoint as the researcher, thus omitting other important and perhaps more critical voices like those of my research assistants and the study participants. Diverse viewpoints should be solicited. Nevertheless, this story brings to the forefront of social science doing and writing, ingredients previously suppressed or ignored. These include self processes, social interaction, organizational and environmental influences, imagination and creative problem solving, and ongoing crisis management.

With the conclusion of the CREW-VA pilot project, my emotional roller coaster ride was over. I gained a richer appreciation for the complexity of altruistic socialization, the difficulty of conducting an intervention research project, and the value of modest gains. In the wrestling match between my despair over our society's cruelty and indifference and my hope for progressive changes, there is not yet a victor. Nevertheless, I learned that, although prevalent, cynicism, apathy, and alienation are not inevitable outcomes of life in modern society. A civil society is possible, and as a social worker I can successfully call others to the joys and satisfactions of engagement in and service to their communities.

Since telling this story, I have revised my research methods assignments so students include reflections on their literature search, proposal development, and mini-research project. Several of the other lessons gleaned from this scientific inquiry will seem commonplace to reflective social work practitioners: Pay attention to the social, cultural, and physical context of research action; monitor not only the observable behaviors of participants in a research study but also their private thinking, feeling, and dreaming. As with practice, the effective researcher must demonstrate cultural sensitivity and competency. Good social work research involves the activation of the mutual aid inclinations of all collaborators.

Several insights may appear a bit more novel. First, methodological limitations related to the competencies of the researcher or scarce resources need not undermine enthusiastic, clever, diligent researchers. For example, researchers who search their personal autobiography may find experiences analogous to central research tasks and use such history to construct efficacious lines of action in the present. Second, those claiming a monopoly on the formula for good research and good research writing do not always serve the interests of the profession. We need our research rebels, innovators, and troublemakers, too. Lastly, the way we write about our research says as much about how we conceive of social work science as the way we conduct research. In our pluralistic social universe, it is important to remember that there are multiple ways to know and numerous ways to report on this knowing. Perhaps stories like this one attempting to integrate standard research report elements—private conversations in the researcher's mind and public conversations among research participants—can play a part in fostering effective research and creating reflective researchers.

Our profession prides itself on its appreciation of diversity. Yet, my impression is that much of our research and writing conventions require a uniformity and orthodoxy that stifle such diversity. Research, as currently practiced, reported, and rated, has not resulted in the effectiveness, respectability, or social justice desired by most social workers. Innovative approaches to research writing as a supplement to conventional research writing offer the profession new resources for resolving differences over philosophy of science issues related to ontology, epistemology, and

methodology for building knowledge that interests a new generation of social workers in scientific practice and for promoting "reflective" research. Let the story telling begin. □

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Treading Water: A Social Worker's Personal Narrative

I joined thousands of other community volunteers who were attempting to prevent an epic flood during the spring of 1997 in Grand Forks, North Dakota. The volunteer fight was strong, but the battle was lost and the flood resulted in 3.6 billion dollars in damage. This paper describes the author's professional social work and personal response to a natural disaster. It will provide a general description of how disaster evacuation and recovery occurred. It will also describe my experiences as a victim/survivor of the flood, including conflicts I experienced in balancing my personal responsibilities with my professional obligations to assist in times of public emergencies.

by
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Introduction to the Disasters

They were brutal and deadly, Andy, Betty, Christopher, Doris, Elmo, Franzi, Gust, and Hannah. But the most brutal was Hannah, which was a storm with the force of an Atlantic hurricane and the cold of an Arctic night (Jacobs, 1997). In Grand Forks, North Dakota, we name our blizzards like others name their hurricanes. These eight blizzards contributed to an accumulation of over 100 inches of snow in the Red River Valley during the winter months of 1996/1997 (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1998). Two weeks following Hannah, on April 19, 1997, the residents of Grand Forks experienced the worst flood on record as the snow began to melt. Seventy-five percent of the city was inundated with water and most of the 50,000 residents, including me and my family, evacuated to all corners of the country. A smaller city located across the river, East Grand Forks, Minnesota, suffered an even worse fate with all its 9,000 residents being evacuated. The population of rural communities in the area doubled as Grand Forks residents evacuated to towns nearby. During the afternoon of April 19, while the evacuation was in progress, a fire of historic proportions began in downtown Grand Forks, eventually destroying 11 buildings (Jacobs, 1997). Within only a few hours, two once thriving communities were decimated.

On April 28, 1997, the day after my return to our flooded house, my friend, Marcia Harris, who was a reporter working for the Grand Forks Herald reported:
"It's all on the first floor, Marcia," Thom said. She took me inside, under balloons hanging in the doorway. The balloons were from son Evan's first Communion party just two weeks ago. I had helped Thom pick out the decorations. "Look at this. Sewage and mud all over," she said. Several pairs of ruined boots sat in the entranceway. A water line showed that the filthy water had come up at least three inches in their living room.

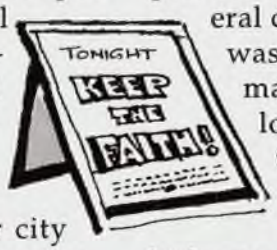
"The couch clearly was ruined. While Al cleaned out the refrigerators and freezers—"Fish is the worst. Tell people that"—Thom and I went into the boys' rooms. Wearing rubber boots, we squished our way

across the ruined carpet to the bedrooms. Luke, 6, had tried to save some of his things by stacking them on his bed. But some of his toys were on the floor of his closet. Fire trucks, hot wheels, a bag of books and tapes. Maybe some toys, in plastic tubs, could be washed with bleach and salvaged. It was hard to say. Wearing rubber gloves, Thom picked up Luke's soaked "Thomas the Tank Engine" Hat. Luke has been crazy about trains all of his young life. That's when she lost it. My heart broke, and I held her, but her arms hung by her sides. "We can't even hug our friends," Thom said. "We're afraid we'll contaminate them." We went into Evan's room. He is 8 and had managed to get most of his toys out of harms way. Thom looked in a fish tank. "They're alive!" she said, and she fed them. Back in Luke's room, on the floor, sopping wet, was the "Discovery Box of Stars." It was my Christmas gift to Luke this year. I cry as I write this. The flood has come home to me.

Loss of Faith

The disaster not only destroyed property and the personal financial security of much of the Grand Forks population, it also destroyed the confidence of many hearty North Dakotans and Minnesotans who believed that planning and hard work would avert any flooding. The people of North Dakota and Minnesota are generally proud of their abilities to weather any storm and to survive the harshest of winters. The spring disaster of 1997, however, left in its path thousands of people who will spend the next few decades rebuilding their lives, their homes, and their communities.

Prior to the flood, residents of Grand Forks had little fear that a monumental disaster might occur. Flood forecasts were very similar to the 1979 flood which had reached the 49-foot level, and we were clearly more prepared in 1997. It was expected that, at most, only low lying areas of the city would be flooded. Community leaders were confident that media reports and National Weather Service forecasts were accurate. We believed that we were doing everything necessary to prepare for the 50-foot flood crest predicted by the National Weather Service to occur on April 15. We had faith in the technology used by the National Weather Service and we believed, with our city leaders, that the sandbagging effort had created plenty of available freeboard on the top of our dikes. But we were not prepared for the final 54-foot flood crest.



The dikes, in spite of the best of human efforts, were breached, resulting in water covering all of East Grand Forks and most of Grand Forks in depths from inches to twenty feet. Water entered the cities by river, over land, and through storm sewers. The United States Department of Commerce reports that estimated damages from the fire and flood, which covered 2,200 square miles in North Dakota and Minnesota, totaled about $4 billion, with $3.6 billion occurring in the immediate vicinity of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1998). The Red River in Grand Forks was three miles wide at points where it normally is only 50 yards wide. One-hundred and forty thousand cubic feet/second of water ran through the middle of our two towns in a channel that was accustomed to only 780 cubic feet/second (City of Grand Forks, 1998).

Later, during disaster recovery, many residents would question why federal and city government officials had not warned us to protect our property from this flood. Some also questioned why accessing federal disaster relief services was so difficult. At times, many of us seemed to lose faith in the institutions that once protected us. One response to this loss of faith was a production staged by young people in a local performing arts group who wrote and performed a play entitled "Keep the Faith." This play provided comic relief and heart-warming thanks to those who helped the community during initial flood recovery. The cast of the play performed to sold out audiences during several performances, and was videotaped for commercial production. It was difficult, however, to keep the faith during times of personal crisis and increased dependency on governmental agencies for disaster relief.

Disaster Preparedness: Personal and Professional Response

As a social worker and university professor who teaches community practice, I knew I had a professional responsibility to assist with community preparations for the flood. Moreover, I did not want to be perceived as an educator who did not care about the concerns of the "real world" of social work practice. So in early April of 1997, when I received a telephone call from a good friend and social work colleague requesting that I arrange for student volunteers to assist in the development and staffing of a local flood evacuation center, I immediately agreed. My friend had been assigned to work with the American Red Cross. If disaster struck, these centers would be necessary as a temporary resource for individuals residing in low lying areas. Clearly, our preparations proceeded with the strong underlying belief that any breach in the dikes would be minor and limited to a small area of town (Johnson, 1997). The primary concern expressed at our early meetings was how our local volunteers could help adjacent rural communities which were at greater risk of flooding. Ironically, they ended up helping us.

My immediate responsibility was to help establish an evacuation center in Grafton, a rural community located 45 miles north of Grand Forks. It was anticipated that this community, located on a tributary of the Red River, would experience more severe flooding than Grand Forks. After making some preliminary contacts to assure that my students and I would be welcomed as volunteers, I began making arrangements for students to accompany me and assist with this work. Their interest and commitment to the volunteer project was exhilarating. Clearly, participation in the project would be excellent preparation for generalist social work practice (Brustad, 1997). It would be an opportunity to fulfill a community need and work with local human service providers, not something I could have expected students to do without my direct involvement. As for myself, I was confident I would be able to serve as a volunteer because, unlike many others, my home was not located in the 100-year flood plain. Therefore, I wouldn't have to worry about saving my property in the event of a breach in the dike.

The evacuation center in Grafton was only one of the projects in which I became involved. Volunteers were needed for a variety of flood-prevention tasks, although much of this activity was not directly social work related. I also helped out at the local "Sandbag Central" which began operation in March. At Sandbag Central, a machine with octopus shaped appendages poured massive quantities of sand into bags held by volunteers at the beginning of an assembly line. The bags were tied, placed on pallets, put in trucks, and distributed throughout the city, where they were placed on the top of clay dikes, after the snow was removed.

Community members were also assisting colleagues and friends who resided along the river. A former colleague, now retired from the Department of Social Work, needed friends to lay sandbags in his back yard, which faced the quickly rising Red River. Several social work faculty, including myself and students in the undergraduate social work program, assisted him and his family by joining an existing sandbag line. The water was splashing up against his dike and it was difficult to stand on the existing sandbags to lay more heavy bags.

Later that same evening, I attended a family fun night at my children's school where the only adult conversation was about the possibility of flooding and how we all needed to do more sandbagging. There was growing concern about how to balance family, work, and community responsibilities. This balance was becoming more difficult as the snow melted. Then, the last blizzard of the year hit us.

Balancing Responsibilities and Exhaustion

Like other residents, I became exhausted from the need to maintain family and other work responsibilities, and at the same time to follow through with volunteer commitments. When I left Sandbag Central on the afternoon of April 4 during a fierce rain storm, other commu-

nity volunteers were laying sandbags on dikes outside in the rain to prevent flooding in a low area of town. They were the strongest and most committed of the volunteers, continuing to work as the temperature fell below freezing.

My husband, a local attorney, was returning from an out of town two-week trial and I was growing concerned about his safety while traveling in this storm. He did arrive home that weekend, just prior to the travel warnings being issued. We then lost our electricity as the temperatures began to plunge. For the next 18 hours, with below zero temperatures outside, we had no electricity in our home. Even so, we were more fortunate than some because we could stay warm with a wood stove, which we rarely use, and we were able to listen to the only radio station on air through a battery operated radio. During the week following Blizzard Hannah, the weather warmed again and I spent many hours preparing for my eldest son's April 13th First Communion. My family arrived for the event.

