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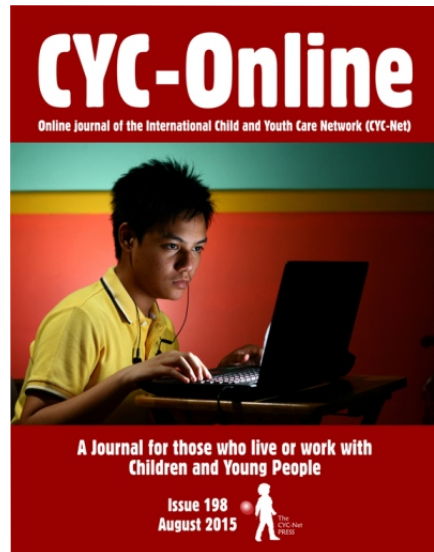
Online journal of the International Child and Youth Care Network (CYC-Net)



**A Journal for those who live or work with
Children and Young People**

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 Practice



Trauma, Relational Safety and a Child and Youth Care Approach

It is common these days to talk about how ‘many of the children and young people with whom we work have been traumatized’. I take exception to this common statement as I believe that all of the children and young people with whom we work have been traumatized. When one accepts this premise, it makes sense that all of our work with young people should be trauma-informed work.

When we think of working with chil-

dren and young people who have been traumatized, we would do well to think about Howard Bath’s writings about the three pillars of trauma informed care (Bath, 2008). Bath suggests that all of our work with traumatized children and young people should focus on three elements:

1. Safety
2. Connections, and
3. Managing emotions

As Bath (2008, p. 18) has said “the defining experience of any child who has experienced complex trauma is that of feeling unsafe.” Traumatized young people feel unsafe in relationships with adults, especially those who might be influential in their lives. They need to experience *relational safety*.

Understanding Relational Safety

In the simplest of terms relational safety refers to the experience of feeling safe in relationship. It refers to the experience, in this case of young people, of feeling that in the context of a specific relationship, they feel free from concerns about being hurt. When one experiences relational safety, one feels like there is no threat to self, that one can experiment and take risks, that it is okay to be themselves in the context of this relationship. Relational safety implies that the young person feels safe and connected. *Relational safety is central to effective helping interactions and interventions.*

Historically, we have talked about relationship-based practice where the emphasis was on the characteristics or actions of the people involved in the relationship – e.g., ‘I am the worker, she is the child’ or ‘I have a good relationship with the young people, they do as I ask.’ In Relational Child and Youth Care practice, we focus on the characteristics of the relationship itself – e.g., is it a safe place? Is it a place of connectedness, of learning, etc.?

In focusing on the characteristics of the relationship itself we focus on the develop-

ment of relational safety, the creation of a space, the in-between between us (Garfat, 2008), where the young person experiences herself as free from danger which characterises most of their other relationships.

Relational safety is the outcome of the effective use of a Child and Youth Care Approach as identified through the 25 characteristics of a Relational Child and Youth Care practice (Garfat & Fulcher, 2012). In the context of relational safety, the young person experiences safety, connectedness and a secure holding environment in which to experiment with new strategies for managing emotional responses. Thus a CYC approach in creating relational safety creates a context to address the three pillars of trauma informed care as identified by Bath (2008).

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Social Enterprise: An appropriate model for a child and youth care organisation?

Graham Bell and Lesley Fuller

Abstract

This article charts the journey of Kibble, from one of Scotland's oldest child and youth care charities, to an award-winning social enterprise. It explores the definition and history of social enterprise and how Kibble created a Victorian blended income-stream long before the term 'social enterprise' had been coined. The authors discuss the daily challenges and opportunities of adopting a social enterprise model in a child and youth care organisation. Finally they outline the need to blend purpose with profit and explore the impact on stakeholders, beneficiaries, staff and ultimately on wider society.

Keywords: child and youth care, social media, qualitative, unplugged

Keywords

Social Enterprise, Mission, Social Innovation, Child and Youth Care

Introduction

This article will explore and discuss Kibble's journey from a traditional grant-funded charity to a social enterprise and attempt to determine whether social enterprise is an appropriate model for a child and youth organisation. Kibble is one of Scotland's oldest charities, and today a

leading social enterprise. Kibble works with young people from five to 25, offering a uniquely integrated array of services that include emergency and respite; residential and through-care; secure and close support; day and community; education and youth training; intensive fostering; young adult; and youth employment and training. Kibble provides a place of safety, structure

and stability, opening up new possibilities for young people to play a useful part in society and prepare them for a happy and fulfilled adult life.

We will begin with a definition of social enterprise, followed by some background on how Kibble was founded and boldly assert that Kibble was in fact operating as a social enterprise when it opened in 1859. This will be followed by a discussion of the day-to-day practice of running a social enterprise and the impact of this model on stakeholders and beneficiaries.

Social Enterprise Definition

A search of both the academic and wider literature offers a variety of definitions for social enterprise. However, there is no such legal entity. It is therefore descriptive of an ethos and approach rather than carrying any formal authority. The consultation paper *Building a New Economy: Scotland's Vision for Social Enterprise 2025* (CEIS et al., 2015) describes social enterprises as: 'businesses that trade for the common good rather than the unlimited private gain of a few. They address social needs, strengthen communities, improve people's life chances, enhance culture or protect the environment'. Demarco (2015) describes social enterprise as: 'a business which operates for public benefit – and which re-invests any profit towards its embedded social purpose.' Social Enterprise Scotland describes social enterprise as a dynamic and inspiring way of doing business. The agency state that social enterprises are innovative independent

businesses that exist to deliver a specific social and/or environmental mission, trading in all markets, selling goods and services to individual consumers, local authorities, government and private businesses. In Scotland, one key principle is that social enterprises have an asset lock on their buildings, land and other assets. Many organisations have signed up to the Social Enterprise Code of Practice (www.se-code.net) the aim of which is to: 'set a bench mark – that establishes clear blue water, between social enterprise and particularly the private sector. This centres on the unequivocal affirmation of the defining characteristics – that social enterprises do not distribute dividends'.

A Lasting Legacy

Miss Elizabeth Kibble wrote her Last Will and Testament 175 years ago, in which she set out instructions for money to be used: 'to found and endow, in Paisley, an Institution for the purpose of reclaiming youthful offenders against the laws'. A trust was established comprising local clergymen, businessmen and the Sheriff, and after 17 years of fundraising and planning, ground was purchased on the outskirts of Paisley, building commenced and the Miss Elizabeth Kibble Reformatory Institution was officially opened two years later in July 1859. Kibble's operating model at that time was to take young boys and men from the local ragged school or from prison and provide them with accommodation, education and vocational training in the trades of the day (carpentry, shoemak-

ing, farming, tailoring).

Our record books from the 1860s tell us that fees were charged to the more enlightened burghs and sales from the produce of the boys' work helped finance the organisation's running costs. This mix of sales, fee income and philanthropy is a wonderful example of a Victorian blended income stream – regarded by many as the holy grail of social enterprise today. In July 1868, the record books tell us that a contract was entered into with the Burgh Parochial Board to supply 396 pairs of boots for the poor house.

In August 1859, we learn of Kibble's first marketing campaign.

Two hundred copies of 'The Rules' were printed. One was to be sent to each of the Clerks of the Criminal Court of Renfrewshire and to the Clerks of the principal courts of neighbouring counties 'excepting Lanarkshire', along with 'a circular intimating that the Institution is now open for the reception of boys and requesting that the communication may be laid before the magistrates'.

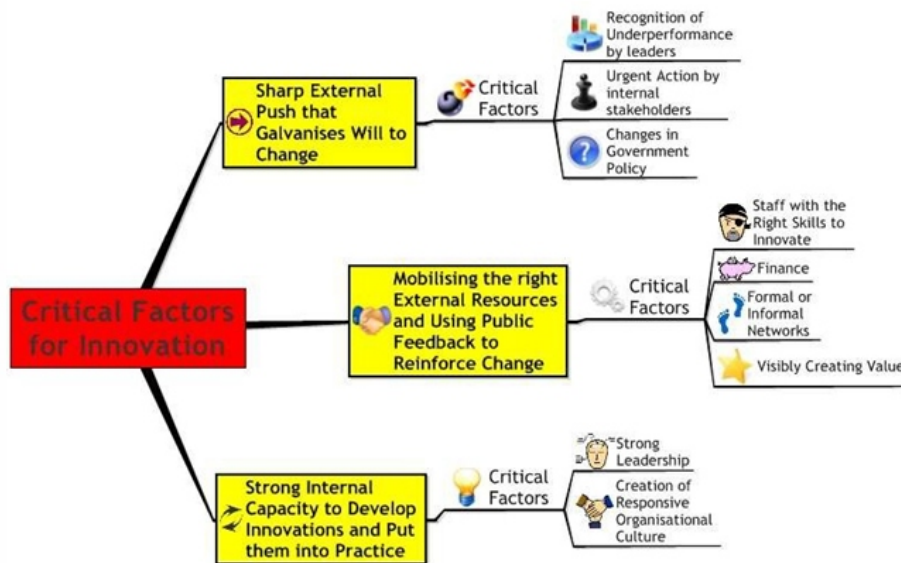
A Perfect Storm

The shift away from independence to a centralised funding model occurred during the 20th century, principally with the introduction of the Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937, and this approach became the model for charitably run public service delivery for most of the 20th Century. However in 1995 local government reorganisation meant that Kibble's 100% grant funding, together with

local and central government administrative control, were removed and the organisation was faced with the stark realisation that if it was going to have any chance of survival it would need to reinvent itself. This perfect storm was the driver for Kibble's reinvention, but at that time we considered ourselves to be a social business. Social enterprise was far from our radar, principally because the term was largely unknown in the mid-1990s.

Research undertaken by Bacon, Faizullah, Mulgan and Woodcraft (2008) into meeting social need found innovation to be the most important condition for survival in a changing environment. They also highlighted three groups of critical factors which explained the need for innovation. Kibble's critical factors in 1996 are shown at the top of the next page.

In 1995, the senior management team and board of trustees entered into a period of formal business planning and the decision was taken to form a separate trading company with its own board, with Miss Elizabeth Kibble's Trust retaining its role of guidance and governance. Kibble Education and Care Company (a company limited by guarantee with charitable status) was formed in 1995 and a local retired lawyer, James Jack MBE, was invited to form the Board of this new operating company. James Jack's foresight and shrewd business sense together with his unfailing commitment to his role as Chairman were pivotal in providing strong leadership in the early days. Critical was his decision to bring the four members of the senior staff



on to the board as executive directors to ensure shared decision-making, risk and commitment. This business model is very unusual for a charity, and indeed one charitable trust refused to support us because of our 'business' approach.

UK Social Enterprise of the Year

Around the time of the millennium, social enterprise was beginning to attract more attention nationally and internationally, and in the UK, the Social Enterprise Unit was created within the Department of Trade and Industry. In 2003, a competition was launched by the *New Statesman* to find the UK's social enterprise of the year. Around this time, our board had decided to begin promoting Kibble's work more widely, and we had tentatively begun producing marketing materials, presenting at conferences and events and had re-launched our website. We entered the Social Enterprise

of the Year competition, and much to our surprise won the award. This created yet another perfect storm and thrust us into the spotlight, not only in the UK, but also in North America, since the Social Enterprise of the Year award included attendance at the Social Enterprise Alliance conference in San Francisco. This opened up a huge network for us and was also pivotal in giving us the courage to drive forward some of our ideas, particularly in relation to developing our training and employment activities for young people leaving care or custody. Our KibbleWorks social enterprises were effectively modeled on North American organisations including Juma Enterprises, Homeboy Industries, and our transitional jobs model was pioneered by REDF in California. These links and networks continue to form a key plank of our ongoing social enterprise development. It is interesting to note, however, that we have come across

very few child and youth care organisations, nationally or internationally, who would describe themselves as 'social enterprises'.

External evaluation is always a useful benchmark and we were delighted to be chosen as a case study in research commissioned by the Scottish Government (2010) to 'evaluate the success factors for establishing a thriving social enterprise in Scotland'. The critical success factors are shown in the diagram below.



The case study research explored the experiences of a diverse group of 11 high profile and successful social enterprises and it uncovered a number of common traits that are critical to the success of social enterprises, many of which are common to businesses of all forms. It also highlighted that while social enterprises are susceptible to adverse market conditions and shocks, their continuing success and resilience relies heavily on strong and effective entrepreneurial leadership.

Social enterprise day by day

Having consciously operated Kibble as a social business for the past 19 years, it is now hard to remember what we did when grant supported, or indeed speculate on what we would do differently today if still traditionally funded. Arguably social enterprise is so much part of our organisational DNA that we are the last people who can or should critique it. Perhaps some critical friends may step forward?

However, it is worth commenting on some of the features we regularly think about that may not be as prevalent in other kinds of organisations.

Since the 'reinvention' of Kibble in 1996, governance has been something of a totem. First and foremost we are a charitable purpose social enterprise. We earn our income through sales of services (There are businesses that call themselves social enterprises but are profit distributing and charities that depend on grants that do likewise). Our directors are *de facto* trustees, with the obligations of stewardship of purpose and resources that this brings. We are a non-profit distributing organisation, so surpluses are reinvested for social good. Secondly, we are a legally constituted company which brings obligations to operate in a financially sustainable way. Both of these factors have resulted in us promoting very strong and active governance. Our board of directors is still deliberately geographically skewed to the

Renfrewshire area of Scotland where we mainly operate. We are also a national specialist resource, so in recognition of this we have directors from a wider area. All our directors, executive and non-executive, fulfil their directorial responsibilities for no remuneration. Given the scale, complexity and risk profile of our organisation this is a very significant ask. The fact that we are able to have people of such high calibre perform these often-onerous functions for no personal gain demonstrates that the charitable ethos is very much alive within Scottish society.

This volunteer expertise and commitment helps us to reinforce the 'values and value' that a real charitable purpose social enterprise needs to bring to every aspect of its activities. Sometimes also referred to as the blending of purpose and profit; a successful social enterprise needs to keep a deliberate tension between these conflicting objectives. The board needs to fulfil its statutory and fiduciary responsibilities and does so with monthly board meetings and sub-committees overseeing the increasing range of Kibble's activities. However, also embedded since the inception of the company, operational responsibility lies with the senior staff team and it is their duty to meet the social and financial targets that the board lays down. The importance of this in effective social enterprises is gaining attention internationally but is also being reinforced by the social enterprise support agencies in Scotland.

From a business perspective it is sometimes easier to recognise the importance

of investment and almost from the outset the Kibble board tasked the senior staff with strategic and continuing investment planning across the work we do with children and young people (researching what works, why, for whom and when), the capital investment required for good places to live, learn and work in and finally in the financial investment in staff training and development. Pivotal to how Kibble has developed was research into the nature of the work we were doing: why were young people being referred to Kibble? And what was the most effective way to help them? So while in social work it is now common to implement evidence informed intervention models, there is a business 'investment' parallel and a social enterprise is perfectly placed to balance these.

Interestingly one of our fears around some of the earlier commissioning models was that 'contractors' were required, delivering services in a highly prescriptive manner where continuing evaluation and research would be squeezed out. An approach of partners in procurement is therefore of more long-term benefit for both this and future generations.

