In The Telling: Critical Reflections from Child and Youth Counsellors

by

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Abstract

This thesis is an exploration into the lives and educational experiences of three exemplary child and youth counsellors. It elaborates issues which are inherent in the practice of child and youth care. Examination of the experiences and stories of the participants were elicited through in-depth phenomenological interviewing employing feminist and narrative approaches.

In the research a vivid portrait of the work and its accompanying socio-political conditions and realities was obtained. Findings suggest that stories play a strong role in child and youth care practice. Through stories and vignettes of practice the indeterminate aspects of relationships were explored as well as the significance of issues related to self-development. Issues of voice and the need for articulation of the knowledge base also emerged prominently in the study. Information and recommendations for improving practice are provided. It was posited that further research into personal knowledge methods would prove beneficial to the profession.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Paradoxical and elusive, service is ultimately a journey into the unknown. Did we really help? Help at what level? We often can't find answers. And we don't know what to do with that. So we wonder, worry, turn off, give up...or just bravely struggle on, puzzled and burdened down.... At some level this challenge is very plain. We can either be frustrated and worn out by uncertainty and doubt or try to open the ambiguity, embrace it, work with it, be moved and inspired by it...and thus come very close to the heart of service where true freedom is found.

(Ram Dass & Paul Gorman, 1985, p. 202)

This thesis is an attempt to articulate some of the issues, concerns, realities, joys and despair of child and youth care counsellors and some of the ways that they stay involved and committed to the children and the profession. The work will take us into the daily lives of counsellors and the settings in which they work as well as the struggles after hours as they attempt to assimilate the information, soothe themselves or come up with explanations for events in practice.

The work is also an attempt to celebrate child and youth counselling and honour those who persevere and excel and who can "rejuvenate, revitalize and revolutionize their work through reflection on their own practice" (Diamond, 1996, class notes).

It is hoped through listening to the stories and narratives of experienced practitioners that we will find new ways to examine practice and in so doing contribute to the professional development of both new and experienced workers.

A Brief Introduction to the Work of Child and Youth Counsellors

Child and youth counselling is an exciting and demanding profession. It can be both exhilarating and exhausting, reflective and immediate, growth promoting and challenging. It is rewarding work with a variety of rich and textured experiences and it can be a stressful field of work with a tendency towards a high rate of burnout and job turnover. Often child and youth counsellors are those people on the front lines mediating between children and societal pressures surrounding them. Days can be filled with listening to the devastating stories of children's lives and dealing with some of the very difficult behaviour which accompanies that pain.

Professional child and youth care in North America is practiced across a continuum of services including treatment centres, group homes, correctional institutions, special
schools, temporary shelter care facilities, independent living programs, foster and specialized foster homes, communities, and street corners (National Association of Child Care Workers, 1987). (see also Current Description of the Field, Appendix A). In 1991, Fewster and Garfat wrote that,

Serving as the consistent human element between the child and a frequently confusing world, child care workers provide the essential mediating relationship through which the influences of parents, teachers, peers, siblings, and therapists take on meaning and relevance. No other profession has chosen to assume this breadth of perspective or level of personal and interpersonal responsibility. Beyond the time-tested theories and practices found in psychology, social work, education, or psychiatry, child care has been founded upon the accumulation of experience through involvement in the daily lives of children and young people.

(cited in Denholm, Ferguson, & Pence, 1987, p. 9)

Child and youth counselling is a relatively young field, originating in Ontario in the 1950s. The first training program opened at Thistletown Regional Centre in Toronto. Around that time child and youth care advocates began to write about residential treatment as a holistic method that with the proper skill and adequate knowledge of human development could be used to teach, treat, and nurture troubled children (Krueger, 1987, p. 87).

Child and youth care in Canada has its original roots in medicine and psychiatry but has been influenced strongly by a number of disciplines including psychology, special education, social work, human development and the arts (Krueger, 1991, p. 83). The profession consistently struggles to maintain its own identity and develop research literature; it now has four professional journals in North America. The nature of the work calls for varied skill development and abilities which include observation, assessment, behaviour management, counselling and intervention skills to name a few. Not all child and youth care practice, however, involves a fixed set of skills. In a literature review of concepts, principles and themes of teaching and learning for child and youth counsellors, Krueger describes the work this way:

In professional child and youth care, coming from your center, being there, teaming up, meeting them where they're at, interacting together, counselling on the go, creating circles of care, discovering and using self, and caring for one another are actions, thoughts and feelings that when woven together, provide a foundation for effective daily interactions. Further, it is the holistic mix of teaching, counselling, and nurturing approaches ...rather than any
single approach that makes child and youth care unique from other helping roles.

(Krueger, 1991, p. 83)

Caring is, of course, central to child and youth care practice. This concept of caring is ripe with political meaning. It is one of those concepts which some consider fuzzy, sentimental and difficult to define. Developmental care has become a central theme in child and youth care practice. Henry Maier's work is noted as the most comprehensive analysis of care and its applications in child and youth care literature (Krueger, 1991). In *The Core of Care: Essential Ingredients for the Development of Children at Home and Away from Home* (1987, pp. 109-120), he identifies components in care as bodily comfort, differentiations, rhythmic interactions, the element of predictability, dependability, and personalized behavioral training. Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Ackern have explored the ecology of care (1990). Today in caregiving, they suggest, as in most other helping professions, it is widely recognized that parents, siblings, relatives, helpers, and members of the community are all part of a troubled child's circle of care, and long term change is dependent on making this circle functional again (Brendtro et al, 1990, cited in Krueger, 1991, p.87). Feminist educator Nel Nodding's work provides powerful arguments for the significance of caring. She cautions us about a crisis in caring directly related to the neglect of interpersonal reasoning and reminds us that being cared for may be a necessary prerequisite to learning to care. She further suggests that our society should make education of caring a top priority (Noddings, 1994, p. 166).

Also central to the profession is discovering and use of self. The self is our primary tool in working with children and youth. We use ourselves as the primary instruments of change. Fewster suggests that when we are experiencing another person, particularly at the feeling or emotional level, we are actually experiencing ourselves (1990, p.42). Fewster's book, *Being in Child Care: A Journey into Self*, emphasizes and summarizes a belief that a full understanding of, and relationship formation with children can only be achieved through self awareness and self-discovery (Fewster, 1990). Dass and Gorman suggest that until our own self-investigative practice is highly developed, we are bound to get lost in the resistance to pain (1987, p. 85). Witherall describes the formation of self as involving two processes: one the social formation involving norms, values, prejudices and preconceptions and the other
revolving around our relations with other persons (1991, p. 85). They create the "charged dramatic fields" (Witherall & Noddings, 1991, p. 85) in which we interpret, act, and grow.

It is this self-investigation and the retelling of and reflecting on personal experiences that is also central to this thesis, focusing as it does on the workers experiences and their stories of practice. It is hoped that their narratives can make fresh sense (Diamond, 1994) of what it means to be a child and youth counsellor and help to explore the rich terrain of the child and youth work landscape.

**Child and Youth Care in Context**

It is unclear whether counsellors are part of the mental health family at all. They are the illegitimate sons and daughters. They are found in medical hospitals, on the streets, storefronts and more recently in women's health centres and shelters. They do the practical, necessary, but largely invisible labour that their more professional relatives shun.

(Greenspan, 1983, p. 41)

This passage from Miriam Greenspan's work illustrates for me one of the central dilemmas of child and youth care practice, that being, its position within a hierarchical system which protects and gatekeepers around knowledge production. Despite the enormity of the counsellor's crucial mediating role with children, their voices are often dwarfed by those of the experts in the fields of psychiatry, psychology and social work. Schon's work on professional mystique sheds further light:

Within the dominant tradition which has grown up over the past four hundred years the professional's claims to extraordinary knowledge is rooted in techniques and theories derived from scientific research undertaken for the most part in institutions of higher learning.

(1983, p. 288)

Polkinghorne (1988) elucidates this issue through his concern over the dividing line between research and practice. His work points out that those doing the actual work are often isolated from the research which informs practice. His ground breaking work on narrative knowledge in the human sciences lends credence to the great significance narrative and narrative knowing plays in our roles of working with children and families and the systems and institutions that surround them. He tells us that the object of inquiry for the human sciences is the reality of human experiences (p. 159).
As mentioned, child and youth care is still a young profession. Forty years is not a long time to develop a profession and knowledge base. Social workers have existed for over 100 years. No doubt, the developmental age of the profession contributes to this struggle to find voice in professional and academic community, but so too does the marginalization of both the clients and the workers, the predominance of women in the profession, and the value which society attributes to caring, particularly caring for troubled youth.

An examination of the personal experiences of child and youth counsellors takes place within historical, cultural and political contexts which cannot be ignored while exploring their stories. My intention is to ground the work that child and youth counsellors do within these contexts, predominately through a view through the lens of the teaching profession which has historically struggled with some of the same issues child and youth care faces today. Much can be learned from the teaching profession regarding the issues of gender as well as from the struggles to articulate the knowledge base by those who actually carry out the work. Struggles with teachers' issues of professionalization and recognition provide valuable insights into the politics of caring.

**Biographical Context**

Thus, with some time on your hands and with some book learning in your brains - you have had enough of the other kind, and are sent to college partly, I suspect, to be un-educated - surely you should embark upon another stage of your very long, very laborious and highly obscure career. A thousand pens are ready to suggest what you should do and what effect you will have.

(Virginia Woolf, p.102, 1929)

As a number of prominent qualitative researchers (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Eisner, 1985; Siedman, 1991) suggest, much of our research is autobiographical in nature. Certainly my career in child and youth counselling coupled with my interest in feminist studies, psychology and adult education have informed my practice and my research. My earlier personal her/story found me a young single mother who experienced what Mezirow refers to as perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1978). This led me to professional training in the field of child and youth counselling, a profession which calls you to care for others, specifically children and youth. In the course of my career as a child and youth care practitioner I have had the opportunity to work in a variety of settings, including schools,
psychiatric hospitals, community group homes, child protection agencies, and in a variety of roles: front-line, out-patient community worker, teacher, supervisor and manager.

My work as a child and youth care practitioner challenged me, on a daily basis, to interpret the lives of the clients and to assist them in finding ways to rewrite their story in a meaningful and palatable way. These children come from a variety of backgrounds and a variety of circumstances, most of which have placed considerable strain on their emotional lives. Their stories are often complex and I consider them all heroes in their struggles to survive and flourish, often against tremendous odds. Woven through their stories was always my own story, influenced as it was by life circumstances, relationships, education and my own self-development. My work as a supervisor brought me closer to worker stories. Supervisory sessions contained multiple layers and multiple perspectives often shared in storied form. My work as a teacher challenged me to find more creative ways of tackling the multiple realities of informed child and youth care practice and to attend to the developmental issues of the counsellors themselves. Teaching and supervision of new students raised serious concerns for me regarding preparation for the realities of the profession and personal readiness for the job.

Again and again, in all of these roles, I was challenged to find ways to cope and to help others cope in a demanding and sometimes dangerous field, to articulate the significance of the work we do (myself and child and youth care colleagues), and to emphasize the tremendous significance of self-knowing and professional development in providing quality service to children and youth.

I consider child and youth care to be of great value and rich in opportunity for helping children and communities as well as fostering a sense of pride and achievement as well as spiritual fulfilment for individuals. Constantly however, I have witnessed a collective low self-esteem among workers. Partially I believed this to be exacerbated by a system and possibly a public perception that the work was not valued or viewed as anything other than babysitting or having a lot of patience. Partially it is a difficulty in articulating the knowledge base in a way that is both academically rigorous and sound but that does not lose sight of the day-to-day work with children and youth.

My nagging concerns about the education and development of workers and the professionalization of the field led me to my studies in adult education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education in Toronto. Here I heard a new (to me) chorus of perspectives and
voices. These voices were singing about women's way of knowing, personal practitioner knowledge, inside-out psychology, contemplation, self-directed learning, narrative inquiry and arts-based research. This chorus lent timbre and strength to my own voice and story and those of my colleagues, and rekindled that spark in me, the spark that wishes to lend my voice and hopefully facilitate other voices in a contribution to development of the profession of child and youth care.

My interest in this research then, stems from my appreciation for the value of work that child and youth counsellors do with this population of children and a desire to promote and raise the profile of those who do the actual work, particularly those who do well at it. It also stems from a strongly held belief that, in order to be taken seriously, we must embrace our knowledge, from its theoretical frameworks and their implications to its nuance and ambiguity. A specific interest is triggered by a desire to marry my interests in art and literature to my practice of child and youth counselling and my belief that child and youth counselling is an art. It is my hope that this thesis will contribute to the literature in the profession and clear a path for other practitioners, perhaps previously daunted by the research process.

This work on stories, and the value of practitioner knowledge captured within them, represents for me an exciting and stimulating way to examine practice, one which places the worker at centre stage, choreographers of their own work and contributing to their own practice. For too long the work has been determined by a handful of experts, generally those from other disciplines and subject to the whims of the most current therapy trend or the latest governmental edict.

Main Research Question

Earlier I stated that the purpose of this research was to articulate some of the issues and concerns of child and youth counsellors. The main question then inquires: What are the issues inherent in child and youth care practice and professional development?

Research Objectives

The research addresses three broad objectives. They are:

1. To characterize and describe child and youth care practice.
2. To elaborate strategies for successful professional development in the field.
3. To indicate the role narrative plays in both practice and professional development in the field of child and youth care.
Rationale for the Study

Stories, I believe, both teach and heal by encouraging individuals to observe and reflect on the personal self rather than to blindly identify with it.

(Narayan, in Witherall & Noddings, 1994, p. 113)

An interpretive understanding of the experiences of child and youth counsellors is indicated in this qualitative research project. By reference to the literature and through depth interviewing designed to elicit personal narratives in practice, this study will probe the importance of stories in the education of practitioners in child and youth care counselling. The study is intended to be a collaborative process embracing a feminist orientation which promotes equality and respect and in which participants contribute to the appraisal and themes emerging from their transcribed experiences and stories. The research seeks to help participants develop "tacit understandings of themselves" (Diamond, 1995) and to raise questions regarding personal practical knowledge in the profession of child and youth care. The major task will be to build upon and explore participant responses.

This study is aimed at improving child and youth counsellor preparation and training in the field and examining ways in which personal narratives and storytelling can be inserted into the child and youth care curriculum. Ongoing developments in qualitative research and specifically narrative inquiry have multiplied options and questioned previous doctrine regarding validity and reliability. Communicating personal experience can now be viewed as legitimate knowledge.

This thesis focuses on child and youth counsellors and their stories as influenced and shaped by their experiences in working with a unique population of children. It is hoped that their narratives will provide a closer look at the profession as well as an opportunity for reflection and insight into their work with these children. The study is concerned with studying and examining the the consequent themes related to professional learning that emerge through the telling of participants' personal stories and experiences. It is hoped that these themes, stories, "click moments" (Riessman, 1993), transformations, vignettes, truths, and perspectives can expand our knowledge of professional practice and elaborate strategies for professional development in the field.

Increased attention is finally being afforded to the voices of children in care (Shimrat, 1987; Snow, 1995, VanderVen, 1994) and their lives within the child welfare and mental
health system. Sadly, we often hear about some of the more deplorable situations including the abuse of children at the hands of untrained, unskilled workers. Very little positive news is heard, however, about the actual work carried out by professionally trained and experienced child and youth counsellors. This includes the basic principles upheld in the profession as well as the exemplary practice of some child and youth counsellors. Everyone seems to know what a psychiatrist, a nurse, a social worker, a teacher is and does but child and youth care is often invisible. While issues of confidentiality may contribute to this invisibility so too does the marginalization of these children and society’s propensity to sweep problems such as sexual abuse, domestic violence and emotional abuse under the rug. Issues of gender, class, race and bias in mental health also feature prominently in this invisibility and silencing of those (predominately women) in the profession of caring for children with emotional difficulties.

In our culture ‘serving others’ is for losers, it is low level stuff.

( Jean Baker Miller, p.60, 1986)

A feminist perspective on child and youth care will be helpful in understanding and unravelling the complexity of the field and in weaving a new understanding and creativity to the provision of quality services to children and youth. From a political and historical perspective, there are ramifications for a profession which is predominately female. Child and youth care, not unlike social work, nursing and teaching have historically struggled with issues related to possessing a largely female work force. There are the realities of a system which still discriminates against women in terms of salary, safety, status and autonomy. In addition, there tends to be a pecking order in the mental health profession, one which has counsellors “sitting at the mental health table eating the scraps of peripheral respectability.” (Greenspan, 1983, p.42).

The very difficult nature of the work, the dedication and time commitments required on the part of the workers and the marginalization of power both of clients and those working with them, contribute to this apparent lack of profile and voice. Child and youth counsellors are sometimes described as having low self-esteem (MacKenna, 1994) and being “their own worst enemies.” This type of blaming tends to exacerbate the problem of burnout and apathy in the profession and place the responsibility on the individuals in the workplace as opposed to a system which underpays and undervalues their work.
Many practitioners, despite the stressful and oppressive nature of the field, thrive and maintain excellent services to children, youth and their families. It is hoped that participants’ stories of survival, of struggling with dilemmas, self transformation, growth and development can capture some of the qualities and survival skills required to continue in a meaningful way in this profession. Perhaps they can guide others along the way in what can be a difficult and treacherous journey.

In child and youth care there are many stories, the stories of the children and their struggles, the stories of the institutions in which we work, the cultural, the political, the historical. Woven into these stories are the stories from each person who enters the field, their discoveries, their struggles and sometimes their pain. The purpose of this research is to tell and explore these stories and illustrate how the matters brought up through them can be central to child and youth care practice, to practitioner development and ultimately to the improvement of children’s lives.

It is hoped that the stories and struggles with the ambiguity of this helping profession, the descriptive encounters with children and their families and the feedback, reflections, and epiphanies will add depth to the construction of child and youth counsellor knowledge and raise new questions around practitioner preparation and learning. It is anticipated that interpersonal processes of experiencing and knowing will offer new insights and tell new tales of child and youth care practice.

...and in the telling of our stories we work out new ways of acting in the future.

(Diamond, class notes, 1996)

Overview

In this chapter you have been introduced to the field of child and youth care and given a brief context for the work. I have also introduced my interest in this research and the potential benefits this kind of inquiry may yield.

In Chapter Two of the research I have examined the literature as it relates to the exploration of this topic. Some of the similarities in the working reality of teachers and child and youth counsellors, mainly of a socio-political nature are offered. This chapter also attempts to illustrate through use of the literature the nature of the child and youth care
practice experience, the difficulties in examining the work and new ways of looking at and conducting research with the practitioners themselves.

In Chapter Three, the methodology chapter, I offer an explanation of the logic of inquiry beginning with a rationale for the methodology of the research. I have included in this chapter the stages of the preliminary research, a detailed account of the research procedure, data collection and analysis, and ethical considerations. An argument for validity concludes the chapter.

Chapter Four is an introduction to the participants. This chapter is an invitation to meet the people whom I have chosen to examine the practice. Contained in this chapter are partial life histories, outlining what led these experienced practitioners to fulfilling careers in the practice of child and youth care work. It is a detailed account, presented in their own words and representing their own voices.

Chapter Five takes us inside the profession and describes the complex nature of the practice of child and youth care. In essence, it sets the socio-political context of the work and introduces the reader to the children, the settings, roles and realities involved in this challenging work. In it, participants raise important concerns and begin to identify gaps and beneficial components of their training.

Chapter Six explores the first major theme of the research, the role of narrative stories. In this chapter stories are thematically presented in an effort to describe some of the ways in which story is used in the practice of child and youth care.

Chapter Seven delves into the elements of child and youth care practice and expands upon the three remaining major themes, those of Self, Relationship and Voice. Self and relationship, two essential and central foci of the work, are examined in detail by participants. Voice is described from a political and educational viewpoint and addresses three areas: women, children and the profession.

In Chapter Eight, I conclude the research with a brief discussion of the findings and the implications of this research upon practice and professional education. Recommendations for further research are included.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The literature review was undertaken with a view to examining issues in child and youth care practice and professional development. The objectives of this study includes elaborating strategies for successful professional development and examining the role narrative plays in professional development. Child and youth care practitioner knowledge requires that we examine it more closely for the unique phenomenon it is. In an effort to do so we draw on a number of sources from the literature: child and youth care, teaching, feminist writers in psychology and education, and authors in adult and professional education. Much of the review has focused on teacher literature given the similarities that contribute to the political context of the two professions and the breadth of material on narrative, practitioner knowledge and storytelling in the teacher literature. For the purposes of this research 'teacher' and 'child and youth care practitioner' or counsellor are sometimes used interchangeably throughout the text.

The Storied Nature of Child and Youth Care

Our stories of practice reveal an intricate relationship between knowledge, practice, and experience.

(Webb, 1996, p.299)

In child and youth counselling stories are an integral part of the landscape of the profession. First and foremost, the children and their families tell us their very personal stories. We are permitted entry into private worlds, many of which are filled with fear and sadness, tragedy and trauma. There are also, of course, stories filled with warmth and humour, accomplishment and learning, new stories developed, old stories cherished or discarded.

Stories are seen as central to the practice of child and youth care. Child and youth care practitioners frame their experiences and observations of children in story (Krueger, 1996). When they are writing logs and reports they are writing what is the story of my experience or observation? (Garfat, 1995; Moustakas, 1994; Peterson, 1994; Sarris, 1993).

In Framing Child and Youth Care (1994) Krueger states:

The story of child and youth care is existential (Baizerman, 1993), developmental (Maier, 1987), and experiential (Fewster, 1990). It takes place
in the "here and now" as workers weave care, learning, and counselling into daily interactions.

In the "minutiae of child care practice" (Maier, 1992) the practitioner who understands how actions influence a story of a moment or event of activity has a better sense of when it's time to step in or stand aside, of what the child is trying to say (Krueger, 1994). Workers try to have children tell their stories of what they are experiencing in an effort to find common ground (Krueger, 1994).

It has been my experience that child and youth counsellors spend many hours telling each other stories. These are often informal and sometimes even ludicrous and profane. These stories may recount the events of a harrowing shift in a group home or crisis unit. They may recall a story of a child who had a profound effect on them or an incident they are struggling to understand. Often new students are told horror stories of past experience designed to ensure they've got the stuff to make it in the field.

Supervisors in field practicums are fond of recounting experiences in an effort to illustrate a point or teach about a case. Case studies are stories in themselves and an integral part of assessment, planning and treatment strategies in child and youth care. In workshops, classrooms, and field placements workers examine their experiences and children's experiences in relationship, often in response to the stories that are presented. (Krueger 1996, p. 6).

Child and youth care stories are often complex. They are embedded in cultural and historical issues, in issues of power and control, issues of race, gender and class. Counsellors often struggle to define how the child current story fit with previous stories? How might child or youth view story differently? a psychiatrist? a supervisor? There are multiple meanings and multiple interpretations. Bruner (1985) suggests that "narrative is concerned with the explication of human intentions in the context of action" and thus story, with its multiplicity of meanings, is a suitable form of expressing knowledge that arises from action (p.100, cited in Krueger, 1996).

A search of the literature has revealed some pioneering work done on stories by child and youth care practitioners (Fewster, 1990; Garfat, 1995; Krueger, 1994; 1996; 1995; Rose, 1991). Some attention has recently been drawn to the exploration of stories in child and youth care as a qualitative method to build on practice (Krueger, 1995; Garfat, 1995; Fewster, 1990;
Rose, 1991). Krueger, in a 1996 essay suggests that stories are the substance in the developing knowledge base of child and youth care practice. Despite this, there seems to be a paucity of literature available on how to incorporate the use of story into the professional training of child and youth care practitioners.

While there is a growing body of literature in child and youth care (Stuck, 1991; Krueger, 1985; Powell, 1990), including four journals in North America devoted to the practice, scant attention is paid to the developing worker and in capturing the knowledge of experienced workers. There is little information to date revealing how front line workers, educators and supervisors might use storying and narrative to develop professional knowledge. Fewster's 'Being in Child Care: Journey Into Self' (1990) is the exception. It is a creative endeavour which follows the supervision and development of a worker in a residential setting. It offers valuable insights into the importance of reflection and self-examination in the work. Fewster argues for using 'raw experience' which is generated by practitioners to develop a knowledge base which is rigorous, and at the same time accessible to child and youth counsellors.

To date, there has been no text (excepting Fewsters') which places the worker squarely in the role of developing practitioner and which provides a vehicle with which to build on the accumulated knowledge base. Nor is there text which considers the workers' past history in their developing knowledge base. Given the limited scope of available information on storying and narrative available in the child care literature, I turned to some of the teaching literature.

**Teacher Literature**

In this research, as mentioned, I have relied heavily on the literature about teachers. The reasons for this are varied. My experiences at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education brought me in close contact and dialogue with many experienced teachers. These experiences represented some significant learning moments for me. Among these was the recognition that some of my nagging, burning concerns regarding child and youth care practice were the same concerns expressed by teachers about their practice. These included the need for a professional body of literature and research to call their own, a greater understanding by the public at large about their work with children, and a deep and abiding concern about the value of children in this society. The stresses of teaching life teachers
described had to with life outside their classrooms, with board politics, dealing with parents and administrators, and trying not to compromise important values and ideals they believed to be essential in their teaching practice (DiRezze, 1996). How then do people stay committed to these fields? What is the essence of good practice? What is at the core of work with children? Many of these issues have been explored in creative and exciting ways in the teacher literature.

In an effort to examine the work, some of the links or common threads in the disciplines of teaching and child and youth care practice that I have chosen to weave through the literature review concern:

1. our working reality: issues of professionalisation and gender
2. a glimpse at the nature of the knowledge
3. introduction of common themes of relationship, voice and self
4. a search for new ways of developing practitioner-based knowledge.

Our Working Reality

Lortie (1984) writes that “even today, teaching is honoured and disdained, praised as ‘dedicated service’ and lampooned as ‘easy work’”. He continues, “social ambiguity has stalked those who undertook the mission, for the real regard shown those who taught has never matched the professed regard” (cited in Brown, 1996, p.10). These notions were confirmed by my teaching colleagues at OISE. There was a sense that they felt they must always prove themselves, that their work was not truly valued.

These same statements hold true in child and youth care practice, perhaps in a decidedly more pronounced fashion. By nature of numbers alone and the fact that just about everyone’s children will come into contact with teachers, the general public know who teachers are. Britzman suggests that the mass experience of public education has made teaching one of the most familiar professions in this culture (1991). Child and youth counsellors, however, are often mistaken for early childhood educators, that is, if they are known at all. In a society where seeking help is something to be ashamed of, child and youth work tends to be hidden. In many cases of course, the help is not sought out but may arise out of the need to protect children from many forms of abuse and neglect. These factors contribute to the invisible nature of the work and the marginalization of both the children and the practitioners who seek to assist them.
As with teaching, there is a tendency to view the practice of working with children as requiring a great deal of patience, a burgeoning altruism, and not a great deal of skill. Teaching has traditionally been an occupation classified as a "semi-profession" (Brown, 1996, p.9). One conceptualization of professionalism as suggested by Purvis states that professionals: offer a specialized, unique and essential service; possess intellectual techniques; undergo a long period of training and professional socialization; have a life-time calling within a career structure; and encourage the pursuit of research, diffusion of knowledge, and in-service training (1973, cited in Brown, 1996, p. 10). Teaching and child and youth care meets some, but not all of the criteria of this and other models of professionalism. It is widely accepted that the two be referred to as an "occupation" and that they aspire to professional standards of conduct and commitment.

Teaching, like child and youth care, is a highly complex occupation which is constrained by economics, professional territoriality, controls, bureaucratic procedures, low vertical mobility and high turnover (Brown, 1996). Both professions experience a high level of burnout. These careers are often viewed as stepping stones or transitional occupations on the way to a career which can be seen as more long-term. It is often not enough to be merely a teacher or child and youth counsellor and there is little lateral or upward mobility (Krueger, 1985; Stuck, 1991). Lortie, (1984) who summarized teachers careers in a functionalist framework using rewards analysis, notes that "few beginning teachers project long futures in the classroom; the system of career rewards; in sum, the job works most satisfactorily for those who give teaching less than full commitment and tends to favour recruitment rather than retention (p.183). Authors in child and youth care suggest that there is resistance to the professionalization of child and youth care based on socio-economic political conditions, the desire to hold down program costs, the drive to maintain administrative bureaucratic control, professional territoriality, and the hegemony of the psychotherapeutic model of treatment (Linton, Fox & Forster, 1986).

Clandinin suggests that teachers are commonly acknowledged as having had experience, but credited with little knowledge. The omission, she says, is in part due to the fact we have not had ways of thinking about this practical knowledge and in part we fail to recognize more practically oriented knowledge ( 1985). Her work on personal practitioner knowledge, as well as work developed by Beattie (1995), Connelly (1988; 1989; 1990), Elbaz
(1983), Hunt (1987), examine and emphasize the importance of this kind of knowledge and support the need for practitioners to develop and explore their own “tacit” knowing (Polyani, 1969). There is also an important and growing body of literature on the relationship between teachers knowledge, beliefs, life experiences and developing professional knowledge (Butt et al, 1990; 1992; Cochran-Smith, 1991; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992; Goodson, 1992a, 1992c; Richardson, 1991, 1994; Sikes, 1992; Smylie, 1991). This literature is seen as useful in building an argument for the development of research based on practitioners’ stories of experience and for finding ways to articulate the knowledge base by those who actually accumulate the experience.

Recognition is a continuing and ongoing problem for child and youth care practitioners as they struggle with the question of whether or not they have achieved professional status (Krueger, 1991; Stuck, 1991). Further, Stuck's research on administrator attitudes suggests child and youth care lags behind counterparts in related fields of social work, psychology, teaching and psychiatric nursing (1992).

The literature indicates that teaching and child and youth care have much in common. Children, of course, are at the centre of practice. This practice is sometimes highly unpredictable, complex, and ambiguous. Often professional teachers and child and youth care practitioners are given little credit as knowledge producers. They face a number of political barriers which inhibit and prevent their ability to be such. Dreeben, in ‘The Nature of Teaching’ (1970), calls teaching an occupation which is “client serving, mobility-blocked” and one which produces "intangible products"(pp.17-25). It is these intangible products in working with children that we seek to explore in this research: the very personal nature of the work of child and youth care counselling, the messy, ambiguous practice. Storying is viewed as a lens on the work and as a way of concretizing some of these abstract concepts.

the problem is to find an interpretation that neither glorifies nor dismisses such work, that takes into account its complexities and its contradictions.

(Fisher, 1990, p. 109)

Women's Way of Knowing... a Factor?

Women had less choice; marriage ended their teaching career. Only widows and spinsters taught longer than a few years. Those who did remain often suffered the caricatured reputation of embittered self-righteous "Miss Grundy's" - disappointed shrews rather than dedicated careerists.

(Graham, 1974, p. 177)
Both teaching and child and youth care practice are predominately female professions. Women constitute the majority of all public school instructional personnel. (Grumet, 1988) In the U.S. women represent 83% of the elementary teachers, 49% of the secondary teachers, and 68% of all teachers (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986, p. 518). More than 75% of the caregivers in this nation are women (Noddings, 1991). Approximately 85% of child and youth care practitioners are female.

Feminisation is listed as both a cause and an effect of declining relative status in the teaching profession (Brown, 1996). A growing base of feminist literature supports the notion of the devaluation of women's professions, those that have caring and relationship at their core (Baines & Neysmith, 1993; Grumet, 1988; Noddings, 1991; Miller, 1986). According to Beck, the lack of power of teachers, can be seen as a function of nineteenth century outlooks within and without profession (1996). Works by Elizabeth Graham (1974) and Baines and Neysmith (1991) offer excellent descriptions of the historical challenges women have faced in teaching and in the helping professions. Social work, nursing, and teaching all laid down their roots during the nineteenth-century urban reform movement and were based on a maternal ethic of care and duty (Baines and Neysmith, 1991). This history still has implications for today’s practice.

As Baines, Evans and Neysmith suggest, the “caring professions of teaching, nursing, and social work [I include child and youth care here as well] are those in which the 'woman's touch' has been formally incorporated into the job specification” (Graham, 1983). In the home, the work is unpaid and undervalued; in the workplace it is poorly paid and undervalued (p. 16). Women's caring has traditionally been viewed not as work, but as a form of relating to others that comes naturally. Ideas of nurturing and relating to, or caring for others are seen as fuzzy, sentimental and unscientific. These views serve to undermine the work and attach greater significance to objective, positivist, individualistic and predictable modes of operating, those present in a more masculine paradigm. Glazer and Slater argue that this male ethos has made women's entry and participation into the professions difficult (cited in Baines et al. 1987). They state that “if successful professionals were objective, competitive, individualistic and predictable; they were also scornful of nurturant, expressive and familial styles of personal interaction” (1987, p. 55).
Finn's examination of burnout in social work argues that institutional structures such as low pay, poor training and the breakdown of traditional helping systems, parallel this devaluation of women's contributions in caring work. Jean Baker Miller speaks of oppression in these female dominated professions and criticizes a society which suggests that "serving others is low-level stuff" (1986, p. 60). Finn concurs, and adds that when a person who is motivated by a sense of caring and responsibility and a belief in individual worth and mutual support attempts to 'help' within an antagonistic system fuelled by conformity and authority a powerful oppression occurs (Finn, 1986). These conditions set the stage for burnout. Negotiating among what may seem to be conflicting visions, disparaging considerations, and contesting interpretations about social practice is part of the hidden work (Britzman, 1991). This unmapped territory, she states, must be charted in ways than can permit a double consciousness of how systemic constraints become lived as individual dilemmas. Further, the literature on burnout often displays an individual bias which does not take into account issues of isolation, alienation, devaluation and powerlessness among women (Finn, p. 56). These issues must be considered as a backdrop in examining this work.

Kerr, a child and youth counsellor, suggests that, in children's residential services, changes in society and attention to feminist politics and thought have gone virtually unnoticed. There is a lack of attention to gender issues (1992, p. 10). Rose and Innes (1992) suggest that as child and youth counsellors we have been remiss in exploring experiences, concerns and ideas of women who are the predominant professionals in child and youth care. They go on to inform us that there is a distinct lack of training and workshops in this area and that child and youth care professional journals have dealt with the topic only twice in the last ten years (Rose & Innes, 1992). Exploration of gender issues, they say, is long overdue.

According to Noddings, our caring practices are embedded in personal lives, driven by a strong moral purpose and belief in making life more bearable (1991). Feminists are finally giving intellectual legitimacy to personal narrative and experiential knowledge (Grumet, 1988; Personal Narratives Group, 1989; Richardson, 1994). Carter points out that we have to dignify stories of women's work so that we no longer degrade what they do (1990). Educational researchers have suggested that storying is one way of capturing
women's knowledge and skill base (Carter, 1990; Grumet, 1987; Noddings, 1991; Richardson, 1994).

Witherall and Noddings posit that:

Stories can join the world of thought and feeling, and they give special voice to the feminine side of human experience - to the power of emotion, intuition, and relationships in human lives. They frequently reveal dilemmas of human caring and conflict, illuminating with the rich, vibrant language of feeling the various landscapes in which we meet the other morally. Through the poignant grip of story and metaphor we meet ourselves and the other in our mutual quest for goodness and meaning.

(1991, p. 4)

The Nature of the Knowledge: Experience is Slippery

...experience is slippery: it is difficult to operationalize: it eludes factual descriptions of manifest behaviour. Experience is what people undergo, the kinds of meanings they construe as they teach and learn, and the personal ways in which they interpret the world in which they live.

Connelly & Clandinin (1988, p. ix)

Research on the practice of teaching has recently shifted from a focus on effective behaviours toward the hermeneutic purpose of understanding how teachers make sense of teaching and learning (Richardson, 1994). Questions of power and control have also shifted somewhat to considerations of who creates, constructs, or reconstructs practice (DiRezze, 1996). Works on teacher knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1986; Elbaz, 1991), autobiography (Butt et al., 1990; Grumet, 1990), and personal practitioner knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1986, 1996; Elbaz, 1983, 1991; Hunt, 1987; Beattie, 1995) have contributed a great deal to the reconstruction of this knowledge. This evolving body of literature recognizes that the work of teachers and counsellors is complex. The knowledge is seen as multifaceted, embodied, and embedded in the narrative history of the child and youth practitioner's life. They are acknowledged as owners and users of vast resources of personal and professional knowledge. Their practices are seen as expressions of that knowledge, thus making teaching and counselling activities that are both personal and professional (Di Rezze, 1996).

