REFLECTIONS

NARRATIVES of PROFESSIONAL HELPING

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REFLECTIONS

NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL HELPING

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NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL HELPING

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

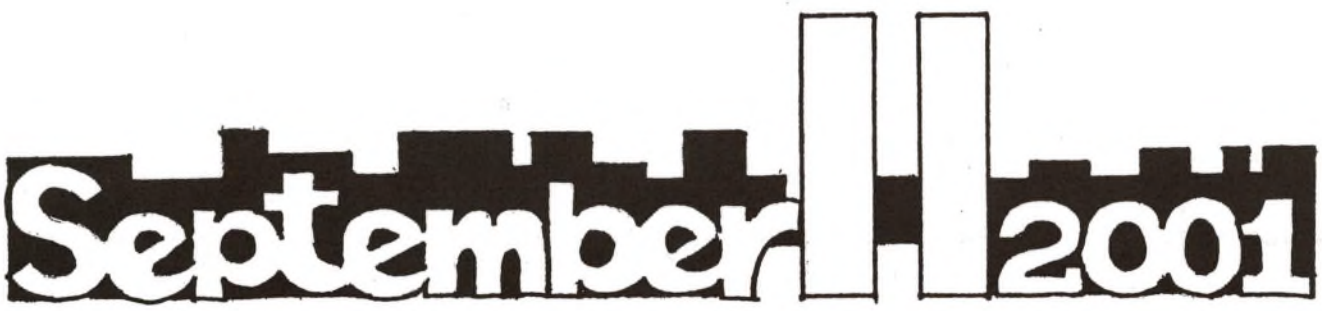
Mary Ann Jimenez, Ph.D.

September 11, 2001

The attack on United States has challenged our national self concept—one based on our historical experience as invulnerable to attack by other nations. Beginning with the American Revolution, people living in the United States have felt a strong sense of optimism and confidence in the future and in the nation's progress. This confidence has been under girded by tremendous economic growth and prosperity from the l9th century through the Clinton era, with a few occasional, though serious, lapses. Westward migration encouraged a sense of limitlessness, accompanying our bloody sweep through the prairies and the mountains of the West. The human costs of the migration and economic progress were not acknowledged in the progressive crafting of national pride. Recently, technology provided us with a new sense of openness and power, as we sensed that nothing was outside of our reach, including space, medical cures and even slowing the aging process.

That confidence in future progress, that optimism and sense of limitlessness, vanished on the morning of September 11, 2001. We are suddenly haunted by our own vulnerability—to future attacks, to insidious germs, to seemingly inexplicable and implacable hatred by unseen and unknown persons. We have lost our trust of some of our neighbors, of our airplanes and of our cityscapes. We are reminded that death may come any time, without reason or preparation, and under terrible guise. The shock of recognizing this—a knowledge previously buried in the optimism of the information age and the business of everyday life— has pierced the comfort we had taken in our daily routines and in our shared sense of escaping time and history. The fictive nature of our belief in a limitless future has been exposed. In this we finally have common bond with people in other countries across the globe

Reading the stories of the last days and hours of those who perished on that morning is chilling. They were no different than ourselves—they just acted more bravely than we can imagine ourselves acting. Their stories remind us of the power of narratives to shock and to unite.



Call for Papers

Special Issue:
September 11, 2001
Narratives of Professional Helpers

Special Guest Editors - Alex Gitterman, Ed.,D., and Andrew Malekoff, MSW

Reflections is seeking narratives from persons who responded to those affected by the attacks on New york City, Washington D.C., and Pensylvania on September 11, 2001. Personal narratives involving interactions with individuals, families, groups, and communities are encouraged for submission. Narratives can be based on formal or informal experiences including, but not limited to:

- ❑ Direct contact with survivors and those who have lost loved ones, colleagues, and friends.
- ❑ Work with businesses that have been devastated by the attacks.
- ❑ Work with schools, students, and faculty.
- ❑ Responses by human services professionals to the disaster and to caring for their own caregivers.
- ❑ Trauma and bereavement work with people from children to elders.
- ❑ Experiences with government bodies organizing crisis responses.
- ❑ Participation in community efforts such as vigils, prayer services, and other commemorative activities.
- ❑ Interactions with firefighters, police officers, rescue workers, medical personnel, and others.

This is a formal opportunity to share personal or professional experiences and add the professional helper voice to the growing dialogue in the aftermath of the attack on America. Manuscripts can reflect brief encounters in no less than 500 words, or longer stories of no more than 25 double spaced pages. For further submission instructions, please visit our website at www.csulb.edu/depts/socialwk/reflections, or call us at 562-985-4626.

Mail manuscripts to: Alex Gitterman, Guest Editor
Conneticuit University School of Social Work
1798 Asylum Avenue
West Hartford, CT 06117-2698

Manuscripts due by March 31, 2002.

Teaching Parenting Skills To Incarcerated Fathers

By Carl Mazza, DSW, Assistant Professor, Lehman College of the City, University of New York, and Consultant, Osborne Association, Family Works Prison Program

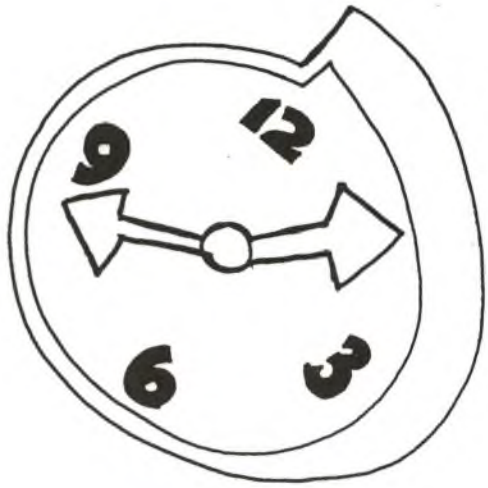
In teaching a parenting class to incarcerated fathers, the author discovered that the most powerful and successful technique has been using narratives. Combining the long periods of empty time experienced by inmates with a supportive classroom environment where insight is encouraged, incarcerated fathers, through narratives, can begin to understand their earlier motivations in life, the consequences their incarceration has had on their children, and the healing process they need to be involved in with their children.

Five years ago I began teaching the only full semester course on parenting offered to male inmates in New York State. This 16-week course is given in a maximum-security prison located about thirty miles north of New York City. I've taught college courses in prison for the previous fifteen years. With the termination of the college programs in prisons in New York State (an attempt to get "tough on crime"), I began to teach the course entitled Basic Parenting offered under the auspices of a non-profit social welfare agency whose mission is to serve ex-offenders and the families of incarcerated people.

When I began to teach the course, I started from a "traditional" model of parenting including pedagogical presentations of such topics as child developmental theory, appropriate discipline, communications skills, and being consistent and nurturing. The classes went well, but not great. One night as an exercise, I asked the students to think back to when they were 12 years old. Their thoughts could be positive, negative, or neutral. I just wanted them to try to remember back to a time when they were boys. I asked for volunteers to share some thoughts and immediately several hands went up. Memories ranged from sitting on the front stoop in the summer waiting for the ice cream truck to come down the street, to the first time kissing a girl, to being beaten by an alcoholic father, to attending the funeral of a friend who was shot by a stray bullet. More important than the stories were the emotions that began to rise to the surface. Many of the men had begun to get in touch with feelings long forgotten. I seized on these newly emerging feelings and told the class that everyone in the room was now 12 years old and asked them, as 12 years olds, what did they want from their parents? What did they need as 12 years olds? A very animated and heartfelt discussion followed. This was the beginning of using narratives to teach parenting to incarcerated men. Over the years, narratives have become one of the prime means of my teaching parenting skills in prison.

Teaching parenting to men is always a challenge. As men we have to look inside ourselves to our earlier experiences as sons, grandsons, and brothers. We have to explore our own definitions of who men are; who fathers are; and what masculinity is. We need to find the courage inside of us to admit

that often our definitions of masculinity are confining and our ideas of fatherhood are too concrete. In the classroom, the men begin by understanding both the environment that they currently find themselves in and how they have learned to adjust to it. Being incarcerated creates a new world for people, requiring a new set of survival skills.



The Concept of Time in Prison

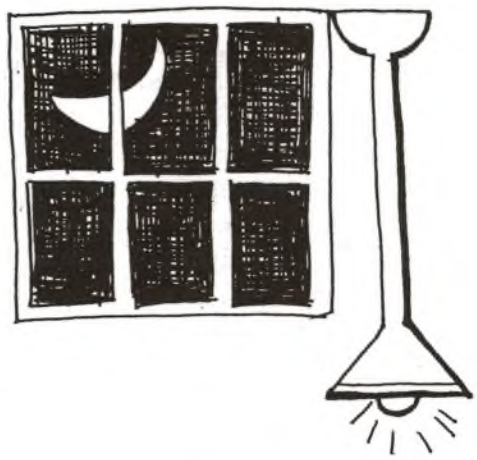
In prison there is a saying that "you do your time or your time will do you." While all of us in the larger society often cannot find enough time to do all of the things that we feel we need to do, in prison time is often the only thing that men have in abundance. Incarcerated fathers often feel that they must harness time so that time serves their needs. Some do this by joining groups, becoming religious, participating in sports and weight training, and/or learning new skills. If these men don't structure their time, time becomes endless and slow moving. Indeed, in order to psychologically survive in prison, men need to master time. Time takes on a different dimension. Frequently men will say that they are "short" because they "only" have four years left in prison. Compared to other men who have over twenty-five years left on their sentences, four years does sound like a short time. However, in the larger society four years is a "long" period of time. It is long enough for a full presidential term in office; for a person to enter high school or college as a freshman and graduate as a senior; and for an enlisted person to complete a full term in the military and begin to receive veteran's benefits.

No matter what activities incarcerated men participate in, what organizations they join, or what goals they set for themselves, every night is exactly the same. Every night they are locked into cells, often in single man cells, where they lie on their beds and think about their lives. They think about their past and the things they did and never did. They begin to think about past motivations for their behaviors. They think about how they felt as boys and young men. They think about their present. They think about the state of their lives, their families, and their abilities to survive in this prison environment. If they are emotionally strong, they think about the future. At times they dare to dream and plan. This requires great fortitude because so often in their lives, dreaming and planning has led to failure, disappointment, and heartache. Compton (1979) states that the ability to set and maintain goals is a result of having hope and believing change is possible. Dreaming and planning means believing there is a future. When a man is facing twenty-five years in prison, believing that there is, indeed, a future requires much emotional fortitude. This all leads to self-reflection and allowing themselves to emotionally feel.

Stephen is 32 years old. He was sentenced to twenty years for a series of burglaries and has been incarcerated for the last eight years. He states, "After being here for eight years and sleeping in the same cell every night, if you are strong enough, you begin to face the truth within your life. You begin to understand your motivations in life and eventually you begin to really feel the consequences of those motivations. You begin to see how you have hurt yourself, your victims, your family, and especially your children.

"I lay in my cell and I listen to the noise and the silence. I think about my two kids, Nina and little Stephen, every night. I think about how I was always too busy running the streets to spend much time with them. I think about how I have

deeply hurt them by committing crimes and coming to prison. But most of all, I think about how I can become a better father to them and not necessarily make up for lost time, but be a loving and



positive role model."

Dan was sentenced to fifteen years for a series of robberies. He states that getting money, jewelry, and cars were just a "perk" in robbing people. The true "rush" that he felt was when he pointed his gun at a victim and for a few moments he was "in control" of the world. "When I held someone up, I became the most important person in the victim's world. Rich, powerful people were under my control for a few minutes. After laying in my cell night after night, year after year, I realize that I thought I was nothing but shit, and the only way I could temporarily not feel like shit was to get a crime victim and control his world for a little while."

Incarceration allows men to reflect upon themselves and their lives. It is imperative that, as the teacher, I support their ability to reflect, develop this ability to reflect more deeply, and connect this new-found insight into the concept of parenting from a distance; indeed, parenting from prison.

Teaching Parenting in Prison

The existence and success of any program in prison rests with the administration of the prison. The support of the administration ensures that the classes will be allowed to meet as scheduled. It means that the men will be allowed access to the schoolrooms in the evenings and that I, as a civilian, will be granted admission into the prison. Strong support by the administration means that the correctional officers will not interfere with the scheduled running of the program; they will not enter the class to take special body counts or question the validity of school passes. Consistency is paramount in teaching parenting and working with incarcerated fathers. Both parenting students and/or incarcerated fathers need to understand the importance of consistency in all of our lives, especially in the lives of children. The consistency in the classroom becomes a model for consistency elsewhere. The administration's approval guarantees that consistency in being allowed to meet will occur.

The 16-week parenting class meets one night a week for two and a half hours. The course is divided into specific units covering, among other units, such topics as communicating with your child; teaching your child ethics and morals; instilling cultural/racial pride within your child; administering discipline versus punishment; and understanding child and human development. Each unit has a factual component where information is presented in a pedagogical manner and augmented with discussions and role-plays. An icebreaking exercise that is designed to encourage insight and honesty is done during the first class. I draw an outline of a chart on the blackboard. On the top of the chart is written "Reasons for Enrolling in a 16-Week Parenting Class." On the left side of the chart is written "Stated Reasons," on the right side of the chart "Unstated Reasons." The stated reasons are easy to elicit from the class: "To be a better father" and "To learn how to parent from prison." The unstated reasons initially create a silence.

Slowly and tentatively a brave hand is held up and a student cautiously states, "To impress the parole board." The student is absolutely correct, for in prison, when a person is up for review for possible parole, the more certificates of completion that a person has in his file, the better his chances are to "make" parole. With the acknowledgement that taking the parenting class is a possible way of impressing the parole board, a heavy fog is lifted as the "secret" reason is dispelled. Soon other reasons are eagerly listed:

- Impress your child's mother that you've "really changed."
- Impress other family members.
- Attempt to start or renew a relationship with one or more of your children.
- Bored, and one of the few programs available.
- Get to attend a graduation ceremony at the completion of the course.
- Meet guest speakers who come in from the outside world.
- Good food at the graduation ceremony.
- Heard that the instructor had a good sense of humor.
- Instructor could be a potential resource of help with employment after you are paroled.
- Sprained your ankle and cannot play ball for a few weeks.
- Understand that some interesting films are shown during the course of the semester.
- Enjoy writing and view the parenting course as an opportunity to write more.

I tell the students that all these reasons are valid. In fact, in life we sometimes initiate things for one reason only to discover that we were being motivated by other behavior. One student, Jason, gives an example of his older brother Robert, who was addicted to crack cocaine and eventually brought to court and charged with several crimes. Robert was given a choice of 18 months in a residential drug program or 18 months in prison. Robert chose the residential drug program only because it wasn't prison. He went to the program unmotivated and with low expectations. As time went on, Robert began to view his life differently; he began to see a future for himself. He became more and more motivated and not only completed the program but also eventually went to school to become a certified drug counselor. He now is employed in the same program where he formerly was a resident. Robert, at the initiation of his substance abuse program placement never dreamed of how it would have such a positive lifelong effect on him. Likewise, men enroll in the parenting course for a variety of reasons – all of them being valid.

The role plays become problem-solving exercises between father and child even though, obviously, the children themselves are never present. With each weekly topic, the men are strongly encouraged to be insightful into their own past experiences and motivations. For example, in the unit concerning instilling cultural/racial pride, the men first need to examine how they really feel about being from a specific cultural group. They are encouraged to react to the various stereotypes (both positive and negative) regarding their cultural group. They need to remember how they felt as boys and whom they held as role models. While there is always a lively discussion, the men are not forced to disclose their feelings. Disclosure occurs when individual students feel the need to do so.

Larry is African-American. He was raised by his grandparents in South Carolina and later, New York. He grew up in the late 1960's and although he was too young to participate in the Black Panther movement, he remembers the pride he felt within his community about the power and the media attention the Black Panthers received at that time. He remembers James Brown's "I'm Black and I'm Proud" being constantly played on the radio. Yet he also remembers his grandmother wanting to comb his hair and bragging to the other older women in the neighborhood that her grandson Larry had "such good hair." Larry states that his grandmother's boasts made him feel both uncomfortable yet proud. He realized that "good hair" meant "straight" as opposed to "nappy" and that despite the slogans of

"Black Pride" that he embraced, part of him enjoyed being seen as having a "white" physical characteristic.

What is important is that the men get in touch with their feelings, not necessarily that they share them. The students as men and fathers need to understand their own feelings about themselves before they can teach their children. The setting for all of the role-plays is the prison visiting room. Pretending that the father-child interactions are taking place in the visiting room gives the role-plays a feeling of greater authenticity for the men's interactions are limited to those allowed by the rules governing conduct during visits. A situation is given to the father and son actors. For example, a 13-year-old son is visiting his father. The son is very involved in rap music and performs some of his own rap songs for his father. Within the lyrics are references to "n------" (the father and son are both African-American). How does the father handle the situation?

Father: Son, I think you have a lot of talent but why do you use the "n" word?

Son: Aw, come on pop. It's nothing, that's what we call each other. It means we're friends, we're homeboys.

Father: Too many of our people died in trying to stop the white man from referring to us like that.

Son: That's old fashioned, pop. If we make the word our own, then we take the power out of it.

Father: That's not true, son. By us using that word, we're disrespecting ourselves. We're telling ourselves and others that we truly dislike ourselves. There are hundreds of other words to describe us but choosing the vilest, most hateful word to call our selves is wrong. We must respect ourselves more.

The role plays generate a class discussion about the subject. There are few right or wrong answers. Instead, everyone must resolve the issue for himself.

The students are given regular homework assignments where they must write about some life experience. The first assignment is to write about a boyhood memory with either their father, someone who played a father-like role, or if neither existed, a memory of what it was like growing up without a paternal figure in their lives. The students are assured confidentiality and they are encouraged to be as open as they feel comfortable. The papers are not graded, but I write extensive comments on them, noting strengths that often go unnoticed by the writers themselves. Using a strength perspective (Compton & Galaway, 1998: Goldstein, 1997; Mills, 1995) on narratives often helps many incarcerated fathers begin to see positive qualities about themselves that they've never noticed before.

For example, Courtney is 28 years old. He wrote, *"I grew up not knowing my father. It made me feel alone even though I knew my mother loved me. When I was in the first grade, I had trouble reading and writing. Everybody called me 'stupid.' I knew I was stupid but hated hearing that name. I learned if I acted bad in school I was sent to the principal's office. If I was at the principal's office then I didn't have to worry about reading and writing. As for the kids, I learned if I fought a lot, most of them would be afraid of me and then they wouldn't call me 'stupid.' Others would befriend me only to get me to beat up someone for them. I didn't like being called 'bad' in the neighborhood, but it was a lot better than being called 'stupid.' It wasn't until I came to prison and became Muslim did I realize that I didn't have to fight all of the time in order to get 'respect' and 'friends.'"* I wrote to Courtney on his paper that his understanding of the reason for his behavior as a boy was remarkable and that few people had such keen insight into themselves. Furthermore, he was obviously far from stupid. His understanding, even at such a young age, of how to successfully avoid humiliating situations demonstrated great survival skills. He developed a successful mechanism to ensure that no one would call him "stupid." Courtney did eventually learned to read well and his writing skills have improved greatly. His spelling errors

now are a result of phonetic spelling and therefore illustrate his knowledge of English spelling rules.

As the semester goes on, the students write similar narratives on how they were disciplined as boys; a memory relating to school, to grandparents, to siblings, to their mothers, their dreams for themselves; and their hopes for their children. With each reflection paper, the students begin to take bigger risks in writing and talking more about their feelings and selves. Within this parenting framework, what I believe I am really teaching my students is how to be more insightful.

Jose, age 32, wrote about his father: *"My parents split up when I was six years old. My father would often come around on weekends and take me out for a little while. We'd always end up at the candy store and he always let me buy any candy that I wanted. When I was nine years old he told me that he was going to take me fishing next Saturday. That Saturday I got up at dawn, took a shower, got dressed and waited for my father. He never came. I never saw him again. I never cried about it either. My mother eventually told me that she heard that he moved away to Florida, but I really don't know. To this day, sometimes, if I don't catch myself, on Saturday morning I wake up and for a brief instance I wonder if this is going to be the Saturday that my father is going to take me fishing. I get so pissed at myself for doing this because I want to believe that I've overcome him hurting me, but I'll be damned if I don't think about it as soon as I wake up on Saturday."*

Carlos was raised in foster homes. *"I never knew my real mother and father. Someone once told me that they had severe tuberculosis, but I don't know whether that's true or not. Anyway, I never felt really accepted in any foster home and every time that feeling of not being accepted became too strong, I ran away and lived in the streets for a while until I was eventually picked up by the police and placed in another home. When I was ten years old, I wanted to grow my hair into a big Afro. My foster mother at the time dragged me to the barbershop and told the barber to cut my hair. I kicked and screamed throughout the haircut. She was mad and embarrassed and told the barber that I was a foster child. It always made me feel bad when people knew I was in foster care. It was always so embarrassing. I decided then and there to run away the next day. The next morning was Saturday and I got dressed and left the house. I walked towards my school and ran down the subway entrance two blocks away from school. I went up to the turnstile and put my hand down the pocket of my pants. You know the way little boys dig deep in their pockets with great intensity and determination. All I had was a single dollar, the price of one token. I stood frozen not knowing if I should spend all my money on a token or sneak under the turnstile and have some money in my pocket. I looked to the token booth to the turnstile, from the turnstile to the token booth, not knowing what to do. Out of nowhere, a white man in a gray suit came up to me and said, 'Son, if you always think before you act in life, you'll be okay.' He then gave me a token and left. I never saw him again. I often think of him now and how sound his advice was. If I listened to his guidance, I wouldn't be here now. You know, he may have been the closest I ever had to a father."*

The narratives have helped open the men up to their own feelings. As the teacher, I then help them use this new insight into making the transition from boys to fathers.