The Flood. . . Evacuation Begins

On the morning of April 18, we awoke to disaster warning sirens. Immediately I reported to the local evacuation center, where I had agreed to be on call in the event of an emergency. Up until this point, there had been only a few low-lying neighborhoods evacuated. When I left the house, my youngest son was crying with fear on our sofa because of the noise from the sirens and my husband was comforting him. We had just learned the previous day that he did not need skin grafts on his hand. As I drove to the evacuation center, an announcer on the car radio said that the local public schools had canceled classes for the day. I would have to rearrange my schedule so someone could be home with the children. It turned out later that all schools, including the University, would be canceled until the next fall and many students would never return to the same school.

Upon arrival at the evacuation center, I learned that the center had been moved to a location further from the river. Many people arriving at this new shelter were friends, as well as some former students. They were being evacuated from a neighborhood that I had left seven years earlier, because the home we had in that neighborhood was in the 100-year flood plain.

I assisted with the establishment of a new shelter that morning by unpacking boxes of food, putting up cots, tables, and chairs and assisting local social workers and Red Cross volunteers with registration. While registering those evacuated, I learned from an evacuee that water was now moving toward my current neighborhood, a quarter of a mile from the river. Quickly returning home, I discovered that many colleagues, friends, and family had arrived to help in our neighborhood. They had heard media reports that morning of a break in the temporary dike built only five blocks from our home.

Several other colleagues and family arrived to help us out personally. None of these people were asked to come—they just knew of our need and arrived. My brother, who lives 150 miles south, arrived with a friend to help move things from the basement and sandbag. My sister, who lives 260 miles southwest, arrived with a friend to help. We built a sandbag dike in our back yard and finished moving possessions from our basement to our main floor. We didn't bother moving things from the main floor because it was not supposed to get wet, even in the worst scenario.

Eventually, I went to Sandbag Central with a colleague and her two-year-old son to secure sandbags to place in our backyard, now dangerously close to the rising water. When we arrived at Sandbag Central, we learned that all remaining resources were needed to keep the last bridge connecting us to Minnesota open. Two other bridges had been closed due to the rising water and subsequent flooding. A truck driver reported that people were trying to take sandbags directly from his truck while he was stopped at stop signs. He was concerned about the personal safety of these residents and the panic he was witnessing among citizens. After a half hour wait and much frantic discussion, it was agreed that someone would drop sand in our back yard if I picked up the bags directly from Sandbag Central. I wondered if I was receiving a special favor because

I had worked politically with the person in charge of the sandbag distribution. When I mentioned this concern to my colleague, she assured me I should quit worrying about social justice issues and start saving my home.

As we laid sandbags, neighbors who thought we were overreacting to the possibility of flooding stopped by to assure us that our neighborhood had not flooded during the last big flood in 1979. In response, I took some remaining sandbags to a neighbor's homes and placed them in her window wells. She accepted the sandbags and I promised to remove them after the flood. I explained that I had witnessed the panic at Sandbag Central and was very concerned that our neighborhood would flood.

Later in the afternoon, my brother took our children to my mother's home, which is located near his home community. As they backed out of our driveway, the disaster warning sirens were ringing and the helicopters were blaring loudly overhead. My youngest child looked scared and tired from all his worrying during the previous evening. I didn't leave with them because I needed to stay in Grand Forks to follow through on my professional commitment to set up an evacuation center in Grafton and to protect my property. My husband agreed to stay back with me and continued to move possessions from the basement. I did wonder about the advisability of being separated from my children, but consoled myself that my family would take good care of them. The children had helped sandbag and move things in their bedrooms so they had been part of the flood prevention effort, which was important.

For the most part, I continued to sandbag with family and friends throughout our neighborhood. The flood prevention effort now appeared to be focused on laying secondary dikes with sandbags. The City Mayor asked that all liquor establishments close because of her concern about the quantity of alcohol being consumed during flood fighting efforts. Businesses were closed and there was no school, so there was opportunity for people to party.

"Please, for your safety leave at once. . ." We Are All Evacuated.

At 2:00 a.m. on April 19, we learned from a neighbor that another emergency clay dike, built the previous day and located a half a block from our home, had been breached. Water was slowly flowing into the neighborhood from the swollen river. Water was also coming up through the storm sewers. A short time later a red emergency vehicle, with lights flashing and a bull horn blaring, announced that we had to evacuate immediately. We left in a hurried, unplanned manner, taking with us an elderly neighbor to assure that she arrived safely with family. Just before we left, I called the student volunteers to inform them that it would not be safe to travel to Grafton, as planned. None of the students I called were sleeping; they were all planning to leave the city.

We planned to stay with my mother during our evacuation. When we arrived at the local evacuation center to register our plans, the director of the local human service center asked me to stay and assist with registration. I agreed. The evacuation process was very orderly, but sad. The faces of evacuees were hollow, empty, and full of disbelief and disappointment. The governor of the state arrived to tour the evacuation center. People appeared despondent and worried about the uncertainty of the situation. Many apologized for crying or being too nervous to complete a registration card. Some evacuees had been evacuated from their homes the previous day and were staying with friends in town, who were now being evacuated. One woman tearfully reported that she had been evacuated three times during a 24-hour period as she continued to relocate to various friends' homes in Grand Forks. Some parents talked about how difficult it was to get their teenage children to leave their homes. A colleague working at the shelter had reported that a parent could not get her teenage daughter out of the car into the shelter. Many of the city's teenagers had worked very hard to assist in the sandbagging effort. They could not believe that the battle had been lost and that their basement bedrooms with all their possessions still in them would be flooded. They wanted to stay and protect their property.

The greatest concern expressed by residents was that they were separated from family members. This was a difficult aspect of serving as a local volunteer in a small community. Evacuees were aware that we were acquainted with their family members, and friends were asking us about their whereabouts. I was concerned about sharing this information because I was performing in my professional capacity and would need to adhere to rules of confidentiality.

They didn't want to hear about confidentiality issues in a disaster. But in general, there was no way to locate missing family members because registrations were not entered on a computer system, only handwritten on cards. We tried to sort through the cards, but it was a difficult task because there were just too many. It was also difficult, at times, to read the handwritten information on the cards. People were very anxious and found it difficult to focus on completing a form. Clearly, a computer system to register evacuees would have been helpful.

There was also concern about the safety of pets who had been left behind. Evacuated residents were worried that they had not disconnected their power prior to leaving their home, which the City was encouraging. They were reassured that they could leave town and the City would cut off the supply of electricity when necessary. Numerous friends and acquaintances filed in from the sandbag lines in dirty clothing and without a change of clothes. Our former child care provider arrived with her family. Like many, they had to be evacuated by the National Guard because their vehicles had been flooded. People were crushed that they had lost a battle after having worked so hard to keep the city from flooding and had done little to save their own personal possessions.

One woman was experiencing problems breathing because she was allergic to animals and there were animals in the bus which had transported her to the evacuation center. She had no time to secure her medication prior to evacuation. Other evacuees had forgotten their medications or were unable to rescue adaptive equipment. Serious medical concerns were referred to the City Health Department, but there was significant confusion about what resources would be available. Free tetanus shot were being given at the evacuation center for those who decided to take the time. The next day the only local hospital was closed due to flooding.

My husband accompanied me to the Air Base because we did not want to become separated after hearing others express this concern at the last evacuation shelter. After passing Air Base security, we arrived to join other community social workers and to meet with Red Cross and Air Base personnel to determine an appropriate plan to assist the most vulnerable evacuees. A plan was designed to reach out to individuals who were at the greatest risk during evacuation, including those who had been receiving the services of the local human service center. I assisted two former students in their work. We then moved onto the hanger with a plan in place.

One of our first scenes at the cargo plane hangar was a child vomiting outside a portable toilet. The odor from the numerous portable toilets was foul. We witnessed a very large room full of people with mere walking space between the cots. Three thousand people were taking shelter in three 175,000 square foot hangars. There was no running water. Many had only the clothes they were wearing. I witnessed many pets waiting in hot vehicles, because animals were not allowed in the hangars. People were lined up to use the public phones so they could reassure family members of their safety. It was very difficult to locate anyone.

We then visited a school, also located on the Air Base, where nursing home residents and individuals with developmental disabilities were being housed. These people would need to be moved in the next 24 hours because there would be school in the building on the Monday following the evacuation. Some former clients, whom I had assisted over a decade earlier during their process of deinstitutionalization into the community, wanted to talk to me. They knew that they were being moved to an institutional setting that they had left behind many years prior.

Clearly there was a need to provide support for individu-

als who were disorientated from the experience of being evacuated and then moved into a confusing situation. There were not enough resources. A former student, now employed with a public human service agency, was providing me with directions on how to assist. She joked with me that she wanted me to critique her community work, while I took instruction from her. This was a juxtaposition which often occurred throughout flood recovery.

The Recreational Center at the Air Base was also housing evacuees who drove directly to the Base. This center was not nearly as crowded as the hangars, and there were toilet facilities as well as televisions playing live footage of the fire which had started in downtown Grand Forks. There I visited with a close friend who was watching the office building which housed her non- profit agency burn. She was also distressed about her daughter, who had severely injured her arm roller skating at the evacuation center. She was also concerned about the safety of her elderly father-in-law and the pet she had left in their vehicle.

As the sun began to set, I realized how tired I was. I needed to leave my professional obligations behind and check in on my children. Prior to leaving, I told all my friends and acquaintances to leave the base if they had a vehicle and access to cash or credit cards because we would not be returning to our homes for up to two weeks and the base accommodations were temporary. Also, I had been told by Red Cross volunteers that there would be relocation funds available through Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). At that time, the majority of evacuees had no understanding of what resources, if any, would be available to assist them during evacuation, except a cot and a hot meal provided by the Salvation Army and Red Cross. We were all beginning to realize that there was no water in the city. Also, the electrical power was threatened. There was a fire spreading out of control in the downtown area because the streets were under at least three to four feet of water. It was also clear that the flood had reached the main floor of some residents' homes, so it would probably take years to rebuild the city.

When we arrived at my mother's home, I watched the fire live on television. It was still burning and spreading when I went to bed at 3:00 in the morning, over 24 long hours after evacuation. I felt as if I had just experienced the Apocalypse. The next day we learned that early reports that my husband's law office had burned were inaccurate, but the devastation was still overwhelming. We realized the foolishness of abandoning my vehicle at our home. We also began to accept that our basement was full of water and hoped that the main floor of our home had been spared.

The following day, we were told by a radio announcer to enroll our children in a local school. This seemed important because there was almost a month and a half of the school year left and they had missed many days of school due to storm cancellations. The kids were scared and we were frustrated. We purchased new school supplies and followed through with enrollment at a local Catholic school, assured there would be no cost for tuition. I registered for a FEMA number, an essential in flood recovery, and picked up a Small Business Administration loan application at a local flood center south of Grand Forks. We were not a small business, but I was told to pick up an application anyway. I wondered why we had not secured flood insurance.

I was able to secure an office with a computer which had e-mail access at a local community college. Although I would need to complete some work-related activities during evacuation, I abandoned any thought of working professionally in flood recovery in the immediate future. I knew the tasks associated with personal flood recovery would consume my time.

It is all over the main floor . . .

