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Conference edition

A special edition of
Childhood Remixed with papers
drawn from the international
Children and Childhoods Conference
held at UCS—July 2013



Welcome



It's with great pride and pleasure that I introduce the February 2014 edition of *Childhood Remixed*, the University Campus Suffolk (UCS)'s peer reviewed, on-line journal. This represents a special 'conference edition' of the journal, with contributors drawn from papers presented at the Children and Childhoods Conference held at UCS last July. The Conference itself was great success, opened by Professor Lucinda Platt, Director of the Millennium Cohort Study at the Institute of Education, and offering a wide range of stimulating papers and poster presentations to an

audience of academics, students and practitioners.

The contributions to this edition represent the conference well. They represent the conference's international flavour, with contributors here from across Europe, India and the Phillipines. Like the conference, the contributors' papers cover a range of topics and disciplines but tend to share a child-centred orientation and take an applied research perspective. Arguably, taken as a whole, this collection could be taken a 'state of the art' expression of the intellectual endeavour to understand children's lives—and how their lived experiences and life opportunities are mediated by family, peers and community, education, poverty, disability, media and religion. As such, this edition also reflects the core interests and ethos of the UCS School of Applied Social Science which hosted the conference. It reflects our particular interests and expertise in the study of children and young people, the value we place in collaborating with colleagues across institutions, disciplines and countries, and our commitment to creative and critical teaching and research which has impact and 'makes a difference'. To our contributors, we thank you for sharing your work with us. To our readers, we hope that you find this edition of interest and use.

Professor Noel Smith

School of Applied Social Sciences
University Campus Suffolk

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A note on referencing

All referencing is formatted as supplied by the author. All text copy is presented as submitted by the author after peer review by specialist editors. The Childhood Remixed editorial team take no responsibility for inaccuracies herein.

Special thanks

The Childhood Remixed editorial team would like to offer special thanks to Sarah Coombs, Sarah Richards and Jessica Clark for their work as specialist editors and for their outstanding contribution to the Children and Childhoods Conference held at UCS in July 2013

Accessibility

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Dr Jane Akister

Dr. Jane Akister is a Reader in Social Work at Anglia Ruskin University researching questions of effectiveness and 'value for money' of innovations in child protection practice. Jane is co-editor of the peer reviewed journal Practice: Social Work in Action and an Associate Mental Health Act Manager (Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation Trust).

Niamh O'Brien

Niamh O'Brien is a research fellow at Anglia Ruskin University and has worked in research since 2004. Since then she has worked on many projects seeking the views of children and young people including a national project exploring the impacts cyber-bullying has on young people's mental health. This project was commissioned by a group of young people and used both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. Findings were presented via a conference organised and run by the young people themselves.

More recently Niamh was part of a project team investigating 'Value for Money' for a volunteer service. She is currently leading a project evaluating the impact as well as the 'Value for Money' element of a family support project.

Niamh is currently carrying out doctoral research investigating bullying in a private day and boarding school using a Participatory Action Research (PAR) framework. She is doing this research alongside students of the school who have received training on all aspects of the research process including ethical issues, confidentiality and empathy. The young students and Niamh form the Research Team. She worked with these students for 36 months and an excellent working relationship was developed.

The mental wellbeing of children and parents when there are child protection concerns—can volunteers help?

Abstract

In child protection work the main focus is on safeguarding the child and promoting better parenting. Focus on mental health is limited even though we know that problems with mental health (parental or child) impact on family functioning. An evaluation of an innovative scheme, 'Volunteers

in Child Protection' that promotes volunteers to work alongside statutory child care workers in complex child protection cases measured the mental health outcomes for the family. At referral, two thirds of the families were dysfunctional, with children having emotional and behavioural disturbance and some mothers having clinical levels of depression. Repeat measures indicate improvements in children's emotional wellbeing, family functioning and mother's mental wellbeing during the volunteer intervention.

Keywords volunteers, child protection, mental wellbeing, parenting.

1. Background

Can the relationship between a volunteer and a service user offer something unique and different to support from professionals? Measuring outcomes from child protection work is complex and there is little focus on mental health even though we know that problems with mental health (parental or child) impact on family functioning.

Protecting children and supporting parents and carers is a major priority for governments (Munro, 2011) with care in the family for all except the most vulnerable, as the preferred option for bringing up children (Children Act, 1989). What do we really mean by family support? In the voice of a parent: *The parent is still in charge and they are asking for help, advice or whatever but they are still the one in charge and are not handing over their kids to someone else to take over.* (Ghate, 2007, p.12)

The importance of being 'still in charge' may be critical to the parent's willingness to engage with a service offered. Social Service workers are viewed with suspicion by parents who fear they will remove their children.

Key outcome indicators for the wellbeing of children and their families are parental and child mental health, family functioning and changes in the level of concern in the child protection system (Davidson et al. 2010). Children in the care system are overrepresented in the mental health statistics (Akister et al. 2010) with evidence suggesting that mental health problems have a serious impact on life chances (Fergusson et al. 2005). Additionally research shows that the children of adults with mental health problems have an increased likelihood of mental health difficulties themselves. The increased psychiatric risk for children of mentally ill parents is due partly to genetic influences and partly due to the altered natures of the parent-child interaction because of the parents' mental illness (Mattejat and Remschmidt, 2008). Interventions to improve children's wellbeing need to involve effective treatment of the parental mental illness. How well a family is functioning impacts on their parenting skills, determining how well the family will problem solve, communicate and manage affecting their ability to protect their children from harm and neglect and to promote their wellbeing (Miller et al. 1985).

The Volunteers in Child Protection Scheme (ViCP) project was established by CSV (Community Service Volunteers) to support families in their own homes who are already within the 'child protection system'. The volunteers work alongside local authority professional staff, offering practical and emotional support.

2. Methodology and Sample

This is a small scale mixed methods study, of a group of families subject to child protection procedures who are very hard to engage in research. The study used standardized measures of mental wellbeing for the whole family: The Family Assessment Device (FAD), (Miller et al. 1985); for individual family members the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ), (Goldberg et al. 1997) and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), (SDQ, 2012) combined with semi-structured interviews with parents and volunteers. The interviews explored families and volunteers expectations and experiences from the ViCP scheme and were conducted by telephone giving participants an opportunity to share their experiences of ViCP (Akister et al. 2011). Questionnaires (FAD, SDQ and GHQ) were given at the beginning of the intervention and repeated at 3 months and 6 months. Ethical approval for the project was given by the university ethics committee.

Families referred to the ViCP scheme are on child protection plans. The study took place in the ViCP project in Southend-on-Sea. All families (n=37) working with the ViCP project were invited to participate, and 13 families agreed to participate. It is extremely difficult to engage these families in research as they are under surveillance regarding child protection and tend to be both distressed and disorganized. For these reasons it was agreed to use the volunteers as researchers rather than introduce yet another person into the family. Volunteers were trained to administer the questionnaires.

Due to the small numbers who completed second and third questionnaires we cannot draw any firm conclusions about change during the intervention in the whole sample. Research carried out by Tunstill experienced the same problems with recruitment and retention of the sample (Tunstill and Malin, 2011).

Southend-on-Sea is deprived in terms of income, employment, health, education, barriers to education and crime, with the figures for living environment deprivation being very high (Office for National Statistics, 2010). Children living in deprived areas do less well than their peers, raised in more favourable areas, in relation to attainment and general quality of life (Scott et al. 2010).

3. Results

a. Children's Behaviour and Wellbeing

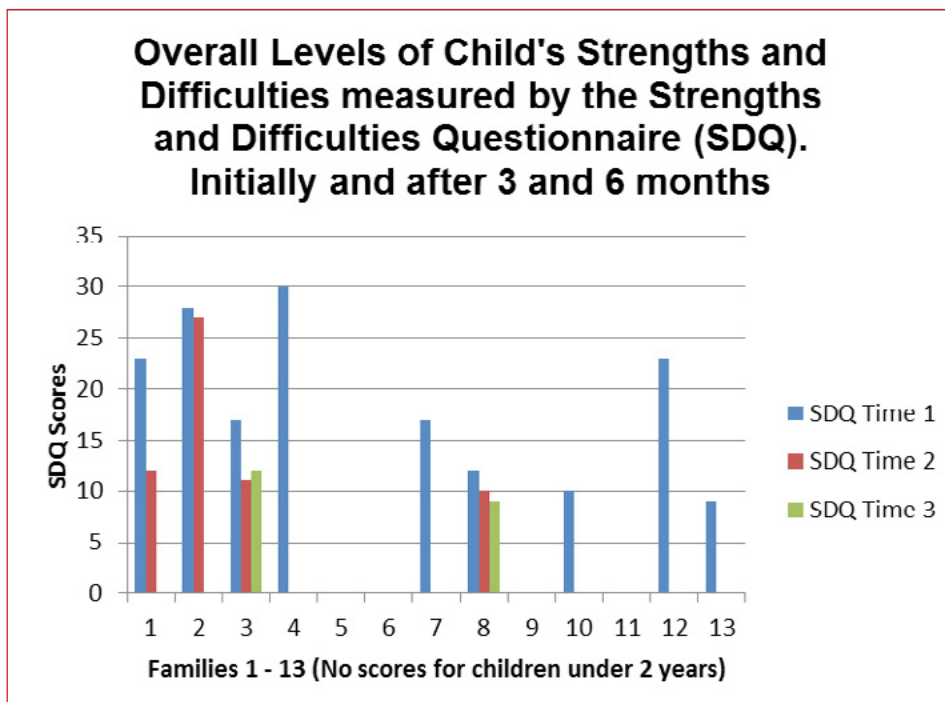
The SDQ questionnaire is an effective screen for children's emotional and

behavioural difficulties. The average British scores for an SDQ completed by parents are 8.4 (s.d. 5.8) (SDQ, 2012). This would mean that we would be concerned about scores greater than 14.2. From Table 1 we can see that in 6 of the 9 families where the child was old enough for the SDQ to be completed, the child's SDQ scores are above 14.2. These scores indicate high levels of emotional and behavioural difficulty (see Table 1; where there are gaps in Table 1 the child is under 2 years of age and too young for an SDQ to be completed).

For all the families who completed the SDQ at Time 1 and Time 2 there was an improvement in their scores, which was mirrored in parental reports.

Families 3 and 8 completed the SDQ at Time 3 and both report sustained improvement (see Table 1 below).

Table 1:



b. Parental Mental Health

With the GHQ scoring method (Goldberg et al. 1997), any scores higher than 2 are indicative of mental health concerns; the higher the score the greater the level concern. The maximum score is 12.

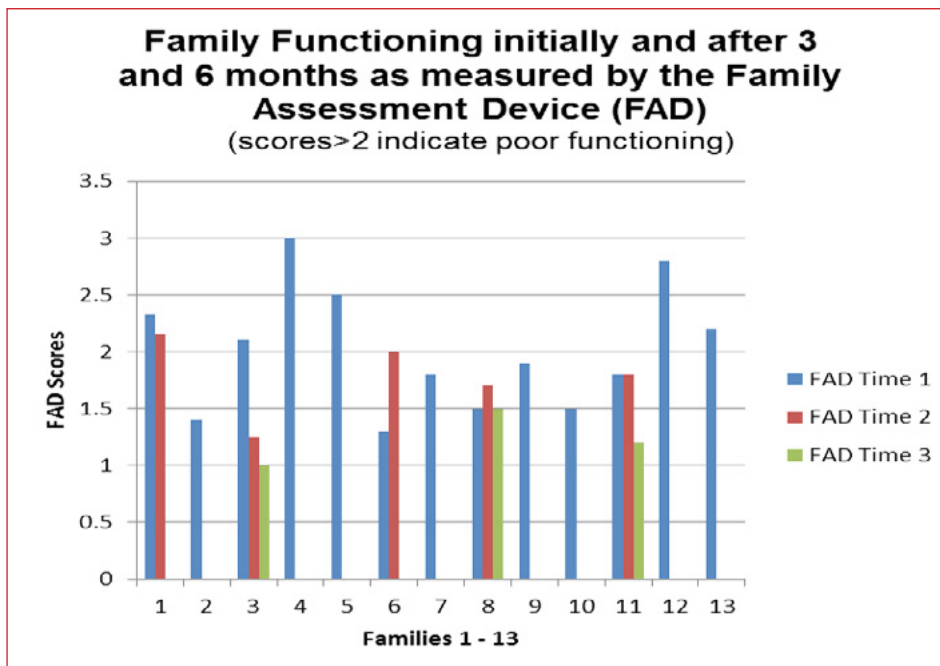
All the mothers described being depressed but in only 2 cases did their GHQ scores reach clinical levels. For the majority of the sample, they are overwhelmed by their circumstances and lack confidence to deal with the parenting task and to engage with helping services. Although not clinically depressed their wellbeing is clearly of concern.

The 2 mothers who scored in the clinical range at Time 1 had very high scores (Family 3, GHQ=9 and Family 12, GHQ=8) suggesting that they are likely to have clinical mental health problems. At Time 2 there was considerable improvement for both mothers (Family 3, GHQ=4 and Family 12, GHQ=0) and this improvement continued for Family 3 at Time 3 (GHQ=0). During their time with the ViCP scheme, both mothers GHQ scores moved from the clinical (>2) to non-clinical range. None of the other mothers reported significant mental health concerns (GHQ>2) at Times 1, 2 or 3.

c. Family Functioning

The 12-item version of the FAD has a cut-off established for family dysfunction of scores >2 (Miller et al. 1985). Half of the families (6 out of 13; see Table 2) scores 2 or above. We might have expected all the families coming with child protection concerns to report difficulties with their family functioning. One explanation may lie in the fact that families in this situation have most difficulty in dealing with the demands of the world outside the home, such as getting the children to school, and may not be entirely unhappy with their family circumstances per se. The difficulty of coping with external demands, such as getting the children to school or going to the doctor, can reflect an inability to deal with their child’s needs as well as their own needs.