This continuing research and evaluation has resulted in Kibble's most distinguishing feature – a uniquely integrated array of services. Perhaps this model would be hardest to deliver within other organisational models and one where a social enterprise approach is most effective. The genesis of this model lay in understanding that Kibble's mission was in work with young people in trouble, not an early intervention model, or for those only in a

particular category, rather for those young people for whom other interventions had not worked. Working with such a group soon dispels any notion that there is a 'silver bullet' approach, rather 'whatever it takes' needs to be the pragmatic approach, not just in the day to day tenacity and commitment of staff but in the design and nature of the services being offered. So today Kibble offers secure care, a wide spread of campus and community based residential services, foster care, day services, peripatetic outreach 'as and when', education, a range of therapeutic interventions, community benefit activities, youth transitions support, and training and employment programmes. These are simultaneously closely interlinked and separate business units, and offer both continuity and variety, dependent on 'ages and stages'. This requires continuing investment and a social enterprise can draw on many funding streams. When it is operating both efficiently and effectively, it may be able to generate surpluses. If it has a track record of operating profitably it may be able to access mainstream financing such as bank lending. 'Social investment' – funding tailored to seek a social and financial return – is also a possibility. Government grants may be available because of the community benefit and non-profit distribution nature of a social enterprise. Some, although not all, charitable foundations may support charitable social enterprises, with the caveat of community benefit. Kibble has utilised, and continues to use, many different funding models to develop what it does.

So a successful social enterprise has to be more skilled in the use of the language of business as it is often working at the intersection of the charitable, business and government sector. This opens us up to criticism: we have to ask if it is right that we train staff in business qualifications as well as in care and education? And could our risk of 'mission drift' be not that we drift into other areas of social need, but rather that we over-'commercialise' what we do and how we do it? These are our continual ethical dilemmas, but in any setting, there are ethical considerations that need to be acknowledged and addressed. We believe that by keeping these open for debate and scrutiny that we are better held to account and become better, in every sense, at what we do.

Perhaps one of the biggest 'ethical' debates within Kibble lay around the decision about whether to develop a secure service. The funding model dictated commercial borrowing (around 65% / £7million, with the remainder provided by grant). There was no 'traditional' charitable funding model that could deliver this. We had seen what had happened in England when charities had refused to become involved: a privatised model that delivered little social benefit. We believed that we had a moral obligation using a social enterprise model, one that would work to provide alternatives to secure care and integrated after care models. This was tough to sell to the banks. In their eyes, we were going to actively try to underutilise our facility! Moreover, we were determined to provide a coherent

approach to secure care that would reduce the numbers of young people in custody, not a balkanised, freestanding model - and all this was to be done with no guaranteed income stream. There would be no 'fiscal floor' or safety net put in place, it would be a market free for all. Ultimately, we decided to go ahead and work to develop a new model of secure care that was located firmly within a child and youth care context. We are under no illusions: this is a high-risk service, operationally and financially. Sometimes we have to work in the world as it is, not as we would like it to be. Is it the best way to deliver such specialist support to the most challenging and vulnerable young people? We have our doubts. What we do know is that by consciously implementing the 'values and value' social enterprise approach we have been able to mitigate some of the worst excesses of secure care that we have seen in other parts of the world.

So what are the motivations and qualifications of the staff that come to work in a social enterprise, as opposed to a local authority, commercial operation or traditional charity? The answer seems to be that most front-line staff care little about the organisational model, but are most interested in direct work with young people done to a high standard. Of course, they will want to ensure they have decent terms and conditions of employment. We took the decision to broadly match local government conditions in the area where we work. That means that from the entry level living wage employee through to the

senior staff there is a matching grade point in the public sector. This was to prevent a race to the bottom in pay for lower skilled staff and avoid the excesses that some businesses were paying to senior staff. Consequently, we consistently seem to attract highly motivated and talented staff. Managerial appointments, however, tend to be those more interested in entrepreneurial approaches. The rise of social entrepreneurialship means that many managers come looking to be leaders and change-makers, often with a degree of dissatisfaction with the status quo. Inevitably, a social enterprise business model offers more scope to this group of employees.

Conclusion

If 1996 was the perfect storm for Kibble, the time since has been spent creating a vessel fit for stormy waters. While we yearn for blue oceans and tranquil voyages in balmy conditions, our daily reality is of turbulent white water and strong winds. The nature of the work we do and the society in which we live indicates that today's organisational vessels need to be robust yet manoeuvrable, with good navigation systems and powerful engines. Well run social enterprises offer the child and youth care sector a model that brings in strong business disciplines while retaining at their heart the passion and purpose essential for the work we are committed to.



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Useful links

- Homeboy Industries
<http://www.homeboyindustries.org>
- Juma Ventures <http://www.jumaventures.org>
- REDF <http://redf.org>
- Social Enterprise Alliance
<https://www.se-alliance.org>
- Social Enterprise Code of Practice
www.se-code.net
- Social Enterprise Scotland
<http://www.socialenterprisescotland.org.uk>

GRAHAM BELL joined Kibble in 1993 and has been responsible for leading Kibble through its transformation from a traditional charity to one of Scotland's most effective social enterprises and a multi-service centre for young people. Graham holds a BA, CQSW and MBA and has over 38 years of national and international experience, encompassing residential childcare, youth work and the Third Sector. He is board chair of the Scottish Social Enterprise Academy, a former Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Travel Fellow, former Entrepreneur in Residence at the University of the West of Scotland, board member of Engage Renfrewshire, and of the International Child and Youth Care Network (CYC-Net) (<http://www.cyc-net.org>)

LESLEY FULLER is Kibble's Funding, Marketing and Communications Manager, and has been with Kibble for 20 years. In 2010, Lesley received her MBA from the University of the West of Scotland and was awarded the Court Medal. Lesley has travelled extensively in Europe and North America and co-presented and facilitated sessions on Leading and Learning in Social Enterprise. Lesley and her team have brought in over £11m of investment from a wide range of philanthropic, European and Government sources and she plays a pivotal role in managing the social marketing and communication activities of the organisation.



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21 Hours

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It takes 21 hours of flight time and about 35 hours of travel time to get from Toronto to Cape Town. Toward the end of June, a massive delegation of Canadian (and some American) CYC-involved folks set out on the trek to South Africa in order to attend the 20th Anniversary conference of the National Child Care Association of South Africa, held in Cape Town. Many of those traveling there had been to previous conferences and had some sense of what to expect. Others were coming for the first time, uncertain of what all the fuss is about. I should point out that not all the Canadians left from Toronto; some came from Halifax, others

from Montreal, and again others from Victoria, Edmonton, Winnipeg and other places.

The 21 hours of flight time are fascinating from a CYC perspective. The flight for me and my wonderful wife Patti started in Toronto, where developments in the field of CYC are proceeding at a furious pace. For one thing, my School of Child & Youth Care at Ryerson University is in the process of developing a Masters degree program in Child and Youth Care, only the second such program in Canada (although there is a graduate diploma program at Concordia University in Montreal as well).

The Ontario Association of Child and Youth Care, fresh off a name change in which the term 'Counsellor' was abandoned, is working hard to pull together the profession in an organized manner, all with the goal of eventually pushing government to develop legislation for the regulation of child and youth care practice in Ontario. And service providers across Ontario are continuing to develop new ways of using a child and youth care approach in non-residential settings.

The flight heads north east from Toronto over Quebec, where, as mentioned, Concordia University is welcoming its second cohort of graduate students in a program that is based largely on child and youth care, but officially serves to add qualifications to aspiring psycho-educateurs, the Quebec (and French) tradition within the broader child and youth care field, somewhat more focused on developmental psychology but still incorporating the core concepts and ideas of child and youth care practice. From Quebec, the flight heads straight east, and flies almost directly over Halifax, Nova Scotia, where the Nova Scotia and New Brunswick professional associations for child and youth care are busy planning the 2016 National Child and Youth Care Conference to be held in Halifax.

The first leg of the flight features a stop over in London, England, but not before flying over a corner of Scotland, where CELCIS continues to work hard to support the residential care system in Scotland by, amongst other things, publishing the Scottish Journal of Residential

Care, which currently is working on a special issue focused on the theme of Love in child and youth care practice. With the flight path someone proximate to the airspace of Edinburgh, one can sense the excitement also that comes from the second year of operation of the still new Masters Program in child and youth care offered entirely online by the University of Strathclyde.

The stop over in London reminds us of the attempts in England to introduce social pedagogy to child and youth care practice, especially in the context of residential care and treatment. London is also one of the places in the CYC world where people are working hard to focus on the concept of 'learning' as a foundation for excellence in residential care and treatment.

The second leg of the flight takes us over continental Europe, where discussions about child and youth care generally take place within a social pedagogic context, but where previously almost purely academic discussions now take into consideration some very practical issues, none quite as prominent as the challenge of 'careleavers', a topic increasingly being engaged by practice, professional and research folks across Europe. In Austria, FICE Austria in partnership with FICE International and the Global CYC Conference movement started in Newfoundland in 2013 are busy developing the program for the 2016 FICE conference to be held in Vienna www.betterworld2016.org. And in places like Italy, Germany, and Sweden, discussions about unaccompanied children and youth showing up in those countries as refugee



seekers increasingly incorporate child and youth care perspectives, at least in the context of critiquing the otherwise rather bureaucratic and sometimes quite heartless approach to managing these young people. In fact, these issues have increasingly given rise to a children's rights movement in Europe, which until recently had been a little soft to say the least.

As the flight path crosses the Mediterranean Sea and enters African airspace over Libya, we enter a dead zone for child and youth care, and probably one of the most challenging places for children and youth in the world. The flight goes right over Libya and then Sudan, where war and violence mark the everyday experience of young people. Child and youth care surely unfolds in those countries as well, but it is difficult to connect with the heroic practitioners there, who very likely do what we seek to do without pay, organizational support or access to resources. From Sudan, the flight moves smoothly over the airspace of Uganda, in close proximity to Kenya and Tanzania, where child and youth care, modeled mostly after South African initiatives, is alive and well. In Kenya, the Austrian organization *Therapeutische Gemeinschaften*, supports a rural program serving children and families by providing everything from health care to therapeutic and play-oriented programming, and using a mix of European and African staff. Throughout sub-Saharan Africa, early ef-



forts to adapt the Isibindi model, including the work of Safe Parks, are unfolding under the leadership of individuals who have repeatedly traveled to South Africa and specifically the National Child Care Association to learn more about how this model works.

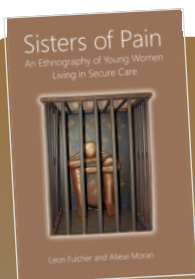
Eventually, and after 19 hours of physically exhausting flight time, the plane touches down for a second time in Johannesburg, home to some of the most advanced and committed child and youth care practitioners I personally know. This is where *Boys and Girls Town* operates several residential and non-residential programs for young people using a wide range of child and youth care techniques and approaches, and currently trying to incorporate various versions of outcome measures and other metrics for their work. Many other child and youth care-focused organizations operate in Johannesburg and surroundings, some informed by particular faith contexts, including Muslim and Jewish organizations. Additionally, child and youth care is very much at the centre of several rural initiatives in Gauteng, the province where Johannesburg is located. These projects often have a significant focus on accessible education, and one such project has done very well to mix therapeutic CYC interventions with school-focused activities that allow otherwise highly marginalized children and youth from child-headed households to attend school.

The final leg of the journey, accounting

for the last two hours of flight, take us from Johannesburg to Cape Town, the site of the conference, but also the centre of amazing child and youth care practice in all kinds of different contexts. Cape Town is the home of CYC-Net (www.cyc-net.org), the mothership of global child and youth care dialogue, headed for ever by the amazing and wonderful Brian Gannon. One organization is doing unbelievably creative work in the context of young people transitioning to emerging adulthood, using theatre and the performing arts as its vehicle for ensuring a strong youth voice in the development of programs and services in this context. The NACCW itself is strongly represented here, and there are several *Isibindi* projects in driving distance from Johannesburg. One of my favourite residential programs is located here, under the leadership of my good friend Francisco. And this week, while we are there, no less than 1200 child and youth care practitioners from across South Africa have gathered to engage their profession for this 20th Anniversary conference (which

coincides with the 40th Anniversary of the NACCW itself). At the conference, they are greeted by a video message from Desmond Tutu, and also by the presence of the South African Minister of Social Development, who remains at the conference for an entire day. In one of the more enchanting moments of the conference, the Minister of Social Developments plays with the message delivered from Montreal by Thom Garfat: "Making Moments Meaningful".

And so I can help but smile at these 21 hours of flight time; a 20,000km trek that exposes the different faces of child and youth care, all unique and adapted to fit their geographic, cultural and spiritual contexts, but ultimately all integrated into one message that travels unencumbered from Montreal to Cape Town: The heart of our profession, the essence of our goals – making moments meaningful.



SISTERS OF PAIN: AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF YOUNG WOMEN LIVING IN SECURE CARE

by Leon Fulcher and Aliese Moran (2013), Cape Town: CYC-Net Press.

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Use of Self, A Complex Idea

Jack Phelan

CYC students and practitioners are familiar with the concept “use of self”. Stated simply, it means that you and your whole presence are what you use to do the life space work called child and youth care. Much of the CYC literature on relational practice emphasizes this concept and it is a good example of how CYC practice looks simple, but when done well, is actually very complex. The practitioner’s self-awareness is an ever-changing process that develops as professional competence increases.

Self-awareness for new CYC workers is emotional, almost primal at first and focuses on anxiety about safety and incompetence. Descriptions about the nature of CYC practice by newer staff are

very personal and tinged with difficult emotions. Friends and family often listen in awe and wonder how you are able to maintain a positive attitude in the face of so much personal attack and difficult behavior. As competence increases, the description of the work shifts and your non CYC audience stops thinking you are some kind of saint. The self focus of a newer practitioner is all about what is happening to me and how do I feel about it. Listening to a youth in distress, the worker is focused on hoping that he/she does a competent job when he/she replies. When confronted with resistance, the thought is mostly about why are you making me feel bad. Aggressive rejections of

friendly overtures are seen as a lack of appreciation for my good will.

Gradually this focus on self as the primary actor is replaced by curiosity about the other person's viewpoint. This changes the CYC practitioner into a professional entering into professional territory. Until this happens, the reports and analysis of youth and families is unprofessional, and could be done by anyone with common sense. Unfortunately, many CYC staff are seen by the rest of the treatment team as lacking a real professional approach because they sound like this.

The journey through self-awareness development is complex and slow to emerge, usually taking at least 2 or 3 years. What happens is twofold, an appreciation for the point of view of the youth or family, and a humility about how our attitude and behavior is crucial to success. A mature CYC practitioner, when met with aggressive rejection of good willed advances, thinks about how he/she came on too strong and frightened the other person. Resistance is seen as a useful protective strategy for people to keep themselves safe from unwanted intrusion. Again, it is up to the CYC practitioner to inspire less resistance by being a safer person. This type of self awareness is very different than the initial version. In fact, it is a good example of simplicity on the other side of complexity. Now when you describe your work to friends and family, they are confused, but impressed – not with your courage and fearlessness, but your depth of analysis, even if they believe you are wrong to not be judgmental and controlling.

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Certainly everyone is aware of the surging incidence of bullying throughout the life course. – from the high-voiced preschooler saying “We don’t like you – you can’t play here” to the restricted table in the senior care facility where the exclamation “This place is saved” barked to the approaching newcomer, reflects behavior meaner than 7th grade girls in the lunchroom. Right now the focal point of bullying intervention is with school age children and secondary school age youth.