Fatherhood and Prison

I've taught parenting classes to men outside of prison, and there are many similarities between parenting classes with men both in and out of prison. Both groups often initially intellectualize rather than discuss feelings; have a rather constrictive view of fathering; tend to solve problems rather than deal with emotions; and want their children to enjoy a better life than they themselves have experienced. Yet in prison,

men must grapple with the reality that despite their best efforts, they are limited by their incarceration from being full time fathers. At best, the fathers in prison can speak to their children a couple of times a week and see them once every two weeks for a few hours.

The classes are extremely honest. The students are told that because of their incarceration, their children are now five times more likely than other children to be incarcerated as adults. Their children are more likely than other children to fall below the poverty line. Their children are likely to be ostracized by other children and their parents and labeled "difficult" by teachers. If they hide the fact that their fathers are incarcerated, they often experience intense anxiety, fear, and guilt (Hairston, 1998). The mail that they receive from their fathers is often stamped in red letters "MAILED FROM A CORRECTIONAL FACILITY" causing embarrassment and shame should anyone see the envelopes. Collect telephone calls from prison are often up to ten times more expensive than telephone calls made from other phones, putting an increased financial burden on their mothers and caretakers (Hairston, 1998). If the children don't see their fathers on visits, they develop a sense of abandonment. If the children do see their fathers on prison visits, they enter a strange, frightening and confused world. Visitation in prison involves waiting on long lines and submitting to detailed searches. Depending on the institution where the father is incarcerated, the amount of physical contact between father and children may be limited. Although most prisons allow "contact" visits, many prisons do not allow fathers to hold their children in their laps. Incarcerated fathers are often assigned seats by the correctional staff at visitation tables, usually in the seats facing the front of the visitation room. Children are often not allowed to bring in papers to the visiting room; consequently, children's drawings, report cards, homework, and art projects are denied to the fathers.

The visiting rooms are often dank and uninviting places. The furniture is institutional, often old and mismatched. The walls are cinderblock, painted gray, and void of any decorations. In a few prisons there are decks of cards and old Bibles that can be used to pass the time during visits. Often paper towels are taken from the rest rooms and parents and children use their creativity to devise games and activities out of them.

Incarcerated fathers are restricted from performing many everyday activities with their children in the visiting rooms. Such restrictions may lead to a role reversal between fathers and children, which is confusing to the children. For example, in most prisons, inmates are not allowed to touch money. Many visiting rooms have vending machines marked off in a corner with a colored line painted on the floor. Incarcerated fathers cannot pass the line, so the children walk up to the machine, insert the money, and choose the food items. If the food needs to be heated up, the children then need to insert the item into a microwave oven and wait until the food is ready while the fathers look on helplessly.

This parentification of children can be quite confusing and frightening. The children often sense that they have more power than their fathers do. The fathers are dependent upon the children coming to visit. Furthermore, the fathers' interactions with their children are always under surveillance in the visiting room; therefore, the interactions between fathers and children often have a surreal quality to them.

All of these issues are discussed both in the context of barriers to effective parenting as well as in having the fathers take responsibility for the consequences now put upon their children. This causes great sadness among many of the fathers in the class. What is continually reinforced is that only by understanding the effects of their incarceration on their children can the fathers begin to understand their children's pain, fear, and confusion. It is now up to the fathers to "right the wrong." This can be a very energizing experience. The class offers the fathers a great deal of emotional support. In the role-plays, the men who play the children frequently confront their "fathers" with

painful accusations and the "fathers" struggle for an appropriate response. For example, a 16-year-old boy tells his father during the course of a prison visit that he wants to quit school so he can work as a mechanic's helper in a local garage:

Son: Pop, school ain't nothing. Mike will teach me how to be a mechanic and I'll be making big dough.

Father: I think you're better off in school. You'll need an education to make it in this world. Maybe you can work at the garage after school?

Son: Nah, I need the money now.

Father: Your mother works hard to take care of you. She does the best that she can. Remember she isn't rich.

Son: You're telling me! We struggle with money every week and Pop, to tell you the truth, you're no help. Our lives would be a lot better if you never went to prison. You didn't mind making fast money back in the old days. At least what I want to do is legal. Come to think of it, you never finished high school either! Now you're sitting there telling me what to do.

The students discuss the dilemma presented in the role play. They understand the son's anger and impatience. They also acknowledge the legitimacy of the son's accusations towards the father. Answers to this dilemma are not easy to come by, but before answers can be attained, the fathers must begin to deal with the feelings.

Each semester, Amber, now 25 years old, addresses the class. Amber's father has been incarcerated since she was four years old. She grew up visiting her father in prison. She speaks candidly of her experiences with her father. She speaks about how, as a young child, she made up stories to tell her friends and classmates about her father's whereabouts. She talks about an incident in first grade when she told her best friend that her daddy was in prison and a week later her friend told her that her mommy said she wasn't allowed to play with Amber any more. Amber talks about how at age 14, and for one year, she stopped writing or talking on the telephone to her father and only visited him three times because she was so angry with him for being in prison. Yet during that year she still has all of her father's letters safely stored away in a book under her bed. She talks about the anger that she had for years against everyone in uniforms because she blamed them for her father's imprisonment, and how as a teenager she dated "bad boys" because it made her feel closer to her dad. Amber speaks about how it took her five years to complete high school even though she was an honor student because she believed if she stretched out high school, her father would eventually be released from prison and then would be present for her graduation. Amber talks about the arguments with her mother throughout the years and how it was easy to blame her mother for not understanding her father than it was for her father to take responsibility for the actions that led him to prison. And then Amber cries a bit and says that speaking to incarcerated fathers helps her feel closer to her father. Several of the men's eyes well up and for a brief moment everyone lets down their guard and allows themselves to feel vulnerable and almost forget that this is taking place in a maximum-security prison.

The students realize that as fathers, they serve as role models, but they struggle with the concept of being able to present to their children, particularly their sons, the difference between the father's past behaviors and them as individuals. While it is a boost to their morale to recognize that the children are modeling their behavior, there is always the real fear that they will be modeling the past criminal behavior. This is terrifying to the fathers. Often it is said among the men that their worst nightmare is that someday their sons will be incarcerated with them in the same prison. The fathers walk a very thin line in discussing incarceration with their children, particularly their sons. The fathers adjust to prison life, yet they feel a strong responsibility not to glamorize it nor to portray themselves in stereotypical media images as "super-macho" men.

Tyrone states, *"It's always hard talking to your sons about prison. When I was coming up, going to prison was almost a rite of passage. I was never afraid of it; I think I wanted to prove to my peers that I wasn't afraid of it. In fact, part of me was probably even looking forward to it. Prison isn't anything like it's portrayed in movies and television. There really is a sense of humanity and caring that occurs within groups of men here. Yet nothing in the movies or television can portray the deep sense of loneliness and self-hatred that happens in prison. I love both of my sons and I want to assure them that I'm okay here and they don't have to worry about me. But I want desperately to have them realize that this place is no joke and that a real man doesn't have to prove his manhood by coming to prison. If either of them ever came to prison, it would be my worst nightmare. I don't know what I would do. It's funny; I said I don't want my sons to worry about me. The mere fact that they are worried about me shows the selfishness that I demonstrated when I was in the streets. Kids shouldn't be burdened with worrying about their fathers. It's the fathers who should be worrying about their kids."*

William has been incarcerated for two years. He has not tried to contact his son since his imprisonment until taking the parenting class. *"I always felt ashamed to contact my son, Freddy. I pretended if I wasn't around him then he wouldn't miss me. I guess it was 'out of sight, out of mind.' In the parenting class I found the strength to write him. I apologized to him from the bottom of my soul. I told him that I was selfish and that when I was committing crimes, I wasn't thinking of him. I told him that I probably wasn't even thinking about myself. I asked him to give me another chance to be a real father and that by being a real father I'd accept more responsibility than I have ever accepted before. I only have three years left in here and we could build a great life and we could teach each other new things. I told him that if he wanted, he could call my mother, his grandmother, and she'd take him up here to see me. I wasn't sure how he would respond to the letter. I was pretty nervous about the whole thing. I was really afraid that he would hate me or even worse, pretend that I no longer existed. Last Sunday, he came up with my mom and visited me. I'm thirty years old and I held him in my arms and cried. I don't think I've ever been so happy and grateful for anything in my life."*

I love going to the prison every Thursday evening. To see the students recognize their inner strengths and begin to struggle with hurts and issues that have plagued them most of their lives is unbelievably gratifying. To help them use narratives, both oral and written, is exciting. To help them break the cycle of future incarceration of their children is breathtaking.

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Measures of Heart: The Rest of the Story

By Lawrence H. Climo, M.D., Consulting Psychiatrist, ACT Program, Department of Mental Health, Commonwealth of Massachusetts

For many of the severely mentally ill trying to make lives for themselves in their community, progress isn't about taking small steps forward. It is about remaining in place and not falling down. It is about hanging on. The author learned this lesson when asked as the psychiatric consultant to an ACT Team to make home visits in order to put a human face on psychiatry. The lesson, of course, worked the other way around.

When I was hired by the State Department of Mental Health as a psychiatric consultant to the local ACT team (Assertive Community Treatment), I was both over and underwhelmed. I was overwhelmed by the number and detail of state regulations dealing with monitoring progress of these chronically and severely mentally ill clients living in the community and underwhelmed by the lack of a clear function or job description by which I might contribute to their progress. I was, after all, the consulting, not the treating psychiatrist.

When a case coordinator was assigned to take me around into the homes of the clients to meet with them it felt, as the state regulations had felt, like an impressive and important thing to do. It was not, however, really thought out, nor did it have a clear and realistic purpose or expectation beyond the notion that this would look impressive to someone somewhere, plus show the ACT clients that psychiatrists are human, too, whatever that meant. Not surprisingly, I got to visit only three clients before the project was stopped and I was recalled for other duties.

Nonetheless, I learned something during those three home visits that has stayed with me and has informed all of my subsequent consultation work, not only with ACT but also with the state. It has to do with my contribution as psychiatric consultant. My most important contribution, I realized, might not be with promoting progress of the clients in the community but rather with generating reforms in the way the state system thinks about them and their progress in the first place.

Community rehabilitation of the chronically and severely mentally ill is, to a state bureaucracy like ours, about setting goals, identifying and monitoring measurable behavior changes towards those goals, and documenting the progress. It's about clients becoming increasingly independent in their lives in the community; in their money management, for example, public transportation and housing; with medication compliance and continued education; with job searches and job application. This is what the regulations presume and monitor. More. Progress. But, what of those clients for whom additional progress is not possible? What of those clients hanging on and simply trying to resist a relapse and re-hospitalization? What if hanging on is all the success they'll ever achieve? Don't they deserve our recognition? Aren't their efforts fighting off the illness, hanging onto sanity, as worthy of our respect as holding a job, if that is one's reality?

This part of their story, observed and passed down orally from caseworker to caseworker, never makes it into the official record because it isn't recognizable as progress. It certainly isn't measurable. Or so it seems. But what if a psychiatric consultant decides it should be considered progress and should be measured? What if a psychiatric consultant wants to say so, on the record?

Because it's all about them, not about us.

Nelly: Behind the Wall, Enduring in Solitude

Let me begin with Nelly[1], 51, a widow with two adult children and four grandchildren. (Her state file diagnosis: chronic depression, recurrent with psychotic features; post-traumatic stress disorder. In relapse she stops caring for herself and becomes suicidal.)

I met Nelly in her kitchen where she invited the case coordinator and me to sit and offered us coffee. I told her I was there to meet her because I was the consultant to the case coordinator and was making the rounds of all the clients, and I asked her what it was like living in the community. She surprised me. "I don't really live in the community," she told me. I waited for her explanation. "I live life alone. I'm very solitary."

She then told me about her illness. "It's like being in limbo," she said, "in a land where you're forgotten. It doesn't matter who is there, trying to help. You can't feel. You put those feelings away. Somewhere. Nothing can touch you except sadness." Can't people help, I wanted to know. The answer was no. "You have to bring yourself out of it. No one else can help. Your self brings you out. I don't know why this happens."

She told me her story. "I had sad feelings all my life and didn't know why. When we were kids we never talked, never expressed ourselves, feelings. We learned not to. Our father used to beat us if you were angry or telling something he didn't want to hear. At ten it was molesting. Then I was raised by my grandmother who had some form of mental illness. Made a real mess out of it."

The next surprise came when I asked what she found stressful in her life. "Going grocery shopping." Grocery shopping? Why I asked. "Lots of panic attacks. The effect lingers." This was her critical stressor in the community? Yes, and she had her strategy. "When I'm feeling good, I pick a slow time and a small grocery store. I go in and get a few things and leave."

I hadn't considered shopping for food a stressor, let alone a major stressor, just as I hadn't given attention to the possibility of an impromptu, homemade remedy to help negotiate that stressor like slipping into the smaller stores during their down times. I hadn't even considered the client's personal efforts that go into simply resisting the disabling effects of the illness that might be proceeding apace with the presumed rehabilitation process.

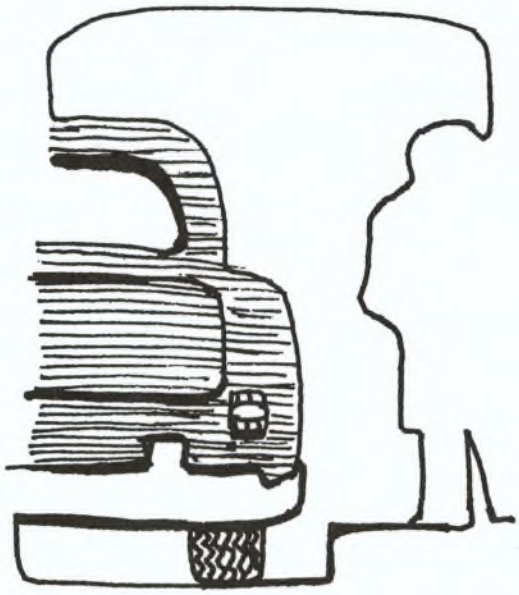
Doesn't your case coordinator help, I asked her. "They can't help. But they gave me medications in the beginning," she said, "because I couldn't get them right and they made all the difference."

Nelly's life, it seemed, in the depths of depression, was still a life she managed to endure. Panic, however, could make it impossible to get the food to live. And she still wanted to live. So she figured out on her own what to do. She has meals and she endures.

Antonia: On the Edge, Determined to Stay in Control

Antonia, age 48, is illiterate. The record shows that she became a ward of the state at age nine because of abuse and neglect. (Her file diagnosis: mild mental retardation and depression. In relapse she injures herself and becomes assaultive.)

Antonia's experience living in the community was different from Nelly's. Antonia described it this way. "I'm afraid of crime. You don't know what's going to happen next. It's like being in jail, not



knowing what's going to happen next."

But crime wasn't, for Antonia, the principal stress. For her, the main stress was simply walking along the sidewalk and it wasn't because of the possibility of crime. It was because of traffic. "Walking near the edge of the sidewalk and cars pass" was what rattled her. Again, just an ordinary community experience, something we wouldn't consider a stress, was for her a major stressor.

The description of her experience with her illness provided a measure of insight into this reality. "I don't want to hurt anybody," she began, but "I lose my temper. That's what I'm afraid of. I keep to myself so I don't get violent. That's why they put me in the State Hospital from the State School. They couldn't handle me. I pushed a nurse down a flight of stairs. They put me in another hospital to calm me down." She explained further. "My mother couldn't take care of me. She was sick. My father signed me away. Nobody in the family wanted me. I was on meds since I was nine, for depression and temper. I used to take off, run away, all the time. When you're a child in a courthouse you don't know what's going to happen, where you're going to go." I understood better her fear of traffic passing close, her fear of unexpected force coming too close.

Her strategy appeared in the advice she's learned to give others. "Live with someone. It's always nice to have someone to talk to. I feel safe with my boy friend." She spoke of how she walks with her boyfriend and stays away from the edge of the sidewalk.

For some clients, simply managing to cope and survive in the face of provocations that can trigger a flare-up, which means not only terror and then loss of control and potential violence but re-hospitalization, is truly the best they can do, their optimal functioning. For them, living in the community and not relapsing is their success.

Antonia's sedate and monitored life was, nonetheless, on the edge simply because there were streets to cross and traffic. But, determined to stay in control, she found a partner, someone to live with and care about and who helps her when she must cross the street. She did this and she did this without help.

Annette: In the Shadow of Dark Energy: Making Light

Annette is 43, a separated mother of seven who was ten when her own mother committed suicide. (The state file diagnosis: depression, recurrent; PTSD, alcohol and polysubstance abuse. In relapse, voices tell her she should die and she attempts suicide.)

Antonia was welcoming to the case coordinator and me, offering us fruit juice and pastry, and was happy to speak about herself without prompting. After introductions she told me what it was like living in the community. "When the medications don't stop the panic," she began, "and no longer

calm me down, I shower. I clean the house, top to bottom. I go for a walk. Bake. Bake a cake, biscuits, muffins. Take a shower again." She laughed.

I couldn't help smiling. I assumed her major problem would be mood swings. I was wrong. As with Nelly and Antonia, the stressor wasn't the illness, but the trigger to symptom eruption, and it wasn't associated with something I'd have anticipated. It was, like with the others, associated with a normal part of community living. Just as her home-made remedy was something I wouldn't have predicted.

For Annette, the major stressor was "crossing the bridge." (There is a bridge bisecting the city.) "Once I got stuck in the middle," she exclaimed. "I didn't know which way to go. I had a panic attack and froze. Then I ran."

"I dream of dead people from the past and now," she told me. "I've heard voices since I was a child. I slept with my father until I was twelve. I was hospitalized at seventeen when I found my father dead." And now, "I panic when I see lots of people in one place. Stores. Banks. I can't take it. My heart races, my face turns red. It scares the hell out of me. I begin to faint. I do a dance, like this. I get them all laughing. They love me. 'Hey, Annette!' they call out."

Annette's certainty that she can affect the outcome of a bad encounter, that she can make light, even in the presence of the dark, that she can find the words, the dance, comes through with her unsolicited offer of this dream. "I had a nightmare about God and the Grim Reaper. The Grim Reaper was to the side. God was above a curtain. I said, 'God, if you're with me, let the curtain fall', and it fell. Thank God. That stays with me."

Three visits in three apartments, chatting over coffee. Nothing formal. What did I learn?

I already knew that the forces of mental illness could be unforgiving, relentless, and very painful. I was aware that these forces could take the form of despair, self-loathing, and terror; of confusion and collapse; of violence and suicide. It was obvious to me that medications, professional intervention, and community services around housing, public assistance, social clubs, and medication compliance are necessary for sustained progress for most. What I already knew but didn't appreciate until now was that for others, progress is simply not falling back. Period.

And I learned this too. There is a treasury of original and effective home remedies that clients create and draw upon daily to enable them to simply hold it together and hang on, to resist the forces that would trigger relapse and regression, to cope and survive another day when, for them, that is all that is realistically achievable. This is their success and it rests on them in ways that are underappreciated, underreported, and not measured. They need to be supported, not pushed, because the triggers to their relapse are as likely the most innocent, benign appearing, unavoidable, and banal experiences of community living.

When I think about how Nelly gauges her energy level and scopes out small markets and their hours and slow times and prioritizes so, if she has to flee, she'll come home with something to eat even though she'd rather not move from bed at all, I know this was her very own and very desperate service plan. When I think how, even though it seems pointless and she feels worthless, she forces herself to take her medication every day as she waits behind the wall for relief to come to her in its own time, if at all, I know that hanging on is realistically her true success in the state program called community rehabilitation.

Antonia, illiterate and homely, has made a friend and keeps that friend. She found someone to share a home with, who will be there, to call on or talk to, when the fear of something happening triggers the urge to be destructive threatens to erupt. She crosses

streets and takes care of business and she does it her way and with her own friend.

Annette has trained herself to create little islands of positive energy that can provide for her succor when she needs it. She cleans and bakes and offers treats and makes people she is with, like me, smile at her. Feeling faint, as it were, she does her dance. Seeing the Grim Reaper, she looks for God. She finds God. And no one told her. She figured it out and made it happen all on her own.

In my consultations, now, and meetings with state authorities, I try to make a point of sharing this informal and personal side to the story of community rehabilitation of the chronic and severely mentally ill who are the clients. I try to share my appreciation and respect for the grit that enables some of them simply to hang on and maintain what is called their baseline, but who the record shows are not making progress because their real success can never find its way into any official category or documentation of success. Finally, I try always to acknowledge the case coordinators who privately, off the record, and without being told or taught, transmit orally the knowledge of this informal practice of effective homemade remedies the clients create and that the coordinators instinctively affirm and support in their daily work. I do this because that, too, never finds its way into any record.

[1]All names are pseudonyms.

Teaching Urban Learners with Behavior Disorders: One Teacher's Experience

By Tim Roberts

This brief narrative is factual. However, in order to preserve student confidentiality, all names, including that of the author, have been changed, and references to dates and places have been purposely blurred.