Table 2:



Five families completed the FAD at Time 2, Families 1 and 3 reported improvement in their family functioning and Families 6 and 8 reported

more difficulty. For Family 8 this related to the children returning from out-of-home care to the family home, and the score remains in the functional range.

All 3 families who completed the FAD at Time 3 report improved family function, with their scores at Time 3 indicating good family function.

4. Limitations of the Study

Findings from the questionnaires indicate that the ViCP families have high levels of dysfunction, particularly in relation to the children's emotional and behavioural disturbance, at the beginning of their contact with ViCP. Some mothers also have clinical levels of depression. Where there are repeat measures, there are improvements during the period of the ViCP intervention.

As with any study there are limitations. It is very difficult to engage these families in research and so the numbers of questionnaires returned is lower than we had hoped for and there are less returned at times 2 and times 3 than we would wish.

There is also the issue that there are other agencies who continue to be involved with these families at the same time as ViCP and it is not possible to be precise about the contribution of each, although the families believe that ViCP is pivotal to the changes observed.

5. Discussion

At the outset of the ViCP intervention the reports on children's wellbeing (SDQ scores) are of great concern. Parents report their children' as having emotional and behavioural difficulties in two thirds of the sample. When working with families under child protection much of the initial focus is on the capacity of the parents to improve their parenting to an acceptable level of care (Woodcock, 2003). The focus on the child relates to levels of neglect and safety, and would not, necessarily, in the first instance consider their mental wellbeing. Difficult behaviour can be interpreted as related to inconsistent parenting, when it may be reflecting problems with mental wellbeing. The question of the knowledge base and interpreting what we see remains complex (Akister, 2011). If we focus on the parenting skills, rather than the wellbeing of the child and family this may increase the risk to the child (Horwath, 2011).

Similarly, while many of the mothers' describe being depressed, their GHQ scores only place 2 (out of 13) in the clinical range of mental health concerns. These mothers both reported marked improvement in their mental state which they attributed to the involvement of their ViCP volunteer. It is important not to ignore the expression of depression, even though it does not reach levels requiring clinical intervention. The sense of isolation and difficulty in meeting their children's needs, combined with their lack of confidence to engage with services they are referred to, makes these parents feel 'hopeless'.

ViCP are working with extremely complex families who are very hard to engage, and for the small number of families in this study there is evidence of marked improvement after the ViCP intervention, both in their questionnaire data and in the changes of levels of concern from social workers. It would not be accurate to claim that all the change relates to the ViCP scheme. Nonetheless the nature of the relationship between the volunteer and the family may be the catalyst promoting positive outcomes. Munro (2011) proposes that relationships need to be forged with these families and a systemic approach to service delivery is required to foster effective engagement between the family and the agencies they are involved with. The fact that the volunteer, who freely gives their time is commented on by the families as giving them a sense of worth. Also the presence of someone who will actually accompany them to places they have been referred to facilitates engagement with the world outside the home.

Overall families reported a very positive experience with their volunteer: *"My volunteer was second to none."*

Families were also able to recognize that they needed the support of a volunteer to help them improve their home life for their children, including practical help and advice, and support with mental health problems. Families reported that volunteers were supporting them emotionally and found that the practical help, for example attending an appointment with them, developed their confidence to do these things independently. The lack of confidence to engage in arenas outside their home, including doctors' appointments and school, is a major barrier to improving parenting competence and this aspect is clearly improved by being accompanied by a trusted volunteer.

The experiences of the volunteers are interesting in themselves, as the engagement and management of the volunteers in work of this complexity is challenging. Volunteers spoke about the wonderful experiences they had with their families despite being apprehensive to begin with. The volunteers described how challenging the work can be, but also praised their families for the good work they are trying to do, and indicating their belief that the project is a very worthwhile resource for families experiencing the types of difficulties these families have had to deal with.

"I expected to feel apprehensive when meeting my first family and to feel that way for many visits, but I soon felt comfortable with them and was accepted as part of the family" (Volunteer 3).

“Explaining to the family that professionals working with them are on their side. These professionals are working with a lot of other people who are very busy and don’t always have time to sit and talk. I’m here for that. Mum was not able to stand up for herself in meetings so I did this and encouraged her” (Volunteer 1).

Not everything will go well, or be positive and there were 2 cases (Families 4 and 7) where the volunteers identified ‘unmet need’ and were able to alert professionals to this. This is not an easy experience for the volunteer, who is hoping to ‘make a difference’ and needs careful management and supervision (Eisner et al. 2009).

6. Conclusions

This is a small scale study of an innovative approach to child protection, using volunteers to work with complex families with high levels of need. This approach articulates with the findings of the Munro report (2011), proposing a relationship based model to assist these families in practical ways, and operating within a systemic approach to service delivery. The ViCP scheme works alongside statutory professional involvement adding a voluntary dimension and is highly valued by the service users who report improved confidence in their parenting skills and improvements in their own mental wellbeing. Questionnaire responses support the service user’s reports of improvement in the three dimensions of children’s emotional and behavioural wellbeing, family functioning and mother’s mental wellbeing.

The ViCP scheme does appear to be pivotal in facilitating the engagement of these families in the range of services and activities required for effective parenting. The parents experience the volunteer as ‘being on their side’ and as a resource that they are able to use for both practical support and for guidance.

List of Abbreviations

CSV—Community Service Volunteers

FAD—Family Assessment Device

GHQ—General Health Questionnaire

SDQ—Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

ViCP—Volunteers in Child Protection

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Selena Timmins Chapman

I was born in Canada, moved to the UK at thirty, and started the BA (Hons) English degree at UCS at thirty-one. I wrote 'What Sarah Said' as an assignment for the (optional) second-year Short Story module. I was looking forward to studying short stories, but I wasn't sure about writing one of my own! I wasn't sure about sharing a draft with the group either, but this was less scary (and more rewarding) than I was expecting. 'What Sarah Said' would be a poorer story if not for the input of the group, and I'd like to thank Jazelle Johnson, Sophie Phoenix and module leader Gill Lowe in particular for their suggestions. In the end, I enjoyed writing this story so much that I've signed up for the Scriptwriting module this year—something I was sure I wouldn't do when I started my degree!

What Sarah said

Amanda was walking the tightrope, fingertips outstretched. Far below her was the crowd. Glancing down, she could see the flash of hundreds of light bulbs. That would be reporters from the local paper, Amanda knew. She knew too that all eyes were on her. *How does she do it*, people would be whispering to each other. All the whispers added up to the roar of the crowd. Amanda was pleased with herself for finding an adding problem in real life, not just math class. She would tell her teacher tomorrow. In the meantime, waiting on the hard bench for the judges' scores, Amanda would answer the question the way she always did. *My secret is how I bend my knees just a little bit*. Noisy flowers in crinkly plastic sleeves would be piled on her lap. Teddy bears would have been thrown from the crowd, but Amanda would always have Edward beside her, his fur worn smooth from years of competing. One of his eyes was missing and yellow stuffing would sometimes leak from the empty socket. Amanda would poke the stuffing back in with her finger. *Don't worry*, she would reassure him. *I would never replace you. Never ever ever*.

Amanda could hear the judges yelling at each other now. They were already arguing about her scores, and she wished she could bring Edward with her on the rope. Wind was flying into the tent through gaps in the walls, bringing with it a swirl of autumn leaves. The back of Amanda's neck tickled and she looked down to see her toes wobbling. A sound like a megaphone, or maybe a car horn, entered the tent, and the shock of it made Amanda go still. Even her toes stopped moving, she noticed. She began circling her arms like a windmill to keep her balance, but it was too late. She was falling.

Far above her, tree branches laced themselves together against the sky. Looking up, Amanda remembered she was only on Chestnut Street. The branches looked kind of like figure skates, she thought, if figure skates could have black laces. Amanda's street was lined on both sides with huge, old trees, some of which still had orange leaves clinging to their highest branches even though it was already after Thanksgiving.

As she lay watching, the wind that had been whistling noisily all afternoon picked up speed and made the branches move quickly. More leaves were drifting slowly downward. Amanda shivered. It was colder on the ground that it had been in the big top and her knee was throbbing from her fall. At least there had been a net, she thought. The sky overhead was a thin, bright blue, and the white clouds had flat grey bottoms. *They look like they're ironing the sky, don't they*, Sarah had often said. Amanda had wondered why the sky needed ironing, but she hadn't argued with Sarah. She been content to wander the streets of the neighbourhood holding Sarah's hand while Sarah found shapes in the clouds and Amanda's little brothers, walking in front, bickered.

Sarah had said a lot of things, really. She talked a lot; more than Amanda's teacher, more even than the other kids in Amanda's class. Amanda thought again about the last thing Sarah had said. She turned it over in her mind like a somersault and tried to come up with something she could say. *I am too not that thing you said*. When she said this out loud, it didn't make as much sense as it had in her head, but this pleased Amanda so much she said it over and over. Finally, the funny feeling in her chest went away, the one she sometimes got when she thought about Sarah, or about her father being gone.

A car drove past, too close to the curb, and a gust of wind swirled the leaves from the side of the road onto the sidewalk. Amanda sat up, raking dry leaves over the new hole in the knee of her tights. She made a small pile of leaves and rested her head on it. There were no grown-ups around to bother her. They were all still at work.

The school bus drove by like it did every day, taking some of the other kids in her class out to the suburbs. Amanda watched the bus's yellow belly roll pass as she scrunched herself further from the curb. Slowpokes. Amanda had already walked home from school, put her backpack away, and gone out again. She wiped the back of her hand across her face. The leaves were crumbly and dusty and dirty, and they were starting to make her nose itch.

'Why are you on the sidewalk?' said a familiar voice, and Amanda opened her eyes. A small boy with bright red cheeks was leaning over her, hands on his knees. The woollen strings on his hat dangled near Amanda's eyes. She stuck her tongue out at him instead of answering.

Henry stood. 'Mommy, why is some girl LYING on the SIDEWALK?' he complained.

Amanda could see that a baby carriage had stopped almost at her feet. A blonde woman in a bright purple winter coat was leaning over the carriage, fussing with a fuzzy blanket.

'You know me,' Amanda said to Henry. 'You and me and Jack and George used to have a snail farm. I held your hand last week when you were too stupid to cross the street by yourself.' She paused to take another breath. This was important. 'You KNOW me,' she repeated.

Henry's face crumpled like he might cry. His mother kept one hand on the baby carriage and used the other to pull Henry's hat up his forehead. He pushed her hand away.

'You know who that is, honey,' she said. 'That's Amanda from across the street.'

'Oh, yeah,' Henry Jessop said. He smiled at her with his stupid baby teeth. His mother pushed the baby carriage back and forth in one spot and looked down at Amanda. 'Are you all right, honey?' she asked.

Mrs Jessop was always saying that to Henry and Noah. Noah was the actual baby; Henry just acted like one most of the time. And Amanda didn't even like honey. She wondered if Mrs Jessop had ever thought about keeping bees, the amount of times she talked about honey. There was a queen in one of Amanda's storybooks who kept bees and Mrs Jessop looked a little like the illustration in Amanda's book, even with her hair in a ponytail like it was today.

It was just like the Queen to take an interest in the provinces, Amanda decided. She had moved with her family from the Capital to Amanda's town last year. The Queen's family went everywhere together all the time, except when Mrs Jessop or Mr Jessop was at work. Affairs of state in the Capital; Amanda didn't need to know the details. She too had often gone to the city with her brothers and both her parents. Now she was stuck in the provinces all the time, just like the Queen was today. This didn't mean Amanda was going to say if she was all right or not, though.

Mrs Jessop looked like she was smiling but she was upside down so she wasn't, really. Beside her, Henry had taken off one mitten and was picking his nose. Next, he would put his finger in his mouth. Boys were gross.

'Sarah's waiting for me at home,' Amanda said, though really Amanda's mother had said that if Sarah thought she was going to pay her the same amount to look after one child as three, she had another think coming. Sarah was gone now and anyway, Amanda's mother said that Amanda was old enough to entertain herself afternoons until she had a spare second to hire someone new.

'Perhaps you could walk back with us,' Mrs Jessop said. She was still frowning, and Amanda knew the border countries were giving the Queen and King trouble again. The problem was that horses were being stolen. Amanda had almost taken one herself last week on the way home from

school. The horse had been tied to the huge maple tree on the corner with the stone wall that stretched down both sides of the street. He had gazed at her with huge, dark eyes and made a soft kind of snickering sound. Amanda fed him leftover potato chips from her lunch bag. *You belong here with your owner*, she said, trying to be firm. *I can't take you with me*. She had stroked the horse's flank for a long time anyway.

Now Henry was tugging at her sleeve. 'Amanda, get-get-UP.'

Amanda found his hand and pretended to let him pull her up. Maybe it hadn't been a horse she'd seen; maybe it had actually been a rabbit with a white tail, running underneath a bush to get away from Amanda.

'We haven't seen much of you lately, honey,' Mrs Jessop said. 'You kids could play together while I start supper. How does that sound?'

Amanda's parents called her 'honey'. Underneath her sweater, she could feel the tight, twisty thing in her chest again. She knew she could make it go away by not thinking about things that she didn't want to think about. She twisted her feet together, dragged one boot through the pile of leaves to make rustling noises. 'If it's all right with Sarah,' she said finally. 'I'll ask her myself,' she added, so that Mrs Jessop couldn't volunteer. Amanda crossed the leg with the bloodied knee behind her other one so Henry's mother couldn't see. But the baby had started crying and Mrs Jessop was pushing the carriage back and forth again.