During evacuation, a national Red Cross volunteer told me that the recovery process would be more difficult than evacuation. We were not unique. In fact, many lost more. Because we were unable to fit all of our damaged materials on the berm, we put some garbage in our backyard, only to learn later that the Army Corp of Engineers

would not pick up materials from alleys. All this awful garbage would need to be moved to the front yard! Clearly, I couldn't ask volunteers to help with such a dirty task, so I decided to try to hire someone. Before I could do it, 10 volunteers arrived at our door, having been told by neighbors that we needed help. They were from the Carson Corporation in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and had flown in to help residents. These people, like thousands of others, volunteered to help us by willingly moving our garbage. As neighbors arrived with equipment to assist the volunteers, I was overwhelmed by feelings of gratitude. In need of temporary housing in Grand Forks, we learned of a property that would be available June 1. Because it had only suffered six feet of water in its basement, it was made habitable quickly, and we remained there until mid August when we moved back into our partially rehabilitated home. I agreed to provide public testimony about our personal situation on video tape at the request of our United States Congressperson, who was producing a video to assist in his efforts to secure critically needed funds for disaster relief. I also testified by telephone for a United States Senator from North Dakota who was gathering support for disaster relief funds. Other community members who testified at this meeting were experiencing a much more severe hardship than my family. A local labor organizer discussed his wife's struggle with end stage cancer, how his home had been totally destroyed, and how he was planning to rebuild his life with his four children. Political advocacy was necessary. But there was also a need for neighborhood activism, as decisions were being made about what areas of town could be rebuilt and information was needed on the implications of these decisions.

Finally, there was a need for case advocacy as flood victims struggled through the maze of federal disaster relief programs. Like most in our community, I applied for federal disaster services, which required that we complete lengthy forms and wait in long lines to secure information about my status.

At the large Recovery Center, established at one of the former evacuation centers, we waited hours to see various representatives who punched our personal data into a computer network. Each technician expressed shock regarding the severity of our damage considering that we did not live in the 100-year flood plain. I wanted to cry but couldn't—I knew too many people working at the center and wanted my privacy. Ironically, only two weeks earlier, I was the bureaucrat concerned about protecting confidentiality. Keenly aware that I was now the recipient of government benefits, I was also aware that I had to place my financial security in the hands of others. Although I have trained social workers to deal with these situations and have explained to them why anger and frustration accompany clients' feelings of helplessness, almost overnight I became that difficult client, rendered into an access number punched into a computer. We did not have an advocate or case manager during our recovery. We had only numerous voices on the other end of the telephone line or individuals facing a computer screen at the Recovery Center. Many were helpful, but I was still frustrated with the bureaucratic maze that had created such an impersonal approach to such severe crisis.

Work Responsibilities

Although there was more than enough to do on the home front, during this time I also needed to maintain work responsibilities, which included serving as a liaison for summer field placements for the Department of Social Work. Summer school was going to be held and the focus of the University effort was on keeping our existing student enrollment and returning the campus to normalcy. Normalcy, though, was hard to come by. During my three-hour drive to campus the morning summer school started, there was snow in the air—in May!

I also needed to follow

through on a commitment I made to host three National Conferences in August of 1997. We did co-host the conferences with our Division of Continuing Education and also sponsored a preconference session which focused on disaster recovery. The preconference, entitled Crisis Work with Individuals and Families, was attended by 157 local professionals. The evaluation results were very positive. A national expert on rural disasters, who was planning to attend and present at the national conferences, donated her time and skill as a presenter for this preconference.

During this time, I continued to supervise and participate in the activities of social work students whose efforts were focused on assisting the community with disaster recovery. The students conducted community assessments to determine the impact of the flood on neighboring rural communities, designed a recognition ceremony for youth involved in sandbagging, conducted outreach activities for the local Salvation Army, assisted in the development of a local food cupboard, and hosted an intergenerational dialogue during the one year anniversary of the flood. In addition to supervising their work, I have been doing "flood work" of my own.

I am writing about the great flood of 1997, using my personal experiences as well as the empirical research data I have gathered. This writing will include information about lessons learned in disaster preparedness, evacuation, and recovery. I am also conducting an exploratory study to determine the human service delivery system response to the flood. This will include quantitative and qualitative analysis of respondents' perceptions of the flood evacuation and recovery.

The NASW code of ethics unequivocally states, "That in times of disaster social workers should provide emergency service "to the greatest extent possible."

Reamer (1998) states, "It may not always be feasible for social workers to devote great amounts of time and resources to provide assistance during public emergencies; their family commitments, job obligations, and financial needs also must be taken into account (p.252). An answer to this ethical dilemma must depend upon each individual's personal circumstances, the nature of the disaster, and the disaster's direct effect upon the social worker.

Upon reflection, for example, I now see that I should have spent more time with my family and not worried so much about public perception that professors are too removed from practice. I should not have separated myself from my children at the time of their evacuation. Social workers involved with evacuation efforts would have understood my absence. There have been consequences of these actions displayed in my youngest child's behavior. I should also have been more available to help my husband with our personal flood recovery. Looking back now, I can see why I made the decisions I did. My office was not flooded and I have always enjoyed working with community agencies and students. I did not wish to spend time in our flood damaged home because it was too depressing, so I left my husband there while I went to work.

I also learned that it is much easier to be a provider of services than a recipient. I did not want to trust former students with my personal problems when they arrived at my door step in their professional capacity as outreach workers. I did not want to be seen as weak in any manner because the flood had only resulted in property loss, not human loss. But I still know my FEMA number and worry that my youngest child will become distressed when sirens scream.

Finally, I learned about the kindness that came in the form of thousands of volunteers who assisted community members when we could no longer assist each other. These volunteers provided housing during evacuation and assisted with home reconstruction. They displayed human goodness and reminded many, who had lost faith, that goodness should be received and returned.

This year, I am on developmental leave from the University conducting research and writing about human service response to the flood. I am working from my partially repaired Grand Forks home because I cannot afford to travel out of state but also because I need to spend time with my family, finishing our home reconstruction, and taking my

children to piano and swimming lessons. Thanks to the flood of 1997, I will be responsible for returning the goodness I experienced and learning how to accept kindness when I am vulnerable. I have also learned the importance of placing my family first during times of personal crisis. □

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The Death of a Child at Birth

The birth of a child is perhaps the most anticipated event in life. When a child dies during the birth process, profound grief sets in for the parents and those who care about them. Helping the family grieve this loss during the first year is an important process for their future mental health.

by
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Some have called it miscarriage; some have called it silent birth or stillbirth, while others have labeled it sudden infant death (SIDS) in utero. Whatever language you use, it is in the psyche a cruel oxymoron.

I received a call from a trauma physician saying, " I'm Dr. G., please help." His voice was somewhat shaky, somewhat unclear. I wondered for a brief few seconds... was there another local tragedy? "Oh God" I said silently, "please no." While I have worked with trauma patients in the past, no one looks forward to them. They are sad, exhausting, and challenging. My small caseload had a mother dealing with her HIV-positive son, a couple who had suddenly lost their college-age daughter to a brain embolism, a single mother whose teenage child was killed in an auto accident, and a woman who had just attempted suicide. The tragedy Dr.G. was calling about was his own.

I listened... he said, "My wife is depressed and I'm worried about her... We had a baby born on February 3rd, dead." Asking for help, particularly mental health assistance, is usually not easy for physicians. They tend to be more physiologically focused. I have treated physicians in my practice but they were never the ones who made the initial call for help.

There are two types of stillbirth: fetal death in utero (FDIU) in which the baby's death is diagnosed days or weeks before delivery, and one where there is no warning or knowledge prior to the labor and delivery. This couple experienced the second type of stillbirth. I remembered how sad and depressing my earlier work with couples who had experienced stillbirth had been for me. The difference now is that I am a parent and it is hard to even allow myself to consider fully the depths of the loss. In anticipating my work with this couple, I knew my empathy would be helpful, but I felt it would be difficult to keep it in check in order for me to be therapeutically helpful. I was afraid at times that I would become sympathetic and that I would feel immobilized by their depth of sadness. I recalled a very skilled therapist retiring early because his son unexpectedly died. He had shared how he could no longer do this work because he could not listen in the same way as he had before. I assumed his grief was too painfully loud in his mind.

This article will offer the reflections and theoretical interventions I used in working with this couple through the first year after their tragedy. I had the couple take up journal writing

as a technique for venting their feelings between sessions, and to reminisce. Having used journals before, I was aware of the many benefits for the therapeutic process—safety, relaxation, spontaneity, integrity, experimentation, imagination, testing reality, integration, emotional release, self-understanding, and self-confidence (Capacchione, 1989). The quoted passages used in this article are actual excerpts written by Mrs. G. from her journal.

I saw the couple that evening. He was a somewhat overweight man of medium height. She was a thin woman. It was difficult to determine her height as she was hovered over, almost in a fetal position. They had a three-year-old son that was being cared for by their parents. She shared how she knew that the baby they were expecting was alive earlier in the day of the birth. What happened? They were very distraught. The couple entered the hospital with absolute joy-filled anticipation. What happened later would change their lives forever.

I was concerned about both of their levels of depression. The trauma physician had a strong, almost posturing presence. He felt he had to hold it together until his wife could fully function again. She was verbal and was able to discharge her sadness by crying and withdrawing. He had experienced a lingering depression that preceded this tragedy. He accepted my recommendation early in the therapy to see my psychiatric colleague who started him on antidepressants, which he responded to positively. She could have benefited from psychopharmacology, but refused to consider it.

They both had some control issues. They worried as others had about letting their feelings go, about grieving, fearing what might happen to them (Stauncher, 1994). She worried that their depression would never lift and that he would have to be on medication forever. His family had a history of depression and she worried that he would be "like them." I worried about whether she might become psychotic. She seemed fixated about something else bad happening to her or her family. I wondered if her nihilistic attitude was related to a typical Post Traumatic Stress Disorder reaction, or if it was more than that. Dr. G. worried about whether he could return to work. During the first three months of their treatment, I saw them several times a week. Sometimes the sessions would be individual sessions, while other times I would see them together.

They had been on a six-year roller coaster ride of trying to have a second child, after having one son, which made this loss even more complicated. They had prior marital conflicts and dissatisfaction related to money, stress, work, and infertility and struggled with limited interpersonal conflict resolution and communication skills. This was another blow to their relationship. My clinical experience is that some couples get stronger working through a crisis, while others fall apart.

What was it like for this physician to be in his wife's delivery room watching their baby enter the world without the long-anticipated cry? "There is a tendency to believe that somehow a mistake has been made and the infant is still revisable" (Kirkley-Best and Kellner, 1982, p. 421). Dr. G. began CPR on the baby, trying hard to breathe air, give life to this beautiful little baby girl that was his. He had performed CPR on thousands and had saved strangers along roadsides after long hours at the hospital. I tried to think about my being on the operating table as they performed a caesarian section and what my reaction would have been if this tragedy had happened to my husband and me. Despite several attempts, I could not do this mental exercise. It was too draining, too scary, too overwhelming. The depth of depression and the emotional threat left me feeling "there by the grace of God, go I." I had been one of the lucky ones.

Mrs. G. was able to share her pain with me in her first major journal entry five weeks into their treatment. "On Monday, Feb 3, 1997, our baby girl was born—still. She was beautiful. She had all of her fingers and toes and everything else that would make her appear like a normal healthy newborn. She resembled my maternal grandmother, her namesake, and had our son's chin. There are no words to describe the horror, pain, emptiness and isolation we felt on that day. My husband, an emergency physician,

tried unsuccessfully to assist in resuscitating his own child. There was nothing he could have done. She was already dead. He had saved so many lives in the past, but could not save that of his daughter. This is the burden that he has to shoulder. He had to look into my eyes and tell me that the baby we wanted and loved so much, the one we went through one full year of fertility treatments to conceive, was gone. The tests reported that our daughter died of overwhelming sepsis from Group B Streptococcus (Strep B). The bacteria came from my body. My body killed my baby girl. There was nothing I could have done. This is the burden that I have to shoulder." I offered how they both felt terribly out of control and that the first step towards healing would be to accept that neither of them did anything "wrong."

Bowlby (1980) and Parkes (1972) offer the stages of grief as shock and numbness, yearning and searching, disorganization, and reorientation. This theoretical frame seems to more fully describe the stillbirth grief process than Kubler-Ross's (1969) stages of denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. The burial was complete but the shock and numbness remained.