Following my retirement from the New York City Police Department where I had been employed as a member of the Uniformed Force, I embarked upon a second public service career as a teacher, and subsequently as a supervisor, with the New York City Board of Education's Division of Special Education. But only after I had completed twenty years of service in those capacities was I able to determine—through a totally unrelated occurrence—whether my efforts had reaped significant benefits for my students, my colleagues, and, by extension, myself.

My decision to pursue teaching as a second career occurred at a time when New York City was faced with a dire teacher shortage. The New York City Board of Education had appealed to candidates for retirement from other city agencies who possessed college degrees to consider coming on board. Education course requirements were to be waived temporarily, pending completion at a later date.

Shortly after I first arrived at Board of Education headquarters, a newly attained license to teach social studies in the secondary schools in hand, I was directed to the Bureau for the Socially Maladjusted and Emotionally Disturbed (BSMED). There I was informed that, because of my maturity and past experience, I had been selected to teach in one of that bureau's special day schools. Later that day, upon arriving for orientation at the school to which I had been assigned, P.S. 666Q, I was greeted by the principal, Mr. Edwards, and learned that I had been given a class of twelve seventh grade youths, all of whom had been held back several times because of disruptive behavior. They were,consequently, a few years older than their counterparts in neighborhood schools. Students at that facility arrived by public transportation from all over the borough of Queens and were required to-submit to searches for weapons.

The goals of the program were to reverse unacceptable behavior, improve academic functioning, and prepare students for their return to regular schools. Departmentalization, normal for junior high school students, was not practiced at that facility so as to delimit explosive episodes. I was expected to cover the entire curriculum and, except for my lunch break, to remain with my students for the entire school day Mr. Edwards emphasized that I would be teaching boys who, when frustrated, reacted violently. The courts had issued PINS

petitions (an acronym for Persons In Need of Supervision) for many of the students, and the special day school provided the last hope for keeping those students from being remanded to residential correctional institutions located in upstate New York.

I assured Mr. Edwards that in my previous employment I had often interacted with such boys and had been able to establish excellent rapport with them. My only reservation, I confided, related to the factor of emotional disturbance, an area in which I had no background. He brushed that off by countering that I was simply expected to report extremely bizarre behavior so that the Bureau of Child Guidance, the clinical arm of the program, could dispatch a clinician to evaluate the youngster in question.

When I met with the school's guidance counselor, I learned that all my students came from impoverished homes where many of them had been physically abused. I could relate to the impoverishment, having experienced it in my own youth, but the physical abuse aspect was completely foreign to me. Little wonder that many of these youngsters reacted as they did; the syndrome had been ingrained since birth. I was determined to establish a climate in our classroom where physical encounters—and the concomitant emotion of fear that such exchanges engendered—never occurred. That evening I shopped for plants, posters, and banners that might promote feelings of warmth in their new environment. Upon returning home, I brushed off a copy of *Summerhill* by A.S. Neill, which advocated a humanistic approach to teaching atypical children. I had read the book previously, but this time I devoured it and memorized every innovative approach suggested by the author.

What I was completely unprepared for when I met my pupils for the first time the following morning was their size. Some of them stood almost six feet tall and looked like young adults. Surprisingly, however, I detected expressions of abject fear on their faces. Why, I wondered, were they afraid of *me*? These were, after all, street-wise kids, many of them wearing insignias on their outer garments that boasted of membership in street gangs. But the fear was there; there was no mistaking it.

The first two weeks of teaching proved to be the most disappointing work experience of my life. All the activities I had planned fell flat. The students were more than merely uncooperative; whenever I turned my back I received a barrage of chalk, paper clips, and sundry items. I pleaded with them to give me a chance to help them and pointed out that they risked removal from their families and friends. My entreaties fell on deaf ears. I consulted with my superiors, who were quick to offer suggestions, including punitive detention after school hours, but all to no avail. Then one day during my lunch break, I retreated to the teachers' lounge. The advice I received from some of the teachers who had been teaching this population for many years floored me. One teacher suggested that I catch a culprit in the act and "beat the crap out of him in front of the other kids." Only then, he insisted, could I expect to earn their respect, for that was "the only language they understand." I was sick to my stomach. As I was leaving, one teacher whispered to me, "Watch out for Fred Barnes." To be sure, Fred was the tallest and appeared to be the strongest in the class. He was also the most sullen, and students from other classes invariably lowered their eyes whenever he crossed their paths. His behavior did not seem different from that of his classmates, but by the time my students had returned from their lunch period, I had devised a plan to test that advice.

I made it a point to approach the chalkboard at an angle that permitted me to observe Fred's image reflected in the glass panel of our door. Almost immediately, I saw him point to students seated at the opposite side of the room, and a barrage ensued. It was not their teacher, Tim Roberts, that my students feared, but rather Fred Barnes! That boy had been terrorizing the rest of the class.

After I had appointed a student to supervise the class in my absence, I directed Fred to accompany me out of the room. Fred swaggered beside me as I led him to the far end of the hall, well out of sight and hearing of the others. I then positioned him into a corner and angrily stated, "You're going to cut out that garbage. Do you understand me?" Fred's reaction was to glare back at me. As I stood there waiting for his reply, I detected a clenching of his fists. As he started to raise them, I reacted by implementing a defensive tactic that caused him to lose his balance and fall to the floor like a sack of potatoes. When I repeated my question, he replied, "Yeah ... O.K."

As we walked back to the classroom, I was devastated. I had never condoned the use of corporal punishment, a response that succeeded only in perpetuating the very syndrome that was playing havoc with my students, lives. More importantly, I was furious at my own naiveté in having been influenced by people whose students shrieked with pain from the beatings they had to endure.

The other pupils were quick to conclude which of us had fared better in the altercation: Fred's clothes were soiled, mine were not. I then approached the chalkboard and announced that they were to pretend that that precise moment marked the start of the school year. I wrote out the goals of our class and conveyed that one forty-five minute period would be set aside each day at which time all of us could feel free to express our feelings without fear of reprisal. Gratifying to me was their fixed attention and the absence of fear on their faces.

Having determined that their lives were riddled with uncertainty, I set about promoting a sense of security by establishing a structured environment. Every morning I would have my pupils read aloud the list of activities planned for the day, and the time allotted for each activity so that they were always aware of where they were and what was expected of them. Students' desks were arranged in a semi-circle in order to encourage socialization, and the change proved especially effective during our rap sessions. The seating arrangement was altered during math and reading sessions after some students suggested that different levels be established because of varying degrees of competency in those areas.

From the outset, it became clear that the use of regular textbooks was anathema to many of the students, for it reminded them of past failures. Consequently, I prepared my own materials in which students' names and life experiences were prominently incorporated. I needed help in running off those materials. When I asked for volunteers, every boy raised his hand, though it entailed early arrival at school. I included Fred in my selection in order to compensate for his loss of face.

Academic and behavioral improvement occurred across the board, and in some cases it was phenomenal. I was able, before long, to identify several youngsters who might be candidates for return to their neighborhood schools the following year.

If there was one activity above all the rest to which I attributed the academic and social growth that occurred in that classroom, and particularly the positive interaction

that had developed between my students and me, it was the rap sessions and the past work experience that I brought to that activity. In my first few years with the NYPD, I was assigned to foot patrol in an area of the city where crime was rampant and was inhabited to a great degree by families that had recently emigrated to the United States from neighboring nations. Before too long, I had become conversant with the patois of each ethnic group. I had also befriended parents who invariably pleaded with me to monitor the activities of their children so that they would refrain from associating with undesirable elements.

At our rap sessions, some of the students would occasionally lapse into the use of their patois. My approach to such lapses was to use the same unacceptable language and good-naturedly steer them into English. It was refreshing to note how Fred patiently, and without the slightest trace of domination, joined into the practice.

As Christmas approached, I announced that we were to have a party. When the day of the party arrived, each student walked in with a wrapped gift in his hand. Disappointment registered on their faces when I stated that Board of Education regulations prevented me from accepting gifts. One student ripped off the wrapping of his package and displayed a portable television receiver, the uncancelled receipt still attached to the item. I repeated that I could not accept it. However, I refrained from making an issue of how the student had obtained the merchandise. The party was a huge success.

One aspect of my students' special schooling gave me cause for concern. On several occasions, I detected behavior which I considered as warranting clinical involvement. But when I brought such matters to the attention of the school administration, they were ruled to be insignificant. Aware of my own shortcomings in the field of mental health, I deferred to my superiors.

Abraham Maslow, psychologist and educator, coined the term, "peak experience," to denote an unforgettable event. I was to learn that such occurrences can be negative as well as positive. In mid-June, convinced that my pupils and I had established a most unusual relationship, I implored Mr. Edwards to permit me to take my class on a field trip, and he reluctantly agreed. I chose a boat trip on the Hudson River Day Line around Manhattan Island during the course of which I was prepared not only to acquaint my students with historical points of interest, but also to reward them for their progress and their trust in me. Parental permission slips were forthcoming in short order, except in one case; David Lopez had to be prodded several times before his materialized.

We took public transportation to 42nd Street and Eighth Avenue and walked west toward the Hudson River pier. At Tenth Avenue I took a body count and discovered that David was missing. A student was quick to divulge that David had bolted and had run into a tenement building a few yards back. With only a nod to Fred I conveyed that he was to supervise the class, and I was off like a shot. I found David cowering behind a third story stairwell, his body curled up in embryonic fashion. When he saw me, he covered his head to ward off the blows that he was certain would follow. Instead, I reached down and cradled the boy in my arms. He burst into tears and blurted out that he had never been on a ship and was "scared to death." I consoled him and promised not to leave his side.

The trip was a huge success ... for the students. Before it was over, David could be

seen prancing about in the company of his classmates, a smile of satisfaction on his face. For me, however, it was a different matter. The image of sheer terror that had overcome David in that tenement building kept reappearing. Even after having worked with David and the others for almost an entire school year, I had not succeeded in dislodging the fear of physical-abuse that plagued these kids. Especially ironic was the fact that David was one of the students I had recommended for return to his neighborhood school. Had I been deluding myself that my efforts had been meaningful?

Moments after my pupils arrived on the last day of the school year, the bell rang, signaling that the final assembly session was about to begin. I escorted my class into the assembly hall.

The student body sang, visiting dignitaries spoke, and then Mr. Edwards rose to make some announcements. He congratulated the graduating class, the overwhelming majority of whom were to go on to a special high school under the jurisdiction of BSMED. He then read off the names of those students throughout the school who had earned the privilege of returning to their neighborhood schools. All of the students I had recommended were among them, but the recurring image of David cowering behind that third story stairwell dampened my enthusiasm. My gloominess persisted until an additional "peak experience" occurred. Holding up an innocuous-looking 3x5 commendation card, Mr. Edwards announced, "This is for Mr. Roberts and his class. In the last six months they've achieved 100% attendance. Thank you, Mr. Roberts, and thank you, class." My students had enjoyed coming to school, and I was thankful for that significant fact.

I remained at P.S. 666Q for several years. But then one evening in late May, I received a telephone call at home. The caller was the director of a well-known social service agency. He asked whether I would consider accepting a teaching position at a day treatment school for severely emotionally handicapped children, most of them schizophrenic and autistic. I had been recommended to him. When I indicated that I was happy with my current assignment, he implored me to spend one day at his facility before rejecting his offer. I agreed, for I was intrigued by his offer and not unfamiliar with the "partnership" between such agencies and the New York City Board of Education. The private sector provided a wealth of clinical services, and the Board of Education provided the teaching component, the latter supervised by the principal of a special day school housed within the psychiatric division of a major city hospital. Children were admitted to the agency school on a non-sectarian basis and were charged a fee based upon their ability to pay. Medicaid coverage abounded, and a philanthropic organization subsidized any shortfall. Children of both sexes, ranging in age from six to sixteen, comprised the student body that encompassed diverse ethnic, racial, and religious backgrounds.

Upon my arrival, I was ushered into the director's office where I was introduced to two psychiatrists, four psychiatric social workers, and two psychologists. The director announced that he would be escorting me through the facility, and that we would return in about an hour.

The student body consisted of sixty children. They were divided into twelve classes to each one of which a teacher and a school aide were assigned: Board of Education personnel. I was able to determine that the teaching staff had never worked in a regular school setting. Each child had a deep-seated psychiatric history, and the teacher and school aide in each of the twelve classrooms were responsible for implementing the therapeutic treatment plans that had evolved from case-study conferences directed by clinical personnel. I noted the total absence of routines. Teachers and aides interacted with the children on an informal basis, engaging them in non-threatening play therapy. Despite occasional outbursts of bizarre behavior, I was able to make eye contact with many of the children.

Laboring under the delusion that a similar teaching position was being offered

me, I was prepared to announce that I was not interested in the offer. But when we returned to the director's office, one of the psychiatrists--he was head of psychiatry at the municipal hospital--greeted me with,"What, if anything, is wrong with the operation of the school?" I was ready for him. I contended that this was not an educational facility but rather a therapeutic center with a narrow conception of what was needed to promote mental growth. A gross disservice was being accorded many of the children for whom the eventual transfer to regular schools was not outside the realm of possibility. Why should they not, even at this stage of their development, be exposed to the structure, limits, and trappings associated with school life? Might not such exposure be incorporated into their therapeutic plans? I went on and described briefly my program at P.S. 666Q which revolved around my conviction that my students would succeed.

I thanked them for considering me, and was preparing to leave when the director jumped up and asked, "Mr. Roberts, when can you start?" They all laughed, for before my return, they had concluded that a bridge was necessary for the very reason I had articulated. They I had envisioned the establishment of a typical classroom to be situated on the floor below, to which small groups of "students" would be brought by school aides at forty-five minute intervals to attend "public school."

My decision was not forthcoming for several days. I did not wish to abandon the population I was servicing. On the other hand, I would be exposed to new experiences while broadening my knowledge in the area of mental health. I finally discussed the matter with Mr. Edwards, who encouraged me to take advantage of this unique opportunity. I took his advice, effective the start of the new school year.

During the summer months, at my insistence, the room I was to occupy was freshly painted, floors were scraped and waxed, new furniture was shipped in, and a prominent sign, reading "P.S. 999," was affixed to the door. New textbooks arrived and were stored away. In this instance, students' desks were arranged in a standard pattern so as to replicate that which they were most apt to face one day upon transfer to a regular school.

In early September, several days before students were scheduled to arrive, a meeting was called for teaching and clinical personnel. I was asked to make a presentation. I described the goals of "P.S. 999" and, although I anticipated a negative reaction, I was overwhelmed by the positive receptivity accorded me all across the board. The spirit of cooperation that I detected was not fleeting. Lists were forthcoming with the names of children capable of withstanding a forty-five minute formal experience. A master list was finally agreed upon that took into consideration such matters as cognitive ability and age. From that list a schedule emerged.

At 9:00 A.M. on the second day of the new school year, the first contingent of seven pupils arrived, my first day having been spent meeting my students in their classrooms, informally testing them, and briefly eliciting some background material from their teachers. After lining them up according to height, I assigned them to their seats. The aide who had escorted them sat in the rear of the room. And then, within a few minutes, I was to learn how abysmally ignorant I was in matters of mental health. After spelling out some of the rules of classroom behavior, I directed their attention to a page in the basal readers that I had placed on their desks before their arrival. There a picture depicted a boy trying to bandage a dog's bruised paw. I had the students place their books face down on their desks and then asked them to tell me why the boy was engaged in that activity. Hands shot up—as I had directed them to do—and I called upon Phyllis Green to respond. She stated that the boy had been angry with the dog because it bad been bad, and he had hurt it. Now he was sorry and was trying to fix it. I thanked Phyllis, then called upon other students in turn. The more common response revolved around the dog having been accidentally hurt, and the boy

who loved it was making it better. Phyllis kept shaking her head disapprovingly. I then directed the class to find the passage in their readers and to read it silently. When they had completed their reading, they were to raise their hands. Phyllis was the first one to do so. I tip-toed over to her desk and had her read the passage to me quietly. So taken was I with the ease with which she read, and with her excellent diction, that I reached down approvingly to pat her head, and all hell broke loose. She overturned her desk and ran shrieking uncontrollably around the room while running headlong into walls and closets. The other children, more accustomed to her behavior, didn't bat an eyelash, but the aide was quick to catch up with her. As the aide started to escort Phyllis back to her homeroom, she whispered to me, "Paranoid schizophrenia." Only then, for the very first time, did I begin to appreciate how terribly fragile these children were.

The rest of the period and subsequent periods went well, I thought. But at the first opportunity, I met with the director and requested permission to sit in on case conferences that involved "school" children. He heartily agreed and suggested that I keep anecdotal records so that I might make a contribution to such conferences.

The conferences I attended revealed profiles of defenseless children constantly in a state of torment, some of whose bodies were covered with self-inflicted wounds, and others who had found periodic relief by withdrawing into their unfathomable worlds. What also became clear to me were the sacrifices made by loving parents who refused to send their children off to state psychiatric institutions and the heroic efforts of teachers and aides to protect their students. My overall goal remained intact, but I was now determined to redouble my efforts to provide a pleasant and secure environment and to motivate my students sufficiently, if even for a brief period of forty-five minutes, so that they might be absorbed in a meaningful and enjoyable educational experience. After a few months, the clinical and educational staffs were able to note a significant improvement in the mental health of those who attended "P.S. 999."

That conclusion may have been due partially to my insistence that students of "P.S. 999" carry their textbooks to and from school and the positive attitudinal interest that the rule engendered. About halfway through my second year at the day treatment center school, the director told me that several of my students had been targeted for transfer to their neighborhood schools. Therapy would continue to be provided to them at the center on an out-patient basis. I was alarmed, for I did not perceive them as being ready for a full-blown school experience in classrooms where the student population often exceeded thirty-five students. I suggested that as a preliminary measure arrangements should be made for me to take the targeted children to a public school situated a few streets from the center and have them sit in on regular classes for short periods of time each day. In that way, toleration levels could be expanded. My suggestion was approved.

Arrangements were made between my principal, housed at the psychiatric hospital school, and the local school principal after the latter was able to find a teacher receptive to those arrangements. I conferred with that teacher, and we devised a plan of action. Initially, my students would merely sit and observe. Then, gradually, they would be encouraged to participate. And, indeed, the plan worked just as we had anticipated. In succeeding years, more children attended "P.S. 999," and consequently more students were exposed to the transitional experience at the local public school. The format took hold and became common practice throughout New York City.

Having recently completed an evening post-Master's program in administration and supervison, I was awarded New York State certification in those capacities. I then applied for, and was granted by the New York City Board of Education, a license as Supervisor of Classes for the Emotionally Handicapped.

A revolution was taking place throughout the nation in the field of education due to the enactment of federal legislation mandating

the expansion of services for all handicapped children. Guidelines had been spelled out, and the Divison of Special Education within each public educational system was given the responsibility to implement the legislation. I was offered the assignment of Supervisor of Classes for the Emotionally Handicapped over all the high schools in the City of New York. I accepted, and was directed to establish classes as soon as possible in any high school where a viable population that met all the criteria for admission could be identified. My work entailed interviewing and hiring special education teachers, guidance counselors, and paraprofessionals. It also entailed working closely with the Bureau of Child Guidance, which provided me with clinical personnel. That relationship was fortuitous, for those clinicians who had previously been assigned to the High School Division were able to identify populations that met federal and New York State criteria. The assignment was overwhelming. The hiring of teachers, for example, was especially time consuming. The need was so great that I often worked fourteen hours a day and, on many occasions, had to interview candidates at local diners on late evenings when no Board of Education facility was available for that purpose.

The High School Division had always prided itself on being superior to all other Divisions within the Board of Education. Its schools often had student populations in excess of 3,000. High school principals resented anyone who intruded on their domains, federal and state legislation notwithstanding. Arranging meetings with them was often difficult. Fortunately for me, the Executive Director of the Division of High Schools was an exceptionally bright and realistic individual. At one of our meetings, he suggested that I attend all conferences that he held for his principals so that I might be perceived as an extension of the high school staff rather than as an outsider. I took his advice and on many occasions he called upon me to make presentations about the special education program. Not long thereafter, I was on a first name basis with every principal.

There was one facet of the special education program throughout the city that was subject to widespread abuse. I made my position clear, and never deviated from it: I would not permit the "dumping" of their schools' disciplinary problem students into special education classes. It was incumbent upon the principals to resolve such matters with their own staffs.

The program grew by leaps and bounds, as everyone knew it would. But as it did, it drained me. When I asked my superior, an Acting Director and one of the finest and fairest individuals I had ever met, for additional supervisory help, she got back to me the following day with the news that no budgetary provisions had been set aside for that purpose. After an additional year at that back-breaking pace, I submitted my resignation, along with a request to be re-assigned as a teacher to P.S. 666Q. Within a week, three interim-acting supervisors were assigned to the special education high school program, and I was asked to supervise them in addition to carrying a more limited load.

At long last I now enjoyed the luxury of working a mere ten to twelve hours a day and spending more time with my wife and children, whom I had virtually neglected. I met with interim-acting supervisors one half-day each week and supervised twenty-two high schools in the borough of Queens.

Each of my facilities was staffed with the best personnel available. Employing the format used at the day treatment center before I was elevated to supervisory status, I prevailed upon the clinical staff to establish a rotational case conference schedule that included teacher input. Workshops were offered to parents and to representatives from the numerous advocacy groups that had surfaced seemingly overnight. The high school curriculum was assiduously studied by our staff, and our students were prepared for "mainstreaming" experiences in anticipation of their eventual re-entry into the high school proper. Neighboring towns and cities, thoroughly unprepared for this massive revolution, occasionally dispatched their emissaries to observe and study the techniques we used, and often adopted them. In

reality, however, we were playing it by ear. There were no definitive tools in place to measure the efficacy of our procedures. The Division of Special Education was growing at far too rapid a pace, and virtually no direction was accorded its supervisory staff. In the eleven years that I worked in that capacity, I never had a superior visit in order to voice approval or disapproval.