'We can play castle,' said Henry. He jumped up and down but Amanda didn't laugh at him, even when he dropped one of his mittens on the sidewalk.

'Okay,' she said, 'but I'm the Queen.' Amanda was always the queen. George and Jack were always knights, except when George was king because he was older than Jack was. Henry was a page, only they called him 'Herbert' instead of 'Henry' because it sounded better, and because he didn't like it.

'I'm the knight,' Henry said.

Amanda clutched Henry's soggy mitten. She couldn't believe she'd picked that snotty thing up off the ground. 'You can't be the knight,' she said.

Henry's lip stuck out. 'Why not?'

It was her game. It already had knights. 'You just can't,' said Amanda.

'Well, I want to.' Henry wiped the back of his hand across his nose, and it came away all slimy and gross-looking.

'Fine, HERBERT, then we're not playing. And I'm going HOME.'

Amanda waited until she got to the corner before she let herself look back. Way down the street, Mrs Jessop was leaning over the baby carriage. Amanda watched Henry kick her in the back of the leg. Sarah would never have put up with that rowdy, attention-seeking behaviour, thought Amanda, but then Mrs Jessop turned and said something to Henry. He crossed his arms and kicked the ground instead. He'd taken off his other mitten and his

hands were bright red with cold.

She watched as Mrs Jessop took hold of Noah's stroller and said something new that made Henry laugh. Amanda turned around and didn't look for the Jessops the entire rest of the way home. She really, really hoped the whispers about Henry's plans to usurp his parents' throne turned out to be true.

Her library books were where she'd left them, spread out to make a hopscotch on the floor of the foyer. She locked the door behind her and put her key in the jar on the round table. She took off her wool coat and hung it next to her backpack. Its white hem dragged on the wooden floor, but she would grow into it, her mother said. She kicked off her boots and stood looking at the shiny books with their pictures of circus performers and ice skaters and all the Kings and Queens of England on their covers. She stepped carefully around the books and went down the hall to the kitchen.

She wasn't supposed to use the kettle but Amanda thought this was ridiculous. Her father wasn't supposed to leave and take George and Jack with him. Sarah wasn't supposed to leave either, even if she had said what she'd said. Other people did things they weren't supposed to every single day.

She made herself a big mug of hot chocolate and took it with her to the living room. She climbed into the window seat that looked out over the street. Edward was already there, staring lopsidedly at her with his one good eye. She turned him around so he could see out the window.

She smoothed her skirt over her injured knee and made sure she wasn't sitting where the wood was starting to splinter. Outside the wind was picking up leaves, swirling them around and then slapping them back to the ground. The chime on the Jessops' front porch was twirling crazily in the wind. She had sat on her own porch for a while, listening to the noise, before coming inside. She couldn't hear the chimes from here even though she could see the long silvery pipes colliding again and again in the wind.

She drank her hot chocolate slowly and wondered where the Jessops were. Maybe they had stopped in the park. Mrs Jessop would be sitting with Noah, and Henry would be swinging on the monkey bars like the stupid monkey he was. Or maybe he would be playing on the jungle gym. He liked the jungle gym.

She poked at a powdery lump in her drink—she'd used too much chocolate and not enough hot water, maybe—and when she looked up, there were the Jessops coming down the sidewalk. A blue hat with dangling woollen strings was leaning over the baby carriage, keeping up as Mrs Jessop slowly pushed down the street. Mrs Jessop and Henry stopped to make sure no cars were coming before they crossed with Noah to their house. The wind was making some of the leaves twirl across the street after them, twisting and turning in the air.

Amanda liked the jungle gym too, but not as much as she liked the swings. She could make herself go up to the sky on the swings. She went to take a sip of hot chocolate but it was all gone, even the powdery bits. She got up to put her mug in the dishwasher. 'I'll be right back,' she told Edward, and he nodded like he believed her.

On her way back through the hall, she noticed the blue mitten sticking out of her coat pocket. There were spidery bits of brown leaves stuck to the part of the mitt where somebody's fingers went. There were leaves on the floor too, Amanda noticed, tracked in from outside. It looked almost as though a herd of messy children had just blown through the foyer. Amanda considered the mitten. She might tidy up later, she decided.

Instead she took a piece of paper and a skinny pencil out of her backpack—fat pencils were for babies, her mother said, and Amanda pretty much agreed—and sat down at the dining room table to write a note. *I will be fine*, printed Amanda, remembering to put two 'ls' in *will*. Sarah had said that before she left. She had said Amanda would be just fine on her own. Amanda signed the note with her best new cursive handwriting and made sure to lock the door behind her before crossing the street to Henry's house.



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Using volunteers in child protection work: Emerging questions for social work

Abstract

This paper examines findings arising from commissioned research into the use of volunteers in local authority child protection services. Concentrating primarily on findings obtained from interviews with local authority staff and stakeholders, the paper considers the merits and possible pitfalls of such schemes. Examined against the backdrop of the current economic climate and political agenda, it raises pertinent questions for social work research and practice, which include:

- Is there a legitimate role for the use of volunteers in child protection work?
- What are the ethical questions and practical risks regarding the use of unpaid labour in place of paid support staff?
- Post Munro, do volunteers enhance or hinder progress in child protection work?
- What are the lessons of conducting commissioned research and service evaluations?

Continued on next page...

In addition, the paper forms a useful guide to individuals and organisations who may be considering the use of such provision as it contains detailed qualitative data documenting the views and experience of front line local authority stakeholders who have experience of one such scheme.

Introduction

Criticism of child protection practices have become common place in the UK in recent years, with similar discourse occurring during the same period in other English-speaking countries such as the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand. Commentators have advocated (Lonne et al 2009, Munro 2010, Connolly & Smith 2010) the need for whole scale change to children's services, systems and the very paradigm on which they have developed. They highlight forensic, risk-averse, adversarial approaches where the family has become alienated, where the voice of the child is lost, where the role of community is absent and where the professional social worker has become little more than a policing agent of the state. The failings of such systems are equally well documented in terms of headline grabbing child-death tragedies, cumbersome, costly and inflexible processes, and poor outcomes for the children who are removed from home and cared for by the state. Within this backdrop local authorities struggle to create meaningful change in families and better outcomes for children. The use of well organised community volunteers is being rolled out in a number of areas and the potential to engage local 'citizens' to plug the gap where perhaps previously the extended family might have acted. The strength of belief in the potential of volunteers and the possible economic benefits during a time of austerity has opened-up opportunity for new initiatives. These are now emerging within the provision of social care and must be examined and evaluated on merit as part of a considered debate about providing effective future services. There are many questions which such schemes raise, including the ethical issues arising from the use of unpaid staff and the potential impact this could have on the social work profession. In recent years we have seen a shift in the debate regarding social work practice, particularly in children's services. The Munro Review (2011) raises the possible dangers of increased regulation, inspections, targets, use of technology:

'An over-standardised framework makes it difficult for professionals to prioritise time with children and young people and to meet their wide variety of needs and circumstances.' (Munro 2010: 43)

This shift has been profound and one which has distanced social workers not only from their key skills, but from the very communities and individuals they work within. This distance brings into question the whole notion of 'partnership' with parents set out in the Children Act 1989. Any initiative which attempts to aid meaningful communication between professional services and families in child protection cases must be given

due consideration. There is little doubt that such schemes do not seek to impose radical reform which many commentators see as necessary (Lonne et al 2009, Connolly & Smith 2010, Goodman & Trowler 2012.) However, the use of the 'volunteer' is a growing reality in many authorities and it is on this level that we offer our evaluation findings to the debate.

Context of the Study

The Volunteers in Child Protection (ViCP) project was established in 2005 by Community Service Volunteers (CSV) as a response to the Victoria Climbié enquiry, aiming to provide additional support to families in their own homes where at least one of the children was subject to a Child Protection Plan.

ViCP work with families with children up to 18 years as set out in the 1989 Children Act. The volunteers work alongside local authority professional staff, offering practical and emotional support. The ViCP scheme has dual objectives:

- To support families under stress and to help protect children from abuse and harm.
- To use volunteers alongside local authority professional staff and others in ensuring that children considered to be 'at risk' are visited regularly and their families supported.

Methodology

The study took place in 2010 – 2011. It was a CSV commissioned piece of research designed to evaluate the impact of the ViCP scheme in a Unitary Authority in the south east of England. The focus of the overarching research was to evaluate whether the scheme provided value for money to the Authority. Methodologically, it was mixed methods study using a three sampling population strands: Families, Volunteers and Local Authority Stakeholders. In addition there was an evaluation of 'value for money' using a service related cost calculator developed by The University of Loughborough (2009).

Much of the study concentrated on reported changes in family functioning, parental well-being and child strengths and difficulties using standardised questionnaires repeated over a six month period. Volunteers and Families were additionally interviewed to gather qualitative data. Details of the full evaluation can be accessed in the final Report (Akister, O'Brien & Cleary 2011.)

Data collection from local authority stakeholders involved face to face semi structured interviews conducted by the author (TC.) Contemporaneous records of the comments made were taken and thematic coding was used to highlight relevant emerging issues. Peer evaluation added to the trustworthiness and validity of the data. Participants were fully informed of the context of the study and had the opportunity to review and amend transcripts of their interview before data was analysed.

Informed consent was given for comments to be recorded and quoted in the evaluation report and subsequent analysis.

Findings from interviews with Local Authority Stakeholders

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sample of local authority staff, all of whom had direct involvement at some level of the ViCP scheme. This included Social Workers, Senior Practitioners, Child Protection Review Chairperson and Commissioning Managers.

The general view of the stakeholders was that the ViCP project provided an invaluable resource which appeared to improve outcomes for families who engaged. In conjunction with the work of statutory services, the scheme achieved results which exceeded those normally considered achievable by statutory intervention alone. The 'value' of the service provided by the volunteers was acknowledged as something nebulous and difficult to measure. It was seen as being based on prevention of reception into care, or prevention of a family requiring intensive statutory intervention, or the relative cost of a statutory worker providing the same number of hours working with a family. However, what was clearly highlighted by all those interviewed, was that the role of the volunteer was viewed as something significantly different to that which could be offered by a statutory worker. This is perhaps indicative of the 'distancing' which has occurred in recent years between worker and family, and the power-based relationship which exists.

Stakeholders stressed that the role performed by a volunteer could not be directly compared to that of a statutory worker:

'...rather than simply to use volunteers to replicate a family support type role, we wanted to use the unique status and role of a volunteer to work in a different way with families who may be more receptive to non-statutory agency getting involved.'
'We wanted to target social work time on crisis cases but also taking on board the fact that some families just don't respond well to statutory social work and a volunteer may be able to form a different relationship and be accepted as a 'critical friend.'
They can become a role model, a friend, a big sister...'

The informal and unpaid nature of the volunteer's role appeared to be key to this unique status. Many of those interviewed referred to the volunteer becoming like a substitute extended family member.

'The volunteer aspect is important because they are seen as wanting to be there not because they are being paid.'
'How often do we think 'this person is a natural' and when they become a trained social worker they lose something - the ability to really connect in a natural way. The volunteers keep that natural ability to respond in a very human and natural way. An 'unhindered human response' I suppose. They are instinctive and intuitive.'

The fact that the volunteers only worked with one family was also highlighted, meaning that they could invest a level of time and commitment in the family that could never be replicated by a statutory worker:

'Busy social workers don't have time to engage and listen as much as they would like. Like an extended family, the volunteer becomes a protective influence.'

Stakeholders were able to provide examples where they considered the ViCP scheme prevented reception into care. Managers involved with the commissioning of the scheme stated that the use of volunteers should not be viewed as a cheap option. Good recruitment, training, management and support required significant and appropriate levels of funding. They also placed great emphasis on the importance of organization, management and administration of the scheme:

'The initial thing is to get good staff to manage the scheme and we have been really lucky as they are experienced and able to work well with social workers. They have developed a really good reputation. They share information and are able to spot problems/dangers/risks. They are very clear and boundaried. Volunteer training and supervision is also good and this is really important.'

Personal experience and anecdotal evidence clearly indicated that the scheme is effective, but stakeholders felt that more objective measures and monitoring systems should be put in place:

'Intuitively and anecdotally it works well but we want hard research. I mean for the £140,000 the scheme costs we could employ 6 family support workers—so why not?'

Whilst all of the stakeholders were specifically asked if they felt the scheme provided value for money, none felt able to give an informed and conclusive response.

Implications for Social Work Practice

Many of the findings reported above concur with the results of previous evaluations (Tunstill and Malin 2011) and provide intuitively (Munro 2009) and qualitatively compelling data. However, the significance of three themes emerging from stakeholder's experience merit detailed consideration in the context of improving social work practice with complex and hard-to-reach families where there is an identified risk to children. These key themes are listed and evaluated in turn in the discussion that follows:

- 1) The suggestion that volunteers provide added value over and above the monetary equivalent of a paid worker.
- 2) The ability of volunteers to form trusting relationships with families which may create a climate for sustainable change to occur.
- 3) The volunteer's ability to provide additional and meaningful communication between family and statutory service.

Theme 1 – Value Added

Most of the stakeholders interviewed in this evaluation commented about the impact that the volunteer was able to have and the unique role that they were able to play in the lives of the families to whom they were assigned. A senior social worker comments:

'CSV get better results than social services support staff. This family had a support worker in the past but she made no difference. A volunteer is less judgemental and only has one case. There are no power issues in the relationship and she has quality time to spend. This takes away suspicion, builds trust and a good relationship.'