Experience is at the heart of studies on practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 142), and experience is what child and youth practitioners bring to their work. They intervene, do or think something in a particular way because of their experience.
Experience is seen by some researchers to penetrate all judgment and decision making. Elbaz's conceptualization offers a useful starting point for examining the way experience becomes part of practical knowledge (1983).

Counsellors and educators tend to see their experience as possibly the most significant piece of their training. The development of practical knowledge requires experience. This experience however is only educative with reflection (Schon, 1982; Shulman, 1986; Anning 1988). Personal practical knowledge begins in this reflective study of practice. It is revealed through interpretations of observed practice over time and is given biographical, personal meaning through reconstruction of the teacher's narratives of experience. Personal practical knowledge is, therefore, found in practice.

The practice of child and youth care is capable of infinite adaptations. The work involves "complex, moment by moment decision making" (Schon, 1983), and "click moments" (Reismann, 1993). It is a day to day practice of innumerable judgments of quality skills that cannot be stated in the rules. Like teaching, it is a mentally, emotionally, and physically draining job. Meanings attached to the work tend to be highly personal. Dilemmas in child and youth care are frequent and complex, whether they are dealing with the extremes of behaviour in the children to the pervasive misunderstanding about the nature of the work (DiRezze, 1996). The practice itself is characterized by unique events and are frequently embroiled in conflicts of goal, purposes and interests (Schon, 1983, p.21).

Schon uses the phrase "professional artistry" to refer to the competence that some practitioners display in unique, uncertain, and conflictual situations of practice (1983, p. 22). He contends that although research and applied science are very important there is an art of implementation and improvisation that is necessary to validate technique. According to Schon the student needs to step back to reflect critically on any treatment problems, reframe them and work out the consequences of various action plans. These messy problems or indeterminate zones of practice, can be examined through reflective practice. Unfortunately there is a paucity of information available to practitioners with regard to facilitating these practices.
Lampert describes "managing dilemmas" as dealing with the inherent contradictions that arise during the course of any working day (1985, p. 178). Measor and Sykes (1992, p. 71) describe "critical" and "counter incidents" as ways to examine the nature of this knowledge. These new understandings or concepts help define practitioner knowledge from other types of knowing. They provide ways of unravelling the complexity, examining the layers, and providing insight into what child and youth care practitioners learn and know.

Connelly and Clandinin emphasize that teachers know teaching through "images, rituals, habits, cycles, routines, and rhythms"; (1985, p. 195) that are embedded within the narrative unity of their experience. Aoki uses the terms 'pedagogical watchfulness' and 'thoughtfulness' (1988) as part of the essence of teaching. These concepts, though abstract and almost elusive contain valuable keys to good practice.

We discover, through examination of some of the teaching literature that the work experience of teachers and subsequently child and youth counselling can be seen as messy, ambiguous and complex, filled with subtlety and nuance, layers of interaction and a myriad of conflictual and problematic situations. It is also work experience which is profoundly influenced by the practitioners themselves. Telling our own stories is a way to impose form upon our often chaotic experiences and in the process develop our own voice (Grumet, 1988).

The Relational Nature of the Work

Relationships are something you have when you're not working or living your life, at night or on weekends.... the idea of doing or acting or working appears to be departed from relating....and at best relationships are seen as meeting needs for support, affection, and contact, not as opportunities for action or growth

(Surrey, 1991, p. 162)

Relationships, like nurturing and caring, are often underestimated, trivialized, and misunderstood (Surrey 1984, p. 2, yet, of all the stories I have heard in child and youth care, most have to do with relationships. First and foremost are always the relationships with the child or the student. In a profession whose substance and learning is borne of personal dynamics, relationships are central. From the early writings in child and youth care, relationships have always been seen as the cornerstone of practice (Bettelheim 1950; Redl & Wineman, 1951; Treischman et al, 1969). The work is highly interactive and of
central importance is developing a relationship with the child (Maier, 1987; Krueger, 1991; Fewster, 1990). Krueger suggests that knowledge, attitudes, and skills are centred on connection and empowerment - necessary components of relationship. This premise suggests that growth is rooted in empowering relationships and connections from which children and youth can grow, learn skills, and develop attitudes that will help them attach and be free in our society (Maier, 1987).

There are many layers of relationship present in our work. Counsellor/ child or youth, counsellor/family, counsellor/careers and team members, counsellor/ supervisor are just a few. Within these relationships emerge issues of power and control, voice and the silencing of voice, assertion and submission that characterize a particular relationship either as growth enhancing or growth suppressing (DiRezze, 1996). Consider, Di Rezze continues, that all of these relationships take place within, and are shaped by, particular contexts that impact directly on how these relationships play out.

Feminist educators and psychologists identify the themes of connection and care, developed through relationship as central to women's psychological development (Belenkey et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Jordan, 1984; Miller, 1984; Surrey, 1984; Witherall & Noddings, 1984). Good practice, many suggest can only be executed thoughtfully through knowledge of the other (Belenkey et al, 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1984; Surrey, 1984; 1987). Noddings argues for an educational system that emphasizes dialogue and connectedness in order to promote healthy development and learning in all the domains of the human experiences (1984).

Despite the significance of relationships to the practice of child and youth care, the language of relationships is not the language of accountability. It is not measurable nor easily defined. Recent writings on relationships which have attempted to identify concepts which are central to the study of relationships are those of feminist psychology (Miller, 1984; Surrey, 1984, Jordan, 1984) and educational philosophy (Greene, 1986, 1991, 1993, 1995; Noddings, 1986, 1991). They characterize elements of a growth-enhancing relationship as empathy, attunement, relational knowing, response/ability. Noddings, (1991) cites attitude, attention, flexibility, effort to cultivate the relationship and a search for appropriate ends as components which characterize interpersonal reasoning. Sustained interpersonal contact is cited as crucial for the development of interpersonal reasoning and
dialogue and the means through which we cultivate the relationship (Noddings, 1991). Literature on teacher induction (Cole, 1990; 1991; 1994; 1995) teacher knowledge, (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; 1990; Elbaz, 1991) are helpful in integrating discussion on relational competence into the context of practice. These writings remind us of the difficulty in examining this kind of relational knowledge, but also offer us new ways to view the learning. In a field where relationships are key, ongoing exploration of these facets of caring are seen as essential.

An article by Earl Stuck on administrator attitudes towards child and youth care practitioners suggests that, when hiring, employers most often looked for characteristics that promoted the worker's ability to form relationships (1991). Despite this, they were unable to pinpoint what the actual skills involved in this ability were. This is not surprising, in light of the literature examined here. With the ascent of qualitative research and specifically narrative, this concept may be better probed. Through participant stories of experience and the literature we hope to untangle and make explicit some of our understandings about the nature of relationships and their impact on professional development.

What are the key relationships in a new child and youth care practitioner's life? What is the nature of these relationships? How have these relationships contributed to their understanding of becoming a child and youth care practitioner? Given the dilemmas inherent in working in the field, how have these relationships helped to negotiate learning? Is it possible to create relational contexts that facilitate child and youth care understanding and development and personal growth? If so, what might such relationships look like? (adapted from DiRezze, 1996).

**Self: It all starts here**

Kids, especially these kids, offer us perspectives that are rarely available in the bottled-up everyday world of normalized adult trivia and routine. As they share the rawness of who they are, so we are able to explore and examine ourselves in the raw.

(Fewster, 1990, p. 17)

Child and youth care work is a process of self (worker and youth) in action (Baizerman, 1996; Fewster, 1990; Garfat, 1996). Workers bring themselves to the moment and use their experiences, self awareness, knowledge, and skills to form empowering
interactions and to help children learn new skills and ways of interacting with others. To understand a child's fear, sadness, loss, trauma, or joy, for instance, workers have to be able to understand how they experience these emotions so they can understand how their feelings influence their understanding of and contribute to their interactions with children (cited in Krueger, 1996, p.5). Incorporating autobiographical accounts and life history provide an avenue to explore such issues. Storying itself, calls into memory significant issues which probe one's self-understanding.

The medium of self reflection and understanding is critical to my professional field. If we are to work with troubled and children and youth we have to become aware of who we are as individuals (Rose Sladde, 1995, p.82)

Several authors writing about practice, acknowledge the importance of using one's presence or self to understand (Fewster, 1990; Garfat, 1995; Moustakas, 1990; 1994; Sarris, 1993). They believe that an awareness of one's experiences and feelings leads to a deeper understanding of the meaning of what is occurring in the field of child and youth care work. Gerry Fewster (1990), and others (Baizerman, 1996; Garfat, 1995; Sladde, 1996) have written about child and youth care work as a shared journey. They argue that our major task in practice is to understand the subjective world of the child by sharing the road to self-discovery. In addition to the significance of self observed by a number of prominent child and youth care authors, individuals' self-development and the enhancement of her learning are viewed by a number of educators as the most important outcomes of self-directed learning (Coles, 1980;Eisner,1991; Hunt, 1987; 1992;Mezirow,1978 ). Above all, development of one's professional self is seen to be essential to safe practice (Kennedy & Charles, 1994; Wylie & Marcowitz, 1992).

**Barely AudibleVoices**

The struggle for voice begins when a person attempts to communicate meaning to someone else. Finding the words, speaking for oneself, and feeling heard by others are all a part of this process.

(Diamond, 1993, p. 511)

The opposition between personal and academic modes of knowing in teaching calls attention to a central theme in the literature on teacher stories, namely, voice (Carter, 1993, p.8). A great deal has been written on the subject of voice over the last decade. It is particularly prevalent in the feminist literature given our history of muting women's voices
in literature (Heilbrun, 1988), education (Noddings, 1991; Lourde, 1980), psychology (Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1986), and child and youth care (Parry, 1989; Rose & Innes, 1992; Ricks, 1992).

The notion of voice has been central to the development of research on teacher knowledge and thinking. Researchers in education point to the significance of educational reformers understanding the teacher's perspective, and of hearing the teacher's voice (Butt et al, 1992; Elbaz, 1991). Goodson argues for reconceptualizing research that assures that voice is heard, both loudly and articulately (1992a). Nelson's research on retired Vermont schoolteachers suggests that listening to teachers's own interpretations of their experiences can result in a radical reconstruction of the research problem (Casey, 1992, p.206).

Elbaz cautions us that the term "voice" is always used against the background of a previous silence, and it is a political usage as well as an epistemological one (cited in Carter, 1993, p.10). In examining political issues such as gender, class, and race in child and youth care we find marginalized groups with little power and voice not only in the public spheres of government and education, but within the multi-disciplinary teams in which practitioners often work. As noted by Greenspan in her book Women and Therapy, "counsellors sit at the mental health table eating the scraps of peripheral respectability" (1983).

An argument for the use of story as a forum to make practitioners' voices public is made by Elbaz in her work with teachers. She states:

The story is the very stuff of teaching, the landscape within which we live as teachers and researchers, and within which the work of teachers can be seen as making sense....[It] is an epistemological claim that teachers' knowledge in its own terms is ordered by story and can best be understood in this way.

(1991, p.3).

Clandinin (1986, p. 11) cautions that even when teachers are given voice in the research it is often used to reinforce existing theory rather than creating new theory. At the same time there has been a strong movement toward teacher research that gives voice to practitioners, allows them to communicate their wealth of knowledge to other practitioners, and helps them improve their practice (Richardson, 1994a, p.200).
New Ways of Looking at Practitioner Knowledge-- The Role of Narrative

Let us search, instead, for an epistemology of practice implicit in the artistic, intuitive processes which some practitioners do bring to situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness...

(Argyris & Schon, 1974, p. 49)

The research on teacher knowledge that is coming to light recently helps in creating a new understanding and providing important frameworks for looking at practitioners' professional knowledge as a unique and complex matter (DiRezze, 1997). Belenkey et al. (1986) demonstrate the importance of claiming personal theory and experience as valid ways of knowing. They suggest through their work that women create their own knowledge as well as critically examine others’. We have learned that feminists are giving intellectual legitimacy to personal narratives and experiential knowledge. There are even those who have declared emotions academically legitimate (Elbaz, 1983; Bateson, 1994; Oakley, 1981).

Understanding how child and youth care practitioners think, act, develop professionally and change during their careers and that this knowledge is "intuitive and imitative rather than explicit and analytical" (Lortie, 1975,p.62) can help us recognize how child and youth care practitioner identity is formed. Drawing on life history research, which examines practitioners’ personal and professional lives in order to understand the nature and sources of the development of teacher/child and youth practitioner thinking, knowledge, and practice (Ball & Goodson, 1985; Butt et al., 1990, 1992; Goodson, 1992a, 1992c; 1988, 1992; Measor, 1985; Sikes, 1985) in addition to studies that have uncovered the unique nature of practitioner knowledge (Clandinin, 1986; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Elbaz, 1983, 1991; Hunt, 1987) provide new opportunities with which to examine the stories of practising counsellors.

According to Clandinin (1983) there are two types of research: research adopting a theoretical researcher's perspective and research adopting a practitioner perspective (p.135). These works adopt and promote developing and hearing the practitioner's perspective. Schon's work on reflective practice has encouraged people to move away from mechanistic approaches to their work to the use of intuition and reflection in improving their practices (Miller, 1979). Freema Elbaz' work on teacher thinking has marked a turning point in research on teacher thinking, as her study provides the basis for
a conceptualization of teacher's practical knowledge (1983; 1991). Prior to Elbaz's work, the research on teacher thinking viewed knowledge solely as cognitive knowledge. Elbaz' work focused instead on a description of the content, orientation, and structure of a teacher's practical knowledge, defined in its own terms, rather than in terms derived from theory. She developed the notion that knowledge is not just content knowledge or structure knowledge, but rather knowledge that arises out of, and gives shape and meaning to our experiences (Beattie, 1995, p. 45). Mary Beattie observes that it is this holding and using of knowledge that makes it practical knowledge. She continues Elbaz demonstrated that this knowledge is dynamic, and is held in an active relationship and used to give shape and meaning to practice (Beattie, 1995, p.45).

Connelly and Clandinin build on the work of Elbaz (1983) by offering a conceptualization of knowledge as past, present, and future experience, knowledge that is affective, moral, emotional and aesthetic. Goodson suggests that life experiences and background are obviously key ingredients of the people that we are, our sense of self. The degree that we invest our self in our work, experience and background shape our practice (1992).

What facilitates the telling and retelling of the stories of practice? What is the sense that we can make from them? How does this reciprocal and ongoing sharing of experience help refine or redefine each person's understanding of what being a child and youth counsellor means? How do these relationships help practitioners negotiate the dilemmas of the professional knowledge landscape? These are the questions we seek to answer through the exploration of this emerging literature and through the stories of these participants.

**Summary**

Through the literature we have begun to examine some of the prevalent issues in child and youth care practice and professional development today. In addition, we have explored literature heralding a new kind of knowledge, knowledge that is practitioner driven, that allows for ambiguity and mystery, and that has appeal to practitioners and academics alike. We begin to explore themes inherent in the practice, those of relationship, self, and voice. Through shedding light on these topics we develop glimpses of the slippery nature of these components, the difficulty in accounting for their presence and importance in the work.
Fewster has suggested that the field of child and youth care was "its own child" in the early years and now seems a compliant pre-adolescent, fragmented in identity and unsure in purpose (1990, p.3). Denholm and Pence suggest that today's challenge to the child care field is that of evolving in a manner which acknowledges both the human and technical aspects of professionalism and maintains a good balance between them (1991, p7). In an effort to maintain this balance, it is important that child and youth counsellors continue to develop their own knowledge base. A great deal of this literature supports such a premise and offers new insights and avenues of exploration into the experience of practitioners.

It is evident through the review of new teaching literature that a great deal can be learned from our sister profession. Teachers have struggled historically with recognition, professionalization, and knowledge production issues. Although the jobs differ somewhat in their intent and purpose, the nature of the learning is similar as I believe has been indicated here throughout the text.

Teaching literature points to the emergence and value of practitioner knowledge. This builds on the work of Schon (1983), and Hunt (1987), who call for increased reflective practice in the professions. Feminists scholars point to the need to investigate the complex, unpredictable, and ambiguous, aspects of womens' knowledge and caring and practice, the indeterminate zones of practice.

As noted previously, story has the ability to provide us with valuable insights into the practice of child and youth care as well as having potential as a method of inquiry. In arguing for a practice built on stories, reflections, dialogue, and meaning making through life histories, this research takes us on an avenue of exploration to look at how the personal informs the identity of child and youth care. Throughout the research we attempt to make sense of factors that inhibit or facilitate the child and youth care practitioners professional practice. What attitudes, personal philosophies, experiences and dispositions have contributed to survival in the profession? How is practice defined? How does one cope with the working reality?

We have learned that the child and youth care literature does not directly address the ways in which the practitioner can begin to build on their own knowledge, although there has been promising research on storying and narrative methods over the past decade.
(Krueger, 1995; Peterson, 1994; Rose, 1991; Thomson, 1994; White & Epston, 1990). This literature review supports this literature and begins to explore possible new strategies which are accessible and compelling for those who do the actual work with children.

Work towards a model which is developed by front-line practitioners themselves, which is experience-based and academically rigorous provides hopeful possibilities for the professional development of child and youth care practitioners.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The intention of this study is to learn from participants themselves about their professional development and to delve into their experiences in child and youth care practice. The methods used in this study to hear, record and analyse child and youth counsellors’ voices are presented in this chapter. To this end a description of the qualitative approach to research with a feminist orientation and employing narrative methods is provided.

This chapter outlines the rationale and logic of the method and its application to the main research questions. It describes the actual research procedure as it was carried out including design and data collection techniques. An explanation for the measures taken to ensure ethical propriety, a discussion of subjectivity as researcher (conceptual baggage) and claim for validity are also included in this section.

Problems revisited

The purpose of this research is to explore the issues inherent in child and youth care practice and professional development.

There are three broad objectives addressed in the course of this thesis project. They are:

1. To characterize and describe child and youth care practice.

2. To elaborate strategies for successful professional development.

3. To indicate the role narrative plays in both practice and professional development in the field of child and youth care.

Rationale for Method

Qualitative Research

Qualitative inquiry is an odyssey into our discipline, our practice, and perhaps our souls.

(Glesne and Peshkin, 1992, p.179)

A number of considerations were taken into account in the decision to use a qualitative method in the exploration of issues in child and youth care practice. First, It
was felt than quantitative, objective measures would not allow for the descriptive data I was seeking, nor could quantitative measures provide an adequate portrayal of the dynamics and realities of the child and youth care profession. The choice of qualitative methods incorporating a feminist orientation and utilizing narrative methods of interviewing and storytelling allows for the flexibility required in examining the aspects of this work.

A study such as this, like most qualitative research, does not seek to predict and generalize, but seeks to paint a vivid portrait of what child and youth counsellors do, to provide thick description (Grumet, 1987). This calls for a definitive presence of the participant in the process. This is a shift from the scientific paradigms which have long informed medicine and psychiatry. Important concerns of the practitioners as well as a picture of the settings and situations emerge with the methods employed in the collection and examination of data.

In addition, the professional knowledge of child and youth care practice can be seen as emergent. It emerges with those who actually do the work. The practice develops alongside the workers and children. It emerges from relationship and experience. Qualitative research is about the study of direct experience. It is informed by the point of view of those being studied and its’ primary objective is to understand the meaning of their experience (O’Connor, 1993).

We have learned through the review of the literature that often this experience is slippery. It is often difficult to operationalize, to count or to measure. These methods and the stories of experience which they elicit are seen as suitable for the exploration of the nuance and ambiguity inherent in the work.

It seems ludicrous to me that we ignore the feelings we bring to this work and the feelings this work elicits in us. Yet that is what scientific, quantitative research asks us to do. Our feelings and intuitive knowing make the research messy, our responses invalid. This is not to suggest there is no place for quantitative studies nor that we accept research which is not academically rigorous or which is as Kathy Carter suggests is “no more than a rhetorical device” (1993, p.5), but that we explore the rich terrain of experience from the people who accumulate the experience in the profession. Stories of experience allow us this privilege. They are inclusive and offer a way to [capture] in compelling ways, issues
of gender, power, ownership and voice that are defining the major intellectual tensions in our field. (Carter, 1993, p.5).

The methodology is also often dependent of the orientation of the researcher. I have been up-front in the introduction and through my review of the literature regarding my location, training and theoretical precommitments (Riessman, 1993). The methods used in the design of this study suit those orientations and have allowed me to characterize the study based on my own experienced knowledge in the profession. In keeping with this theme, Roberts suggests that to talk of a feminist methodology is clearly political, controversial and implies personal and political sympathies on the part of the researcher (1981, p. 16). In a field where a relatively high proportion of child and youth counsellors are female, the importance of sexual divisions cannot be ignored.

When we speak of using a narrative method in studying child and youth counsellors' lives it means that we enter a collaborative research relationship in which both participants construct and reconstruct personal and social stories of their experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Because of its focus on experience and the qualities of life and education, narrative is situated in the matrix of qualitative research (Connelly & Clandinin, 1989). The collaborative nature, the allowance for voice and the attention to experience that has been previously dismissed or ignored, make these methods a good fit with the feminist orientation of the study.

Beattie has suggested that there must be an acknowledgement that the participants are the personal and professional owners of knowledge as well as the users (1995). The purpose of this research then, is to gain an understanding of the work from the workers' perspective, specifically how it is developed through their experience and stories. For these reasons this methodology is seen as appropriate for this research.

**Interviewing**

In order to probe child and youth counsellor understanding of the aspects of their work and in order to deepen our understanding of their experience, tools other than questionnaires or checklists are called for. Interviews are seen as the most appropriate method for obtaining the data required to meet the objectives of the research. Given the aforementioned issues of marginalization, invisibility and absence of voice it was seen as paramount that priority be given to first person accounts. The information is gathered
directly from the people who have the experience I am interested in knowing more about - the experienced and exemplary child and youth counsellor. Unlike case studies which allow for elaboration on a thin slice of the workers experience in a specific context or document analysis which relies on secondary sources of information, this interviewing methodology relies mainly on these first-person accounts of experience.

There is a vast literature on interviewing which provide a framework for the process. The main model employed, however was devised from Siedmans' in-depth phenomenological model (1991). The method combines life-history interviewing and in-depth interviewing informed by assumptions drawn from phenomenology and especially from Alfred Schutz (Siedman, 1991, p. 9). This method was seen as appropriate for this research for a number of reasons. First, the nature of it's structure allows for dialogue. Unlike standardized questionnaires or structured interviews it allows for minimal interruptions and allows the participants to “hold the floor” (Mishler, 1986). This type of open-ended interviewing also encourages narration and storytelling. I concur with Carter who argues for telling stories rather than simply reporting correlation coefficients or generating lists and findings:

> These stories capture, more than scores or mathematical formulae ever can, the richness and indeterminacy of our experiences...and the complexity of our understandings [as child and youth care] practitioners and how others can be prepared to engage in this profession. (1993, p. 5)

In the review of the literature we learned that experience is difficult to operationalize and define. According to Mishler one of the primary ways- probably the primary way- human beings make sense of their experience is by casting it in a narrative form (1986, p. 68). This knowledge that is often represented in story cannot be reduced to abstract rules, logical propositions, or the covering laws of scientific explanation. Story and narrative, however, are able accommodate ambiguity and dilemma as central figures or themes (Carter, p. 1993). These vignettes of experience can also be seen as a way of concretizing abstract emotional ideas (Noddings, 1991, p. 260).

Intensive interviews also seek to discover information about the experiences of the interviewee in the language and gesture of that person (Roberts, 1981). Using participants experience as a guide, there is an allowance for the interviews to be individualistic and
exploratory in nature. This affords the participants the opportunity to respond about his or her own experience in an insightful and thoughtful way.

This research is also described as collaborative in nature. The style of semi-structured in-depth interviewing allows for a dialogical, reciprocal, conversational interview, where the researcher could share ideas and experience (Kirby & McKenna, 1989; Oakley, 1981; Roberts, 1981). Given my aforementioned interest in a feminist, democratic participant process I took recommendations for interviewing from Oakley, (1981) and Kirby and McKenna (1989). This orientation suggests that in addition to being a data collection tool, the interview can also act as a vehicle for empowering participants’ to find voice (Gilligan, 1982; Lourde, 1984). In doing so, they grow in self awareness which may precipitate action. This is the underlying goal of most qualitative research (DiRezze, 1997). Other issues in interviewing such as rapport (Oakley, 1981) conscious monitoring of ones’ behavior and boundary issues (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992) and reciprocity (Oakley, 1981) were also taken into consideration in the design of the interview methodology.

Interviewing is seen by Siedman as a powerful way to gain insight into educational issues through understanding the experience of the individuals whose lives constitute education. He further asserts that as a method of inquiry, interviewing is most consistent with people’s ability to make meaning through language. Importantly, it affirms the importance of the individual without denigrating the possibility of community and collaboration (Siedman, 1991, p.7).

Like case study research, this kind of interviewing produces large amounts of data. It was felt, however that the interviewing process was more likely to elicit the stories of experience and learning this research sought to explore. This style of interviewing opens up forms of participants telling about experience and allows participants to examine how they themselves make sense of past actions and events.

**Summary of Research Design**

These methods of exploration into the experience of child and youth counsellors are seen as crediting the knowledge of practitioners. They draws our attention to the practitioner as the main central agent of change. They give value and legitimacy to the practical everyday knowledge of the practicing counsellor while at the same time working
towards a potential theory of practice. All are seen to provide a way of understanding the place of experience and in assisting in, or understanding the complex world of child and youth care practice. They are incorporated in stories of experience and may provide us with an alternate model of theory building, one which is based not on "technical rationality" (Schon, 1983), and therefore one which pays attention to insight, reflection and interpersonal skill.

Connelly and Clandinin have suggested that only trust, collaboration and relationship can ensure that there is a place and a voice for each participant (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). These methods can be seen as attending to these issues. By seeking to examine the experience and knowledge of practitioners with the purpose of gaining a deeper understanding of the issues surrounding professional development. I draw attention to the significance of the role of practitioner beliefs, knowledge and life experiences and the meaning the work has for them. Through the methods employed, it is hoped the research gives expression to the voices of the practitioners through first-hand accounts of their lives and experiences as provided in the in-depth interviewing and narrative accounts.

**Choosing the Participants**

I felt that the most appropriate way to gather information and to examine the work of child and youth care practice was to select experienced practitioners who could be considered exemplary in the field. Choosing a small sample of three participants, although it does not allow for extensive comparison and generalization, does allow for an in-depth examination of participant education and experience. It provides us with the opportunity to take a detailed look at how respondents developed professionally. Although this may be viewed as a small sample, the nature of the methodology is such that it yields a significant amount of useful information in relation to the objectives of this study. Reissman informs us that although a limitation, eloquent and enduring theories have been developed by close observation of a few individuals. She cites Breuer's Anna O, Garfinkels' Angus, and Piagets' children, as examples (1993, p.70).

I chose to study in detail, three persons whom I and others considered exemplary and who have had considerable experience as practitioners in a variety of roles in child and youth care practice. I have, as Denzin suggests given priority to the "testimony of schooled or experienced observers" (1970, p.247). For the purposes of this research I did
not rely on novice practitioners but those who had been in the field for a number of years. Two of the participants have had life long careers in child and youth care practice and are now retired, although still active in the profession. One has had over fifteen years experience in working with children. Although experience plays a major role in the development of the child and youth care practitioner, there were other factors considered in selecting participants for the study. In addition to a prolonged commitment to child and youth care practice, evident in the years of experience, I was also looking for a certain quality of experience. In order to further define this quality I relied on the following additional criteria:

1) a career in child and youth care which is diverse and which demonstrated mobility and achievement (ie: varied roles including administrative, teaching and supervisory positions)

2) a commitment to education in the field of child and youth care practice. This was evidenced through formal education, attendance at and delivery of training and workshops and through participation in extracurricular activities related to education

3) a demonstrated commitment to helping others, ie: students, allied disciplines, the public in understanding the nature of child and youth care practice. This was displayed by the participants through teaching, involvement in board and committee work and public speaking engagements.

4) those who I personally believed to have made a significant contribution to the development of child and youth care practice

5) peer and colleague recognition.

No formal instruments such as checklists or questionnaires were used in determining whether or not the participants possessed the above criteria. My own involvement in their professional community, a working knowledge of the participants through participation and involvement in advisory boards and committees and collaboration on professional activities, provided me with valuable insights into the work of the research participants chosen for the study. In addition, references from other professionals in the field were sought to confirm my views of these professionals.
In addition to the above criteria, there were practical considerations such as geographic location, contactability, and willingness of the participants. Two participants lived in the city and one was out of town, but willing to travel. All were willing to meet with me for the duration of the three ninety minute interviews and were willing to review the transcripts. All were also available to the researcher by telephone and one was available through e-mail correspondence.

Communication was also seen as a criteria for choosing participants. Given the exploratory, in depth nature of the interviews, it was important that rapport be present with all participants. This rapport was established prior to interviews and was partially influenced by factors such as possessing similar experience, being known to each other, and sharing in some political action (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). Although not all participants were involved in the same activities, they all possessed obvious interests in promoting good practice.

**Preliminary Data Collection**

The researcher must experience the interview as both an interviewer and a research participant early on in the data gathering process.  

*Kirby & McKenna (1989, p.72)*

A pilot interview took place prior to the interviewing process whereby a colleague interviewed this researcher. My purposes for conducting the pilot interview were to determine whether the time frame allowed for the process and also to pre-test some questions to ensure they were clear and appropriate. The process of interviewing and transcribing the pilot self-interview was instructive in a number of ways. First, I was struck by the intensity of emotion that I experienced through the use of this method. Being open regarding personal learning and experience gave rise to considerable discomfort. Secondly, I became aware of the power of the interviewer. My interviewer was a colleague with whom I had considerable professional and personal experience. This created some mixed feelings regarding self-disclosure. As Reismann (1993) suggests, the story is being told to 'particular' people; it might have taken a different form if someone else was the listener (p.11).

This was helpful a helpful process as I felt I became increasingly aware of what I was expecting of my participants, that this was not a benign interview experience with yes and no answers or straightforward replies. This was, in my estimation a deeply personal
exchange. Through the storying and dialogue which took place over the course of the interview I was reminded of the intensely relational aspects of the work, how emotionally charged the work was. My recollection of a young girl who I had been involved in moving to a new group home brought forth a surge of sadness and injustice that I felt quite unprepared for. It also became apparent to me how vehemently I defended the profession.

This experience was instrumental in how I then conducted the interviews as well as recognizing my own conceptual baggage (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). There became an awareness that I was constructing a ‘self’, how I want to be known and I “like all social actors, seek to persuade myself and others that I am a good person” (Reissssman, 1993, p.11).

I had also been concerned regarding the time that has lapsed since I have actually worked in the field, given my academic pursuits over past years. I was concerned about ability to recall stories and incidents and the implications this might have for my participants. I found however, that the time allowed for an enhanced understanding of the events in that I had opportunity to be more reflective. The actual interview helped improve my own reflective process and worked as a catalyst for further recollection of experience.

Minor revisions were made to the research interviews based on my impressions and feedback from the interviewer.

The Research Procedure

Conducting the interviews

Interviews were conducted over a period spanning November 1996 to February, 1997. The first two interviews were approximately two weeks apart with the exception of one participant who was travelling from out of town. In this circumstance interview one and two took place on the same day. The third interview took place at a later date due to extenuating circumstances and a decision to complete some rudimentary analysis in an effort to share the emerging themes with participants in interview three.

Meetings were held at locations convenient for the participants and efforts were made to ensure surroundings were comfortable and interruptions at a minimum. For the most part they took place in either my home or the homes of the participants.

Interviews were structured to allow each person to explain as completely as possible in a ninety minute interview what led them to the field, the context of their
practice and the meanings they attributed to the profession of child and youth care. Within this framework they were encouraged to tell stories of their experience which were meaningful to them and which represented significant learning for them. Efforts were made to keep within the confines of the ninety minute interview, although due to the storytelling nature of the interviews, it was felt it would be unfair to leave some stories unfinished.

A semi-structured model was employed; guideline questions were developed, but not strictly adhered to in the interview process. Interview one had a life-history focus which asked participants to tell as much as possible about him or herself which led them to the profession of child and youth counselling. The purpose of interview two was to concentrate on the details of the person's present experience in the practice of child and youth care and the third interview focused on reflections on the meaning of their experience. Participants were also asked to focus on and tell stories that were significant to them in their learning about the work. A dialogical or conversational model was employed where respondents could continue at length without interruption.

Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed and minimal edits were made for readability, leaving out some ums, ahs etc. Notes were jotted down during the interviews and notes of silences, laughter and intonation were also recorded. Audio-taping allowed me to engage in an exchange of information, a personal social interaction (Oakley, 1981).

After interviews one and two, participants were given copies of the transcripts which allowed for reflection upon accounts of events and circumstances. Informants were offered opportunities to clarify descriptions, elaborate or add stories and to delete or edit selections as they wished. They were asked if transcripts were an accurate reflection of their experiences.

Phone contact with each participant took place as well as a correspondence which included a profile of their lives leading them to the field. Themes from their transcripts as well as collective themes were shared with participants at this point as well.

**Researcher Impressions**

Following completion of each interview, notes were made about the meeting with details about setting, time of day, receptivity, researcher reactions, evidence of emotion etc. These notes helped maintain the freshness of the material. The notes were consulted
regularly as a supplement to the taped interviews. A log or journal was also kept throughout the thesis process. This log or series of journals began before data collection and was maintained throughout the interview and analysis process and writing. These journals included notes from thesis supervision, thesis support group notes, notes from individual meetings with colleagues and e-mail correspondence. It also served as a place for jotting down ideas as they arose and brainstorming around the thesis.

Phone contact was made with participants after the first interview (with the exception of one participant who completed interview one and two in one session) to check in regarding how they felt after the interview and to confirm the next meeting date. Two of the participants (female) noted that they felt quite drained after the process but were willing to continue. The length of time (ie: ninety minutes) was considered sufficient and more than that could have proved difficult, according to one participant.

Few edits and or additions were made to the actual transcripts, the profiles and the preliminary analysis of themes. Any objections (of which there were few), spelling corrections, edits or additions were included in the final research.

**Conceptual Baggage**

Story is a joint production. How she or he listens, attends, encourages, interrupts, digresses, initiates topics, and terminates responses is integral to a respondent’s account. The interviewer’s role is to be taken into account is a difficult problem but it is not solved by making the interviewer invisible and inaudible, by painting her or him out of the picture (Mishler, 1986, p.82)

Feminist research call for revealing ‘conceptual baggage’ and considering relational issues in interviewing (Kirby & McKenna, 1989; Oakley, 1981; Roberts, 1981). Hunt suggests that if applied research is to be authentic and relevant, researchers must first accept their own personhood, their cooperation in the human venture they seek to understand. Our personal intentions along with the related perceptions and actions that flow from them are our most powerful and sensitive means for recording and interpreting our research (Hunt, 1986). For this reason there is attention to the biographical context of the researcher, a feminist approach to the interviewing process and methodology and an ongoing scrutiny through all stages which address these issues.

Several authors have pointed to the need to include self in research (Kirby & McKenna, Mishler, 1986; 1989; Polkinghorne, 1988 Riessman, 1993; ). As I filtered and
organized stories I relied on my own experience in the field. Particular attention needed to be taken around assumptions which may be well-known to me but not to a layperson or beginning worker in the field. Checks for language, jargon and underlying assumptions were required. For this I relied on outside readers, thesis support group members and my thesis advisor.

Kirby and McKenna suggest that 'conceptual baggage' is the record of experiences and reflections of the researcher that relate to the focus of the research (1989, p.49). This serves as a record of thoughts on reflection and process, preliminary conclusions, interesting and unexpected links, difficulties or solutions. Researchers are also cautioned to acknowledge the historical and political context in which the research occurs. They suggest that researchers note both content and process highlighting emotions as well as process. The aim of this layered process is to help identify biases, assumptions and pre-established goals which might be influencing how the research developed. To this aim I employed the use of ongoing journals, consultations with my thesis support group, readings by persons outside the profession and consultation with the participants.