As I was about to complete the twentieth year of my pedagogical career, which coincided with the completion of fifty years in the labor force, my beloved wife contracted a life-threatening illness, and she was suddenly reduced to non-functioning status. I, too, was traumatized and unable to concentrate on my work. I terminated my employment.

For many years I had contributed articles on important civic matters to newspapers in New York City and Albany. But there now appeared a new phenomenon in journalism. Local affiliates of all the major television networks were presenting editorial commentaries on their newscasts. I took issue with many such commentaries and was invited, as a "concerned citizen," to air my views. Over a period of a few short years, I achieved the dubious distinction of having delivered more such opinions than anyone in the metropolitan New York City area. But for me a byproduct of far more importance began to unfold.

The uncertainty about whether my years in the field of education had been well spent had been gnawing at me for a long time. And now the phone calls resulting from my exposure on the television screen kept pouring in. Some were from students I had taught: Fred Barnes, David Lopez, and Phyllis Green among them. Some were from teachers I had supervised. And, to my surprise and delight, some were from high school principals who had often taken adversarial positions. They all shared with me that my presence had changed their lives considerably ... for the better.

Initially, I was inclined to discount the calls as nothing more than tendencies by these people to touch base with a "television personality." My cynicism was soon dispelled, however, when each caller recounted specific experiences that underscored his or her conclusion. But by far the most rewarding and heart-rending call I received was from Paul Zwick, a former severely emotionally handicapped student of mine from "P. S. 999." After thanking me profusely, he informed me that he had recently been appointed to the position of teacher of special education.

My exhilaration knew no bounds.

Crazy, Gay, and Risky: One Man's Unfinished Story*

By Marty Dewees, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, University of Vermont, and Brian Gilbar, MA, Psychologist, Northern New Hampshire Correctional Facility

This paper is a narrative within a narrative. It describes a spin-off from an interagency practice and research project concerning HIV prevention in a population labeled as chronically mentally ill. In order to gain a more holistic, personal, and substantive view of the effect of being labeled gay and mentally ill and known to be participating in high-risk behaviors, the authors explored one man's life experience in depth. This story incorporates his story as it emerged through the research process.

Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know,
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow
The world would listen then -
as I am listening now.

- To a Skylark, Percy Bysshe Shelley

It was at the behest of friends that I came to this practice and research project on HIV risk behavior in people with diagnoses of chronic mental illnesses. One friend worked in a housing authority operating a single room occupancy residence primarily for men with histories of receiving such diagnoses; another worked at a local community mental health agency and had worked at a local center for HIV. Together they had secured funding from the state health department to develop an educational and attitudinal intervention for the men, whose risk behaviors concerned them. I came to the project as an academic with a graduate student researcher. My friends approached me with a beguiling plea, "This is really interesting stuff," and added less subtly, "what we really need is someone to evaluate it, and you do service in the community, right? And it's interagency and interprofessional!" Friends sometimes know too much in this small community of social work practitioners, human service workers, academics, and beleaguered colleagues.

But they had a point. The subjects of their concern were those participants in my first and most highly valued experiences in the field: people with diagnoses of mental illness. They were for me as compelling as any gut-wrenching news report. So, yes, I agreed to work on this study of sexual behavior—what people know, what myths they entertain, and what help might keep them from harm's way.

The formal study (Dewees, Gilbar, Ainsworth-Daniels, & Mastro, 2000) evaluated a group curriculum that was designed to educate members around HIV myths and attitudes, improve facility with condoms, and explore high risk behaviors. The intervention involved 55 participants and we evaluated its effectiveness, with and without peer educators, with regard to how 'education" was attended to (or not) and what influences such aspects as gender and diagnosis had. We remained quite unsettled. It wasn't enough. We were dealing with rough measurements and test scores that didn't help us enough to understand much about the total experience of human beings. We needed to

go into depth with at least one person to get some kind of sense about this phenomenon. Why is there an overall decline in safe sex practices in the gay community (Rosenstock, Strecher, & Becker, 1994; Newman, 2000)? What is the meaning of this "deviant behavior" (Yegidis, Weinbach, & Morrison-Rodriguez, 1999) for the individual? What conflicts does this behavior have for individuals (Wheeler, 2000)? How does carrying a diagnosis of mental illness influence that behavior? How does one's life story impact this phenomenon? We wanted to get some handle on the broader experience, even if it wasn't generalizable, statistically significant, or tightly categorizable.

Brian is a white, male psychologist with six years experience working in the field of HIV, as well as four years in corrections. I (Marty) am a white, female social work educator whose major practice interest for over 17 years has been mental health. HIV had been only a peripheral part of that work before the overall group project began in 1998. Brian is particularly interested in exploring more thoroughly the role public sex plays in risk behaviors. "Public sex," I thought. "How will I tell my mother my new research interest is public sex?" That query suspended, the two of us took on a case study to explore a more holistic picture rather than segmented behaviors with one person, the perfect candidate, a man named Steve[1].

Steve

Steve is a 40-year-old white man from an upper middle class, well-educated family. He described his early childhood as somewhat idyllic with summer trips to the beach, benign parental expectations, and a good solid base of being cared for. Steve is also gay, a point not confirmable even to him until late adolescence. In addition, Steve had a mental "breakdown" not long after he graduated from a prestigious college. He has sometimes believed that his life and his family members' lives have been forever changed, broken, irretrievable. In his view, he did it. Steve has been a client of the local mental health agency and a participant in several groups. He was well known to the male member of this research team as an openly gay man who freely acknowledged his high-risk HIV behaviors. He was selected as an ideal participant due to his legendary introspection and engageability in interpersonal relationships as well as his verbal skills and general psychiatric stability. As we explored the prospect of this study with him, he was hugely enthusiastic, "honored," businesslike, and apparently gratified that his story should be deemed important enough to be told. We felt that the telling could be beneficial for him in that he was extremely eager and recognized the empowering, magnetic appeal of helping others to understand his experience.

Process

In order to gain a deeper understanding of Steve, we decided to interview him by broad topic areas, or life domains (including those beyond HIV knowledge, attitudes, or risk behavior). Each of us addressed two topics, one per session, with a fifth session added as a way to conclude the work. We suspected there would be substantial overlap among topics because they artificially divide his life. We also acknowledged that this more comprehensive approach would be an indirect, and hopefully enriching, route to a better understanding of his HIV risk behavior as it contributes to his identity as a whole person. Organizing the interviews in this way seemed to control for some of the over-

whelming expression of what he had to say, which protected us from overload. It also seemed to help him stay focused and to reduce his own anxiety as he led himself and us on an odyssey of existential angst through a grand effort to find and re-find hopefulness in the telling. The domains included family, education/work, mental illness experience, and sexuality. Each open-ended session lasted ninety minutes. We did not use an interview guide and asked Steve to tell us about his family and work. Steve himself proposed the final meeting with all three of us as a way to review and end the work as well as to say goodbye. Viewing this kind of research as very close to practice, with a significant relationship developed, we agreed that a reflection session to sum up the work would have value for all of us. In it we did a summary genogram and ecomap, engaged in contextual activities Steve enjoyed, and talked about the impact the experience had on each of us.

Family

Marty: I decided to pursue family first as the place where relational patterns begin. Steve jumped into this full speed. He told of his early life, describing them as "the good years," and then described the progressive disintegration of this positive family feeling, first when his adolescent brother became bitterly contentious with his mother, and finally when Steve was hospitalized and diagnosed with schizophrenia. He sometimes described the break as not only irreparable but characterized by a constant agitation, "denial," and "dysfunction" in the family constellation. He spoke of the difficulties of his brother's adolescence as if they happened recently rather than nearly thirty years ago; he indicated that they are still operant as an important dynamic in his family life.

My mother has been a thorn in everyone's side; the family is not 'coming together' over the issue between my brother and mother. I don't think she's naturally manipulative; I don't think, I don't think she is, but she is now.

He illustrated what he defined as "the denial:"

...like the gay situation, they don't even...it's just not even apparent; they don't even acknowledge it. You know? They don't even acknowledge it! Oh my God!! I mean it's like, it'd be like walking into a room...just they're so in the closet about it and so...really we're talking about enmeshment...She [my sister] expects me to call once a day to let her know how I'm doing. It's okay if I fit into the context which she wants me to fit into, but it's not okay to be the gay uncle...I mean they're [niece and nephew] old enough to know that I've had a, I had a mental breakdown and they should hear it...I would be banished. And if I told them I was gay, I would be banished from their holiness forever. And my brother has all this hostility and my parents have all this underlying hostility which is in denial, and nobody is owning up to any of it...no one. No one is owning up to a blessed thing and there my sister is...oh my gosh, could Saturday Night Live *do a take off on, a parody on this satire, a real satire on my family...but, you know...I...have a lot of residual feeling for the family...I feel it's a real satirical piece...but I also think it's deadly to be in this much denial.*

I noted Steve's language here: "underlying hostility," "denial," "enmeshment." I thought, "That's what happens when a bright person spends years in therapy." The image of a *Saturday Night Live* performance was at once entertaining and sadly heartfelt.

When I asked if he ever grieved over this situation, loss of his family, he responded:

I feel evil, defective, and no good because I did experience such a personal loss over us once having had a great family, you know. And I really feel a loss over myself every single day. I have not stopped living the aftermath.

I noted language again. This time it was more painful for me to hear. The indomitable

persistence of the "every day" aspect was painful. This is his characterization of his family today:

Dysfunctional. My mother thinks that I don't feel, I don't wanna be a part of the family, I don't wanna be a part of their life. I mean, really, the meanest thing, the most hard core thing I could say is I really don't wanna be part of their life...At one point I was my parents' favorite. I don't think I'm my parents' favorite anymore. I don't think I was sexually dysfunctional at that point...And my father snapped when I had the breakdown in just that way. My family has their grappling hooks in me, you know, the emotional grappling hooks are just, the severity to it, like you know. I think they think they failed as parents.

Steve's father died of cancer midway through the interviews. It was expected. Steve remained balanced, almost stoic, simply rescheduling by phone one interview appointment. Since I had some sense by this time how important his family has been to him, I wondered if he would experience a crisis or uncontrollable grief. He accepted my condolences with graciousness and alluded to his father's death only incidentally at that time. I had to remind myself that this is research, not therapy; I needed to let this be. At the same time the remanding voice of a former mentor entered my consciousness: "Old school boundaries are not necessarily God's truth; research is not separate from relationship."

Steve continued to deal with his father's death resiliently. The tireless longing for a better relationship and the hope that other broken family connections could be restored were dashed. The ability to keep going persevered, just the same, as it does in most families. A hint of ambivalence emerged, as well:

I have mixed feelings about where I left off with my dad, uh, with his passing...I'd be awfully surprised if my father didn't die unhappy, with a large part of that mass, whatever that mass was in his lungs, had more to do with being tied up in, emotionally tied up in knots over a family that he...didn't feel comfortable with...I mean, I'm gonna have a hard time, with this down the road that my father's passed on...I think I'm not happy about it but, you know, there is an undercurrent of...like, it's like, oh, my father's dead. I can, you know, be the man I always wanted to be, or be the gay man I always wanted to be...

We have not concluded this section on Steve's family here because his family is infused in all other contexts as well; rather, we shift attention to other domains.

Education and work

Much of the discussion of Steve's education was framed as another venue for socialization and the development of sexuality. At the beginning this seemed off focus to me until I considered, first, most people's experience with formal education and, second, a broader definition of education. In many respects, Steve expressed more relevant integration of his "objective" education to his life than we could have predicted. Speaking of his particular school's climate of peer pressure as a reflection of a more general aspect of U.S. culture in the 1960's and 1970's, he remarked:

I think that it's important to keep that in mind though, that, that this is the backdrop to the times we live in. This is a backdraw, blackdrop [sic] to where we live in the world...but I think I was insular to my own emotion, you know, growing up. I just did what I enjoyed...I was trying to [be] involved in all this stuff. It never occurred to me that I was, um, really not having a sex life for myself, really not discovering myself as a sexual being, um, and but...with the context of being the youngest...I wasn't aware that I wasn't as...attracted to women as much as men, you know...and, you know, I am a little bit effeminate. There was stigma around, and you know it is...they made fun of people that were really...we were reflections of

the times, I mean, you know, pot was a big deal, drinking was a big dea...I was really trying to spread my wings, and a lot of people that try to spread their wings in a small high school where there is peer pressure usually they get snipped...you know, brutally snipped...you know that period of time, the 70's, the backlash of the 60's .

Marty: With this sociohistorical commentary, I no longer was concerned about his sense of the role of education as I had been at the beginning of the session when he emphasized social and sexual relationships over educational processes. He described the common experiences of many middle and upper middle class young people as they worry about what colleges they will be able to get into, what that means about their social status, and how their parents will value them. He spoke of his status as an erstwhile member of a peer group that did very well and went to well-known schools; he also saw himself as an outsider at times. He talked about his summer as an exchange student in Iran and his own sense of adjustment there. He chose the prestigious small liberal arts college his mother had attended on scholarship and he believed it was a good choice.

I think they were pleased and off I went. My first year I was, like, gregarious city, you know; I made friends again, but it was with girls...at the end of my freshmen year at [school] I said 'Boy, I had fun socially.' I had done lousy academically. I hadn't applied myself which has been a problem since day one.

At this point in his life, Steve's direction in school and work started to become confused and confusing to him. Taking some time off from school to become more focused, he worked briefly as a bellhop to support himself. He transferred to another school, having applied to several. He still held onto long-standing hopes that he would become a doctor. A couple of summer stints and another longer one working as a hospital orderly disavowed him of that goal. A trial at nuclear medicine in college aborted and his confusion began to take hold of his usually strong affiliation inclinations. His personal sense of identity shifted and he found himself to be a person he no longer understood well.

But you gotta realize at this point I had moved onto campus...and I had become very withdrawn...and I started to develop something like an eating disorder...I was not really in touch with, you know, the greater part of me.

Following "the break" and his hospitalization, he returned to work in various capacities, frequently finding himself lacking in vibrancy and confidence.

I really would have to say that right along, you know, I...of course, I've had pretty menial jobs. I feel as if...you know, I really am not as task oriented as I was before my breakdown.

The workplace has also presented Steve with some powerful experiences of stigmatization, because of both his mental health history and his sexual orientation.

I feel the aftermath of having had a psychotic break and it directly parallels the amount of energy I have for work, for trying to do a good job at work...I really feel like that's somehow been diminished, but I have come a long [way]. I mean I have been at this job for [number] years...I've really felt a little bit of harassment around trying to tell them that I was gay, a little bit of harassment around, you know, it takes the form of like not trusting me and talking behind my back to other people...you know there's no reason they should feel uncomfortable with me being gay, there's no reason they should even feel uncomfortable with my situation, you know, they've known me for years and they know I see a therapist, I take my medicines regularly. If you do have a disability it makes people nervous, or you do have a sexual preference that

makes people nervous.

When asked how he sees his future related to work, Steve responded that he has lots of things he would like to do although he can see himself in his current job "indefinitely." These two pulls were manifest in his ongoing self-discussion:

I think I've probably gotten ahead of myself in thinking, 'Oh, I'd really like to have a calling or a vocational life...or go to San Francisco and [do] counseling for gay men who have mental health concerns and stuff'; you see how I talked in sort of this containment of ideas...you know I am gonna move on from here...I also feel as if I again need to slow down and try and just be more fully aware of where I am, you know, how I wanna be a part of my own life...I could see being at [job] for the rest of my life...will I choose to do that? I don't know...It's almost like I have a little built in stigma...I've had...to grapple with having had a breakdown for the rest of my life.

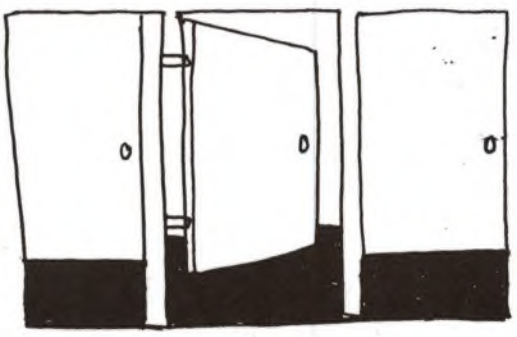
Sexuality

Steve seemed to discuss his sexuality easily. Brian knew him well, had a positive relationship with him, and was the interviewer on this segment, which is likely to have increased Steve's comfort level. Steve's relentless effort to figure everything out, to trace its emergence, is reflected here. He attributed his early confusion regarding his sexual orientation to a kind of holding pattern in which his true identity lay waiting to emerge. This was apparently shared by his parents who also believed his identification as a heterosexual would in due time unfold. The unspoken alternative was too terrible to contemplate.

I've always felt that my sexuality... myself as a sexual being would naturally occur...in other words, I basically have gone through life thinking this, very young, you know, things would come about when they naturally occurred... That never happened for me. I [began] to move into this shaded area where I was, you know, going to the gym and wondering...there the pocketed side of me sort of started to crave a little.

He made multiple references to his belief that the development of his mental illness had a distinct relationship to his gay orientation. He indicated a more veiled sensibility that his family's response to the idea of his being gay was linked as well.

I guess...you know I had a serious emotional breakdown, right? And I feel as if that was paramount to my not...finding out my path of sexuality, of sexual expression or whatever...It's not clear to me why I never really lost my virginity to a guy or a girl before my breakdown. My father's a real man's man. I've never felt akin to being comfortable with the idea of being gay. Yet there has been this pocket inside of me that may have burst, may have really been...a part of the reason why I had a breakdown...I really think there's a lot in terms of my having had a psychotic breakdown...I call everything about who I am as sort of residual...I had things on the back burner for so long that it just turned into a pressure...I just wish I could be more relaxed about who I am as a sexual being, and you know, because it's funny...that instead of losing my virginity I had a you know...I had a psychotic break.



Public Sex/ HIV Risk Behavior

Steve easily acknowledged that he has engaged in public sex, in restrooms, libraries,

and the like. He acknowledged that it was dangerous and put him at higher risk for HIV transmission. He described some of the potential consequences of public sex, including sexually transmitted diseases in addition to HIV, but tended to focus more on the social and relational sequelae. When he was asked to address the argument that might dissuade a person from such activity, he was clear about the ambivalent pulls he faced:

There's many reasons not to even find yourself in that situation. Backlash, just knowing the person...I actually don't think I'm that well received in the gay community and I think that's part of the reason...well, if this guy wants to have sex with me, we're gonna...just do it and then we're both gonna just put it, you know, brush it aside. But it doesn't always work that way...people will use it to their advantage rather than care about the fact that maybe I was just dying, you know, not literally dying - did anyone stop to think that I was maybe dying to have a sexual encounter because I'm a 40-year-old virgin?...that's one way it's not safe. I guess what I've come to think is the AIDS thing is absolutely true, that whole thing [is] about safe sex and that's...that's key on an emotional level...you're not gonna be sexually intimate with a person, you know...it becomes disjointed. I can understand where people, you know, like living on the edge, like the sort of uh, existential, 'we're here today, gone tomorrow.'

Here Steve voiced a recurring theme, that casual, public sex is distinguished from meaningful, intimate sex, and that one is a "virgin" until there is true intimacy.

...after all I've been through, I just want to be with someone who cares to be with me, you know, and if it starts off where we pick each other in a bar and go home and it develops, I would just like to see it develop. I mean I'd be kidding myself to say that I wasn't vulnerable to wanting to - if some gorgeous guy in the mall started.

Marty: "This is just like everyone else," I thought. Not everyone takes these particular risks, but "I just want to be with someone who cares to be with me," seems to be one of the very few timeless, universal, multicultural drives there are. Finally, Steve described the dynamic he sees operating in public sex by people who clearly understand the HIV dangers.

I think people wanna be able to feel comfortable with having sex when they want, you know...and people don't want to have to connote [sic] for every sexual experience to see it as a moral dilemma. A lot of people that don't approve of stuff like that refuse, like the public baths is a perfect example of where it might be somewhat of a compromise, it might be seen as...a way of looking at the dilemma of people wanting to have sex all the time.

Mental Illness Experience

In discussing his experience with mental illness, treatment, and his own response to it, Steve continued to emphasize the totality of the experience:

I've never really felt quite the same since I had my break. And I guess I would...bring it back to the question, I think that psychologically or mentally, emotionally, spiritually there was a point where I snapped...I don't really think that my development from a child necessarily had anything to do with it...I sort of grew into being very much a loner...taking on the emotional weight of not...make it from the nest out to, you know, an expression of my individuality...I know professionals who I've worked with have definite ideas as to what happened. And, I don't know, maybe it's just more the jargon... [community mental health center therapist] has told me that I've been diagnosed with schizophrenia or a form thereof, or schizoaffective disorder; talking about myself in psychiatric terms is difficult

cause I didn't have a...not aberrant or abnormal [childhood]...so that the bout of struggling, leading up to having, actually having a break didn't appear aberrant to me...I really look at that as a sort of a precipice between... having led a fairly normal life and feeling totally different about myself from there on in. And that happened in [month, year]. I was down here at the [local movie theater] and I had a panic attack...I was just physically starting to sweat and then all of a sudden I...got this, I felt like, you know,... "Oh my God I feel like I'm dying." I don't know where that came from but I lost all sense of comfortability ...you know, about myself and I knew something was up.