Whatever the age range, addressing bullying is a pressing international issue. The pain of rejection is deeply felt and may eventually lead to other asocial behavior.

There is a new notion in bullying now – “Adult” bullying, where arbitrary practices are imposed on the young by adults for the sake of control and intimidation, rather than for promoting well being and growth. Of course structure, guidance and many similar approaches, some even authoritative, are necessary for youngsters and knowing how to provide these constructively is central in child and youth work. But these are not bullying.

The notion of ‘adult bullying’ gives us a new and meaningful lens for reviewing entrenched practices that sustain themselves just because “that’s the way we’ve always done it”. The ubiquitous point and level systems come to mind. I’ve ranted against these for years as most people know. So the concept of ‘adult

bullying’ is just one sally in protest against them – should there be any left of these moribund practices.

Point and level systems are a form of adult bullying plain and simple. Experiences such as contact with adults, participation in activities, and ‘privileges’ that should be part of everyday living for children and youth.,

must be ‘earned’ by acquiring given numbers of arbitrarily assigned points. . They are a ‘folk culture’ rather than an evidence-based practice, highly subjective in their

BULLY BULLY!

Karen VanderVen

interpretation and application. They make those who administer them feel more powerful. But *nobody* - children or adults – is *empowered* by them.

Point and level systems give the meta-message of, “We hold power over you and will exert it by requiring you to do things that we say are right and by withholding things that are good for you and/or that you might want”. When children and youth perceive a setting as arbitrarily controlling and withholding, that encourages their own bullying behavior towards those weaker and more vulnerable so that they themselves may feel control over something.

If you haven’t started thinking of ways to get rid of your point and level system (and replacing it with a more relational, activity centered approach, then look at it through the concept of “adult bullying”. Hopefully this concept is antithetical to yours of being a child and youth worker.

Lingering in the Moment

James Freeman

Abstract

This article acknowledges the high demands of child and youth care practitioners and the importance of ensuring time for personal reflection as an essential component of practice. Examples from the ancient Japanese tea ceremony are included.

The pace of our work in child and youth care can be relentless. We sometimes find ourselves moving from one moment to the next without the time or luxury to stop and reorient ourselves. Perhaps this is one reason reflection-in-action (Stuart, 2013) and pausing to reflect (Garfat, 2003) are so critical to effective practice. Learning such skills is a central task of child and youth care workers moving to more advanced practice and deeper experiences within our work.

We know that moments in time can be sacred, deeply meaningful experiences that are unique in their character and potential, never to be created again (Freeman, 2015). This can motivate us to recognize these moments of opportunity and leverage them in our work with young people and families.

Lessons from the ancient tea ceremony

Reflection and contemplation is important not just in moments of crisis and

challenge, but in moments of joy and pleasure as well. Sometimes allowing ourselves to linger in the moment, to appreciate what just occurred, is necessary. Consider the closing farewell and the way in which it is instructed in the art of the ancient Japanese tea ceremony:

After host and guests have expressed their feelings... and the final farewells have been said... the host watches them until they are gone from sight. It would not do for him to rush about [closing the room and cleaning up] for this would make the day's entertainment meaningless. Even though it is impossible to see the guests returning to their homes, the host should not put things in order quickly. Rather he should return quietly to the setting of the... gathering and..seat himself before the hearth. (Naosuke, 1957, p. 414-415)



After a shared experience with others, we miss something if we quickly move on to the next task or opportunity. However brief it might be, there is value in taking a breath and lingering in the experience, reflecting and absorbing it's addition and meaning to our lives.

The instruction of the tea ceremony continues:

Wishing to speak a while longer with his guests, he must wonder how far they have gotten on their ways home. This "one time, one meeting" has come to an end, and the host reflects upon the fact that it can never be repeated. The highest point of a tea meeting is, in fact, to have a cup of tea alone at this time. All is quiet, and the host can talk to no one but the kettle. This is a state in which nothing else exists, a state that cannot be known unless one has truly attained it oneself. (Naosuke, 1957, p. 415)

Notice that the moment of solitude following the shared experience is referred to as the "highest point" of the gathering. Surely this does not minimize the experience itself, but helps us understand that the experience is not complete, is not made full, without the closure of reflection and the rhythmic return of the shared experience to the boundaries of our own self.

The value of lingering in the moment

Why is this momentary post-experience reflection so valuable? Perhaps it's at

this point where we absorb the meaning of the experience into our own being. It's a way of acknowledging the value of what occurred, being intentional about assimilation, and allowing it's impact to change us.

It provides space in our thoughts to be content with who we are and with what the others have brought to us in the shared experience. It opens opportunity for self-assessment and recognition of meaning. It can be an occasion of thankfulness and gratitude. It can provide insight into preparing for the future moments that will come our way.

How does this look in our daily life experience? For me it is some times lingering a moment after the kids have gone to sleep. One last walk around the campground before departing. A visit back to a



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special place enjoyed with a friend. Sitting up late at night just to be with my own thoughts without interruption. Sometimes it is sitting around the braai alone or quietly with others. Taking a brief pause as I walk out the door from a family visit. Sometimes is it a quick gasp for breath as I move on to the next child or crisis.

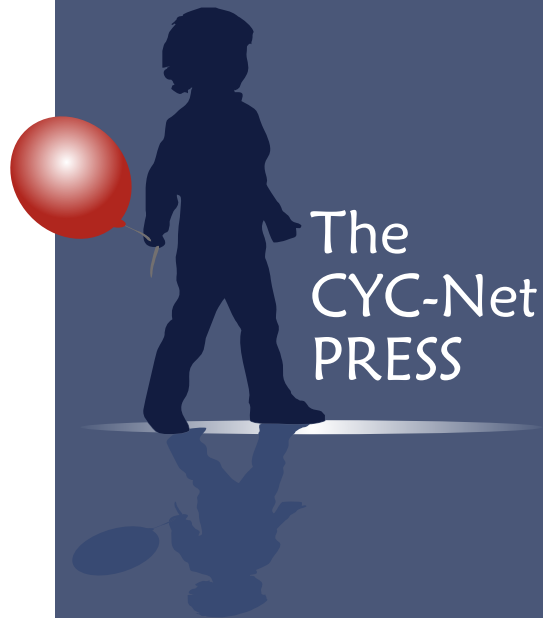
There are a myriad of ways this idea might look like for you. Reflect on the concept, explore it, and find your own expression of it - and enjoy the benefits it brings to your life and practice.

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“The M Family – Like Any Other?”

Thomas Kreiner
SOS Children’s Villages, Austria

Introduction

Work in the youth welfare context has been among the most exciting, most fascinating and, at the same time, most challenging activities of my professional life to date. Our team, i.e. the Mobile Family Work unit (MOFA - *Mobile Familienarbeit*) of SOS Children’s Villages in Burgenland, exclusively acts on behalf of the youth welfare service and/or trained and qualified social workers assigned to the case (*DiplomsozialarbeiterInnen*). Our mandate is to support, counsel and strengthen families, adolescents and children in difficult life situations in order to ensure the best possible development of the children and adolescents concerned (see also Mobile Family Work concept).

A variety of systems are involved, all of them contributing to a process of change. The fascination of our work is due to the mix of stakeholders – not only the families in crisis (parents, adolescents, children) but also external cooperation partners (physicians, counselling bodies, professional

helpers, school, ...), internal cooperation partners (placement facilities outside the family, employers, ...) and, last but not least, the social workers and the authorities assigning the cases to us. This means that even if the families concerned are not aware of the problems of their behaviour, others may well find that changes are necessary for the benefit of the children.

From among the offer of help available, families in crisis are “prescribed”, assigned or proposed help by the youth welfare services. This may range from temporary support to bridge a current gap, to the placement of a child in a facility outside the family. Frequently, families appear to accept counselling on a voluntary basis and take the initiative in applying for support from youth welfare services. The cases referred to MOFA for families in crisis are extremely varied, ranging from scheduled assignments to misguided mandates.

Guiding Principles

“Systemic therapy as such does not

exist. It is rather a broad notion covering a variety of models..." (Schlippe & Schweitzer, 2002, p.23)¹. Based on systemic-therapy models developed in the course of several decades, numerous methods have been generated that can be used for work in different contexts. In the theoretical part of this paper, I mainly refer to the classic model of structural family therapy according to Salvador Minuchin, work by Gianfranco Cecchin and the concept of Home-Based Family Therapy by Marie-Luise Conen. They have all developed concepts for work with so-called "poor families", "multi-problem families", families in crisis or "underprivileged families" (see Schlippe & Schweitzer). In his book "Families of the Slums", published in 1967, Minuchin was able to show that successful family therapy for "multi-problem families" is possible. "Prior to his study on "Families of the Slums", "multi-problem families" had been considered to be unresponsive to treatment. Besides developing his own new methods, which were later delineated as structural family therapy, Minuchin also drew on commonly used psycho-dynamic or behavioural-therapy methods" and it takes "specific frames and contents" in order to succeed (Conen, 2007, p.44)². In their work, Minuchin and his followers had to find new ways of dealing with the "deficit-oriented view of the helpers involved" (Cohen, 2007, p.44). In

Minuchin's view, this calls for a fundamental political discussion on how to deal with "poor families".

In Minuchin's opinion, "therapy is action-oriented and should not be limited to thought processes Therapies are to enable clients to review their past attitudes, values and ideas" (Conen, 2007, p.45). As Minuchin observed, all human beings, including therapists, are guided by a certain epistemology. Their basic assumptions determine their way of thinking and their choice of strategy (Minuchin & Fishman, 1983, p.9). The therapist, as seen by Minuchin, is both an observer of and a participant in the therapy. In his/her role as observer, he/she is responsible for "contents, topics, stories and metaphors" (Conen, 2007, p.45), whereas as a therapist he/she takes the position of an "initiator of change processes" (Conen, 2007, p.45). On this basis, the therapist develops active forms of listening and observing. This approach is not meant as an instruction on how to change behaviours or as a form of education for the family system, but helps to understand the functioning of the system or to open up different points of view and to strengthen the family's own responsibility for bringing about change.

As stated by Jorge Colapinto, "structural family therapy is a model of treatment primarily characterized by its emphasis on structural change and on the

1 Quotation translated into English from the German original.

2 This and subsequent quotations taken from publications by Marie-Luise Conen have been translated into English from the German original.

therapist as an active agent of change” (Colapinto, 1982, p.25). The individual family member is looked at as part of a social fabric within a structure, the assumption being that each part acts and reacts within its social environment. As soon as one component of the whole moves, it influences all other components, which in turn changes its own position as well as theirs.

In the youth welfare context, an additional aspect needs to be taken into consideration: The social worker in charge may perceive a problem in a child’s behaviour (see Conen). The child presents a symptom, and the social worker may consider a change desirable, even though the family is not aware of the problem and does not see any need for change. At the same time, the meaning and the function of the symptom need to be appreciated, as it may serve to stabilize the family organization and its relational fabric for the family concerned. Any radical attempt to eliminate the symptom – which may not be possible anyway – would constitute a threat to the family. Hence, we should understand that the family considers it essential to protect, preserve and, if possible, develop that symptom.

On a similar note, Heinz von Foerster quotes Gregory Bateson, who said that in order to understand abnormal behaviour, it is not enough to deal with the individual, but one needs to study his or her network of human relations – from the “transactional viewpoint” (Foerster, 1985, p.46). Thus, it is essential for helpers to understand the significance of symptoms and to look at them in the context of

family dynamics.

The point at issue is not to identify causes, but to establish relationships and to recognize any form of behaviour as an attempted solution, no matter how “crazy” it appears to be (see Molter, 1990, p. 2 ff.). “Unless the “history” of the child, the adolescent or the parent, i.e. the problem-solving aspect of the problem behaviour, is “understood”, access to more constructive options will not be possible” (Cohen, 2006, p.15). However, this does not appear to resolve the fundamental dilemma of the family, since the external pressure for change may differ from the family’s own perception, which in turn generates resistance on the part of those concerned. Faced with criticism of their behaviour, the family or its individual members “surprisingly show a problematic behaviour”; they fail to perceive the problem and are not motivated to change their behaviour. After all, who would willingly admit that they have a problem – let alone more than one?

In such a situation one might argue that the law does not require us to intervene. We have to bear in mind that we are dealing with family systems with children and/or adolescents. This means that for social workers – as legal representatives of the state – the well-being of the child or adolescent always has to take priority. When a situation constitutes a cause for concern from the social worker’s point of view, a variety of supportive measures are taken. On the one hand, the social worker, acting as the legal representative of the state, identifies a problem and tries to install helpers to

alleviate the problem and make the behaviour more socially acceptable. On the other hand, there are families that are not motivated as clients and do not voluntarily accept help (see Conen, 2007). As Conen points out, “the significance and immediate perception of the problem provides a starting point for the helper’s work” (Conen, 2007, p.51). Moreover, she notes that the “client’s definition of the problem is decisive for its solution”. Hence, questions such as “Who is expected to do what?” and “Is the problem really a problem?” arise (see Conen, 2007). In this triad of stakeholders – the social worker assigned by the youth welfare service, the family and the helpers – the different underlying “problem definitions” need to be placed within a meaningful context.

Thus, the “constructive design of a coercive context, in which the clients involuntarily have to make an effort to change their behaviour or their attitudes” (Conen, 2007, p.49), is governed by Heinz von Foerster’s ethical imperative (1999, p.41): *Act always so as to increase the number of choices.*

How can we account for a coercive context in a democratic society, where interference with “private matters” is an extremely delicate issue? The coercive context facilitates access and provides a legal basis, which continuously interferes in the complex and destructive problem-solving attempts by families and converts them into a constructive relational design. Instead of pursuing the idea that human beings can be forced to change their behaviour, we rather attempt to find

access to “involuntarily motivated clients” (see Conen).

In his description of the therapist’s role, Cecchin attempts an answer to the question of access. *Is the therapist a genuine therapist* or, as Cecchin critically observes, a “social inspector, a teacher, a moralist, an expert ...” (Cecchin, 2007, p.177 ff.)? In his opinion, these role models are at risk of supporting an approach that “ends in a description of cause and effect” (see Cecchin) and would be rejected by the individuals concerned. Another way of approaching people is to regard “clients as experts” (Cecchin, 2007, p. 178) in matters relating to their own life, their solutions, their strength, their resilient factors, their own actions, etc., and to ask “What can this client teach me?” (Cecchin, 2007, p.178). For Cecchin, this is “consistent with the idea that human beings are responsible for their actions. Their responsibility derives from the fact that they are free to choose what to do” (Cecchin, 2007, p.180). The therapist’s task is to “engage the client in a conversation that enables him/her to see his/her own contribution made to the current system through his/her behaviour or attitudes ... to highlight the consequences of his/her action ... without passing judgement on a given attitude or behaviour” (see Cecchin, 2007, p.179 ff.). Should a therapist find himself/herself in a situation in which others urge him/her to assume the role of a teacher by “telling him/her what to do”, he/she can make good use of that in conversation with the client and place himself/herself on a meta-level, e.g. by say-

ing “... we are in the same boat, you are here against your will, and so am I...” (Cecchin, 2007, p.183).

Besides the classic methods of systemic family therapy, such as the genogram, biography work, resource and solution orientation, appreciative enquiry, the multi-generation perspective, reflecting team, disturbance, etc., Minuchin lists other important family therapy techniques, such as universal assumptions, spontaneity, joining, focussing, creating intensity, re-structuring, drawing borders, un-balancing, complementarity of family reality, constructs, paradoxes, family strengths, etc. (see Minuchin & Fishman, 1983).