As Kirby and McKenna also indicate that there is no such thing as an impartial or unimpassioned researcher (1989). Recording my conceptual baggage, being up-front about my role as a committed insider, conducting a self-interview, having participants read transcripts, themes and profiles and including what led me to the research in the introductory chapter of the research address this issue.

**Data Analysis Methodology**

Data analysis began with transcription of the interviews and was not a distinct stage of the research but an ongoing process. Upon completion of the interviews, document collection and transcriptions I began to code, categorize and synthesize the information which emerged from the interviews (Siedman, 1991; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). I heeded advice from Kirby and McKenna in the early stages who counsel:

The general analytical design consists of examining how data items and groupings of data items generate specific and general patterns. This is done primarily through the constant comparison of data items with other items until sections that 'go together with' or 'will to help describe something' can be identified and located together in a category file.

(1989, p.130)
A significant piece of the analysis of the data was to share the transcripts of interview one and two to each of the participants. Another significant step was to develop a preliminary breakdown of the emerging themes and the development of profiles of each of the participants. Profiles were gleaned mainly from interview one, put in chronological order and composed with minimal editing. This deliberate process was designed to ensure participant 'voice' was present in the research. Participants were able to edit and comment, to expand on what they had said and to recount other important anecdotes and ideas. It was also hoped that this process would allow for clarity of reflection for the final interview which was concerned with the meaning of the work and what wisdom or advice might be given to those entering this profession (See Appendix B, Interview Format). This process led to a considerable amount of initial analysis and refinement of the ideas raised in the research.

A form of "hurricane thinking" (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p. 146) was also employed as a strategy to understand links between categories. Research questions were placed in the centre of a large length of paper and moved around in various categories in an effort to get at main themes and organization of data. This proved a useful tool although there were consistent overlaps in categories and themes. Efforts to begin eliminating trivial or weaker ties began at this stage. The analysis process also was informed by Lofland and Lofland (1984, cited in Kirby & McKenna, 1989). They counsel the need to take some distance from the analysis, step back and reflect on it. Participants were also given this opportunity through the sharing of the transcripts and profiles gleaned from first interviews. The process of feeding material back to the participants for editing also began the process of sorting and defining the data. Collaborators from my thesis support group were also engaged to spark questions, highlight possible connections and identify researcher 'blind spots'.

Since stories are at the centre of the research, transcripts were reviewed to discover stories. A general assumption of narrative analysis is that telling stories is one of the significant ways individuals construct and express meaning (Mishler, p. 67, 1995). Participants are assumed to have selected the most significant anecdotes to relate. Participants were sent information regarding the purpose of the research and an outline of the questions prior to first interview. (See Appendix C: Letter of Consent) Often these
stories had a beginning, a middle and an end in the transcriptions. They often contained a conflict or dilemma and sometimes a resolution, sometimes a question. Transcripts were also searched for biographical vignettes, critical incidents, and dilemmas.

Transcripts were read and re-read to get at the point of stories and to examine relations among episodes between stories and within stories. Efforts were made to examine the ways the stories are tied together and related to each other. An understanding that multiple interpretations were possible and that many stories overlapped in theme development was an ongoing concern.

Since preliminary themes had emerged and were agreed upon by participants, a further investigation of transcripts took place to identify stories which were tied to emerging themes of the research. Stories were designed to introduce the participants and begin to explore their knowledge. Stories to inform the reader about the nature of the profession and the nature of the knowledge required to work in the profession were also drawn from the transcripts.

Ethical Considerations

Following Walker (1985) and Glesne and Peshkin (1992) I clarified my procedure through a Letter of Consent (see Appendix C: Letter of Consent). The procedure on ongoing data analysis and sharing of transcripts as described above ensured that the material that went into the study was approved by the participants.

Efforts were made to protect confidentiality where participants were concerned about recognition. All client names were changed.

Issues of Validity

How do we know if what the participant is telling us in true? For an answer to this question I turn to the Personal Narratives Group (1989):

When talking about their lives, people lie sometimes, forget a lot, exaggerated, become confused, and get things wrong. Yet they are revealing truths. These truths don't reveal the past "as it actually was," aspiring to a standard of objectivity. They give us instead the truths of our experiences...Unlike the Truth of the scientific ideal, the truths of personal narratives are neither open to proof or self-evident. We come to understand them only through interpretation, paying careful attention to the contexts that shape their creation and to the world views that inform them. Sometimes the truths we see in personal narratives jar us from our complacent security as interpreters 'outside' the story and make us aware
that our own place in the world plays a part in our interpretation and shapes the meanings we derive from them (p.261)

Epistemological assumptions underlying the notion of validity have come under increasing scrutiny and many qualitative researchers argue for a new vocabulary with which to discuss validity and reliability (Mishler, 1986, pp. 108-110). Lincoln and Guba (1985) offer a framework for thinking about the quantitative notions of validity, reliability and generalizability as they apply to qualitative studies. They replace standard formulations with their new terms: credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. In their study they suggest concepts of prolonged engagement, peer debriefing and member checking, all components of this research, as ways to authenticate observations. (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Siedman argues that in-depth interviewing structure incorporates features of validity by:

1. Placing participants comments in context
2. Encouraging participants over the time frame to account for idiosyncratic days and to check for the internal consistency of what they say.
3. Since the goal is make meaning of their experience, the interview structure allows them to make sense to themselves as well as the interviewer.

In addition to these ‘built-in’ processes in this model of interviewing, the participants were given their own transcripts and profiles and preliminary analysis of emerging themes identified by all participants. Glesne and Peshkin (1993) argue for trustworthiness in the research and suggest that sharing the working drafts with participants may verify that you have reflected the insiders’ perspectives (p.147).

Barones’ (1992) suggestions of accessibility, compellingness and moral persuasiveness are considered elements of good narrative. Research must be accessible to the community it serves and compellingness requires that the imagination be engaged (1992). He suggests that story form is one way to engage the reader. These stories, Barone concludes, must be morally persuasive. Peshkin discusses issues of goodness (1993) in qualitative research. In this case the question becomes “What makes a good narrative?” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p.13). Narrative, like other examples of
naturalistic inquiry, uses standards other than validity, reliability and generalizability. At this point in time:

The language and criteria for narrative inquiry are under development. It is currently the case that each inquirer must search for, and defend, the criteria that best apply to his or her work.

(Connelly & Clandinin, 1990. p.13)

**Summary**

In this chapter I have made arguments for the methodology employed in the research, narrative methods which fit in the matrix of qualitative research. In addition, the methodology is considered feminist, collaborative and concerned with the voices and personal knowledge of child and youth practitioners themselves. These methods are able to capture the ambiguity, messiness and zones of indeterminate practice that have been identified in the previous chapter.

The nature of this study is such that it values the life history of the participants and evokes reflections on past learning experiences. Though in-depth interviewing as well as the sharing of transcripts and emerging themes the participant’s representation and interpretation of their own experience are accepted as valid, and acknowledged as an essential aspect of influencing change.

Finally, stories are powerful research tools. They provide us with a picture of real people in real situations, struggling with real problems. Most important, they invite us to remember that we are in the business of teaching, learning and researching to improve the human condition.

(Witherall and Noddings, 1991, p. 280)

I have outlined research design and the steps I followed in conducting the research. I have also informed the reader of methods of analysis as well as ethical considerations and an argument for validity. In the following chapter you are introduced to the participants in the research and their stories of what led them to the profession of child and youth care practice.
CHAPTER FOUR: PARTICIPANT PROFILES

The three participants chosen for this study represent over ninety years of experience and a variety of child and youth care roles as front-line worker, group worker, clinical supervisor, teacher, manager and individual therapist. All have worked in clinical settings in hospitals, mental health centres, community group home models and educational institutions. All are what I consider exemplary child and youth care practitioners.

Following is a profile of participants, presented in their own words, which describes how they came to practice in child and youth care. Participants were asked what led them to the field of child and youth care and were encouraged to tell as much about themselves as the ninety minute time frame allowed. The following profiles were gleaned from the transcripts with minimal edits, put in chronological order where necessary, and kept in the participant’s own words. The profiles, which were drawn mainly from the first interview, were then shared with participants to ensure they were in fact true to their intent. The decision to tell their stories in their own words was a conscious one as it highlights the issue of “voice”, one of the main themes emerging from the data analysis. These profiles are meant as an introduction to the participants and are just a small segment of their recorded life experience. It is seen as important to get a sense of who the participants are, how they talk about themselves and their experience outside of and within their profession.

Robeson

Robeson is now retired from the field of child and youth care but remains active in promoting the profession. He is a strong advocate for professionalizing the field and has a rich knowledge of the history of the field given his experience from the beginning years of child and youth care at one of the first major children’s health centres in the province. In his own words Robeson shares his stories of how he came to practice and some of his lived experience in the early years of the profession.

I came to Canada in 1957. Prior to that I was born and raised in England. For 10 years I was a firefighter. I became interested in the trade union movement [and] was a
union representative for the fire brigades union of Great Britain. I regard my early education as coming from the trade union. They taught me how to think on my feet, talk and negotiate etc. It was a very interesting endeavour [and] I learned much from them. In 1954 I led the first British Youth Delegation to Poland. It was an interesting endeavour and during that tour of Poland I went to Auschwich--the concentration camp. [At] that time it was just as it was left after the war. It was a very moving experience.

When I was in England I used to meet occasionally [with] a probation officer who worked with young offenders. He was employed by the same employer I was: the county council. [When] he would come into the fire station to get his car filled with gas, we talked about his work and I said "Gee, that is the kind of work I would like!" I made some inquiries and discovered that to become a probation officer I had to go to university for two years. I couldn't afford it because I was married then [and] had two children so it was really out of the question. I put that in the back of my mind, came to Canada and got a job with the Canadian National Railways which lasted about a year.

In my early months with the investigation department [of the Canadian National Railways] I was on day tour of duty. I was bored as hell and prayed for the shift to end. [I would] think "Well, another hour is gone." [I] would look at my watch and only ten or fifteen minutes had gone by. It was that school boy kinda thing. During that one afternoon I was walking down by the freight cars and I saw three guys jump out and then run like hell! I quickened my pace to see what [was] going on and the whole floor was covered with pockets of fire! I got up in the car and took off my jacket and [saw] the car was three parts loaded. [They] had split
the seam of this five gallon drum when they were loading. They were loading a chemical. I think it was called carbon bisulphites or something like that which ignites when it is in contact with air. I put this piddly little fire out.

Then the superintendent in charge of the freight yard came in and he said to me: "That was a helluva job you did! Boy! That was really something!" Later the inspector of investigation phoned me and said "I heard about what happened." he said. "It was a helluva good job!" etc. "You saved thousands of dollars worth of stuff." He said "Now, I think you should be acknowledged for that so I was thinking...do you smoke?". I said "No." and he said "Ah well. Leave it with me, leave it with me." About a week or ten days went by and I got another call. "Would you be in the office of the vice-president of the CN at Union Station on such and such a date and be sure you are dressed in full regalia because a photographer is going to be there?".

Everyone was waiting when I arrived and I was presented with a sterling silver cigarette case with [a] monogram on it. Then they told me I was on the way to a promotion, but I was turned off prior to all this happening. I [had seen] an ad in one of the Toronto newspapers about Thistletown starting and [that] they were having a training program. I had already applied just before this had happened and it so coincided that I went through [Thistletown’s] interview process. I was accepted, just by the time that I had got this wonderful award of a cigarette case. I took it, said [to myself] "this is going to be a little embarrassing" but the following week sent in my letter of resignation.

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1 Thistletown Regional Children’s Mental Health Centre was the first formal training program for child and youth workers in Ontario. The first staff began their training at the Queen Street Mental Health Centre in 1957
Thistletown was a whole unique program. It was really started by a psychiatrist, John Rich, who had an MD and a PhD. He was a very, very knowledgeable type of guy, especially with disturbed kids. It started in the fall of 1957 and during that time I think there was about twenty people when it began. There were no other children's centres like this one at the time. There was a selection process of maybe a psychiatrist and psychologist set up to see these kids, go over their histories and decide whether they were suitably disturbed. The eight boys were probably the worst acting-out behaviour disorders in the province of Ontario! The word went out that they wanted kids the other centres were finding difficult to handle.

Many of us were just learning, you know forged in some fire. Trial by fire. It was a very interesting experience. These kids did present a problem and we were kind of literally learning on the job...a long way from the teaching we were getting. The teaching was done in the main building in one of the seminar rooms and it was done by people who were hired as clinicians who had a good background of experience.

It is difficult for me to convey the type of quality of these people. They were different. They were very intellectual. They were very socially aware and socially democratic. Lon [Lawson]² was the type of person who could have a group talk with him and the group as a whole would [remain] for the next session [as well] because he was so interesting. He would involve everyone in the group discussions. No matter how stupid you may have been [he]

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² Lon Lawson: the first teacher to develop child and youth care curriculum in his role as Chief of child care work at Thistletown "Training notes on milieu therapy and child care work."
always took the point and looked at it. At the time Lon was the chief of child care work.

I was a student with a group of people and no doubt they all have their own individual story. They came from all walks of life; one was from the nursing profession; there was Fred King who worked in group settings in England; hostels, boys' homes and training schools, things like that. John Rich [had done] some recruiting in England - psychiatrists, social workers and one psychologist. There was [a] fellow from Germany who was a circus clown and a young woman who left the program prior to graduation and turned up later as a television producer. There was faculty and people from all walks of life.

It was a very small student body. The school of child care work had yet to be built (or the accommodation), but it was a very small tight group. Fortunately John Rich was a socialist and was at one time [running] as a candidate for the N.D.P. (formerly C.C.F.). That's where he was coming from. He was a person who wanted to turn things on very quickly. Often in doing so he upset the bureaucrats and he had difficulty with some of the "old guys" civil servants at Queen's Park and he began to move forward. At the same time he was upsetting the powers that be.

I'll tell you more. John Rich saw this property and tried to go through the channels of government and he wasn't getting anywhere at all. Two things happened. He happened to be at a cocktail party where he met the then publisher of the Globe and Mail (or maybe it was the Star). He was getting the run around from the government and so thought "Maybe this guy will listen to me." [He] started talking about the need for services for disturbed kids, the property at Thistletown which was empty....completely empty...just
deteriorating...... and obviously he had turned this guy on. So he was listening and nodding and then suddenly he put out his hand, picked up the telephone and said "Get me Leslie Frost!" Leslie Frost was the premier at the time.

Within just a few minutes Leslie Frost was on the line. [He said] "Hey Leslie! I am talking with a person called Dr. John Rich and he is talking to me about a place called Thistletown out in the north west sector. I think he is on to something and we should do something about it." So it was kind of left like that...that Frost would do something. Then John Rich heard that cabinet had discussed it and they turned him down. To give you some idea John Rich was different [Around that time] he happened to be talking to a service club. He really was somewhat of a maverick...a very knowledgeable guy but a maverick. [He] was out talking to the service club, made sure that the press was at this meeting and got someone to tip off the press. "I have got some very good news ! I have heard that cabinet has approved the establishment of Thistletown as a centre for emotionally disturbed kids." Quite the reverse. ...they had turned it down.

The papers came out and there was headlines. Wonderful things. [He said to Frost] "Les, if you reverse or appear to reverse yourself at this stage, you will have every mother of a disturbed kid on your neck so I advise you not to do it!" The cabinet rediscussed it and changed there....it is all documented . It is the first time ever that the cabinet made a reversal of a decision!

Finally he [John Rich] was in charge of the whole shebang and they appointed him superintendent. Lon became the clinical director. I think we had the best of two worlds because Lon had this child care work vision. Lon Lawson was
a very knowledgeable social group worker and he wanted to establish child care work as a profession. Lon wrote a lot of the initial training notes in milieu therapy. John Rich and Harvey wrote the psychiatric methodology side of that and then there were various people who came in and taught social work practice or group theory or things like that. As I was saying to you earlier it was difficult to convey to you their method of teaching and the quality. One method of teaching was as a group of two of you or even individually would be told "Well, this hour this afternoon you will be walking outside with Lon Lawson and you’ll discuss milieu therapy". You could go along and you could talk and it would be a nice fall day and you spend that hour getting some pretty intensive theory into child care work. There was nothing like it elsewhere in the province. It was the only setting which really taught child care work and Lon was quite an intellectual. In many ways he was kind of anti-conventional and he [would] say. "No social worker has ever been taught how to relate to disturbed kids in a residential setting!"

He wanted to establish [a profession] and this phrase comes out still I am glad to say. "Child care work is a professional discipline in its own right!" That is something [that] you struggle [with] and I had terrible struggles because other disciplines wanted to tell child care workers how to do it!

To me it was fascinating because when I came to the work I was thirty-one years of age, married with two young kids. They did offer a salary but it was like an Ontario government bursary. I don’t know if that was a fancy name for a low-paying job or not, but I can recall that when I went into the program the stipend for the first year was
$1,240.00 per annum and the second year - boy you are in the big time! $2,480.00! So...that's really living it up!

Robeson started his career in child and youth care at the atypical age of thirty-two. His earlier career was shaped by the war and politics of the time and he was initially involved in careers which would be considered traditionally male occupations: fireman, CN police officer and trade union activist. His decision to enter a new program working with problem children represented a major shift in his career and was driven by a sense of purpose and a drive towards stimulation and excitement. He was deeply affected by the intellectual forerunners and mentors during his training period at Thistletown and this seemed to sow the seeds for a lifelong commitment and dedication to the field of child and youth care. Robeson continued his career in child and youth care practising in a variety of capacities and only recently retired from his position as a director at a large childrens' psychiatric centre. His career in child and youth care spans over thirty-five years and he continues to advocate for child and youth care, write about the profession and work on conferences promoting the field. Robeson is a natural storyteller and often speaks, teaches and converses in storied form. He has a great deal to offer regarding the history of the profession, a high regard for those who do this work and his career is a testament to the possibility of making child and youth care a vocation as opposed to a stepping stone to other jobs or disciplines. As noted in his profile he describes a great deal of his own learning taking place in a socially democratic, exciting and stimulating environment in one of the first training centres in Ontario. He offers many stories of how he has learned from colleagues and children. His nagging concerns centre around the need for validation and recognition of those who do this important work and their commitment to advocating strongly both for the children and their own profession. Despite the prevailing problems of lack of recognition and difficult working conditions, he has remained committed, enthused and speaks favourably of the work. He is a valuable spokesperson for the profession and offers important insights while describing his own learning and history and recounting stories of experience.

Athena

"My life, Patti, is the story of how I came to child and youth care."
Athena is also a recent retiree from the field of child and youth care. She tells of the events leading her into her work with children and subsequently the teaching of new professionals in the field.

So...all right. I was born Sept. 28, in Germany. I lived two blocks up from what was called the Villa Wanfried which is the house that Wagner built and across the street from where he and his family are interred. A big beautiful park [and] across the street from Franz Liszt's house. As I understand it Wagner stole Liszt's wife.

What happened [there] was that during the war, Hitler would come annually to go to the opera. [Depending ] on how you interpret Wagner there is a feel of the "ubermenshen" - the superman...the Aryan. So I would see Hitler as a little girl. I would see him marching by and I think this definitely impressed me. I saw the thousands and hundreds of thousands of people who went totally bananas over this man. So that sort of cues you in. Hitler really came to power when I was about three or four years old, 1934. By 1934 he was prancing around like a peacock. So I really have only three or four years without him around.

I was raised in [an] Orthodox Jewish family that were quite assimilated. I remember growing up under a portrait of a relative. I don't know who he was [but] he lost his arm in the first world war and then went back in [and] got killed. They were very neurotic Germans, my ancestors. They came, I think, at least many of them, from Spain which I think accounts for some of my colouring. In 1842 the Spanish king and queen threw the Jews out. You had a choice to convert or to leave. So I think that's when my ancestors came to Germany. They built a cattle business in Germany where they bought cow[s] and sold them. I don't belong in that family. They loved being mercantile.
[For] most German men, at least from the kind of society I was born into, business is very important and for my father it was. It was truly important. He loved it! He hated school and his father didn’t want him to quit school but one day he sold [a] cow, he got a good price for her [and] so his father finally gave in and let him quit. I think the only book [my father] ever read was "All is Quiet on the Western Front" in German. I gave it to him when he had a heart attack. He was a non reader. My mother is a non reader. My mother will now, occasionally, read and she [will] make sure that what she reads has sex in it or else she never looks at it. She is quite clear about that!

So, I was born into a family I really don’t belong in, and my mother has finally accepted that...that I’m weird (by their standards). I didn’t marry when I was supposed to. I didn’t marry a Jew or any of the things I was supposed to.

At great expense to both of us. I would say that I am quite estranged from my father because I found him rather stupid and in terms of quick on the draw, quick of the hand. Quite punitive. So there was no love lost between my father and I, even as a child. It was mostly because he was so punitive and self-centred in his punitiveness. When we were together my father didn’t engage with his children. You were expected to do certain things and behave in certain ways. It was the kind of family that makes Eugene O’Neill very understandable. I mean there was such madness! Two sisters married two brothers. My mother’s youngest sister married my father’s younger brother and they always lived together and I think they liked each other much more than they liked their husbands.

After the Nazis came to power people had a lot on their minds. It wasn’t their children. [My father] was thrown in
jail for quite a while. By then I was seven. I mean it was a messy time. Those are the things you can never describe. It's like somebody being through horrible times trying to describe it. For me, basically the facts were that because I was a Jewish kid, I got thrown out of school because all the Jewish kids got thrown out of school. We were quite humiliated. Teachers really went to town on us. I must have been around seven when they said Jewish kids can't come to school and there was no places for them to educate me. My brother who is a year or two older than I am was sent to Nurembourg to live with a teacher. They were worried about him going to school. He hates school. He just hates school! I stayed in the attic for about a year and a half. You couldn't leave. There was nowhere to go and to had to wear a star and you had a special name they called you by - a Jewish name. (All girls were Sarah and all boys Israel)

Eventually they wanted me to go to Nurembourg. I had an aunt there who I loved, who I was named after and whose birthday was the same day as mine and who was entirely different in how she approached children than my own parents. I think that was a real eye-opener for me. I had never seen a street car before because Bayreuth was very small. I wanted to go to the street car and didn't ask for money, just took some from her purse and I think she figured it out. She went to cuff me one and deliberately missed. You know that made a very, very deep impression on me. That out of love one would set limits -- but gentle limits...loving limits. I never swiped from her again.

We came [to North America] on the last boat. We were followed and it was very scary. There was a terrible storm. It was an awful trip! I remember hating my father even as a child. I remember having the fantasy that I could blow this.
I could really get this guy into trouble with these people. I remember so well.

I was almost ten when we came over. We arrived April 29 and my mother in her infinite wisdom sent us to school May 1 without a word of English. That was also a terrifying experience. We had to learn English and there were no ESL (English as a Second Language) in those days. You were on your own. [My parents] were struggling. My mother was a maid. My father was pulling a wagon. There was a depression going on.

When I was twelve the war was on of course. I was able to get a job. They hired you when you were just a kid cause everybody else was away. I worked in a hardware store and [was] taught how to fix electrical appliances and stuff like that. I mean, my friends would all be playing and having a good time, and I was at work six days a week at twelve. [I remember] in history class in junior high I got up and defended the Germans once. That went over really, really big. [sarcastically] I think I was trying to say not all Germans are bad because I was German! But it was very confusing. Because, you know, I was German.

I felt like a poor kid you know, compared to all the other popular rich kids so that's a very painful thing. I also had huge gaps in my education which I have to this day. You know it keeps going. However, what happened was I graduated high school and decided I wanted to go to university and again, you get this problem of being a Jewish woman. We're supposed to get married. [My parents] didn't have the money so it's not like they were going to support the idea. [It] was not the first time that had happened with me. I graduated high school in February and was working all through high school at the library system and then when I
graduated I worked full time. I just kept saving my money and went to university which at that time was not that horrendously expensive, and lived in the dormitory and became very active in the Jewish community on campus. I became the president of Hillel and through that experience was given scholarships. I became very active and I made speeches and somehow they got money for me. It was overwhelming there. Gradually I was able to (again through the help of the Jewish community) I made it to [another prestigious] university. I mean they were very kind to me and they helped me financially get through university and in university I met [an influential psychologist]. Again he was very kind to me. I was his secretary, whatever the hell that was, and he was my professor and I babysat and all that stuff. So he helped me. I was a psych major I guess and a lit minor. [I] learned a hell of a lot more about literature than I ever learned in psychology. I did go to work one summer at a local State Hospital. It was supposed to be the third best mental hospital in the States and it was a nightmare!

It was a very scary place. There was a little girl on the ward I asked to work with. I will never understand why. I must have been afraid I would be bored or something. I asked to work with violent patients and damn if they didn’t let me! They did put me on the worst ward and I was a kid. I mean it was in the days of shock therapy as a control measure. They had straight jackets, hydrotherapy, and the mummy...the water pack treatment and a little girl on the ward with all these people...all these women...a five year old little girl!

She was mute by the time I met her. She was alternately being masturbated by one group of women and saved by another
group of women. I assume there was no place to put little
girls. No place for children...poor children. Anyway, they
satisfactorily destroyed that child, whatever was left of
her by the time she came to us. And that made an impression
and that bothered me. What was a little girl doing on this
ward with these kooky people?

I was terrified and tired because you had to walk a lot
....these long wards. I don’t even know what my official
duties were, must have been something because they paid me.
It was really sad...so when it came time to graduate I
didn’t know what the hell to do with myself. I had a
distinct feeling that I should stay out of school. That I
had done that. I had been by then engaged about six times to
be married and each time at the last minute I chickened out.
...So I read "Love is Not Enough" by Bettelheim¹ and thought
that I should go [to a centre which employed those
principles] My boss wrote a letter to the director because
he knew him and the director wrote me back and said that I
should write a ten page autobiography or something stupid
like that and I wrote the most arrogant piece of work. For
some reason he hired me. Sight unseen!

There was a woman who went to the school at the same
time. She was taking a psych course [and] she was a
Radcliffe graduate and she was in a class with a young man
who I was involved with at the time and he introduced us.
She is a doctor who ran a treatment centre for twenty years.
We’re still friends. We arrived at the same time and we
lived together at the treatment facility. I stayed ten

¹ Bettelheim: a noted author and therapist, particularly known
for his work with troubled children and autistic children at
the Orthogenic School in Chicago during the fifties.
years. The counsellors by and large lived in...and I lived in.

I left that centre when I got married. By the time I got married I was thirty-two years old. I had left that job to marry. But I was ready to leave. You know, if you listen to your heart it tells you when it is time to move on and it was time to move on.

Athena's career continued in Canada for a number of years as a front line worker, a trainer and a teacher of child and youth care. She continues her private practice as a feminist therapist and consults on training those who work with children. This story is just one of many which cast her in the role of a determined survivor and dedicated activist. She is a strong advocate for children, has had a prolific career in teaching students of child and youth care and shares her experiences and stories willingly and passionately in an effort to help others learn.

Her life story is the story of how she came to child and youth care, highlighting her view that the personal and the professional are deeply entwined in the work. She was marginalised, always on the outside. Jew, woman, child, German, in wartimes, in a new country and school. Her life was like a set of Russian nesting dolls. She evidently possessed a strong drive to succeed and a voracious interest in furthering her education. After moving through several situations where she found herself at the mercy of autocrats she reconstructed her own identity as an autonomous individual with strong opinions and a code of ethics based on communication, self-understanding, and a strong moral code.

Annie

Annie has been a child and youth counsellor for over fifteen years working in a variety of roles and in a variety of settings. She, like Athena, supports the premise that her childhood led her directly into the practice of child and youth care.

I grew up in a project type area which was a planned community -- not very well planned. [It was] high density, roughly 20,000 people in three square blocks of concrete. It was largely I guess lower class, lower middle class families with lots of kids. [It was] quite a disadvantaged area. I
didn't actually start there. I moved from middle class suburbia to this area. That community was probably influential in my becoming a child and youth worker for two reasons. One is the sort of structure and the other is that I ended up working there and I got into working with kids as a result of this recreation centre.

Before that, there was a large group of kids spanning about five years that really formed a group, so much of my childhood was spent in a group sort of setting. Although it was unsupervised without adult involvement we very much formed a group and that group was [and still is] maintained many, many years later. It was facilitated by most people not wanting to go home.

Sexual abuse, physical abuse, domestic violence, alcoholism was what my peer group experienced and therefore I experienced it...then the kids who I came to be caring for quite a number of years. I started at thirteen and didn't leave until I was eighteen or nineteen. I saw these kids grow up and there is a whole generation of these kids that in many ways I was part of raising as I was raising myself.

I had two brothers and myself. I am the youngest. My parents divorced when I was young. It was a high-conflict divorce. They fought for seven years in court. It was all before Family Law Reform Act so they could do that. They could drag it out. They could battle it out for as long as they wanted....and they did. I was five [when that was going on]. I remember the violence from that. I remember court. I remember being assessed...so I had contact. That was my only contact with social services and it wasn't positive at all.
I can remember very clearly going to what would be a Family Court Clinic now for an assessment and I was only about seven or eight, remembering that they were not listening to anything we had to say. I remember clearly they were not listening ...that they didn't understand...that they were in the battle. They were the adults doing that battle thing, but they did not understand what was going on ...for either me or my brothers.

And likely it was around that same time, my brother who is three years older would be in extreme pain. I remember him on the front lawn just screaming in pain and falling down and the neighbour would come over and restrain him, put him in the car, [and] take him to the hospital. They would send him home and say there was nothing wrong with him. Told him it was all in his head.

Finally after a year, he was finally diagnosed with Perthy's disease which is a disease that rots out your hip bone. He would feel it in his knee and the pain would radiate and I guess they would x-ray his knee and there would be nothing wrong but I guess his hip bone was literally rotting away. So he wound up being hospitalized in a place called Crippled Children's Hospital. I remember that place quite well too. He had hip replacement surgery [and] was in a body cast for a year.

When he did come home, and it was very conflictual for him there too, because of the whole divorce situation. So he was like that for about a year and a half and then once he was out of the cast he quickly began to start drinking and drinking extremely heavily. At that point it was probably more emotional pain. I suspect the drugs they had him on. They did not understand the degree to which you really shouldn't put kids on that kind of pain killer medication.
So, twenty years later he continues to drink. I sort of watched him kill himself over the years and I think that has had an impact on me being in the field. When I think back I don't know how I felt at the time and I think back [and] I think how horrible it would have been for him, unable to move, in pain and having these crazy adult screaming at each other and having the police intervene because they couldn't be in the same room with one another.

In terms of my own home, I went through a period of living on the streets for at least four odd years at which time I was really a good example of an out-of-control adolescent. I have seen many of them who have been in my care who were just like me...impulsive, self-destructive, doing a lot of drugs and alcohol, escalating ...that type of thing.

You know I was clearly in a lot of trouble and I think...you know...at the time I would not have been able to think it at all but I needed help. I already had not trusted adults so I wasn't about to ask anyone for help and I think in adolescence it is often a time when it is really confusing and you may say your parents are crazy but is it your parents or is it you?

I never asked for help. I never had contact with social services. I probably should have been a protection case. I had come not to trust that anyone would help so I became silent. I was quite a ...I acted out a lot, but I was very quiet. I was quite withdrawn sort of ...[a] silent type. Although I was somewhat...you know, I was a bit rebellious.

My school experience was very bad...up until grade six, it was quite good in primary school I was accelerated, I went into enriched programming at a young, quite young [age]. In fact in some ways it was kind of ironic because it
would take me out of English to go to enriched programming ...so I actually never learned to write until I started school. [college].

My brother somehow was still in the school or around so that was always a bit of a problem but I remember school being okay. I was quiet...um but I seem to have been well-liked. I remember teachers would allow me to stay in the classroom after school and so I remember that as being quite good. Education-wise it is hard to say if it was that good. I wouldn't be able to learn given the stuff that was going on in my life. I moved to grade seven after my two brothers and three cousins who had been there...all with same last name...who were all in a lot of trouble. When I stared grade seven I was suspended the first day.

Basically it was because a teacher scared me...not because of anything I had done but he had questioned me about my relatives and made me stand up in class and I was being extremely anxious and you know my peer group was watching me and I really felt uh...you know embarrassed so I kind of choked back tears, told him to "fuck off" and ran out of the room.

That started off a few years of what I now call an abusive three years. I did very well in a couple of things. I did very well in the band and played in the band. I loved the band. I'd go in early and stay late. I practised all the time. But the teachers in that school had a lot of problems in that I started smoking drugs with teachers. I drank with teachers. It's amazing I ever got any boundaries. There was a vice-principal there who really had it out for single parents and in fact when I was fifteen he tried to take me to court to give me an early release from school. You had to
be sixteen and we had to go to court. We had this truant officer and that whole scenario started to unfold.

I was, by that time, mainly drunk or stoned day in or day out and I used to go to the drama room and relax. I spent a lot of times standing in hallways outside of offices or not going or getting into battles to get out.

I didn't make the transition to high school very well. I did a little bit of alternative schooling, but it just never quite was able to happen...so I ended up leaving school.

All through this time, despite living on the street, despite doing drugs...I continued to work with kids. I was always sober. I was never ever under any influence when I worked with the kids. I always liked being with the kids. We had a lot of fun...and that's really what I wanted to do at the time. I always maintained my job. Those were somehow always a priority and I always got it together but as I got a bit older...things really escalated in terms of my peers and the situations that were happening and so I led up to a period where ...um...there were three suicides in the course of two weeks...two of which I watched.

One was eighteen and one...he was a young guy...older than me but not much...uh jumped twenty-two floors down. I watched him...and then his girlfriend...four days later..shot herself up with bleach..and died...with her two very young children watching. And then his best friend...killed himself shortly after.

I had to get out...out of my community and very much of the time it felt like that was the world. And if I didn't leave there I was never going to get out. I was going to die there. I was going to be next...and so I did. I packed up the
little stuff I had...I had a room downtown...in the
city...and left...and that little period of time working on
becoming straight. An awful lot of time just spent in that
room by myself.

It was after a period of time. I cut off all contact
with my friends. Nobody knew where I was. I didn't tell
anyone where I was. I didn't tell them I didn't even feel I
could call at the time because it felt like it would just
consume me. I would just become part of that and although it
was the right decision, I felt like that was my family. On
the other hand I needed to get out. A lot of people were
experiencing a lot of turmoil. The substance abuse going on
was just astronomical when I think about it now in that if
it started when I was eleven or twelve. I was very
concerned. I remember becoming aware that I had done this
too long. I was not playing any more. This was very serious.

I really believed I had to go up to Moosonee to be able
to go to college. It was the distance. Then you got snowed
in in the winter. I think I needed some boundaries. I
actually took the Polar Bear Express up there. [but I made
a decision to attend in the city]. I'm not sure how I chose
to go in the city...to a college in the city but somewhere
along the line, because I was determined that if I wanted to
do this, I had to go there but I stayed in the city and I
started college. I was very, very unprepared for college. I
handed in my first assignment and it was one sentence,
twelve pages...one sentence. My spelling was atrocious, I
had no idea of grammar and I just couldn't write. They sent
me to remedial English and that was just such a blow.

I was humiliated. It was something at the time I
couldn't really face so I sort of got into a bit of a
rebellious stage in my first year of college. I always
thought they wanted to do therapy with me and I wasn't prepared to face any of those issues. I fought every step of the way and I regret to this day that I couldn't allow that to happen because my grammar is still not very strong. Despite not doing very well in my first year at all, I managed through it and I started working in a group home and so I'd work eleven to seven, go to class and then do my placement in the evenings.

The job gave me a lot of confidence. I got a lot of support and direction in the job. I had to learn a lot about professional behaviour. I wasn't out of control anymore. I was struggling. It was very hard to pay the bills and what have you...but I got help. I remember at the time the government gave grants. I would not have gone to college without that grant.

Work gave me a lot and school made me think... I don't really recall a lot of what happened in classes except people challenged me a lot on things (like I was angry) and I needed to resolve that. I remember very clearly this one woman who I very much admired and she was kind or unusual to me. [She] would talk in class about her analysis and that to be in this field you had to be in therapy and I remember reacting to that...I wasn't going to therapy! There was no way! I was working and doing my placement and things and really quite tired cause it seemed to me I never slept and issues were coming up. I was being faced with families I was angry at and my supervisor would challenge me on that. You know kids stirred up memories for me and I'd react and somewhere in that second year it became clear to me that I did need to get a therapist.