This notion of added-value, over and above that which could be gained by a family support worker for example, is one which has not been factored-in using the 'cost calculator' method of assessing value for money in this evaluation. Other such studies which have attempted to use similar formula to calculate the monetary value gained from the use of volunteers have likewise been seen as limiting the focus of the value of the volunteer (Graff 2009.) The Volunteer Investment Value Audit tool (VIVA) developed by Gaskin (1996) has been widely used both nationally and internationally to establish the comparable monetary worth that a volunteer brings to the work of any organisation by estimating equivalent replacement costs of a paid employee in a similar role. Using this model in a European study Gaskin (2000) was able to establish that for every £1 spent on the recruitment, training and support of a volunteer, organisations were likely to see a return of anywhere between £3 and £8 in terms of the time offered. Graff (2009) argues convincingly that this methodology fails to take into account the 'actual value' of what volunteers are able to accomplish, echoing the views of stakeholders' experience of ViCP, and stating that such an approach 'obscures the multiplicity of values created by volunteer involvement.' (Graff, 2009: 2) Using the example of a volunteer in a children's hospice, Graff lists the possible benefits to be gained by using a volunteer such as comfort, solace, relief, 'a re-injection of humanness', and even 'a gentler, more generous, more caring spirit of community and civility.' Studies which attempt to measure this added value brought by volunteer workers are extremely rare (Putnam 2000, Baum et al 1999) and yet anecdotally reports such as those of the stakeholders in the ViCP study do not appear unusual, in that volunteers are identified as being able to achieve more positive outcomes than a paid equivalent worker:

'...something very strange and wonderful is going-on in the world of volunteering. It is this very elusiveness, the power of volunteering to act upon people in mysterious ways that makes it so powerful an intervention.' (Neuberger 2007: 3)

The potential for using volunteers within the public sector must therefore be considered as far more than just providing free labour. The contention that volunteers make a different and unique contribution to that

of paid staff opens up the debate as to how volunteers and paid staff can work together in a complimentary way and how this partnership might be further evaluated in the future to tease-out some of the qualitative complexities of what is occurring.

Theme 2—Relationships

The second key theme emerging from the stakeholder interviews in this study is the notion that volunteers are able to develop more meaningful relationships with families than paid staff, and that such relationships create a milieu for sustained change and growth. As one senior staff member highlights:

'The volunteer is seen as a 'critical friend.' Families are more receptive to a volunteer than a worker from the statutory sector and can effect change in people's lives by acting as a role model, giving good advice, improving self-esteem, improving confidence & anger management. They have time to build real relationships and to listen. The impact is positive...Sadly, there seems to be an ingrained perception that social workers are all out to get them and a volunteer would be viewed differently.'

There is some evidence that a positive relationship with a worker can influence parental behaviour and as such have positive outcomes in child protection cases. Lee and Ayón (2004) pose the question in their research; 'Is the client-worker relationship associated with better outcomes in mandated child abuse cases?' and conclude:

'...a more positive relationship with the social worker was associated with improvement in discipline and emotional care and tendencies toward improvement in children's physical care and parents' coping. This was expected because establishing a good relationship has been described as a powerful tool (Woods & Hollis, 2000).'

Such observations are echoed in other studies where relationship-based work is identified as forming the basis of resilience and growth (Stein 2005) and is likewise reiterated in the Munro Review (2011.) The highly commended 'Hackney Model' additionally pin-points the body of research in which service-users give the consistent view that they value the relational aspects of social work intervention (Cross, Hubbard & Munro 2010.) Statutory social work intervention, particularly within the field of child protection, has somehow distanced itself from the ability to form real and meaningful relationships with parents and with children. This is a 'persistent criticism' in child death enquiries (Munro 2011) in that social workers have failed to form relationships with and speak to children enough. The possibility that a volunteer may act to bridge this gap between families and statutory services, and that the work of statutory social workers will be enhanced if they align themselves alongside community-based volunteers,

is one which is worthy of further and more detailed examination.

Theme 3—Communication

Finally, the fourth finding from data gathered from local authority staff is that they feel confident that there is a clear channel of communication from the volunteer about what is going-on with the family and specifically any needs, concerns or deterioration. This reflects findings from earlier evaluations of ViCP (Tunstall 2007.) As one social worker commented:

'They keep an objective semi-professional eye on things for us.'

Child death enquiries again indicate that social work visits can become stage-managed events with parents eager to be seen in the best possible light, or perhaps even set on a path of outright deceit (Haringey LSCB 2010.) In building up a real and trusting relationship over time, the volunteer has the opportunity to perhaps 'see the family as they really are', to monitor risks and resilience from close quarters, and to feed-back this insight to statutory services. Families are made fully aware that this is one of the roles of the volunteer. Part of the credibility of the scheme among professionals was the willingness of the volunteers to share information and work alongside social workers to shared aims and objectives.

'They have developed a really good reputation; they share information and are able to spot problems, risks and dangers.'

Lessons and practical pitfalls of using volunteers in child protection work

Although this evaluation and other similar studies are largely positive, potential pitfalls have emerged again from the experiences and comments of stakeholders. These may have specific relevance for practice and are summarised as follows:

- There is a need for realistic funding and management to support and facilitate the work of volunteers.
- Monitoring systems to record and evaluate outcomes must be part of any planning and costing.
- Selection processes and matching of volunteers with families are important.
- Volunteers require good quality management, training, support and supervision.
- Clear and open channels of communication between statutory workers and volunteers need to be in place.
- The supply and sustainability of volunteer labour needs to be considered.

Conclusions

Within the current economic and political climate it would be tempting to take a cynical approach to the notion of using volunteers in the provision of public services and to see this as simply a possible cheap option which

conveniently fits with the current political rhetoric. However, this evaluation has highlighted the potential for volunteers to both complement and enhance the role of statutory services in complex child protection cases, to build more meaningful relationships with hard-to-reach families, and to ultimately contribute to the greater safety and wellbeing of children. There may additionally be fiscal benefits for local authorities, if these families move on to require fewer services.

However, recent shifts and professional developments in many areas are heralding the re-emergence of the social worker as an agent of change, who seeks to work alongside the family within the specific cultural context of a community and wider family network. Many authorities are seeking to additionally give social workers the time and space to build meaningful relationships with children and families in a reflective climate (Goodman & Trowler 2012). With this in mind, the use of volunteers is perhaps an option which local authorities are considering in some areas to improve outcomes for all children at least in the short term, since fundamental systemic change is likely to take 5 -7 years (Nunno 2006). The rise of similar schemes across the country and indeed internationally, will open-up debate relating to the possible deskilling of the profession, and the erosion of the role of the state and a healthy scepticism regarding governmental objectives to cut back the role of the public sector is necessary. However, the potential benefits of the involvement of volunteers should not be undervalued or overlooked within this. Our findings indicate that there is potential for volunteers to meet the needs of families who are struggling and improve outcomes for children. Whilst it is undoubtedly a sad reality that statutory social workers have become unable to fulfil this role due to the forensic approach that has been encouraged over the past two decades (Lonne et al 2009), until there is wholesale and systemic change, there may be a legitimate, ethically acceptable and indeed pragmatic place for the use of volunteers to improve outcomes for children.

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Allow to flourish

Introduction

“Dance interweaves with other aspects of human life, such as communication and learning, belief systems, social relations and political dynamics, loving and fighting, and urbanization and evolutionary development of human species” (Hanna, 1979, p. 3).

The development of Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) is illustrated within a timeline of progression and it can be linked to fundamental human with origins in primitive societies to the present day (Chaiklin, 2009). Indeed, dance has been used culturally and spiritually as a healing practice and deep-rooted fundamental elements of humanity displayed in these practices continue to be utilised effectively in contemporary dance, therapeutic dance and Community Dance practices (Chaiklin, 2009). In addition, healing elements have been applied to many dance styles and genres to advance individuals’ holistic being.

Anna Halprin’s work embodies a holistic approach to the body and healing and suggests a connection between the body, mind and emotions by combining dance with personal feelings and visual images (Worth and Poynor, 2004, p. 34). Halprin’s work is concerned with the whole body and summarises the core features of dance when working with a variety of people; “Halprin expresses a deep-seated belief in the innate wisdom of the body and its power to heal itself, using dance as a means of empowerment, a way of ‘reclaiming’ a body in crisis and affirming the will to live” (Worth and Poynor, 2004, p. 34). Pioneers of Dance Movement Therapy (Marian Chace, Mary Whitehouse and Trudi Schoop for example) based their exploratory work on the integration of the body and its movement to develop self-harmony, self-awareness and self-validation (Chaiklin, 2009, pp. 4-7) and contemporary Community Dance practitioners continue to draw on the concepts of supporting the self and developing an affirmation of the

being (see Rosemary Lee (Rescen, 2012), Joe Moran (Dance Art Foundation, 2012) and Penny Greenland (Jabadao, 2011)).

This study, 'Allow to Flourish', undertaken for an undergraduate research dissertation, investigated the benefits of dance and therapeutic dance to promote health and wellbeing in children with behavioural difficulties. It aimed to create an alternative behavioural management model through the use of dance.

The Study

An initial review of current literature was undertaken to situate the study in a wider context. It included a review of medical and social definitions of health and wellbeing and investigated how they relate to the Mind/Body connection, which is one of the fundamental beliefs of a Dance Movement Therapist's work (Chaiklin, 2009, pp. 4-5; Goodill, 2005, p. 27). Current literature also provided a theoretical understanding of how behavioural management methods, approaches and models have been applied to differing populations. This offered insight into the breadth of research surrounding professional dance techniques. A broader area of inquiry included the exploration into physical activity, educational research, teaching literature, resources and methods, medical behavioural condition research and specific case studies.

Continuing on from this, a primary research case study of a ten year old boy diagnosed with Autism and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), whose behaviour was described by his parents as 'spontaneous, aggressive and out of control', was carried out to explore whether the use of dance and therapeutic dance could aid the behavioural difficulties that the boy exhibited, whilst also enhancing his physical health and psychological wellbeing.

Interviews with significant adults in the participants' life took place to discover more about the challenges and issues faced. Observations of the participant were undertaken in three different settings; in the classroom, in the playground and during a dance session to obtain a holistic understanding of his characteristic behaviour. Three weekly short one-to-one dance sessions were planned during which the researcher/practitioner identified the child's reactions and responses to task-based exercises. The purpose of the investigation into the participant's behaviour and current related literature was to establish what was required to create a model which promotes positive behaviour and enhances health and wellbeing.

Approaches based on the notion of the Mind/Body connection were central to this field of inquiry. Research and historical evidence suggests that dance interlinks with many aspects of life. The notion that dance is a fundamental human process and that dance was, and continues to be utilised as a healing practice, suggests that this method is strongly associated with the body, both physically and psychologically and therefore

allows for positive progression of individuals health and wellbeing.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that children with behavioural issues respond well to a dance class environment created by the facilitator and the typically disruptive behaviour, described by parents and/or teachers, is absent (Colors of Play, 2012; Medindia, 2009). This study began by considering how, why and what makes this occur.

This research is an area of personal interest and was guided by an interest in the ways in which current modes of dance practice can be utilised to aid positive behaviour. Two professionals in the dance sector—Joe Moran and Penny Greenland, have adopted this approach and it was considered that by exploring current professionals' practice and using supporting theories in the dance and education sector, it would be possible to examine the ways in which dance could support and benefit a child's behaviour and engagement. Having insight into how individuals and organisations work with and support children within a dance setting helped to identify what makes dance so successful and effective for some children with behavioural difficulties. The research into how current individuals and organisations manage behaviour in health contexts bridged the gap between theory and practice.

The objective of the study was to supply parents, students, teachers, practitioners and assistants with a resource that encouraged positive pupil behaviour through dance whilst also aiding health and wellbeing. The intention of the model was mainly to promote non-disruptive behaviour and also to progress and develop young people's health and wellbeing.

The recommendations made aimed to improve the facilitation of dance to support positive behaviour in children while vital learning and teaching takes place. For example, in an educational setting where the teacher has to meet learning aims and objectives and also cater for a large variety of individual needs within the classroom, these potential behavioural management recommendations could be utilised with individual pupils to support and encourage positive behaviour. This therefore could potentially establish an environment in which optimum learning and teaching can take place.

Collation of Findings

Identifying a successful mode of practice was essential. Deciding whether to work as part of a team, to work independently within a group (Erfer, 1995; Duggan, 1995) or to work one-to-one was central to discover what works best for that particular individual. The decision to work with the participant on a one-to-one basis was made so that the needs and requirements of the individual were placed at the forefront of the practical research.

The structure of the session was important; being clear about the structure of the session from the outset, identifying boundaries and setting clear expectations allowed for development and progression of the

individual. According to Edwards (2002), overall discipline of dance helps aid disruptive behaviour and supports the ability to feel free and able to respond to ideas.

An evaluation of the content of the individual dance sessions with the participant was completed before, during and after the workshops. A balance between familiar tasks, as well as introducing news routines enabled exciting challenges to take place. The practitioners' use of trial and error to develop ideas and successful strategies were then utilised in subsequent sessions. In addition, breaking down new complicated movements and layering movement patterns helped to build the participant's confidence and it was found that having a focus, a performance or a show, channelled energy productively.