Steve seemed ambivalent about the term "psychotic break" and used it, wrestling with it, frequently:

...a lot was colliding inside of me and, you know, I basically think I had a break. And I guess I would say it was a psychotic break because mentally things were...unresolved, so I guess I would really say that it reflects probably the notion of having had a major emotional breakdown in the prime of my life...I was very much alone...trying to figure things out...At first this was very difficult for my parents, cause they didn't understand what was going on...it was sort of a symbolic, iconoclastic, 'Oh no, this is like the plunge that we're afraid of...'

Steve's experience began to reflect some of the lasting and recurrent ambivalence about his family and his autonomy as a man:

After I was released, I wanted my mommy and daddy. You know, this residual kick, uh, kickback of mommy and daddy, mommy and daddy...I literally wanted my mother to hold me all the time...I felt so raw and desensitized.

While Steve's current connections with the mental health system appear supportive and positive for him, he was quite clear that he's had views about his experience that have differed from the "system's" views.

You know it's, it was senseless for me to have a psychotic break and this is sort of where the professionals sort of come in and say 'Well, you know...the whole impetus behind this is far more complex and rooted than you may think.' For me in therapy I say 'Well, you know, I feel totally humiliated. There's nothing we can do about it. There's nothing that will, will ever change my mind about feeling at a loss'...but, you know, I brought this on myself to some degree...for the first couple years I wouldn't talk about anything. I was just evil, defective and no good...after all these years how I really moved away from that...so my thoughts and feelings on my sexuality came out...and it's interesting because he [community mental health center therapist] wanted to focus on the dynamics, the dynamics...for me and the fam...you know, and the family.

In a moment of hopefulness for both himself and possibility for true help in the mental health system:

I was still able to open up, these other venues of, um, emotional concerns. I don't know, somehow it all just came together, because I don't know actually the truth of how I got from 'I don't want to talk about it,' to 'Let's talk about this'...I don't know, I think I was being nurtured by him [community mental health center therapist]...over and over the power, the coming together over that...I think he has really felt awestruck himself by the way he, he as a professional has, uh really, been able to connect, you know.

Marty: When I asked Steve how he's done so well in using this system to mediate some of the humiliation, the incredible sense of loss, and the responsibility he's felt, he hung on to a thread, fell into ambivalence,

and out again.

I think some of this does point to a time when I was I...I was really able to hold my own...I haven't lost, you know, I haven't lost the memory of all that...I wish I could do it all over again, and not have a breakdown, cause you know, that whole family legacy thing looms over me. But on the other hand is, um, I'm glad to be alive and its been interesting [laughs]!

Implications

Much of the prevention literature on HIV work deals in numbers, medical facts, and intervention stage points. But the work is about human beings whose complexities are rarely explored in depth and reported in the scholarly literature. Amid crises of funding, legally determined competency, medications, and service system politics, it is important to return to the story. This story is about Steve. He has gone through education/prevention groups on HIV. He has taken risks sexually. He is clear that he understands the behavioral dynamics of HIV transmission and the increased risk he takes through his behaviors. There are times he cares and times he doesn't. He's a complicated human being shaped by his family, biosociohistory, culture, and social connections, like the rest of us. He has given us glimpses into how to respond better to his own complexity and how to nurture and maximize the hope he retains. He has sometimes harbored anger, loss, and regret directed at his family members, who in turn seem to have experienced significant struggle over his illness and sexual orientation; he has felt defeated at times, as if nothing will ever be right again. He has connected with his helpers and disconnected again. He currently recognizes the importance of family connection to his own life and, with some degree of hope and an awe-inspiring persistence, keeps trying to work through to them. He continues to fight off being "negative" in attitude and demonstrates an optimistic sanguine streak. While he has experienced the same sorts of ambivalence that most contemplative people do, he is now unwaveringly clear about connections:

I think being in a relationship is the single, uh, most important thing anyone can do.

Steve trusted us with the gift of his experience. He was sometimes exhausting and sometimes he taxed every dendrite we could muster to make meaning of his idiosyncratic expansive Zeitgeist. Highlights of strengths, talents, dreams, family anguish, social rejection, peer intolerance, service system successes, service system failures, and the tyranny of his three-fold label have filled these pages and hundreds more of transcription. What is less clear is where the resilience comes from, what makes him keep hoping that somehow salvation will find him, if he can't locate It.

More lessons for social workers and others need to be uncovered. From Steve's story we can speculate a need to consider working more with families and the public/cultural institutions at large about acceptance, integration, and labeling; about the experience of being gay; and about the happenstance of psychosis as well as the lure of risk behaviors. If we are discouraged at the lack of enlightenment, we need to transform that discouragement to a new commitment to keep going, just as Steve seems to every day. Surely, we can no longer be so surprised that people "who know better" engage in behaviors that are not considered healthful. At the same time, we can connect to the late Howard Goldstein's (1999) assertion of a triumphant resilience in a socially constructed world of "deficits," "strengths," and "ordeals."

Conclusions

Steve supplies continuing gifts. When asked about his experience in this narrative research process, he responded:

It felt like...a positive release for me that, you know, being able talk on, about something that is close to home as this was just, it was cathartic...when I express myself in a meaningful way, that I think

has, you know, enduring qualities to it...hopefully we were able to come together...for a brief, or short, period of time and, you know, it had that soul searching...prospectus to it, which I really really am grateful for.

There is so much more to understand about the life experience of our clients if we pursue a meaningful interventive stance in their lives. Excessive risk behavior is only one, although critically important, area. As the usefulness of the narrative approach (see Freedman & Combs, 1996, for example) grows and is explicated in many arenas, we are invited to take up the experience of others as they allow us access to their stories. At the same time, these stories are unfinished, reflexive, and influenced by each telling, as they "fall back upon themselves" (Laird, 1995 , p. 159). The Steves of this world are among our greatest teachers.

Epilogue: Impact on the Authors

Brian: I will try to come as close as I can to stating the impact this work has had on me. The most significant part of the process was to teach me the importance of being human and respecting other people's right to be human as well. Life seems so obvious at times...why wouldn't I just use a condom, why would I risk my life for sex? I think we can become so judgmental, especially when we start looking at people in groups. It is easier to judge people in groups. I've seen people who have grown from having gay friends or having friends with mental illness. They get to know what these lifestyles are really about. It becomes more personal. They are willing to take a closer look. To me, a case study represents a way for people to get to know someone, versus a bunch of statistics.

I guess another part of the impact was that I enjoyed and took pride in my work. I felt like I was doing something important, and this was magnified in seeing the impact on Steve when he could see that his story was important and could make a difference in other people's lives.

Finally, this process scared me. This up close and personal look at the life of someone who has really faced a struggle was very emotional for me. I guess sometimes (even with the work I do) I manage to be able to emotionally disconnect. This whole process made it very difficult to do this, especially when Steve's father died right in the middle. I worry about which high paying job to take when I have been offered more than one, or how I am going to get my research done so that I can become published and live a happy and successful life. Steve worries about surviving day to day emotionally, physically, and financially. Every day for him must be equal to years for me in the struggle to survive and to be able to get some enjoyment out of life.

In mid-March, 2001, in Dallas, Texas, as part of the overall research project, Marty presented Steve's story to colleagues at the Council on Social Work Education's (CSWE) annual program meeting.

Marty: In preparation for that session I had several e-mail exchanges with Steve

regarding his responses to the draft of the paper I'd sent him. I had been nervous about my accountability to him, his possible reaction and concerned that I might somehow have "missed the mark" in describing his life from the pages of transcriptions that Brian produced. How relieved I was to discover he was profoundly enthusiastic about it, describing it as a "culminating experience" and "empowering!" He also proclaimed that he "shone like a rose!" How often do we facilitate a client to "shine like a rose?" I realized quite viscerally the power of a

patient, genuine inquiry into the lived experience of another human being. The indications that Steve found such value in having his story respected, "studied" as a thing of worth, and shared with others as an account of import brought me back to the heart of social work—that is, relationship. The experience also provides some impetus for confronting the practice world that supports generic treatment applications to diagnostic categories with no humans attached to them. As a research project of the postmodern age, it affirmed for me the significance of the participant's voice, one that is often silenced in this culture. It seems intuitive that Steve's extraordinary confirmation of experience stands in contrast to at least some of his more poignant experiences with devaluation. Such work would probably not be so "easy" with many other participants, but I am left with the conviction that to get at the story, with Steve or with anyone, is to get at the crux of it all. In reflection, I borrow Steve's words, once again, as he called upon Shakespeare's metaphor to illustrate his experience:

I think this is a piece about 'measure for measure'...Perhaps this is specifically why and how come I am elated and overjoyed by the final making of this piece of work. Because it is only by seeing that writing in the context of feeling the story itself, alone as a reader, [that] we see my life take on that meaning, alas, 'measure for measure'!

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[1] All names are pseudonyms.

Efforts to Develop a Latino Program in the Neighborhood

By Gloria Freire, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, Cleveland State University

After assuming the role of program director of Latino counseling services, the author found a series of problems, issues, stereotypes, and fractured relationships that taxed all of her management skills in seeking resolution. Her task was to expand the program and to work with a population which was of great interest to her, but the task proved to be more than she expected. Issues were multiple. What she did is the focus of this article.

Background

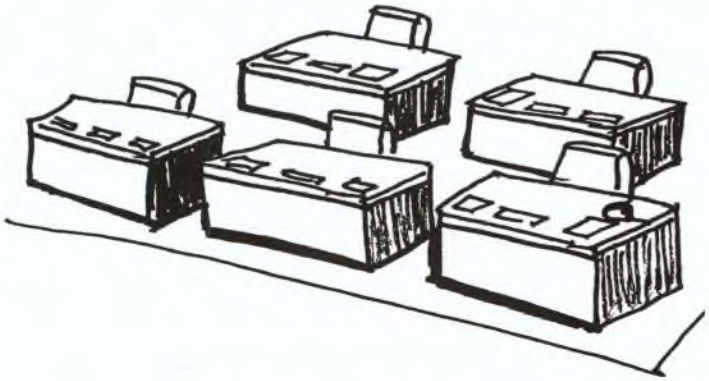
When I accepted the position of program director for a specialized counseling program aimed at Latinos, chances to implement many new and old skills as well as broaden my background in the Latino culture of Latin America and the Caribbean were awaiting me. These skills would soon be tested as I had walked into turmoil created by three changes coincident with my hiring. First, the staff had to accept the loss of the previous director; second they had to adjust to the appointment of a non-Latina supervisor, myself, as well as assess their own initial distrust regarding whether or not I really was committed to helping the Puerto Rican community; and third, everyone involved would have to deal with the expansion and development of the program.These issues were difficult ones for all concerned. The staff and I would have to cope with important side issues as well. The male staff members would now have to work with a female manager; there was a lack of trust between the central office administrators and the Latino staff, in part because the latter were based in the Latino community; and there were questions about the importance of the program both to the Latino community and to the central office, which had to maintain its credibility within the larger, loose federation of which it was a part.

The program's office was located geographically in the heart of the local Latino community, but the program's home agency, an organization of medium size, was situated across town. The program had been managed by an African-American professional who was highly respected by the Latino staff. However, he had performed his duties from a central office rather than at the program's site. This made oversight difficult, and various individuals at the central office had expressed concerns regarding the staff's performance related to that arrangement. I had learned in my work at other agencies that optimal service to clients is achieved when workers have immediate access to their supervisor, so I decided that it would be best to place myself in the middle of the action and opted to work on site.

Beginnings

The Latino program had five people on staff when I arrived. Two were assigned to the youth program and a third was the mental health counselor. The remaining pair were outreach workers whose role was to provide education and prevention services in substance abuse. In addition to this, the

outreach workers were the office mainstays, with one or the other taking care of the program's day-to-day affairs. All five staff people had been employed by the agency for



some time; the most recent to join had been hired three years before I came into the office.

The local Latino community that the office served was largely Puerto Rican. This community had many needs and, as a consequence, it put strong pressure on our program to obtain funding that would provide additional services. Fortunately, grant-giving institutions were just as eager to have us offer such services as well, as many had allocated funding to be used on such services in the Latino community, but no service providers had applied for it. I was to have many successes with grant writing, in part for this reason. The immediate, and what soon proved to be substantial and ongoing, development came in the areas of outpatient substance abuse treatment for adult males, adult females, and adolescents, as well as child abuse prevention education and domestic violence outreach. I would later hear that other agencies in the community were relieved when we started these programs because it meant that what had been a minimal effort from the one and only agency providing services to the Latino community would be replaced by a substantial increase in offerings. It also meant that there would now be a place to where non-Latino agencies could refer their clients.

Office Relationships and Program Directions

In the beginning, I had a number of issues to contend with on the home front. The first of these was to build a relationship of trust with the staff, who had mixed feelings about having a new program director. This was natural given the bonds they had developed with the retiring director. One male youth staff member made it plain that he viewed me as a non-Latina outsider and wanted no part of my direction. He showed his disdain constantly by doing only what he absolutely had to do. All my suggestions were ignored. Neither my lifetime personal interest in Latino cultures nor my equally long professional commitment to advocacy on behalf of Latinos was of interest to this individual. The other youth service worker supported this individual. With respect to the other three staff members, the mental health counselor—the only person besides myself with a master's degree—was pleased to have the moral support of another person with a similar educational background, but ambivalent about my non-Latina status. As for the two outreach workers, their initial attitude was one of courteous distance.

Resistance to Change

A second issue was the need to define our mission. Some of the larger agencies in the community included, as a part of their service delivery, small units of Latino staff who provided welfare services and mental health outpatient treatment. Part of the difficulty that these other service providers had was their lack of focus on the Latino population, the Latino community's distrust of non-Latino agencies, and the inconsequential number of Latino personnel at these providers. Once I began securing funding through grants, completely unforeseen problems surfaced in the offices of the central administration. The central office was not prepared to handle the influx of funds, an expanded program, and the overseeing of new hires. Its administration had become complacent and had adapted to the status quo. The influx of new funds

meant extra work, but there were insufficient personnel available to handle it. Decision making had been neglected and left in the hands of an associate agency director and the office manager at the central site. The central office's structure was oriented to operate at a minimal level.

Whenever and wherever the decision to expand the Latino program had been made, it was not accompanied by the sorts of changes to the program's organizational structure that ordinarily would have been outlined in an agency-level strategic plan. As a consequence, the administration was prepared neither to make changes nor to adjust to those that unfolded. Thus, instead of receiving accolades for my role in ushering in the program's expansion, I found myself subject to criticism from the associate agency director and the office manager for making the administration change its organizational style. It was a peculiar position in which to be. This resistance to adapting to the changes caused by the introduction of new services remained a source of conflict for several years, and centered on my role for causing it to happen.

Strategy for Recruitment

Problems or not, the program needed additional staff. I took the position that it was important to hire Latino staff persons; and what's more, I also thought a change in the professional educational requirements was required. That said, due to the small number of Latinos with a master's level education, the prospect of hiring such individuals became a daunting challenge. Furthermore, given the amount of money available for salaries, it was unlikely that we would be able to find and hire the few Latinos on the job market with advanced degrees. Central administration fought me over this because they wanted people with advanced degrees, but I did prevail, and chose to focus on seeking Latinos with bachelor's degrees.

Most of the individuals eventually hired were from the neighborhood that the program served. Seventy-five percent of all hires were Puerto Rican and 25% were of Central and South American descent. Of the Puerto Rican staff, 75% were from mainland Puerto Rican communities, and 25% from Puerto Rico itself. This is an important point, as persons from the island of Puerto Rico have been socialized differently from the Mainlanders, and frequently the Islanders had problems in delivering service to the Mainland community in which they worked. These problems may be labeled a product of cultural differences, and several of these staff did eventually resign because they were unable to accept the Mainland adaptation of the Island mores. For example, one point most consistently raised by the Islanders was the issue of respect; to them the attitude of the inner city young people was disrespectful and shocking. Related to this, the Islanders could not understand the indifference of the parents to the attitudes

and behavior of these youth.

Such matters aside, the period of time that followed the influx of new grant money and the consequent recruitment and hiring of new staff was exciting but trying. I still had not obtained the trust of the old staff; the administration remained upset over the disruption created by the new programming; and the program itself was expanding, adding seven staff members in the space of three years to provide various services. As I said, exciting but trying.

An Advisory Committee

Into this mix was thrown another task. The central administration expected that the Latino program would be overseen in part by an Advisory Committee and asked me to handle its formation. The Committee was to be composed of the one Latino member of the home agency's board of trustees along

with three individuals I was to select who were recognized as community leaders. These three were to be either of Latino heritage or interested in the status of and issues related to Latinos in the U.S. or both. I was given little additional guidance on the criteria for selection. Since the home agency had not been active in the Latino community, the central administration had little institutional knowledge about the community's needs.

Complicating the situation, the Latino member of the board of trustees and one of the Latino community leaders whom I had recruited were vocal and actively expressed their strong interest in organizing a free-standing agency out of the expanded and new program I was developing at my office. Unfortunately, when I reported these discussions, the central administration chose to view them as a threat to its own status and also appeared convinced that I was stimulating this interest. I sought guidance because I was unfamiliar with the administration's thinking on grassroots activism, but it was not forthcoming. There was not only a lack of awareness about and sensitivity to the strong emotional desire in the Latino community for a center of their own, but also general condescension toward the two vocal Latinos as well as the Latino community at large. This negative attitude created a barrier to engaging in dialogue about the issues raised. These two committee members viewed our Latino program as the starting point for creating THE Latino organization that the community had been wanting for some time. Ironically, it seemed the home agency's executive director thought I had more power internally in the agency than what I knew I really had, which was not much. This additional misunderstanding only added to the difficulties I would face over the issue.

The executive director apparently saw our program as a political tool that could be used to convince the administrators of the federation that our home agency was doing innovative projects. This was crucial because the home agency, I had now learned, was seen as redundant and struggling. Our program gave the agency a symbolic and innovative character that would keep any efforts to dismantle it at bay.

Controversy and Resolution

As the advisory committee dynamic was developing, the dissident youth counselor staff person continued to stir dissatisfaction over my work and create controversy within the program and at the home agency's central office. In addition to the fact that I was non-Latina, I learned from some of the other supervisors at the home agency's central office that he had difficulty acknowledging women as supervisors. Among the cluster of the new staff that had been hired, he found another anti-Anglo with whom to collude. I soon found out that they were working to have me removed from the post. They made it difficult for me to carry out my functions. Adding to the problems, the home agency's executive director perceived this individual as the voice of the Latino community, and the youth worker was skillful at manipulating the executive director's fear that the community would cause trouble for him over real or imagined shortcomings in our office. This served as another reminder that the administration knew little about the culture of the local community and hadn't instructed the staff at the central office to learn more.

Eventually, common sense prevailed, but only after a period of managerial reorganization and restructuring created by the opposition and resentment of the dissidents. Most of the new staff were more concerned about how well I did my job than whether I was Anglo or Latina. Some went to the home agency administration to complain that the dissidents were causing problems and keeping the office in a state of turmoil, which affected their ability to work. In response, the home agency asked me to produce a weekly log outlining the work I had done and my interactions with all staff. I stopped after a year because of the lack of follow up by the executive director. Fortunately, however, the situation resolved itself during this time as the dissident staff members chose to leave.

Advocacy Issues

By now, the remaining original staff members had concluded I was serious about my interest in the Puerto Rican community. They knew I had by this time taken a trip to Puerto Rico to become acquainted with the Islanders and their culture; even more importantly, they knew I had resumed studying the Spanish language. In the meantime, I was bringing in staff members to observe and participate in the meetings I had with our funders to advocate for our clients. I also involved them in learning advocacy techniques. Part of the advocacy work to be done was with some of our fellow agencies, who felt that the enlarged Latino program was referring another minority group on top of the largely African-American one they were already serving. My interest was finally seen as real and as being deeply rooted, but it had taken five years to earn trust and respect.

The remaining youth services worker reluctantly began to work more closely with me although we never ever really operated in a totally congruent relationship. When she did work with me, she made it a point to show how we differed, which threw me off in the attempts to firm up the relationship. We never had the opportunity to discuss whether the issue was that I was not Latina, or she felt I was not taking the positions she wanted me to in office affairs. This was a shame, as she had leadership qualities and her professional skills grew during the time in which we worked together.

As the program director of the Latino site, I needed to advocate from a human resources perspective for salary increases through the grant proposals and with central administration. That we were faced with such problems, however, was symbolic of the larger issue of differences between the Latino staff at my program and the largely non-Latino staff at both the home agency and other agencies in the federation. The Latino staff believed that the central administration regarded them as second-class citizens; this belief was hard to shake even when they were shown the actual placement of operation items in the budget. It was true that stereotypes did exist on the part of administration that were equally hard to change. Home agency administrators had no system to talk to people in the Latino office. Since, until my arrival, there had been no supervisor on site, there also was no secretarial support or voice mail to facilitate communication.

Given the poor communications, it was no wonder that there were stereotypes on both sides. The staff's job responsibilities involved spending much of their time in schools performing counseling and group services; the outreach workers were out in community assignments. If the staff members were in the office when the administrators assumed they should be, then they were not taking care of their responsibilities. However, the administration did not seem to realize this. It was obvious that the administration did not trust the staff. While the staff might not have known about the assumption outlined above, they had sensed enough of the administrator's attitude to feel discrimination. Perceptions on both sides were very hard to dislodge and change.