Somewhat reluctantly I did start therapy and that gave me a real clear perspective on things and gave me a
containing place for my own stuff...so that I could go and really concentrate on school, work and develop. My second year things really turned around. I got promoted. They paid me and I got all these promotions and what have you and in many ways people were really accommodating to me in terms of the needs I had...financially. All of a sudden I was getting a lot of perks there. I was getting promoted. People were telling me I was doing a good job. My evaluations were glowing. I actually wound up becoming a supervisor while I was still at school...so I was becoming an authority too which was a bit of...you know...a shift.

There is just so many things that led me to the field. A number of my peer group are in the field so I think that form of group care taking led me there. My experience with that little boy [story told in Chapter Seven] and many many others...many other kids...seeing what I saw with my brother...all those things made me want to [enter the profession]. I was going to change the system...I was going to change the world. It was good whenever I got over that too...

...because then I learned to do what really mattered and it was just one kid at a time and a relationship and I stopped worrying so much about the system and the world and everything else and I learned to...when I am in the milieu...that's it...that's the world...doesn't go beyond what's happening there and someday I hope to be able to explain that...

Annie describes her early experiences (persons, family, peers) as major sources of her thoughts and actions. Her knowledge evolved early as a result of life experience including life within a group of socio-economically deprived children from abusive backgrounds. She also experienced negative school experiences of humiliation, marginalization, teachers crossing boundaries.
She tells us that her learning was refined by her college experience. She lost her street language, took remedial writing courses. Importantly she was validated for her strengths and she developed an increased willingness for self-examination, including confronting her own anger.

In many ways her story is really a story of a youth who would have been a good candidate for care. She missed being brought into the system and, given her experiences working within it, she is relieved about that. She is dedicated to advocacy and changing the system. She was silenced as a child and is determined to give voice to children living in the margins today. Annie was self-taught in many ways but needed school to learn the language and navigate the systems of child welfare and children’s mental health.

Annie's personal knowledge is embodied in notions of safety, structure and advocacy for children and youth. In her own early experiences she found sanctuary and safety within the physical structure of a housing project and with a peer group who were bound together in a common need for survival, acceptance and nurturing. These provided her with a level of "containment" (a term she uses often to describe the work with children) and seemed to embed in her an altruistic attitude towards others, particularly children and youth. A pivotal experience of separation and hospitalization of her brother, with whom she had been close, gave her some early first-hand experience in issues of alienation and "loss of voice".

Summary

The participants of this study offer a rich and varied landscape of experience in child and youth care. Although this study includes only three participants, it represents an in-depth exploration of their experience. One participant has been practicing in the profession of child and youth counselling for over fifteen years and two are since retired from full-time work in the field. All were trained in the practice of child and youth care through an education which included theoretical and clinical teaching as well as field practice experience.

All remain committed to the profession and are strong advocates both for the profession and the children it serves. All have served in both paid and volunteer capacities in helping work. We are at a place in the history of our profession where we now have
people who have kept a lifelong commitment to the field. This is the first time in our young history that we have the benefit of this rich experience.

As noted in the introductory profiles of the participants, all could be considered on the margins of society. Robeson is a male in a predominately female profession. Athena has a long history of being on the outside as a female German Jew living in a traditional family. Annie could be describing one of the youth we work with each day, definitely children on the margins of society. All experienced economic barriers which made it difficult to receive and achieve an education. All are keen observers of the social circumstances surrounding their own lives and those of the children and youth they have sought to assist through their chosen career paths. They each possess a wealth of personal and professional experience which will help shed light on the realities of the profession, its challenges and shortcomings, what they have or have not learned through their training and experience, and what others might benefit from in future training and education.

Through recounting their life histories in relation to their profession and reflecting on their own learning, they are able to offer keen insight into the everyday workings of the profession. I consider them wise provocateurs. They are in a position to use the benefit of their life experience and personal development to describe what was helpful to them in learning about the work, what mistakes they made, how they best learned. Since they are all educators they bring a perspective from “both sides of the desk”. They represent a sample that demonstrates a commitment and high regard for the work.

In the upcoming chapters these participants offer their insights, stories and reflections in the hope of contributing to the objectives of the research. As one of the participants indicated, we are in a “field under siege” and in the next chapter the stories and opinions of the participants reflect some of the underlying problems, issues and concerns in the profession and the system surrounding it.
CHAPTER FIVE: INSIDE THE PROFESSION

...our patches don’t fit and they don’t heal and we are just trying to help the walking wounded cope...so it never comes across as all that easy. I think the general public has this sort of idea that kids get sent into residence, that something magical happens. They don’t know what happens but out they come and they are okay.

(quote from participant)

Introduction

In the previous chapter you were introduced to the research participants and their storied accounts of what led them to their work in the profession of child and youth care counselling. This chapter is designed to explore the work through the perspectives of these three counsellor/practitioners and, in doing so, learn more about their personal philosophy of practice in working with children, their nagging concerns, their moral dilemmas. Their narratives and stories will introduce you to some of the children with whom they have worked, societal attitudes surrounding these children and the many roles involved in their professional work. Their stories will also acquaint you with the some of the problems they have experienced while practising. In their unfolding narratives we begin to see the complexity and density of the work, the conditions of the work as seen by them - the working realities.

Through the participants’ narratives and stories we are able to explore the essential character of the profession, the deeply personal nature of the work, the emotional connections, the frustrations and the satisfactions. In the final section of this chapter the participants identify what they see as the gaps in their training, what they wish they had known upon entering the field and, for them, what constitutes good practice.

Participants’ Descriptions of the Work

The Children

When Robeson was asked to describe the profession of child and youth care to others, he indicated that one cannot describe the work without first talking about the children:

I think first of all you would have to spend some time explaining the type of child that you are working with, their background and give a few examples. I can recall when I worked in Victoria we had one child there
whose name was Bob and he came to us at the age of six which was quite young to come into the centre. We usually try to keep them away until at least eight but he had SIXTEEN foster homes by the age of six! You know quite a disturbed child and I know he was ah initially smearing feces on the wall and all that.

The children who come to the attention of child and youth care workers/counsellors have many labels and manifest a wide range of behavioral and emotional difficulties. Some are the behavior problems in schools that none of the teachers want to deal with in their classrooms; some may have a psychiatric difficulty which brings them to a children's psychiatric unit or mental health facility. Some have been abused and neglected and are under the protection of the Children's Aid Society. They are called troubled, delinquent, street kids or runaways, throwaway children, incorrigible, anti-social, special education kids, foster kids, group home kids. They may be the children who turn their problems inward, becoming depressed or suicidal, self mutilating or anorexic. Some may be experiencing problems that are transitional in nature as a result of divorce, death or other losses, while some have long-standing difficulties which are developmental or biological in nature.

In the following passages some of these children are described by participants in the research project:

a child who has been damaged, usually from day one, from birth.

they were neglected...they had all kinds of ...different kinds of internalizing problems. They were having eating problems, body image problems... self-esteem problems, depression, self-mutilation....

I don't believe kids are born bad...and I have seen some very young kids who seem on a trajectory to badness...I don't think they started that way. I always believe that somewhere inside there is something. You just have to find it...sometimes it takes a long time...sometimes it is really difficult

whether it is the kid who is offensive and doesn't, you know, doesn't bathe and spits at you and is angry at you the whole time...or the withdrawn who threatens suicide at every step you take. They are both extremes.

Extremes in behavior are not unusual in children who are served by this profession.

The magnitude of their problems often manifest themselves in behavior which is socially unacceptable and sometimes bizarre. Terms such as conduct disorder and anti-social
behavior, terms used to flag these children diagnosisaly, can't describe the pain and suffering many of these children and youth have endured. Not all the children exhibit the extremes that are described by these informants; however the excerpts are meant to provide the reader with a sense of the complex, often volatile nature of the job settings. Since all participants have worked in both residential and psychiatric settings which tend to 'house' some of the most difficult of the problematic behaviours, many of their narratives/stories centre around some of the more problematic cases.

She was probably psychotic, pre-psychotic or whatever. She was epileptic and at times she would become very, very quiet and she would have an aura, and the aura was she would see a bear. And you knew that very soon after seeing this, ... she said "I saw a bear", we would try to get her lying down as soon as possible, usually we would prop her leg... but Sally was an acting-out kind of girl and she would deliberately ...she would be quiet and in her room and she would be stark naked and she would be masturbating and another time she would be in such a terrible frenzy and you would have to grab her and get her away from the other kids and put her into a quiet room. One of the rules was...if you put them in the quiet room, you stay with them as long as possible....she was a big gal...she was a big fourteen years old at the time. She would then, if you weren't watching her, she would take off her pants and stimulate her rectal area until she defecated.

I remember this kid, he would defecate. He would destroy things. I seem to recall being in so many restraints with him. He was out of control. I certified him. I had him certified 14 times in two weeks. He was so out of control. More out of control than any kid I've ever seen...

... they would have been considered some of the most dangerous fourteen year olds who were here...you know these kids - one of them was being taxied in every day from Etobicoke. He had been that out-of-control and that dangerous. The other one was so suicidal that you know at any given time there had been suicide attempts. He had been hospitalized many, many times. The other kid was so traumatized she didn't speak for a long, long, long, time. So these weren't easy kids...

The eight boys were probably the worst acting-out behavior disorders in the province of Ontario because the word went out that they wanted kids

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4 Certified: a procedure in mental health institutions called a Form One, a legal document ordering a patient into care for a period of 72 hours: generally used in extreme cases where patient is considered a harm to him/herself or others.
the other centres were finding difficult to handle...and then there was a selection process of maybe a psychiatrist and psychologist set up to see these kids, go over their case histories and decide whether they were suitably disturbed.

...this is a girl, I mean she didn't even know who [her parents were], her mother had the baby in jail and ran away from the maternity ward. She didn't know who her father was. She had no family and then from then on things went downhill [emphatic]...I mean there were far more serious problems with this young woman.

One of the participants describes the deprived nature of some children's backgrounds and workers' attempts to accommodate this deprivation. All participants spoke of the significance of food for these children, the supply of it, the presentation, the rituals surrounding it. In this particular residential centre, children were often found hoarding food in their rooms.

...but I think in talking with someone who doesn't know [about these children] you give the various examples that these kids are so deprived that we kept a cookie jar with instructions to the cook that the cookie jar was in the main dining room in a prominent spot. She should keep it full as much as possible and at all times. She should never let it go below three quarters full...if a child wanted to have a cookie two minutes before suppertime then the child should be allowed. We had many kids who would initially come in and we would find cookies under the mattress...

I remember this one kid, he was really quite severely abused. He was in residence and he was one of those kids that hoarded food, right? and I have always had a policy around food that kids eat as much as they want. It's not always worked so well for kids who have eating problems, but my experience has been more trauma and neglect. So kids have always, in the house, been able to eat all they want. It is just a core value...that "breaking bread" value that we talked about....you know that you have to feed kids, right? It is very symbolic in terms of nurturing, caretaking you know. This one kid who was very deprived would hoard food in his room and no matter what I did to talk to him about it there would be more food you know. "You don't need to bring it up to your room." We would talk and talk and talk about it. It didn't matter. He was hoarding food. I could have fed this kid until you know ..eternity..and he is still going to hoard food because one day that food was going to be taken away. And in reality he was right..because one day he was going to be discharged from the residence and he wouldn't have that food anymore.

Robeson recounts a story which further highlights the significance of food for the children, specifically one in residential care:
We had a boy come to the centre and he was there I think it was the first two days. Then he was missing. Gone. You know we were out looking for him and we’d go find the police etc. Just before supper the next day he came back and brought his brother with him.

“Where have you been?”

“Well,” he said, “I have been home and I told my brother how good it was here and said you know the food is like this. You should come here and live as well.”

So...that is a good story and people should have this explained... I think child and youth work students, this should really be impressed upon them. You are really bringing organization in to disorganized lives.

Some stories refer to the familial complications of working with this population of children:

One other story I recall, a very bright girl at the centre. She had an IQ of 140. She was the daughter of a lieutenant commander. No matter what she did it didn’t please her father. If she got an A she should have got an A+. Never good enough and there was always this hassle with her father. She used to go home weekends. One night she came back. Some of the Sunday nights depending on what was going on, I would go up and see the kids when they came back [from home visits] and see what kind of shape they are in. And I went out this night and she got out of the car, slammed the door and her father kind of took off and I asked her what kind of weekend she had.

“Nothing is ever good enough for him but I fixed the bastard!”

“Come on. What have you done?.”

“I’m not going to tell you. I fixed him real good!”

That was on the Sunday. On the following Friday I had a call from the father at the navy docks. He was scheduled to take this sundown parade and the routine was that whoever took the parade would have to be vice admiral, but he had to actually take the parade in full regalia including his sword and his medals. He went to his glove compartment just before the parade started and his medals aren’t there! He was in trouble because he didn’t have his medals. We had to write a letter saying that he had a daughter in treatment and this was to the vice-admiral...she had stolen them..she had taken them out of the glove department. So she fixed him proper.

Athena tells a disturbing story of one of her first days at a mental health facility:
yeah, they had straight jackets, hydrotherapy ...the water pack treatment and a little girl on this ward with all these people, all these women...a five year old little girl!

Interviewer: five years old?

Athena: Kelly Sue...who was...mute by the time I met her. She was alternately being masturbated by one group of women and saved by another group of women...it was...you know. I assume there was no place to put little girls. No place for children, poor children.

One of Annie’s beginning stories about working with a young boy who had been seriously physically abused, sheds some light on the emotional nature of the work with children.

I mean I can still picture this kid...I can still remember...I wanted to take this kid in...unfortunately I didn’t have a place to live but I remember having that feeling...I would have taken this kid in and now I think about, you know...it’s just so...naive in terms of all the dynamics but at the time it was very powerful. I think what I learned the most from that is I remember seeing him in the hospital, black and blue...right? He was just so badly beaten and burned and he was crying. He wanted to go back to his Dad...and I just couldn’t understand it. Right? I didn’t want them to do that. I didn’t understand how he could go back to his Dad. I just remember it being so painful that this kid would do that and I’m not sure when it was that I understood why that was...but I remember at the time I thought things should be different! I thought there should be other ways...

Societal Attitudes Towards these Children: Hidden and Marginalized

When you turn twelve for some reason in Canada all of a sudden you’re bad...right? forget that they are hurt kids ...

(quote from participant)

These children can best be described as the “marginalized” in our society. They are sometimes referred to as “throwaway children”, those that society is uncomfortable dealing with. The emotional or “mental” aspects of their illnesses are perhaps not as well understood or empathized with, as with children with physical disabilities or physical illness. Participants speak to this marginalization:

well...we hide them. That didn’t really come up in my transcripts but that is a function...of this job...it is about hiding...it is about social control.. it is. We may not like it but...
They have to be locked up and they have to be hidden away then I think that is what you get and I think that is what Warrendale showed, right? They expected those kids to be out-of-control and they were...whereas you expect them to manage...they do... and they always managed it. Most [of the] out-of-control behaviour happens within institutions.

This hiding away of troubled youth further contributes to the marginalization.

In terms of residential..kids coming into residential are out-of-control, right? Their behavior has really had them sort of banished from their community and they get sent away to be fixed, right? So they have already been given a message that they are not okay... they are bad. They have to go away and get fixed. Most kids I know react to that by doing. “Right. I am. I am bad and I’m going to show you just how bad I am.” And they proceed to that.

Annie, who has many years experience in working with and researching young offender facilities, describes her findings about some of the children:

I just did a study and the average kid at 16 years...had 5 or more placements in the 3-5 years they had been in care. That’s average. There is extremes on either side. On average they were moving once a year to different caretakers. We have NO idea what we are doing to those kids What we are developing is people who won’t be able to form relationships, they won’t be able to form attachments...they won’t even have relationships with peers, or parents or colleagues. They haven’t learned to trust and they have learned to hate. That’s all we are teaching them. When you follow these kids and you put them through the young offenders service which we are doing we just continue to disrupt their attachment and make them more angry. Then we find that they break down placements. They won’t form attachments...they won’t do all the stuff we talked about ..the core service...you can’t reach these kids ..they think that no one will care for them...that all they have to do is act up and they are going to get kicked out....so they learn that cycle and it is a lot easier to reject than to be rejected so we are setting these kids up to do that, and we continue to reject them and we dump them into young offenders’ facilities...

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5 Warrendale was a group home facility in Ontario which utilized some controversial ideas in dealing with troubled children. A film was made and has recently been re-released and aired on TVO.
She goes on to express a deep concern towards our treatment of children in general.

It's just...they are hurt kids...and we are just making it worse and we are alienating them and keeping kids in cells for 24 hours a day does not help them to get back, I don't know. I think we have to do something about triage care and I also think if we start to see these kids as hurt and start tearing down some of the jails .....but no we are building jails...we should be frightened I think...we should be very frightened about our kids...of how we are losing the generation...not just treatment kids...kids in general.

Alternative ways of looking at the problems are offered.

I hear change the kid...he has got to sit down in class. He has got to stop speaking out. He has to stop touching people. He can't throw desks. He can't do this. He can't do that...on and on and on and on it has to be changed in the kid. They never come and somebody says to me we will change their family or change their school or change their community because the kid isn't meeting their optimal development and we need to provide a better environment for them.

We've got this backwards. We have to start thinking that the solution to the problem is us meeting the kid's needs...not kids meeting system's needs.
And I think every time we move a kid we have to think of it as a failure. Right now we think of it as the kids' failure. The kid hasn't made it in the foster home.

Annie describes her personal philosophy around the 'hiding' of these children.

I don't know if I told you this the last time...you see kids have never let me down this way. I don't believe in that. I don't believe in making kids hide. I've done all kinds of things with them. You know, we have a fund-raiser coming, you know? We drag them off to dinners, you know ...somebody is going to give us money so I'd comb their hair...you know, tell them just be nice...be nice. But if things are important it makes me think of the Warrendale film and going to the funeral and there is this perception that we can't take these kids out. They can't be out in public and there is a reason why we have them hidden away. Kids have never ever let me down...and you saw it in the Warrendale film. All those kids managed through that funeral.... managed to contain their emotion, stand there...looked good...dealt with all their disturbance or whatever it is that they are supposed to have that they can't go out in public and managed to walk back to the program without incident. I have taken kids all over the
place. Never once have they ever failed me. It is about what you expect of them.

Problems Experienced by Participants in the Workplace: The Working Reality

In general, child and youth counselling practice is depicted as a highly complex occupation affected by a number of political constraints. These include low wages, depreciated status, difficult sometimes dangerous working conditions and loosely defined methods of practice. In this section participants describe some of the background problems they experience in the field. In addition to the above they describe the lack of public support for the work, the scarcity of resources and the lack of professional status.

Job Complexity and Roles

The complexity of child and youth care was evident throughout the reading of the transcripts.

... it is also clear that things were very complex but I didn't really have all the tools to really understand how to manage all the complexity.

Workers are responsible for creating an atmosphere for children and youth which is warm, supportive, tolerant and sensitive. In addition to creating a therapeutic milieu, participants described being responsible for daily activities and routines, supervision requirements, program planning, therapy sessions, liaising with parents, agencies, schools, psychiatrists and other professionals, attending appointments, developing budgets, purchasing equipment, toys and supplies, visits to hospitals and emergency clinics. Also mentioned were establishment of training courses, and developing guidelines, training, consulting with team members, attending staff meetings, designing and implementing programs and acting as advocates for children. Participants described the crisis nature of the work. Children and youth sometimes required physical or pharmaceutical restraint, emergency counselling, medical treatment, and individual or group intervention. Often workers were asked to work overtime or took on the initiative themselves in an effort to calm or resolve a crisis situation.

In addition to the day-to-day work with clients, informants described having to complete paperwork which included daily and weekly reports and logs, medication
reports, critical incidents forms, medical forms, other ministry forms and program planning guidelines. In addition to paperwork there were a number of administrative tasks which could include anything from ordering household supplies and equipment, committee work, and program planning. Often the job, particularly in residential settings, included household tasks such as cleaning, cooking, and shopping.

Child and youth care professionals often work closely with colleagues and are part of a team. This requires skills in communication, problem-solving and team building. There are additional obligations in the role of supervisor or supervisee.

An increased call for accountability as well as a dedication to professional development casts the child and youth worker increasingly in the role of writer, data collector, researcher and evaluator.

Given the interactive, holistic nature of the profession workers were often expected to flourish in a number of other roles including teacher, recreation leader, life skills coach, arts and crafts specialist, parent and nurse. Some of the other role assignments participants referred to were correctional officer, security guard, authority figure, judge, buddy, and private detective.

Adding to the complexity was the often contradictory nature of the roles workers were expected to take on. One such example cited was in the area of control agent. While workers were expected to keep children under control or hidden away they also knew there were times when the child needed to “blow off steam” or “act out” in an effort to feel safe and secure in their environment or with their workers.

right..but the danger of that is that it makes us become security guards, right? and we are just the containers and we are putting ourselves back in the position where we have to hide away these kids so...I think we have to start validating the skill base we have and the relationship and the complexity of that. We have to validate our communication skills, our theoretical orientation. When I was in college I couldn't have articulated who all these theorists were. Now fifteen years later I may be able to articulate them but the skills are still there. I just didn't have the language.

I think the complexity is more in our ability to manage other people...to manage different relationships, to organize, to communicate on many, many different levels, to intervene and de-escalate, more so..those are highly valued skills in the workplace - in the real workplace.
Difficult working conditions

I think residential care is the most difficult working situation there is. You are emotionally always drained. You have to be hyper-vigilant. It’s demanding and whether that is just playing with kids or physically restraining kids or just...you know...day-to-day life with kids...it is exhausting. You know you think about parents with one or two kids and you know they are exhausted. You become parent to [these children] and these ten are very damaged. They come to you that way. It is not like we are raising healthy kids. We are patching up hurt kids.

Workers described busy schedules, often without breaks or time to discuss cases. They were left little time for reflection and analysis of problematic situations. They described a scarcity of resources which made the otherwise routine tasks of housekeeping and cooking meals, bathtime and hygiene problematic.

Issues are largely systemic and I think that my difficulty now in the field has far more to do with systemic issues and how we go about caring for kids than anything to do with the kids. When I go into a place and there is no tea towels or utensils...in these places, right?....and I wish I had known that when I came into the field. I wish I had known just how little people valued...to have kids raised in a home where there is not utensils to cook meals or tea towels or the bathroom is leaking...you are trying to cook a meal and you’ve got water from the bathroom dripping on you...

Participants described the work as very demanding with low pay, no breaks, lack of status, high propensity towards burnout and stress, and unrealistic expectations.

I mean that is another problem with the job. There is no time. You don’t get breaks....you are usually working 8 to 12 hour shifts and you just never get a break...it is amazing we could ever think...

...wages so low for our responsibility . I just went through pay equity and the skill level and the skill breakdown of our job is just phenomenal. We never talk about that. We just take care of the kids. We just do that. We keep real quiet....and our complying ...maintains the problem.

Exactly! Responsible for all that and you know barely able to survive plus working on average 80 hours a week because between on call and this...you know

...you don’t get coffee breaks or all those other things other workers have...I don’t even know what it is like to have breaks like that. I don’t even know what the laws are around that. I do know that the law is different for residence...which says something...you’re underpaid...you
work a lot of overtime and you are not compensated. I was in charge of the

group home when I worked in residence so I was always on call and my

pager could go off at any given time. Ten adolescent boys can cause some

problems...24 hours a day...seven days a week!

Dangerous Work

As indicated in the aforementioned quote, putting children with difficulties
together in group settings can create some powerful dynamics. Anger and aggression are

commonplace in child and youth care settings and all participants tell stories of their
dangerous experiences.

Beginning stories

Some of those kids from those early experiences were just so difficult and

...you know there is just such pain and I remember being quite scared and I

was quite young and you were often alone with these ten big kids who

were all really angry and...

It was a very scary place. There was a little girl on the ward. I asked to

work with...I will never understand why [emphasis]...must have been afraid

I would be bored or something, I asked to work with, I guess I said violent

patients and damn if they didn’t let me! They put me on the worst ward and

I was just a kid. [feigning incomprehension] and they put me on the semi-

violent ward, whatever the hell that is I have no idea...

Horror stories

There was one child, a child who was a thirteen year old boy. He came

from Nova Scotia. He was schizophrenic. He was thirteen. He was easily

the size of a sixteen year old. He was a big, big boy and he, when he

became psychotic, you would get him into the dining room and we would

sit down. He had a tremendous appetite, he would eat his dinner and then

he would say “I want my dinner!” and you said “Tony, you have already

had your dinner.” Suddenly the table would go up, dishes would be
everywhere [emphasis].... One day he got completely out of control just
after we had been on the rink ice-skating. I was the lucky one who had to
move in and handle him and I gather I wasn’t as quick as I could have been.

He kicked me with his skates on...and it hurt but you know he was so out
of control I almost didn’t feel it because I had to deal with him and ...to
calm him down one of the psychiatric staff had to come and give him a

needle to put him out...
Another child was cause for concern:

And you knew, you knew that you couldn’t turn your back on him. If he had a knife he would let you have it!

Annie provides us with a vivid description of how dangerous the workplace can be:

...in fact I have a number of stories where kids have tried to hurt me and we have worked through them...many of them therapeutic...but I remember this kid. I managed to get myself...which was part of...sort of...it was young is what it was...in behind a kid in a bathroom and really I should have had an out for myself and out for him. But I didn’t do that, so he managed to have a uh razor blade to my throat...and had me trapped in there for a good, I think we were there probably six hours in the washroom talking to him...

One of the participants makes reference to a tragic incident in which a young worker was killed on the job. He is referring to an incident which took place in February, 1989 where a young, inexperienced youth worker was working alone on an overnight shift in a community residential setting. A boyfriend of one of the young female residents stabbed her to death.

What happened to her, that was so tragic and you know it’s easy to point blame at someone but she should never have been left alone or semi-alone in that kind of situation.

Although a certain amount of anger, aggression and violence can be expected given some of the circumstances under which children come to be in the care of child and youth counsellors, Athena maintains that much can be prevented through proper resources, planned admissions, careful training and a welcoming, well maintained milieu. She tells a story of her experiences at a treatment facility:

One of the miracles of this treatment facility was that the kids ate off crystal, you know their glasses were crystal...[they used] stainless steel platters. Sometimes the kids had cranberry glasses to drink from. The fixtures were absolutely gorgeous, the wall paper was gorgeous, the accoutrements of that whole place were just incredible. The reason I tell
you this story is because the kids never destroyed anything. Never. They never threw their glasses. They never scratched the walls. They never carved the furniture and they were never told they can’t...The only rule they were told when they were coming in was you can’t hurt yourself or anybody else. That’s it. Shit where you want, pee where you want and they did you know. They did all kinds of peculiar things ...ate with their hands...but they never destroyed anything.

Int: They found some way to express themselves but not by destroying any of...

A: Well cause they realized and I think [the staff] was absolutely right. They [the children]realized this was for them.

Int: It wasn’t like a stop along the way?

A: Well, no because they stayed a long time, all these kids...but the environment was made pleasant and continuously kept in good shape...We kept that place ship-shape. And that’s of course the secret..anybody who runs a ..you know that from running your place. You have something that’s broken and you don’t fix it right away, they will. The kids will fix it for you...ha.

Athena believed, as did the other informants, that the milieu was extremely important in providing a warm, safe atmosphere. All had stories of damage to property and all indicated that if the damage was not repaired immediately, more damage would follow shortly afterward.

what the surroundings says to a child. You know if you get a hole kicked in a wall and you leave it there for 24 hours you stand to get two more to go along with it.

Unfortunately upkeep of facilities was not consistent and often presented a problem for workers as indicated in the following section.

**Scarcity of Resources**

Athena speaks of her work in another residential children’s mental health facility after leaving the treatment facility:

yeah, really bad. And I spent most of my time, I guess trying to recreate the the [last place I worked] ..make it a livable..digestible place for children. I
mean, I would have my therapy office in some old hen coop and I would somehow fix that place up so that it would be just cozy and inviting...

She expresses her discouragement and anger at the administrator of the facility.

The kids would be at camp in the summer and then they'd come back and I wanted to fix the place up and receive them, lovingly... Well they slept on these metal beds with army blankets...and I think even all the mattresses had plastic on them or rubber on them...and it pissed me off you know...that was no way to treat kids. So I went out and got um mattress pads and I think some blankets...blankets and he made me take them all back!

Annie wishes she had known about this scarcity of resources when she came into the field. She struggled with this issue often throughout her career and sees it as a direct response to how children, particularly these children are valued.

... you know because I have worked in those places where the water is dripping where the kitchen is and I gave quality care despite all this....and those obstacles make it so much harder...it's not like...some people say the environment doesn't matter....the environment says what you care about...and when you walk into a group home or a treatment program and you see that it is shabby or falling down that is a value of how we care about kids.....

I don't think we care as a society ...I mean society really has to start caring and the children and until then we will have the demands of the job. I get outraged. I do think that the system screws up so many kids . I can never totally divorce myself from that. There is a part of me that has to change some of those things....but there is nothing that is ever going to change in my lifetime the way I would like it to. I would like that every residential program we have.....You know in Ontario we have about 16,000 beds, right?....that probably means there are about 40,000 kids floating through our residential system. um...and how many of them can you count?....five maybe that are decent programs? and the rest are from there down...so you know it is not uncommon to go into a group home and there is not even a dining room table. How do you live in a house without a dining room table? and we license them....because you know their hot water is hot enough that their dishes will be sterile and uh you know they've got screens on their doors....

The implications of this scarcity of resources is far reaching. It is not just evident in the milieu but presents itself in terms of underpaid staffing, unsuccessful treatment interventions and inadequate training of those working with children.
They will build bigger prisons, but not acknowledge that if you want to change a kid it takes time and money, and if your going to have the courage to change it, that person has to have enough to bring up his or her own family...

It is evident through many of these narratives that this scarcity of resources represents dilemmas for these workers and makes an already difficult and complex job even harder. All participants describe problems they have encountered being largely systemic in nature.

**Lack of status**

Closely tied to this scarcity of resources is the lack of status afforded those who choose to do this job. Robeson tells us:

It didn't pay enough money really to equate what was being paid in industry and I think it's still somewhat like that. I am a little out-of-date as to what the salary structure is. I know personally I could have earned a lot more money had I been in industry.

Annie describes the pecking order nature of the profession, how the workers are viewed and how they, in turn, take on this diminished status.

They [the children] were there twenty hours a week. They'd spend two hours with other disciplines, one usually a psychologist or a psychiatrist and one a social worker. The other 18 hours, now I mean this goes back to a residence, the other 18 hours were spent with child care workers who weren't clinicians...um so if they were sent for treatment and 18 of the 20 hours were spent with people who weren't clinicians supposedly. What were they doing there and where was the treatment coming from? I don't think it seeped through the walls. These kids did get better so something was happening. But no one would have ever called us a clinician... and it is interesting because I hear child care workers not call themselves clinicians either. I think we are clinicians and we are putting kids in residential treatment and something we do causes treatment then we need to figure out what it is we do and acknowledge that we have a clinical role... but that is like a Monty Python movie, right? How can you not be providing treatment if the bulk of the time providing treatment you are not having treatment staff. Child care workers buy into it and that's where I think we have to make some professional changes. We see it in our professional association where they don't want to be clinicians...they want to be grass roots, front-line something else...as long as you want to be that, you will be that. It serves the purpose because then we can fund these
places. If we were to fund day-treatment or residential properly we would have half the numbers.

Robeson tells us of one of his mentor's attitude towards the mental health hierarchy.

...He had no time for psychiatrists and he felt that child care workers should project themselves once they began to know what they were doing, project themselves as true professionals. Doing this, you felt that a lot of the social workers resent you because there was this or they tried to institute a pecking order.

He describes his feelings at an early conference held for those working with children in mental health settings.

This was a conference of educators and social workers, and child care workers, and what happened during that first day, it was like a discussion-conference. The people who were not child care workers there were presenting their ideas about how to treat children...still regarding child care workers as the low person on the end of the totem pole. The group of us there became very angry...

All participants see advocacy as a necessary step in addressing this issue.

so while I may have some role in teaching and I may have some role in advocating for the profession...the leaders are in the front line and we have to figure out how to empower them.

As long as the staff aren't empowered the kids are going to be fairly disempowered. We really have to empower the front line staff....you know, it is like a kick the dog kind of thing whether you want to admit it or not...when people feel so disempowered...you know the oppressed oppress and our staff are an oppressed group and we oppress kids...and our society oppresses kids so...

Lack of Professionalism

Lack of status is closely intertwined with notions of professionalism. Participants express grave concerns over training, practice guidelines and certification of the field. Lack of professional standards give agencies license to hire who they please, sometimes at the expense of the children and youth they are attempting to help.
but it is bigger...it is how we think about kids in care....it is how we handle kids in care. It's that you know....anybody can come in without an education and say they provide treatment and they don't have any training but the fault with that lies with the system.

Participants express a concern about the transitory nature of the field, how some enter it as a stepping stone to another profession or a stop along the way. The political nature of oppression is addressed in this participant’s view of why the work is undervalued:

I have seen enough people pass through it. And there is something about identifying with the kids and their oppression and taking that on that makes it very hard for child care workers to empower themselves. But I really have come to believe that as long as child care workers are empowered we are disempowering the kids we care for. So somehow child care workers have to get the message that by empowering themselves they will empower others. I don't know how they are going to do that but that is what we have to do.

Robeson identified this issue from his very early days in the profession. Child care work is a professional discipline in it's own right and that is something with which you struggle. Earlier, I had terrible struggles because other disciplines wanted to, you know, tell child care workers how to do it.

His views on what needs to be done:

I wish I had another 40 years to live [laughing] but I feel that the profession of child care work is not going to come into its own until there is a college of child care work....If there were a college...association of child and youth counsellors, their prime responsibility is to protect the interest of its members. A College’s responsibility is to protect the interest of the public. When I say public I mean children, parents, anyone concerned with the well-being of children. So here you have two separate entities which could work together and are legally separated because they both have their particular roles to play. The College of Child and Youth Counsellors job would be to establish examinations.... So in essence you would have 3 or 4 markers before people would be “qualified and registered” and registered to work with children.

He concludes:

This will be the advantage of having a college. It would be an advantage to the public, protection of the public. It would be an advantage to the status
of the Association [of Child and Youth Counsellors] and it would be an advantage for the community colleges to know where they rank within the college system. If I could get that message across, to get that established would be wonderful. It has got to come. That is my message; it has to come if child care work wants to be established as a true profession.

Propensity for Burnout

There can be no doubt that child and youth care is an emotionally exhausting job. Practitioners are being asked to make decisions which affect children's lives on a daily, sometimes moment-by-moment basis. Combine this with some of the other concerns we have addressed such as low mobility, poor pay and working conditions, difficult clients, and a collective low self-esteem and we have a recipe for burnout.

All participants described situations where they experienced disillusionment and disappointment and a feeling of being overwhelmed. They noted the potential for secondary trauma and recognized that many people were not 'cut out for this kind of work'.

Robeson describes a colleague who burned out early in the job.

... was a therapist but had very great difficulty initially in relating to the kids and she came to me one day. I was a fellow she knew, she cried and cried and cried. She couldn't take it anymore..

Participants described their own coping with the stresses and pressures of the job:

It was very demanding in many ways, because you know I had to learn that. I had to learn to leave my work behind when I left the centre. Many people have told me about if they are on an afternoon shift, coming off at night, usually ten o'clock having to spend some time winding down before they felt ready for any form of home life or social life.

One participant shared some notes from a particularly difficult phase in her professional career.

I have been in the field for fifteen years and I've loved it since the first day I started. I worked with the kids, not the system. I didn't understand the system and did not want to interact with the system anymore than I had to. They made me fill out useless forms, which took away time from the kids. On occasion they would provide an extra staff, help a kid out a bit and let them stay a few more weeks or even pay to fix that leaky toilet. We clearly were 'us' and they were 'them', and that was ok. I didn't understand how the system worked, how powerful it is, how pervasive it is, how society influences they system. I didn't understand the system's ethics, nor the
ethical implications of its interventions. I’ve been starting to learn about the
system particularly over the past couple of years. I wish I hadn’t.