Unlike other schools of family therapy, Minuchin states that he does not shy away from setting his own goals for his work with families, and that as a therapist one cannot help setting goals. He observes that, above all, “multi-problem families” are hardly able to define their goals in family therapy, let alone express such goals in words, due to their lack of confidence and hope for a better future. Hence, it is the therapist’s task to restore hope and to convey the feeling that things can change (Conen, 2007, p.49 ff.).

The M Family

Ms. L., the social worker in charge of the case, addressed the following request to the Mobile Family Work unit (MOFA):

The M. family lives in a small village in the country, in the childhood home of the boy’s mother. She has a job in a retail store; the boy’s father, a municipal em-

ployee working in refuse collection, has been on extended sick leave due to a tumour disease. Both parents never completed any vocational training. The boy’s father has an adult daughter I. (25 years old) from a previous relationship, who moved out some years ago. The couple’s two sons live in the same household as their parents. The older son F. (19 years old) completed an apprenticeship, but has been unemployed for months and is spending most of his time at home. H. (17 years old) is the family’s youngest child and, except for short periods, has also been at home for almost three years. There are frequent conflicts between the two brothers. F. appears to dominate any conversation and, according to H., tells his brother to try harder to find a job. H.’s circadian rhythm is completely disrupted. He often stays awake all night playing computer games.

H. has rejected school ever since he reached compulsory school-leaving age. In lower-level secondary school he teamed up with a group of friends and, according to his parents, did nothing but “fool around”. At the same time, he was mobbed at school and only attended class very irregularly from second grade onward. The school notified the parents and brought in the school psychologist. As the situation did not improve, the youth welfare service was contacted and individual help was initiated for H. He completed lower-level secondary school according to the curriculum of schools for pupils with special needs. Several attempts were made to orientate H. toward the labour market

(e.g. Labour Market Service measures, placement in a home for adolescents run by the Province for voluntary completion of education, including apprenticeship). H. took up these offers, but dropped out after a while. According to the social worker, the boy's condition was diagnostically clarified on two occasions (admission to a therapeutic pedagogy ward) and he was seen by a child and youth psychiatrist. He was diagnosed with depression and anxiety disorder and prescribed the necessary medication. However, he refused to take his drugs regularly. The boy has been at home for more than a year, neither going to school, nor training as an apprentice or going to work.

At that point in time, MOFA got involved in a first contact and orientation phase. H. is a slightly-built, pale young man who tends to pull his hood over his head when you are talking to him. The family keeps most of the appointments. Usually, both parents and H. are present. Occasionally, the family's older son is also there. After the end of the first phase (approx. 4 months), the youth welfare service again brought everyone together for another conversation.

The M. family stated that they wanted to see a change in their situation, but they felt that H. himself would have to find a way to overcome his problems; they did not want to actively guide him or impose anything on him. The parents stressed that they kept advising him what to do, but that he refused to take up any of their suggestions. The boy's mother said she would not mind if her son did some unskilled

work, she would not force him to train as an apprentice. She would prefer her son to continue living with his parents. She was rather sceptical as to the usefulness of continued help, whereas the boy's father felt that the measures might produce a result in the end. Repeatedly, he pointed out to his wife that things had to change within the family. The parents did not succeed in motivating H. to keep follow-up appointments with his psychiatrist.

The family situation is characterized by a tendency to regard things as hopeless and a lack of confidence in their own ability to initiate change. The parents tend to be passive in their educational behaviour, assuming that their children have to decide for themselves what to do. They do not demand that their son follow a structured daily routine (getting up in the morning, brushing his teeth, getting dressed, etc.), nor do they set a schedule for him or guide him through the day. There are hardly any daily rituals, house rules or directions to be followed by the adolescent.

Conversations between the parents and their son about his everyday life or his feelings happen rarely, if at all. One of the family's resources is its cohesion. Moreover, both H. and his parents conscientiously keep their appointments and hope that their situation will improve. At the same time, through their own attitude, the parents try to encourage their sons to become independent.

H.'s disrupted circadian rhythm is an issue that comes up frequently in conversation. Questions arise as to how the parents could help him and what he him-

self can do to return to a more or less normal rhythm. It turns out that H. actually tries to go to bed earlier, but hardly every manages to do so without his parents' help (e.g. reminding him, agreements ...).

Over time, the social worker stepped up the pressure on the family. Being sceptical about the outcome of the change process, she suggested that H. and his parents go and look at a day-care centre for people with mental disorders, where H. would find himself in a well-structured daily routine. To that end, the boy was to be "trained" to take a bus on a regular basis.

It was pointed out to the family that any change in their situation required active participation and involvement, that the measures suggested had to be applied and tried out at home. Everyone had to assume responsibility for their own actions and conflicts had to be acted out and reflected upon. The parents had to be strengthened as experts in matters relating to their child, they had to become aware of H.'s needs and understand what he likes and what makes him happy. To this end, the parents must actively engage with the boy and develop an active educational behaviour.

The main focus of the individual phases of work was on establishing a structured routine for the adolescent and on finding a job perspective for him. The parents were encouraged to set clear limits for their son, to make demands, to assume responsibility for the change (self-effectiveness) and to be aware of the consequences of their action. The appointment with the

day-care centre for persons with mental disorders triggered a multitude of emotions in the family. H.'s mother could not visualize her son in a centre for mental patients and did not want him to go there.

Both parents want their son to have a chance to work. They no longer want to see him at home all day. In a conversation with the family it became clear that there are only two options open to the adolescent: he must either accept being in an environment of mental disorder or find a regular job, which means going to the Labour Market Service and participating in one of the opportunities offered there. Soon after that conversation, both parents accompanied H. to the Labour Market Service, where he was placed in a vocational orientation class.

H. has been attending that class since mid-December 2012. He gets a great deal of support from his parents, who see to it that he goes to bed at night and wake him up in the morning to make sure he catches his bus. In mid-February, the parents attended a parents' night at their son's place of work. They talked to H.'s trainers and got very positive feedback.

During meetings with the MOFA team, it turns out that the adolescent has become more self-assured, he speaks up whenever there is something he does not like, and he contributes his own ideas. Both parents appreciate this development. At the same time, they are beginning to make certain demands on him in everyday life (e.g. cleaning up his room, putting away his clothes), which he readily accepts.

Throughout all phases of work, the

agreed goals were discussed intensively with the boy and his parents and efforts were made to continue the process of change. Even before the appointment with the social worker, the boy's mother made an appointment with the psychiatrist. H. and his parents now feel at ease with the psychiatrist and have seen her four times since they first met. H. even talks to the psychiatrist when his parents are not present. He does not want to take any psychiatric medication, but he knows that he can get medication if his condition deteriorates.

At the beginning of April, the parents asked if the "educational measure" could be phased out. The boy has a job, the level of conflict in the family has been reduced, and the boy's father is back at work after his long sick leave. Both parents are highly motivated to encourage the development of their children, the phase of isolation is over and the adolescent no longer rejects his parents' efforts to make him look after himself.

In line with the principles of our work with the families assigned to us, the concluding phase is focused on efforts to prevent a recurrence of problems encountered in the past. We assume that the family will again be faced with situations that take them to the limits of what they can cope with. In this context, it is important to involve the social worker to make sure that the recurrence is regarded as an incident in which the family, from our point of view, is trying to test the hopelessness of the helpers.

Reflection and Summary

As the example of the M. Family shows, the case concerns a normal family trying to find a solution for their situation, with the parents allowing their children the greatest possible decision-making autonomy. It has become clear that the parents are making a joint effort to motivate their son and allow him to look after himself. The family are struggling to find each individual tone of a composer's melody (different ideas for solutions) and have thus produced new chords (consonance) and a new harmony. Their son H. has helped them understand their role as parents, draw borders and open up new vistas. At the same time, we – in our role as youth and family counsellors – were challenged to counter the hopelessness and resignation of the social worker, as well as the family's scepticism regarding the change process, and to offer constructive opportunities.

It was particularly important to resist temptations to take the young man by his hand, accompany him to the Labour Market Service and impose employment upon him – just to make the social worker happy. Instead of doing that, we succeeded in initiating a change processes that strengthened the parents and restored their belief in their own capabilities. These processes have taught us to understand the development of the family tune, to accept and interpret intervals and to introduce new variations in the family composition.

Quality-assurance measures, such as co-working, intervision, weekly team meet-

ings, monthly case and/or team supervision sessions, self-experience, training and further training for co-workers, extensive reporting and documentation, etc., provide the basis for such work. This relates not only to the mental hygiene of individual co-workers. The primary question concerns the extent to which family systems can be exposed to stakeholders, i.e. professional helpers, who are left to their own devices, with little supervision, when engaging in family dynamics. As a result, many ultimately turn out to be helpless helpers. We have a societal responsibility to introduce helpful opportunities that are accessible to family who are desperately in need. As Cohen states clearly, “.... Such work can only succeed if respect, appreciation and passion for the task at hand are combined with a high level of professional qualification.” (Cohen, 2008, p. 10).

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Gazes and Mazes: Navigating the complexities of 'watching'

John Digney and Maxwell Smart

A man gazing on the stars is proverbially at the mercy of the puddles in the road.

Alexander Smith (Scottish poet)

A man is original when he speaks the truth that has always been known to all good men.

Patrick Kavanagh (Irish poet)

Preamble

Some weeks ago one of the authors was invited to a residential programme for evening supper. This was part of an organisation we had been 'supporting' the staff team through a difficult time, but did not know any of the young people at all. As everyone was 'milling about' getting settled for the evening a raised voice was heard, 'what the hell are you looking at you muppet'? A stony silence descended as a sense of 'OMG' entered the life space. After a number of seconds the author realised that the comment had been directed at him, he felt like the 'rabbit in the headlights', OMG for sure.

Having something to Say

Hearing such a 'muppet' comment, projected in such an agitated tone and especially coming from the mouth of a

'troubled' youth with whom there was no prior relationship, can certainly be the cause of one's heart to skip a beat or two. But to respond effectively can be a challenge, particularly given:

- (i) you were NOT looking at the youngster,
- (ii) you are aware that this might be a ploy to start an argument and,
- (iii) you do not know what makes this kid tick.

We are acutely aware that anyone working with troubled youth for any amount of time has certainly been in this position, so for the next 30 seconds please stop and reflect on what you might do or say and what you have done or said in the past in a similar situation.

Deciding what to do is like trying to solve a riddle or find your way out of a



maze. Gannon (2014) reminds us that having something to say becomes a tool in the child and youth care workers toolbox, that 'something' can be either the start of a 'relationship beachhead (Brendtro, 1969), or it can be the opposite. The relentless relational maze workers traverse trying to find a foothold on the path leading to a healing relationship as a youth's placement progresses.

Watching you, watching me?

Looking at or 'watching' is an activity that we are engaged in almost all of the time and some would argue that is at the core of what we do in our work; it is part and parcel of our daily lives with the kids. Unfortunately 'watching' is a word that has a voyeuristic connotation – imaging telling your friends that your job is 'watching kids'. But there it is and who can deny that this is what CYC's do and to be good at what we do, we need to be good at watching others.

However distilling the work 'watching' to a specific task is of course far too simplistic, for as we know there is nothing simple about child and youth care practice. As we explore this component of our work we can see that there is nothing simplistic about 'watching' at all - for watching is a sophisticated art far beyond mere observation. Watching is in actual fact the reading of the mood music of the environment, like sticking ones finger in the air to find alterations of wind. Watching detects changes of rhythms and moods – careful reading of these altered states allows

workers to interact proactively with youth.

Imagine now being a young person, surrounded by others whom you perceived have the job of watching you. 'What are you looking at', we hear the kid say to us. Why does this come as a surprise - that they articulate what they are feeling? Is it not a positive thing that they have a voice and know how to use it? But, do they really want to know **why** you were looking at them, or **if** we are looking at them?

Caroline Heanue (2014) points out that it can be human nature to have a 'fear of saying anything that **might be true**' because saying it brings it into reality and to ask, in anticipation of a response that you are NOT looking at them, may be a way for them to validate that they are invisible. This is all part of the riddle, working our way through the maze that the kids are even constructing; wondering if we go this way or that will be end up going in to a dead-end, or worse, down a path that we cannot get back from. And this is where we need to have the right equipment with us, our map and compass.

We need to understand the 'legend' on the map, how to read it properly. So, we start by remembering that this 'maze' is all about understanding behaviour and here is a young person communicating with us, not only in the words he is using but the associated behaviour. Larry Brendtro (ibid) iterated, 'since communication is a two-way arrangement, we must be concerned with the content of two sets of messages – those we receive from the child and those we communicate to the

child' (p58). We have to be sure not to 'jump the gun', but to figure out what is really being said (by us both).

As the adult hearing the, 'what are you looking at' question it can be a common reaction to feel startled - especially if you weren't consciously looking at the originator of the comment. Here you were trying to figure out the best place to sit down and you get slammed with an aggressive and emotionally charge confrontation. Do you reply with, 'sorry, I didn't mean to' or, 'what's it to you' or the truthful, 'I wasn't looking at you at all' (but in many ways it is irrelevant if it is true or not because from the kids perspective, one way or another, you really were). What to say!

Seeing it all

To 'watch', to 'look', to 'observe' or to 'supervise', all seem very similar concepts but at the same time they are significantly different – but can we tell the difference? Ida Sue Baron (2004) reminds those of us who have studied psychology and other such disciplines that, 'one of the first things one learns is how easy it is to forget useful observational information ...' (p53). The significant portion of our work time is taken up with conscious and unconscious observation (and interpretation) and where 'taking notes' may be a thing that can be achieved with ease in contrived psychological interviews and assessments, in the every-day milieu that is child and youth care, we cannot (and should not) readily take notes. Consequently we must hone our internal cognitive note-taking

skills in this regard if we are to not miss what is really going on.

Developmental Insight – Resilient Gazing

If we were to step up our watching by looking to a more intense form of observing we might begin to 'gaze'. Gazing involves more focus; it involves more intensive scrutiny of what is both there and what might be possibly there. Is there a problem or strength; is this a difficulty or opportunity? Depending on how we wish to view a situation will impact on what we see or do not see. If we view situations through a problem lens we may never see the opportunity and likewise if we see a situation as what is wrong we may never see what is strong.

When we gaze we see something different. Like looking at the shapes of clouds in the sky, or the colours and shades of light in an abstract painting we see different images and shapes that subtly develop our insight. Within a practice context, gazing may allow us to gain the insight into how a youth thinks and feels, what their 'attacks and hurts' are really about. Gazing can allow us to see through the window and to act differently towards young people. After all, J C Chambers advises that it is good practice to, 'glance at problems and gaze at strengths' (Brendtro & Larson, 2004, p194).

Our Internal CCTV

Jacques Lacan, a French psychotherapist



from the psychodynamic school, coined the term, 'the gaze', to refer to an anxious state that comes with the awareness that one can be viewed. He argued that a psychological effect occurs and one loses a degree of autonomy when they realize that they are a visible object. This notion is linked with his 'mirror stage' theories. Lucan postulated that 'gaze effect' can be produced by the presence of any object and thus one has an awareness of 'being an object' under scrutiny. The notion of the 'gaze' can therefore be one of the most powerful human forces, and when we catch each others eyes, this is enhanced and can prompt someone to feel 'observed', thus prompting the question, 'what are you looking at?'