I decided that it was my responsibility to work on the stereotypes held on both sides. I undertook a number of steps to help bring about some changes. The first action had been stationing myself at the Latino site rather than at the central office. Then through grant writing, I was able to secure part-time clerical support; through contact with a volunteer agency, I was able to secure a volunteer part time to answer the phones. Next, I began the long process of sharing information with the central administration about the activities of staff members and their schedules. Staff members led

resource sessions on the Puerto Rican culture at the central office home agency as a staff development activity for agency employees, and agency staff members were invited to visit our offices. I also took new staff members on visits to other branches of our home agency to learn about the work their counterparts did there and to help establish initial lines of communications among them.

Adapting to Cultural Differences

With my on-the-job immersion in Puerto Rican culture, I was learning that it was necessary to modify my professional practice habits. The Latinos expected greater warmth and closer relationships in the workplace than what I had been accustomed to previously. Boundaries between worker and myself and between client, worker, and myself were much narrower. There was exchange about personal issues. Both clients and my staff expected our relationships to be informal. This informality had to be achieved before any dialogue about the reasons why a client had come could be explored.

I also learned that, despite some of the Islander-Mainlander cultural clashes I mentioned earlier, the Mainlanders did make some efforts to maintain certain Island customs and mores. For example, staff members bought home-cooked comfort foods from women in the community who, at the end of the month, were forced to supplement welfare money by selling such goods. This in-group mutual support activity is a typical behavior on the Island where people are often faced with needs but lack the means to satisfy them. Puerto Ricans were expected to respond; moreover, so was I since I was now a part of their community. Customs associated with funerals and burials were particularly striking to my outsider's eye. On Puerto Rico, and likewise in the community where I worked, solicitation for burial expenses for someone other than one's own family member is a common practice and my staff members were often making contributions of this sort. Eventually, we were able to provide emergency funds as a means of assistance to meet major needs of this type. To some extent, these funds relieved pressure on all staff to give their own money, although some of this giving did continue, owing to the power of custom. When I brought the redundancy of their giving to their attention, they would just smile at me and tell me they had to work with their people to keep relationships.

A Split in the Latino Program

In the meantime, an entirely separate and sensitive issue arose involving the Advisory Committee that would, among other things, result in the departure from the committee of the two men who had been so active in the beginning. This issue was the attempt by our program's education/prevention outreach workers to split their project off and form their own agency. This was too much like the two Advisory members' own initial desire for a free-standing Latino agency. They did not want to be involved in any dialogue with the executive director on this. Through grant writing, I had been able to increase the number of staff in the education/prevention outreach program, their work responsibilities, and the program's funding in order to expand their assignment. With this largess, these staff members began to organize for the separation, securing a board of trustees and drafting articles of incorporation. They petitioned the funder and began bombarding the home agency with letters of recommendation supporting separate status that came from numerous Latino entities from across the state. The executive director did not know what to do with this, and so he shifted the decision to the Advisory Committee. The education/prevention workers wanted me to advocate for them with the director.

Even though I was sympathetic, I felt that the director had put me in a trap and that I was in no position to take a stand. Given the perception at the central office that separations would be harmful to the agency, for me to advocate would have been his excuse to fire me on the spot and argue that I had been against the agency all along. If he had really wanted me to negotiate the question, our relationship would have had to

have been less conflicted. As it was, I was suspicious of his intentions, too. Eventually, we compromised on three-way meetings between the outreach workers, the director, and myself and a contract was made to allow for the separation. In the end, the education/prevention program moved into another part of the same office building and began a process of organization.

Separation was not an easy one because the education/outreach and Latino programs needed one another. The staff members of the outreach program were quietly triumphant but acted guilty that they had been able to achieve their new status, and remained dependent on their ability to refer clients to our treatment program. The Latino office staff felt betrayed by the departure of the education/outreach program staff members. Nonetheless, our office developed a process of accepting the education/prevention program's referrals as a part of a larger system mandated by the funders' policies and procedures. Both organizations had to consider additional referral sources that were autonomous but still maintain a relationship for making referrals to one another. There would be a love/hate relationship with this and the Latino program for the rest of my time at the office. Each still needed to work with the other, as we were all to be a part of a system providing chemical dependency treatment services to the Latino population. At some level, to this day, there are ongoing discussions about procedures for referral and activity.

New Directions

Having crossed this hurdle, the office settled down. From then on, my work was focused on the everyday interactions to aid clients, support the staff, fulfill the service-delivery expectations of the funders, maintain the relationships with the central office that had been built, and to continue to cement the trust and respect of my staff.

Five years into my affiliation with the Latino program, I began my doctoral work. It became apparent to everyone at the Latino office that a segment of these studies and internships was focused on the Puerto Ricans, particularly on the culture and the issues confronted by the people in adjusting to living in the new culture. The staff was appreciative and our relationships deepened. I remained with the program another six years before moving on. I have continued to play a role in the local Latino community through boards and committees, a role that has been made easy by service and commitment. My experiences in managing the program fully tested me on all that I had learned in my previous positions and through formal education. The intense, eleven-year learning experience added substantially to my background in Latino and particularly Puerto Rican culture, and has made me an entirely different person: one who has a deep appreciation of who the Puerto Rican people are, and how they have overcome oppression.

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Authoring an Identity

By Clay T. Graybeal, Ph.D., Associate Professor, University of New England School of Social Work

In this narrative, the author describes the various phases of his career, particularly in relationship to those identities sought and achieved. First, he discovers a career in social work as an opportunity for focusing his life. Then he finds himself engaged in a search for meaning and validation, which gets translated into a quest for degrees, titles, and credentials. During this journey he encounters the complex politics involved in professional identities. Finally, his life and outlook are destabilized and then transformed when he writes and produces a play. This process gives voice to his many questions, and the play creates a new kind of dialogue with peers and others. Finally, he realizes that conflict and contradiction are not obstacles, but rather the essential stuff of social work.

"I'm so sorry," she said. It was the anchor for the local evening news. She had interviewed me the day before for a piece on a play I had written.

"What for?," I replied.

"I forgot to put Ph.D. after your name. I didn't notice it until after it had aired. I'm really sorry."

I laughed for a moment, and then I said,"You know, I really want to thank you."

"For what?"

"When I looked at the screen, it said: 'Clay Graybeal, Playwright.' I want to thank you for putting that up there."

We laughed together.

A Search for Meaning

It was 1979, and I was sitting in the back yard of my father's house when reality came crashing in. Over the previous few years, I painted houses, shuffled rental cars, drove a school bus, built a barn, framed houses, and struggled to make guitar payments by playing in a rock band. Not only did I need to start to think about earning an actual living, but I had a gnawing feeling that there was a greater purpose somewhere. Sure, I was a nice guy, thoughtful, maybe interesting, but other people I knew were moving on, making big life decisions, picking careers. During a previous hiatus from education, a break from college, I had spent a couple of years reading Alan Watts, Carlos Castaneda, Krishnamurti, Sri Aurobindo, and Golf in the Kingdom. I went to California, met Carl Rogers, and spent 17 days in an encounter group. I meditated, transcendentally and otherwise. I believed that one day a clear path would make itself evident. But it hadn't happened yet.

College was a three-country, five-university, six-year, and nine-campus hike through the wilderness, as one path after another petered out in front of me. I was turned off by a geology professor who declared that bombs had been helpful in motivating the North Vietnamese to move away from an agrarian economy. I took up languages, but despite sixty credits in French and Spanish, I couldn't imagine teaching either, recalling my friends in high school whose idea of a successful day in Spanish class was having the teacher lower the overhead projector screen only to find a Playboy pinup taped inside. Then I hit the calculus wall. For someone who had never had to do any homework to get all the answers in algebra and geometry, calculus was like showing up for a German movie, only to find the subtitles were in Chinese. A friend suggested sociology to me, "The study of people in groups," he said. Yes, that fit me perfectly. I enrolled as a sociology major. It seemed logical, but I soon became confused as I encountered one professor who considered the army an ideal community, another who liked to throw his pencil through the air to test our perceptions of reality, and yet another who kicked off a mid-term with an eighteen part question on Marx, Weber, and Engels, thereby traumatizing several students into switching majors. I did learn a lot about people in groups, though a substantial part of

my research took place at local taverns. I volunteered at the state mental hospital, spent Wednesday afternoons at the Bergman festival, and finally managed to graduate with a major in sociology. I moved in with my girlfriend and set out to find a job.

An extensive job search in the Sunday paper revealed that my degree in sociology had qualified me for two jobs in the local market: photographer's assistant and builder of pole barns. I chose the latter. For two months, I built fences of two inch hardened oak, shoveled manure, dug ditches, chased rats, and carried roof trusses through the mud. I drove a tractor with a rear blade and no brakes into a pond of liquid manure, blindly trusting the foreman who had assured me that it would stop before I went under. It did, though my boots were never quite the same. In two months, I gained the physique that twelve years of physical education had never hinted at. That was pretty exciting to me, though I suspected that few careers consisted of building pole barns. Over a cup of coffee one morning, certain that cow manure should not be in my future, I thought to myself, "I've got to get out of here." Once the barn was up, and I realized I had nothing in common with my girlfriend, I moved back home, picked up two of my friends, one in each arm, and asked them, "What the hell am I going to do now?" As an experienced Ohio pole-barn builder, I was able to secure employment in my home state as a carpenter, framing houses. Unfortunately, I discovered the noise of hammers was not very conducive to the contemplative lifestyle I had pictured for myself, and my knuckles swelled up to the point that my guitar playing began to sound more like that of Eric Idle than Eric Clapton. About that time, I ran into a friend of the family who had a nice little office over the local stationery store where he saw individuals for "counseling." He was a social worker. I recalled that my older sister had once suggested I get into social work. She told me about her friend, who got by quite well with a "nice little private practice." Maybe this was it, what I was supposed to do. I wanted to be helpful in some way. People seemed to listen to my counsel. If this was inspiration, it was a fuzzy one, but it was clearer than anything else to hit me for a while.

I applied to several graduate schools, and family friends wrote glowing letters of recommendation, testifying to my good character and common sense. I was accepted at two or three schools and rejected by a couple. The University of Washington turned me down in a form letter, indicating that they were looking for "mature" candidates. I reflected back to my application, and I dimly remembered having made a joke in my personal statement, thinking I didn't want to go to any place without a sense of humor. That screening device apparently worked. I suppose they would have argued that *their* screening device worked. Perhaps it was mutual.

One of the places that accepted me was Fordham University in Manhattan. This was great because I could live at my father's house and commute by train and subway. This hour-and-a-half trip, I reasoned, would provide time to do all my reading. (Over time, this turned out to be novels on the way in, and a beer and a nap on the way home.)

What's In a Name?
The Search for Identity.

At that time, the social work program talked a lot about micro, mezzo (or meso, different instructors spelled it differently), and macro social work practice. These terms were, apparently, the latest development in a long evolution of concepts, titles, and classifications designed to describe what

social workers do. I deduced that these had evolved in some part as a response to post neo-Flexnerian trauma, Abraham Flexner being a physician and academic who took it upon himself in 1915 to pronounce social work to be a non-profession. (If only I had such sway regarding lawyers or politicians.) How he ever gained such influence has perplexed me for the past twenty years.

In any event, I discovered that most students in the program were seeking to become psychiatric social workers. The title seemed to confer knowledge, expertise, and authority, and though I had never been particularly attracted to such things in the past, I began to wonder if what my life lacked was a concrete identity. Perhaps it wasn't enough to be just a nice guy, or even a social worker. "Psychiatric social worker" had gravitas, respect, position. I quickly signed up for the Micro Practice track, though I learned soon enough that in the agency where I did my field placement, nobody knew what "micro" meant. The older workers just nodded wearily and said, "You mean casework." The younger ones would say, "So you're studying to be a psychiatric social worker, right?" "Yes," I replied.

Some of my professors bemoaned the fact that nearly all students now wanted to be psychiatric social workers. One in particular recounted the good old days when social workers hung out on street corners with juvenile delinquents and never watched the clock. He was impassioned and persuasive, but at the same time, my mind wandered and I could hear the gang from *West Side Story* singing to Officer Krupke, telling him what they thought of social workers. It wasn't flattering. I looked out the window to the streets of New York far below, and I worried about standing on street corners. Was I destined for that? It seemed noble, but at some point, I really don't know exactly when or how, my vision of Eastern transcendental consciousness had transformed to something else. I wanted respect and position and what emerged was a core of Western materialistic aspirations: my own office, appointed with a leather chair, a steady stream of high functioning, well paying clientele, and Wednesdays off to play golf with the doctor and dentist buddies who I knew would refer me all their worried well. It was still noble, wasn't it? Motivated by human kindness, and social justice, right? Even Flexner would recognize the professionalism, wouldn't he?

My fantasy was buttressed by my psychopathology professor, a Fifth Avenue psychoanalyst who charged $125/hour (this was 1979), wore gold chains, a scarf, and a shirt unbuttoned to reveal the hairy, virile chest of a weekend sailor. He was brilliant as he described the baby, suckling at the mother's breast, and how everything in life flowed from whether that worked out well or not. I pictured myself years hence on my sailboat, with adoring female grad students gathered round to hear me dispense my pearls of wisdom. "Hang on," I'd say, "we're in for some rough seas."

Well, anyway, I made it through graduate school, despite my propensity for daydreaming, and received my Master's in Social Work. I scanned the papers for positions for psychiatric social workers, skipping over all those plain social work positions, and soon gained employment at a private psychiatric hospital. Somehow Flexner had gotten to me. I wanted to make sure I was legitimate. I put my degree on the wall and added MSW to my name. It was official, and when people asked me my line of work, I proudly replied, "psychiatric social work." Interestingly enough, the most typical response to this was a confused nod and a hasty retreat. This surprised me, as I thought my professional identity to be admirable. I was soon to discover the unspoken rules of hierarchy in mental health.

Early in my tenure at the hospital, I

recall doing an assessment on a young man who identified himself as a social worker. When I asked about his degree, he informed me he had a B.A. in History. That made me wonder why I had spent so much time and money to get a Master's degree, when I could have just gotten a job that had the title, "social worker." One would think that a B.A. in History would be a fine preparation for the savageries of everyday life, but somehow it had come up short for this young man. Over the previous three months employed as a caseworker for sexually abused young children, he had become increasingly depressed until he became suicidal. He survived, though he only started to feel better about himself once he realized that he wanted a different career entirely.

This experience heightened my interest in the phenomenon of licensing and how it related to identity. In my home state at that time, social workers did not need licenses. In fact, you couldn't get a license. Anybody could call themselves a social worker. I was even more surprised when I discovered that in this state, only a licensed cosmetologist could cut my hair. The next time I visited my licensed cosmetologist, I leaned back in her chair, confident in her abilities (both as a hairdresser and a personal problem consultant), and found myself looking with envy at her framed certificate on the wall. I began to wonder just who decided what was a licensable activity and why.

I was about to receive a clear lesson in the politics of identity. It came in the form of hearings in the state capital about licensing social workers. I watched with interest as the Medical Director of my own hospital testified, and argued against, licensing social workers for independent practice. Shortly after this, I discovered that this same man employed several social workers as psychotherapists in his private office. He charged the patients ninety dollars per hour for their time with the social workers, and then paid the social workers fifteen dollars an hour.

Mistaking Legitimation for Validation

Since licensing was not an option, I felt somewhat inadequate, but I did begin to understand why some of my colleagues would work for the fifteen dollars. Though I didn't recognize it until much later in my career, I think I was compelled to pursue titles, letters, and credentials out of a need for validation. My next opportunity for status enhancement came when I was promoted to psychiatric social work *supervisor*. Then, shortly after that, about two years after graduation, I was invited to join the Academy of Certified Social Workers (ACSW). I took the exam, answering a series of questions with a #2 pencil, aided by an inbred capacity for answering multiple choice questions without any anxiety whatsoever. I proudly added ACSW to my title and twenty dollars to my annual dues. Feeling cocky, I decided to join the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (AAMFT), only to find another contradiction. They told me I wasn't eligible for membership as I wasn't a licensed professional, and I wasn't a family therapist. So, I couldn't be licensed as a family therapist, even though providing family therapy was one of my primary functions.

Soon after that, an interesting change occurred in our state. I became eligible to be licensed as a marriage and family therapist (LMFT), their lobby having been more effective than that of the social workers, "therapist" sounding better than "worker," I suppose. I got out my checkbook and my pencil and took that test. The licensing board sent me a certificate suitable for framing, and invited me to add LMFT to my title. I sat down to write out my new letters: Clay Graybeal, MSW, ACSW, LMFT. It was pretty clear that no one in the general public would know what any of my letters meant, but that seemed less important than the sheer volume of them. To my enduring surprise and joy, the AAMFT, which had previously rejected me, discovered I was an LMFT and sent me an invitation to join. My sense of validity enhancing by leaps and bounds, I broke out the checkbook and joined up.

About that time, in a move designed to consolidate its increasing status and influence, my department changed its title from

Social Services to the Clinical Social Work Department, which made us all walk visibly taller. Clinical social worker had a nice ring to it and was less cumbersome than psychiatric social worker. Even so, on some level, I'm not sure I felt confident, or validated. Playing out a multi-generational family script, I enrolled in a doctoral program.

Some time after starting the doctoral program, as if manna from heaven, I was offered yet another honor. Having survived five years without a lawsuit, I was invited to send in $90.00 and receive the title of Board Certified Diplomate (BCD) in Clinical Social Work (CSW). Things were finally happening for me. A Diplomate. I really wasn't sure what it meant to be a diplomate, but it sounded important, and my father had once encouraged me to be a diplomat, so... Anyway, about the same time, a friend of mine sent a letter to the American Board of Social Work Examiners, the sponsoring organization for the Board Certified Diplomate in Clinical Social Work, inquiring about the requirements for eligibility. They sent her a certificate by return mail, suitable for framing, indicating she was now a BCD, though she never sent any money or sat for any exam. We decided not to tell anybody, though I was tempted to charge her $45 for my silence. We each received a congratulatory letter from the American Board of Examiners, encouraging us to attach the letters BCD to our names. This was just too exciting. I decided once again to take stock of my career by writing out my full title: Clay Graybeal, M.S.W., A.C.S.W., L.M.F.T., B.C.D. The letters were growing, but they seemed to be having little effect on my own sense of identity. I did have the feeling that I was fairly effective in my work with clients. I seemed to have a knack for finding their strengths, though my psychiatric colleagues seemed to believe that was not due to skill, but naivete.

In 1987, I left my employment at the hospital in order to do private practice and to work on my Ph.D. I believe it was about that time I discovered the language was changing again. It was *de rigeur* to call oneself a "therapist." "Psychiatric social worker" was cumbersome, and so was "clinical social worker," and neither would appeal to the walking wounded, which was the population all my colleagues in Princeton were after. I opened a private practice and began to identify myself as a family therapist, or a psychotherapist, depending on whom I was talking to. This seemed to satisfy most inquiries. Instead of the look of confusion and/or derision often engendered by "social worker," people nodded in a knowing way and took the opportunity to describe their path along the road to self-actualization, their latest insights and foibles, curious as to what I thought about them. A nod and an "mmm" would set them spinning, and I took a certain glee in this new power. I felt I had almost arrived. People were starting to treat me like a professional.

Another curious thing happened in 1987. I became an ABD (All But Dissertation), which means that you have passed all your course work and are expected to write three hundred pages of text that will be read by four other human beings and then collect dust for a hundred years. In the language of doctoral students, what it really means is, "God I hope I haven't wasted all this time and that I will actually get my Ph.D., sometime, somewhere, please!"

Interlude

During the time I was working on my dissertation, in a harbinger of things to come much later, I began to have brief out-of-body experiences. I would stop writing about chi squares and standard deviations and would write instead from some primal space where meaning and emotion, spirituality and sexuality were merged. I started a novel and began to write in new voices as characters emerged and took over, talking to me and through me in ways I had no control of. Time seemed suspended, and I found I began to lose touch with my identity, my degrees, my letters. Even as my clients spoke to me of deep and lasting pains, I began to feel I could do nothing for them, and nothing with them. My mind wandered to the other voices, the ones that seemed to come from the next room, and I was compelled to seek them out,

impatient to get back to writing down their words.

I was drawn to give myself over entirely to that experience, though I was not sure what that would mean, whether in the end that would be more comforting or more frightening. Then the exigencies of reality intervened. I had invested years and substantial resources into a new identity I was about to assume, and here the muse was tempting me away. Sadly, and slowly, I turned away from the voices and then closed the door on them behind me. I began to focus on the details of preparing for a new career, and over the course of several weeks, the voices shut down entirely.

Back to the Practical Pursuit of Identity

Offered a teaching position, I moved to another state in 1989. Sadly, this brought about the loss of my LMFT, because that identity was valid only in the state I had come from. Luckily, while my new home state did not license marriage and family therapists, it did license social workers. I broke out my pencil and filled in a series of circles once again. My choice of circles represented what I considered to be the least odious options provided, though they could not be said to reasonably represent in any significant way the knowledge I considered to be essential to social work practice. As a result of passing the test, I was bestowed the honor and title of Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW). I soon noticed that many of my friends would say, "I'm an LCSW. Are you?" I proudly responded, "Yes!" though I was tempted to list all my other outstanding credentials too. I noticed that none of them ever said they were social workers, and they didn't put MSW after their names, just LCSW. I wasn't sure why they did this, but it seemed significant, and, wanting to fit in, I started doing it too. For awhile then, I was an LCSW, though it just didn't seem very fulfilling.