Another participant expressed a wish for one way of treating trauma in workers.
Well, I’m hoping when there is more awareness of when this kind of trauma
happens, that they do now what they do with subway drivers. They have
them see someone, you know over a period of time and you know have a
series of counselling sessions. Because I know at one time when a suicide
happened on the Toronto Subway nothing happened... the guy only had one
or two days off... that was it. Today they see one of their trauma experts
and you know it is so important that staff initially are not placed in those
situations, there is some back-up procedure and never on their own in that
kind of setting where there is a potential it may not happen in a dozen years
but you know... that one occasion.

Why Stay? Personal Meaning / Rewarding work

So, given the nature of the work that has been described, the children, the system,
the danger. Why and how do people stay involved? Although this question was not posed
directly, participants indicated great satisfaction and meaning in their jobs. As indicated,
two of the participants have retired from the field (yet are still active in it) and one has
been practising for over fifteen years.

They described the greatest source of satisfaction coming from the children
themselves.

I really felt we made a difference. I cared very much [emphasis] about
making a safe house for kids so they could grow and that meant investing a
lot of myself and my own emotions. I still am in contact with many of the
kids I played a little part in raising. I still see lots of those kids and it is nice
to see. Some haven’t done well... some have done very well. It’s always nice
no matter where I run into them. They are always happy to see me and they
always want to tell me what’s going on.

Kids consistently tell me that... that they felt fed and cared for and none of
that describes what child and youth workers do in milieu so, it is difficult,
because although you do feed them and you do hopefully provide a nice
place, there is an emotional containment that takes a lot of work...

Eight kids coming in and we were going to make a difference and I think
we did... because we believed in them... we had nothing... when I think
about that house and how many times we’d have to bring stuff in ourselves
from pots and pans to food to what have you...nobody was paying the bills but we made a lot happen for those kids...

Others talk about being allowed to play in this profession.

You know that business thing...I really only had one job outside of the field for a little while...[In this work] I got to play with toys, build lego, play basketball or shoot pool...or whatever it was I was doing and I wanted to avoid the business thing at all costs and so I did.

There is something important that is unique to our field.... um...so that is why I came to the field...I didn't want to grow up and not play.

It is also really important with these kids too because play has become their vehicle to tell you what has happened to them. To teach them how to play and just have fun too....like you know just rolling on the floor and laughing because you just had such a good time...it is just so funny...you know.

All spoke of the moral commitment, as acting as agents for change.

We really have to start providing for kids' development and understanding how they are dependent on our society and that it is not up to one person to make sure of that. It is up to all of us...and then you know it would be really nice not to have child care workers....I would love to work with healthy normal kids...they are just so different.

So it just fits who I am. I mean to this day, this happens to me at least once a day, I look at what people do for a living, like making ads, working really, really hard at making the best ads available...and I think how do you explain what the meaning of life is to yourself? It is hard enough even with my bent, the fact that I am an activist. It is still hard to figure out what the hell this journey is all about. But if I spent my working hours creating the best ad in the world, I would really not know. I would really be in serious psychological difficulty [laughing]. Oh...I see! I am in the world to sell Nabisco. They must say to themselves I am here to make money.

[we are] agents for change, maybe it should be agents for hope and change, for hope and change in children and youth. We can all look back and see some failures in working with kids, kids who have not responded to treatment, kids who end up in penitentiaries. On the other hand, there are many kids I have met, many years after who have made it in life. I can recall one who is today a carpenter, who is doing quite well, who has a family of his own. I can recall another one, she along with her husband operate a business here in Toronto...I met her and without any boasting at
all, here she was a beautifully dressed young woman with a suit saying to me “Robeson, one day I am going to be worth a million”...and I believed her!

There are, of course, many reasons for staying in the profession. Here we have captured a few of the reasons people enjoy and stay in the work. Other reasons will become evident in other chapters of the research project.

**What Informants Say About Child and Youth Care Training**

You hear these stories all the time ...there is something to intuition and I have it...more and more I believe in its existence but I find it really frustrating that we can't articulate it....so maybe we need to provide people with the language so they can articulate it.

This came up often throughout the transcripts - the difficulty in articulating the knowledge base, naming the qualities, the skills required to be an exceptional worker. Trying to find words to describe the work and the profession sometimes prove elusive. This could be in part attributable to what Schon calls tacit knowledge and in part because the language is yet to be developed.

All participants stressed the importance of modelling and of having mentors. There were strong feelings regarding professionalism and training standards. All struggled with conventional notions of education and power imbalances and all noted a preference towards an egalitarian model which emphasized democracy and fairness. In addition all were committed to a lifelong learning process and were highly motivated to continue their education and provide training to others.

All questioned the motives of some people entering the profession and had strong opinions regarding self-development and informed decision making, and two were very concerned regarding people entering the field on a transient basis.

All participants identified the need to know oneself very well (or a willingness to explore) when entering the profession. Robeson goes so far as to suggest that if you have any doubts, don’t enter the field. All spoke at length about the need to form relationships
and to advocate for the profession. These issues are addressed in-depth in Chapter Seven of the research.

Robeson's reflections of training revealed his admiration for some of the earlier pioneers of child and youth care trainers. He described them as mavericks, intellectuals, democrats, and fair and open-minded. He also felt they were willing to take risks and advocate for the children in their care. He is not convinced that current day standards are as rigorous and that entering students are getting the best possible training opportunities. He is clear and persuasive in his ideas about professionalism and training, the need for a college of child and youth care and the need for more rigorous standards of practice.

Athena sees self as the most important instrument in working with youth. Her life is a testament to how one's own biography affects one's professional life. Her own commitment to this process makes her someone with a strong sense of ethics which she sees as crucial in the work. Her concerns regarding preparation for the field centre around a shift to a more 'methodological' approach to our work with children. She is worried about taking the 'care' out of the practice and advocates for developing one's personal resources as well as having a good sound base in theory. She worries about students getting lost in a system which is no longer able to afford to provide the individual, quality supervision students in this field require.

There's some very good teachers at the college right now...very good teachers, but you know we are a field under siege, you know...but even before that happened...the numbers were so big that uh...you really have to wonder...um...how is it possible? I mean after all we are a field that works with the souls of other human beings and...Freud said "if you are going to deal with other peoples psyches, make sure you know your own." Make sure your own is in order.

Annie is equally concerned about levels of training and sees the reasons for inadequate preparation as political in nature. Efforts to maintain oppression of the field (and the children) leave those involved voiceless and marginalised. Fragmentation in the system and not recognizing the complex, holistic nature of the work takes away from the level of care children should be receiving in this province. She expresses a strong need for advocacy both for children and for workers and believes that practitioners should be better prepared for some of the pitfalls of the field.
...so it didn't work out the way fiction did.... I wish I had been given tools to map out the complexity of the problem because I think kids' problems are extremely complex and that we do...we fragment kids because we can't understand the complexity, so it's kind of like how the system fragments them...you know we have education do one thing and health the other...that's part of the fragmenting. But even in treatment we send them to the psychologist to get tested, the psychiatrists are supposed to do something in there and the family therapist does something and the child care worker does something over here and the teacher does something over there and so we fragment out all these pieces because we don't really have the tools to look at them holistically and conceptually. ...and there is good things about being in teams and there is bad things because part of that is fragmenting with kids. We don't really look holistically at kids and I think only in the past five years have I really started to begin to understand that and start to really implement that in practice.

All participants refer to the highly experiential nature of the work. They all vividly remember their beginning stories of practice...their 'trial by fire'.

plus the fact many of us were learning and you know kind of what's the term? "Forged in some fire"?

Trial by fire...it was a very interesting experience that these kids did present a problem and we were kind of literally learning on the job.

All participants referred to the need for self awareness and self care. (These issues are dealt with in depth in Chapter Seven of the research).

I wish I knew how to balance the demands of the field more. Now there are moments where it feels a bit overwhelming or I get over involved or too much stuff happens at once, but in general, day in and day out, it is not so bad. But in the beginning it was really, really hard...to carry a pager 24 hours a day, seven days a week, but also have a life and try not to have that impact or problem solve...where that took a lot of growth to work through that and I think more effort maybe at college to talk about those types of issues.

Take care of yourself. I think it has to be indoctrinated at the beginning because child care workers are terrible advocates for themselves. If we all started to advocate that it is not acceptable for us to have a work week that no one else has.
Summary

In this chapter you have met some of the children and looked at some of the aspects of the child and youth care practitioners's job which contribute to its complexity. There can be no doubt that this caring profession brings with it a monumental emotional and moral responsibility.

Informants/participants give lengthy, informed, diverse descriptions of their experiences. They tell stories of learning and transformation, of the need for personal growth, recognizing one's own shortcomings and protecting one's own health. They are clearly humanistic in their approach and describe a profound respect and understanding for the children with whom they work and often some moral outrage and anger towards the systems which sometimes prevent these children from getting the help they need.

Despite the sometimes deplorable conditions, these people are still able to find positive, rewarding aspects to their work. They have described how they have survived and offered suggestions as to some of the ways in which workers could be better prepared for their profession. In the following chapters we will build on these suggestions by examining how their narratives and stories can assist in the training of new and practised counsellors. The three prominent and overlapping themes of relationship, self, and voice have surfaced throughout the interviews. These will be addressed in more depth, as well, in Chapter Seven of the research project.

Intuition isn't perfect; judgment isn't perfect, but if you set up a system where people use good judgment and are well skilled and get well compensated then you are going to have people using intuition and judgment in a professional way and then we will have safeguards to protect in case mistakes get made.

Annie
CHAPTER SIX: THE ROLE OF STORIES

Introduction

I remember this one kid. He was really quite severely abused. He was in residence and he was one of those kids who hoarded food right? He was very deprived and would hoard food in his room and no matter what I did to talk to him about it there would be more food you know. [I would say] “You don’t need to bring it up to your room.”

We would talk and talk and talk about it. It didn’t matter. He was hoarding food. I could have fed this kid until you know...eternity! He is still going to hoard food because one day that food was going to be taken away. And in reality he was right! Because one day he was going to be discharged from the residence and he wouldn’t have that food any more.

This kid used to hide in the closet. He used to sleep in the closet. Day in and day out and it seemed to me...it was probably six months and this kid never came out of the closet! He would hide in there. He would cry....[and] urinate in there. This wasn’t a [young] kid. He was sixteen!

And I would go and I’d sit for hours it seemed, outside the closet door, trying to do anything [emphasis], [to get] any connection...look at me...sit with me, right? And the point was...I really started to lower whatever I wanted. I mean at this point I really wanted this kid to come out with me...right? I mean that is what I wanted...but you know one day he didn’t turn his back to me...and that felt pretty good. The next day he didn’t close his eyes as soon as he saw me, right? And so for me those were real milestones.

It may have taken me six months to get this kid to join the group and I could have beat myself up the whole time that, you know, it had taken me six months. But I could see lots of really small changes that occurred and I had to pay attention to them. Those, those small things all added up.

This story and many others like it are important in how we think about practitioner education and training, on inducting new practitioners to the field and in how we approach professional development. Through story we are able to recount and reflect on stories of experience, gain new insights into our work and into the children we work with. We share with our colleagues the benefit of our experience.
In this chapter the reader is introduced to the first main theme in the research, the role of stories. The stories as they relate to professional development emerged in a number of ways. I have arranged the stories in series to highlight the various roles participants have described.

1. Stories as central to practice
2. Stories as a way to teach others
3. Stories as a self-reflective tool
4. Stories of coping and building collegiality

As with other stories included in the research, these stories are told in the participant’s own ‘voice’. My interpretation is just one and I assume that there are multiple interpretations. In many cases, the contextual complexity of the work becomes apparent simply through the recounting of the stories; however I have added my own perspective and interpretation in some cases as well as reference to the literature where appropriate. Further examples of these categorized stories are also presented in the following chapter in the context of the three major themes of self, relationship and voice.

**Stories as Central to Practice**

...stories...well it is all about stories...in fact that is sort of what you have to weave through. That is part of the art, I think, is that you have to weave the story for the kid, with the kid, around the kid. The more you can understand the story, and that is I think, context...their home...their life...their constitution...their intellect...all these weave together to create a story that has brought this kid to you.

Annie

This quotation from Annie illustrates the centrality of stories in our practice with children. The child care literature has suggested that a central part of child and youth care is awakening the children and youth’s stories, listening to them, and helping them create new stories. Stories are present in the everyday minutiae of the work, in the daily lives of workers and children, in their interactions with one another, in the interpretations of behaviour and its context and in the healing of children. Stories give voice to the children’s pain and suffering and help impose form upon their often chaotic experiences (Grumet, 1988).

Stories help to understand the palpable pain and suffering of another human being.

Robert Coles (1989)
In the opening vignette of practice, Annie's learning centres around what Maier refers to as emphasis on the minutiae of the client's life (Maier, 1992). By stopping to detect even small changes workers create points of entry and connection (Peterson, 1994, p.110). Annie is also able to recognize that her expectations of the client are not in synch with what the client was ready for, or capable of, and had to adjust her expectations to him. This is only one interpretation. In it, Annie has not expressed an opinion, she has told a story. There are several levels of meaning about this and any ongoing situation in practice. How a similar situation might be handled by other practitioners is open to discovery and interpretation. This in an ongoing process in the work. Schon would describe this as literally a reflective conversation, where the professional attributes to her clients, as well as to herself, the ability to mean, know and plan. Annie recognizes that her reactions may have different meanings for the client than she intends them to have, and gives herself back to the task of discovering what they are (1983, p.295). Our meaning-making, whether spoken or not, is an intervention. It determines the range and nature of our moment-to-moment therapeutic responses (Peterson, 1994, p.110).

Over the past decade growing attention is being given to narrative therapy in child and youth care. In a 1994 issue of the Journal of Child and Youth Care an entire volume is devoted to the growing examination of narrative as a way to explore practice. In it Thompson suggests that so much of our counselling today is the migration, surfing, and hitchhiking of great and heartening ideas and stories between kids, families, and ourselves. No versions are more right than others; they are simply different (Thomson, 1994). Each version however adds to our repertoire of interventions and invites opportunities to develop and enrich our practice.

The following story told by one of the participants illustrates beautifully the centrality of story in the practice of child and youth care.

_Crazy Charlie - Metaphor for Change_

He couldn't read or write and he was untestable. He was a wild child. This kid bit and kicked and ran and he had the most amazing way of getting himself set up. I remember taking him down to the public beach one time and he managed to get a whole gang of adolescents chasing him...on the beach. I had to go run in the middle of it to save the poor soul...but he could make anyone else furious with him. We would be on the [bus] and he
would walk up to the biggest, meanest looking guy and tell him to "Fuck off!"...and then he would come and run behind me.

His family was quite ill...really, really ill. They did not care about him. They were just so ill themselves they couldn't care for him. He took a lot...a lot of settling down. He came and they had been trying all these medications on him. He was so medicated...and...um...we had all his medications stopped to get a look at what do we already have, right? He was pretty out-of-control. He used to swing from the doorways and you just couldn't settle this kid. I knew he was really smart. I knew this intuitively. This kid could assess situations like you wouldn't believe. We would be in a group and this kid could set off the whole group without anyone knowing it. He would know what everyone's buttons were and he would push them...and then he would sit back and smile and you know say,

"I'm not doing anything."

This kid, 'Crazy Charlie', this kid could draw like you wouldn't believe. I first discovered this because he used to barricade himself in this kind of cave sort of thing he built for himself. He got out the cardboard and barricaded himself a little place that was his. Now I noticed that he was doing all this doodling when he was in there...really quite elaborate. I got a big roll of that parchment paper and got him to draw with me. He drew probably the most elaborate killing machine I have ever seen in my whole life! It was this trap. Throughout this and this was months and months and months...we started the drawing and we used up the whole roll. It was a fairly big roll...of all killing machines. It was all black and red...the entire drawing. The machines were black and of course the blood was red. All the people who got killed as we went through this (which became a trap)...so no matter where you stepped something was going to happen to you and something quite gruesome.

It was incredibly detailed and it was really quite amazing! I still have that somewhere...the story. He had attention to detail...they were so vivid. They were disturbing nonetheless. This is an example of relationship. I was willing to meet him there. I didn't like what I was seeing. I was concerned about what I was seeing but he engaged and I engaged with him, otherwise we would have never engaged. So we moved from the drawing of a story and the story was about Crazy Charlie and Crazy Charlie was basically this bad person who was possessed to murder people wherever they went and anyone that crossed Crazy Charlie's path would get annihilated. Not in one fell swoop. No. It was a long, slow, painful torturous death. Much like I think he was feeling. He felt like he was being suffocated and tortured.

But it was significant in that he started to write...drawing now and writing and engaging. Very rarely was he in his cave. So we wrote all these
stories about how Crazy Charlie would murder people and Crazy Charlie would do this and Crazy Charlie would do that...volumes and volumes of it...in fact it is all in his clinical records. Just stories of Crazy Charlie. He spent well over a year writing this story. That's what he would do. He wouldn't engage in schoolwork. Now this kid had never taken any formal education so the writing was quite poor and through that we sort of developed that but at some point I knew he had to be tested. I thought he could be tested and he went in. Sure enough, my instincts were true in that he was in the gifted range in ninety-ninth percentile so he had the IQ of Einstein but he couldn't read and write.

Then, somewhere along [the line] it changed. One day he asked me if we could write a new story and you know...we had been working with his family so there was lots of things going well for him. He wasn't getting beaten up any more. You know, right down to helping him dress so that he didn't get beaten up. Walking him through all those situations, making him go back and face things...all those day-to-day issues that are really significant. He was going to be 'Nuclear Man' and so we went through the whole process again. This was another six months of work but Nuclear Man went and saved the world. He protected people and he used his nuclear cloak to protect people from harm. Then we drew pictures of Nuclear Man. He let me draw his body.

Crazy Charlie is such a metaphor for change...he went from someone who wanted to kill everyone to someone who hasn’t been in trouble again. He also had three years of placement. It makes a big difference.

In accounting for their practice the participants relied often on their experiences in working with children, more so than formal theory and techniques.

Stories in the Teaching of Others

The utilization of stories to teach others comes up often in the research. Robeson recounts stories of the history of the profession and some of the interesting people who blazed trails in the early years of the profession. Athena counsels us that life stories and children’s stories are valuable for teaching people about themselves and about the practice. Annie recounts stories to describe her relationships with children and her struggles with the politics of the profession. Each practitioner works from a particular ideology and a set of connected beliefs about what is essential. They base their professional decisions on these beliefs. According to Ball these idiosyncrasies need to be addressed, not dismissed (1987). These idiosyncrasies can be captured in story.
Athena speaks of using children’s stories to teach others about a number of issues including self and impulse control.

Not just my stories but I use children’s stories...like there is a story that I am taking down to the Caribbean. This is a Christ story, a saviour story, only the hero takes over the suffering and the pain of the slaves...on the ships coming over...the slave ships. It’s a beautiful, beautiful story. The reason I would use that when I am teaching this time is because...just to show them that they don’t have to take the white man’s religion...oh I won’t use that word...but they have a history of their own; that they have roots of their own and that mental health has to do with being your honest self...your real self...and this is part of being you real self.

If I’m teaching impulse control I’ll use Where the Wild Things Are. It’s a great story. They love it. And there is a million stories. Annie uses children’s stories as a metaphor for the field of child and youth care and a caution that we may lose sight of our primary work with children.

...and I think they say a lot about child care actually particularly The Butter Battle. There is a moral to the story and a moral for our field in that we are kind of the underdogs as child care workers and we are always trying to outdo the next person. I think sometimes we are in a bit of an arms race ourselves, that we are trying to be better or speak differently or write more...or whatever we are aspiring to and I suspect we are going to get so high up in the weapons pile that we are going to forget about the kids...and playing.

Child and Youth Counsellor Lore

Schubert’s work on “teacher lore” suggests to us a way to utilize stories in practice. He tells us that in teaching, this lore is both a necessary and a neglected construct with relevance to both theory and practice (1991, p.207). He defines teacher lore as a mix of a blend of theory (evolving ideas and personal belief systems) and practice (their reflective action). I adapt his term here to child and youth care practitioners. In ‘lore’ practitioners are invited to share in the creation of knowledge. Lore enables practitioners to tell their stories and reveal their understandings --their personally created, experiential knowledge bases. According to Schubert, this can be communicated directly and through stories about practical experiences.

Consider the following examples:

Robeson’s parable

[There was] a boy who was a west coast Indian and he came into the centre. The west coast Indian are as dark as the dark Jamaican or black person and his name was Thompson. The centre was well placed. At the
back was the side of the mountain and the other side of the mountain was a beach so the kids in the summer, after school, would come home and have a snack and then take their suits and tops and off they would go to the beach.

Now Thompson, I got the word, would stay in his room. He wouldn't go to the beach. So I said to him "Well ah, tomorrow afternoon I'll go over and see if I couldn't get him. So I went over and I said to him:" "Where are the rest of the kids Thompson?" "They're gone" [quietly] ...gone over swimming". "Oh..why? why haven't you gone?" "None of your fucking business!"[laughter]"Okay, as long as you know I know why you haven't gone."So, I said to him: "Well I have a couple of questions to ask you. If I cut my arm off it would bleed eh? "Yeah, yeah""What colour would it bleed?""Red.""Now, if you cut your arm, what colour would the blood be?""Well, red of course" [angrily]"you know, stupid.""Okay, just a question. ah..when the kids go swimming in the afternoon what do they do?""Well, they swim.""What do they do after that?""Well, they lay around on the beach.""Why?""Well, they sunbathe." I said "Well, why do they sunbathe?" "I don't know." I said "Is it because they want to be the same colour as you?"You know what he said? "Come on. Let's go!"

Robeson's insight into this child's resistance to join the others would not necessarily be a part of every worker's repertoire. A typical response may have been to get into issues of power and control and insist the child join the others for the after school activity. This would likely have served no purpose other than making the child angry and resentful and may have even created an escalation into violent behaviour. This is an example of one of those messy problems (Schon, 1983) where the practitioner relied on intuition and previous knowledge to create an intervention.

**Athena's intervention**

Athena recounts a story of how she dealt with a runaway's testing of her limit setting. At the time this story took place, Athena was beginning to question authority figures or expert knowledge, as well as the pathology of the institution she was working in. She was becoming more confident in her own approaches, adjusting them to suit her own personality and developing child care identity, and actually defying some of the rules in the treatment setting in which she was working. Workers had been instructed that if children threaten to run away they should physically restrain them and prevent them from leaving. She decides to take a different tack.
I remember I met this girl; she was twelve years old. Her name was Sally. She still calls me. The first thing she says to me is: “I’ve run away eleven times, and I’m gonna run away one more time. That will make it a baker’s dozen.” And I remember saying to her “Whoopee shit! You know of all the things to be proud of, I’m glad you found something.” And she was floored! She was just... and I wouldn’t hold her hand [as was the policy of that treatment centre] I said, “What’s the point? Don’t you sleep here at night? You think I’m going to sit on you while you are sleeping?” I said, “I can’t keep you here. It’s a normal setting! You either stay or you don’t stay! If you stay let’s get to work. If you don’t want to stay, don’t stay.” And she never had [heard this before]... that was a new one.

Not everyone could pull this intervention off in this manner. Athena’s ‘no crap’ persona propelled her to try a new intervention with this child. This story is part of her repertoire, one that she has shared with students and one which stands out in her memory as part of her objections regarding the questionable treatment interventions of the time.

*Annie’s lore*

There is a good example of a kid that some people would look have looked at and said “He is empty and unsalvageable”. Yet somewhere along the line he wanted me to feel better.

One day I got a call. We had got this boy a job in this car dealership. He had been doing really well. They liked him. They were quite happy and it was a mistake on my part and I will tell you about that. Anyway I got a call saying:

“He’s taken a car!”

I said “Are you going to charge [him]?” I mean I talked the guy out of charging him. The deal was he had to bring the car back and he wouldn’t lay charges. So I call the kid in and I’m mad, right?

“You know you were doing really well here. Now why are you stealing a car?”

He was going to be late. He was going to be late coming back and I had told him be back at a certain time and if he wasn’t back he could be charged. Now some of that is just how mistrustful he was. I mean he had lived with me for eight months. He had never seen me charge a kid despite ample opportunities to charge kids. I very rarely use that. So I never used that. But he was late. It was really quite a simple thing to pick up the phone and say you were going to be late. But in his mind he needed to survive right? And I was at this point part of his survival... and if he was late I was
going to send him away...so he stole a car to get back on time...and we worked that through. He’s a car dealer. He’s in cars in Vancouver now.

These stories or lore, are a small representation of the participant’s repertoire of learning experiences. They are just the tip of a wealthy resource of stories with which to educate and train others.

Food for Thought

In Chapter Five of the research and in Annie’s opening ‘vignette’ of practice in this chapter, workers tell us about significance of food in practice. This is not a new area of discussion in child and youth care. The early ‘bibles’ of child and youth care highlight its significance (Red1 & Wineman, 1951; 1957; Treischman, Wittaker, & Brendtro, 1969). Food is seen as a crucial element of child care practice, a way of communion or ‘breaking bread’ to open up communication or to provide nurturance. The following are new stories of practitioner experience, however, and each of the participants told stories involving food and its significance. Through these stories we are able to catch glimpses of the essence of the work and to begin to uncover the many layers of experience expected in good child and youth care practice.

One kid is in crisis and that causes other kids to feel their crisis and then they go. Most of it is under the surface type behaviour...like you know... dinnertimes. Dinnertimes you could see as some sort of feeding thing, right? Just wolf down the food and out you go. I guess I view it quite differently as a time to nurture, a time to check in, a time to ‘take the temperature’ so to speak. If you watch you can see all kinds of information about kids while they eat. Do kids hide their food? Do kids eat really fast? Do kids not eat? My experience is mainly with trauma, you know kids measuring you know how much other people get...so you know the simple thing of do you dish out the food? Right? Do you let them dish it out themselves? It sounds really basic but I tell you. You get a group of neglected kids in together and you don’t do it exact. Then you are asking for one hell of a dinner!

That is not something you just...I don’t know how you learn that. You probably learn it by experience. You learn by doing it a few times and kids freaking out. They never say “Well, you gave him more.” They throw a chair across the room. They go upstairs and they tell you they hate you and they lock themselves in their room and they have a fit and you are left wondering what happened. Well, I gave them three ounces more mashed potatoes than the other person. They are never going to tell you that! So
you have to really be aware of what is going on and in the context of their experience. You use educated guesses I think and pose some possible scenarios. You say “Okay, you are mad because...are you mad because of this?” And they still won’t say “Yes, I’m mad because of this”. You judge by their reaction and you learn to narrow in on things. You take their history, their context plus the context you have put them in and you weave them in to understand and hopefully help them to understand.

Athena discusses her learning around food and offers her experience while training in Chicago.

We were taught not to mix work with food unless the children were presenting things at the table than needed working through; otherwise we were trained to talk about the weather, politics, a story, but peripheral things rather than ‘the eye of the hurricane’. Leave the eye of the hurricane alone...and you know we teach child and youth counsellors leave it alone at bedtime for sure if you can. Be very suspicious of a child that brings it to you at that time. Its’ a delaying tactic usually because they don’t want to go to sleep.

But meals shouldn’t be contaminated either, especially because these kids came from contaminated meals... home situations. You know the supervisor was an intellectual and he wanted to stretch their brains. He wanted them to use their brain muscles so he wanted them engaging in topics like politics and literature...and they were encouraged to do that.

In this and other stories regarding food and other activities of daily living, participants educate us in a number of ways. Each participant has a set of guiding principles with which they consider this component of the work but also indicate that issues evolving around it are highly unpredictable. Each participant displays a sensitivity regarding the possible issues of neglect, deprivation, familial discord that may revolve around a meal or snack. Only through reflection, analysis, trial and error, is it possible to experience the range of possibilities and react to them in a helpful manner.

Trial and Error

While participants shared stories of successful interventions with children, each of the participants also spoke to the importance of learning from your mistakes in practice, that it is inevitable you will make mistakes and that it is important to face up to them, particularly with the children.

You use yourself in giving an example. If you have an example which comes from your own experience and you can translate that to another person or group of people I think the message gets across a lot better. You
have to get the message across: in working with kids you will make a lot of mistakes, but don't be ashamed of those mistakes - learn from them. Be aware of what I can say, analyze what has happened over the past shift or whatever. Try and learn from that.

...being able to admit mistakes when you make them is important. I made many, many mistakes. I can think of a kid kicking me in the shins. I have been kicked in the shins so many times for whatever reason but that day it really hurt. I put that kid in a restraint so fast it wasn't funny. I had a lot of working to do to get...to work through with the kid. I had to say I made a mistake and how he wasn't out of control and I used my force and power.

Robeson's recounts stories of situations where he needed to intervene with a colleague in the best interest of the child.

I had seen a worker restraining him one day and I tried not to directly interfere in any way. This time I did. He was down on the ground and in the field and this worker had him all on his own...he was restraining him and I went down to him I said "Look. Let him go." The staff looked at me as if I was crazy. He said" Let him go? He'll kill me!" So he let Thompson go and Thompson got up. He got up, he ran a few yards, he picked up a big clot of earth and he threw it but he threw it like this [gestures throwing downward]. I said then: "I have just been talking to John [staff] and he's not... no one is ever going to hold you again because you can take care of yourself. And I'm not! I had it in my mind that someone doing that to him was somewhat akin, and maybe I'm stretching it but it was somewhat akin to rape, holding him down etc...so I said " You are a big boy. Nobody is going to restrain you again. You can do what the hell you want to do but nobody is going to hold you." And then he, you know, then he took off.

You can lay on the consequences more effectively if you have that kind of relationship. I can recall one session with one of the kids I have mentioned - one of the treatment failures...he had gone into the Kingston pen and [a worker] went to speak on his behalf...I worked with him for a long while and I had a pretty good relationship with him and something happened...he was assigned to another worker...I am trying to think what the incident was but he was assigned with another worker and he really blew, really blew his top, had to have other workers intervene and physically restrain him and this new worker came to me and said, "I've seen you lay the law down with him dozens of times"and I said "I've got the relationship with him, you can't just come along and work with a kid effectively...without there being that kind of affinity and I said its not that I am a magician. I know the kid and I work with him and he knows me and where I am coming from."
Child and youth care practice, like teaching, is a moral craft. The literature and experience suggests to us that there are many moral dilemmas in our work with children (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1986; Schon, 1983). Reflection on the moral basis for action, says Richardson (1994), also constitutes an element of practical inquiry. Although it is not conducted for the purposes of developing general laws related to practice, and it is not meant to provide the answer to the problem, the results are suggestive of new ways of looking at the context and/or possibilities for changes in practice. Many of these stories represent reflection on the moral dilemmas in practice, issues of what is best for the child; confronting colleagues or recognizing and admitting to making mistakes are just a few examples. Reflection on these matters are facilitated by the telling of our stories of practice.

Annie tells a teaching story involving a former client’s recollection of her work with him. In it she learns of his memories of caring and being cared for.

*Mikey’s Story --- The Goal of Child and Youth Care*

He’s a big gawky sixteen year old now. I knew him when he was eight and he was very much a little boy then. Now he is a big young man and kind of towers over me. I think one time I restrained this kid. [referring to physically holding a child to prevent injury]. He actually joked with me that he in fact could easily restrain me now. He always calls me ‘Miss’ still ‘cause he was so young then. We went out for lunch a little while ago and he wanted me to go to a park with him and I really didn’t understand why he wanted to go to a park. We sat in this park together. This kid is very mentally ill. He has Tourette’s syndrome, very serious Tourette’s syndrome, and it has been difficult on him and his family and lots of other situations have happened with him, so I’ve become really connected with him. Anyway, he wanted to go to this park. We sat in the park and he started remembering how he and I used to do this when he was little and...while I don’t quite recall it as this wonderful joyful time. I thought he was angry. I seem to recall being in so many restraints with him. He was out of control. More out of control than any kid I’ve every seen and it was so weird for me to be sitting in this park with him remembering how wonderful it was...that he felt cared for...that I cared about him...that we spent time. We used to sit. His memory of it is [that] we would sit in the park and talk about really important things and play and that life was good then, he hadn’t gotten in trouble. That was a very different picture that this boys’ reality.

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6 Tourette’s syndrome: a disorder characterized by uncontrollable facial tics or verbal outbursts
When he describes the story he describes it as we [would] only sit in the park on sunny days. The park with this kid was an outlet. I remember very well the intervention of him and I going to the park. It was a way to try and redirect some of his negative attention seeking. I can remember sitting in the park with him in the rain and snow,[chuckling] but his memory is only in the sunshine and we played...that I would play on the climbers with him...which I did. I remember doing that but it was never associated with anything negative and I asked him about that. I asked him whether he remembered the difficult times, where his parents were deciding to put him in residence and he was very angry at me.

He does not remember any of that and so he has this image of what I think the goal of child and youth care is. It is not to delude anyone, but it is to provide some level of safety even though everything else is very out-of-control.

Stories can help us see through the eyes of other people, in the case of this last story, through the eyes of the child who received the care. Practitioner lore and the sharing of learning stories offer us views through the lenses of experienced workers. Stories become a vivid way to critique irresponsible activities and can be a defence against bad practice. Telling a moral story, as the participants do, entails reflecting on the experience narrated. This encourages us to learn more from experience and therefore assume more responsibility in our professional development.

Stories in Self -reflection

Theory is critical for evolving clinical work; with every new understanding, you become a different person—the person you previously were plus the new understanding. This new you cannot necessarily perform what worked for the previous you. This means you must learn to do something different. Doing something different leads to new experience which in turn can be subjected to understanding.

(Keeney, 1990, p.6)

The deep significance of knowing self has been addressed in detail throughout the research project. Life history, collaborative autobiography, and personal practitioner knowledge and narrative methods all point to the significance of how one’s past and the accompanying ideas, values and beliefs have a profound affect on the developing practitioner. The participants here, have acknowledged that attention to the developing self is crucial in professional development. All have consistently practised building on self-knowledge through continued education and through relationships with others. Two of the participants actively engaged in therapy for a number of years in part, to examine influence
of self on their practice. This knowledge of self seems crucial at every level of
development. Participants caution that new workers should be aware of this issue, should
be open to the realities and subsequent impacts on self. They should be prepared to hold
up the mirror. Although this issue of self is dealt with in detail in Chapter Seven of the
research it is explored here briefly through some of the participant’s stories.

If we are trying to find our bearings, all the wrong directions we recall, all
the dead-end streets we have travelled, won’t in and of themselves be
enough.

(Coles, 1989, p.183)

We have learned, in the section on teaching others, that admitting to mistakes and
the trial and error nature of the work is part of the landscape of professional development
as a child and youth counsellor. Robert Coles cautions us that instead of brandishing our
authority in practice, we must not forget to examine our own warts and blemishes (1989,
p.205).

Athena reflects on circumstances in her professional development that she felt she
could have handled differently.

I think that as a young counsellor ...I was not distanced enough. For years I
hated my mother...well, I probably woke up to my own childhood. I really
disliked my mother intensely and there was this one girl I was working with
who also hated her mother. Now her mother had MS and it was really
pitiful. Christine hated her mother and my supervisor knew that one of the
reasons this kid came out of her depression to me...one of the reasons she
and I were a team...the dynamic duo ...was because we both hated our
mothers. I just reinforced her hatred of her mother...now one could
question whether that was very ethical but the point is he couldn’t have
stopped me from hating my mother...

This poor woman! She had the most awful history herself. It was so sick! You
know with MS and all I did for years with her daughter was go on a
hate campaign against her. You know when you finally wake up you realize
, “Oh my gawd!” and I remember the social worker said to me...”Yeah,
yeah. When it comes right down to it, we are all just people.”...but I think
you young people coming into this work... you know you are at a certain
level and there is nobody who can push you out of it.

I think that what I hadn’t learned yet is that we all create our own reality
and I thought Christine’s and my reality were the reality...those two
mothers were terrible where in Christine’s case it was a sick woman. She
had terrible health...she was in a wheelchair...which is why the child was angry at her because she couldn't mother her.

This is good example of how stories come to us wrapped in transference. Issues of transference and counter transference are prevalent throughout practice in counselling work. Kennedy and Charles caution that we must know what is taking place inside ourselves at the same time that we are trying to grasp at what is taking place with others. (1994, p.25). These feelings and emotions occur simultaneously and they are often significantly interrelated. If a helper is not sufficiently sensitive to themselves they do not know what is happening to them in the course of helping. This can lead to potential stress on the helpee. What occurs between ourselves and others, suggests Kennedy and Charles, determines whether we are going to help others and whether we are going to grow ourselves (1994, p.25).