During the practical stage of the study, the roles between leader and participant became blurred, which sometimes created issues regarding the management of the session structure and completing the intended learning outcomes. Whilst the relationship between leader and participant is vital, being able to recognise traits, warning signs and body language changes to establish when disruptive behaviour may occur is crucial. Developing strategies to respond to these signs as they began to appear targeted the behavioural difficulties early on. The development of the ability to relate to others with empathy (Duggan, 1995) is often required when working with children with behavioural issues. Dance Movement Therapy can assist this and therefore may support the use of therapeutic dance in this specialised context. The context of dance learning has the potential for everyone to be equal, particularly within a Community Dance-based environment, there is no right or wrong answer and the practitioner develops the work from what is offered by the participants. The practitioner should go with how it feels, using practitioner experience and wisdom to tailor make and individualise every session so that it suits that particular participant. However, the key to a successful session is the way in which a practitioner engages with the participant with the ability to offer children a range of choices (Greenland, personal communication, 25th April 2012), to develop their own voice.

The data demonstrated that visual aids and objects helped the participant to 'feel' qualities and be able to experience props kinaesthetically. However, as dance offers a different mode of expressing and communicating, it also allowed everyone in the space to be equal. It was found that the participant made a physical response as opposed to a cognitive one (for further examples of this see Greenland, personal communication, 25th April, 2012; Moran, personal communication, 26th April 2012). According to Edwards (2002), participants should be able to develop this communication and expression through the session as dance offers a different learning model (Moran, personal communication, 26th April 2012) that provides ways of expression which is less achievable in more verbal, static learning contexts.

The researcher/practitioner found it necessary to balance the session and maintain an open-mind to ideas and themes put forward by the participant themselves. In order to achieve this, the ability to listen, evaluate situations and be able to communicate thoughts using an appropriate tone of voice and express both verbally and non-verbally was necessary. As Greenland (personal communication, 25th April, 2012) suggested, non-verbal communication can be successful with children who struggle to interact and therefore, it is suggested that when devising a model of practice, careful thought should be applied as to how instruction is given.

According to Goodill (2005), the use of relaxation through the use of touch (Erfer, 1995), massage or simple exercises can reduce stress and anxiety for participants. In addition, an environment set up for children with behavioural difficulties should be free from distractions and obstacles. A 'holding environment' should be created in which participants feel free to respond (Duggan, 1995; Goodill, 2005; Greenland, personal communication, 25th April 2012) and offer ideas. The term 'holding environment' comes from Winnicott's description of the conditions required for development of emotion (Duggan, 1995, p. 225). Attention should be focused upon supporting the individual and creating conditions required to help individuals to be safe in any context (Greenland, personal communication, 25th April, 2012).

The data demonstrated that actively encouraging movement or a series of movements whilst the participant displayed aggressive tendencies created a barrier to the implementation of the therapy and impacted on the successful outcomes of the session. From the discussions with the participant's caregivers and the interpretation of the participant's body language it was concluded that a series of adaptable professional skills might be more suited and realistic in channelling challenging behaviour and therefore improve the overall outcomes.

Several ideas and themes emerged from the research highlighting that the key in supporting appropriate behaviours whilst enhancing health and wellbeing is underpinned by a set of professional principles. Whilst many of the themes and ideas which were emphasised through investigation run parallel to several of the Community Dance Principles, published by the Foundation for Community Dance (2012), it was acknowledged that one model does not necessarily fit all. Therefore, it is suggested that a set of adaptable, bespoke professional skills used by the practitioner/teacher to engage with a participant with challenging behaviour is adopted rather than a specific, prescribed behavioural management model.

Adaptable Professional Skills

Making sense of the synergies between the findings allowed for a nuanced understanding of the ways in which this mode of inquiry sits within a wider

context. Drawing from the literature and the action-based research, the following set of suggestions outlines a range of adaptable professional skills created from the collation of findings from the study. The recommendations are therefore based on both the theoretical and practical stages of the research and are deemed suitable for those working with children and young people who have behavioural difficulties to enhance their health and wellbeing.

Relationship

To be able to establish suitable relationships with everyone in the space.
To endeavour to outline the roles of all individuals so that everyone is in complete understanding as to who is who and what their role is.

Adaptability and Flexibility

To be able to pre-think and plan content but also be able to develop and modify pre-thought ideas easily in the moment and when necessary.

Sensitivity

To be able to know and act when there needs to be a directional change, a change in mood, atmosphere, environment or expectations.
To know when to try out new ideas and when to stay with familiar themes.
To always work inclusively.
To value all ideas put forward and be able to develop them as successfully and appropriately as possible, whilst maintaining quality throughout.

Environment

To be able to create and maintain a safe and effective environment at all times.

Spontaneity and Creativity

To create an environment in which everyone feels safe to respond, to ideas put forward and to offer their own suggestions confidently, in order to allow individuals to flourish.

Language

To use appropriate language and non-verbal communication when necessary.

Health and Wellbeing

To strive to progress and develop physical health and psychological well-being with age range appropriate ideas and themes.

Evaluation of Approach

The review of current literature provided foundations for the study as a whole. Findings from the practical research and conclusions made from scholarly literature highlighted synergies, acknowledging a wider context.

The methodology adopted for this case study was successful in the sense that it gave an overall appreciation of the participant's behaviour. However, it is acknowledged that the interview, one-to-one dance sessions and observations took place in an educational setting, therefore related strongly to a teaching and learning perspective. As a result of this, the researcher/practitioner did not acquire data from the participant in a home setting where, from information provided by the caregivers, most of the participant's behavioural difficulties arose.

Reflecting upon the two sets of interviews undertaken, one set at the beginning of the time spent with the participant and the second set at the end, allowed for further collection of knowledge from significant adults in the case study participant's life. The first set of interviews helped to build an understanding of the participant's holistic behaviour which informed the approach of the one-to-one dance sessions. Additional interviews with parents, class teacher and dance teacher concerning any changes, either behavioural or relating to health and wellbeing during the research time would have been useful to supplement the dance sessions and enhance the ability to measure and assess behaviour and health and wellbeing.

Three short one-to-one dance sessions provided an insight into the ideas and abilities of the participant and therefore allowed the researcher/practitioner to build evaluations of how dance contributes to the individual's life in both a physical and psychological sense. The observations offered an insight into the participant's daily routines and periodically differentiating behaviours.

A longer practical research period with more frequent, longer one-to-one sessions would have provided a wider variety of data to assess. The one-to-one sessions with the participant could have been extended by having more frequent and longer sessions. In addition, including the participant into a small group of children, could have developed his social interaction skills and optimised performance due to the stimulation of others in the group. More substantial conclusions could have been suggested if a larger sample size of children with behavioural difficulties was researched.

Conclusion

Clearly, one model of behaviour modification does not fit all. A child with behavioural difficulties requires individualised support. Therefore, the creation of a set of adaptable principles and professional skills, in which the practitioner can support the individual children effectively is recommended so that each child can develop and flourish.

Further research is necessary before the recommendations elicited from this project are applied in broader, more diverse contexts. However, it is suggested that the use of bespoke therapeutic dance related strategies are useful in supporting behaviour. Emerging modes of practice with children and young people within Dance Movement Therapy and Community Dance could potentially advance professional standards with the application of such recommendations and therefore establish a benchmark in which practitioners operate within.

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Continuing professional development for leading change in early years settings: Evaluation of a Masters module in leadership

Abstract

This paper considers leadership of practice in the early years workplace and explores the value of continuing professional development of graduate leaders. Specifically, a Masters module in leadership, designed to improve early years practice, is considered using case examples from graduate leaders, results from a research project into graduate leader impact, and evaluations of the leadership module. The paper concludes that continuing professional development in leading change in practice in the early years can positively influence early years leadership practice.

A number of research studies have identified that graduate leaders in early years are effective at implementing change in practice and that these changes have positive effects on children, settings and staff (Sylva et al., 2004; Mathers et al., 2011; Hadfield et al., 2012; Davis and Capes, 2013). This paper presents findings which evaluate a Masters module as continuing professional development (CPD) of those graduate leaders.

Introduction to leadership in early years

Leadership as a concept is difficult to define. Definitions range from leadership being about the leader as an inspirational visionary frontrunner, through ideas of leadership being about organisational structure for control, to definitions of leadership which emphasise collaborative practice, with leadership roles being distributed within the team rather than being wholly within a post held by one individual. Indeed a definition can be elusive because leadership is different in different settings and for different people. For example leadership may take on different forms depending upon the size of the organisation, the gender mix of the workforce, the age of the workforce and the aims and aspirations of the workplace. Many authors writing about leadership in early childhood settings (Jones and Pound, 2008; Whalley and Allen, 2011) argue that leadership is about vision and inspiration and motivation. Planning and organising and leading are very much embedded in the leadership role of early years (Moyles, 2006), but controlling is not.

The early years workforce in England is based in private, voluntary, independent and maintained settings (funded by the Local Authority), which include nurseries, pre-school settings, childminder settings and Children's Centres. Different definitions of early years' are used internationally. In this article the term is used to relate to settings which provide education for children who have not yet reached the age to attend formal school. Early years workplaces may be very small settings, for example a childminder setting, or a small nursery setting in a church hall. Typically, early years settings will be very child centred, child focussed, aiming to improve the lives of children and their families, to maximise their development, and to impact on the future of the community, so that leading in the early years setting is extensively identified as a collaborative venture (Rodd, 2006; Siraj-Blatchford and Manni, 2006; Moyles, 2006; Jones and Pound, 2008; Whalley and Allen, 2011; Miller and Cable, 2011; Aubrey, 2011). Collaboration with parents, families, children, other professionals and within the team or practitioners are features of leadership in early childhood settings. The early years setting may exist for altruistic purposes, voluntary settings for example will aim to improve outcomes for children and their families in the local area and the aim will not be for profit. Clearly there is a business in childcare and education, and these businesses certainly operate for profit, but even in these cases the framework within which they work, for example EYFS (Department for Education, 2013), embeds goals which are child centred.

For an early years leader, leadership is of a predominately female workforce and includes aspects of care. Leadership is collaborative, working together with other practitioners, parents and other agencies. It is supportive, in the child's best interest, and includes leading to learn, leading to include, and leading to maximise the child's development (Moyles, 2006).

Supporting leaders, through CPD, to lead change in practice is the focus of this paper.

Professional development for leading change

The early years workforce in the UK has undergone professionalisation in recent years. The development of graduate leaders in early years settings has taken place since 2006 in England. The value of this graduate leader role has now been researched and reported widely. Research by Hadfield et al. (2011, 2012) Davis and Barry (2013), Davis and Capes (2013), Mathers et al. (2011) among others has demonstrated the value of the graduate role in improving the confidence of the leader, enabling them to both see the need for and make effective changes in settings, and the importance of the leader working directly to lead changes in practice, rather than focussing on management. However, the graduate leader status has been shown to be a starting point for leading practice rather than an end point (Davis and Capes, 2013). Continuing professional development of the graduate leader, to further support leadership of change in settings, is also needed.

It is this aspect of leadership to improve practice which was of interest in developing a Masters module, a collaborative development between the University and the Local Authority in one county of England, to provide professional development for the graduate leaders employed in the locality. The module focussed on leading change in practice. Students on the module were working in nurseries, pre-school settings, childminder settings and Children's Centres as graduate leaders and they attended the module one half day per week for twelve weeks.

The structure of the module required students to share ideas about practice, and to constructively provide feedback on ideas presented by other students. The module leader acted as a facilitator, ensuring that the learning outcomes were achieved but not being overly directive in the tasks. Theoretical perspectives on leadership and change management were included and discussed in terms of their potential use in settings to enact change. Assessment of the module comprised submission of an essay analysing the use of theoretical models of leading change in relation to the student's own work setting.

Methods

The value of the Masters module in supporting leadership of practice was considered after students had completed the module and gained their results. Three sources of data were used.

Firstly, existing anonymous data from module evaluations was analysed, 18 evaluations were available for this purpose and all were included in the study. These evaluations had been completed towards the end of the module by each of the students on the module. The evaluations were completed by students and then submitted to the University by the

student representative, minimising the influence of the module leader on the evaluations. The module leader then received an electronic version of the evaluations, fully anonymised, including both quantitative data and qualitative comments. These documents are a generic way of obtaining data within the University, and students are aware that the data can be used to evaluate programme delivery. No specific consent is required for their use in relation to the programme of study.

Secondly, data obtained from the Early Years Professional Status Impact Study (Davis and Capes, 2013) regarding continuing professional development of graduate leaders was also included. This data arose from questionnaires, interviews and focus groups with graduate leaders.

Finally, documentary analysis of student's scripts after assessment had been fully completed provided rich evidence of changes being made in practice settings. The changes described were considered, and the use of different theoretical models analysed.

All data were anonymous. The study was carried out in accordance with the British Educational Research Association ethical guidelines (2011). The project was subject to University ethical approval.

Findings

Results from each of the three sets of data are presented below.

Module evaluations

Eighteen out of a possible 21 module evaluations were reviewed. Three module evaluations had not been submitted. The mean score for the module was 9.5 points out of a possible maximum of 10 points indicating that the student group had a high regard for the module. There was no specific question on the evaluation form regarding the value of the module in influencing practice. However, within the module evaluation form students had the opportunity to add free text comments. All 18 of the returned evaluations contained comments. Responses were read and summarised thematically. Three main themes were evident in the analysis.

1. The positive value of learning new theory about leadership.
2. The value of relating this new theory to the individual's practice setting.
3. The helpful way in which the module was delivered. The majority of comments were on this aspect and included the value of group discussion in challenging thinking, the value of discussion with other practitioners from similar and different settings, the important role of the tutor as a facilitator.

Although this is a small sample overall, 89% of possible respondents were included, the data suggests that the students valued learning the

theory, applying it to their practice, and working with other students who had a range of experience in other early years settings to help in the understanding and application of theory to different practice settings. The students were not required to provide written comments, but all did so, indicating active involvement with their studies.

No negative comments were present in the data.

Early Years Professional Status Impact Study

The study by Davis and Capes (2013) identified that continuing professional development in academic and in non-academic settings was highly valued by graduate leaders.