Foucault (1977) also pondered the notion of the 'gaze' and expressed his belief that 'the gaze' is not a construct that a person actually has or intentionally uses. He thinks of it more as a relationship between individuals. A relationship which we enter into and one within which we tend to modify our behaviours when we believe (rightly or wrongly) that we are being watched. This perceived 'supervision' then begins to have a self-regulating effect. Cartwright & Surken (2009) build on this somewhat stating 'the gaze is integral to systems of power and ideas about knowledge' (p.94). Is there something here about 'giving someone the eye' or being perceived as doing so?

Listen with your senses

So – not only is our work about watch-

ing (and understanding all that this means), it is also about problem-solving; finding our way out of the ever appearing labyrinths, set out but our young people (deflecting and diverting us up blind alleys and along the mysterious and unknown roads) and to effectively gaze or watch, we must in essence, listen with our senses. 'First, listen with your eyes, heart and ears', we are told by Sean Covey (1998). If we are true to our tasks of 'watching' or 'gazing', we must look for what is really going on. 'Don't be fooled by me; don't be fooled by the mask I wear; for I wear a mask; I wear a thousand masks that I am afraid to take off, and none of them is me' (Covey, *ibid*: 171)

Squaring the Circle

Back to our introductory paragraph ... The stony silence persisted for a further 10 or 12 seconds. Then as he pulled himself out of his frozen state the author began to internally scramble, hoping to draw from his decades of experience (all that 'learned knowledge' and 'practice wisdom'). As the 'headlights' began to dim, the author looked straight at the agitated young man, gave a slight smile, shrugged and using the wise words of Brian Gannon (2014), said, 'What do you think of that comfortable-looking couch' (p51). With a glint in his eye, the youth replied "saggy". All was made good.

Maxie and Digs

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I find myself returning to the scope of meaning and praxis indicated by the term care in Child and Youth Care. I have argued consistently in this column that care needs to extend beyond the boundaries of a particular field of engagement between young people and adults. It is not sufficient, in my view, for us to perform practices of care that do not account for the actual lived experience of young people outside the field of practice that is bounded by any given program or agency. Such practice may be gratifying, to the degree that it establishes the experience of being cared for by adults, but I would argue, it is both incomplete and inadequate if it does not acknowledge and engage the brutality of life as lived under the current regimes of global capitalism.

It is Foucault who points out the ways in which social services have been deployed as the work horse of capitalist domination. In his work, he delineates and maps the subtle ways that the best of intentions, such as care, are turned into instruments of discipline and punishment. Along with cogent social critics and analysts such as Jacques Donzelot, Ian Parker and Erica Burman, he demonstrates the ways in which disciplines, such as psychology, psychiatry and

social work (and might we say CYC in its appropriations of developmental psychology, neuro-psychology and diagnostic psychiatry?), structure our perceptions of identity and subjective possibilities through discourses that serve the system of dominant rule in contemporary society.

This array of theories, that proliferate across our society as the common sense of who we are, has been called the psy-complex by Donzelot and Parker. Such a complex is richly intertwined with mass media, schools, political systems, and corporate interests to disseminate a continually evolving set of beliefs and practices that, over the past century, has encompassed more and more of our creative capacities.

Foucault discusses this process as the production of what he terms “docile bodies.” Under industrial capitalism, it was in fact the body that necessitated discipline. It was bodies

that were needed in industry and social sciences were deployed in subtle and overt ways to shape bodies so that they could be of service to the ever-expanding field of corporate production.

Joanna Wasiak makes this point in her excellent article “The Development of Development: A Post-Marxist Analysis of the Development of Hegemonic Developmen-

Notes on Caring under the Society of Control

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tal Psychology.” In her analysis of Piaget’s theories in relation to the development of industrial capitalism, she argues that his work was appropriated by mainstream developmental psychology in ways that served the interests of industrialists.

For example, she makes the argument that within developmental psychology, the notion of progress that leads to an idealized end product was entangled with Fordism and the concept of individualism. She argues that this was deployed to produce workers who do their part, but do not see themselves as part of a whole process of production and who will increasingly put their perceived individual interests ahead of their capacity to organize collectively. Wasiak argues that this is related to the way that,

Piaget’s stage model was widely received as having discontinuous, or individual stages. In fact, in the US, developmental research even came to focus upon the acceleration of development (known as the ‘American question’), attempting to “teach children to do Piagetian-type problems at even earlier ages” (Burman, p.156). In other words, such an approach attempted to quantify Piaget’s original qualitative model. Hence we see how normalization and standardization is made more ‘efficient’ through processes of individualization. Mainstream development focuses on producing a ‘normal’ child; in other words, a rational, able-bodied, male who will eventually sell his labour for the sake of profit.

The deployment and distortion of theory in the social sciences is similarly traced in the work of Gille Deleuze. In his prescient article, “Postscript on the Society of Control” he argues that the forms of discipline, as described by Foucault, have mutated and expanded at the end of the 20th century. He proposes that it is no longer the body (or just the body) that is the object of discipline. Instead it is our capacity to participate in the increasingly abstract world of finance and consumption. Capitalism is no longer interested in a body that is disciplined to the ends of working on an assembly line. The current mode of production needs to appropriate our creative capacities to manipulate code (i.e. the ever-proliferating world of the internet) and to exploit our abilities as social beings (i.e. the service industry).

In his timely article, *Aesthetic Labour: Grooming Young People to sell their bodies, their personalities*, Alan Mackie points out this is extremely relevant to those of us who work with young people. He suggests that within most of our agencies and programs.

it seems to be taken for granted that workers prepare young people for employment. This focus on employability is seen as central, even though reality asks more than a few questions about this emphasis – chronic lack of jobs, low wages, zero-hour contracts. For many young people the world of work is and will be highly precarious.

As Mackie points out, the focus on pre-



paring young people for the world of work is both contentious and problematic. I would suggest that this is particularly true if we take the mandate of care seriously. I would ask, under what concept of care would we encourage young people to subject themselves to increasing levels of appropriation and exploitation? This was, of course, extremely problematic during the period of industrial capitalism, where child labor and the brutality of the assembly line led to major reforms for young people through unionization and collective legislative action. I would argue, however that for young people today these correctives to the capitalist's rapacious need for profit have been undercut and significantly rolled back, leaving young people even more open to the predations of global capitalist empire. Indeed, not only has the world of work become increasingly individualized and precarious, but capitalism has expanded its capacity for exploitation into almost every area of young people's lived experience.

On his excellent facebook site, *In Defense of Youth Work*, (I would note the following as the inspiration for this month's column) Tony Taylor lays out an explicit example of the new form of social control and exploitation. He references the recent global initiative by mega-corporate giant McDonald's to explicitly valorize what they are calling soft skills.

At McDonald's, soft skills are at the heart of what we do. We know that these skills can really affect a customer's experience with us, and that they are critical to our

employees' performance, progression and motivation ... We're spending 2015 championing the hard value of soft skills, together with leading organisations from the worlds of business and education, alongside entrepreneur James Caan CBE. We hope not only to change peoples' perceptions of soft skills, but also to generate some brilliant new ideas about how to develop them in the workforce so that all employees can benefit from them throughout their careers and lives.

Hardt and Negri, in their work on the development and expansion of postmodern capitalist empire, refer to these soft skills as affective labor. They have argued that this is one form of labor exploitation that fits within the category of immaterial labor. Immaterial labor they define as, the appropriation of work that does not produce anything material. The realm of virtual production through mass media and on the world wide-web as well as the realm of stock markets and hedge fund derivatives fit at the high end of this mode of labor, while the affective capacities of service workers fit at the bottom. As Taylor describes it, soft skills or affective labor is "To be translated as our employees better do as they are told, never complain, forever smile mechanically and intone repetitiously, 'have a good day.'" Affective labor is the alienation of the worker from their full range of emotional capacities in the same way that industrial labor cut off skilled laborers from their ability to creatively craft a product. In the realm of global corporate capital, worker's

emotions and social skills become the commodity in question.

Allan Mackie terms this phenomenon Aesthetic Labor and he says that,

Aesthetic labor includes a worker's deportment, style, accent, voice, and attractiveness. Employees at these stores must embody particular styles of standing, speaking, and walking. "Looking good" and "sounding right" are their jobs' primary requirements. In virtually every case, the right aesthetic is middle class, conventionally gendered, and typically white.

We have all seen this in play in the Walmart greeter, the stilted social chatter of a new generation of restaurant wait staff and other aspects of the service industry. In my view, this is an extremely pernicious form of labor exploitation that begins to shape young people's emotional capacities in very restrictive ways.

One might argue that this can't be too serious. After all, this is only something young people put on during the work day. It isn't just the work day though. In combination with the realm of tweets and other social media modes of communication, it begs the question of how much time young people's emotions are being truncated and flattened into what Baudrillard would call a simulacrum or a copy of a copy. The emotions expressed during the work day as soft skills are a copy of what young people are exposed to through virtual media, which is a copy of social interaction as fully lived experience. Put into concrete terms the smile of the service worker is a copy of smiles seen in the mass media which are copied from smiles

as actual expressions of affect.

If McDonald's is now overtly showcasing their ability to train and promote soft skills in their employees, we have to wonder how much of this has already been going on quietly and largely unnoticed. As Foucault points out, the most effective systems of discipline and control are not the most overt brutal exercises of raw power. Rather, they are the unnoticed normalization of modes of self-discipline and the subtle shaping of subjectivity and the realm of desire.

For those of us who live our work lives engaged with young people and their desire to thrive and to survive within the contemporary social and cultural environment, all of this calls for an interrogation of our own soft skills. The realm of child and youth care is a field in which social and relational skills are both developed and valued. What if our own field of endeavor, which is designed to build networks of living, loving and creatively interacting young people and adults is being high jacked by the world of corporate capital? Should this be a matter of urgent concern or should we just continue with business as usual and prepare young people for work in the "real world." I would argue that, if care in any functional sense about the value of human creativity and the importance of love and affect then we need to begin to think about how we are to respond. And we need to hurry. History is already ahead of us.





Separation

Laura Steckley

As I write this, I'm heading back home to Colorado. Actually, it's no longer home but it's where (as Leon Fulcher is fond of saying) I come fae. Despite living more of my adult life in Scotland, I still refer to Colorado as 'back home'. I go back home about every three years. The lead-up to going is always tinged with anxiety and this time is no different.

Part of my discomfort is with leaving my home in Scotland. I have this anxiety every time I go away – anywhere, even just for a couple of days. It isn't based on anything rational and I come by it honestly, which is to say I have inherited it from a parent (in this case, my mother – though thankfully in a much milder form). I imagine it is some sort of separation anxiety and it manifests as vague dread and inertia in the weeks before I go. I don't have active worries of catastrophe or imagine minor things going wrong. No horrible imaginings running across my mind's eye. And, over time, the development of habits

and systems related to travel, along with naming it for what it is, have reduced its disruptive effect on me. *Oh here's that separation anxiety thing again. C'est la vie.*

This anxiety is more complicated when I go back home. Again, I don't usually spend a lot of time actively worrying about how things will go, but nevertheless, there's a constant, low-volume emotional noise in my background that could be characterised as vague worry about how it will go. Colorado doesn't feel like home anymore, rather something *like* home but strangely off kilter. Indeed, I have regular dreams about being back home that have a mildly disturbing quality, like finding myself in my dressing gown in the parking lot of the grocery store we frequented when I was growing up. The dreams almost always have a story-line that involves my realisation that I have to be at work tomorrow, in Scotland, and I've no idea how I'm going to get back in time. Often, 'work' is a job in direct practice. If you're

into dream analysis, I'll leave them with you; I've got my own theories about what they're about.

My immediate family is still in Colorado; my parents still reside in the house I grew up in. It's hard for them, my being so far away. I have a good life in Scotland, but being far away is hard for me too. I worry about my parents as they face the related challenges of their twilight years, and for my sister who will only have my support from a distance as she supports them. And, I just miss them.

So while I'm also very much looking forward to seeing them, I'm also a little bit anxious about how quickly we'll be able to bridge that distance, even though I feel secure in their love for me and mine for them. How much will that residue of guilt get in the way of my being able to just relax and connect? Will we have conflict? Will we manage it poorly or well?

As I reflect on all of this, I think about how difficult it was for so many of the young people I worked with in residential child care. Their separation anxiety was often ragingly evident on a Sunday evening when they came back from their families, and on a Thursday evening or Friday morning, as they prepared to return to them. The vast majority clearly had more extreme things to worry about, whether the myriad of threats to their loved ones' safety (and sometimes their own) or the precariousness of parental affection and their place in the family. Moreover, issues of identity and belonging were painfully confusing for those who felt torn between two homes. Some young people ap-

peared to feel guilty when they began to thrive in residence away from their families. For many, all of this was far too much to manage and so remained unthinkable. Instead, running away or wreaking havoc in the residence or home community was the most accessible way of coping.

My understanding of separation, particularly separation from one's family of origin, has definitely deepened as a result of moving to Scotland. And, of course, this is what all kids in residential, foster or kinship care have in common. Many are also separated from where they come from. Looking back, I think it was easy to become desensitised to the complex mess of feelings that a lot of them must have felt – especially the ones who appeared to cope well.

At a conference a few years ago, Holly Van Gulden gave a keynote in which she did a fantastic experiential exercise with the audience on separation anxiety. She instructed us to place our most valued object (that we had with us) under our chairs – a wedding band or other piece of jewellery, a personal diary, a watch. She then continued with the presentation. As people began shuffling uncomfortably, she asked how many of us wanted to check under our seats. She encouraged us not to, and continued a bit further with the keynote. Some could not hold out and retrieved their object. When the rest collected theirs at her instruction several minutes later, the relief was palpable. How interesting it was that, on the one hand, most of us rationally knew that the item was safe and would be there. Yet at the



same time, doubt and worry tugged at our attention, making it hard to focus on what she was telling us. If we really *knew* that the valued item was there all along, why the relief at retrieving it?

Van Gulden's point was that for children whose early years have been characterised by extreme chaos or neglect, there is a constant sense that not just objects but places and relationships are not durable. These kids don't develop object permanence. For a child with a distorted sense of object permanence, people, places and things cannot be relied upon not to disappear or change beyond recognition. So perhaps leaving home for some young people felt something like being asked to leave one's wedding band (or equivalent) under that chair for the week. Or, maybe it's too impossible to invest much value in anyone or anything and so it feels very different. Whatever the case, she was illustrating how we all sometimes have what she referred to as 'slippage' of object permanence, and that this affects our relationships.

It feels uncomfortable to compare my much more manageable separation with those of the children and young people we serve. In many respects, theirs are incomparably difficult. The external circumstances and internal experience will be unique to each one of us. Yet the raw stuff of loss, worry and vulnerability (and love and belonging and joy) are fundamentally the same. It's what unites us as human beings and enables us to be truly present with one another.