In reflection on her experiences, Annie is able to call up ways in which she would have handled supervision with a colleague differently.

There are stories where I have just been really harmful to kids too. I remember a situation where there was a young girl...she wasn’t my kid. Another staff person came to consult with me and in the course of the consultation she disclosed her sexual abuse. While I was sort of aware that maybe this kid was being sexually abused I wasn’t sure so I gave some consultation to this worker about how to handle it, and how to help her disclosure but I didn’t pay enough attention to the worker’s own issue. What ended up happening is the worker colluded with the child. I believe she got a disclosure and then hid it and I didn’t intervene in that situation and I should have. Again, that was sort of as the story unfolded that you understand...it is that reflection-in-action stuff.

She reflects on her growth and learning:
In my time as a child and youth counsellor I have grown incredibly and I see things very differently. I couldn’t be doing the job I do now, evaluating other people’s programs, unless I had been in there struggling and not sure what to do. It would be nice to pick up a book and you know, look through Redl and Wineman and see look...you know there is that technique. It just doesn’t work that way, you know? I think it is action reflection and I think that is part of the process. It is difficult to put your finger on. I think I was originally trained very psychodynamically and that sort of formed the underpinnings of my beliefs about my own work in trauma and about relationships....and then developmental and behavioural-cognitive theories, some system theory. I think the role of a child and youth worker is to become a healthy object....which means to be a real
object...not always perfect...you know? Part of the process is to become less idealistic and more real.......

To narrate a story is already to reflect upon the event narrated (Ricouer, cited in Noddings, 1991, p. 61). Such recollection also entails learning from the event narrated to consider what happened, what was thought, felt, and experienced, and how things turned out (Noddings, 1991, p.61). We learn through the participant’s life story profiles some of the ways in which they learned. The thickness of personal identity is revealed through an emerging personal story, a story that has a narrative plot characterized by connections across time, by intentions, and by an attitude toward life, a passionate and personal vision or interpretation of what life and reality is (Noddings, 1991).

This vision is reflected in the participants’ work with children. Athena sees the absolute necessity of ongoing communication, of allowing children their autonomy and encouraging them to make choices. These factors were absent in her upbringing and through self-exploration and reflection she notes their importance in her own personal and professional life. Robeson’s informs us that he has admiration for those who advocate and take risks, who treat people democratically and with respect. He transfers these values to his work with children. Annie confides in us the significance of having safety and security within a group, in sharing food with them and in the importance of play. She is very concerned with providing a place of safety which is not intrusive, but offers security and trust in very chaotic times. It is no accident that these components become part of the participants work with children. They each bring pieces of their personal history directly into practice.

Stories of Coping and Collegiality

Not all stories’ primary mission is to share wisdom. Workers often recount stories to amuse, distract and entertain. This is important in a field that is prone to crisis and stress.

I get together with child care workers and we can come up with no end of stories...no end...of, you know, the cat in the house and how many times we’ve had pets in the house. I had a kid microwave the cat and we got a cat again. It seemed to me that there was always a cat coming to the house that we adopted at some point despite [the fact] that we microwaved one of them. What a horrible story!
I mean the stories...there are lots of moments...there are lots of funny moments. There are funny things that happened. There are terrible things that happened...but for me the stories are more as they unfold.

Workers may use stories to build a camaraderie and collegiality with fellow workers. We have learned in the description of the field that the work is often stressful and problematic, crises are not uncommon, and teamwork is an important component of child and youth care. People work together better when they know each other. If you know their personal stories and who they are you are probably going to approach them differently and work more effectively with them. True story tellers are not solo acts; their listeners are also storytellers, receivers and givers of wisdom ( Zipes, 1997, p.41).

Stories create community. They link the teller to the listeners and listeners to one another. When they share a piece of history they become less strange to one another.

( Sanders, 1997, p.54)

Stories often have no other purpose than to make people laugh. The following humorous anecdotes were shared by Robeson. The first is about an effort in damage control.

In the centre we had a series of windows, small panes like that [points to doorway with several small squares of glass] It was a lovely setting. There was a barn at back. There was a garage and there was a shed with windows. And the maintenance man [we only had two maintenance men there]. They were forever mending broken windows. So at great expense at the time I got in touch with a firm in Toronto. They shipped me panes of armoured glass. You could thrown anything at it . It would just bounce off. We had another area with a big picture window which cost an arm and a leg but I had that with armoured glass. The theory was over a period of two years it would pay for itself because you didn't have to pay for new glass. You didn't have to pay for the time for the maintenance man etc. So [we put them] in what I call target areas. We didn't tell the kids. We just put in armoured glass. So this same kid I told you about. I was roaming around the property one afternoon and I saw one of these panes of armour glass and it had like little chips all over it, and I had a feeling. I didn't know why I knew that. It was probably Joe. I said to him you know in a relaxed moment . “Were you having a bit of a problem with that window Joe?”

“What window?”

“You know. The one in the back.”And he looked at me and he realized. A sly in or sort of a slow grin came across. “Robeson” he says “That fucking window!”, he says, “I was in a snit and I took up a stone. I threw it at it but it bounced off. and he said “ So I took up another stone and I threw it at it again and it bounced off!”And he said, “Finally, I
couldn't break it. So I attacked it with an iron bar and I still couldn't break it!"

Int: So it just had these little flecks in it.

Millions of tiny little notches in it. You know like when a stone hits your windshield. Little stars you know. I never told him, well, you couldn't break it anyway but...
Another story became well known to all the staff and became part of the 'culture' at an agency.

A new staff member came there from girls' training school, see. She was very worldly you see. But she was always dressed very nicely and always looked very pretty and she was coming down... and this is a very famous story, this. She was coming down the corridor one day and a little girl was walking down in the same direction as she was and a little boy came along. And they were only just little kids and the little boy said to the little girl "Fuck off!"
And this woman said,"I was so surprised that such a little kid would say that. She said I stopped and I looked down and the little girl said to me. 'It's all right. All it means is stand aside.' So from then on we were always saying to one another, "Stand aside!" [in forceful tone]

It is important to find and see the humour in the work we do. Sometimes the working conditions can make it difficult to cope. The participants told us in Chapter Five just how complex and stressful the work can sometimes be. They also gave us some insight into why they stay. Coping, trust, teamwork, connectedness, shared experience can all be assisted through storying. It is important in coping with the realities of the profession to reflect on the success stories or stories of affirmation which make one grateful for the work one does and the opportunities they afford children. It may only be in retrospect that these moments can be gleaned from personal/professional history. The following stories were recollected fondly by the participants about the children with whom they worked:

**Jodie’s story - The Gift**

There was one young fellow who was one child who was there and uh...his name was Jodie Williams and he was from Sarnia...I always refer him as a Sarnia kid...now he is grown up now. I don't know where he is ...must have a family of his own...and all that...but [one of the workers in charge of workshops] said.. "I want you, tomorrow morning to come down to this
craft room because Jodie has something he wants to give you.” I think I was about to go out west. I am not quite sure... but you know I went down and he gave me this kind of metal weaving. He presented me with this brooch and the worker said to me afterwards “This is the first thing this boy has ever given anybody”. So you know it was kind of an honour for me to have it.

*Peter’s story - Reconnecting*

Not more than two years before I retired, it was in the winter. I was on the subway and I was going down to the Queen’s Park exit. A man and his little boy, came and sat opposite me and the little boy had a parka. It was so cold, you know, and this fella he was sitting beside him; he was wearing a toque and they were kind of all on their own there. Then I saw them. He put his hand in his pocket, took out a candy and didn’t even look at it just stuck it in the boys’ mouth. That kind of grabbed my attention. And then after a while he picked up this little boys’ hand, gave it a kiss, put it down again. I went on a little further and I looked at the boy and he looks like a younger addition to Peter and I looked at this fellow and I said it could be Peter, you know, so I got off and he preceded me. He got off at Queen’s Park. I wasn’t going to say anything [but] then I kind of walked by them and suddenly I turned to them and I said, “Excuse me. Is your name Peter? And he said and this was typical. “It most certainly is!” [vehemently] And I looked at him and I said “Do you know me?” and he said. "Thistletown. Robeson!” [loudly]And he works in a restaurant downtown...So it was him! I said; “Where have you been since you left Thistletown?” It was only a brief conversation on the subway. . He said, “Well, I’ve been in the army and I’ve been to jail and I’ve been hospitalized.” He said, “I’ll show you.” and he says. “These are my attention-seeking scars” [rolls up sleeve]. So this was his little boy. He was now working at a restaurant downtown and was taking the boy to their day care centre.

Int: and behaviourally rewarding him and...

Robeson’s: That’s right.[I remember] [another staff] was very fond of Peter. We knew as soon as he had a tantrum we knew what to do because he wore boots. All the other kids had shoes but his parents [made him wear boots]... and we always felt they were trying to get back at us when they issued him with boots. And that’s what you do, grab around him and take his boots off. And during our brief conversation I said, “I guess I don’t have to take your boots off today Peter”. We laughed.

*Connections and Disconnections -- Danny’s Story*
Connections and Disconnections -- Danny's Story

I can tell you one story about this boy. His mother was borderline personality disorder\(^7\). She was really, really intrusive. She watched him go to the washroom. He could never change by himself. He was twelve so you know... he was in that pubescent sort of stage where he needed some privacy... and he had lots of questions about sex... and he had all this castration anxiety. It was the first time I had ever experienced that. This kid believed [emphasis] his penis was going to fall off!

I will never forget that. So I did this whole sex ed. thing... unfortunately his mother started to distort it and [was] telling him that I was becoming sexualized with him and this and that. It was all part of the pathology. He and I really connected. He was an angry kid. He was one of those kids who you wondered at twelve, Was he going to murder somebody?

We were playing in the playroom one time and he had been telling me about some of the hurts he had had....how, you know, his mom didn’t love him...how he had been used in this divorce. His father was in jail and uh...you know how he felt he was just sort of destined...and he began to sob. I had never seen this kid cry and he was just sobbing and sobbing and I remember he picked up a baby bottle and crawled into my lap and sucked the baby bottle. This kid was much bigger than me, okay?...and I didn’t know what to do. Here is this big kid being a baby....so I sat and rocked him and we talked and we talked and that was a really critical time for him although today I still don’t understand it entirely except that I think he felt safe and contained and I think he was getting confusing messages...what I was, who I was from his mother. Anyhow after that period he started to do really well. In fact we started to move him on to a transition program...and he was discharged and I probably should have been more clinically astute because as he became healthier his mother became less healthy and more reactive and quite mean to him in many ways. One day we were in the hall and he was really angry. I don’t know what he was angry about but he was angry that his time was ending and he was upset and I was really trying to push him to talk about it. I mean, we were talking two years of treatment and we still had another year to go. It wasn’t like this was happening tomorrow. He just became enraged, he hauled off and punched me in the face.

\(^7\) Borderline personality disorder: A term used in psychiatric diagnosis to describe person with marked and persistent identity disturbance
To this day... the only kid that ever actually punched me. He punched me and I went flying and he started to cry... and I just felt so horrible. I'll never forget. I don't remember my face hurting although I got quite the lump. I remember thinking back. He put himself in the quiet room and he wouldn't come out... six months we spent talking about this and then we talked about how he felt about it... whether I still cared... what I thought about it... that it wasn't okay to hit me... we worked through it... on and on. We talked about him betraying my trust and he did betray my trust and he needed to hear that and in the end this kid... he had been discharged and he had been doing really, really well at school and had been for some time. [Then] his mother decided to pull him and put him in military school, which was just devastating for him. He went off to military school and he wrote me a letter... this was after he had obviously changed quite a bit. He was much more rigid... much less feeling... um... but he still remembers our time in the quiet room and this is all sort of pre-punch and it was interesting. He closed the letter something like (I still have the letter), something to the effect that... well he feels badly that he hit me... [but] it doesn't destroy him anymore and that he needs to remember that in the future... that it could have destroyed him... and I've not heard from him since... it's been about three years now.

There is no doubt it was difficult for me to go back in the next day with a black eye and a kid in the quiet room... but that was such a powerful story and I remember being so worried about him going to military school and was he just going to bury his feelings and be angry again and hate women and yet... how this story unfolded... I mean in that period of time since he'd left he had come to see me... that it made an impact on him that he wrote down this story to me when he wrote the letter... that it had significance and that story will have significance for him.

**Summary**

We have learned through the participants that there are several roles stories play in child and youth care. Stories are a complex and central part of the work we do, in working with youth and their families, in shift reports and staff meetings, in the moment by moment interactions. We have also learned that workers who frame their work, observations, and interactions with story have a better context of understanding what they do (Krueger, 1995).

Stories can be a useful tool for teaching others, for passing on generations of history, for assisting colleagues to see another perspective, for developing new ways to intervene in our practice. Practitioner lore can offer innovative ways to build on our own repertoire and help create 'praxis' in theory and practice (Schubert, 1991, p. 214).
Noddings has suggested that understanding the narrative and contextual dimensions of human actors can lead to new insights, compassionate judgment, and the creation of shared knowledge and meanings than can inform professional practice (1984, p.8). The outcomes may include a change in practice or enhanced understanding. Stories can offer insight into professional practice.

Our own issues or previous learning can, as Brundage and McKeracher suggest, be applied directly to our current experience (1980). These self-reflective stories build on Hunt’s (1987) tenets of “inside-out psychology” which suggests that we are tapping into enormously rich resources by tapping into self.

Participants have illustrated for us how stories are central to practice, how they can contribute to the knowledge base of others, can act as a tool in self-reflection and coping and can help build collegiality.

In the following chapter we explore the elements of good child and youth care practice that arose from participants narratives and stories of experience by examining themes of self, relationship and voice.

I end this chapter with one of Annie’s narratives as I believe it to be a powerful example of the significant role story plays in child and youth care practice and the power of narrative. It really is a celebration of the incredible strides children and youth can make despite very difficult odds.

Simon’s Story- The Power of Caring

Sometimes a person needs a good story more than food to stay alive.

(Barry Lopez, 1989)

Simon was a kid in many ways I was very close to crossing boundaries with for a number of reasons. Simon came to me when he was eight and he was another kid who I could just tell was really, really bright but he had never managed to be in school. He had been on home instruction for years...kicked out of day care and this and that and he was a scrawny thing. He was always dirty with beautiful blond curls and bright, bright eyes but he was scrawny looking. He was never dressed. He was dirty and I can remember we would go into [meetings] where they would report on things and I would freak out because once again he would come in. It was winter and once again he’s got no socks on and his shoes have holes in them and we just have to do something. I would just be so upset by this kid’s neglect and he was pervasively neglected. His father neglected himself and didn’t care for himself. He also worked evenings, so this kid, you know, raised
himself. He was all alone and he cooked his own dinner, made his own breakfast, which he rarely did, so the kid didn't eat. He wasn't parented at all and he was another kid who hid; he had his cubby, and he hid and he hoarded. He hid and hoarded. Periodically we had to clear out the little hiding spot because it would become so foul in there.

I could not stand [emphasis] how hungry and dirty this kid was and I made a colleague of mine, a male colleague, bathe him one day, brought him clothing...and it's not like I spent a lot of time... I spent months working with his father. Father had convinced himself he couldn't manage and uh I remember Simon...he must have phoned around Christmas and he started writing this Christmas list. This Christmas list was so long that when he would show it to people he would have to roll it down the hallway. It had to be fifteen feet long. This kid's needs were just so immense that they could never ever be met.

...and he was always suicidal. He just wanted to die and he was verbal about it. He was very rarely...he was too depressed to act it out. He would just say:

“I hate my life. I want to die.” day in and day out. He would come in the morning and he would tell me.

“I want to die. I want to die”

And we tried to find one thing that we could do together that day. Now he made it hard because he wouldn't do schoolwork or activities. He wouldn't do anything unless it was on his terms. I got myself caught up in feuds and battles with him. Another learning moment. He was dropping to a point of critical weight where we were considering hospitalizing him and I didn't want to do this to this kid so I started bargaining with him.

“You eat two crackers and I won't make you drink the milk.” Right?

I mean it was clear to me that I was getting caught up in this kid's neglect. He...uh...never had any formal schooling and somehow... I don't really remember how it happened. I got him to agree to do math with me...but the deal was he wouldn't spend more than two days on a grade and of course the teacher was really unhappy but I didn't really care because I had got him to agree to do something and I was going to do it and I was just amazed that within I think it was six weeks we got to grade nine math... and he still had not been challenged...yet this kid had never been formally schooled. He is another kid who tested out gifted.
So over time I came to accept that this kid was neglected and really needed a mom. His father wasn’t abusive or bad...or anything like that. He was just quite needy himself and needed a mom himself and I remember I started to consider fostering this kid. I had no intention of trying to take him away from his parents or any of that type of stuff. I just wanted to bathe him, put him to bed at a reasonable hour, feed him breakfast and send him on his way...in the course of which time I had to get some consultation....and of course I never did do that or indicate to the kid or the family or anyone ...but I remember really struggling because what I thought was, ‘I could do this for this kid.’ That it was very basic...you know...he would have to come in and he’d go brush his teeth and what have you and he’d come and he’d show me and I go and look behind his ears and if they were still grey then he’d go back. It was all just real basic needs stuff and it was just so easy to do for this kid and this kid thrived. He gained weight. He went to school. He was functioning way beyond what he should have been able to do; he was talking less about wanting to die...engaging with peers...he’d laugh, he’d have fun, because of really, really basic things.
CHAPTER SEVEN: EXPLORING THE DEPTHS OF PRACTICE

Introduction

In this chapter I discuss three major themes resulting from the participants’ stories and narratives. The three themes are not discrete and possess overlapping sub-themes with headings: Self - It All Starts Here; Relationship - The Soul of Practice; and Stammering for Good Reason - Issues of Voice. The first theme begins with the main instrument of child and youth counselling work, the self, and is divided into three emerging sub-themes: the beginning self; self as patient; and self-care, tools for survival. The second theme is relationship, the cornerstone or what Bailey refers to as the “soul” of the work (1995, p.92). In this section participants discuss the importance of relationship, recount stories of meaningful relationships and discuss aspects of relational knowing. The third theme concerns voice and is entitled “Stammering for good reason”. Three interrelated sub-themes emerged in this area: the issue of voice is addressed from perspectives of women, children, and the profession.

This chapter builds further on an understanding of the complexity of the child and youth care work. Through exploration of the themes, it presents us with a preliminary examination of how professionals translate their knowledge through use of their own voices and stories.

Self - It All Starts Here

[I mean] that we don’t have any other instrument. We are the total instrument. It is a hell of a responsibility. I mean a dentist has to keep his tools honed, a butcher keeps his knife sharp and we have to keep ourselves toned and sharp and that is an ongoing process and we are a mystery.

As Athena indicates in the above quote, we are the total instrument in child and youth care. The dictum “know thyself” is crucial in this human centered profession. Our personal and professional growth is a continuous and interrelated process. Maslow recognized this process as active steps toward self fulfilment. Jerslid describes self as constituting a person’s inner world as distinguished from the outer world consisting of all other people and things (Jerslid, 1955, cited in Heck & Williams, 1984, p.2). Prior experiences shape what Pinar calls the “architecture of the self:”, which consists of the contribution of the many elements of the private existential person, such as beliefs, values,
dispositions, feeling, guiding images, principles whether explicit, implicit, tacit or intuitive (1988).

Fewster suggests that:

In our business, the story of one youngster may trigger anger in one worker, sympathy in another, alienation in another, despair in another and so on. The child and the story remain the same; it’s the lives of the workers that are different. They respond to experiences that are etched into their view of the world. (1990, p.43)

There are multiple factors which influence who we are, how we act in relationship to others and how we conduct our everyday lives. All of this underlies our present perspectives and reflects the unique way we look at things, talk about things, structure our realities and encounter our worlds (Heck & Williams, 1984, p.4). Each person achieves contact with the world from a particular vantage point and in terms of a particular biography. Our different reactions reflect our personality, our unique self. In this research we examine this issue of self from the unique perspective of the three participants.

The concept of self was raised through the language in the transcripts in a number of different ways: affirmation, learning through experience, vulnerability of nurturer, stories of first learning, relational, tacit knowledge, change agents, gender issues, personal in the professional, lived experience, coping, public versus private, intuition, ethics, empathy, attunement, rupture of family, silencing of child’s voice, relational incompetence, transformation, epiphany, autonomy, stress and burnout, when would I, personal ethics, autonomy, relational knowing, common sense, free choice, self-awareness, personal history, personal code of ethics, dissonance, authority, pivotal epiphany, moral responsibility, reconstructing identity, self-as-tool, self-taught.

Themes of self-awareness, self-knowledge or self-development also surfaced throughout the participant narratives. Informants’ life stories were testament to their growing self-awareness. A number of critical reflections revolve around becoming aware of who participants were at the time, how their history affected their decisions and interactions with children, and how they incorporated their new self-knowledge into both their personal and professional lives. All told of transformational learning experiences or perspective transformations (Mezirow, 1978, p.100) which created greater self-awareness. All told stories of mistakes they had made that assisted them in creating a new awareness
of their own personal development. The female participants in particular pointed to developing a greater self-awareness through difficult and painful situations. All described their learning in the context of familial, social, historical, and political contexts. Importantly, all pointed to self-knowledge as an absolutely crucial element in becoming and growing as a professional in this field.

**Beginning Stories - The Self We Bring To The Work**

In previous chapters we have discussed the thick complexity of the field of child and youth care. Counsellors are expected to relate to a wide range of individuals, all with a unique set of characteristics, needs and expectations. In addition, they are expected to carry out a number of roles in difficult and sometimes oppressive conditions. The first years in field placement and subsequently the transition into employment in the field can represent a difficult journey fraught with a number of new challenges. For some it is filled with accomplishment, excitement and exhilaration; for others it can be discouraging, confusing, filled with seemingly insurmountable problems. For many it is probably a mix of new learning opportunities and challenges, some satisfying, some not.

I remember vividly my own beginning stories in child and youth care. I was a young woman of 25 working in a detention centre for seventeen and eighteen year old young offenders. They were called juvenile delinquents at that time. Issues surrounding authority, sexuality, identity were just a few of the personal factors related to self-awareness that surfaced for me very early in this field experience. I was equipped with some beginning competence, largely as a result of my own parenting role at the time, as well as some experience in working with groups of day care children and their parents, but I was in no way prepared for the intensity, the potential for violence or the range of emotional responses I would experience in this job. Supposedly simple tasks such as getting the residents to leave the recreational area and join other staff and children for a meal could turn into a power struggle and provide much ground for learning for a young, inexperienced worker. Developing the role of an authority in such an institution required considerable development and practice. I encountered this 'dilemma' (Lampert, 1985) in the first hours of the job.
The participants too, have significant recall of their beginning years in the field, and all refer to the “trial by fire” nature of their beginning experiences.

So I think in my first year I just really learned the crisis intervention...tried to manage crisis...because there was a lot of crisis all the time...personal growth...caring for kids

Trial by fire. It was a very interesting experience that these kids did present a problem and we were kind of literally learning on the job... it was a long way from the teaching we were getting.

...you know those first few times ...you know, I remember we had this one kid who was a slasher and this kid tried to kill himself all the time. He...uh...was just the most actively suicidal kid I ever met. I swear I was at the hospital with him every night... and he tried hard....and you know, I remember feeling so powerless and not knowing what to do or how to stop this or no matter what I did it seemed it didn’t make a difference.

Their stories often reflect being not adequately prepared, having to face their own issues and relying on others to model appropriate and useful interventions with children in order to develop as a professional. The concern for development as a child and youth worker originates within the self. People use self, self-knowledge and their personal resources to assist youth with the problems they are facing. This will be facilitated by workers who feel good about themselves, and who know what they are doing and how they are doing it. They will be capable of modelling behaviour which is healthy and growth-promoting. There are several issues surrounding self which have come up in the context of the participants' stories.

**Ages and Stages**

The fact that both Athena and Annie entered the profession at an early age is not unusual. The general norm is that those entering the profession are college age. This has many implications for the developing self. Annie describes some of the difficulties she encountered:

[It is] far more emotional and that’s why you have to be clear about your own emotions. I think that is why new child care workers get into difficulties....the people who aren’t prepared to face their own issues. There is a potential for secondary trauma that one, is overwhelming, but two, if you can’t allow yourself to have that containment and safety within you...you can’t possibly serve as somebody else’s emotional containment.
That is essentially what you do. In some ways it is like you are holding the kid’s pain for a while so that they can look at it and resolve it and understand it.

I think it is only as an adult I’ve been able to firmly believe that. I think at that age [when I started out] I uh was really wondering about me and what things like that meant for me...as opposed to that maybe um things were beyond my control..that adults need to take more responsibility...

Athena attests to some early difficulties as well.

You had to grow up because all of a sudden you had all these responsibilities....

I had trouble with adolescents for years because I didn’t have an adolescence as such. I was in my adolescence when I was in Chicago. These kids were charging ahead of me and I was scared to death of them...beating their chests....

I suppose it depends what age you are when you come in. I would be very suspicious of someone who comes into child and youth work wanting to do something about the world.

Relying on reflection on her own personal experience and her years of teaching new workers entering the profession she concludes:

You know, I think we have been saying in our work you go through stages. I think it is very important for educators to stay the hell out of whatever stage the student is in as long as it is not destructive to herself, to the child, to the clients. It is a growth process. In terms of advice I wouldn’t plop something down. In think in our work it is not so much a question of frugal advice as setting an example. I think they come in, and I think the good educators and the good staff knows damn well they are being watched by the new staff and that is the education part. They will do as we do; if we are hypocrites there will be a problem...I don’t think there is any way out of that fact...and that means not just our work life but our whole life has to be all of a piece because they will smell it out if it isn’t.

These participants expressed a wish that they had known more about themselves upon entering the field. In their cases they took a number of active steps to learn more about self. It is worth noting that Maslach (1982, p.59) indicates that there is a clear relationship between age and burnout. The first bout with burnout, she says, is likely to
occur within the first few years in a helping profession and that many may leave the profession entirely as a result.

**Self in the System**

In earlier chapters we have heard the participants describe some of their frustrations and moral outrage at the systems that serve children and youth. The tension between the world of the child and the demands of the child welfare and mental health system and the public is a central dilemma that young practitioners must learn to manage (Lampert, 1985). These first encounters with managing dilemmas (Lampert, 1985) have great repercussions for the well-being and continued professional growth of the worker. In the following story one of the participants examines some of the ‘dilemmas’ she faced in encountering a young boy who was being seriously abused.

.... I remember a story and it’s a boundary crossing too. I was quite young. There was a kid when I was running a recreation program. We used to do this shirt versus skin and they were all boys, you know...so one team would take off their shirt... and one wouldn’t and [therefore] you can tell what the team was. I never even thought of the implications of that at all and uh..I had this little guy, who was probably about seven and uh...he uh..wouldn't take his shirt off and I couldn't understand why he wouldn't take his shirt off and I, I forced the issue and uh...you know I got caught up in he was just being defiant and wasn't ..you know..playing with the group and I couldn't even think beyond that and of course I took his shirt off, I saw a lot of welts and an iron mark actually.

An iron, like a steam iron...so you know, my head was not necessarily all that into what was going on because I had my own issues at the time. But this kid. I got into a bit of a collusion with . I called Children's Aid and they weren't prepared to act. And that was really my first sort of experience with authority not taking responsibility. So I took a bit too much responsibility for this kid. I gave him my home phone number and one night I ended up with a call from the hospital. This kid had been beaten to the point that he was in the hospital and he uh, he had called me. He had asked for me to be called.

Int: that must have had an incredible impact...

It still does. I mean I can still picture this kid. I can still remember I uh...I wanted to take this kid in...Unfortunately I didn't have a place to live but I remember having that feeling. I would have taken this kid in and now I think about, you know, it’s just so...I was just so [emphasis] naive in terms of all the dynamics but at the time it was very powerful. I think what I learned the most from that kid is I
remember seeing him in the hospital, black and blue. He was just so badly beaten and burned and he was crying. He wanted to go back to his Dad. I just couldn't understand it. I didn't want them to do that. I didn't understand how he could go back to his Dad. I just remember it being so painful that this kid would do that and I'm not sure when it was I understood why that was...but I remember at the time I thought things should be different. I thought there should be other ways... I felt that I was not very clear at all about what those other ways were... yeah...so he was a story... I often tell that story when I teach too because I think for practitioners it brings up a lot of issues...this kid needed intervention. He didn't need me rescuing him. I think I was probably fulfilling things out of my own rescue fantasies. I was.

Int: uh huh. That would be hard to know at that age.

yeah...[laughter] Yeah I didn't see it at that age. I absolutely colluded with him to keep silence, when the Children's Aid wouldn't intervene. They wouldn't intervene because it was such a high need area at that time... but I clearly reacted against authority. I think, in retrospect, I thought well if they won't help this kid...I will!... and in that way I think I sort of colluded with him to sort of...We were going to manage it, you know? I did things like I would feed him at the program...you know we would go out together. I didn't know what to do. I didn't have the resources. I got caught up in everything... but I did learn from that. If there was no doubt even at that time...I mean I didn't have the language to say that it was boundary issues and what have you but I knew that things had to be different when I faced that again.
Clearly I needed other people and I was not in a position. Well, I had no real authority position to begin with. I was quite young and unstable myself...
This story raises a number of points of discussion including issues of voice or absence of language as well as the need to develop some professional relationship boundaries. I use it here to illustrate some of the difficulties and moral dilemmas new (and experienced) workers often face as they make daily decisions regarding childrens' well-being. What we label here as the self versus institution dilemma is an abiding tension in the life and work of the helping professional and relates to a number of issues related to self-awareness. The workers' function is presumed to serve both institutional and individual needs. Most helpers will have institutional affiliations and must be aware of this in order to survive.
Why We Come to This Profession

What leads people to the career of child and youth care? By placing self at the centre of the work, examining motives for entering the profession appears a good start as an avenue for exploring retention and excellence in the field. In sharing their life histories participants have been candid and introspective regarding their journey into the profession. We are, by now, aware that salary and high prestige were not the incentives for engaging in this work. Personal, intrinsic motives become important.

Robeson, who was older (32) when he entered the profession, described being "bored as hell" in his job with the railways when he saw the advertisement for child care workers at Thistletown. His work history was one which consisted of a number of male-oriented positions, patriarchal in nature and dominated by authority and 'power-over' relationships. Many required wearing a uniform and complying with rules, routines and regulations. His stories reveal someone who wanted to make a difference, who didn't want to be a functionary. There was a sense he wanted to contribute. Throughout his child and youth care professional history, particularly the beginning years, there exists a sense of collegiality, of excitement and democracy. Although he does not reveal a great deal of his own personal development, his stories reflect someone who is deeply affected by his relationships with children, an admission that one makes many mistakes and a commitment and a warning to others to benefit and learn from those mistakes.

He comments:

If a child care worker or student has any doubts about what they are doing or are going to be doing as a child care worker. The time will be when they put their socks on in the morning and if they don't feel good about going and doing the job after giving it a fair trial they should get out and do something else...
For all participants there was a sense of the different or 'other' elements of the job.

For Athena it represented a rebelliousness against her parents and the social mores of the day. It was a bursting beyond the prescribed roles for women and an alternative to convention and often mandatory marriage contract. Annie describes wanting to keep the element of play in her work. She enjoyed playing with kids and the various recreational activities one could do with children. Both women had experienced significant
marginalization themselves and both indicated they came into the profession with a need to 'save children'.

In their reflections they inform us:

...but it takes us to child care in the sense that we know from our children that the greatest gift we can give them is an autonomous self that can say yes or no to things so I am sure in that sense my childhood is related.

... I think those people who come to it and stay with it, I think it’s, I suppose it’s based on the ..the base of it would be the child..your own childhood.

Athena and Annie draw a clear map to their destination in this field. Both see their childhood and growing up as directly leading them into this business. Athena’s childhood of marginalization, of struggling against authority and striving for a sense of identity led her to the field. Annie grew up in a group that provided containment and a basis of social connectedness and mutual responsibility. We see, through these histories, the multiple factors which were shaping their ongoing personal growth.

...which is the way we were raised. I mean you weren't taught to think for yourself. You were taught, you were taught to do as you were told...and...if you didn't do what you were told...this was, the disappointment was quite obvious [emphasis] and the punishment...I mean to this day my mother will come out with "You know, probably your father died when he did because you married a non-Jew." That's the kind of guilt that they employ.

Self as Patient

I wish I had known more about myself. So many come into this work... we don’t consciously I think. We are the patient and the therapist. I wish I had known more about myself when I was young.

...well you don’t have to do it right away, but eventually you’ve got to solve your problems. It’s there. You have to deal. Timing is also important. It doesn’t have to all be blurted out.

Maslach suggests that some people come to the field for 'selfish' reasons which may include:

1. involvement helps gratify some of your own personal needs;
2. there is a strong need for approval and affection;
3. there is low sense of self worth or self esteem;
4. as a way of working out own problems;
5. focus on someone else’s troubles rather than own.

Although these are not necessarily bad motives they do raise potential for burnout in the field.

Both Athena and Annie have described extremely difficult growing up circumstances. They described relationship difficulties, low self-esteem, abuse and neglect. There can be no doubt that they came into the profession with significant and serious issues to resolve. Athena describes her difficulty in maintaining relationships, her strong anger towards her parents, her alienation and mistreatment as a result of being a woman, a Jew, an immigrant. Annie was candid about her teenage struggles with addiction and abuse and her open anger towards authority. She described tragic events, two of which she had witnessed prior to making her decision to ‘get off the streets’.

One of the participants quotes a colleague:

he was talking about staff who have problems and come into work to help resolve their own problems. His message was you don’t send anyone with TB to a coal mine to work so that applies too. ....

When questioned about this angle, that the helping professions attract those who have their own issues to resolve Athena offered the following:

Well, it is a question of degree. The same thing is true in Mary’s course...in the advocate course....you know where they go into the shelters...so many of the people that come in there have been assaulted or abused. I taught in that program a couple of years and um...that's okay if you've got some distance from it...and you've done some work with it but if you are right in the middle of it, it is totally not okay. By the time I became a teacher...I had a good deal of distance..I had done some work...quite a bit of personal work

Robert Coles (1989) observes that crisis can lead to growth when it presents an opportunity to confront impediments to further development. Mezirow tells us life crises can create social or personal problems for which there are no ready-made answers. He suggests that resolving these anomalies through critical analysis of the assumptions behind the roles we play can lead to successive levels of self development(1990, p.100). Both female participants seem to embrace this quest for self-knowledge and self-development, and put to good use their growth resulting from disruption and crisis. This is indicated in their involvement in therapy, their ongoing education and professional development.
Although both expressed feeling ‘dumb’ and possessing gaps in their education they both continued to pursue their education and became educators themselves. Their exposure to extremely difficult social conditions, and their pivotal learning centred on crises and challenging growing up circumstances seem to have contributed in a positive way to their development and subsequently to their work with children.

**Holding up the Mirror**

It is not easy to delve into one’s own unconscious. Especially when, when there is trouble. I think we are too self-protective. At times we do need outside help. Athena

For one who is seeking to offer help, investigation of our habitual reactions to our own suffering can illuminate the subtle ways in which we may judge others for theirs. Many helpers, when they themselves are suffering, are incapable of accepting support, or at least receiving it easily. Yet they may be impatient with those they’re working with for not accepting aid or counsel readily enough. Chances are, if you can’t accept help, you can’t really give it. While all of this is an extremely complicated psycho dynamic interaction, one thing seems obvious. The more conscious we are in dealing with our own suffering, the more sensitive we will be in treating the pain of others.

(Ram Dass 1987, p.86)

Annie, who has been very open with us about some of the emotional difficulties she experienced in her own life history, discussed the importance of knowing yourself when you endeavour to work with problem children. She describes vividly in her narrative her initial resistance to seeking help, and her struggles with self-esteem and self-worth. Her accounts of her accelerated development in her second year at college is directly credited to a new willingness to look at herself and her own issues. In reflection, she describes herself as angry and rebellious, feeling dumb and resentful of advice and suggestions from her instructors. On the other hand she received significant nurturing and support from her mentoring relationships, from her accumulated knowledge and through her growing ‘voice’. Through her stories, we learn she lost her street language, gained greater self-esteem through her endeavours and began getting excellent evaluations and promotions. She describes a major role shift as she became “the authority” instead of the person rebelling against authority figures and was viewed as a competent and caring practitioner.
I did need to resolve my stuff if I was going to be in this field. I was afraid of it, but clearly it was stirring stuff up for me. If I didn't get a grip on that I wasn't going to be helpful to anyone else. So, somewhat reluctantly I did start therapy and that gave me a real clear perspective on things. It gave me a containing place for my own stuff...so that I could go and really concentrate on school, work and develop. So my second year things really turned around. I got promoted....all of a sudden I was getting all these perks.