Masters level study of leadership was identified as valuable because it provided a new dimension within which to think about practice. Two elements were of value to the graduate leaders, the interaction with others and the separation from practice. Graduate leaders were enabled to engage more broadly with theory and with alternative ways of working because they could discuss practice with their colleagues, who were leading a variety of settings, and they could discuss possible ways of approaching change. Participants commented on the importance of trust within the group, both trust within the student group but also trust between students and facilitator, so that communication was open and there was no concern about being mocked for lack of knowledge or understanding. Secondly, having time out from practice meant that reflection was more effective. Participants found it challenging to take the time out from their busy work schedules, but valued it because it helped them to consider different theories within a reflective space away from the work setting but related to it.

The study demonstrated the readiness of these graduate leaders for further professional development.

Documentary analysis

Twenty one scripts considering the use of theoretical models in leading change in practice settings were reviewed. The documents were essays written by Masters students during a leadership module in early years. Students were required to analyse a change in practice in relation to the theory of leading change.

The documents were not accessed for research until after the complete assessment process had occurred to ensure no undue influence was exerted by the module leader over content. This was a very important ethical consideration, as there is the potential for power relationships to affect participants as they consider what to include in their assessments. In this case the research was not planned until after the assessment process had taken place, so that there was neither intentional nor unintentional power exerted to influence the content of documents during their

preparation. The value of undertaking documentary analysis, and some of the potential pitfalls and ethical issues, are summarised by Davis (2012). Analysis of the documents demonstrated that no single theoretical model was found to be suitable in its entirety for practitioners to implement changes in practice in early years settings. However several theoretical models were valuable to practitioners as they offered insights into different aspects of the change process and thus practitioners made use of components of several theoretical models to support changes in practice.

Eleven of the scripts included a consideration of democratic, autocratic and distributed leadership within specific early years settings including private and maintained nurseries, childminder settings and Children's Centres. Democratic leadership is leadership which recognises the voice of the individual employees or other stakeholders in the decision making process, and provides opportunity for employees to have a say in how things are done. Autocratic leadership on the other hand is more detached from the opinions of the workforce or other stakeholders, with decisions being made with limited reference to these opinions. The changes made by practitioners in their settings included changes in communicating with parents, changes in the way that children with additional needs were included, changes to physical structures and equipment, changes to improve safeguarding, among others. There was an acknowledgement within the documents that there were times when practitioners needed to use elements of autocratic leadership, for example when new policy dictated that changes must be implemented in settings. The introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum, a required change, which not all of the workforce welcomed, needed to be autocratic in insisting that the EYFS was implemented. However the overall approach in terms of how the change was introduced was flexible and democratic. There was clear identification that within these mandated changes, there was room for a much more democratic and distributed approach, which enabled team work and participatory approaches, and placed value on the workforce as significant enablers of change. Distributed leadership was evident in discussions of the way that practitioners developed their staff, and gave them roles of responsibility within settings. A number of terms were used frequently across all scripts in descriptions of leadership styles which were effective in settings: empowerment; engagement; teamwork; collaborative; caring; inclusive. Thus all the documents included reference to collaborative and participative styles as being effective, even if democratic leadership and distributed leadership were not specifically analysed.

The importance to the practitioner of using a staged model of change in leading change in practice was clearly identified in 16 of the scripts, and reference was made to Kotter's model (1996), Lewin's model (Lewin, 1997; Burnes, 2004) and Reddin's model (Barr and Dowding, 2008) as examples of the staged models used. All staged models are structured to consider the

initial steps in making change, and the ongoing steps in taking the change through and then maintaining the change.

In all cases, criticisms were made by practitioners about some aspects of the staged models which were not useful for the particular change being made in practice, as well as identifying valuable elements of the models to enact change. For example, many changes in practice had to be made very quickly in response to policy or financial factors, and in these cases Kotter's (1996) model was criticised by practitioners for including too much detail but valued for the sense of urgency it provided. In some cases, the detail provided by Kotter's model was valued by practitioners, as it provided a clear structure within which to plan change and against which the progress of the change could be monitored. Kotter's model was particularly useful when the change could be planned well in advance; it was less useful for immediate change. One aspect of Kotter's (1996) model which was particularly useful was the emphasis on frequent and ongoing communication between members of the team. This was also the case in analysis of the use of Reddin's model (Barr and Dowding, 2008) with communication being a useful component of the model alongside the importance of valuing each member of staff, even those that resisted the change.

Lewin's force field analysis (1997) was found to be valuable as a first step in planning change in a setting. Identifying driving forces was a positive way to give impetus to the change. Using Lewin's three step model of planned change was very effective for use in small settings, or for changes which were considered to be relatively small, provided sufficient account was taken of communicating the change with the team and acknowledging the individual concerns of team members. The initial and ongoing identification of restraining forces was useful as this enabled progress with the change to be re-evaluated and enabled the leader to tackle issues which were preventing successful change.

The scripts provided evidence that practitioners were seeking a staged model which would support collaborative practice and support strong communication to ensure the change was understood well. Collaborative practice included being able to work effectively with parents, children, staff and other professionals in planning and implementing change. All scripts demonstrated analysis of theoretical approaches to leading change in relation to particular instances of practice. Judgements were made by the practitioners about the value of different theoretical approaches within their different settings.

Summary and conclusions

This paper has considered evidence of the value of a Masters module in supporting leadership development in graduate leaders within the early years workforce. The data demonstrate that the graduate leaders embraced

continuing professional development at Masters level and readily engaged with a range of leadership theories. They were able to move from learning about the theory in the classroom setting to making use of the theory in planning and implementing changes in their practice within settings. The analysis shows that practitioners demonstrate reflective practice, are able to think about theory and able to use theory to support change in practice.

The leaders in this study were not passive recipients of theory but were active in engaging with it and looking for ways in which theory could support positive changes in practice. The graduate leaders enjoyed learning in a facilitated way, gaining value from the ability to discuss ideas openly in a non-judgmental way with other early years leaders and with academic facilitators. Thus it was apparent that the way in which leadership is conceived in early childhood settings reflects the way in which learning takes place in the academic setting. In the academic setting, collaboration between members of the group, listening to others opinions, actively seeking ideas, and valuing reflective practice was mirrored by the leadership of change evidenced by these practitioners in their settings. They were collaborative, inclusive, democratic where possible, actively seeking to include their staff, the parents and the children in planning and implementing changes in the settings.

Using three sources of data in this work was valuable, and provided rich detail at individual setting level of the way theory was enacted in practice. The quantitative data from the module evaluation forms was not useful, as there was no question to find out about the ability of students to transfer theoretical knowledge into their practice settings. However the qualitative comments on the module evaluation forms were a very rich source of data. The data obtained here were particularly valuable because all of the students had made comments. The scripts describing changes in practice were invaluable in providing rich data demonstrating how the theoretical approaches covered in the classroom activities were being considered and used in practice settings.

There is much work that needs to be done. Detailed research into the ways in which leadership CPD impacts on practice would be valuable. Further work could be undertaken to explore the gendered nature of the leadership evidenced in this article, and the gendered nature of learning. It could also be valuable to research the role of the academic in facilitation of the learning process to support graduate leaders to apply theory to their practice and thus enhance their practice.

This small study identifies that early years leaders value CPD and make use of this to improve their leadership practice.

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Currently, I am a Research Associate for the Philippines Water Governance Research Project at the University of the Philippines Baguio.

My career includes teaching different courses in science at the Pines City Educational Center (1996), De La Salle Lipa (2006-2011) and the University of Baguio (2011-2012). From 2007-2011, I was the Officer for Alternative Education at De La Salle, Lipa.

My passion for education reform began in 2002, when I took up the post of Technical Assistant for the Ford Foundation-De La Salle Lipa Education Reform Project, for 30,000 public school pupils in Lipa City. In 2003, my interest in improving children's education grew through my affiliation with Synergeia Foundation.

In 2009, I helped to create Pusong Pinoy, an all-volunteer, non-profit organization, which is registered in California. It is focused on improving the literacy levels of underprivileged Filipino children. We provide scholarships, donate books and school supplies, and provide reading programs to communities and public schools. As the Philippine Charter Team Leader, I am in charge of assessing potential recipients, monitoring programs, collaborating with partners, and providing trainings for volunteers, parents and teachers.

Education reform in the Philippines: Does it really take a village to raise a Child?

Keywords: education reform, Synergeia, appreciative inquiry, Project ABC, multi-sectoral collaboration

Abstract

Education in the Philippines is in a state of crisis. It is not simply a case of poor access to public education. Of greater concern is the problem of lack-luster provision and the steady decline in quality. The public education system has long been plagued with these recurring problems that it seems incapable of reforming itself. In the rural town of Burgos in La Union, the local government addressed the problem of poor public basic education by undertaking a reform program called Project ABC (Ameliorating Burgos Children). Together with the multi-sectoral coalition, Synergeia Foundation, it aspires to make education in Burgos more effective through community participation and collaboration.

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This paper outlines the performance and impact of the Synergeia education reform program in Burgos through the experiences of seventy program implementers and beneficiaries. The study revealed that both believe that the local government and schools provide adequate support for improving education in Burgos. However, it was clear that parental involvement was lacking. Parents actually believed that their level of participation was adequate, or were unaware of the importance of their participation in their children's education. These perceptions need to change to ensure success. Resulting improvements proved that it does, indeed, "take a village" of parents working with schools and local governments to improve educational attainment.

Introduction

Historically, it was felt that students in the Philippines received a well-rounded education which equipped them with the range of skills necessary to face life's challenges. However, it has been noted recently that the quality of public education has declined markedly in recent years. It is already a cause for alarm that dropout rates are high. However, what is more distressing is the steady decline in the quality of education.

The public education system has been plagued with these recurring problems for so long that it seems that it cannot reform itself (Bernardo, 2008, p. 70). There is a tendency to focus on the question, "What are we doing wrong?" However, maybe the better question to ask is, "What are we doing right?" as emphasized by the reform model of appreciative inquiry. Furthermore, can the solution to poor quality of education exist right there at the "village" level?

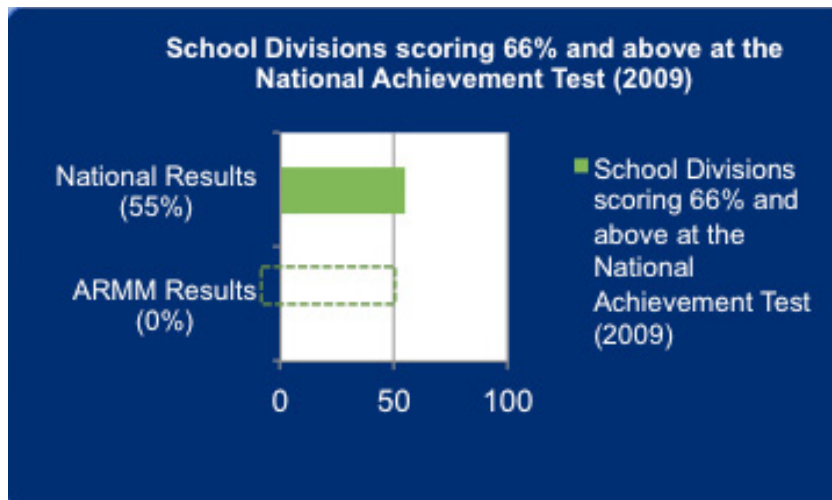
This paper looks at the effectiveness of implementing reform strategies which promote collaborative and multi-sectoral participation in public education governance at the ground level—especially in rural communities where the "village" structure is still strong.

Review of related literature

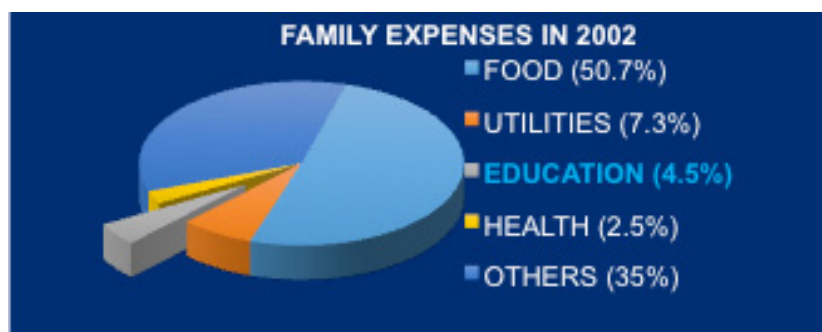
The lack-luster provision of education results in high dropout rates and declining quality. A good 28%-34% of the population does not reach or complete Grade 6. Out of ten Filipino Grade 1 students, less than five complete high school. In the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), it is worse, with only one out of ten reaching high school (World Bank, 2004, cited in Bautista, et al, 2009, p. 4).

According to Albert and Maligalig (2008, p. 6), the main reason for the children's non-attendance in school is their lack of interest due to factors such as lack of support from parents; distant schools; low quality of schools; a need to do housekeeping or to contribute to the family income; and the belief that school is irrelevant to daily life.

Furthermore, learning achievement continues to be low as reflected by the National Achievement Test (NAT) scores. In 2009, out of 204 divisions in the country, only 112 divisions have more than half of the grade 6 pupils scoring 66% and above, interpreted as “moving towards mastery”. One of the poorest regions in the country, the ARMM, has NONE of the divisions scoring 66% and above (Arcibal, 2012). In addition, fewer than 1% of Filipino students qualify for high school or college level education. Of even greater concern is that only 19 out of 100 public school teachers are competent enough to teach English in a country where English is the medium of instruction (Araneta, 2005, p. A4).