Shock and Numbness

They held a funeral before I began working with them. This first step of saying goodbye to Baby J. was an important one for this couple. The funeral home was sensitive and respectful. They made the right choice for themselves. Mrs. G. reflected: "The funeral home treated us with decency, humanity, and generosity. Without them, an impossible task would have been made more so. They were available at all times, allowed us to make the choices that made us most comfortable, and were genuinely caring and comforting. They accepted no fees for their services. They graciously stated, 'We are not in the business of burying babies.' Their only goal was to assist us in giving our daughter a beautiful and loving burial." Some couples choose not to hold a funeral. Their decision was the right one for them as the ceremony allowed for many people to join and embrace them in their long grieving journey.

Yearning and Searching

With all parents, there is some discrepancy between their ideal infant and their real infant; however, in a normal outcome it is not difficult to reconcile the differences. "In still birth, however, parents suffer the worst discrepancy—not only is their real infant obviously different from their ideal infant, but death, one of life's greatest sorrows, has occurred at precisely the moment in which the opposite joy at birth was expected" (Kirkley-Best & Kellner, 1982, p. 421).

Mrs. G. experienced the classic signs of grief: thoughts of the baby, flashbacks of giving birth, not hearing her cry, holding her, anger, guilt, difficulty sleeping, somatic distress, and depression. Mrs. G. felt her body had betrayed her, that she had killed the baby. This is not uncommon. Wolff (in Kirkley-Best & Kellner, 1982) found in his study that of 50 mothers, 17 blamed themselves, 10 blamed God, and 9 blamed husbands and doctors.

I attempted repeatedly to exculpate her. She seemed stuck. I felt like a failure. Why wasn't she making any movement? The truth is that there are no answers. Worried that she would not move, I found her sadness hard to stay with at times. I felt drained and uncertain of her progress. I tried to reassure her that she was not to blame for this loss—she had tended to this pregnancy with extreme care and consideration. Approximately 60 - 70% of stillbirths remain unexplained (Ilse, 1982; Kirkley-Best & Kellner, 1982).

Did this event create her negative outlook on life or did other events precede this? She seemed even more hurt and desperate than the other women who have lost children that I've worked with.

They both in some way blamed themselves, and perhaps each other, in their loss. The most difficult aspect for this couple, particularly Mrs. G., would be the issue of control. She would at some point need to make peace with the concept of powerlessness. Neither she nor her husband had any control over their baby's fate. That was in the hands of a higher power. They were Jewish, but were not connected with a tem-

ple. They had grown distant from their religion and felt betrayed by God. This would make my work more complicated. They seemed to abandon their spiritual belief system. For them nothing seemed predictable anymore.

No one is ever prepared for a sudden death; therefore, they are the most complicated to grieve (Bernstein, 1997; Rando, 1988; Tatelbaum 1984). "When you have experienced the elation of learning you are pregnant, only to feel the despair of discovering you have miscarried, the magnitude of the loss is understood. It is a shattered dream - the death of a wished-for child" (Covington, 1987,p.1.). "In sudden death you are called upon to face a massive gap between the way the world should be, with your loved one alive and the way the world is" (Rando, 1988, p.91). Life for this couple had become no longer predictable. Their stance of expecting things to go wrong may have been a way of protecting themselves.

Traditional grief literature (Kubler-Ross, 1969; Parkes, 1972; Rando, 1986; et. al.) describes the physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental aspects of grief reactions. However, in the case of stillbirth, some unique dimensions exist. For this couple, the grieving felt more complicated by the fact that they had some difficulty conceiving, which created a greater emotional investment and attachment to the pregnancy.

Why did their baby die? Could they or I accept that Strep B was the cause? I did not know what Strep B was all about. I wrote to the Strep B Foundation in North Carolina and asked several other physicians to educate me. It did not really matter except that I, also, began to wonder if this was really what happened. This wondering is common for the parents. A parallel process was occurring for me as I felt Mrs. G.'s uncertainty. I wanted to validate her curiosity but I was uncertain whether it would be helpful to join with her anger and suspicions, so I tried to remain neutral. Anger alone would keep the client defended against her feelings of powerlessness. She wondered why the fetal heart monitor tape was missing from her chart and wondered if the doctor had begun the delivery sooner, whether the baby would have been born alive. My own mother worked in many delivery rooms and had shared stories of things going terribly wrong due to human errors.

Dr. G. seemed settled with the explanation while Mrs. G. continued to wonder. He had experienced deaths in his own work. Maybe his medical training gave him the edge of understanding the unthinkable outcome of a child born with Step-B, or maybe he could not consider other physicians making errors that would result in the death of their baby. She ambivalently considered beginning a lawsuit but she didn't want to make it any harder on Dr. G., who had grown disappointed over the past couple of years with his chosen career and seriously considered leaving the field of medicine. His issues of abandonment and betrayal within the medical family had to be explored and resolved. Physicians are human and they make mistakes. Physicians sometimes can also do everything "right" and still the outcome is tragic. They are not trained to accept their humanness. At one point I shared the Strep- B information with Mrs. G. as she wanted to speak to an expert to determine her risk factors in trying to conceive again.

I asked the couple to bring their baby's mementos into a session. They could reminisce and share their thoughts of their baby. I did not want to do what others had—avoid their baby. It made their baby real in the session. She proudly brought in a box with the baby's wristband tag, hat, blanket, and pictures. She showed me a picture of her holding Baby J., a beautiful baby with dark hair. Many people are uncomfortable sitting with a dead baby. I know I would be, but I did not want to avoid their baby. She had been alive for them for nine months. Mrs. G. wrote: "We held our lifeless child in our arms, kissed her, told her how

much we loved her, and that we would carry her memory with us forever." The couple spoke often of how family and friends are uncomfortable talking about the baby and fear that bringing up the subject will injure the grieving. Mrs. G. wanted and needed friends and family to speak about Baby J.—doing so was not a reminder as she was always emotionally with her.

I had used pictures before in my grief work with clients so I encouraged them to bring in the pictures they had of Baby J. Pictures "can relieve your fears that time will dim your memory" (Schwiebert & Kirk, 1993, p. 17). The literature confirms almost unanimously that seeing and holding the infant is helpful in successful grief (Kirby-Best & Kellner, 1982). In my clinical experience, parents do benefit from being able to hold and see their child, even if it is a picture. It helps them hold on to the reality of their experiences.

Disorganization

The intense grieving gives way to feelings of depression, devaluing of self, and apathy (Kirkley-Best & Kellner, 1982). Questions re-emerged for Mrs. G.: Who am I? Will we ever have another child? They both felt as if they had failed themselves and that they had failed each other. They remained depressed and uncertain about their future. They continued to struggle with questions that at that time had no answers.

Mrs. G's Body

Mrs. G. was readmitted to the hospital with terrible abdominal pain due to complications from the caesarian section. "My mind and body responded in ways I didn't think possible. My gastrointestinal system shut down. I had excruciating neck spasms. I developed anxieties that disabled me from participating in everyday activities and chores."

Having had a cesarean section myself, I know it is a tough operation. But I had my baby girl to buffer my physical pain; she did not. Concerns were that some of her physical problems were psychosomatic, hormonal, and a re-visiting of her most profound loss in that hospital. Mrs. G. needed concrete love and physical attention. She felt that her own body had failed her. She felt connected, yet detached. She was angry, sad, frustrated, and hurt and experienced some emotions we may not have words for.

Mrs. G. had experienced a set back: "Screams came from my lips so frightening and primal that I still hear them in my dreams and flashbacks. As each day passed, my grief became worse. Each day was one more day farther away from the only time I had with this child. My pregnancy and five minutes of holding her were the only memories I had. I recall accidentally focusing on a mirror about five days after the burial—no one was looking back at me. There was no life in my eyes at all. A few minutes earlier, a friend who was visiting said I was looking better than I had a couple of days before. I cannot imagine what I must have looked like then. I have gained about 15 pounds since I lost my baby. It is not due to a nervous habit developed from my loss. My body change is my chosen form of self-destruction. It is the least harmful one I could think of, most important, it is my banner. It says, I am not OK. Please do not think that I am OK, even if I laugh. Please do not forget my beloved baby."

It is not uncommon for women, after miscarriages and stillbirth to gain weight—perhaps psychologically to make their bodies feel "full," unconsciously a wish to be pregnant. She was able to understand her weight gain although she was critical of herself.

Reorientation

Mrs. G. had resumed her major roles in her life. While she continued to think of the loss of Baby J. the time spent on it is decreasing. She was becoming more present in her interactions with her son and some of the couple's friends. Covington (1987) describes this as a reorganization period in which the loss of the baby is no longer consuming all of one's energy and emotions. This is the time when the loss is accepted as part of reality, not as being fair or right.

I found myself impatient at my inability to move Mrs. G. into the later stage of the grief work. "A final unique aspect of the grief that parents experience following a prenatal death is that many parents are reluctant

to complete their grief because, they say, to do so feels as though they are 'abandoning' the baby. Since other people did not honor the life of their child, many parents feel they must 'hold on,' even when they are otherwise ready to 'let go and move on'" (Doka, 1989, pp. 121-122). When she was not holding on to the loss of the baby, she was holding on to her loss of feeling protected by G-d. She felt punished and betrayed by Him. This was hard for me, as I believe things happen for reasons and that we may not like what happens, but later find meaning and purpose. She did not share this idea. She could see that her relationship with her husband was stronger, but she remained fixated on her anger at G-d. She refused to celebrate any of the Jewish holidays.

Grieving Differences

Dr. G. seemed farther along towards the final stages of the grief work. I offered him support to reassure Mrs. G. that grieving differences between men and women were common. Rando (1986) found in her research that mothers and fathers grieve differently. For fathers, grief seems to decline much more rapidly than for mothers. This implies that the father's grief decreases while the mother's grief is either remaining the same or increasing. It should be recognized and understood as a normal phenomenon (pp. 82-84).

Mrs. G. seemed to benefit from knowing that there are differences in grieving and seemed to accept that Dr. G.'s difference in grieving did not mean that he did not love the baby or that he did not care anymore. Abraham Lincoln had three sons who died: Edward, 4; William, 11; and Thomas,18. He wrote the following poem (in Ilse, 1982): "In this sad world of ours, sorrow comes to all/It comes with bitterest agony/Perfect relief is not possible, except with time. You cannot now realize that you will ever feel better/And yet this is a mistake. You are sure to be happy again/ to know this, which is certainly true, will make you become less miserable now. I have experienced enough to know what I say" (p.56).

Sibling Loss

Mrs. G. vacillated between wanting her son to be "okay" with the death of Baby J. and wanting him to be distraught and to share in her sadness. He needed to act out and express his own ambivalence about not having a sibling. Children grieve and deal with loss in their own way. They need role models and a stable environment. "Children often have three basic questions: Did I cause this illness or death to happen? Will this eventually happen to me? Who will take care of me now?" (Papenbrock & Voss, 1990).

A four year-old child does not quite understand death but certainly experiences a sense of loss. Their living son had escorted mom to most of her prenatal doctor visits. They had spoken about and prepared him for his new sibling. The baby's room had been painted, wallpapered, and furnished. Children sense distress of parents and the change in atmosphere within theirhome. I advised them that their son might regress, become irritable and/or withdraw but the changes would be temporary. When he acted out, this was hard for Mrs. G. as she, at times, blamed herself that she may have failed him.

I encouraged her to allow her son to see a child psychologist so he could express his own ambivalence about not having a sibling. She did not accept the referral and continued to struggle with her feelings that she was in some way to blame for her son's struggles. Later in the therapy she would work that through with me, and she allowed her son for a short time to see a psychologist colleague whom I had recommended.

I offered literature and pointed out suggestions: "provide security and a stable environment... follow a schedule... hold the child often... play with the child" (Papenbrock & Voss, 1990). I encouraged Dr. and Mrs. G. to buy their son a doll, as he had anticipated the arrival of a new baby sibling. They agreed to do this and found their son often playing with it, trying to resolve his positive and negative anticipations of having another child in their home.