Int: How do you think they [the college instructors] would have described you then?

Absolutely angry...um ...rebellious...but there were also people who talked to me about being strong minded and passionate [emphasis] and powerful...and those were important things for me to know...that those could be good...they weren't just negative things. I started to use those in positive ways. I started to look at things more clearly. I started to separate my own issues from others' and ...somehow...I knew that I had taken certain steps to turn my life around ...It would be really clear if I was going to do this that I couldn't be in the field unless I was sure what I was doing, that I wasn't going to be harmful, that I wasn't going to in any way put my own issues on someone else...so I became very devoted to that...I mean using supervision, using colleagues, using therapy, really thinking things through. You know in the past I just played with kids. I mean although it was so much more than that...that is what I thought it was... ...and then somehow I gained a whole new understanding and it allowed me to feel the kid's pain without becoming overwhelmed by it. It allowed me to set limits and boundaries and be clear about where I was going.

Athena as well was committed to the process of self-awareness.

being a child and youth care worker...um...it prepared me in that I never under-evaluated a child... you know, I was prepared to commit to discovering the unconscious, uncovered by own....[aside] much to my chagrin at times..and I discovered other people's...became quite convinced that it existed.

She tells us about an exercise she conducts with beginning workers in an effort to get them thinking about these issues. It is not unlike the life history approach which we have described in earlier chapters.

When I am working with workers I spend time on getting them to formulate how they see human beings. Do they think people are born good or do they think people are born evil? There's a whole list ... Do people make choices or are there situations in which people can't make choices. Do we always make choices? Do we never make choices?..and make them
think those things through because it influences how you approach human beings.

I don't think this is just an old woman looking back and being nostalgic. I used to...and I do this day...I do this with the workers that I train in Trinidad. I write up the kinds of things that most of us never thought about in our own infancy and birth. In other words I engage them in their own human growth and development...but right from pre-natal...and they, for one of the first times, they talk to their birth-giver...um if they have one...if they are lucky enough to have [one]...

and then I build the theory around that...cause then you can't help but learn it...there is no way! you know that your first word was "Dada" or that your first word was "Woo Woof" and you know you are interested in what was his first word and what was her first [word].

Int: so you would have the students go to their birth-giver and have them ask the questions about...

Athena: hmm I still do it...and they love it! Then they come back into class and they want to talk to each other, you know?"What did you find out?"...You know "How long was she in labour?" or "Why did you get that name?" "Why are you an only child?"

If, as Maslach suggests, we believe that our helping others will increase our esteem without any intrinsic alteration and careful self-examination we take the risk of living our lives vicariously through others and perhaps the further risk of ignoring our own development (1982). The most dangerous risk of all is the potential risk of harm to the client (Wylie & Marcowitz, 1992).

Self-Care

Helpers actually work in the presence of the greatest stress-producers we know--other people.

(Kennedy & Charles, 1994, p.23)

The nature of the workplace is such that it can further traumatize individuals and this too is not always adequately dealt with. Little research or attention has been paid to the assaulted or traumatized worker.

(Snow,1993, p. 12)

We have discussed how factors such as age and reasons for entering the field can impact on the propensity for burnout and our survival in the helping professions. We have also described a work-based reality that contains several factors which can contribute to a
high level of burnout including poor working conditions, dangerous conditions, scarcity of resources and lack of status and professionalism.

Literature on burnout suggests that many practitioners come into the field and are not prepared for the range of emotion and emotional circumstances involved in the job (Cherniss, 1980; Freudenberger, 1973). They may also come in to the work with ideals about the excitement of the job and discover they must complete some mundane and routine tasks which can be time-consuming and exhausting. Students often enter the field, as I did, with some lofty ideas about helping others. Although these feelings are often heartfelt and genuine, Cherniss (1980) points out that students entering the field frequently carry a "professional mystique". They begin work or studies with the impression that child and youth care is heroic and charismatic rather than routine.

I came in idealistic too...right? I was going to change the world. Then it was good when I got over that too, because then I learned what really mattered and it was just one kid at a time and a relationship.

One of the common assumptions we may make is that others will want our help. When we are faced with the anger, indifference and sometimes hostile attitudes of children and their parents, we can find ourselves disillusioned and spent. We are distressed that what we consider "reasonable solutions" are often shunned and discarded. We are taken aback that clients are not immediately grateful for our help.

The systems, as discussed previously, do not often work in our favour. We may find ourselves overwhelmed by the limitations of the institutions in which we work, the strict adherence to policy and protocol, the paucity of resources available to our clients and ourselves. Society at large can also play a significant role in preventing progress on the part of children and their families. Efforts to assist in problem-solving may be fruitless when families are faced with systemic discrimination and economic and political barriers which prevent their achieving good mental health. We are not necessarily well prepared for this in our work and may not understand that a commitment to helping children is a commitment to changing some of the social conditions which can make their plight unbearable.

Hence, our unrealistic expectations, combined with the many limitations we face in attempting to offer quality services, are a perfect recipe for burnout.
Our participants have identified a number of issues which have led them to field, the desire to make a difference, their own familial situations, a need to become part of a non-traditional occupation, a desire to play, to name a few. All spoke to the lack of readiness for the emotional and physical aspects of the job.

It is not uncommon for students who enter the field of child and youth care to become '24 hour a day' workers. They live and breathe child and youth care. They bring it home after long hours on the job and it is not unusual for teams to do a lot of socializing together and talk about the 'shift' or the children afterwards. The participants wrestled with this feature of the work.

I learned very early on that I was drained. I didn’t have anything to give to my own kids so...

[It was] very demanding in many ways, because ,you know, I had to learn that. I had to learn to leave my work behind when I left the centre and many people have told me about if they are on an afternoon shift, coming off at night, usually ten o’clock having to spend some time winding down before they felt ready for any form of home life or social life.

The other piece I have learned [when I needed a vacation] to give people lots and lots of warning. I think just before I left residence I was really getting burned out. I was short-staffed. My staff were all kind of tired and the staff by far were always more needy than the kids...there is no question in my mind about that. While the kids had more emotional needs the staff needs were never ever met.

They recognized the dangers of over-involvement or feeling like it was their job to rescue children.

Which is the way we were raised. I mean you weren't taught to think for yourself and that’s the personality that comes into this work. I suspect we pay and we pay and we pay...a bit of a saviour thing that most of us have to realize is totally unhelpful.

[you need to be open to] what they are feeling...what their emotional lives are like...so you have to be open enough to allow yourself to feel that...without being overwhelmed by it or having your own issues triggered by it.
They offer suggestions for those entering the profession.

What’s helpful is leading a normal life and let the kids see that they too can lead a normal life. Part of having your own life is having relationships that you sustain not by working on Sunday when you’re not on schedule.

I think that you could prepare them [new workers] partly through self-awareness sessions where you tell them initially that during their first year they will learn more about themselves hopefully, than about the children or disturbed children and adolescents... You try and relate to them certain experience, experiences and hopefully that will have somewhat of a teaching focus...

I think you have to take care of yourself first. I really don’t believe you can be helpful to other people if you are not taking care of yourself... Sometimes juggling that is harder. Sometimes knowing when you have reached that point is harder, you know.

I think I feel better on recognizing my limitations... right from the beginning. So when the kids say

“Well. Fuck you. You don’t care. You go home at night.”
“Well, yeah I do go home at night.”

I am quite up front about it and I am quite honest about... you know that I have a life outside. I don’t cross the boundaries in terms of discussing it, but I don’t pretend it doesn’t exist. I think that is a healthy way to model for kids as well. I don’t think it is healthy for them to think I will sacrifice my life.

Kennedy and Charles suggest that the very thing that makes counselling or good advice work — that it is done in a personal caring way — is also the reason it can be hazardous to the emotional health of the helper (1994). In order to achieve stress reduction, workers must consider themselves.

Summary

... ultimately your own personal resources are the one service that can’t be cut.

(Garfat, 1995, p.iii)

As participants have suggested, workers must be prepared for the reality of the child and youth care field. Teachers must practice what they preach in terms of dialoguing with students, in modelling professional behaviour and a balanced lifestyle. Those entering the field may not be prepared to handle repeated, intense, emotional contacts. The lack of
prior information regarding the stresses in our field are a striking omission in many of our training programs. If we tend to focus on lofty ideals instead of the nitty-gritty of the field we are doing both students and clients a disservice. Maslach suggests that we tend to attract naive recruits to the field when little is said about the emotional reality of the job (1980). The more information students and professionals receive, the better the ability to make informed choices and recognize early stages of burnout. The clearer the sense of personal skills required, phase development, and social supports needed to work effectively and well, the better able we are to take steps which lead to careful reflection and examination of our work and ourselves.

Counsellors’ emerging identity, during the first years of practice and beyond, is subject to many transformations. Early simplistic notions of practice give way to a more complex understanding of self and the role of being a practitioner. We cannot assume, however, that every practitioner submits to the rigorous self-examination and reflection that our participants have engaged in, in an effort to be non-detrimental to clients or themselves.

Participants’ reflections and stories point to some of the issues involved in this developing self. The self, however, does not develop on its own. It does so in relation to others. This takes us to the next major theme in the research, relationships.

Relationship—The Soul of Practice

But remember first that you already know a great deal about relationship. You have known it experientially from your first relationship. You have been nourished on relationships: you have tasted them, savoured some, rejected others, swallowed and digested them comfortably or with consequent gut ache, learned from them, have been patted (or punched) into shape by them. You have been made tall by some, diminished by others. When you stop to think about it, you become newly aware of how meaningful relationships have been in your life, even temporary ones, and how your sense of self-worth and of belonging with your fellow men has been their product. And you may become aware, too, of how at times of helplessness, of failure, of loss, of too great stress, the natural appetite for being cared about and connected with others may become an acute hunger. Perlman

(1979, p.18)
Child and youth care practice takes place in human relationships. To be able to relate, practitioners need an understanding of people and their behaviour. As discussed in the previous section of this chapter, workers must understand themselves in order to truly understand children. They need to be aware of how their own actions and personalities affect others. As Athena indicated in her self-awareness exercise, how we think about people and life will influence our work and our relationships.

As the opening quote from Perlman suggests, the professional life of the practitioner is embedded in the personal (Goodson, 1992). Child and youth care practitioners already have some knowledge of how to work with children by virtue of their own experience. They have served an “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie, 1975, p.62) throughout their lives and have formed ideas about the nature of relationship. This knowledge is “intuitive and imitative rather than explicit and analytical” (Lortie, 1975, p.62).

The concept of relationship I think is a key term and we need to spend a lot more time on that. It is not something you can easily teach, but if it is a core skill they may have to learn how to do that...or at least understand it. Perhaps you can’t teach that...maybe this is an avocation as opposed to a job choice.

Annie

As we have noted several times in this thesis, it is difficult to adequately describe the complex activity in relationships. Perlman notes that although “meaningful relationship” and “good communication” appear to be highly valued in our society, there has been short shrift given to the recognition of the uses of relationship in the human services (Perlman, 1979, p.2). Recently the work of feminist psychologists Jean Baker Miller and colleagues, Surrey and Jordan from the Stone Centre, have begun to investigate the nature of relationships. Some of their work on relationships, and its chief component, empathy, is used in conjunction with the participants’ narrative and story in an effort to explore this topic.

All participants have pointed to the central significance of relationship in their work:

...we have nothing else as it turns out. Unless you want to use drugs all the time, leave them to help themselves. If you want to study something study
relationship. Spend your energy on studying me and thee and thee and me. That’s all we have.

Athena

The important thing also is [that] you are here to bring about change in an individual boy or group of individuals. No change is going to take place ever, unless they have a relationship with you, whether they have some form of respect, or admiration or whatever. Unless they have that for you, you will never bring about any change. That would be one of the most important...

Robeson

You have to really believe the relationships will work...that without a relationship, well, there is no ability to develop empathy....security...it is a cornerstone I think of human relations and I believe the field has completely forgotten that today.

Annie

...and no change will take place until relationships are formed...even if it is only a relationship with one person at the centre.

Robeson

If you are actually on the front lines you have to be ambidextrous. You have to, obviously, focus on the relationship. You can’t forget.

Athena

Although we believe relationship to be the ‘soul’ of the work we find it difficult to define. For the purposes of this paper I offer two definitions which I found useful from the work of Perlman and Jean Baker Miller:

1. A catalyst, an enabling dynamism in the support, nurture, and freeing of people’s energies and motivations toward problem solving and the use of help. (Perlman. 1979, p.11)
2. Engaging with another person(s) in such a manner that you foster the psychological development of both (all) people involved in the interaction. (Miller, 1986, p.2)

Our participants share their stories of relationships. These stories offer some illustrations of meaningful interactions. Through them we are able to explore essential features such as empathy, mutuality, intuition, and a term coined by Annie called “emotional containment”.
Stories of Relationships

Few of us can remember our early experiences of relationship but most of us can recall at least fragments of relationships from early childhood that were meaningful to us in constructive ways. Athena has described very troubled relationships with both her parents. The disruption of the war, entry into a new country and not knowing the language limited her same age peer relationships for some time. In the midst of her growing up though, she recalls some important learning moments with others in her childhood. The following anecdotes describe these pivotal moments with her aunt, her nanny and her employer at the hardware store.

Her nanny:

She was a far better mother than my mother ever was and um...she ..would take me out the odd time and you know the Nazis would be parading all over the place and I would want to parade with the rest of them you know. Who wants to be left out? Anyway she wouldn't let me, she would say "No, no. You don't want to do that." And I never quite understood..I mean how would I have understood?

She helped me. I wasn't an object for her; I was a living thing. She was young woman off a farm and she was probably like I was when I went to the centre, probably younger I don't know. Come to think of it. I'm probably better because she came into our lives and she loved us and she loved me...She liked children; she actually liked us.

Her aunt:

.I had never seen a street car before because the town was very small and um....I wanted to go to the street car and didn't ask for money, just took some from her purse and I think she figured it out and she went to cuff me one and deliberately missed and I knew she deliberately missed and that was the first time anybody had deliberately missed.[chuckling] oh..and I, you know, [it] made a very very deep impression on me...that out of love one would set limits but gentle limits...loving limits..I never swiped from her again.

The store owner who employed her at 12 years of age:

but I would sell stamps, savings stamps for the war..so I would be quite the heroine because I am very good, you know, at that kind of stuff but I would be stealing off of my boss, you know, at work. So I was leading this double life...[laughter] as the heroine who was contributing to the war effort and was helping herself to the cash [laughing] she was taking in...in
small amounts...until one day we were outside the store together. Mr. Carmel was his name and he said "Athena if you are going to steal, steal big. Remember that!" And we were just talking about life in general but I don't know. To me it was a warning. I gave that up. I made a deal with God. I remember very clearly throwing out the window of this third floor where we were living a few of the things I had purloined and then I started reading the bible every night...became a compulsive reader of the bible...my twelve step program to stop stealing. [laughter]...okay I would be stealing things like ribbon.

Annie describes a significant relationship with her geography teacher.

I did though, I did have a geography teacher that took a real special interest with, in me and he had a classroom...he had a little office off to the side of the classroom and uh...I used to go in and I'd be really in bad shape. I might not have eaten. I might not have slept...whatever had happened. He'd just send me into his office and I remember I could smoke cigarettes in his office...um...and just...it would be okay...he would give out handouts, you know, and the class would do handouts and he would come and talk with me and ask me how I was doing. When they took me to court, he went to court on my behalf without me asking, and agreed to supervise me. The court agreed that I had to go see him in the morning...go see him after each class, go see him before lunch...go see him after lunch. He agreed to that and he never made any demands of me actually. I would do it. I did it faithfully for the next year and a half or so that I was in that school...um...I don't think I ever missed. My attendance actually improved, because I actually made it to the school. If I was not in very good shape or if I was high or drunk he would just sit me in his office. He would tell me not to go to class. He would get me an excuse from classes, but I had to stay there. That was really the only limit. In some way I had to talk to him, although I don't remember it being all that demanding. He took me to his house and I met his wife and his kid. We had a barbecue. I remember it all quite well. And he was always appropriate [emphasis] Meanwhile...you could say I smoked in there or not...if he hadn't given me some carrot I would not have been able to have stuck around...right? At that time those were the types of things and he was just very, very consistent...very kind...very safe...There was never any question. Some of these other teachers that were crossing boundaries, they crossed sexual boundaries...you know relational...you know once those things start to blur...they really blur. This guy was just clear...right? I mean I had to get some containment and he was going to provide that. And he used to talk to me about trust and that he trusted...he went to court. That meant he trusted me...that I had to show up...but he didn't make unreasonable demands like you have to come here, be straight and get As for me to trust you...somehow he knew that that was more than I could do.
These relationships had a profound impact on the participants. They recount their stories of them as a significant part of their learning. Earlier in the research we heard stories of Athena’s autocratic upbringing. Corporal punishment was not unusual and she described her parents as preoccupied with war and other matters. Finding other models who shared a warmth and wisdom made a deep impression on her. Goleman refers to these relationships as reparative relationships (1995). They are those that reshape your working model of relationships. An imbalance at one point can be corrected later; it is an ongoing, lifelong process (1995, p. 101).

Stories of Mentors

Robson has fond recollections of his teachers who very much influenced his learning.

In the trade unions:

I had some wonderful teachers there. I can recall one situation and the general secretary of the union...he was a big guy and came for a sea-faring background before he went into fire service and he was a whole story himself. One day I was in the office and someone came in about negotiations...and well boy, did he tell them, ya know. And John listened and he was the top banana and he said..."Okay"...he turned to me and he said "Now never go into a meeting, punch somebody on the nose and expect them to give you something. Go in and present your case and you don’t have to shout, you don’t have to thump the table etc."

In his beginning years at Thistletown:

...it is going to be very difficult to convey to you, Patti, or anyone, the type of, the quality of these people. They were different. They were very intellectual; they were very socially aware and socially democratic. Lon, who over the years became a very close friend of mine, was the type of person that was so interesting and would involve everyone...

He was also greatly influenced by Lon’s wife as well. The following excerpts reflect her generosity and her modelling a great deal regarding respect for children:

She was very left wing, very left wing and fought in Spain...now I don’t know if you know anything about the Spanish Civil War...prior to World War Two and there, you know, the fascists took over and lots of people got killed...she was an ambulance driver. I am trying to convey...she was different. There is a book which has a chapter devoted to her by a well known Canadian poet named Dorothy Livesay...and it devotes a whole chapter to Gina. When moving into a house...Gina was saying to us “You don’t want to rent a house, buy a house....and I was saying : Gina, we
don't have enough money for the down payment!" "Ah, what are you worried about?" [stern tone]. "I'll lend you the down payment. Interest free."

Gina was excellent with children. Excellent. Could relate to children and had a way with children. Never worked really directly with kids but our kids adored her... But very impatient with adults...

Annie recounts stories of her mentors.

I started in the field very much with mentors and I have kept that. I've had throughout my career... My first mentor is still in my life and she was my supervisor and she took a chance and hired me when I was very very... she describes it rough around the edges...

Int: a diamond in the rough

yeah, I needed some polishing... um but I think she saw something of herself in me.

Int: uh... huh... Any sense of what that is or what that was?

Well, she's one of the first child care workers in the province in terms of being a T-Town grad (Thistletown graduate)... and I suspect, given what I know about her now, that she was probably a bit rough at that time too. They, of course, had a different educational experience cause they were in residence and things. I think it is the way she formed her group with her child care colleagues... they had to live there. [She] very much mentored me... I wanted more. I wanted more experience. I wanted to learn and she allowed me that freedom to do it. She allowed me the freedom to go and do things and make mistakes. There was many, many times where I know she knew I was about to go headfirst into a wall and she never stopped me. She trusted I would learn and let me learn if I wasn't seeing things... but didn't shield me from my own growth that I think sometimes people can do... I remember sometimes even being angry.

"Well, if you knew I was gonna do that, why didn't you say?"

Then the other thing was that she rewarded me. I got promotions... used to go on great [emphasis] trips. There was money in the field at that time. Used to go to conferences. I got to travel. I remember the first time, the first trip I went to was to Cincinnati and for me, you know I came from such a poor background, you know, the idea of travelling... that has to... still I think about it now. I've done lots and lots of travelling over the years.
Her college instructor:

...I remember very clearly this one woman who uh...who I very much admired and she was kind of unusual to me...Yeah. Because there are certain things that my school mentor...she was very different from me. She was feminist before I even knew what feminism was. She taught sexuality and I remember I got into such battles about her...with her She would talk in class about her analysis and that to be in this field you had to be in therapy...and uh...I remember reacting to that so much, right. I wasn't going to go to therapy. There was no way! ... and of course I was working and doing my placement and things and really quite tired. It seemed to me I never slept and issues were coming up. I was being faced with families I was angry at and my supervisor would challenge me on that...you know, kids who stirred up memories for me and I'd react. Somewhere in that second year it became clear to me that I did need to get a therapist...I always felt she was different right? She was menopausal and she would tell us about it...and you know at the time I thought it was weird, but I learned to appreciate that it was confidence and self-assurance and self-understanding and that you saw who she was and she wasn’t afraid to show it. I had spent so much time hiding who I was that in many ways she was my mentor in that...that it was okay to be who I was. I didn’t have to hide you know...recoil...I didn’t have to be perfect. She also was the one to talk to me about therapy and uh...she also fed me.

She describes lessons they both taught her.

...and both of them taught me the same lesson and it is something I tell people about me, because I had been in that role myself...which I consider a privilege...but the one mentor told me right out. “Be careful how high of a pedestal you put somebody on because the higher it is, the harder they fall.”...and both of them taught me that lesson...although that probably took some time...but they did by their humanity. They did by their willingness to look at their own self but also to be really consistent about who they were....knowing who they were...

Finding the Language - Exploring Relationship

Why don’t they call that course working with children and youth within a relationship! I know that needs firming up but that’s what we are doing. And methods doesn’t tell you piss. What does it tell you? Do 5A when the child is doing 2B? Did you get that or should you memorize it? As if every dilemma is going to be the same.

As indicated at the beginning of this section, participants pointed to the need to develop relationship as central and crucial to the work in child and youth care. At the same time they found the elements of relationship difficult to describe and to teach or learn. The following are some of the key emerging concepts that were raised in the context of establishing working relationships with children.
Empathy builds on self-awareness; the more open we are to our own emotions, the more skilled we will be in reading feelings. The skills that allow us to do this well or poorly are also, for the most part, learned tacitly. (Goleman, 1995, pp. 96,98)

The most often mentioned aspect of relationship is empathy. In describing this aspect of relationship I rely on Judith Jordan’s (1984) writings on empathy entwined with the participants’ narratives in an effort to explore its features.

As with other aspects of relationship, empathy has often been construed as a mysterious, contagion-like, and primitive phenomenon or dismissed as a vague and unknowable subjective state (Jordan, 1984, p.69). Jordan, however, describes empathy as a complex process, relying on a high level of ego development and ego strength and, in fact, may provide a good index for both.

She describes several components of empathy.

1. One must have a well-differentiated sense of self in addition to an appreciation of and sensitivity to the differentness as well as sameness of the other.

   This has been discussed in considerable detail in the previous section on self.

2. Empathy always involves surrender to feelings and active cognitive restructuring; in order for empathy to occur, self boundaries must be flexible.

   ...I think you really have to be able to understand when kids are at an affectual level because you can’t begin to provide them containment if you don’t really understand how out-of-control they are feeling...when you don’t have an understanding of that...and that’s scary....

Int: And that’s what you mean by an affectual level? How they are feeling?

What they are feeling...what their emotional lives are like...so you have to be open enough to allow yourself to feel that...without being overwhelmed by it or having your own issues triggered by it.

Int: right. How do you do that?

I’m not so sure. It is what you do...I think it was my own insight at the time and my own self-understanding and reflection.
3. Experientially, empathy begins with some general motivation for interpersonal relatedness that allows the perception of the other's affective cues (both verbal and nonverbal).

   I never forget it...that children are people, you know, and you don't talk down to them; you listen to them, you have eye contact, you touch them if you can.

   My experience is you get one or two [opportunities] ...if you are persistent you may get three....but these kids have learned to give up a long time ago...It is really paying attention to the behavior. It is paying attention to the emotions. It is paying attention to what is being said without words ...

4. Such perception must be followed by surrender to affective arousal in oneself. This involves temporary identification with the other's state, during which one is aware that the source of the affect is in the other.

   Athena describes a teaching and learning tool which I believe is helpful in defining this aspect of empathy.

   The important thing is to cut the barrier between yourself...to get the white coat off...Freud indicated that there is absolutely no human behavior...none...that we can't fantasize...we don't have to go and do it...but we certainly can fantasize it and in so doing you begin to understand where the other person is coming from. So the first thing you would do is the "when would I?" You know, when would I act that way? In order to do an effective "when would I?" you have to have plumbed some of the depths of your own psyche for it to be accessible to you and then the second question always in "when would I" is "Why now?" and "Why with me?" and they are more client-oriented but they are very important questions.... So that means when somebody is acting in a most bizarro fashion...you can, I can, if I am willing to do the job and just comfort myself, I can become that person in my fantasy, whether it is a mass murderer, a paedophile, or a kid eating their pudding with their hands, or twiddling [referring to masturbation].

   Int: Right, and so in doing that you can create a more objective view of what's happening with the child and remove some of your counter transference or your reactions to what they are doing?

   I can if I take the trouble to go there...to go there in your own thinking. I can do it and it is important that I do that.
5. The final step involves making use of this experience to help the patient understand his or her inner world better.

   and the kid knows you are doing it. The kid knows you are trying to understand....and it really changes.

questioning and thinking really directed at understanding...um ...because I don't believe kids will feel emotionally contained if you don't understand them and I know that because I've had kids where I didn't quite get it fast enough...and they let you know pretty quickly and usually quite physically...that uh [chuckling] you are not understanding...HELLO!

For empathy to be effective, there must be a balance of affective and cognitive, subjective and objective, active and passive. Self-boundary flexibility is important, since there is an “as if”, trying out quality to the experience, whereby one places one’s self in the other’s shoes or looks through the other’s eyes; distinctions between self and others blur experientially (Jordan, 1984,p.69).

Athena describes this “as if” philosophy.

We were taught that you have to treat your children or your clients AS IF they could make choices...Give them the impression they can make choices...while in the family like mine you can pretty well know with a mother like that [laughter] I didn't have any choice but NOW they have to make some choices...whether they can or not who knows...AS IF you didn't either....so that's that. But it is also psychologically you have to do ‘as if' because when you do your own work on your own psyche and you suddenly realize that's why you behave.....I understood that gradually in terms of my own history in terms of identification with the oppressor...the Nazis who did my dirty work...who beat up my father for me and my grandfather who had beaten me up...so and not just that. It is also that the child of course leans toward the stronger one and if it happens to be the aggressor in the family, the child still identifies with the aggressor rather than say the mother who is being aggressed upon. You still want to be like the strong one.

The whole issue of free choice is very very important in how you see human beings you know.

Intuition

Polyani, (1969, cited in Miller, 1984, p. 18) describes tacit knowing as involving an intuitive sense of how to do things that cannot always be explained in explicitly conceptual
terms. The effective practitioner operates intuitively and makes changes based on moment-to-moment decisions (Miller, 1984, p. 18).

Participants point to the significance of intuition in their work.

Intuition is so important and how do we value it? Sometimes I just know. You hear stories all the time. There is something to intuition and I have it. More and more I believe in its existence but I find it really frustrating that we can’t articulate it.

with clients..I mean I got so with people that I saw for years I could read their minds...but only because we always been honest.

I could almost read their minds...often I did read their minds. I knew what they were thinking. I knew what they wanted. I knew where we were going; I knew what they were trying to avoid...I knew...

I can tell you that I can see when it doesn’t happen and when people don’t have the skills to make it happen...it is harder to articulate..I can walk into a house and I call it ‘taking the temperature’. I can take the temperature of the house and I’ll know exactly whether that containment factor is there or not. Some of it is probably intuitive. Some of it is that you see it.

One of the participants tells a story of using intuition.

one of the boys was elective mute...This boy was designated to go to a home for the retarded because he came as mute. They thought he couldn’t hear and he used to stick his fingers in his ears and go “Ga..ga..da, da, da, ga..ga [very quickly ] This was a personal experience. I was working with him and at times he was on a special diet. On this occasion I took him down to the basement area. It was all kind of caged off and the kids could play their go karts etc. and they couldn’t damage anything. So I take Joey down on his own and I said:

“Joey, I’ve got to go upstairs. I’ve forgotten something upstairs.”

So I went up. I was only gone a couple of minutes and I came down and in the far end of his area there was Joey peeing though the [crack in the wall].

So all I did. I went up just a little way from him and I said:

“Joey”.

And he jumped and so I could go back and say,

“This kid is NOT deaf .”

**Mutual Empathy**

Jean Baker Miller suggests that historically our central formative relationships have not been founded on the basis of mutuality. Surrey suggests that the goal of development is the increasing ability to build and enlarge mutually enhancing relationships
(cited in Miller, 1987, p.3). These relationships foster the continuing development of all people involved and flows more from an "empathic love" mode as contrasted with a "power - control mode" (cited in Miller, p.3, 1987).

The following excerpts from participants’ work reflect this concept.

[There was] this kid I actually contracted TB from... he was from a foreign country. He had escaped during a communist takeover and what have you. In the course of his escape his mother was murdered in front of him and he learned to survive. So he learned to steal. I’m pretty sure he killed somebody...not entirely sure. ..and he ended up getting in trouble. I’m not sure what the trouble was. I remember over a period of time he and I had developed a really good relationship and there were some indicators for me that he was really turning around. I mean he formed relationships. I remember coming in with a cold one time and he made me...um...and this is so significant...people outside the field don’t understand how significant this is, right?...but he made me chicken noodle soup. Now this kid had been hungry, deprived. He had lived for months running through a war zone...and for him to feed me was so significant...I will never forget it. I will also never forget that he didn’t know how to make it...

I am trying to think of stories...there are just so many things that ...that kids taught me about...in those years...you know playing pool together...I remember ...I played pool on the weekend and I was thinking about it ...but...I could never shoot pool...and given that I grew up with pool tables it's amazing I could never shoot pool and the kids [emphasis] really liked to play pool with me...and I'm sure on one level it was I didn't do it so well ...They could beat me but they also taught me.[emphasis] and I remember how important that was...for the kids to teach me how to play...you know I never did learn but it really sort of showed me that it was meaningful for them too and...uh...that was their way of doing it. There was other ways of doing it but I remember pool was the one that I became aware that ..that kids needed the opportunity to do that and that it was really healthy that they wanted to do that...that something was working...that our relationship was really meaningful because they wanted to do...they wanted me to learn to play pool properly...[chuckling].

Emotional containment

This is not a term found in the literature, but one which was coined by a Annie. It is part of her repertoire of practice and it speaks to unfolding layers of meaning and nuance in the everyday manifestations of the work.

So that is a skill that somehow our field has to articulate better because in my mind it is one of the most important skills and I have seen many people over the years that I’ve trained...all disciplines..doesn't matter if it’s a
psychiatrist, social worker, child care worker, whatever...and I've allowed them into my group and watched the group disintegrate because they can't provide that level of emotional containment. They may provide the structure okay...They may be able to run an activity but there's two levels of understanding that people miss. One is the emotional containment and the other is that the activity is not the treatment. The activity facilitates the treatment. I used to train medical students, first year -the psychiatry residents and they'd always come in and say "Well, I'll just do a cooking group"...[chuckles] and I'd say "Well, I really don't think you should choose a cooking group" and they'd say "Well, cooking is easy." So I'd always let them do it and it would disintegrate. I'd always be sitting outside the door, picking up the pieces of my kids, one after another because they'd just come out in such bad shape because they were so focused on just cooking and getting the stupid muffins done. [chuckle]...where it was...that they had no idea that it had nothing to do with the product...it had to do with so many other layers of kid's experiences with food and being nurtured and nurturing and peer relations and group skills and you know just their emotional state of the day.

It's being able to look at a kid while maybe you are cooking or playing with clay and understanding that this has a significance to them and trying to figure out what that significance is. What does this mean? and how does it make you feel? and what does it remind you of? or if it doesn't you know...what do you think about now and how are you coping with the peers across there or me here spending time with you? or that you gotta go home tonight or whatever the issue is...um and it is different for each kid and each situation. So it is also not as easy as getting to know your kids...once...kids they grow, they develop and they change and it is a slow process.

So I was very good at the managing of the group..right? Maybe not so clear at that time about how to resolve some of their issues but we had a good safe, contained safehouse and as a result of that the kids did well and especially that first group of kids...they were really [emphasis] challenging kids...and we went through some really difficult times together. But it was really important to me that they all became part of the group and we all sort of lived in this house even though I didn't live there. ..and ...we needed to make that important..and so the clients were getting better [surprised tone] and I don't think I knew what was going on or why that was happening.

I'm just sitting in the room, drinking my coffee and people call me on it...saying you're not doing anything. Yet I know exactly what's going on in the room and I can see...I can see it, what I'm doing...I can see my
proximity is managing the group...and helping them to learning to begin to have some self-structure and independent time and learning to manage unstructured situations and knowing where a kid is at the moment and knowing exactly what issues they are dealing with...and whether they've had breakfast or not and what the past weeks been like and how these two kids are going to get together and interact or not and...all these different layers of understanding and providing containment. That is a lot of what child and youth workers do. Not physical containment...I don't mean that at all...it is emotional containment...if you are consistent...you are there consistently...if you are patient...and consistent and caring...over time it helps kids feel some containment themselves that you provide an emotional place because they feel so out-of-control emotionally.

I'm not so sure it's what you do...I think it was my own insight at the time and my own self-understanding and reflection...also when I am with kids...I am totally devoted...nothing else is on my mind when I am with kids...This component Annie is describing to us may refer to what Fewster calls “staying present in the moment”. Although he is not totally pleased with that term he states “expressions like concentrationor attention just don’t catch the essence (1990). Or what Aoki refers to in teaching as “pedagogical watchfulness” or “pedagogical thoughtfulness”. (1988, p.27). Annie is attempting to, “unfold layers of understandings”. (Aoki, 1988, p.27). This is not dissimilar to what Dewey calls wholeheartedness or single-mindedness - a genuine interest -bringing about a state of being absorbed (cited in Eisner, 1991, p121).

Participants continue on this theme.

That's all that matters is the stuff that you can't see. I've never found...maybe there is something out there I don't know about but I've never found an activity that does treatment...[laughing]. I've had lots of groups...but its not...that's not what it is all about. It is a subtle understanding of all these things and always knowing.

If you are working with groups of kids and you may have say 5 kids around you, you can talk to one, eye contact with your hand on the shoulder of the one next to your and you make this kind of non-verbal contact and you may be talking to one but you are looking at another and it is always the whole group.
The power of relationship

I kept trying to think of ways I would teach it and you know when I do teach I just tell stories...and people come to know that I really care about the kids because of how I talk about it...but it doesn't really teach relationships...all it shows is that I have a relationship.

Annie

When the reader was introduced to the profession in Chapter Five Annie told a story of danger, when she was trapped in the bathroom for over six hours with a sixteen year old youth who had a razor held at her throat. The continued story is a powerful one as she explains to us about her relationship with this boy and how it helped her (and him) in this dramatic situation.

...he was just trapping himself...he really couldn't get himself out of it...he was in such pain. So we talked a lot about what happened and I believed we could work this through, that it didn't have to get bad. There wasn't a lot of words....the words were quite minor. There was a lot more tone and feeling. I can feel this kid's pain. I tried to respond to his pain. I reflected back his pain. I was careful because in my interpretation he was suicidal and if he hurt me he was going to kill himself and I was really really worried about that so I wasn't going to let him hurt me and I was going to make sure that he knew I wasn't going to let that happen although this kid was, by far, outweighed me by a hundred pounds...so how I was going to do that I wasn't really sure...but I believed that and in the end he cried.