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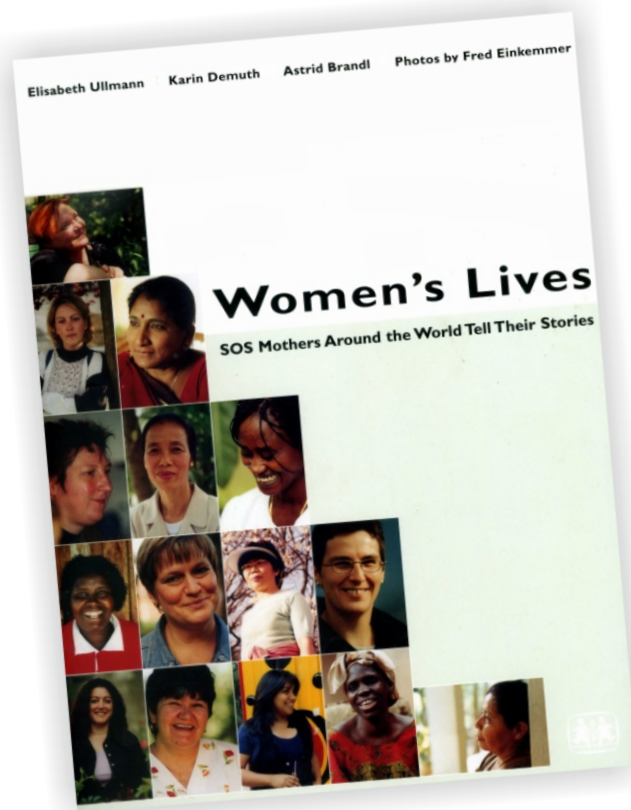


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Women's Lives

SOS Mothers tell their stories

Introduction

There is no other professional group within the SOS Children's Village organisation which has been as mirrored in clichés as that of the SOS mother. The spectrum of thought, depending on one's ideological point of view, ranges from "holy-like admiration" of these women, "who selflessly sacrifice themselves for the good of the children," to their dressing-down as "unworldly broody hens, who, on grounds

of personal frustration, have withdrawn from life to eke out an existence, living like nuns with their children" What these two points of view have in common, is that neither of them take the SOS mother seriously, neither as an individual nor as a person qualified in taking care of children.

Why did we write these stories?

The aim is to bring the reader closer to some of the women, thereby contributing



to a more authentic picture of the profession and life of an SOS mother. Fifteen portraits of women from four continents have been fashioned. They give the reader an insight into the women's life stories, their motivation for choosing this profession, their daily lives in the SOS Children's Villages, the aims they have for the children they care for, their greatest challenges, their personal dreams and desires, as well as the synonymity they have attained through this singular profession.

One of the aims of these stories is to act as a sort of "megaphone" for the voices of what are now more than 5,500 women who carry out this profession. This is done in close co-operation with the colleagues responsible in the countries – mostly the directors of the SOS Vocational Training Centres. We wanted to meet some of the SOS mothers from various countries and we wanted to understand what motivated them to take on this task, to learn from their wide spectrum of experience and, most of all, to make their knowledge and experience available to the general public.

Our methods of procedure

The choice of the women was made by the national SOS Children's Village associations. Our only criteria were that the women were willing to undertake this adventure with us, and it had to be possible to visit their parents' homes. The countries were chosen in collaboration with President Helmut Kutin, with a view to having the widest geographical and cultural

variety possible.

In order to prevent a "dry white season" of paper and to attain an integral overall image, we engaged the freelance photographer, Fred Einkemmer, to accompany us and to visually document the women's daily lives. So we set off in pairs to spend four to five days with each of the SOS mothers and their families. During the stay we ate, went shopping or to the gym together. To gain a better insight into the SOS mother's childhood, as well as general living conditions in each of the cultures, we visited their parental homes (with two exceptions).

We held narrative interviews with the women, gathered their experiences and turned the information into readable texts. Most of these interviews took a few days and, in some countries, were only possible with the unstinting help of our translators. We tried hard to do our work in a spirit of co-operation, but whether we always succeeded - only the people we talked to can judge that. We kept personal diaries about our observations, impressions and emotions as an extra source of information. We have quoted extracts from these diaries.

First impressions

During our meetings, we found out that the women's motives for taking on this profession were as diverse as their life stories themselves. We heard examples of many women seeing their profession as a chance for improvement. For the women in developing countries, the profession

meant they had access to education as well as the chance to be a working woman. The women in the industrialised countries see it as a way of life, where they can combine both their professional and private ideas. Over the last years, SOS Children's Villages has invested much in strengthening the Professionalisation of the position of the SOS mother. In talking to these women, we discovered that this corresponds not only with their needs, but also with the high demands that the profession makes on them. We have realised that not nearly enough can be done in this direction. The women were able to talk about so many positive elements, but most of all, it is their critical experiences, their ideas and suggestions that will be able to add to the organisation's further development.

The material we brought back is a treasure chest. Each of the women stands out through their individuality – whether this be the “traditional” SOS mother, who defines herself through her role as a mother, or the “modern” SOS mother, who sees no dichotomy between seeing herself in a professional, educational light and her motherly feelings for the children in her care. The biggest challenge for us was to edit these “treasures” in such a manner, that we could do justice to these women, despite the limited space available. We hope that we have succeeded here.

Constanze Lucke



Born 8.8.1966, Germany

“I was so lucky to have been able to enjoy such a cosseted childhood. Of course, I value that all the more, because I have often seen the opposite during my work in the home and in the SOS Children's Village. My childhood was quite different and perhaps that's why I can pass it on differently. Maybe I can achieve a measure of healing, and perhaps my parents will continue to have effect.”

Constanze Lucke lives in Brandenburg an der Havel. Brandenburg is in the former GDR, in one of the “new provinces”, as they have been called since the reunification. Constanze and her family were happy during the GDR times. They valued family life and doing things together. Constanze has particularly wonderful childhood memories of the little allotment they still have.

The twelve tall chimneys were Brandenburg's symbol in those days. They

were the steel works and rolling mill's chimneys in which thousands of people found employment. The steel works were closed after the reunification and the chimney stacks demolished. What remain are an industrial park and a museum. Unemployment was an unknown term in the GDR and suddenly became a huge challenge for many people, and, for some of them, it was their undoing. Many moved to the "old provinces" in the hope of a better life.

The Story of Her Life

"We were happy. I think we were contented with the simple things in life."

My name is Constanze Lucke and I was born here in the city of Brandenburg. I have a brother and a sister. My brother is one year younger than me and my sister is four years older. My parents, my brother and sister all live in Brandenburg. My dad is a surveyor and my mum trained to be a laboratory assistant and an insurance sales person. I went to school here for ten years and then did a three-year course at the medical high school in nursery education. In the days of the GDR, nursery education was still counted as a medical subject. The training was to look after children from birth to three years old and it included both educational and medical subjects. After my training, I went to work as an

educator in a children's home, which housed children from birth to three years of age. Once they were three, they had to move to another home and I always found this problematic. Then the reunification came and I qualified further as a state-registered-educator. I became head of the team on the ward where the youngest children were. Those were the babies from one week old to eighteen months.

Could you tell us about how you lived with your parents?

We lived on a newly-built estate. Our flat had two big rooms and two small ones. My parents always went to great efforts to ensure that, as children, we had our own rooms: not just free space but our own actual rooms. They went without so that my sister and I could each have a room of our own. There was a divider in the big room so that my brother also had his own area. There was a playground right outside the house and we spent a lot of time there,



playing with other children from the neighbourhood. I didn't go to either a crèche or a kindergarten, because my mother managed to organise her working-hours to work in the evenings. She was a laboratory assistant, and then retrained to sell insurance so that she could manage everything at once. She went to work after my father came home in the evenings, so there was always somebody at home to look after us. It was a safe and wonderful time. In general, I can say that we were a happy family.

I have very strong ties to my parents. I have such a warm feeling in my heart, but I can't express it properly. I was so lucky to have been able to enjoy such a cosseted childhood. Of course, I value that all the more, because I have often seen the opposite during my work in the home and in the SOS Children's Village. My childhood was quite different and perhaps that's why I can pass it on differently. Maybe I can achieve a measure of healing, and perhaps my parents will continue to have effect.

***Could you describe your mother to us?
What did she give you on your way?***

I think my mother is a strong woman for whom the family is very important. She was always there for us and made everything nice for us. I took this dependency, safety and security for granted, because I didn't know anything else. What I found so wonderful was the harmony between my parents. When we left for school, mum would always stand at the kitchen window and wave to us until we were out of sight. It was the same every day. Basically, she put her interests second to those of the family.

And your father?

He's still working for the city in the land registry office. My father is a quiet, lovely man, who has an incredible affiliation with nature. He spends time in his garden every day. Since the early 1970's we've had a small allotment with a summerhouse. It's right by the river and that is his great hobby. He mows the lawn, puts out food for the blue-tits and prunes the apple tree, puts (in a pond and everything. All year round he comes here to the allotment to have a change. I can say that he was always there for me and made lots of things possible for me too. We had great fun there as children because it was pure nature. You could say, I went to bed when the ducks were calling and woke up to the sound of the great crested grebes. It was obvious that I would gain an interest in ornithology. I joined the young ornithologist's club when I was twelve and that was very exciting. Later, when I started to work shifts at the children's home, I didn't have time for it anymore. I opted for the children and my career, and the birds have remained my hobby. Now, when we're sitting outside in the SOS Children's Village, I can say, "That's a starling and there's a buzzard." The children are impressed. They are getting a feel for it too and I like that.

Perhaps you could tell us something about your grandparents?

My father was an only child and was born here in Brandenburg. My grandparents ran a health-food shop. After having to give up the shop, my grandfather got a job in a banana-ripening factory. Yes, in those days there was such a thing! I can



still see it now: there was a huge hall full of green bananas that were ripening. My mother's parents come from Laubusch, on the way to Dresden. My grandfather was in the mines and my grandmother was a kindergarten teacher. When I think of my Laubusch-grandmother, I go all warm inside. She was just the sort of grandmother I'd wanted. She was kind and generous. If you wanted another helping of the wonderful pudding she'd made, you'd always get one. It was always fantastic when we went to our grandparents in Laubusch. It was really cosy and old-fashioned in their house. If you wanted to go to the toilet, you had to go across the back yard to an earth closet. There was an orchard where we'd climb the trees. And I'll never forget the smell. There was always a whiff of coal in the air from the mines. I can still smell it today.



Were your parents born during the Second World War?

Yes, they were both born in 1939. They were children during the war. We used to talk about it a lot. I remember how my mother said, "When Dresden was burning, you could see the flames in Laubusch." And she would tell of the sirens and how they had to take shelter.

How was it for your parents when the GDR came into being after the war?

As funny as it may sound, the GDR times were good times for us. We weren't badly off. Family life was very important to us. We had a lovely flat, did a lot together and had our oasis at the allotment. We were happy. I think we were contented with the simple things in life. I don't need carrots that have been washed. There was sand on the carrots, but we washed it off. All right, we couldn't travel, that really was the case, but personally I never felt the need to travel. If we did, we just went east, to Moscow or Kiev.

And when the reunification came?

When the reunification came, on the day they opened the borders... I sat quietly first of all. I thought, "All right, that's how it is now." A lot of people drove to West Berlin in their Trabis that night. I thought to myself, "It won't run away," and so it was a fortnight before I went to the other Berlin for the first time. I went to a supermarket, where there was a mirror behind the display of fruit and vegetables, and nearly had a fit! I couldn't tell where the fruit ended and the mirror started. I thought this excess of goods on offer was just dreadful and

quickly left the shop again. I'll never forget that fruit and vegetable display and this misrepresentation of the facts.

Do you have a good friend, with whom you can talk about things that are important to you?

Yes, I have a good friend and I don't know how I would have managed to get through some situations without her. She's an SOS mother too, in SOS Children's Village Lippe. We trained together in Mörlbach and we became very good friends. We visit each other regularly and our children, that is her foster and my foster children, get on well together too. If things start getting difficult here, I can call her at any time of the night or day.

Did you ever think about starting a family of your own?

It's strange, but, because I was working in the children's home and had such close contact with the children there, I never felt the need for a family of my own. I always thought, "If I'm going to have children then I want foster children." I heard about SOS Children's Villages and that's when it became clear to me that this was the path for me: to be there for foster children.

What do you like to do best when you're not working?

If I take the time, I like to sew or make things. I design little flower children, made from natural materials. That's something I learned in Mörlbach. I finish a little doll every two or three months. I also like to go for walks in the woods. Those are the

two things I do when I need a change. On my days off, I visit my friends and relations.

What do you think are your particular strengths and talents?

I think I'm a quiet, well-balanced person who can listen well. My particular strength, I think, is that I can put myself in somebody else's situation well. I have got sensitive antennae for other people's situations. I also enjoy doing housework and I don't find it a problem to cope with everything: running the household, the family tasks and my private life. To find a balance, so that I can be content.

Motivation for Her Choice of Profession

"It became clearer and clearer to me that I was fulfilled by looking after foster children."

I've already mentioned that I worked in a children's home for ten years. It was a wonderful job, being there for the children. Even when I was there, I already did more than was really necessary. I came across that quotation years later and it means a lot to me. (Note: this is a reference to Hermann Gmeiner's quotation: "To do more than you need to.") I blossomed in my work and it became clearer and clearer that I was fulfilled by looking after foster children.

It's obvious that a small child belongs with its mother and if there is no mother there, then a replacement mother. A children's home is a less-than-ideal situation.





In the end, that was what made me decide to move to the SOS Children's Villages. Furthermore, I was often confronted with views in the home that I couldn't uphold. For example, "The babies shouldn't be picked up so often. They'll get spoiled." Whereas, it was exactly this physical proximity which was so important to me, in order to give the child a little bit of tenderness! You can only convey a feeling of security by cuddling. This phrase had a great effect on me.

I first heard about SOS Children's Villages when they were planning SOS Children's Village Zwickau in 1991 or '92. There was a job advertisement in the newspapers saying, "Seeking SOS mothers." That was the first time I'd heard of this type of

care. At that time, there was no foster care system as we have now. That's how I first came across the idea that a "mother" could look after a number of foster children, and that was my life's aim! At the end of 1993, I asked for brochures from Munich. I was very impressed when I read them. I put the brochures in a drawer and another eighteen months passed. During this time, I talked to my mother and sister. I couldn't get the idea out of my head anymore. On the other hand, it was going to be a big step for me, leaving my job, as I didn't know whether I could really become an SOS mother. At that time, the first people were being made redundant. Then I heard that they were going to build an SOS Children's Village in Brandenburg and, of course, I

knew immediately that that would be perfect for me. After that I was in constant touch with Munich and was invited for an interview at the SOS Children's Village Harksheide, near Hamburg. Everything ran its course.

I started as a family assistant in Harksheide in October 1995 and didn't know whether I could really become an SOS mother, or even whether I'd ever get to Brandenburg. But what became clear to me during that year in Harksheide was that I wanted to become an SOS mother, and that my then-partner and I would go our separate ways. I wasn't frightened, because I already knew what it meant to bring up these children, some of whom are terribly traumatised. I knew what my life-plan was and everything fitted.

How did your family react to your decision?

Right from the start they said, "But that's exactly what you want to do! Why are you hesitating so much?" It was important to me that my family supported me so positively. They also gave me strong support at the beginning, when I was a family assistant. I was finding things difficult and didn't feel so good at the time. I worked with various SOS families and experienced how a family assistant can either be integrated into the working relationship by the SOS mother, or not. I gathered both positive and negative experiences there.

What happened after Harksheide?

There were further talks in Munich and a psychological test, to define whether or

not I could develop motherly feelings towards children who were not my own. I was advised to spend another year as a family assistant in Brandenburg. I found it was a good experience to be there during the setting-up of SOS Children's Village Brandenburg. The first SOS mother started there in August 1996 and I arrived in October. The training in Mörlbach began in September 1997. I am still thankful to our village director that she said to me, "Treat yourself to this year in Mörlbach. Nobody else will ever be able to give you a year like that again." It was a wonderful year and a fantastic experience.