I educated Dr. and Mrs. G. about the fact that children at this age cannot fully understand the concept of death. They need to ask questions, which come in cycles, and to know that death is not sleep

and that not all illnesses result in death. Children are unable to stay with painful emotions for any length of time and need to resume their normal activities and play as a way of protecting themselves from their loss (Papenbrock & Voss, 1990).

"Our 4-year old son wanted to know where his sister was. He wanted to meet her. When we told him that she went to live with God up in heaven, he responded, 'OK, when she's done living with God, she'll come to live with us.' He still speaks of her every day, 12 months later. The death of a child is so shocking and ambiguous to us as adults—how was he to grasp that he lost something so intangible to him to begin with?" I had explained to them that surviving children need stability. Their son would be able to grieve and move on when he sensed they were able to.

It was terrifying for their son to see his parents so distraught and his mother so sad for so long. He felt powerless and out of control in his attempts to affect her. I encouraged them to allow the continuation of his involved grandparents to be with him and to offer containment and stability.

Mrs. G. would need help in responding to her living child. She became aware of how her complicated grief affected her son. She shared: "Our child lost his mother for awhile. On the day my second child died, part of me died too. How could I possibly be the same? Yet each time I would cycle back into a deep depression, my son would pay the price." He would ask questions and his parents would need to be open to his thoughts to help him grieve. Later they would need to tolerate his having moved on without concerns for Baby J. His life needed to return to normal.

Letting Family and Friends Help

This couple is blessed with two very supportive, involved families who remain available to them. This kind of support is unique in my experience. "Our parents moved in and took over our household for several weeks. Our siblings felt the pain as if it were their own. Aunts, uncles, and cousins completed the circle of family support. Our closest friends came to our side. They counseled us with words that only best friends are capable of saying. They kept silent and let us grieve in our own way. They took our son for playdates, shuttled him to school and parties, shopped at the supermarket, cooked and delivered food made with love, and were there in ways that are too numerous to describe."

Saying Thanks

On the anniversary of their loss, I encouraged this couple to plan for the day. They decided to let others know how they chose to spend time as a couple—to visit the grave site, to include their son in putting bird seed on a tree in their yard, and to involve family and friends in mourning rituals. Mrs. G. was able to write a thank you letter that included her story.

"I bought thank-you cards just a few weeks after our baby died. I began to compose letters of thanks on numerous occasions. But every time I picked up the pen to write, I became overwhelmed. Forgive me—it was too difficult a task to endure. There are no words to thank you enough. You sent cards with loving and caring sentiments; your words enabled us to continue through another day. You sent flowers; they added color to a gray time. You sent plants; they live on even now as a remembrance of a life that could not be. You sent platters and baskets of food; they nourished us and those who took care of us. You sent donations too. These were such thoughtful ways of remembering our beloved little one. We are touched by your heartfelt gifts and are consoled that others will benefit from all you have done. You thought about us, you waved from across a room. You took our hands. You hugged us. You consoled us. You kept us busy. You still ask how we are today. You left us alone and gave us our needed space. You understood when there were times when we could not speak. You forgave us for not returning your calls. These gifts of understanding are the best ones you can give us."

Other Births

Cain and Cain (1964) described how some couples try a "replacement child syndrome" strategy, to become pregnant and give birth in order to get over the loss of the dead child.

This was not the case for this couple as they had dealt with their loss and were continuing to struggle. The couple decided to try again to become pregnant. After a few months, they did. The three of us felt elated... and terrified. Would this pregnancy hold? Would the baby be OK? Unfortunately, after becoming pregnant, they suffered a miscarriage. Another loss, which escalated their sense that time might be running out and that the dream for a second living child may never be.

This has again set our grief work back. I am worried that I have failed to get Mrs. G. to a place where she is able to let go of an attachment to Baby J. that will only make it harder for her to accept a new baby. What complicates this process is that Mrs. G. doesn't have fond memories of her baby to fall back on. She is filled with dreams of what could have been. She longs to have a daughter to have a relationship with like she shares with her own mother.

Again, Mrs. G. began to question her role: identify. Who am I? What do I do with myself? What is my world view? Whom can I trust? Will I ever be a mother to a second living child? Will I ever have a daughter?

Mrs. G. had two friends that were pregnant at the same time as she was. At times, she needed to distance herself for self-protection. Doing so, however, created another loss—that of her friends. These births were bittersweet for Mrs. G. who spoke of this conflict often. "There have been several births and deaths in other people's lives since we have lost our babies. For those of you who have been fortunate enough to give birth to healthy babies, we wish you well. We wish your children a lifetime of health and happiness. We hope that you will allow us to see a glimmer of our child's life in your children. Please give them an extra hug each day in memory of all the children who could not be."

I am concerned about the hyper-vigilance that Mrs. G. has developed in relation to her son. What unconscious messages is she giving him about separation, safety, and independence as he begins kindergarten? She has some psychotic features—her reality seems at times distorted and paranoid. Is this "normal" given what she has gone through? Dr. G. does not share in the distortions. It seems somewhat of a waiting game... how do I address her features without her interpreting them as insensitive? I was frustrated by her lack of movement. I took a chance with her by using vignettes from other clients I have worked with who were able to move on. I confronted her gently and pointed out how she continued to be focused on the loss of Baby J. and how her relationships with those who are living (her son and husband) were suffering due to her inability to transition into the present. She seemed angry with me. I encouraged her to again attend a support group for couples who have lost children. This time she agreed.

Support Groups

The hospital runs a self-help support group. I needed the power of the group to assist me in my treatment interventions. "We have recently joined a support group called HANDS (Hope after Neonatal Death through Sharing). This group meets once a month. We are all parents of babies who are alive in our hearts only. If you share our common bond, please contact HANDS or any other group available in your area. Being with others who truly understand your pain is quite a peaceful experience."

Transformation is beginning to occur for Dr. & Mrs. G. "It is the true miracle of life that you can brutalize it, tear it apart, and still it survives" (Tatelbaum, 1984, p. 138). The power of other people telling their story and bearing witness to the potentials of the grieving process has helped this couple. I have begun to feel hopeful again with renewed faith in the process.

Dr. G. & Mrs. G. have attended the support group together. They see others who are at different stages of the grief process. Mrs. G. obtained a few telephone numbers from the other women who were further away than she from their loss.

Shadow grief (Covington, 1987) remains for this family. While they have passed one cycle of significant days, many more are ahead. Mrs. G's

friends' baby girl (born soon after Baby J.) is a reminder of what her baby should/could be doing in the here and now. The couple is trying again to conceive.

Conclusion

The grief process is never over. I am humbled by how complex and individually driven each grief journey is. Some interventions seem almost universal, while others need careful thought based on the client's prior losses and resolutions. Early grief work is like driving a car on a bumpy road. Each rotation of the tire could yield a smooth glide or a deep bump.

On the one-year anniversary, she wrote the thank you letter, which she had printed in the newspaper. Mrs. G. shared another part of her writing, which touched me and helped to validate in some ways that I had been therapeutically helpful. It validated our work together. "We have found a counselor who is a remarkable person. Her insights and skill have led us down a path of self-exploration and healing. We knew that our situation was one we could not cope with on our own. We thank her for the gifts of understanding and self-love she has given us."

She had wondered about putting my name in it. I encouraged her not to do so. Part of me felt undeserving of her praise. I unconsciously might have resisted because of not wanting referrals for more of this work. I also knew our work was still in progress and wanted our work to remain confidential.

After another recent miscarriage, Mrs. G. is pregnant again. Things are going well, but they were going well with Baby J. also. The wait seems so long for them and me. I defend myself around negative thoughts of something going awry. I find it impossible to strike a balance between optimistic support and realistic caution. In these cases, there is no safe ground for the clinician.

One clinical dilemma lingers for me. At what point do I support the effort to close their chapter on having more children? Mrs. G. recently described trying to conceive as an addiction to being preoccupied, anticipating, trying, waiting, and experiencing all the highs and lows. Ultimately I know this decision is client driven, but clients often look to us for some direction. I am unsure of myself here; holding my own daughter makes me even more uncertain. □

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REFLECTIONS: Narratives of Professional Helping

((((SPECIAL ISSUE))))

CALL FOR NARRATIVES

EXPERIENCES WITH VIOLENCE:

CHILDREN, YOUTH, FAMILIES, INSTITUTIONS, PROFESSIONALS, AND COMMUNITIES

The increasing severity of violence within our children, families, schools, and communities may result in serious ramifications for both victims and those living in violence-prone areas. While there are many theories regarding the influences that have contributed to a "culture of violence" in our society, few attempts have been made to understand the experiences of those who live or have lived with violence or the potential for violence daily. This special edition seeks to give voice to the reflections of those who have experience with violence and what it has meant to or for them. In particular, we are seeking narratives from teens or young adults who have experienced violence as part of their school or community experiences.

NARRATIVES:

- How violence has affected communities.
- Grassroots efforts to reduce community violence.
- The impact of violence on your life.
- Ways in which violence manifests itself.
- Violence in schools.
- The impact of violence on professionals working with children and youth.
- The process of moving away from violence.

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Remembrances of Things Past

I have been asked to write a short note about the hows, the whys, and the wherefores of an article I wrote three decades ago. Following my reflections, "Games People Play in Supervision" appears on page 54 as it was originally published in Social Work, *July 1968.*

by
Alfred Kadushin

Alfred Kadushin, Ph.D., Julia C. Lathrop Distinguished Professor of Social Work Emeritus, School of Social Welfare, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin.

Trying to remember the circumstances surrounding the writing of an article I wrote some 30 years ago, I engaged in a short session of retrospective introspection. Bringing myself in my mind back to 1968 and rummaging around for some productive memories, I was rewarded with some disconnected bits and pieces. The problem is confounded by the fact that I had little confidence that if I did remember the events in greater detail, the memories would yield an objectively valid story of how and why I wrote the article. Memories are not tape recorded productions, but are constantly being processed and revised, frequently undergoing reconstruction and modification. I am often reminded of the fluid nature of memories as I reminisce with my wife about trips we made together to the same places at the same time. We apparently got two different trips for the price of one.

I do remember that the article had its genesis in thinking that was triggered by two books I read at about the same time: *Games People Play*, by Eric Berne(1964), and *Theory and Practice of Gamesmanship: The Art of Winning Games Without Actually Cheating*, by Stephan Potter (1948).

Games are played by one member of a dyad to maximize payoffs and minimize penalties in adapting to some interpersonal situation. The game player manifests some plausible, overt, acceptable behavior designed to achieve some covert, less acceptable objective. The player accepts the game and is induced to participate in the game because it seems that he/she is being rewarded as well.

I was teaching a seminar in supervision at the time, and it seemed to me that games had universal applicability. The nature and specifics of a game had to be developed so that the script was appropriate and applicable to a particular context. I became intrigued with the potentialities of gamesmanship for problems of supervisor-supervisee interactions.

Rather than engage in any rigorous empirical research, I enlisted the help of the students—captives in the seminar. I organized their mind sets by giving a short lecture on games, presented some illustrations in the supervisor-supervisee contexts, and then asked them to

write anonymously a short paper about games in supervision that they themselves had played, had heard about, or could imaginatively devise. Material about supervisor games, I informally collected during lunch, coffee breaks, and chance hallway meetings with faculty colleagues. As a consequence, I collected a fair amount of relevant data.

But having obtained some interesting material, why go to the trouble of writing an article? What motivated me to subject myself to the effort and distress that writing demands?

It is axiomatic that not only is behavior purposive, it is also multiplidetermined. There follows a list of determinants that motivated me to write the article:

1.To embellish the family escutcheon and my vita.

2. To make certain that the faculty merit-raise committee would bless me with an appropriate increase.

3. To confirm to my colleagues that they had not made a mistake in granting me tenure.

4. To vex some and elicit praise from others. But not all motives have the same level of importance, and some are, seriously, more important than others.

5. To contribute to the knowledge base of the profession, I do feel very strongly that social work faculty have an obligation and responsibility. If not us, who?