We sat in there for a while longer and he handed me the blade and you know things worked out for him there. I mean they didn't in the long run because he killed himself...I think it took a lot of strength for him to give me that blade. I think it took a lot of strength to tell me. The amount of saving face he would have to do to walk out of that bathroom after that....that he would do that...he would come back and he worked it through. We spent a lot of time talking...a lot of time. I remember feeling really anxious because my office was quite private and I remember being quite anxious the first time I let him in my office....but you know he worked it through ...he was a kid who had just been so badly abused...I am not sure because I didn't have the skills at the time to identify it...but he was probably the first ritual abuse case I had worked with...and at that time it was just unheard of....but that was a direct result of what he had seen and experienced and I believed him! There was no doubt in my mind that on some level it had happened, whether it happened exactly as he said or remembered...that was his experience....that was his experience....and so you know a lot of people had caused him pain....and I think he very much wanted to cause some pain himself but I know he didn't want to cause me pain cause we got out of that.
Int: if it had been someone else perhaps?

Without the relationship, he would have done it. There is no doubt in my mind...and that is what child and youth work to me is all about...it is developing that relationship...It is finding kids you don't like...and there has been a number of kids I don't like and working a way to try and find that relationship...finding something in them...cause everybody else doesn’t see anything in them...It is finding that thing in them to connect them, to start getting them to trust a little, for you to feel okay about them...and working that through.

The answers must lie in the play of emotional bonding between the help seeker and his helper, even if it cannot as yet be translated into behavioral and research specifications. (1979, p.18, Perlman)

In this section on relationships, participants have described the significance of those growth fostering relationships both in and outside of their professional lives. They have recounted stories of relationships which were meaningful to them. In doing so they give us glimpses into persons and attitudes which have been helpful in their growth. They have also attempted to describe the essence of relationships in their experiences in working with children.

Empowering relationships involve feelings of connectedness that are developed in situations of equality, caring and mutual purposes and intention. (Hogan, 1988, cited in Clandinin, 1988, p.5)

Stammering for Good Reason: Issues of Voice

To have a voice is to be human. To have something to say is to be a person. But speaking depends on listening and being heard; it is an intensely relational act. (Gilligan, 1982 p.173)

In investigating voice in the research three sub-themes emerged, those of silence from the perspective of women, children and the profession. These link with one another on a number of levels. The plot lines are similar. They are all concerned with issues of power, control and subordination. They are concerned with those whose voices are barely audible.

Women's Voices

Telling personal stories can be profoundly moving and meaningful, and to hear another woman's story is often inspiring. (Montgomery 1994, p.1)
The notion of voice has been surfaced in the examination of women's knowing and growing self-awareness (Belenkey et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1984). Gilligan's work emphasizes the power of representing women's voices previously unheard. The results of Belenkey and her collaborators' research provide major insight for everyone interested in the way gender influences knowing and learning. It is important to note that their insights are not limited to women (Ashton-Jones & Thomas, 1991, p.28).

The theme of voicelessness resonates throughout the female participants' stories. Belenkey et al. (1986, p.18) note that in describing their lives, women commonly talked about voice and silence and its various connotations. This is evident throughout Athena's and Annie's dialogue. The issue of voice practically permeates the transcripts. Evident through the language the participants use are terms such as hidden, marginalised, inarticulation, loss of voice, no voice, part silence, quiet, 'I didn't have the language', 'keeping the silence', and 'code of silence'.

In their study Belenkey and co-authors found that women inhabiting the epistemological perspective they called 'silence' were often fearful, abused and buffeted about in the worlds in which they lived (1986, p. 147). The women in this study have described these conditions over and over again in their life histories and in their learning.

Using Belenkey and her colleagues' perspectives on knowledge and Athena's life history we are able to trace the evolution of a journey from a position of silence to one of constructed knowledge. The perspectives outlined in Women's Ways of Knowing are silence, received knowledge, subjective knowledge, procedural knowledge, and constructed knowledge. Received knowledge and subjective positions are seen as problematic perspectives because they preempt any possibility of real dialogue. A preferred model, one which includes a pedagogy of cooperation and collaboration, is seen to "alleviate the discomfort women often feel with the values of educational institutions" (Ashton-Jones & Thomas 1991, p.28). It is these perspectives we seek in examining knowledge through narrative and story-telling. Silence is experiencing the self as voiceless and without the capacity to receive or generate knowledge. As Friere maintains, it is difficult to sustain dialogues with people who are not members of one's own social and economic community(Friere, 1980).

Athena's description of being marginalised speaks to the perceived need for silence.
but...I mean the whole thing really kind of made me aware of being a member of a society which, which I didn't feel a full-fledged member...ever [emphasis]...whether it was in Germany or as an immigrant or as a Jew or as a woman...um...as a widow...you know it just keeps going....

Straight power over. Unquestionable. That is why I left the Nazis because they had power over people...they had power over me...I've been through enough. It took years to work that one out. Although one cannot draw conclusions based on the experiences of one man an one woman it is interesting to note Athena’s nd Robesons’s very different experiences of World War Two, the ultimate power over relationship.

...in England during the war, you know, invasion was expected. It could come anytime sort of thing ...when the war started I became a messenger for the boy scouts and then I joined the fire service and then I was a dispatch liner. A young kid with a motor bike and you kind of lead the way as it were especially in the rural outskirts where you would to ahead and get onto a crossroad and stop traffic and sneak across. It was kind of an exciting different life. Everyone was kind of in a wonderful spirit, you know, everybody was in the fight together...
or his upbringing

I never had any great restrictions, but on the other hand you were always given the message, if you ever disgraced your family, God help you. As a teenager I could come and go as I wanted. I didn't have to ask permission. While Robeson was finding camaraderie and excitement, Athena was being silenced and marginalised, hidden away and isolated from peers.

...and I decided wanted to go to university and again you get this problem of being a Jewish woman. We're supposed to get married...um not go with education and I remember very clearly walking with my mother and saying I need to know who came first, the Greeks or the Romans and she could not understand why anybody would give two cents in such ridiculous ...she said "Marry a doctor. Marry a dentist. Be a dental technician and marry the dentist" and again it was experienced by me as my own needs were not recognized which is again part of what is the gift we can give to our child? The gift to our child that they as individuals are important. that we are hearing them...and that didn't happen. She didn't know how to do it because it was never done for her...and my father didn't feel it was part of his responsibility...that was a woman's role. He was supposed to make the money...so...they were not going to...well, they didn't have much money anyway... so...they were not going to support the idea which was not the first time that had happened with me...
Received knowing is seeing knowledge as absolute and always in the possession of authorities. Athena’s descriptor of ‘received knowledge’:

My supervisor was such a demi-god. It was a two edge sword. I learned a hell of a lot from him but it was very specific as to how he saw the world. I wish I had been strong enough to realize “Hey, wait a minute! There are many roads to Rome.” That took me years to realize....and for me I was going from one autocracy to another. ..and that wasn't good.

But I always felt dumb anyway, you know. I grew up feeling dumb. Um...and maybe it was just that supervisor......um but I think it was also because...he was also an autocrat in his own right. During it all, he was an autocrat and autocrats don't help you become yourself. It was only as they began to find their voices and speak from an intuitive sense or “from the gut” that they gained some power over their own lives and a growing sense of self (Belenkey et al. 1986, p.168).

This was interesting. I remember this. The pain, I defined it as not being heard. Because I remember the first session I had with [the psychotherapist], he asked me what do you want? And it was one of those weird things where a voice comes from your stomach rather than your heart. I had no control over what came out of my mouth and what came out was, I want to be heard! As a German child you were not heard, children were seen and not heard...I wanted to be heard! At 22 I finally screamed it out. I really had not control over that I just erupted. So I would define that pain as loss of voice or no voice. Unrecognized, not encouraged nor listened to...

Subjective knowing is distrusting authority and understanding knowledge as ‘constructed’ the knower acknowledging and taking responsibility for shaping knowledge.

I was a rebel because I was able to follow, thank God, what I needed to do rather than what was expected of me to do....not without a price...my rebellion was curbed by having children and having to provide. Anyway I stayed and I mean I saw parents, I saw kids, I trained staff. I ran a house which was a disaster because I couldn’t be there long enough to do a good job. I fought with [the administrator]. I really disliked [him]...right from the beginning but again I was afraid just to run away from a job. I mean we were new in this country, we had kids coming out our ears...

Athena told us her story of a transformational learning experience for her where she described “the lights going on” and her recognition regarding the significance of communication. As noted, we see her change in her learning. We see her now as an expressive, feisty woman who holds strong opinions and the courage to express them. Her strong language seems no accident but a result of a lifetime of defying prescribed roles and
finding her own voice to express her views and moral commitments. Perhaps the best example of this is her adage that to her, a lack of communication equals psychological death. She recalls her transformational moment when she had a flash of insight regarding communication and maintaining relationships.

...years had passed, ...I'd crossed the hurdle in terms of relationship. I remember the spot where it happened in the university. The lights suddenly went on that a relationship could be supported by the following thing "talking to each other." For me, this was an amazing discovery...that you have to commit to honesty with one another and you have to deal with the problem ...I remember when I figured it out [about communication]...cause that's what we were doing with the kids a lot...constantly dealing, constantly dealing, constantly,...So I said "Well, okay. You do it with them. Why couldn't I do that with a relationship?" And that was the drift of it...it you got mad at each other or jealous or whatever we talk about it [surprised tone]. A whole eye-opening experience. And by the time, about six or seven years later I was finally able to say okay, I was finally ready....people communicated...I mean it is so obvious and yet it was just not a reality for me that I understood communication. Just as when you are training workers ...so many of them don't know how to communicate which doesn't shock me at all because I certainly didn't know how.

She hadn't learned those communication skills in her upbringing. She learned them in her work with emotionally disturbed children.

That has never happened in my family. I don't think in any of it. They just don't understand that...it is something you have to learn....My family never communicated at all. They are not a non-caring family but they don't communicate.

When people are convinced they can shape their social reality and that they are no longer isolated and powerless they begin to participate in dialogue (Friere, 1970).

**Constructed knowing** is understanding knowledge as 'constructed' the knower acknowledging and taking responsibility for shaping knowledge(Belenkey et al., 1986, p.15

It took years to challenge him. By then I was able to do it. I was more of who I am today.

I started to question things. I started to wonder whether things had to be that way...so in my time as a child and youth counsellor I have grown incredibly and I see things very differently.
Evidenced throughout Athena’s story are issues of voicelessness and a difficulty in finding language needed to break through the barriers she faced. Her perseverance through self development, education and relationships brings her to a place where she speaks loud and clear about her issues and dilemmas. The telling and retelling of her story assists in the quelling of the trauma she faced in Germany and in her ‘growing-up’ life. She found her voice. This development of voice is a way out of helplessness into a kind of personal power that seeks to transform pain (Lourde, 1980). Athena is feisty and confident. She chafes at the system, the power over relationships. She found the old myths regarding prescribed roles for women deadening and constricting and struggled to create her own story, let her own voice be heard and to help others find theirs.

As we have listened for centuries to the voices of men and their theories of development that their experience informs, so we have come more recently to notice not only the silence of women but the difficulty in hearing what they say when they speak.

(Gilligan, 1982, p. 173)

Children’s Voices

We all sense the child within us, and through this, we can reach out to understand and communicate with kids in trouble and with those adults who choose to work with them.

(Fewster, 1990, p.145)

We turn first to the participant descriptions of their own childhood to highlight the muting of children’s voices and their marginalization.

I never [adamantly] asked for help. I never had contact with social services. I probably should have been a protection case...um but I...so you know...I had come not to trust that anyone would help so I became silent...I was quite a...I acted out a lot, but I was very quiet.

I can remember very clearly going to a what would be a Family Court Clinic now for an assessment. I was only about seven or eight...remembering that they weren't listening to anything we had to say.

Very clearly, very clearly. I don't remember if I was communicating it yet. I don't remember it that clearly but I remember feeling that they weren't listening...that they didn't understand...that they were in the battle. They were the adults doing that battle thing...but they did not understand what was going on...for either me or my brothers.
and likely it was around that same time....yeah....my brother who is three years older than me would uh.. would be in extreme pain. I remember him on the front lawn just screaming [emphasis] in pain and falling down and the neighbour would come over and restrain him, put him in the car, take him to the hospital and they would send him home and say there was nothing wrong with him. Told him it was all in his head.

It’s like somebody who has been through horrible times trying to describe it, but for me personally the facts were that because I was a Jewish kid...um, I got thrown out of school because all the Jewish kids got thrown out of school...so...and I was quite humiliated.

I stayed in the attic for a year and a half cause you couldn’t leave. You weren’t allowed out of the house.

One of the traumatic things about it is that you lose your mother tongue. I mean my first language is German and when I go back and everyone is speaking German it is extremely painful for me... it’s such traumatic...it’s so loaded you know...I mean that kind of childhood opens your eyes to... well, what humanity is capable of.

Annie’s reflections point to the lack of attunement to children:

I do not think our society values children. We make them voiceless and resist giving children the rights all other member of society take for granted. I do not believe that our political structures have placed a priority on children as “our national resource our future”. Canada has been internationally chastised for its progress on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child yet I don’t think our country is embarrassed. I do not think I’m politically naive.

And worse, we turn a blind eye to abuse of children while in care.

Well, there are huge amounts of abuse of kids in care. The abuse of kids in care is just rampant because we undervalue it so much...We put inexperienced people in there. I have seen kids beaten so badly and I find that personally more traumatic because you know ...somehow it is easier when it is not the people who are set up to protect them. I find it very difficult when kids have been put in a place of so-called safety.. When I see things go wrong I see it really as a lack of awareness and lack of understanding, lack of empathy...it is that oppression you know...the oppressed oppress and they just keep perpetuating the crisis.

there was many, many situations where I saw kids come in who have been hurt who I guess at that time I was probably in my early stages of
becoming an advocate...um....because I learned to fight the system...I learned to make sure these kids were heard and saved that they understood there were ways to get help.

Participants pointed over and over again to the marginalisation of children. In Chapter Five we heard about the way children are hidden, how the child is expected to fit the system as opposed to the system fitting the child.

Annie’s reflection on a current story of the voicelessness of children resonates with the powerlessness and dissonance she feels when it comes to advocating for children and youth. In this story she is referring to the death of a boy who was beaten to death last year on his sixteenth birthday by another youth in one of the most secure jail settings in Ontario.

His death did hit the front pages. They dragged out a two year old picture, made his parents look bad, made him look bad. A two page award nominated article appeared in the Toronto Star. As far as I could tell, the general public didn’t seem to care, nor did many professionals for that matter. No one seemed to see that this was a young boy. This was his sixteen birthday, he was still just a baby. Are we as a society willing to write off people at the age of sixteen? A group of people formed together, filed petitions, asked for a judicial inquiry, demanded an investigation. It is now March; nothing has happened. A youth is charged with murder. He, too might as well be dead.

**Voices in the Profession**

Child and youth care is currently generating raw experience and it takes considerable courage to put words around the personal. If we could only celebrate and value who we are and what we do, we might be able to generate the necessary courage.

(Fewster 1990, p.145)

The issue of voice in the profession surfaced in the research in two significant ways: 1) in a political context; and 2) in an educational context. The two are closely interrelated and are therefore examined here together. Finding a voice to advocate for children and finding the language to promote and develop the profession are the overriding premises participants raised.

the concept of voice is a big one for me...and that you picked up voice from everyone was significant...I think we are in a time when kids are really powerless and it is very much on my mind...that pendulum swinging back...that scares me.
Like teachers, child and youth counsellors are often portrayed as uncertain, tentative, nonexpert characters who are accountable to others. As Connelly and Clandinin suggests, that teachers and others often speak the language of the conduit, they speak of plans, or results, and of policy implications. They suggest that this is abstract talk, mostly irrelevant to practical concerns. The language of the conduit is not a language that allows practitioners to tell what matters to them; that is, the stories of children (1995, p.14). We have heard many stories of children from our participants and it is these youth that remain at the heart of the urgency to have child and youth practitioner voices heard.

I am aware of my responsibility to make sure these youth’s voices are heard. I am also acutely aware that people don’t really care. I don’t know how to reconcile that.

Freire, (1970, p.52) describes the process of gaining voice as not a linear process, but involving multiple transformation. It consists of: 1) a growing sense of control...changing from object to subject, 2) relationships of: particular significance in people’s cognitive and motivational approaches; and, 3) a desire and need for educationally transmitted knowledge bringing with it a vital concern for social and personal changes.

We have seen these multiple transformations in the life histories of our participants. Robeson’s historical perspective of the field praises renegades like John Rich who were willing to take on the government and speak out for emotionally disturbed children. He learned a great deal from mentors like Lon Lawson, who developed a great deal of the early work on developing milieu, for children in residence and from his collegial community of learners and teachers who were fighting the early battles of being recognized as a legitimate profession. In addition to his previously expressed opinions regarding professionalism and improved training he suggests training new workers to speak out.

I wish in the college there would be a course taught [in advocacy]. It would be a good thing to have that taught as a formal course. Maybe they would be in a better position to challenge their own teachers

Annie talks about her earlier years of ‘not having the language’ and indicates that even today it is difficult to articulate some of the intuitive, tacit essences of the work. Much of her dialogue in explaining the work centres around qualities which are hard to
name and even harder to teach. Having found her own voice after years of marginalization as a child she now advocates for children while being mindful of her own well-being. Partly through her mentoring relationships she assists others in understanding the ups and downs of the field:

and I had spent so much time hiding who I was that in many ways she was my mentor in that...that it was okay to be who I was. I didn’t have to hide...you know recoil...I didn’t have to be perfect...

So they [mentors] have been instrumental and I’m really enjoying that I am now in the position that I do that for others. It’s very powerful to be able to do that. It is a way to give back...what I got.

Athena, as illustrated in the previous section, also struggled to find her voice and continues to teach and advocate for those who are marginalized and voiceless themselves.

As the participants struggle to define the true nature of the work in its complexity, it’s many layers, it’s nuance, perhaps reflection on Miller’s assumptions regarding relationship are helpful to heed.

At present, the main thing may be to recognize that our language may be inadequate. The next step may be for all of us in our lives and our work to try and represent our experience as closely as possible. We may find that we are often stammering and inarticulate. It is very valuable to turn to each other in these attempts. This helps us to become clearer and clearer...It may be valuable to recognize that this is a long task ahead and not to expect that we should have the exact right and accurate ways to speak about ourselves ready at hand in any short order. In other words, without making false excuses for ourselves, we may be stammering for good reason.

(1984, p.22)

Summary

Working within the self and between the self and other we are learning more satisfactory ways of relating to other people. This self-perception is an important factor in giving us the confidence and security to deal vigorously with the problems that the young people in our care face. In this chapter we have explored self and our participants’ experiences, thoughts and suggestions for helping new workers explore these issues. A realistic picture of the field, preparation for some of those dilemmas which may arise both internally and externally, the potential for burn-out and some suggestions as to how to care for and nurture the self have been explored from the participants’ vantage point.
Perlman posits that self awareness is the first essential condition for the use of oneself in the interest of others (date, p.21). Participants have shared stories and anecdotes of important ‘others’ in their lives, those who have been detrimental or pivotal, those who have provided models for relationship development. From here informants attempt to uncover some of the layers or aspects of relationship which are felt to be essential if we are to be helpful to the children and families we seek to serve. We explore the nuance, the tacit knowledge, the feelings involved in such endeavours. These narratives point to the nature of knowledge in child and youth care and provides us with a glimmer of the essence (Aoki, 1988), of child and youth care practice. Many of these concepts are simple, while the applications and implications are difficult, complex and far reaching. As Fewster indicates, these participants are offering us their raw experience. They offer us intellectual sustenance and suggests ways in which we may examine the layers of this complex work.

Noted throughout the research is the issue of voice and its significance to the field. Here we have begun to examine it as it relates to women, children and the profession in general. In each instance there is a struggle to find ways to express presence, to articulate views and knowledge, to come out from under the shadow of oppression. By exploring and calling for a celebration and trumpeting of these voices, we begin to uncover important leads in the transfer of this knowledge to those either embarking on the voyage of professional child and youth care work or those wanting a fresh look at the nature of the profession. In the concluding chapter we examine how this information can be applied to the practice and teaching of child and youth care practice.
CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to discover and expand upon issues inherent in child and youth care practice and professional development. In an effort to accomplish this, the research has presented and explored stories from child and youth counsellors of vast and varied experience. I have used their own words and knowledge to extend our understanding of the issues and to elaborate strategies for successful professional development in the field. I heed the words of Witherall and Noddings who state:

Our understandings of the power of narrative and dialogue in teaching and counselling practice cannot help but expand our vision of our responsibilities as professionals within our professional communities, including the relationships that we nurture with our colleagues and students. We are thus faced with some very substantial challenges.

(1991, p.9)

Objectives Revisited

The three objectives of the inquiry were:

1. To characterize and describe child and youth care practice.
2. To elaborate strategies for successful professional development in the field.
3. To indicate what role narrative plays in both practice and professional development.

Through this research readers have been introduced to three exemplary child and youth care professionals who in turn introduce the profession of child and youth care. These participants have provided vivid and descriptive “insider accounts” of the work. Through Annie, Athena and Robeson you have met the children they seek to help, learned about some of the problems they encounter while working in child and youth care settings and heard of some of the joys and some of the despair which is such a central part of the work.

Story is about conversation and dialogue. It is ‘fresh knowledge’. Some of the information is not new but it has been previously kept underground, inarticulated, intuited or ignored.

(Noddings, 1986, p.20)

The findings suggest to us that stories do play a strong role in child and youth care.
Participants have told us compelling, descriptive, sometimes disturbing stories of practice. They have emphasized the usefulness of using stories (telling and listening to), in the professional development of workers. Stories have been described as central to practice and essential in teaching others about the challenges of the work. Participants reflected on their pasts, both personal and professional and told us of moments that helped them develop their knowledge of self. They have informed us that they often told stories informally to colleagues in an effort to create bonds, get through some tough moments, and to help build a sense of teamwork. Perhaps of greatest significance, they have recounted stories of children who have made gains, both large and small, and contributed to their professional expertise. These experiences with children were the source most relied upon to recount learning experience.

Through stories and vignettes of practice, the indeterminate aspects of relationship were explored, important past relationships, mentoring relationships, relationships with children and colleagues. These stories provided rich insight into practice. Issues of self and voice emerged prominently in the study. Self refers to the need for self-knowledge, recognizing the impact of self on the work, the need for continuous self-investigation and a requirement for self-care. Voice was described in the politics of the profession, the marginalization of the children, women and the profession of child and youth care. These themes spoke directly to issues participants felt were essential to good professional practice. In this concluding chapter I summarize the impacts of these issues on professional development and suggest the implications for training and research.

Issues of Practice

1. Socio-political issues: The practice of child and youth care practice cannot be described without placing it in the context of the politics surrounding it. In Chapter Five: Inside the Profession, participants described many of these factors. The stresses and demands of the job and its complexity, the marginalization and hiding of children who don’t fit into the norm, the scarcity of resources, and issues of professionalizing all came under scrutiny. The literature suggests that the reasons for devaluing this profession are longstanding and are partially shaped by history, gender, professional territoriality and societal attitudes towards problem children and women’s caring. They have to do with how we value experience and particular ways of ‘knowing’. What was not helpful to
participants were autocratic and patriarchal structures, a society which marginalized them and the children they worked with, inadequately funded services and bureaucratic institutions who are too far removed from the front-lines of children's lives.

Many of these issues are social justice issues and cannot be resolved through narrative practice. They can, however, be articulated to others, particularly to those beginning in practice. As indicated through some of the literature on burnout, we do a disservice to the profession and to new recruits when we do not make them aware of the realities of the profession. As my advisor suggested, “they should know they are entering the basement of social services”.

Closely linked to the awareness of the realities of the profession is the issue of advocacy. According to the participants, political understanding of the societal forces affecting the practice need to be transmitted early in the practitioner’s career. The participants felt it should be a requirement in training. Additionally, teaching of advocacy could empower students and professionals to take action and work effectively on behalf of the children they seek to help. A greater understanding of the child welfare and mental health systems’ influences and shortcomings might better prepare those who are likely to encounter some of the institutional dilemmas in their practice.

2. Articulation of the knowledge base Another important finding centred around articulation of the knowledge base. The nature of child and youth care knowledge is such that some aspects of the practice are difficult to describe. The literature supports this view, and new ways of looking at knowledge, particularly those under exploration in the teacher literature, hold promise. Throughout the research it has been suggested that there is a lack of understanding regarding the true nature of the work and that practitioners are credited with little knowledge. Further the work has been described as invisible, hidden, the workers silenced and voiceless. There has been a lack of attention to gender issues, tacit knowing and experience-based knowledge.

I have argued that a ‘scientific paradigm’ has done little to promote the work of child and youth counsellors. In actuality it has served to keep the profession in a kind of “underclass”. This is not to suggest it does not have value. Participants were clear that a solid teaching of theory and grasp of psychodynamic issues was a crucial part of their learning experience.
Workers spoke of 'not having the language', particularly early on in the work, and suggested that 'method' was a very difficult concept to apply to this work. They sought ways to articulate how the true nature of concepts like relationships could be described. For insight into this kind of knowledge, the literature on reflective practice (Argyris & Schon, 1974; Hunt, 1987,1992; Schon, 1983), feminist psychology and relationship (Jordan, 1984; Miller, 1984; Surrey, 1984) and women’s ways of knowing, (Belenkey et. al., 1986) were introduced.

The participants, through their stories of practice, have begun to address some of these issues. We have seen that these practitioners know their work in unique and personal ways. By making their tacit knowledge explicit, through recounting stories of practice and reflecting on what worked and what did not, by examining how their own knowledge developed, we gain valuable insights and potential inroads to finding new ways to express the child and youth care knowledge base.

3. Issues related to Self: The findings supported the literature that knowledge of the self is paramount in this profession. This is closely linked with issues raised in relationship and considered a prerequisite in worker’s ability to cultivate growth-fostering relationships with youth and families. Participants raised concerns about the lack of attention to this issue in the training of new workers. Large class sizes resulting in reduced opportunities to mentor and support students is of grave concern. Suggestions for development in this area included focusing on self in course work and through self-awareness training. Two of the participants found therapy very useful in this area of professional development. In relation to this ‘self’ aspect of learning, education around burnout and self-care was also raised as an area of concern. This ties in with the previously mentioned issue of preparing students for the political and economic realities of the profession and speaks to the need to educate students regarding the intense emotional impacts of the job.

The participants themselves, while pointing to the essentiality of self-knowledge, told listeners ways they explored this issue, what they wish they had known and what they now know. Through participant narratives we came to understand how they learned and grew through experience with other people. Seemingly unrelated experiences of life could make sense when explored through use of life history. Through recounting experiences it
was possible to detect changes in practice as a result of reflection and to gain a growing sense of the individual in the work.

The Role of Narrative

Chapter Six, The Role of Stories, outlines the four main ways in which stories and narrative play a role in practice and professional development. We have seen that not all practice involves a fixed set of skills. The work has been described as capable of infinite adaptations, filled with messy problems, dilemmas and conflicts, subtlety and nuance, layers and chaos. Also indicated through the explorations of stories was that, despite these elements, stories are able to describe and characterize the work. They describe what is unique and they are able to accommodate what cannot be measured or counted. They provide opportunities for reflection-in-action, marrying experience and theory, classroom and field experience. They have potential to validate technique and reconstruct knowledge.

Stories emphasize dialogue and connection, build relationships and assist in examining self. They help ensure safe, responsible practice. They accommodate issues of gender, race, culture as well as conflicts of values and goals. They give shape and meaning to experience.

Stories are capable of enhancing personal growth, exploring identity through exploration of critical incidents and sharing with colleagues. They have potential to foster a sense of personal renewal, to rejuvenate and refresh. They lend legitimacy to feelings, aesthetics, and moral endeavours and judgments in practice.

Stories allow opportunity for voice; they explore and validate the significance of practitioners' perspectives. They ensure that the voices can rise above a whisper, through the barriers of multi-disciplinary teams. Stories are the very stuff of practice, capable of contributing to the creation of new theory and improving practice.

Importance of The Study

The research contributes to the profession and its development. It introduces a strategy which could be used to study the practice of child and youth care. The model is accessible and capable of adaptation which could be further field tested. It has the potential of contributing to the literature and knowledge base of child and youth care work. It emphasizes the need for greater understanding from the perspective of workers.
What has child and youth care practice meant to them? How did they best learn? What were their challenges and critical moments? It sheds light on our understandings of relationship, on what has been meaningful and helpful over the years. Working with feminist explorations of knowing and relationships, collaborative research, and narrative explorations hold promise for further research in this area. The strategy is based on the voices of those actually doing the work. It is "research as emancipation" as it takes place with the practitioners not on them (Cantelon cited in Clandinin, 1988, p.3).

**Recommendations for Further Research**

1. Participants have shown us that they have a unique and personal view of their work with children. Further in-depth analysis which examines the impacts of past history and learning of these participants (or others) leading to a solid understanding of their personal practitioner knowledge (Beattie1995; Connelly & Clandinin 1988; Elbaz 1983) or collaborative autobiography (Butt et al.1990) could provide further insight into practice. This study was necessarily limited to a few participants who possessed an extensive work history in the profession and were considered exemplary practitioners. Further research along similar lines with a broader group of participants would widen the range of insights.

2. Self-reflection tools such as time-lines, memory boxes, photographs and other documents (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) were not incorporated into this research and would prove useful tools in other explorations of this kind both in research and in the classroom. Although further investigation of narrative such as journal writing, collaborative autobiography, and in-depth exploration of personal practitioner knowledge was not examined in detail in this study, the research sets the stage for further exploration of this kind.

3. Another rich source of potential research could be developed through the matching of students and experienced practitioners in an effort to promote and encourage narrative inquiry and collaborative autobiography, especially reflections on learning how to be practitioner from both sides of the desk. This study reflected views particular to the teacher's side.

4. Storytelling groups of practitioners, educators, students, and clients in various combinations have the potential to produce previously unexplored aspects of the work.
Personal Reflections

It is at times refreshing to touch home base again, to re-view one’s root knowledge, to find what seems still to be true and useful and also what calls for some rethinking, perhaps re-vision. Storying can help us do that.

(Zipes, 1997, p.42 )

As a researcher I was struck by the wisdom and insight of my participants. Obviously I chose them as I considered them exemplary; however the stories and anecdotes they shared were more that I could have anticipated. I found them to be both enlightening and inspirational. This research represents just a small slice of their experience and I felt I could have easily presented an entire thesis on each one. I was deeply moved by the courage and honesty of the two female participants. I left my interviews with them in awe. I was particularly struck by the wealth of anecdotes Robeson was able to share about the growth of the profession, the visionaries and colleagues who impressed him along the way. That he has remained so optimistic and unjaded is remarkable to me. Despite reading and re-reading transcripts, analysing and coding, my admiration for their accomplishments and stories of overcoming were not diminished. The partial life histories of Robeson, Athena and Annie presented in this study, represent a such a small segment of their commitments to children and improving practice.

In many ways I feel I have just begun to ‘scratch the surface’ on this topic. Collecting stories from other practitioners, storytelling groups, collaborative autobiography, using other tools for self-reflection have tremendous potential for both students and those who have been in the profession for some time.

There can be no doubt that listening to their stories encouraged me to reflect on my own stories, and although those are not presented in this research, I hope to explore them in-depth in the future. As the research indicated, storytellers are not a solo act; they act in relationship to others. I see tremendous potential for development of storytelling groups at various stages of development as a practitioner.

I suspect my attachment to the profession and those who do well at it is barely disguised in this research project. Despite the efforts I have made to suppress it, I don’t believe it has to be ‘knocked out’ of the research or the work in an effort to survive and maintain professionalism. Research which allows for personal positioning, emotionality
and aesthetic experience is welcome news to a profession that practices the art of working with others. I also realize that storytelling must sometimes be sceptical and subversive if one is to continually question and engage in a genuine exchange of experience and dialogue about this work.

A wise professor once told me "be sure your research is something you are passionate about". I have a better idea, now, of just what he meant when he made that comment.
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Appendix A

Child and Youth Care
Current Description of the Field

Professional Child and Youth Care practice focuses on the infant, child and adolescent, both normal and with special needs, within the context of the family, the community and the life span. The developmental-ecological perspective emphasizes the interaction between persons and the physical and social environments, including cultural and political settings.

Professional practitioners promote the optimal development of children, youth and their families in a variety of settings, such as early care and education, community-based child and youth development programs, parent education and family support, school-based programs, community mental health, group homes, residential centres, day and residential treatment, psychiatric centres, rehabilitation programs, paediatric health care and juvenile justice programs.

Child and Youth Care practice includes skills in assessing client and program needs, designing and implementing programs and planned environments, integrating developmental, preventative and therapeutic requirements into the life space, contributing to the development of knowledge and practice, and participating in systems interventions through direct care, supervision, administration, teaching, research, consultation and advocacy.

Child and Youth Care Education Consortium
25 January 1992, Toronto
Letter of Consent

Dear Research Participant:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my Master's thesis project entitled "In the Telling: Critical Reflections and Stories from Child and Youth Counsellors." As you know, the field of Child and Youth Care is a demanding field filled with an array of challenges and opportunities. The work can be stressful and demanding. Despite this, some practitioners thrive and maintain excellent services to children and their families. It is my hope that through their stories of survival, transformations and self-development, we can make meaning of those experiences and contribute to the literature in Child and Youth Care.

Currently, I am completing a Master of Arts degree in Adult Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. As part of this program, I have chosen to conduct research which involves interviewing experienced practitioners of Child and Youth Care work and having them share their lives and experiences as they relate to their careers as Child and Youth Care Workers. My reason for selecting this topic is that I am keenly interested in the development of child and youth counsellors and in obtaining their perceptions of the rigours and demands of the field. I am also interested in conducting research which is specific to Child and Youth Care, as I believe this to be an important part of our development as a profession, and as a means to respond to our ever changing roles in the children's mental health systems.

Attached you will find an outline of the three-interview process which I plan to conduct throughout September. I am interested in hearing your stories of experience and in particular learning moments, epiphanies, and critical incidents. The interviews will be approximately 90 minutes in duration and interviews 1 and 2 will take place between 3 days and 1 week apart. The third interview is designed to gather your reflections and make meaning of your experiences. It will take place after transcription of the first two interviews.

These transcripts will be seen only by me and the information you share will be reported in my study, however you will not be named in any way, thus you can be assured of confidentiality and anonymity of information. Transcripts of tapes will be destroyed after analysis takes place and materials will be kept under lock and key. You may withdraw at any time, or withhold any data, during the interview process.

Recognizing that this is an intensive interview process to which you have agreed, I would like to extend reciprocity by providing refreshments and a small stipend for your cooperation and sharing in this research project.

Thank you in advance for your participation. I am most appreciative of your valuable and worthwhile part in the completion of this project.

Yours sincerely,

Patti MacKenna, CYC, BAA, MA candidate
Child and Youth Counsellor

I have read and understand the above and consent to participate in the study.

Participant's signature: ___________________________ Date: ___________________
Appendix C
Guideline for Research Interview

Identifying Data

Interview One:

Life History: Crafting a Profile

1. How did you come to be a Child and Youth Counsellor?

[Tell as much as you can about yourself up until the time you became a child and youth counsellor-related experience?]

2. Can you tell me any stories about what led you to the field of Child and Youth Care?

Interview Two:

Present Day

1. What is it (or was it) like for you to be a Child and Youth Counsellor?

2. Can you describe the work of a Child and Youth Counsellor.
   (typical day etc.) (as if to layperson)

3. Are stories ever a component of your work as a Child and Youth Counsellor?

a) Are there stories that stand out for you in your career as a Child and Youth Counsellor?

b) I am particularly interested in learning moments, epiphanies and transformational experiences in your development as a counsellor. Can you think of any incidents or stories which provided this for you?

Interview Three

1. Now that you have had a chance to review the transcripts and reflect further on your experience as a child and youth counsellor, is there anything further you wish to add?

Are there other stories, reflections or critical incidents which you would like to recount?

2. Is there an image or metaphor which describes the work of Child and Youth Care for you?

3. Given your experiences as a child and youth counsellor what do you wish you had known upon entering the profession?

4. What does it mean for you to be a Child and Youth Counsellor?

5. What advice (stories) would you give new workers entering the profession?