What was so special about the training in Mörlbach?

The theoretical teaching was a useful refresher for me. What impressed me most, though, was how we lived together in such a small space. We organised ourselves for shopping, cooking and going to lessons, and learned to improvise. We were thirteen completely different women who had one common feature, and that was our feelings for children. I also found the seminars where we dealt with our own families very useful: "Why do I want to become an SOS mother, where are my roots, why do I react like this and not differently in certain situations?" To deal with your own life-history in detail and to find out how others did. It was an exchange that resulted in friendships being made. That's something you won't find on any state-run course, and that's why I hope that these aspects will remain a part of the SOS mother training in future.



Experiences as an SOS Mother

“It’s also just normal life.”

It was during the last months of the training that the association told me I could be an SOS mother in Brandenburg. The village director came to Mörlbach in February 1998 and brought the first files with her. We looked at them together, to decide for which children the SOS Children’s Village would be the right facility. I

already got to know a bit about Fabian, Fred and Oliver then. I visited Fabian at his foster place in Berlin in May. One day later I visited Fred and Oliver in a children’s home in Brandenburg.

When I drove back to Mörlbach, I almost felt as if I were pregnant. It was a strange feeling. The children had seen me, but didn’t know who I might be for them in future.

I finished my training in July 1998 and on the 1st of September I took Fabian in. He was two-and-three-quarters at the time. Fred and Oliver came eleven weeks later. Oliver was eight, Fred was ten, and the pair of them were extremely demand-

ing. Fabian was a quiet, reflective lad, but Fred and Oliver were like two over-wound spinning tops and didn’t take in much of their surroundings. They bounced through the house and the village like rubber balls. They were chaotic children. I could feel how these two were draining me. They’d had a typical career in homes and had gone through a lot of interrupted relationships. I’m Fred’s eighth stop. He was ten but seemed like eight, as he was nothing but skin and bones: thin - horrible. Fred

had always wished for a mum and now that he had one, he had to make sure that he never lost her again. And how do you go about that? By sucking like a vacuum cleaner: He and Oliver tried to take all my feelings

and attention. I had to be careful that Fabian wasn’t left on the sidelines. Fabian is the one who needs a lot of attention before he can open up. There was such a whirlwind in this house that I couldn’t think straight anymore. After a little while, it became apparent to me that these two children needed a clear structure. They had to sense that I was an individual. They had to realise that, “We can treat her as our mother but we mustn’t eat her up,



otherwise we'll have nothing left." The clearer and firmer the structure became, the clearer it became, to the two of them, where they stood and which consequences would follow which acts. I sometimes found it difficult to be so clear and precise and, to a certain extent, to have to distance myself from the children. Sometimes it hurt to be so hard and the rock in the storm.

Mandy and Lena arrived in June 1999. Mandy was eighteen months old, Lena was two-and-a-half and they were about the same as far as their development was concerned. Both of them were institutionalised. What were apparent were the head-shaking and the fact that they seemed absent. Mandy wasn't able to relax at all and would lie stiff as a board in bed. What I found terrible was that she had no reflex to hold on to something or to prop herself up. She had a totally lumpy forehead from all the bruises. She was really a poor little worm. However, in a short space of time, she started to blossom and you could see how quickly she caught up with everything. It's a miracle for me that the change in Mandy was achieved with so few means: just a change of environment and a different care system. Mandy made good use of everything, just as if that was all that she'd been missing. It took longer for Lena. She could hardly stand, couldn't talk or anything. She was absent, as if she were an elf, floating above everything, and she hated any bodily contact. I realised that she needed help in all areas. She received physiotherapy, occupational therapy and at home I worked with materials to

stimulate her senses. There were bowls filled with acorns and leaves and I hung ribbons from her bunk bed to train various senses. Lena has made good progress with these tailor-made stimuli. She enjoys life now and can communicate. She is no longer the floating elf, but is a part of the family and you can discern her presence. Since Oliver left us, we have put a temporary stop to new children coming into my family, so that we have time to do these specific things with Lena. However, next year there's bound to be another child.

Right from the start, I found it important to ensure contact with the outside world. We visited my parents, brothers and sisters and we received visitors. A family can grow together by doing things together: The more you experience jointly, the more you have to fall back on. For example, going for a walk in the park: I was able to point out a lot of things about nature and discovered that the children were interested. This was a link for me to be able to reach them, so that even Fred and Oliver started to take notice of their surroundings, despite the constant whirlwind around them. They developed a liking for nature. Somehow this educational style has borne fruit. Now I can rely on arrangements and that's the basis for me to be able to do things outside of Brandenburg too. It's so important to me to be able to open up the world for the children. We travel a lot and have even been to SOS Children's Village Imst twice. I felt it was important to bring the children closer to SOS Children's Villages, and so I showed them its roots.



What happened to Oliver?

Oliver no longer lives with us. He has moved to a home for children with special needs. He moved out in February 2001. Oliver asked if he could still be allowed to call me mum, but he couldn't stand living so closely with others. He wanted it so much, but, at the same time, he couldn't stand it. He was in the county hospital for almost six months whilst they determined what he really needed. Now he's living in a facility that suits his needs. We see each other regularly, so that the relationship between the two brothers is not lost.

Have you, as a person, changed since you've been living in the SOS Children's Village?

I've certainly changed, as a person. I think that, most of all, my social competences have developed. Apart from that, I can only say that I'm now living my life's aim and have found an inner contentment, where before I was still seeking something. I could say that I've arrived.

How has your working relationship with the other SOS mothers developed?

We work well together. We have an SOS mothers' meeting twice a month, where we talk about the children and other topics. It is an autonomous group, without the village director and just with the SOS mothers. I find that good, as we are in the process of implementing a team model.

Could you describe this team model briefly?

In the early 1990's a new youth welfare law was brought in. Amongst other things, it states the legal basis for facilities which give permanent care to children. The rules declare that only qualified personnel can take on the care of the children. Because the training in Mörlbach wasn't a state-registered course, that meant that, in the eyes of the law, the people caring for the children and working here were not adequately qualified. The association had to work out a suitable model. That now looks like this: future SOS mothers have to be state-registered educators and SOS mothers who are already working can do this training now, if they want to. The law also looks at the question of who cares for the children when the SOS mother has time off. A second change is, therefore, that the former family assistant is now the "second educator", to ensure that, when the SOS mother is not there, the children have a qualified person to look after them. This job could also be done by a man. And then we have the "third qualified educator". These are women who want to become SOS mothers and are doing their practical training as family assistants.

We work together as a team, a "family team", and all have their specific tasks. Logically, the SOS mother plays the central role. The second educator brings specific aspects from outside with her and, most of all, her own personality, which can be an enrichment for the family. In addition, we have two educational co-workers, who act as advisors for each of the family teams.

Once a week we have a meeting where we all discuss matters of concern, try to reach a consensus and come to agreements. If it involves any extra costs, we put in an application to the village director. We involve the village director in the decision-making process, if there is an extremely important decision to be made, such as changing schools or whether a child needs to go to a psychiatric ward on long-term basis.

Of course, I don't have to wait a whole week if I need to make a decision here in the house. I work very closely together with the second educator and there is constant communication. If the team model is installed well, the process well-supported, and openness and trust the magic words, I think that it will work well. What I think is important is that everybody has to be able to identify with his or her role. The project does not foresee two SOS mothers working in one house. Rather, it will be that the SOS mother lives and works here and the second educator will help with the normal working day and will go home afterwards.

There is a lot of talk about the village community. Is there such a thing in your SOS Children's Village?

Yes, we have one. We actually do a lot of things together, properly, with the whole village. We have traditions such as the "school report party" before the children go away in the summer holidays, or at Christmas. Then we have spontaneous things, as when somebody says they're having a bonfire and anybody who wants to come, can do. Other times we just meet at

the playground and have a chat. It's also just normal life. Of course, we also help each other out in emergencies.

How would you describe your tasks as an SOS mother?

I am a person to whom children who need help can turn to. I'm there for those who need security, safety and trust. I can offer the children these things, but it is the children who have to take them. I am somebody who is there for them and just that fact alone creates some certainty. The children who live in the SOS Children's Villages have gone through terrible things. I always say they have a heavy rucksack of experiences to carry. Nobody can carry that rucksack for them. I can only help them. And at some stage, the child will want to look into his rucksack. I can be a pillar or an anchor for him, so that he can bear it and can deal with what he sees in his rucksack. Perhaps he will find his inner peace. The basis for this is the relationship which is possible between an SOS mother and a child. I have found that this attitude has a healing effect on the children. It is often just a tiny, tiny step. Everybody goes at their own speed and some children may never manage to deal with their rucksacks entirely. However, the least they should be able to do is to accept their rucksacks and not to see them as a burden, dragging them down.

Could you tell us about the best experience and the hardest situation you have had to deal with?

After Oliver moved out, Fabian got a tic



in his eye. We were clearing out Oliver's room together, because I felt it was important not to do it secretly. I had to deal with the emotions of losing a foster child and I knew that the children would have to deal with it too. From that day in February onwards, Fabian had this tic. It came five or six times a minute. Then the Easter holidays started. We packed our things to go to my friend's for a holiday, got in the car and drove off. I looked in the rear-view mirror and suddenly the tic was gone. It has never come back and I find that incredible. Fabian knew that we were going to have a lovely time together, and I think that had a healing effect on him. That was an impressive and lovely experience.

At the same time, it was hard for me to lose Oliver. For a long time I tried to deny to myself that our family wasn't the right place for him. When I was around, Oliver's behaviour was acceptable, but as soon as I was out of his sight, he became aggressive and tried to get himself noticed. Then came the time when he shouted, "I can't cope any more! I want to go to hospital!" He was basically saying to me, "Let me go!" It was a cry for help, and from that moment on, I was able to let go. Those were difficult and sad times for me, because we had built up an intense relationship over the two years he was here. I made use of all the assistance that was on offer in the SOS Children's Village and my best friend was a great support, because I could just cry my eyes out with her.

Does Hermann Gmeiner still mean anything to you?

Yes, for me personally, Hermann Gmeiner and his idea still have a lot of meaning. That has become even clearer during the restructuring of the German SOS Children's Village association. I realised then that I wanted to grasp these roots and feel them, because I wasn't sure how things would go with the teamwork. I started as an SOS mother before we had this system and I'm personally convinced by Hermann Gmeiner's model. If I only do the job as an educator, then the ties to the basic ideas are lost. I can work in any home as an educator and even live there, but it still wouldn't be the same as what the SOS Children's Villages have been so far, or what, hopefully, from the roots, they will be in future.

Conny, when you think of the future, how do you see yourself in ten or fifteen years' time?

I hope that I will still have the strength, the energy and the desire to be here for children who need me, and that I will still enjoy it as much as I do now. I'd like to experience a lot of wonderful things with my family and to travel with them through Germany and Austria. I hope that I will still retain my inner satisfaction.

The Children in Her Care

"Fighting and arguing are all part of it, but when the chips are down, they protect each other."

Fred's particular strength is that he was able to form such a strong bond to his SOS mother, even though he was already ten years old when he came to the SOS Children's Village. He has the strength to see me as his anchor. Fabian was also able to adapt to this close relationship and to use it to his benefit. He also has a great inner peace. Lena's strength is that she can cope with the demands that are made on her. It must be difficult always to take another step when it doesn't come easily to you. Lena has to work hard for every step she takes. Mandy, the little fighter, is an equally lovable little girl. She has a mischievous way of batting her eyelids, can win people over and can adapt well to various situations.

The four of them together have the strength that they act like brothers and sisters. The children have found a harmonious way of living together. Fighting and arguing are all part of it, but, when the chips are down, they protect each other. These are the fruits borne by the energy I have put in and it is how I regain my energy. I'm pas-

sionate about my children, despite all the difficulties, and I wouldn't be without any of them.

What would you like to give your children to help them on their way? What would you give the girls and boys?

I'd like to be able to instil in them, how important it is to have other people and to be there for others. Also to have respect for your opposites, even if they are different from yourself. I'd like them to have fun and enjoy life, and to have a person of trust from whom they can get good advice. I'd like to be able to teach them that not everything has to be perfect all the time and that sometimes you can just turn a blind eye to everything, and that they should enjoy having each other. I'd like them to know that they can talk to me about anything at any time. My children are growing up in an environment where they have nearly

everything, materially. I want to tell them that that's very nice, but not to be taken for granted. I already see a bit of the dan-



ger of high expectations. That's why we talk about it a lot. We talk about how people live and that it's not so bad not to have much money, but that you still have to fulfil your obligations.

What do you wish for your children's futures?

I just wish for one big thing and that is that they are content with themselves and their lives. I hope that they will have both feet on the ground, that they will train for a job and find work. I hope that they will have beautiful flats, start families of their own, or not, depending on how their plans develop. I also tell my children, "If it isn't to be, then that's not so tragic either."

How much do your children see of their natural families?

I am of the opinion that the children's knowledge of their origins should be kept alive. It is important for them to know where they come from, who their parents are, where their brothers and sisters are and where their roots lie. At some stage, every child wants to know that. These days, the children who are put in our care still have their natural parents and have their pictures of them. It starts to get difficult when these pictures begin to fade. Then you have to follow it up and prevent that happening. That's why it's important to let some biographical work with the children flow into your daily life. When they were old enough, I started with picture cards so that the children knew where they were: "That's your father, that's your mother, that's your former foster

mother, this is me and this is where you live now." What is important is that you don't make anything nicer than it is and neither do you judge things. You have to approach the subject objectively and say, "Yes, that was bad." Then the child gets the feeling that there is somebody there who believes him that things were bad, or tells him that there were good times too. The children shouldn't be made to have conflicting loyalties and that's another reason why I have to support them.

As far as the visiting rights are concerned, we have always managed to reach an agreement with the youth welfare department, so that the interests of the child have been in the forefront and the parents have been able to get involved. I think that the more transparently I tell the parents about their children, the more likely they are to want to co-operate. If the relationship changes, we discuss it during the child development planning meetings and adapt the visiting rights.

Could you describe this planning in more detail?

Child development planning is laid down in the youth welfare laws. Every six months the youth welfare department calls a planning meeting and we, as SOS Children's Villages, prepare for it by writing a progress report about the child. This report contains a check on the educational aims of the previous six months: Has the child learned to do up his shoelaces, for example? The methods used are evaluated and aims are laid down for the next six months. The youth welfare department

and the parents get an impression of the child's development during these meetings, and the aims for the next six months are put down in writing. This child development plan is then the basis for all our actions and I, personally, find it very useful.

Would you like to stay in touch with your children after they have left your family?

The children should know that I will always be there for them to talk to. My personal wish would be for that to happen too. I have the feeling that we live like a family. I'm aware that they aren't my real children, but it's something very similar. I am still very close to my parents, brothers and sisters and I'd like it to be something like that too.

To My Colleagues Around The World

No matter how many miles lie between us, how many different languages we speak or how many different cultures there are in this world, I believe that we SOS mothers are bound by something each of us carries inside her: that is that we are there for needy children, that we have the strength to be a pillar for children who are not so well off, and that we give children who are looking for motherliness the chance of finding it. I think it is wonderful that something binds us, even though we will probably never meet. It is an amazing feeling to know that there are women all over the world who are probably thinking the same thing as me at this moment.