The contribution could be in the nature of empirical research, illuminating theoretical exposition, organization, and syntheses of the literature, etc., Sharing knowledge as an instructor reaches 500-1000 people in a lifetime. Sharing that knowledge in an article published in *Social Work* reaches 150,000 people.

And, finally,

6. I wrote because I like to write. Getting started is a real pain. It takes a determined push. But once started, there is a pleasure in seeing words flow out of your pen onto the yellow legal pad. You see a product come to life. One of the frustrations of teaching is that the outcome is invisible and uncertain. Writing provides an immediate, visible product. Writing stimulates and organizes thinking, making for more effective teaching. And the process requires privacy and quietude—which I like.

The act of writing is given respect and protection in our family. I do my writing in a large, lower-level study lined with books, away from, but accessible to, the family. The ceiling of the study is the floor of the kitchen above. My wife summons me, when necessary, by thumping vigorously on the kitchen floor—three thumps for major crimes or emergencies, two for misdemeanors and minor problems. But, for most situations, my privacy is protected by my wife's admonition, "Don't bother Papa, he's writing." Writing provides a venerated status.

But, I think I liked writing this article, "Games People Play in Supervision," in particular. It has a roguish humorous slant. We are all left with residuals of resentment about people who controlled us—teachers, parents, employers, supervisors. The article, in some socially acceptable manner, thumbs its nose at people in authority. It demonstrates the power of the powerless. I once wrote another article I like for the same reason, because it is a display of roguish humor or gently twitting authority, "Diagnosis and Evaluation for (almost) all Occasions," *Social Work*, January 1963. And, if love is the best universal solvent, ultimately making life livable and endurable, humor comes in second best. □

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BY ALFRED KADUSHIN

Games People Play in Supervision

■ ***This article attempts to make explicit the variety of games most frequently played in supervision, reviewing the rationale behind supervisory gamesmanship, the ploys used, and the counter-cames that have been devised. The emphasis is on games developed and utilized by supervisees, although the gamesmanship potentialities of supervisors are also suggested.*** ■

GAMESMANSHIP HAS HAD a checkered career. Respectably fathered by an eminent mathematician, Von Neumann, in his book *The Theory of Games and Economic Behavior*, it became the "Art of Winning Games Without Actually Cheating" as detailed by Potter in *Theory and Practice of Gamesmanship*.[1] It was partly rescued recently for the behavioral sciences by the psychoanalyst Eric Berne in *Games People Play*.[2] Berne defines a game as "an ongoing series of complementary ulterior transactions—superficially plausible but with a concealed motivation."[3] It is a scheme, or artfulness, utilized in the pursuit of some objective or purpose. A ploy is a segment of a game.

The purpose of engaging in the game, of using the maneuvers, snares, gimmicks, and ploys that are, in essence, the art of gamesmanship, lies in the payoff. One party to the game chooses a strategy to maximize his payoff and minimize his penalties. He wants to win rather than to lose, and he wants to win as much as he can at the lowest cost.

Games people play in supervision are concerned with the kinds of recurrent interactional incidents between supervisor and supervisee that have a payoff for one of the parties in the transaction. While both supervisor and supervisee may initiate a game, for the purposes of simplicity it may be desirable to discuss in greater detail games initiated by supervisees. This may also be the better part of valor.

WHY GAMES ARE PLAYED

To understand why the supervisee should be interested in initiating a game, it is necessary to understand the possible losses that might be anticipated by him in the supervisory relationship. One needs to know what the supervisee is defending himself against and the losses he might incur if he eschewed gamesmanship or lost the game. The supervisory situation generates a number of different kinds of anxieties for the supervisee. It is a situation in which he is asked to undergo some sort of change.

Unlike the usual educational situation that is concerned with helping the student critically examine and hence possibly change his ideas, social work supervision

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[1] John Von Neumann. *Theory of Games and Economic Behavior* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1944); Stephen Potter, *Theory and Practice of Gamesmanship* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1948).

[2] New York: Grove Press, 1964.

[3] Ibid., p. 84.

is often directed toward a change in behavior and, perhaps, personality. Change creates anxiety. It requires giving up the familiar for the unfamiliar; it requires a period of discomfort during which one is uneasy about continuing to use old patterns of behavior but does not, as yet, feel fully comfortable with new behaviors.

The threat of change is greater for the adult student because it requires dissolution of patterns of thinking and believing to which he has become habituated. It also requires an act of disloyalty to previous identification models. The ideas and behavior that might need changing represent, in a measure, the introjection of previously encountered significant others—parents, teachers, highly valued peers—and giving them up implies some rejection of these people in the acceptance of other models. The act of infidelity creates anxiety. The supervisory tutorial is a threat to the student's independence and autonomy. Learning requires some frank admission of dependence on the teacher; readiness to learn involves giving up some measure of autonomy in accepting direction from others, in submitting to the authority of the supervisor-teacher.

The supervisee also faces a threat to his sense of adequacy. The situation demands an admission of ignorance, however limited, in some areas. And in sharing one's ignorance one exposes one's vulnerability. One risks the possibility of criticism, of shame, and perhaps of rejection because of one's admitted inadequacy. In addition, the supervisee faces the hazard of not being adequate to the requirements of the learning situation. His performance may fall short of the supervisor's expectations, intensifying a sense of inadequacy and incurring the possibility of supervisory disapproval.

Since the parameters of the supervisory relationship are often ambiguous, there is a threat that devolves not only from the sensed inadequacies of one's work, but also from the perceived or suspected inadequacies of self. This threat is exaggerated in the social work supervisory relationship because so much of self is invested in and rejected by one's work and because of the tendency to attribute to the supervisor a diagnostic omniscience suggesting that he perceives all and knows all.

The supervisor-supervisee relationship is evocative of the parent-child relationship and as such may tend to reactivate some anxiety associated with this earlier relationship. The supervisor is in a position of authority and the supervisee is, in some measure, dependent on him. If the supervisor is a potential parent surrogate, fellow supervisees are potential siblings competing for the affectional responses of the parent. The situation is therefore one that threatens the reactivation not only of residual difficulties in the parent-child relationship but also in the sibling-sibling relationship.

The supervisor has the responsibility of evaluating the work of the supervisee and, as such, controls access to important rewards and penalties. School grades, salary increases, and promotional possibilities are real and significant prizes dependent on a favorable evaluation. Unlike previously encountered evaluative situations, for instance working toward a grade in a course, this is a situation in which it is impossible to hide in a group. There is direct and sharply focused confrontation with the work done by the supervisee. These threats, anxieties, and penalties are the losses that might be incurred in entering into the supervisory relationship. A desire to keep losses to a minimum and maximize the re rewards that might derive from the encounter explains why the supervisee should want to play games in supervision, why he should feel a need to control the situation to his advantage.

Supervisees have over a period of time developed some well-established, identifiable games. An attempt will be made to group these games in terms of similar tactics. It might be important to

note that not all supervisees play games and not all of the behavior supervisees engage in is indicative of an effort to play games. However, the best supervisee plays games some of the time; the poorest supervisee does not play games all of the time. What the author is trying to do is to identify a limited, albeit important, sector of supervisee behavior.

MANIPULATING DEMAND LEVELS

One series of games is designed to manipulate the level of demands made on the supervisee. One such game might be titled "Two Against the Agency" or "Seducing for Subversion." The game is generally played by intelligent, intuitively gifted supervisees who are impatient with routine agency procedures. Forms, reports, punctuality, and recording excite their contempt. The more sophisticated supervisee, in playing the game, introduces it by suggesting the conflict between the bureaucratic and professional orientation to the work of the agency. The bureaucratic orientation is one that is centered on what is needed to insure efficient operation of the agency; the professional orientation is focused on meeting the needs of the client.

The supervisee points out that meeting client need is more important, that time spent in recording, filling out forms, and writing reports tends to rob time from direct work with the client, and further that it does not make any difference when he comes to work or goes home as long as no client suffers as a consequence. Would it not therefore be possible to permit him, a highly intuitive and gifted worker, to schedule and allocate his time to maximum client advantage and should not the supervisor, then, be less concerned about the necessity of his filling out forms, doing recording, completing reports, and so on? For the student and recent graduate supervisee oriented toward the morality of the hippie movement (and many students, especially in social work, are responsive to hippie ideology, often without being explicitly aware of this), professional autonomy is consonant with the idea of self-expression—"doing your thing." Bureaucratic controls, demands, and expectations are regarded as violations of genuine self-expression and are resented as such.

It takes two to play games. The supervisor is induced to play (I) because he identifies with the student's concern for meeting client needs, (2) because he himself has frequently resented bureaucratic demands and so is, initially, sympathetic to the supervisee s complaints, and (3) because he is hesitant to assert his authority in demanding firmly that these requirements be met. If the supervisor elects to play the game, he has enlisted in an alliance with the supervisee to subvert agency administrative procedures.

Another game designed to control and mitigate the level of demands made on the supervisee might be called "Be Nice to me Because I Am Nice to You." The principal ploy is seduction by flattery. The supervisee is full of praise: "You're the best supervisor I ever had," "You're so perceptive that after I've talked to you I almost know what the client will say next," "You're so consistently helpful," "I look forward in the future to being as good a social worker as you are," and so on. It is a game of emotional blackmail in which, having been paid in this kind of coin, the supervisor finds himself incapable of firmly holding the worker to legitimate demands. The supervisor finds it difficult to resist engaging in the game because it is gratifying to be regarded as an omniscient source of wisdom; there is satisfaction in being perceived as helpful and in being selected as a pattern for identification and emulation. An invitation to play a game that tends to enhance a positive self-concept and feed one-s narcissistic needs is likely to be accepted.

In general, the supervisor is vulnerable to an invitation to play this game. The supervisor needs the supervisee as much as the supervisee needs the supervisor. One of the principal sources of gratifica-

tion for a worker is contact with the client. The supervisor is denied this source of gratification, at least directly. For the supervisor the principal source of ratification is helping the supervisee to grow and change. But this means that he has to look to the supervisee to validate his effectiveness. Objective criteria of such effectiveness are, at best, obscure and equivocal. However, to have the supervisee say explicitly, openly, and directly: "I have learned a lot from you," "You have been helpful," "I am a better worker because of you," is the kind of reassurance needed and often subtly solicited by the supervisor. The perceptive supervisee understands and exploits the supervisor's needs in initiating this game.

REDEFINING THE RELATIONSHIP

A second series of games is also designed to mitigate the level of demands made on the supervisee, but here the game depends on redefining the supervisory relationship. As Goffman points out, games permit one to control the conduct of others by influencing the definition of the situation.[4] These games depend on ambiguity of the definition of the supervisory relationship. It is open to a variety of interpretations and resembles, in some crucial respects, analogous relationships.

Thus, one kind of redefinition suggests a shift from the relationship of supervisor-supervisee as teacher-learner in an administrative hierarchy to supervisor-supervisee as worker-client in the context of therapy. The game might be called "Protect the Sick and the Infirm" or "Treat Me Don't Beat Me." The supervisee would rather expose himself than his work. And so he asks the supervisor for help in solving his personal problems. The sophisticated player relates these problems to his difficulties on the job. Nevertheless, he seeks to engage the supervisor actively in a concern with his problems. If the translation to worker-client is made, the nature of demands shifts as well. The kinds of demands one can legitimately impose on a client are clearly less onerous than the level of expectations imposed on a worker. And the supervisee has achieved a payoff in a softening of demands.

The supervisor is induced to play (I) because the game appeals to the social worker in him (since he was a social worker before he became a supervisor and is still interested in helping those who have personal problems), (-) because it appeals to the voyeur in him (many supervisors are fascinated by the opportunity to share in the intimate life of others), (3) because it is flattering to be selected as a therapist, and (4) because the supervisor is not clearly certain as to whether such a redefinition of the situation is not permissible. All the discussions about the equivocal boundaries between supervision and therapy feed into this uncertainty.