Compounding the problem further is the fact that many Filipino families give more priority to food and utilities than to education and health. On average, in 2002, family income was so meager that more than half of it went to food at 50.7%. Only 4.5% went to education in 2002 and by 2004, as prices of staples increased, it dropped even lower, to 3% (Albert & Maligalig, 2008, p. 6).



Clearly, there is an urgent need for reform of basic education provision. The development of an effective education system, which fosters the development of life-skills which help to propel children to a life beyond poverty, is now a priority.

Synergeia Foundation

In an attempt to improve the quality of education, past and present administrations, government agencies and NGOs have implemented education reform programs (Arcibal, 2012). Among the more successful ones have been those by the multi-sectoral coalition, Synergeia Foundation. It uses multi-sectoral, integrative, and participative approaches to promote reforms. It energizes local governments to participate actively in education reform, through the proper management of education funds, involving school heads, teachers, parents and other concerned parties in education planning, decision-making and implementation. Synergeia Foundation has improved the quality of education in its 250 “covered” areas through this approach.

Project ABC in Burgos, La Union: The Burgos Experience

In the rural town of Burgos in La Union, the local government addressed the problem of poor public basic education by undertaking a reform program in 2009, in partnership with Synergeia Foundation. The aim was to improve the quality of basic education in Burgos by getting principals, teachers, parents and civic organizations to working collaboratively.

Burgos is a typical rural town in the province of La Union. It is a fifth class municipality with an annual income of Php10,000,000–Php20,000,000 (£145,500–£291,000). With eight barangays or “villages”, its population in 2010 was 7,850 (National Statistical Coordination Board, retrieved 2013). It has eight public elementary schools that cater to 1,353 students (Burgos Mayor’s Office, 2013).

In this mountainous town, the only source of livelihood is the cultivation of fruits like banana and pineapple, root crops like sweet potato, and tiger grass – a material used to make handmade brooms. Children are either at school, or at home doing chores or caring for their younger siblings. During the planting season, they are often absent from school, so that they can work alongside their parents in the fields. Many children have to walk for hours in flipflops, sometimes crossing creeks, to attend school. Some children go to school hungry, making learning almost impossible. According to the interview with the Lower Tumapok Parents Teachers Association on 11 February 2011, many of these students are taught using a “multi-grade” system, where the learning experience is limited by cramped environments. Students at two different grades share one classroom and one teacher. Public school libraries, if any, have a very poor book collection which the children do not even bother to enter.

This scenario is repeated in many rural communities throughout the Philippines. Dial in a myriad of factors like the lack of competent teachers and parent support, mismanagement of education funds, and lack of transparency and accountability in the public school system, and the deterioration of the quality of education becomes inevitable.

Project ABC (Ameliorating Burgos Children)

The municipality of Burgos is one of Synergeia's recipients with its Project ABC (Ameliorating Burgos Children). Its entry point is the improvement of the pupils' reading proficiency. Since its launch in 2009, simultaneous activities, focused on the following, were conducted in the hope of improving student achievement: (1) an integrated policy and planning system headed by the Mayor was set up through a Project Management Team (PMT). The PMT has representations from the local government, the Department of Education, teachers and parents. Their first activity was the Burgos Education Summit where the stakeholders were invited to inform them of the new program and plan with them through workshops; (2) improvement of information base where an inventory of best practices by successful reform programs was built; (3) capacity-building through trainings of school heads, teachers and parents; and (4) forging of partnerships with Synergeia Foundation and other NGOs such as Pusong Pinoy, a US-based non-profit organization that provides teacher trainings and storybooks to the schools to encourage the children to read.

These intervention programs have led to the steady rise in the results of standardized tests such as the NAT scores and the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI). The NAT is a test measuring the students' academic strengths, weaknesses and level of subject mastery. Results reveal that the slight improvement in scores is still inadequate. On the average, Filipino students can only answer six basic subject questions out of ten correctly, as seen in Table 1. It is clear that the Burgos child is faring much better than the average Filipino child with a mean NAT score of 72.54% with a descriptive equivalent of "moving towards mastery".

Table 1. National Achievement Test (national average): MPS for Grade 6 (SY 2002-2012)

School Year	National Average	Burgos Average
SY 2007-2008	64.81	70.20
SY 2008-2009	65.55	73.42
SY 2009-2010	68.01	74.00
AVERAGE	66.12	72.54

Sources: Department of Education in Burgos, La Union (2012) and National Education Testing and Research Center (2012)

The Philippine Informal Reading Inventory or Phil-IRI, on the other hand, is an oral test conducted yearly to measure reading proficiency. As Table 2 shows, yearly, there is an improvement in the reading status of the Burgos children as the number of non-readers decreases while the number of independent readers increases.

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Table 2. Phil-IRI for the Municipality of Burgos from Grades 1 to 6

School Year	Total Number of Pupils	Non-readers		Frustration		Instructional		Independent	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
SY 2007-2008	1194	14	1.2	409	34.2	489	40.9	282	23.6
SY 2008-2009	1204	9	0.7	356	29.6	550	45.7	289	24
SY 2009-2010	1210	4	0.3	473	39.1	430	35.5	303	25

Source: Department of Education in Burgos, La Union, 2012

Research questions

This study has three questions to answer:

1. What is the Project ABC implementers and beneficiaries' perceived level of program impact, in terms of the students' attitude towards reading, school governance, local governance, and public participation?
2. Is there a significant relationship between the respondents' sector and educational attainment and their perceptions of the impact of the program?
3. Is there a difference in the perceptions of the program implementers and beneficiaries?

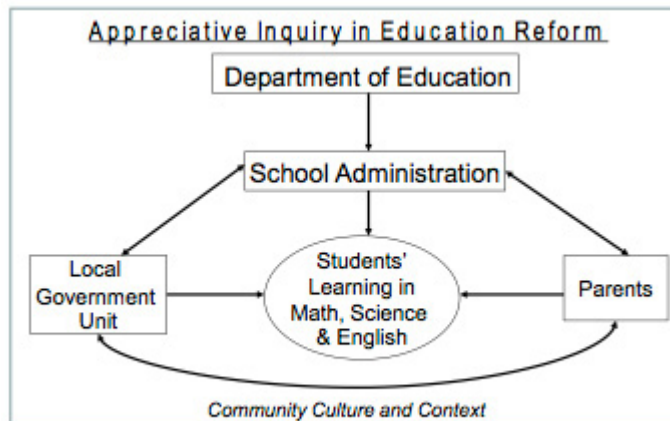
Theoretical framework

The study is based on the framework developed in the 1980s by David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva on Appreciative Inquiry (AI). AI is an organizational development principle which requires individuals in an organization or system to effect change, by building on processes that "work", rather than searching for problems or things that do not work and trying to fix them.

AI boosts the capacity of the "system" to collaborate and change. The organization constantly inquires more into what is "good" in the people and the organization. The idea is that it will "grow" in the direction of what people repeatedly ask questions about (New Paradigm, 2008). It dwells on best practices and successes, no matter how small. Engagement is effective because people contribute in ways that make sense to them, allowing the "village" approach to succeed.

Synergeia Foundation, in its implementation of education reform involving the different sectors, employs the principles behind AI. The illustration in Figure 1 shows that with the Department of Education overseeing school administration, the LGU and parents are involved in the implementation of programs that are geared towards the learning achievement of pupils in the areas of Math, Science and English. All activities are carried out in the context of community.

Figure 1. Theoretical framework: appreciative inquiry in education reform



Source: Project K (2002)

Methodology and case selection

Primary data was gathered using a survey questionnaire which was accomplished by 70 respondents composed of (1) Project ABC implementers (the municipal mayor, Local School Board representatives, local government employees, the DepEd La Union 2nd District Supervisor and the eight elementary School Heads); and (2) the Project ABC beneficiaries (teachers and parents)¹. Primary data was also taken from interviews with various implementers and beneficiaries of Project ABC. Secondary data was sourced from Synergeia Foundation, the DepEd, the Municipality of Burgos in La Union, and other relevant agencies.

Data analysis and interpretation was accomplished using the following:

1. frequency and percentage distribution: sector and educational attainment
2. mean: respondents' perceived level of program impact
3. correlation analysis using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient: presence of significant relationships between the respondents' profile and the perceived level of program impact.
4. T-test: difference in the perception of program implementers and beneficiaries on program impact.

¹ Public school elementary pupils of Burgos are the main beneficiaries of the implementation of the Synergeia education reform program. However, the main focus of this study was the impact of education reform—specifically in the area of governance. Consequently, it was felt that the appropriate areas for study were the attitudes and experiences of teachers and parents. They were deemed more appropriate respondents, as they could better articulate the impact of the program at this level. The impact on pupils' performance and achievement was effectively measured by their performance in the National Achievement Test (NAT) and Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI). This "universal" performance facilitates benchmarking against nationally-agreed standards of performance and ensures consistency.

Discussion and analysis of data

The program impact is discussed from two perspectives: the implementers' and the beneficiaries'. The indicators for program impact are students' attitude towards reading, school governance, local government involvement and parent participation.

Table 3 shows that for all program impact indicators, the implementers generally have a lower mean score than the beneficiaries. The implementers, being more aware of the Project ABC program goals and strategies, believe that there is still a need to enhance the children's love for reading and learning, so that consequently, student achievement will improve. They also know that there is a need to further improve school governance, by facilitating school head teacher/parent interaction and cooperation.

Data also reveals that the level of participation and commitment from the local government is still wanting. It still needs to move education centrally in its agenda, involving all the other sectors in the planning and budgeting for education in Burgos.

Finally, implementers also believe that the community, especially the parents, should take ownership of the Project ABC program and be more pro-active in its application. Despite the underinvestment in education, students have actually performed better in recent years, due to the collaborative efforts of the different sectors and better governance of DepEd officials to limit corruption and improve service (Valarao, 2008).

Table 3. Summary of perceptions on program impact

Program Impact	Perception of Implementers		Perception of Beneficiaries	
	Composite Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Composite Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Student performance	3.44	Moderate	4.13	High
School governance	3.45	Moderate	4.19	High
Local governance	3.45	Moderate	4.04	High
Public participation	3.45	Moderate	3.88	High
AVERAGE	3.447	Moderate	4.06	High

Relationship Between Program Profile and Program Impact

Table 4 describes the relationship between the respondents' sector and educational attainment and the program impact. The level of education and the perception on the impact on public participation is the only indicator showing a relationship with a "low" but positive relationship. This proves that the respondents with a higher level of education have a better understanding of how Project ABC can impact parent participation. This relationship is significant, at less than 10% error. Likewise, the higher level of educational achievement among parents is reflected in their increased participation in activities that will boost the interest of their children in education (Ozurumba et al, 2007).

Table 4. Relationship between respondent profile and program impact

IMPACT INDICATORS	r-Value		INTERPRETATION		P-Value		INTERPRETATION	
	Sector	Educational Attainment	Sector	Educational Attainment	Sector	Educational Attainment	Sector	Educational Attainment
Student' attitude towards reading	-0.02	0.18	Negligible	Low	0.88	0.14	Not significant	Not significant
School governance	-0.05	0.13	Negligible	Low	0.71	0.29	Not significant	Not significant
Local government involvement	0.02	0.01	Negligible	Negligible	0.90	0.92	Not significant	Not significant
Parent participation	-0.02	0.22	Negligible	Low	0.85	0.08	Not significant	Significant

Comparison Of Perceptions On Program Impact

The table shows the results of the test of differences in the perceptions of the implementers and beneficiaries of Project ABC in terms of the different impact indicators. Although the mean scores suggest that the beneficiaries have a slightly higher perception of program impact than the implementers, statistical tests revealed that the differences are not significant for all the impact indicators.

Table 5. Difference in perceptions on program impact

IMPACT INDICATORS	Mean Perceptions				t-Test value	Probability	Interpretation
	Implementers	V.I.	Beneficiaries	V.I.			
Student's attitude towards reading	3.02	Moderate	4.70	High	1.2455	0.2255	Not significant
School governance	4.02	Moderate	4.70	High	0.2413	0.8115	Not significant
Local governance	3.88	Moderate	4.00	High	1.1257	0.2751	Not significant
Public participation	3.86	Moderate	3.84	High	0.2715	0.7893	Not significant

The study revealed that both implementers and beneficiaries believed that the local government and schools provided adequate support for improving education in Burgos. However, it was clear that parental involvement was lacking. Parents actually believed that their level of participation was adequate, or were unaware of the importance of their participation in their children's education. These perceptions needed to change to ensure success.

Conclusion

With only three years of implementation, there is already a slight increase in student outcome as the NAT increased steadily. Likewise, the moderate and high levels of perception of the program implementers and beneficiaries, respectively, are evidences that the "village" approach works. In its young age, Project ABC has slowly, although not yet fully, transformed its "village" into an education village.

Clearly, the Synergeia approach to education reform reaps benefits.

It sees “the village” as fundamental to successful education reform. My research confirms this and points to both the success of the methodology and the factors which need to be re-visited and refreshed, if change is to be maintained. To sustain and develop effective reform requires the “village” to be at its core. The raw material is the community—the people in the “village”.

Therefore, we can conclude that it does take a village to raise a child. Burgos has a good village with good people. If Burgos will continue using appreciative inquiry in its implementation of Project ABC by getting the local government, school administrators, teachers, parents, and NGOs more involved and participative, there is no other direction but UP. We will definitely see better outcomes—children who are readers, learners, and achievers.