SOS Children's Village Work in Germany

The SOS Children's Village idea crossed from Austria into Germany in the early 1950's. An association was founded and SOS Children's Village Ammersee, the first in Germany, was opened in 1957. Thirteen more SOS Children's Villages had been opened in Germany by 1997 – Schwarzwald, Pfalz, Saar, Württemberg, Harksheide, Worpswede, Oberpfalz, Sauerland, Lippe, Schleswig-Holstein, Niederrhein, Sachsen and Brandenburg.

Apart from these, numerous other facilities have also been called into life. These include youth facilities, village communities for disabled people, vocational training centres, social centres, family counselling centres, mother and child centres, etc.

Existing SOS Children's Village Facilities

14 SOS Children's Villages, 11 SOS Kindergartens, numerous SOS Youth Facilities and SOS Social Centres, several SOS Vocational Training Centres.



Constance on the Situation of Women in Germany

Families were supported by the state in the GDR so that those with two or three children could live together harmoniously. That was the ideological wish and also meant that everybody could work. The common picture was for the mother and father to go to work and the children to be looked after in a crèche, a kindergarten, at school or in a day-care facility.

My personal experience was one of equality. I cannot say whether that was really the case, but it is how I saw it. A woman was also just as valuable as a man at work, and I do not think that they were paid different salaries. A woman was just as able to gain further qualifications and reach a top job as any man, even if she had a family. Now it is over ten years since the reunification, and many things have be-

come the same as in the old provinces. Now it is often the case that women only work part-time and a lot of people have lost their jobs. Those were terrible times, and we had to get used to the ways of the west first. However, unemployment did not automatically mean that women were sent back to the kitchen. It was often the men who lost their jobs first and so stayed at home to look after the children.

Generally, I would not say that women in Germany today are still the housewives they were just after the war. Instead, women have become more self-confident, have discovered themselves and seek personal development. However, on a socio-political level, they are still not treated as equals. You only have to look at the world of politics or upper-management to see how few women are represented in top jobs. There is still a long way to go until equality is achieved.



The statistics show that the birth rate is sinking rapidly. According to the Department of Statistics, on average, families are now having fewer than 1.5 children. I see a social development here. Many women are consciously choosing to have children much later in life and then enjoy their motherhood. On the other hand, the divorce rate is rising, children no longer know to whom they belong and many women become single mothers and hardship-cases. That is certainly why becoming a mother has become a much more conscious decision than it was forty years ago.

From: **WOMEN'S LIVES: SOS MOTHERS AROUND THE WORLD TELL THEIR STORIES** / Elisabeth Ullmann, Karin Demuth and Astrid Brandl. ISBN 3-9500984-3-7
Published by SOS Hermann Gmeiner Academy, Innsbruck – 2nd edition, 2006.

All photos: Fred Einkemmer

GERMANY	
Area	357,022 km ²
Population	82,150,000
Population density	230 per km ²
Average number of children per woman	1.4 *
Life expectancy for women	80.6 *
Life expectancy for men	74.4 *
Infant mortality	0.5%
Illiteracy rate amongst women	below 5%
Illiteracy rate amongst men	below 5 %
Percentage of population living below the poverty line	n/a
Unemployment rate	9.4%
Religions (the two most common)	32.9% Catholics 32.6% Protestants
Language	German
GNP per capita	USD 25,120

Sources: Der Fischer Weltalmanach 2003; * WDI Database





We Were Poor ... And Inattentive

Nils Ling

Sometimes I worry about how good life has been for my generation. When we reach the age where we can sit back and inflict hard-luck stories on our kids, there won't be much to tell.

My parents had every hard-luck story in the book. I would come home from school complaining about how cold it was, so cold "I had to actually plug my car in, and still it almost didn't start!"

That would be my Dad's cue to lean

back and tell me how he used to walk four miles to school every day. Uphill both ways. Through hip-deep snow. And they were so poor his parents could only afford one pair of boots. He and his brother had to share. Some days one would go bare-foot while the other wore the boots. Other days they'd each wear one, and switch at the halfway point. On the other foot, they'd wrap barbed wire around their socks for traction.

So much for sympathy from them about how long I had to wait for the Auto Club to show.

My Mom is the hard-luck queen of all time. When we were first married, anything my wife and I would whine about, she had it worse – way worse.

Kitchen table getting a little old and ratty? Well, for years all they had to eat off were used orange crates. Feeling a little cramped in the house?

Hey, when they were first married, they had to share a one-room apartment with a troupe of circus performers. And their chimps.

And she always ended her stories with the same silly line, “Sure we were poor – but we didn’t know it.” It always seemed to me this was a very unobservant generation. If your main furniture is a fruit box, and you’re wearing barbed wire on your socks and still nothing seems amiss – well, maybe you’re just not paying attention, you know?

I’m sure my parents did have it rough - and don’t misunderstand me, I don’t want to minimize their suffering. But every dark cloud has its silver lining – and in this case the pay-off came when they could inflict those horrible stories on us for hours on end. I’m not going to get that chance with my kids.

I mean, really – what am I going to say? “Well, you think you’ve got it rough. When your mother and I first got married, we only had one colour TV - and hey, no remote, either. We’d have to get up to change channels.” I just know my kids aren’t going to be impressed.

They’ll come whining to me for money and I’ll say something like: “Poor? Let me tell you about poor. We’d go for weeks drinking nothing but domestic wine. My VISA limit couldn’t have been more than - what was it, mother? - two or three thousand bucks. Tops. I waited for months before I got my first CD player. Problem with you kids is, you want everything now.”

“You don’t know what it’s like to be really poor, to have to rent older movies at the video store instead of going to the new releases. How your mother used to get embarrassed because she only had one pair of leather pants. One time our mechanic phoned, said we needed some repairs on the air conditioning in the Volvo and we had to say - hey, hold off till the spring.”

“Yeah, we were poor - but we were happy. We didn’t know how poor we were.” And my kids will think we must have been pretty dim.

Don’t get me wrong - I’m not ready to trade in my dining room suite for some apple crates or anything. I just hope when I get older, I can keep a straight face when I’m telling my kids how rough we had it. I don’t think I’ll be able to manage.

Because, this time, at least, my Mom is right. They did have it tougher. We’re rich, but we don’t know we’re rich.

Maybe we’re just not paying attention.





Postcard from
Leon Fulcher

AUGUST 2015

Kia Ora Friends! We've not long ago returned from South Africa where we participated in the 40th Anniversary Conference of the National Association of Child Care Workers (NACCW) in Cape Town. We arrived early in order to visit Robben Island – where Nelson Mandela and other African National Congress detainees were held during The Apartheid Era in South Africa. This piece of sculpture caught my attention.



Head to Head – A Sculpture located in a Stellenbosch Art Gallery

Robben Island is a 45-minute boat ride out of Cape Town Harbour. The tour has maintained one of the original boats that took detainees and staff to and from Robben Island. The crossing from the Cape Town Harbour can involve huge storm winds. We experienced one metre swells and no wind. The approach into Robben Island Harbour makes it clear: Freedom Cannot Be Manacled! Repression—Release—Resurrection.



Robben Island – Freedom Cannot Be Manacled!

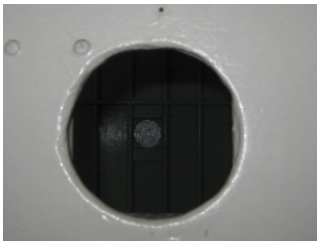
From the harbour, prisoners were taken through the entrance to the formal prison compound. I was reminded of the sign over the entrance to Auschwitz – Work Will Set You Free! *Ons Dien Met Trots – We Serve With Pride.* It was interesting being reminded of how after World War II, the Africans in control of South Africa formally implemented eugenics principles heralded by Adolf Hitler. *White-Coloured-Black!*

Mandela was released with the other ANC detainees in 1993, and was elected President of South Africa in 1994, a year



Welcome to Robbeneiland – We Serve With Pride

before South Africa won the 1995 Rugby World Cup. Nelson Mandela played an active role in supporting his country's return from international isolation with the removal of sanctions against a no-longer Apartheid driven South Africa. If you haven't seen the film *Invictus*, be sure and do so.



Through the guard watch hole into single occupant cells

As we entered the cell block where the high-security prisoners were held, it was horrifying to contemplate living in those cells for more than a quarter of a Century! We have no idea!

A former inmate is employed to tell stories about life in the prison. Communications happened via the food and laundry deliveries, or on the football field. We vis-



A former Inmate tells of life at Robben Island

ited the quarry where prisoners worked in isolation.



Harsh cell conditions for political prisoners at Robben Island

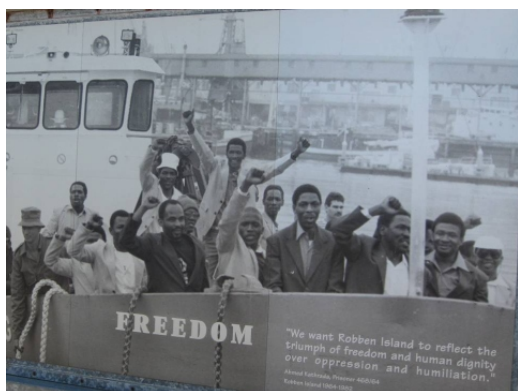
With harsh living conditions, it is surprising that so many survived. Before it became a prison for political detainees, Robben Island had once been a Lepor Colony. As with any 'total institution', there are always 'the inmates' and 'the workers' who manage the inmates. So there are separate living quar-

ters maintained for 'the Robben Island community' whose workers live in tied accommodation to look after the prison and the prisoners. Instead of prisoners, the workers on the island now look after tourists like us.



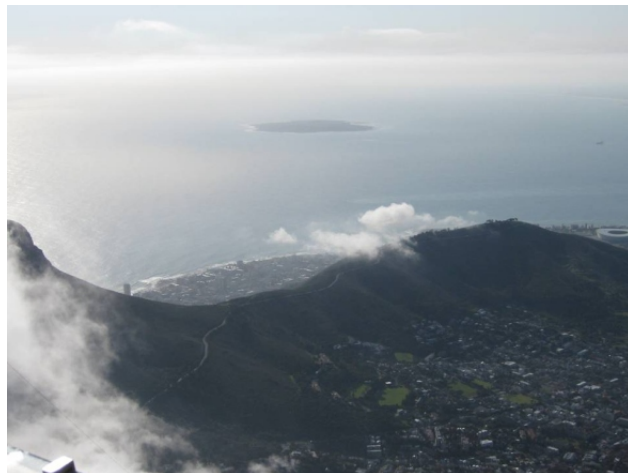
Before Apartheid – Robben Island was a Leper Colony

There came a point in the history of the detention of political prisoners when a new kennel was built beside a so-called 'low security housing block' to house guard dogs that were introduced – no doubt as additional inmate management capability. Guard dogs were used continuously until release of prisoners in 1990.



Triumph of freedom and human dignity over oppression and humiliation

Robben Island is an international symbol of the triumph of freedom and human dignity over oppression and humiliation. It attracts South African and international visitors who include Cape Town on their travel itinerary. And there is good reason to include Cape Town on any South African visit, especially when the weather turns nice and the harbour area hums.



Robben Island from Table Mountain – Cape Town

Later the same day, as we stood on Table Mountain looking out at Robben Island, I couldn't help wondering how it could all have happened. Here we were in Cape Town to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the National Association of Child Care Workers, and organisation that was multi-racial well before the fall of Apartheid. Thanks NACCW for bringing us together to celebrate a legacy! Thanks Conference delegates – all 1200 of you – who helped to make this adventure meaningful moments that mattered!



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EndNotes

“May you *live* all the days of your life.”

– Jonathan Swift

*“You have brains in your head.
You have feet in your shoes.
You can steer yourself
any direction you choose.
You’re on your own.
And you know what you know.
And YOU are the one
who’ll decide where to go...”*

– Dr. Seuss

“... I would have let him go one finger at a time, until, without his realizing, he'd be floating without me. And then I thought, perhaps that is what it means to be a parent - to teach your child to live without you.”

– Nicole Krauss

“A wise parent humors the desire for independent action, so as to become a friend and advisor when his absolute rule shall cease.”

– Elizabeth Gaskell, North and South

“Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is a mystery. Today is a gift. That’s why we call it ‘The Present’.”

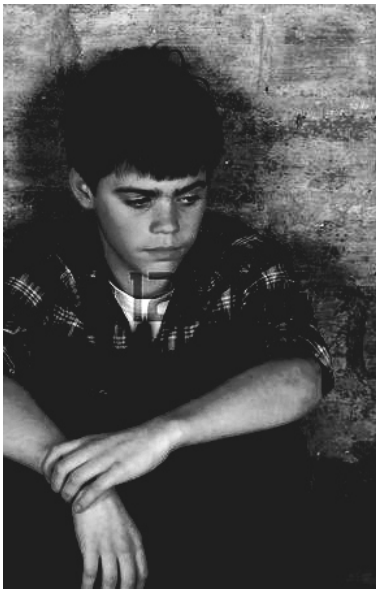
— Eleanor Roosevelt

True terror is to wake up one morning and discover that your high school class is running the country.

— Kurt Vonnegut

It might sound a paradoxical thing to say – for surely never has a generation of children occupied more sheer hours of parental time --but the truth is that we neglected you. We allowed you a charade of trivial freedoms in order to avoid making those impositions on you that are in the end both the training ground and proving ground for true independence. We pronounced you strong when you were still weak in order to avoid the struggles with you that would have fed your true strength. We proclaimed you sound when you were foolish in order to avoid taking part in the long, slow, slogging effort that is the only route to genuine maturity of mind and feeling. Thus, it was no small anomaly of your growing up that while you were the most indulged generation, you were also in many ways the most abandoned to your own meager devices by those into whose safe-keeping you had been given.

— Midge Decter



Adolescence is a period of rapid changes. Between the ages of 12 and 17, for example, a parent ages as much as 20 years.

— Al Bernstein

“I think that the best thing we can do for our children is to allow them to do things for themselves, allow them to be strong, allow them to experience life on their own terms, allow them to take the subway ... let them be better people, let them believe more in themselves.”

— C. JoyBell C.

“Drawing from 1.7 million Gallup surveys collected between 2008 and 2012, researchers Angus Deaton and Arthur Stone found that parents with children at home age fifteen or younger experience more highs, as well as more lows, than those without children... And when researchers bother to ask questions of a more existential nature, they find that parents report greater feelings of meaning and reward -- which to many parents is what the entire shebang is about.”

— Jennifer Senior, *All Joy and No Fun: The Paradox of Modern Parenthood*

Children in a family are like flowers in a bouquet: there's always one determined to face in an opposite direction from the way the arranger desires.

— Marcelene Cox

I don't know why I did it, I don't know why I enjoyed it, and I don't know why I'll do it again.

— Socrates

ZITS



information

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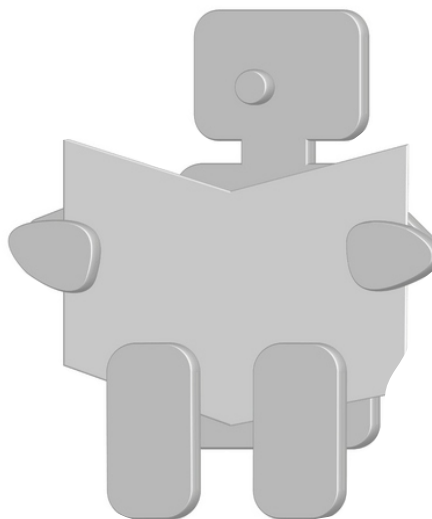
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