My new position brought about another identity, Assistant Professor. This was a curiously ambivalent title. I certainly felt very important, I was a professor. Yet, somehow the "assistant" qualified the title in such a way that people would think of me as "admirable, but...not quite there." Interestingly enough, I don't believe I ever assisted anyone during the time I had that title, at least not to my knowledge,

The next spring, I attended a ritualistic hazing event in which four seasoned academicians sat on one side of a table and I sat on the other while they hurled challenging questions at me. After an hour or two, they smiled and said, "Congratulations, Dr. Graybeal!" I smiled also. They encouraged me to take a few days off and then to get right to work turning my dissertation into articles. I had great respect for them, and for what I had learned from them. Even so, I filed away my work and headed to the golf course. The next day, driving back to my new home, it was time to take stock again. In the course of a year, I had lost the LMFT, but gained the LCSW. I gladly surrendered my ABD (which is not an official title anyway) and replaced it with Ph.D. Confused, I wrote out my letters once more: Clay Graybeal, MSW, ACSW, BCD, LCSW, Ph.D. This was impressive. I had arrived. I breathed easier, content that I had reached some plateau, some resting place, where validity needed no further legitimation.

The Winds of Discontent

It was shortlived. Several things began to affect my thinking. I didn't feel very satisfied with my identity. The graduate school where I was teaching developed a new mission statement, one that emphasized a commitment to struggle against oppression. A short time later, I noticed that my fees to be a Board Certified Diplomate and a member of American Association of Mar-

riage and Family Therapists had gone up. Each organization indicated that it needed money to lobby for special status to enhance insurance reimbursement and to fight about who was trained to provide which clinical services. I looked to see if I could find anything about protecting clients from sociopathic, unethical, or incompetent practitioners. I couldn't find anything. I asked my peers about this. They all agreed those were interesting things to think about, but they couldn't invest any energy in them because they had to fight the pastoral counselors and substance abuse counselors who wanted licensure too. Furthermore, each organization was taking up the cause of advanced specializations so that with considerably more training and expense, you could add even more letters to your name.

Then something very strange and impulsive happened. I'm still not sure what pushed me over the edge, but one day, I looked at my wall, stood up, and took down all the certificates and diplomas. I put up artwork in their place. Next, as if my body were inhabited by some alien force, I resigned my membership in the American Board of Examiners and the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists. I surrendered my BCD and my AAMFT. I started calling myself a social worker again. I found I didn't care anymore when people scrunched up their faces or went back to the punch bowl for a refill. I wondered if most people, especially professional people, were just uncomfortable with any title that contained the word "work." It was a Maynard G. Krebsian response, primitive but powerful. Give them an "-ology" or an "-iatry" any day. A title to steer one toward study and talk. Anything but the pedestrian term, "worker." It reeked of socialism, I suppose. Maybe Flexner had just hated the idea of work. Maybe it irritated the hell out of him that a professional should have to *do* something!

This was bad timing, though, to be going through this existential identity dilemma. Just as I was discovering the burdens of identity, a new hurdle loomed ahead. It was time to submit my portfolio for promotion and tenure. If I was successful in this endeavor, I would become an Associate Professor. The title seemed slightly less ambivalent, though still highly ambiguous. I would no longer be assisting, even though I never had, and would now be associating, though no one could tell me what that would look like. The title came with something called "tenure," which is really less clear as a concept than one would think. Apparently tenure was developed to protect academic freedom, sort of an enhanced First Amendment for the elite, though as I looked around, I wasn't convinced that in practice it didn't just ensure mediocrity. Sensing that my observations on the matter would not be well received, I wrote a convincing self-evaluation, and a jury of my peers voted me worthy of permanent employment. I became an Associate Professor with Tenure.

A Sea Change

The following year I took a sabbatical, during which time I planned to write several scholarly articles and submit them to peer-reviewed journals. I laid out a schedule with interviews to complete, time to write, and target journals for each project. But nothing happened. For days I sat and stared out the window. Days turned to weeks. I cleaned the house, built shelves, and cooked meals. One day, I forced myself into my study. I reviewed the list of projects and, determined to get started, turned on the computer. Then a shocking thing happened. As I looked at the blank screen, I typed out, *The Calling*. The muse that had tempted me ten years earlier, the one I had pushed back from consciousness and suppressed through all the years that followed, danced over my head, through my fingers, and into my heart. It approached with the force of a storm-fed ocean wave. There was no choice but to dive in.

A woman sits reading in a large chair. The phone rings. She glances at it, smiles, and goes back to reading. A man walks up to the door and knocks. There's no answer. He knocks again. Finally, she opens the door. Thus it begins. He is weary, directionless, doing his job. He is the casualty. She is wary, witty, and trying to hang on to what control she has. She's the survivor. What will come of it?

For hours, days, and then weeks, I could do nothing else but sit, glued to my chair, as the words emerged out of the blank screen. Like a sculptor, I was compelled to carve away that part that was not the statue, not the story. The words seemed to appear on the screen just before I typed them.

There's a knock at the door, and another woman appears. She is younger, naive, enthusiastic, intuitive. Who is this? Why is she complicating the story? *She is easy prey at first, drawn into the compelling lives of the survivor. But then she becomes a catalyst. The man returns again, stirring to life as the drama engulfs him, as the mystery intrigues him. In spite of himself, he begins to care again.*

Each of the characters took me over, sometimes alone, and sometimes in teams. They discovered each other as I became each of them and all of them. I cried and I laughed as the words flowed, uninterrupted and uninterruptable. They screamed out with all the things I had wanted to say and never could. I tried to keep up. I was exhilarated and exhausted, exhumed and exhaled. My God, what was going on? My internal editor was gone, expectations became irrelevant, and plans fell apart. It was an experience so profoundly comforting and yet so alien, the way fog both surrounds and obscures, that for the first time in my life, I found my own voice failed me. I could not describe what was happening. It was the page, words that called out, spoken in voices that became as real as any I had ever heard. My wife, Deb, would return at the end of the day and query, "Where have you been?" All I could do was point at the page and shake my head.

The woman reveals a story of harrowing abuse and extraordinary survival. She speaks with extraordinary perception and biting precision. The man, a social worker confronted with his own failings, finds a seed of hope for his own life in witnessing her narrative. His identity breaks down and finally, he begins to listen from the heart.

One evening, Deb sat reading the play while I paced in the other room. I heard her laughing, then long silences. I went to the basement and busied myself with straightening the piles of tools and wood scraps that had accumulated over the previous weeks and months. When I came back upstairs, I found her holding the script and crying. I held her. Just a few weeks later we sat in our living room with actors and directors as they read the play through. I had another distinctly out-of-body experience the entire time, until they stopped reading and started applauding. I smiled the uneasy smile of the war hero who somehow senses that the ones he left behind were the real heroes. Where were they now?

Later that spring, I found a stack of mail on my desk. In it were my lapsed membership to the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and my lapsed coverage for liability insurance. Since I hadn't seen any clients in a couple of years, I wasn't worried about the latter. The former piece seemed strange to me. Twenty years a member of the Association, eighteen years a Certified Social Worker. Gone. I had unknowingly lost another piece of my identity, yet I couldn't feel a thing. I didn't even know what it meant. It was just gone. I thought I should feel something, some loss, some need. Nothing. I stared into the screen as other voices beckoned me back.

Opening night, the theatre is full. The music comes up, haunting and beautiful, and the lights go down. As they come back up again, my mind, my soul, entwine with the actors. I don't know where I end and they

begin. Is it my unconscious mind I see before me, aspects of myself discovering each other? Do I have anything to do with it at all? Who am I in this moment? I have no sense of corporal or temporal grounding. I'm lost, yet never so much at home. It is as though I am a cell, an organism, flowing through some great vein, warmed by the flow, by the proximity of other souls all going in the same direction but not knowing what lies ahead. Where will we come out? What will it look like? What will we have learned? Will there be answers or just more questions? It doesn't matter. It's warm. I'm comforted. I'm scared. I'm alive.

The lights go down, then start to come back up. The applause begins, tentative at first, then building in waves. The audience stands. The actors bow, one spell broken, and another created. I am crying.

The Playwright

As I watch the evening news, I see the piece come on. I'm talking but I can't hear. Under my face, it says, "Clay Graybeal, Playwright." Then they cut to the actors and the opening scene. I'm lost in it, as though I had nothing to do with it. It's outside myself now. "Playwright," I say aloud. "Playwright."

Who am I? I have a new title that in one sense seems deeply comforting and yet carries some profound new responsibility. What if they find out I don't really have any idea what I'm doing? *We travel to New York and over dinner, a very famous actor looks at me with her marvelous, curious smile, and asks, "What style is your play in?" Speechless,I shrug and shake my head. "No habla Ingles," I say. "Yo soy un embaucador, un impostor."*

Who am I? A rambling enigmatic amalgam of roles and identities tumbles out of the attic and onto the floor. Bus driver, psychiatric social worker, barn builder, therapist, musician, professor, playwright. From a distance, each was once a destination. I can see them now for what they were, signposts. Then the letters come tumbling down, tied together in little groups: MSW, BCD, Ph.D., LCSW. They hit the floor, break apart, and spread across the room like Scrabble played by toddlers. It's time to clean up somehow, and yet, where does one start when each movement causes more dust?

Who am I? The voices on the stage speak from a deep place I love and fear. How can I be so exposed and confident at the same time? Playwright—it fades as quickly as it arrived, ephemeral, transparent, and elusive.

Who am I? Around the corner waits yet another hurdle. It's time once again to submit my portfolio. If I'm successful I'll go from Associate Professor to Professor. It's a shorter title. Is that good? Will I measure up? Does a play count? Do I care? The voices are calling me.

Who am I? I ask myself again and again. Why do none of my identities sustain me? My relationship to each new one seems to have a brief half-life as, like drug-induced insights, they fade before dawn.

Who am I?

Then it hits. The question remains unanswered because it's the wrong question. Objects can be described, but subjects must be authored. The real question lurks just ahead, tantalizing, drawing me inexorably forward, always partially, never completely answered:

Who am I *becoming*?

Conclusion

Ultimately, words fail in and of themselves. We can describe a thing but not capture its essence. Titles, credentials, letters, and constructed identities all tempt us towards a certainty of sorts. They lure us on. From each rung of the ladder, the next rung appears to hold out some promise of knowing, of achievement, of arriving, while the one we stand on gives only partial comfort. And in the end, as in any quest, the search for certainty leads not to comfort, but toward ever greater challenges to certainty.

My titles define some piece of me, I think, but each carries with it the risk and reward of attributed power and influence. Each affords some privilege in a way that other identities, like "client," "student," or

"challenged," do not. It is easy to become distracted with the pursuit of titles, of credentials, and if one moves away from this pursuit, external forces have a way of intervening. Identities and titles reward us with legitimation, privilege, a presumption of competence, and a forum in which our voices are conferred weight and substance by default.

This pursuit has not been at the center of my career, but it has defined many aspects of my work. I exist in uneasy alliance with each of my identities, comfortable with the pieces I like and know from my own experience, but uncomfortable with the pieces that seem to prescribe a set of roles and expectations for me. I often find myself to be ambivalent about social work and all its identities, about what is trained into us and what is trained out of us.

Becoming a playwright provided a liberation from the restrictions I felt from other identities and titles. It allowed me to listen to my own voice with an attention I am rarely capable of when tending to others. As a playwright, I discovered I could say things that no traditional social work venue provided for. And in the months that followed the production of the play, I found myself engaged in a whole new level of conversation with consumers, survivors, social workers, and other educators. People have looked at me in a different way, I think. At least their faces carry a different expression, as though they are trying to look past my eyes and past my credentials, and to get to something more essential. Giving voice to the unspeakable seems to cut through the wall of difference, the mantle of professionalism.

There is an essential conflict between the requirements of being a professional and the intricacies of human connection. Often the pursuit of the former infringes upon the latter. That conflict was at the center of my play, and it is the center of my own journey. I believe it is also central to the historical struggle for identity in social work itself, from early challenges to the profession, through ongoing debates over what constitutes knowledge and inquiry, to dueling theories of practice and turf wars over licensing.

Ironically, I think a part of me believed that becoming a playwright had enabled me to transcend this conflict or to move beyond it. It took a while for me to understand the depth of my own discovery. Conflict is necessary to drama, and it is also at the heart of social work. While we aspire to collaboration, conflict is our preoccupation, and that is where the work must be done. Finally, I have come to the conclusion that while the conflict between maintaining a professional identity and making a human connection is not resolvable, it has to be workable.

So yes, I am still a social worker, and an artist, and.....

The Value Of A Social Work Education: Reflections On The Nazism Of Martin Heidegger

By Dale Weaver, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, California State University at Los Angeles, Department of Social Work

The author learned of the Nazism of the philosopher Martin Heidegger twenty years after devoting much of his undergraduate education to Heidegger's works. This shocking discovery was a threat to the intellectual foundations of his life and career and led to a revisiting of the education of his youth. If the greatest philosopher of the 20th Century was a Nazi, what value does knowledge have? The author ponders these questions on the occasion of the graduation of his first MSW class, and concludes, using the insights of Heidegger, that it is essential that social work education be both skeptical and democratic.

The graduation of our first MSW class was an important occasion. As I sat there in my academic regalia, enjoying the celebration of an education in social work, my thoughts turned to the value of the education we have provided for these graduates. Are they more prepared for social work than when they entered the program? What have we added to what they brought with them to social work school? What have we taken away? How can we be sure their careers will be devoted to good? Typical thoughts for the occasion. However, because of some extracurricular intellectual explorations of my own, my thoughts on this occasion also turned to philosophers— and Nazis.

I have engaged in two profound intellectual adventures in my life, 'profound' meaning an extended exploration of a set of ideas resulting in significant and lasting insights for myself. The more recent of these was my dissertation research. But it is the earlier adventure to which I am returning in these reflections. As an undergraduate philosophy major at UC Berkeley from 1969 to 1973 in a series of upper division courses, I encountered and grappled with the works of the German philosopher Martin Heidegger, along with other key figures in phenomenological philosophy. With the ambition of the young, I stretched my intellect by coming as close as I was able to the 'first principles' of the Western tradition. What does it mean to exist? What does it mean to think?

Heidegger and the Nazis

Heidegger is, arguably, the greatest Western thinker of this century. His work, an extension of the phenomenology of Husserl and of the overturning of the philosophical tradition by Nietzsche, marked a revolution in philosophy[1]. His was the first system of thought to successfully transcend the subject/object dualism characterizing Western philosophy since Plato. The Platonic tradition, which still constitutes the basic framework for both our everyday and our scientific approaches to the world, understands a human being as a subject, an ego, an 'I', confronting and seeking to come to terms with an objective world which exists separately from, and outside of, the subject. Simply put, it is Heidegger's insight that we cannot truly understand or describe ourselves as separate from the world, nor can we comprehend a world separate from the ways in which we already find meaning in the world. This insight is the foundation of postmodern thought. The work of Heidegger has made possible, among other postmodern approaches, the existentialism of Sartre and

Merleau-Ponty, the Marxism of Marcuse, the textual deconstruction of Derrida, and the historical discourse of Foucault. Certainly, my own intellectual and political world view, as I teach research, community practice, and organizational theory in social work, is shaped by these insights.

Altogether, this is a traditional and even reassuring story of an innovative thinker resolving the intellectual conflicts of the time through a brilliant new synthesis of thought leading to another period of intellectual creativity. There is a great flaw, however, in this story—Heidegger was a Nazi. He apparently embraced the cause as early as 1931; he joined the Nazi Party in 1933; and in 1933-34 he headed the University of Freiburg where he enthusiastically led the effort to Nazify the university by purging it of those not agreeable to the Nazi cause (including Jews, of course) and to completely restructure the university as an institution at the exclusive service of the goals of the Nazi Party (Ott, 1993). After this brief stint in power, Heidegger was essentially brushed aside by Nazi officials and was not again actively involved in political activity. Thus, it is important to point out that Heidegger is in no way directly associated with the worst excesses of the Third Reich. Also, though the demands of the job as head of the university required him at times to carry out Nazi orders against the Jews, there is no anti-Semitic content in his writings, nor are there other anti-Semitic remarks or actions attributed to him.

Apart from the fact that Heidegger is virtually the only esteemed academic to embrace Nazism, Heidegger's Nazism is of no great historical or political importance in that it did not influence the course of events. There were Nazi philosophers whose task was to justify and support Nazism; and Heidegger was not one of these. In fact, as an independent thinker enamored of the supposed value and power of philosophy, he was more irritating than useful to the Nazi power structure. Absent the contemporary political reality of the Third Reich, i.e., if Heidegger had lived and worked in a different historical milieu, it is not certain that he would have evolved into a fascist.

Rather, the horror of Heidegger's embrace of Nazism is intellectual. He explicitly derived his support for Nazism from his own philosophical thinking, thus raising the issue of the validity and worth of that philosophy (Rockmore, 1992). For Heidegger, Nazism was adopted as an answer to the philosophical dilemma of how we find meaning for ourselves when such meaning is no longer available from either religion or science. I think that Heidegger's embrace of Nazism can be traced to two important elements of his thought. The first is his exclusivity. Heidegger always emphasized the supposed superiority of philosophical thought, especially his own, to the extent that he comes to the belief that only philosophical thinkers are able to experience the world as it really is. While many philosophers would state that only through philosophy can we *understand* the world and the ways in which we experience and describe the world, for Heidegger only certain thinkers can 'authentically' *experience* the world, while the rest of us, the 'they', exist 'inauthentically'. This disdain for the very daily existence of the general populace led him to strongly antidemocratic positions.

The second element, paradoxically, is his faith in the culture and destiny of the *Volk*, the German people. This faith in the people, however, is not democratic in nature; rather, it is based on an extreme historical nationalism incorporating elements of

traditional German folk mysticism and perfectly compatible with the notion of a despotic leader endowed with the ability to embody and represent the traditional aspirations of the *Volk*. Such an 'authentic' leader is necessary for a people to transcend its own 'inauthenticity'. Now, when you combine antidemocratic political beliefs with a belief in the destiny of the German people and culture, incorporated in the figure of a charismatic leader, it is a short step to an embrace of Nazism in the early 1930s in Germany.

It has been argued (Young, 1997) that these two elements of thought are not essential to the philosophy, i.e., that one can have Heideggerianism without, certainly, the reliance on the importance of the *Volk*, and possibly even without the exclusivity and its distinction between 'authenticity' and 'inauthenticity', though I believe that this would require an extensive reworking of the philosophy. There is ongoing debate (Rockmore, 1992; Wolin, 1998; Young, 1997) about whether or not Heidegger's philosophy leads necessarily to fascism. But that debate is beside the point, which is that, for Heidegger, his thinking led him logically and thoughtfully to the embrace of Nazism, and, to his death in 1976, he never repudiated this connection to Nazism. Which leads to what is for me the truly perplexing question. If the greatest thinker of the 20th Century was a Nazi, what value does thinking have? If the successful intellectual pursuit of knowledge and understanding does not prevent the conscious embrace of evil, of what value is that pursuit?

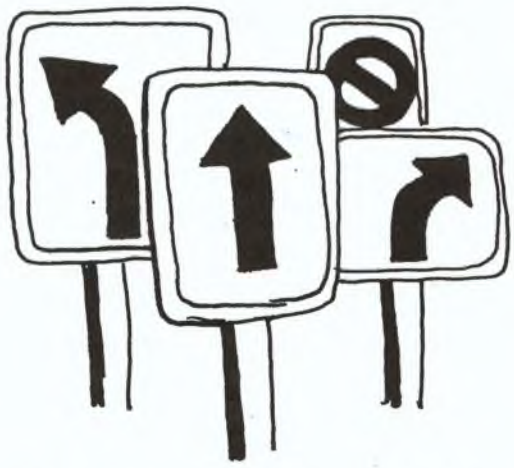
A Berkeley Education

Heidegger's Nazism, though never entirely a secret, was ignored or downplayed by his family, students, and disciples. With *Heidegger and Nazism* by Victor Farias (English translation, 1989), the spell was broken, and the controversy over Heidegger's Nazism was begun[2]. For me, the discovery of this controversy was a profound shock and disillusionment. My education in the work of Heidegger at Berkeley, under the guidance of Hubert Dreyfus, a foremost Heidegger interpreter, and his teaching assistants, contained not a hint of any of this. Twenty years later I learned that this profound intellectual adventure, of inestimable value to my own emotional and intellectual development, was dangerously and inexcusably incomplete. I learned that the intellectual framework upon which I have founded my own career and world view was formulated by a Nazi and contains the philosophical origins of an embrace of Nazism as a political philosophy. Of what value are my undergraduate insights for me now? Of what value is this Berkeley education, which taught a Nazi philosophy without acknowledging its Nazism?

In the face of this disillusionment, I have sought to reclaim this education for myself, to revalidate the usefulness and importance of this past intellectual adventure. For ten years (very sporadically), I have been returning to the philosophy of Heidegger and reading a number of the books written about this controversy. To a certain extent, this has been an exercise in nostalgia as I revisit my own notes and papers from the period, which I have been thrilled to discover are clear and instructive for me now. As an adult, I have been able to learn from myself as an undergraduate. Who would have guessed the value of retaining those old notebooks from almost thirty years ago?