Another game of redefinition might be called "Evaluation Is Not for Friends." Here the supervisory relationship is redefined as a social relationship. The supervisee makes an effort to take coffee breaks with the supervisor, invite him to lunch, walk to and from the bus or the parking lot with him, and discuss some common interests during conferences. The social component tends to vitiate the professional component in the relationship. It requires increased determination and resolution on the part of any supervisor to hold the "friend" to the required level of performance.

Another and more contemporary redefinition is less obvious than either of the two kinds just discussed, which have been standard for a long time now. This is the game of "Maximum Feasible Participation." It involves a shift in roles from supervisor-supervisee to peer-peer. The supervisee suggests that the relationship will be most effective if it is established on the basis of democratic participation. Since he

[4] Erving Goffman, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life *(Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, Doubledag 5: Co., 1959), pp. 3–4.*

knows best what he needs and wants to learn, he should be granted equal responsibility for determining the agendas of conferences. So far so good. The game is a difficult one to play because in the hands of a determined supervisee, joint control of agenda can easily become supervisee control with consequent mitigation of expectations. The supervisor finds himself in a predicament in trying to decline the game. For one, there is an element of validity in the claim that people learn best in a context that encourages democratic participation in the learning situation.

Second, the current trend is working with the social agency client encourages maximum feasible participation with presently undefined limits. To decline the game is to suggest that one is old-fashioned, undemocratic, and against the rights of those on lower levels in the administrative hierarchy—not an enviable picture to project of oneself. The supervisor is forced to play but needs to be constantly alert in order to maintain some semblance of administrative authority and prevent all the shots being called by the supervisee peer.

REDUCING POWER DISPARITY

A third series of games is designed to reduce anxiety by reducing the power disparity between supervisor and worker. One source of the supervisor's power is, of course, the consequence of his position in the administrative hierarchy vis-a-vis the supervisee. Another source of power, however, lies in his expertise, greater knowledge, and superior skill. It is the second source of power disparity that is vulnerable to this series of games. If the supervisee can establish the fact that the supervisor is not so smart after all, some of the power differential is mitigated and with it some need to feel anxious.

One such game, frequently played, might be called "If You Knew Dostoyevsky Like I know Dostoyevsky." During the course of a conference the supervisee makes a casual allusion to the fact that the client s behavior reminds him of that of Raskolnikov in Crime and Punishment, which is, after all, somewhat different in etiology from the pathology that plagued Prince Myshkin in The Idiot. An effective ploy used to score additional points, involves addressing the rhetorical question: "Your remember, don't you?" to the supervisor. It is equally clear to both the supervisee and the supervisor that the latter docs not remember—if, indeed, he ever knew what he cannot remember no-v. At this point the supervisee proceeds to instruct the supervisor. The roles of teacher-learner are reversed; power disparity and supervisee anxiety are simultaneously reduced. The supervisor acquiesces to the game because refusal requires an open confession of ignorance on his part. The supervisee in playing the game well co-operates in a conspiracy with the supervisor not to expose his ignorance openly. The discussion proceeds under the protection of the mutually accepted fiction that both know what they are talking about.

The content for the essential gambit In this game changes with each generation o~ supervisees. The author's impression is that currently the allusion is likely to be to the work of the conditioning therapists—Eysenck, Wolpe, and Lazarus—rather than to literary figures. The effect on the supervisor, however, is the same: a feeling of depression and general malaise at having been found ignorant when his position requires that he know more than the supervisee. And it has the same payoff in reducing supervisee anxiety.

Another kind of game in this same genre exploits situational advantages to reduce power disparity and permit the supervisee the feeling that he, rather than the supervisor, is in control. This game is "So What Do You Know About It? The supervisee with a long record of experience in public welfare makes reference to "those of us on the front lines who have struggled

with the multiproblem client," exciting humility in family therapy with an unmarried female supervisor. The older supervisee will talk about "life" from the vantage point of incipient senility to the supervisor fresh out of graduate school. The younger supervisee will hint at his greater understanding of the adolescent client since he has, after all, smoked some pot and has seriously considered LSD. The supervisor trying to tune in finds his older psyche is not with it. The supervisor younger than the older supervisee, older than the younger supervisee—never having raised a child or met a payroll—finds himself being instructed by those he is charged with instructing; roles are reversed and the payoff lies in the fact that the supervisor is a less threatening figure to the supervisee.

Another, more recently developed, procedure for "putting the supervisor down" is through the judicious use in the conference of strong four-letter words. This is "telling it like it is" and the supervisor who responds with discomfort all and loss of composure has forfeited some amount of control to the supervisee who has exposed some measure of his bourgeois character and residual Puritanism.

Putting the supervisor down may revolve around a question of social work goals rather than content. The social action- oriented supervisee is concerned with fundamental changes in social relationships. He knows that obtaining a slight increase in the budget for his client, finding a job for a client, or helping a neglectful mother relate more positively to her child are not of much use since they leave the basic pathology of society undisturbed and unchanged. He is impatient with the case-oriented supervisor who is interested in helping a specific family live a little less troubled, a little less unhappily, in a fundamentally disordered society. The game is "All or Nothing at All. It is designed to make the supervisor feel he has sold out, been co-opted by the Establishment, lost or abandoned his broader vision of the "good" society, become endlessly concerned with symptoms rather than with causes. It is effective because the supervisor recognizes that there is some element of truth in the accusation, since this is true for all who occupy positions of responsibility in the Establishment.

CONTROILING THE SITUATION

All the games mentioned have, as part of their effect, a shift of control of the situation from supervisor to supervisee. Another series of games is designed to place control of the supervisory situation more explicitly and directly in the hands of the supervisee. Control of the situation by the supervisor is potentially threatening since he can then take the initiative of introducing for discussion those weaknesses and inadequacies in the supervisee's work that need fullest review. If the supervisee can control the conference, much that is unflattering to discuss may be adroitly avoided.

One game designed to control the discussion s content is called "I Have a Little List. The supervisee comes in with a series of questions about his work that he would very much like to discuss. The better player formulates the questions so that they have relevance to those problems in which the supervisor has greatest professional interest and about which he has done considerable reading. The supervisee is under no obligation to listen to the answer to his question. Question 1 having been asked, the supervisor is off on a short lecture, during which time the supervisee is free to plan mentally the next weekend or review the last weekend, taking care merely to listen for signs that the supervisor is running down. When this happens, the supervisee introduces Question 2 with an appropriate transitional comment and the cycle is repeated. As the supervisee increases the supervisor's level of participation he is, by the same token, decreasing his own level of participation since only

one person can be talking at once. Thus the supervisee controls both content and direction of conference interaction.

The supervisor is induced to play this game because there is narcissistic gratification in displaying one's knowledge and in meeting the dependency needs of those who appeal to one for answers to their questions, and because the supervisee's questions should be accepted, respected, and, if possible, answered.

Control of the initiative is also seized by the supervisee in the game of "Heading Them Off at the Pass." Here the supervisee knows that his poor work is likely to be analyzed critically. He therefore opens the conference by freely admitting his mistakes —he knows it was an inadequate interview, he knows that he should have, by now, learned to do better. There is no failing the supervisor's agenda for discussion with him to which he does not freely confess in advance, flagellating himself to excess. The supervisor, faced with overwhelming self-derogation, has little option but to reassure the supervisee sympathetically. The tactic not only makes difficult an extended discussion of mistakes in the work at the supervisor's initiative, it elicits praise by the supervisor for whatever strengths the supervisee has manifested, however limited. The supervisor, once again, acts out of concern with the troubled, out of his predisposition to comfort the discomforted, out of pleasure in acting the good, forgiving parent.

There is also the game of control through fluttering dependency, of strength through weakness. It is the game of "Little Old Me" or "Casework á Trois." The supervisee, in his ignorance and incompetence, looks to the knowledgeable, competent supervisor for a detailed prescription of how to proceed: "What would you do next?" "Then what would you say?" The supervisee unloads responsibility for the case onto the supervisor and the supervisor shares the case load with the worker. The supervisor plays the game because, in reality, he does share responsibility for case management with the supervisee and has responsibility for seeing that the client is not harmed. Further, the supervisor often is interested in the gratification of carrying a case load, however vicariously, so that he is somewhat predisposed to take the case out of the hands of the supervisee. There are, further, the pleasures derived from acting, the capable parent to the dependent child and from the domination of others.

A variant of the game in the hands of amore hostile supervisee is "I Did Like You Told Me." Here the supervisee maneuvers the supervisor into offering specific prescriptions on case management and then applies the prescriptions in spiteful obedience and undisguised mimicry. The supervisee acts as though the supervisor were responsible for the case, he himself merely being the executor of supervisory directives. Invariably and inevitably, whatever has been suggested by the supervisor fails to accomplish what it was supposed to accomplish.

"I Did Like You Told Me" is designed to make even a strong supervisor defensive. "It's All So Confusing" attempts to reduce the authority of the supervisor by appeals to other authorities—a former supervisor, another supervisor in the same agency, or a faculty member at a local school of social work with whom the supervisee just happened to discuss the case. The supervisee casually indicates that in similar situations his former supervisor tended to take such and such an approach, one that is at variance with the approach the current supervisor regards as desirable. And "It's All So Confusing" when different "authorities" suggest such different approaches to the same situation. The supervisor is faced with "defending" his approach against some unnamed, unknown competitor. This is difficult, especially when few situations in social work permit an unequivocal answer in which the supervisor can have categorical confidence. Since the supervisor was some-what shaky

in his approach in the first place, he feels vulnerable against alternative suggestions from other "authorities" and his sense of authority vis-à-vis the supervisee is eroded.

A supervisee can control the degree of threat in the supervisory situation by distancing techniques. The game is " What You Don't Know Won't Hurt Me." The supervisor knows the work of the supervisee only indirectly, through what is shared in the recording and verbally in the conference. The supervisee can elect to share in a manner that is thin, inconsequential, without depth of affect. He can share selectively and can distort, consciously or unconsciously, in order to present a more favorable picture of his work. The supervisee can be passive and reticent or overwhelm the supervisor with endless trivia. In whatever manner it is done, the supervisee increases distance between the work he actually does and the supervisor who is responsible for critically analyzing with him the work done. This not only reduces the threat to him of possible criticism of his work but also, as Fleming points out, prevents the supervisor from intruding into the privacy of the relationship between the worker and the client.[5]

SUPERVISORS' GAMES

It would be doing both supervisor and supervisee an injustice to omit any reference to games initiated by supervisors—unjust to the supervisees in that such omission would imply that they alone play games in supervision and unjust to the supervisors in suggesting that they lack the imagination and capacity to devise their own countergames. Supervisors play games out of felt threats to their position in the hierarchy, uncertainty about their authority, reluctance to use their authority, a desire to be liked, a need for the supervisees' approbation—and out of some hostility to supervisees that is inevitable in such a complex, intimate relationship.

One of the classic supervisory games is called "I Wonder Why You Really Said That?" This is the game of redefining honest disagreement so that it appears to be psychological resistance. Honest disagreement requires that the supervisor defend his point of view, present the research evidence in support of his contention, be sufficiently acquainted with the literature so he can cite the knowledge that argues for the correctness of what he is saving. If honest disagreement is redefined as resistance, the burden is shifted to the supervisee. He has to examine his needs and motives that prompt him to question what the supervisor has said. The supervisor is thus relieved of the burden of validating what he has said and the onus for defense now rests with the supervisee.