But beyond nostalgia, I returned to this material with the purpose of grappling with the more basic question of the relationship between thinking and action—between knowledge and power—a question of enormous importance to those of us who rely

on knowledge as the basis for our own professional identity and self-value. We learn from experts; experts are those who have greater knowledge than others. Heidegger was an expert—his philosophical insight and knowledge was such that a great deal of time and energy was profitably put toward mastering his insights. Yet these insights did not prevent him from embracing Nazism. Professor Dreyfus was the expert from whom I learned how to approach and attempt to master the insights of Heidegger and others, yet from him I never learned of the Nazism of Heidegger. I am an expert in my classroom, as I have more knowledge of what I teach than do my students. Social workers are experts in relationship to their clients, as knowledge is what they bring to the relationship. For me, the attempt to understand the limits of Heidegger's thought and Drefyus's instruction became the attempt to understand the limits of my own role as a social work educator.



Power, Knowledge, and Social Work Education

In the rhetoric of empowerment, which has become pervasive in social work, there has been a lack of appreciation for the real power differences in higher education and in the profession of social work, and in the difficulties of overcoming these differences. Expert knowledge is the basis of professions, including social work. We turn to professionals because they possess knowledge, not readily available to us, which can be used to address our problems or accomplish our tasks, just as we turn to teachers because their knowledge is greater than ours. It has been said that 'Knowledge is power', i.e., knowledge differences become power differences. Expert knowledge is inevitably concentrated in the few, and if knowledge is power, then it gives the few power over the many. The extension of this idea is that knowledge is fascism—not far from Heidegger's position.

Yet knowledge (and power) differences are necessary. We will always need to learn from those who have had more time and experience in which to develop knowledge. We will likewise need to learn from those who have knowledge in areas in which we are deficient—we cannot be experts in all fields. And there are, of course, natural differences among us in the ability to acquire and use knowledge. So what is to be done? How can we be experts—teach our students and serve our clients—without being fascists? How do we redistribute knowledge while neither maximizing and abusing the power which comes from that knowledge, nor minimizing our knowledge and power to the extent that we become ineffective as experts?

The first answer is to be extremely skeptical, both as a teacher and as a learner. It is the hubris of Heidegger that is striking, the belief that an 'authentic' few have finally gotten to the bottom of it all, have been able to understand and articulate what up until now everyone else has failed to understand. Knowledge cannot provide us with certainty. We can learn many profound things, but we can never achieve certainty. This does not mean simply that a particular view may not be certain; rather it means that all views, all knowledge, is always provisional, always incomplete. It was my faith in the completeness—the certainty—of what I learned at Berkeley that led to my disillusionment. It is not knowledge but the belief in the certainty of knowledge that leads to fascism. Certainty is an antidemocratic method of expressing and applying knowledge.

So the second way to minimize the dilemma of the power of knowledge is to be

democratic. Democracy is the power of the many over themselves. Within relationships of knowledge—between social worker and client, between teacher and student—democracy cannot be achieved, but it can be worked toward. The first task is to not horde knowledge. Rather than being the experts to whom our students or clients repeatedly come in order to solve problems, we need to teach them how to solve problems for themselves. The second, more difficult, task is to learn to listen. Being skeptical about our own knowledge necessarily means giving value to the knowledge of others. These are difficult tasks, often seemingly not worth the effort. It is always, in fact, easier to be certain about our knowledge than it is to share our skepticism with others. In the classroom, we need to say to students that we are not certain about the proper view to take on a subject and that the burden is on them to develop their own view. This approach is resisted by students and teachers because it is both hard and humbling. It is humbling to teachers because it reduces their power over students, thereby lowering their status.

Skepticism and democracy are necessary for knowledge to be liberating and to avoid the fascism of certainty, but they are difficult to achieve. When I was an undergraduate, I now realize in retrospect, Heidegger's 'authenticity' of the few, as opposed to the 'inauthenticity' of the 'they', had its elitist appeal. After all, wasn't I, as a philosophy major and budding interpreter of Heidegger, becoming a member of this elite? I recall numerous conversations about how to attain 'authenticity' and how to avoid the 'inauthenticity' of such things as television and sporting events. The elitist fascism of Heidegger's thought found its way into my own world view, even in the face of my avowed progressive democratic politics.

The Added Value of Education

But if there is no certainty, then what is there? Modern philosophy has persuasively taken away from us the certainties of the reality of the physical world, the rationality of our own minds, and the comforts of religion. Seemingly negative, this is, in fact, a great intellectual achievement and represents progress beyond the Western tradition. But, as the consequences of Heidegger's own philosophy so clearly demonstrate, modern philosophy has been less successful at understanding and explaining what is left. We do not yet know how to think and live without the intellectual and cultural foundations which we have for so long taken for granted. Modern philosophy has left us no signs to guide us through the uncertainty left after the negation of the Western philosophical tradition, making it all too easy to make wrong turns—even turns to Nazism.

At graduation, as I sit and observe the celebratory proceedings, I am convinced, based on my personal and academic interactions with these students, that they will be fine social workers. I am proud of the knowledge we have imparted to these students over the last two years, and it has been gratifying to assist them in becoming professional social workers. However, while the expert knowledge they have gained in graduate school is essential to their future as effective social workers, I believe that the most important aspects of being a social worker they brought with them to graduate school. Whatever it is—personality, character, intellect, values, religion—it precedes the social work education we have provided for them.

As I watch the students receive their awards and make their speeches, I hope that we have not taught them certainty. I hope that we have not replaced or covered over the internal characteristics they brought with them to the profession with the false hopes of certainty: tools that always work, concepts that fit all situations, methods that always get at the truth. Here lies the value of a skeptical and democratic social work education. It builds on, it reflects upon, it clarifies and sometimes modifies, the character, intellect, and values which social workers bring with them to the profession. But it does not seek to replace or overcome the core personal identity which brings them to the profession in the first place.

What is this core that lies within us and

cannot be duplicated or even understood through intellectual or academic processes? Heidegger uses a term familiar to social workers as fundamental to human existence: 'caring'. By this he means that humans always exist in a world in which we have much at stake. To exist is to be engaged in some project which is important, be it obtaining something to eat, getting to an appointment on time, caring for our children, or working for world peace. The important point is that we do not—cannot—exist without caring. Whether looking back to the past, living in the present, or looking toward the future, we are never not caring—not engaged in the world in some manner which is important to us. Caring comes before other aspects of human existence, is an *a priori* fact of existence (Dreyfus, 1991).

But as we know from our work as social workers, caring, though necessary, is not enough. Another crucial, but less clear, Heideggerian term is 'resoluteness', which means being honestly open to the real possibilities within ourselves and others, without being distracted by the events of daily life or the superficial opinions of the many, and without being seduced by the comforts of certainty (Dreyfus, 1991). At risk of distorting Heidegger's meaning beyond what would have been allowed by Professor Dreyfus, let me interpret 'resoluteness' as 'self-integrity'. It is a self-contained approach to life, which means that it cannot be learned by mimicking the behavior of others. It is a way of living which cannot be observed or judged by others. It means that within ourselves and known only to ourselves we remain open to the range of emotional, intellectual, and social possibilities which the world contains. At the same time, we carefully inspect these possibilities, accepting only those which resonate with our own sense of what is real and important.

So in Heideggerian terms, I can describe what our social work students bring to the profession as 'resoluteness' in 'caring', which means that they are already engaged in the world of professional caring, which is social work, and that they reflect on and modify that caring in an honest but private internal process. It is the role of social work education to build on that process by refining and extending what is meant by professional caring in a manner which reinforces the integrity of our own reflective character. A democratic education helps all of us to remain open to the possibilities that our students and clients bring to us, and a skeptical education helps us to avoid becoming closed off to possibilities through the embracing of the certainty of one particular way of understanding the world.

Conclusion

I end by pointing out that I have been able to grapple with the issues raised by Heidegger's turn toward Nazism and its threat to my own intellectual integrity by returning to the works and thoughts of Heidegger, using the tools taught me by Professor Dreyfus and his graduate students. This, I believe, means that Heidegger is a philosopher of value, in spite of his wrong turn, and that Dreyfus taught us well, in spite of what was not taught. What is important is that I do not fall into the trap of certainty, believing that Heidegger must be right in all things because he is right in so many, and believing that because Dreyfus taught me so much, that he must have taught me everything that was important.

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[1]As he created virtually a new language, Heidegger in the original is almost unreadable. There are numerous introductions to his work, including a *Heidegger for Beginners* (Lemay & Pitts, 1994). For those willing to look at Heidegger's own words, *Being and Time*, written in 1927 (English translation, 1962), is the foundation work. There is now a new translation available (1997), presumably an improvement over the earlier version. I rely on Dreyfus's (1991) commentary on *Being and Time*, based on the lectures which I heard 30 years ago, though there are other commentaries available.

[2]The Heidegger controversy was originally engaged by Farias (1989). Though a brave and historic work, at this time it is not the best source for the controversy. Ott (1993) presents the essential biographical information; Wolin (1998) contains the basic source documents underlying the controversy; and Rockmore (1992) is the best presentation of the case that Nazism lies at the core of Heidegger's philosophy and that his heirs and disciples have engaged in a cover-up since his death. Young (1997), among others, makes the contrary case that Heidegger's Nazism, while deplorable, does not detract from the value of his philosophy. The Heidegger and Nazism issue, as well as the controversial relationship between Heidegger and Hannah Arendt, has been well documented over the years in the *New York Review of Books*, from Arendt (1971) to Lilla (1999), most notably in Sheehan (1988, 1993).

MOVIE REVIEW: *CAPTAIN CORELLI'S MANDOLIN*

UNIVERSAL PICTURES, JOHN MADDEN, DIRECTOR

By Agathi Glezakos, Ph.D., Department of Social Work, California State University, Long Beach

Watching a film whose story unfolds on the soil of an expatriate's native country can touch the deepest chord of the heart. While viewing *Captain Correli's Mandolin*, I found myself transported back to a time when, as a young girl, I listened to older children and grown-ups speak about Greece's occupation during WWII; first by the Italians and later by the Germans. Those were stories of bravery, of national pride, of immense sacrifice, and of suffering.

Captain Corelli's Mandolin brings to life a tale very like those old stories. Viewing it allowed me to revisit the actual experiences of my older sister, parents, and grandparents. The movie also helped me look at human behavior from the perspectives of both the conqueror and the conquered. I was able to look at Greece's moral code with a critical eye: the eye of the social work practitioner and educator. I was reminded of the culture's gender-based double standard of acceptable behavior, of the consequences of deviations from these expectations, and of the role one's socio-economic status plays in a small, self-contained community.

The movie begins with the Italian army's 1940 invasion of the beautiful island of Cefallonia in the Ionian Sea. "Get out of here; f—off!" is the response of the island's council to the Italian Captain's (Nicolas Cage) request for their surrender. Eventually, however, the arrival of the German army's representative convinces the islanders that they have no option but to cede control of the island. This they do in the defiant way so characteristic of Greeks.

The Italian captain settles at the home of the island's doctor, and agrees to procure much-needed medical supplies. The doctor's daughter Pelagia (Penelope Cruz), who is feeling discouraged by the lack of any response to the 100 letters that she has written to her fiance at the war ravaged Albanian front, finds the young captain appealing. Her attraction to him is so strong that she eventually breaks her community's "sacred" rules of female conduct. As the daughter of the island's doctor, she is spared the rage of and possible execution by the islanders. The harsh standards that the community expects its women to adhere to, however, are made exquisitely clear when another young woman, who responds to the advances of an amorous German officer, is brutally punished by a group of young male villagers.

Thus, though the story unfolds in a setting with tranquil beaches and beautiful green mountains, we are reminded of the cruelty of war and of the difficult to grasp reasons for which wars take place.

I recommend the movie for multiple reasons. The acting is impressive and the artists well suited for the characters that they portray. The scenery is breath taking. Go see the movie for these reasons, but also to learn how, under the constant threat of death, humans are capable of using humor and music to defuse that which they fear.

We all need to be reminded of historical events that have left deep wounds as well as to understand and appreciate that which makes us human. Human nature is complex indeed, and cultural beliefs and practices can be simultaneously brutal, toxic, forgiving and nurturing. Go see *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* to appreciate the spirit's capacity to recover and rebuild, and to ask whether this capacity needs to be tested through the traumatic experiences of war.

SENSE-MAKING

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The True Believers: And the Rest of Us

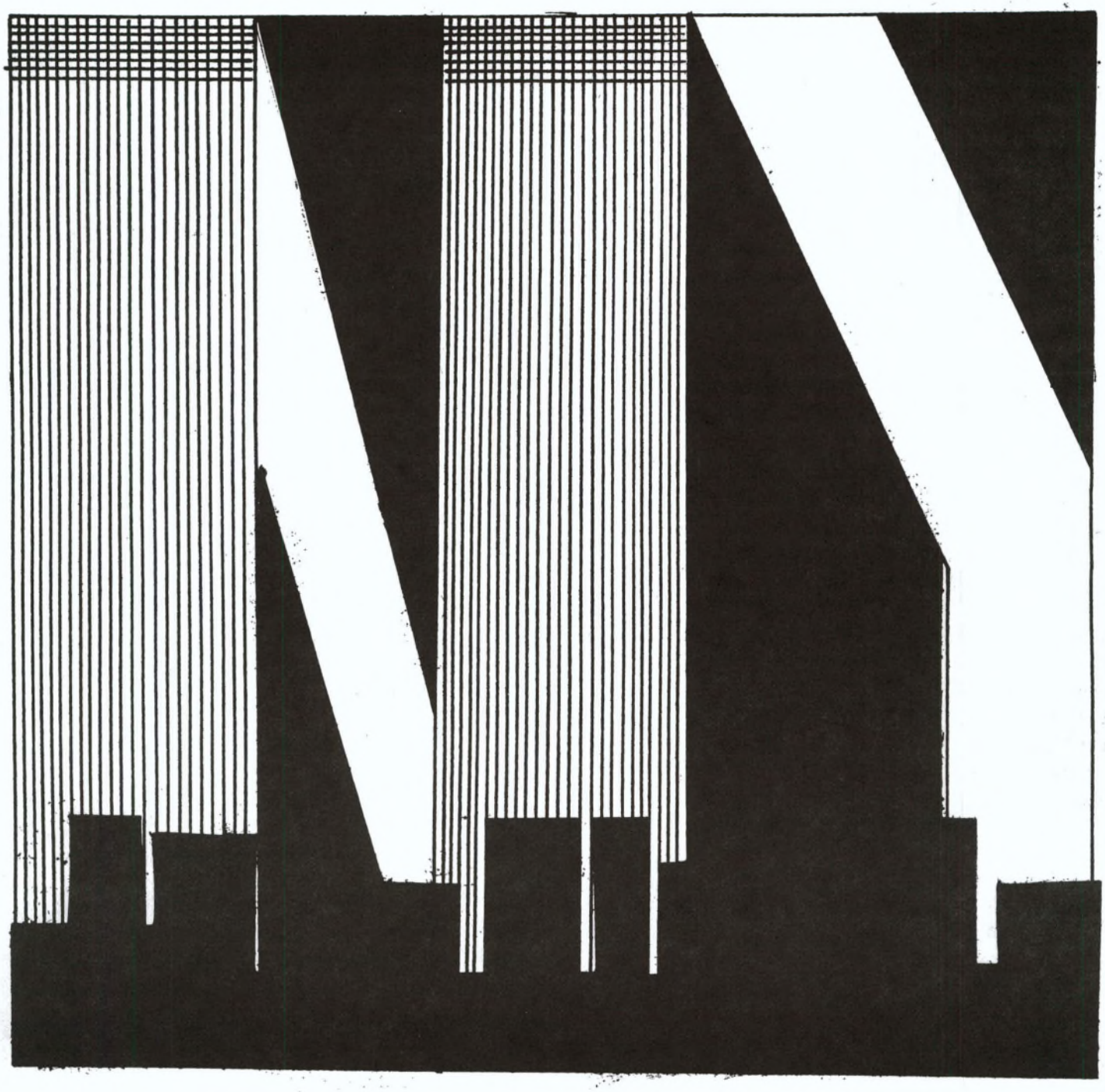
Watching the terror, its aftermath and the human pain, and thinking about the pain that others would soon feel, I had no way to make sense of it. How do you make sense of suicide and mass murder in the name of some cause? I may never be able to accept what happened in any rational way, but in my attempt to understand, the term *The True Believer* flashed into my mind. It is a book Eric Hoffer wrote in 1951 about mass movements, Fascism, The Nazis, and other groups led by fanatics. In it he discusses the factors that help create and animate the true believer, both psychologically and contextually. Re-reading Hoffer's ideas helped me gain some understanding of the reasoning/non-reasoning and the seeming madness of fanatics' actions. It shed some light on the catastrophic devastation we are witnessing, underscoring the damage the true fundamentalist, activist, believer can create, and what we are up against.

The desire of any mass movement of true believers is to interpose a shield between their group and the outsiders by maintaining that "the ultimate and absolute truth is already embodied in their doctrine and that there is no truth or certitude outside it. The facts on which the true believer bases his conclusions must not be derived from his experience or observation but from holy writ." as their leaders interprets it. (Hoffer, p.79). In other words, the True Believer has ideological certainty. There is no intellectual doubt, no room for dialogue.

Steeped in our belief in the value of life, we are baffled by the readiness to kill thousands and then eagerly end one's own life. But, "The true believer sees himself as part of something that stretches endlessly backward and forward-something eternal...He can let go of the present (and his own life)...because it is not the beginning and the end of all things...Dying, too, they see as a gesture..." (Hoffer. p. 71). He is a person of fanatical faith who is ready to sacrifice his life for a holy cause.

Many religious fundamentalists are not only at war with the present, but with the future as well. If the future brings change, particularly democracy, a new and rare concept (only a little over 200 years old), it threatens the traditions of the fundamentalists. Hoffer notes, "The discontent generated in backwards countries by their contact with Western Civilization is not resentment against exploitation by domineering foreigners. It is rather the result of a crumbling or weakening of tribal solidarity and communal life." (Hoffer, p. 58). Benjamin Barber in his prophetic book *Jihad vs. McWorld*, comes to similar conclusions (Barber, 1995).

Some of these explanations for the attacks have resurfaced in newspapers throughout the nation as a result of the September 11th terrorism. One wonders why, since Hoffer presented such a clear picture of the social dynamics and dangers presented by true believers, we have garnished so little from it in fifty years. It might have helped us mediate some of the discontent, or at least make us more attentive to the risks that might be unleashed by the stress between the consumerist capitalism that Barber calls McWorld, and religious and tribal fundamentalism. But perhaps our efforts might not have mattered, as Hoffer wrote, "It is the true believer's ability to shut his eyes and stop his ears to facts which in his own mind deserve never to be seen nor



heard which is the source of his unequalled fortitude and consistency," (Hoffer, p. 78).

The Rest of Us

Hoffer notes that there are good mass movements. "In normal times a democratic nation is an institutionalized association of more or less free individuals. When its existence is threatened and it has to unify its people and generate in them a spirit of utmost self-sacrifice, the democratic nation must transform itself into something akin to a militant church or a revolutionary party," (Hoffer, p. 162).

Our profession has its roots in the lives of true believers, whether it was those who believed in the social gospel, or equality, or humanitarianism, or the dignity of the human being and the search for social justice. Did we not preach that gospel in our codes of ethics and in our texts? Could anyone convince us that what we stood for was wrong?

The difference was not that our cause was more just, but that it had its base in a democratic context in which the idea of participatory decision making and civil liberties overshadowed the power of any one person to set the rules for what was best for people. It left room for people to make their own decisions (for the most part). The strange coalition of actors from casework, social group work, and community organization made for a unique profession that moderated the risk of turning believers into Hoffer's "True Believers." Jane Addams for example, when she first founded Hull House:

*"...thought,'*a simple acceptance of Christ's message and methods is what a settlement should stand for'*(Davis 1973, pp. 73, 74). By the 1920's, however, she had discontinued even its interdenominational services because she believed the residents of Hull House came together* 'on the basis of the deed and our common aim' *rather than on the basis of a shared faith" (Crocker, 1992, p. 114). Strict adherence to Protestant theology also would have jeopardized Hull House efforts to reach immigrant Jews and Catholics." (Quoted in Spain, p. 70).*

Jane Addams was able to change because she was a brilliant woman, with strong social relations with others sharing similar as well as differing democratic perspectives. She could recognize and understand the variety of personal and social needs in the community and held the belief that all persons were equally worthy of respect and dignity. She continually moved her ideas and her profession to increased work toward a goal of social justice.

"Only a goal which can lend itself to continued perfection can keep a nation potentially virile..." (Hoffer, p. 162). The same holds true for our profession.

THERE IS WORK AHEAD OF US.

(Dedicated to New York and to Life)

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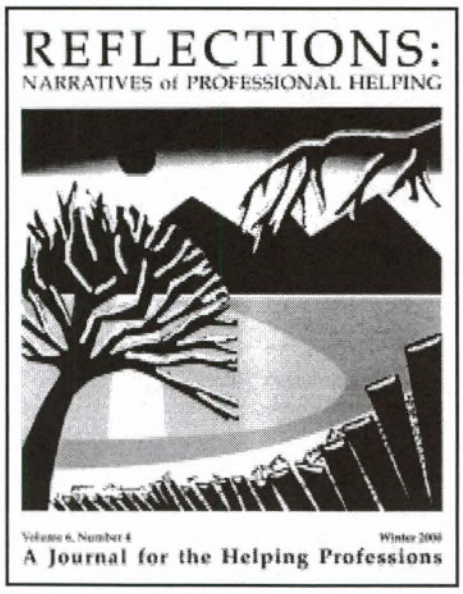

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