Another classic supervisory game is "One Good Question Deserves Another." It was explicated some years ago by a new supervisor writing of her experience in an article called "Through Supervision With Gun and Camera":

I learned that another part of a supervisor's skills, as far as the workers are concerned, is to know all the answers. I was able to get out of this very easily. I discovered that when a worker asks a question, the best thing to do is to immediately ask for what she thinks. While the worker is figuring out the answer to her own question (this is known as growth and development), the supervisor quickly tries to figure it out also. She may arrive at the answer the same time as the worker, but the worker somehow assumes that she knew it all along. This is very comfortable for the supervisor. In the event that neither the worker nor the supervisor succeeds in coming up with a useful thought on the question the worker has raised, the supervisor can look wise and suggest that they think

[5] Joan Fleming and Therese Benedek, *Psychoanalytic Supervision* (New York: Grune & Stratton,1966), p. 101. See Norman Polansky, "On Duplicity in the Interview," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, Vol.. 37, No. 2 (April 1967), pp. 568-579,for a review of similar kinds of games played by the client.

about it and discuss it further next time. This gives the supervisor plenty of time to look up the subject and leaves the worker with the feeling that the supervisor is giving great weight to her question. In the event that the supervisor does not want to go to all the trouble, she can just tell the worker that she does not know the answer (this is known as helping the worker accept the limitations of the supervision) and tell her to look it up herself....[6]

IN RESPONSE TO GAMES

Before going on to discuss possible constructive responses to games played in the context of supervision, the author must express some uneasiness about having raised the subject in the first place, a dissatisfaction similar to the felt toward Berne's Games People Play. The book communicates a sense of disrespect for the complexities of life and human behavior. The simplistic games formulas are a cheapening caricature of people's struggle for a modicum of comfort in a difficult world. A perceptive psychiatrist said in a critical and saddening review of the book:

> It makes today's bothersome "problems" easily subject to a few home-spun models —particularly the cynical and concretely aphoristic kind that reduces all human experiences to a series of "exchanges" involving gain and loss, deceit or betrayal and exposure, camouflage and discovery.[7]

There are both a great deal more sensible sincerity and a great deal more devious complexity in multidetermined human interaction than is suggested by Games People Play. However, the very fact that games are a caricature of life justifies discussing them. The caricature selects some aspect of human behavior and, extracting it for explicit examination, exaggerates and distorts its contours so that it is easier to perceive. The caricature thus makes possible increased understanding of the phenomenon—in this case the supervisory interaction. The insult to the phenomenon lies in forgetting that the caricature is just that—a caricature and not a truly accurate representation. A perceptive caricature, such as good satire, falsifies by distorting only elements that are actually present in the interaction in the first place. Supervisory games mirror, then, some selective, essentially truthful aspects of the supervisory relationship.

The simplest and most direct way of dealing with the problem of games introduced by the supervisee is to refuse to play. Yet one of the key difficulties in this has been implied by discussion of the gain for the supervisor in going along with the game. The supervisee can only successfully enlist the supervisor in a game if the supervisor wants to play for his own reasons. Collusion is not forced but is freely granted. Refusing to play requires the supervisor to be ready and able to forfeit self-advantages.

For instance, in declining to go along with the supervisees requests that he be permitted to ignore agency administrative requirements in playing "Two Against the Agency," the supervisor has to be comfortable in exercising his administrative authority, willing to risk and deal with supervisee hostility and rejection, willing to accept and handle the accusation that he bureaucratically, rather than professionally oriented. In declining other games the supervisor denies himself the sweet fruit of flattery, the joys of omniscience, the pleasures of acting the therapist, the gratification of being liked. He has to incur the penalties of an open admission of ignorance and uncertainty and the loss of infallibility. Declining to play the games demands a supervisor who is aware of and comfortable in what he is doing and who is accepting of himself in all his "glorious strengths and

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[6] H.C.D., "Through Supervision With Gun and Camera," *Social Work Journal*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (October 1949), p 162.

[7] Robert Coles, *New York Times*, Book Review Section (October 8, 196,), p. 8.

human weaknesses." The less vulnerable the supervisor the more impervious to gamesmanship—not an easy prescription to fill.

A second response lies in gradual in interpretation or open confrontation. Goffman points out that in the usual social encounter each party accepts the line put out by the other party. There is a process of mutual face-saving in which what is said is accepted at its face value and "each participant is allowed to carry the role he has chosen for himself" unchallenged.[8] This is done out of self-protection since in not challenging another one is also insuring that the other will not, in turn, challenge one s own fiction. Confrontation implies a refusal to accept the game being proposed by seeking to expose and make explicit what the supervisee is doing. The supervisory situation, like the therapeutic situation, deliberately and consciously rejects the usual rules of social interaction in attempting to help the supervisee.

Confrontation is, of course, a procedure that needs to be used with some regard for the supervisee's abi1ity to handle the embarrassment, discomfort, and se1f-threat it involves. It needs to be used with some understanding of the defensive significance of the game to the supervisee. It might be of importance to point out that naming the interactions that have been described as "games" does not imply that they are frivolous and with out consequence. Unmasking games risks much that is of serious personal significance for the supervisee. Interpretation and confrontation here, as always, require some compassionate caution, a sense of timing, and an understanding of dosage.

Perhaps another approach is to share honestly with the supervisee one's awareness of what he is attempting to do but to focus discussion neither on the dynamics of his behavior nor on one's reaction to it, but on the disadvantages for him in playing games. These games have decided drawbacks for the supervisee in that they deny him the possibility of effectively fulfilling one of the essential, principal purposes of supervision—helping him to grow professionally. The games frustrate the achievement of this outcome. In playing games the supervisee loses by winning.

And, if all else fails, supervisees' games may yield to supervisors' countergames. For instance, "I Have a Little List" may be broken up by "I Wonder Why You Really Asked That?" After all, the supervisor should have more experience at gamesmanship than the supervisee.

8 Erving Goffman, *Ritual Interaction* (Garden City, N.Y. Anchor Books, Doubleday & Co., 1967), p.11.

Commentary: Life is Beautiful

by
Marilyn K. Potts

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Life Is Beautiful is described in its official website as a fable about "the power of laughter to move the human heart and the power of the imagination to bolster the human spirit." According to David Denby in a movie review for *The New Yorker*, the worldwide success of *Life Is Beautiful* suggests that audiences are sick to death of the holocaust's ability to disturb, and that Roberto Benigni (director and star) has created a benign form of holocaust denial. Has the holocaust been trivialized by combining its horrors with an unrealistic attempt to shelter one's son from reality and death? Is it a travesty to attempt to make a comedy about the holocaust? Is *Life Is Beautiful* really a comedy?

The first half of the movie is indeed a Jerry Lewis comedy (more fanciful than funny), primarily concerning Guido's (Benigni's) wooing of the lovely, wealthy Dora through his gushing perseverance and a series of ingenious coincidences (every little detail becomes significant later). He succeeds and we fast forward to a scene from the garden house, where they first made love, to view their son Giosue (age 4 or so) running out and looking for his toy tank (this also is significant later).

So far, the scenes are light and pretty. The restaurant where Guido worked while wooing Dora looks like a wedding cake. The lighting is bright, the colors are vivid. There are a few ominous tones: Guido's uncle's horse, Robin Hood, is painted with Nazi symbols by local hoodlums, but the paint is a cheerful green, flowers are added, and the fairy-tale Robin Hood is used to carry Dora away from her fiance, the Fascist bureaucrat. Jews aren't allowed in a shop passed by Guido and Giosue: this is only because some people don't like other people. Guido protects Giosue from this ugliness by telling him that some people won't allow Chinese people or kangaroos in their shops, and that he himself would never allow Visigoths into his newly established bookstore.

The pretty part of the movie ends abruptly when Guido, Giosue, and the uncle are taken away on a train. Dora, who is not Jewish, insists on boarding also. Since it is Giosue's birthday, this is framed by Guido as a surprise trip. It's silly of Giosue to ask why there are no seats on the train. Doesn't he know anything about trains? This is the first scene in which an ugly pallor, in the form of black smoke from the train, enters the picture. Everyone looks grim and even Giosue is puzzled. A little girl is holding a kitten and one wonders what horrors will befall them both. This is not a comedy anymore.

The characters emerge in a concentration camp. The lighting darkens and the train continues to emit smoke. Guido convinces Giosue that this is all a game. Whoever wins the most points will win a tank, a real tank. He articulates the rules of the game by pretending to translate for the brutal Nazi who is explaining the rules of the camp to the new inmates. You win points for hiding successfully, points for not asking for food, points for carrying anvils all day, points for winning at hopscotch.

Because of his desire to win the tank, Giosue is willing to hide in the barracks all day while Guido carries anvils (to make the tank). After his first day at work, Guido can barely walk, but perks up when he returns to the barracks to Giosue. He maintains this charade with a frenzy until he is bitterly disappointed after discovering that a possible savior, a Nazi doctor he had befriended in the restaurant, turns out to be crazy. This is the first time that Guido appears to fantasize for his own sake, as well as for Giosue's. As he carries the sleeping Giosue through the camp, he suggests that this is all a dream, that they'll both wake up to Dora bringing them cakes and tea, that he'll make love to her six times (if he still can). This reverie ends as they come across a pile of bodies in the mist. The bodies are arranged with the in-

tricacy of a gothic stained glass window, but without the colors. The only color in this scene is gray.

I found this sufficiently horrifying. I knew that the other children had been killed. I knew why the uncle had been forced to take a shower. I knew why the little girl's kitten was found hiding in a stack of clothing. I assumed that the whole family would perish. But I hoped for a different ending, including the possibility that Giosue would win the tank.

Denby the critic came out of the theater feeling "ash-gray," as if his "soul had been mugged." He accuses the audience of feeling "relieved and happy" and of rewarding Benigni for "allowing it, at last, to escape." He criticizes the audience for seeming to fall for the unrealistic aspects of the movie: that all children weren't killed immediately, that one child could survive by hiding, that a few inmates would have the strength to walk out of the camp as the Americans arrive. He seems to equate *Life Is Beautiful* with movies about dancing, singing slaves and dancing, singing Native Americans who triumph over evil through the "power of love." He accuses Benigni of knowing nothing about the real holocaust. "Surely an artist cannot transcend what he never encounters."

Denby the critic falls short of accusing Benigni or the audience (or me) of deliberately mocking the holocaust. Yet, he clearly accuses Benigni and the audience (and me) of a lack of sensitivity in the form of "benign denial." The horrors of the holocaust cannot be transcended; a father's love cannot save anyone from extreme evil. One cannot find meaning in the holocaust through "the power of laughter to move the human heart and the power of the imagination to bolster the human spirit." To be taken in by the sentimentality of *Life Is Beautiful* is offensive at least and dangerous at worst. These points deserve our consideration.

Should Benigni be criticized for failing to find authentic meaning in the holocaust? Has any philosopher, poet, pundit, or politician ever succeeded

in doing so? Victor Frankl wrote about the transcendent power of suffering. Hannah Arendt wrote about the use of rational means to achieve irrational ends, and of the danger of focusing on the efficiency of one's means while ignoring the insanity of one's ends. Perhaps these authors found their own meaning through such abstractions. Perhaps others, including Guido, found their own meaning in the fight for the survival of their loved ones, their racial/ethnic group, their traditions, their heritage.

Was Benigni even trying to find meaning in the holocaust? Does the movie even attempt to do this? If not, should anyone be offended by its failure to do so? Perhaps it's okay to come away with a sense of joy because Giosue has won a tank (i.e., survived). This is not to deny that the holocaust happened. I believe that most of us have the sense to view *Schindler's List* as an attempt to depict reality and *Life Is Beautiful* as an attempt to depict something else. Perhaps it honors Benigni's memory of his own father, a farmer who was imprisoned in Bergen-Belson from 1943 through 1945. Perhaps it is only what the official movie blurb says: a fable of love.

If this is denial, Denby shouldn't take it away. First, a little denial can be healthy, as in the case of clients who aren't ready to deal with their trauma and may never be. Second, although a lot of denial may preclude us from exerting vigilance against further horrors, I don't think I'm falling down a slippery slope. Maybe I can't come close to envisioning the holocaust, but I'm not heading toward a complete denial that it happened, as Denby seems to fear. I've seen *Schindler's List*!

Mr. Denby, you sound like the church group who called for a boycott of Disney World after it established a gay-friendly benefits policy. Is Disney World the worst enemy they could find? Is Benigni the worst enemy you could find? If my comments are offensive, please accept my apology and know that those of us who were moved by *Life Is Beautiful*, rather than offended by its lack of realism, are not your worst enemy. □

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