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There are too many sad things here: children's exposure to neighbourhood violence

Abstract

Do children represent the neighbourhoods where they live? This was the starting point of a research focused on the analysis of children's lives in six public housing neighbourhoods in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, Portugal. Rooted in social ecology theoretical approaches and childhood studies, which recognize children as social actors, the main goal was to achieve a better understanding of children's socialization processes considering multi-problematic spaces, but focussed mainly on their involvement in violence and delinquency. Between 2005 and 2009, a case study based on ethnographic and child-centred research methods to explore children's personal accounts of their lives was conducted in the selected neighbourhoods. Findings highlighted that most children complained about living there, referencing how social and spatial segregation, associated to high exposure to violence, affect them. Violence and crime were labelled as the most prominent problems, and children's exposure to neighbourhood violence seldom occurs only once or just in one form. The data demonstrated how 'normalization' of violence perceived by children influenced their use of the neighbourhood's places, reducing their sense

of the seriousness and effects of violent acts. Violence, briefly discussed from the children's points of view, served to build their skills, structure their present relations with peers and adults, and simultaneously helped and (re) constructed a permanent social dissatisfaction reinforcing neighbourhood's stigmatization.

Introduction

Children and youth are amongst the most vulnerable social groups to violence and crime in urban environments (Sampson and Laub, 1994; Shuval et al. 2012). Given the level of violence in many urban neighbourhoods worldwide, especially those where social disadvantages are territorial and concentrated in metropolitan areas, which particularly affects children's socialization, it is fundamental to identify how children perceive the influence of ecological variables in their lives and what specific factors place them at greater risk. The complexity of children's lives in contemporary urban settings is expressed in the coexistence of multiple ways of life and experiences of violence, generally associated with different social status and contexts.

The more adults emphasize security issues in public spaces, the more cities become less child friendly, decreasing the possibility of children accessing different types of experiences. Children's play in streets is seldom seen freely in urban contexts since there is now equipment specially designed for this purpose, such as playgrounds, one of the hallmarks of present-day childhood (Karsten, 2003). Parental perceptions of risk and (in)security tend to result in the child's confinement to enclosed spaces, specialized 'islands', mainly in the family, school or leisure places, being registered a loss of freedom to use public spaces (Holloway and Valentine, 2000). However, this is not a linear process and does not affect all children in the same way (Christensen and O'Brien, 2003). It results in marked differences in access to resources according to social origin and the nature of the areas where children are located or live (Almeida, 2009).

When comparing risks in different urban settings, Benbenisthy and Astor (2005) have argued it is precisely those children living in socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods who are more likely to be victims of violence. Several studies show that the use of public space by socially disadvantaged children tends to be done more without parental supervision, with a level of greater mobility and autonomy, than among those who belong to middle and upper social classes and who are more likely to participate in organized and formal activities (Valentine, 2004). This might expose the first ones to higher levels of violence and disorders (Sampson and Laub, 1994; Shuval et al, 2012), which confirms that poorer children are likely to be more affected by social risks in using public spaces than children of different social status (Christensen and O'Brien (2003).

The research

The current article is part of a larger study, a PhD in Sociology concerning childhood, violence and delinquency in Portugal (Carvalho, 2010). Aiming to achieve a better understanding of children's socialization processes considering multi-problematic spaces, mainly about their involvement in delinquency. Between 2005 and 2009, a case study was carried out in six public neighbourhoods in the Lisbon metropolitan area, involving a combination of qualitative methodologies.

The neighbourhoods were chosen because they experience relatively high levels of social deprivation, violence and crime, although being located in one of the richest counties in the country, and the first one to have eradicated slums in 2003, by promoting public housing policies. One of the main features of these territories is that they are all close to each other instead of being near other kinds of residential areas. Five of them create a homogeneous continuum in this county territory, and the sixth is less than a half a mile away from the other five. Although there are not two equal neighbourhoods, many of their traces of characterization are common, highlighting the importance of considering the analysis of their interdependence and socio-spatial dynamics. It is a whole socially disadvantaged universe, with no significant socio demographic differences (1,700 homes, 5,000 residents, of whom 33.2% were between 0 and 18 years-old).

This article focus on the results obtained at the first stage of the research based on the analysis of 312 children's neighbourhood's drawings and narratives and community photography. The intention was to identify the main contours of children's socialization in the field, through their own accounts of their lives. We then examine their perspectives on disorder and violence. In small groups in their classrooms, children were asked by the author if they could do an individual drawing about their neighbourhood. When they finished, there was an individual conversation with every single child, started with the author asking the child to describe and explain his/her drawing, in order to register his/her interpretation, which led to the identification of the content and meaning that each one gave to his/her own work. Community photography was carried out by two classes (4th and 2nd grade).

The material collected was subject to content analysis, where it was possible to cross the graphic representation (non verbal language) with the individual narratives told by children about the drawings and photos. In each work, both form and content were considered, the themes and sub-themes were identified, and cross tabulations and chi-square analyses were performed to test age and gender differences.

Participants were 312 schoolchildren aged 6-13 (M=8.38) attending two primary state schools (1st-4th grade), living in one of these neighbourhoods. Exactly half of the participants were girls (50.0 percent,

n=156) and the other half were boys. To assess age effects, the children were grouped according to age: 6 to 9 years old (75.0 percent, n=236), and 10 to 13 years-old (25.0 percent, n=76). Most were African origin from the former Portuguese colonies (62.8 percent, n=196), mainly The Cape Verde Islands, 9.2 percent (n=29) were Gypsies, and 28.0 percent (n=87) were Caucasian. Nearly all were from lower SES households, with 86.7 percent (n=271) getting financial support from social services at schools.

According to the Portuguese law, since the participants were under the age of 18, the study had been previously explained not only to children, but also to their parents or legal guardians, who had to give permission.

Findings

"There are too many sad things here"

Children were eloquent when stating their views of social relations in their neighbourhoods. Most complained about living there, describing how social and spatial segregation, and high exposure to violence and disorder affect them.

Children's awareness of the effects of the territorial concentration of social disadvantages was clearly expressed. As materialized in the context of broader public housing policies through which the national and local authorities tried to overcome the poverty and housing problems faced by large population groups in Portugal, it is important to note that children's representations of their neighbourhoods show how they can be identified by socio-economic disadvantage.

'Here what we have mostly is poor people, there're only poor, poor people, just poor...' BoyM08, 8 years-old (Carvalho, 2010, p. 269)

In addition, these demonstrate how they can apparently accept and approve their social condition of 'being poor,' recognizing their neighbourhoods as places of spatial concentration of socio-economic disadvantages that could potentially exclude them from participation within the city social life by just being poor.

Another emergent issue was the problem of social inclusion.



'I'm Portuguese, yes I am... I'm Portuguese like all other Portuguese people! That's it, that's it... I'm "brown" but Portuguese...' GirlF10, 9 years-old (Carvalho, 2010, p.277)

This 9 year-old girl was born in the country; however, difficulties of social inclusion grounded on the feeling of not being respected and socially accepted because of her skin colour are notorious. The internalization of a notion of social inferiority, based on her ethnic identity is clearly expressed, and which seems to reinforce her need to strengthen the adherence to a more inclusive category: the belonging to the 'Portuguese people'. Children strongly expressed how being subjected to the processes of spatial segregation inside their neighbourhoods on the basis of their ethnic origin affects them and it is at the origin of disorders and violence. Many families have been relocated by local authorities in specific streets of the neighbourhoods, according to this criterion. The social division of space produces power relations that become institutionalized amongst residents, whom are mainly of African origin, and in a smaller, but still significant number, of Gypsy origin, in a climate of permanent opposition and demand for territorial domination that children (re)appropriate and (re)construct in a perspective of a 'normalization' of violence.



'It's my street and the buildings on the side of the Gypsies and on the other it's me and my friends. What I like least in my neighborhood are the Gypsies and if I could, I would move them to another neighborhood because they are noisy and rude and thrown litter on the streets.' GirlF13, 9 years-old (Carvalho, 2010, p.282)

The way children mentioned the built environment and the use of space – on one hand, “we,” and on the other hand, the “other” – in a representation that reflects a battlefield, cannot be devalued.

Overall, when expressing their thoughts about their neighbourhoods the negative aspects overshadowed the positive ones. This overlap was particularly pronounced when they talked about ‘people’ ($X^2=125$, $p < .05$) and ‘public equipment’ ($X^2=85$, $p < .05$), and to a degree, somewhat lower but still significant, as they referred to the ‘public spaces’ ($X^2=31$, $p < .05$) and ‘shops and services’ ($X^2=31$, $p < .05$). On the other hand, their ‘house/homes’ ($X^2=12$, $p < .05$), ‘schools’ ($X^2=18$, $p < .05$) and ‘family’ ($X^2=8$, $p < .05$) were more positive. No significant gender differences were registered in all variables

The 'normalization' of violence in children's lives

The most significant negative evaluation (47.1 percent) is related to social interaction, specifically concerning 'people', in this case the adults with whom children interact or observe in daily life. Children have a clear idea about their expectations of adults' social roles and disparagingly referred to the existence of a large number of individuals who are distant from what they consider the reference model, suitable for the maintenance of trust and social cohesion. Violence, disorders and crime emerged as the focal point of the majority of children's approaches, regardless gender, age, ethnic origin or the neighbourhood where they lived.

A negative evaluation was also made about 'public spaces' (34.5 percent; n=76), because it is within these kinds of spaces children located a wide range of disorders and violence. Children took many photos emphasizing a multitude of places, people, and items associated with the neighbourhood's social problems. Most of the photographs highlighted the degradation of public spaces and equipment. A particular attention was given to physical disorders (graffiti, abandoned cars - or "stolen" to use children's own words-, garbage on the streets, deteriorated sidewalks, broken windows and doors, inoperable street lighting). When describing the drawings, a wide range of social disorders was singled out.

'There're also many 'cafes' full of men drinking and smoking and sometimes there are fights and they hit and run. Sometimes the police come but have to leave and go back because they go after them and beat them among big fights.' GirlF19, 8 years-old (Carvalho, 2010, p. 295)

As children pointed out, most 'cafes' are located on dead end streets, which make any formal social control intervention more difficult. At the same time, children perceived those spaces as dangerous and tried to avoid them.

More play space, better public space and public equipment maintenance and more security were the children's priorities. By not having playgrounds in their neighbourhoods, children are mainly sent to the street. On one hand, it gives them the possibility of fully exploring their physical and social environment, but it simultaneously exposes them to a range of other situations that are clearly more unfavourable and potentially generate different risks (Carvalho, 2013).

When children were asked to talk about their own drawing the most mentioned problem was crime (31.4%), followed by different types of disorders in a social framework characterized by insecurity.



"This here is a man running over a little boy... On the other side is the youngster who killed the other near my house, he went home to pick up the gun and then came back and killed him... In the building there is a man shooting at his wife, and she was pushed away by him. She fell out of the window and the neighbours called the firemen and there's nothing else... I don't like to live here, there are too many sad things, and it's very sad to live here, it's like this..." GirlF02, 9 years-old (Carvalho, 2010, p.163)

Children's forms of victimization in the neighbourhoods were subject to a particular interest and concern by the research participants, with a special attention to death cases in violent circumstances, such as during illegal car races. Other serious problems, strongly represented, is domestic violence, which according to children's words seem to affect a significant proportion of the neighbourhood households, regardless its composition or ethnic origin. Children's perceptions reveal hostility and confrontation between police and residents happen on a regular basis, and police action in the neighbourhoods is far from successful. The easy access to drugs and weapons reported in our study was notorious and widespread.

Conclusion

As a part of the context where children live, violence appears 'normalized' to many children, due to its intense frequency mainly in public spaces, which has an effect on children's socialization, especially those to whom the street is 'the' central place in daily life (Jamouille, 2005). Violent acts may occur frequently and become perceived as less serious over time, in which they tend to gain visibility in all neighbourhoods. This 'normalization' strengthens the risk of children's devaluation of the seriousness and effects of violent acts and, not surprisingly, some participate in it since very young ages. This is a clear example that childhood cultures generated in these neighbourhoods are underpinned by a culture of violence, integrating both intra and intergenerational contributions. Children do not reject conventional values, but in the practice of violence there is excitement and fun. There is also the adhesion to notions that are widespread and highly valued in these territories, such as "be smart", "get tough and courageous" and "have power and money", which are recurrently associated with a 'code of the street' (Anderson, 1999).

Continued on next page...

Ultimately, children's social development through violence is already structuring how they interact with peers and adults in the present, and it will be reflected in children's future roles in society. In this process, special attention should be paid to the use of public spaces by children and adults. The street plays a central role in children's socialization in these neighbourhoods, and parental supervision does not always provide adequate protection; often, both boys and girls referred to how they were involved in social disorders and violence together with their own parents or relatives. Residents' low level of agency and the dilution of informal social control in the study neighbourhoods reinforce the lack of social regulation, facilitating children's social learning of violence (Carvalho, 2010). This forces us to question the nature of the existing social networks and how residents' lack of intervention on social control reflects insufficient collective action to improve children's socialization, which may endanger social cohesion (Morenoff et al., 2001).

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William Lindsey is an associate professor in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Kansas in the United States where he teaches courses on religion in the histories and cultures of Japan and Korea, as well as courses covering topics such as ritual, the body, and theory and method in the study of religion. His research centers on the early modern and modern periods in Japanese history, and focuses on vernacular religion, particularly the employment of ritual and symbol in the household and in lay organizations to construct identity, manage health crises and other disruptive situations, and mark and celebrate the life course. It is from this methodological focus that he has begun turning attention to the role of religion in the history of childcare and childhood in Japan. He received his PhD from the University of Pittsburgh in the United States and is the author of several presentations, articles, and the book *Fertility and Pleasure: Sexual Values in Tokugawa Japan*.

Performing well: Children's bodies and religious childrearing confraternities in modern Japan

In the spirit of the plural marking this conference's name, "Children and Childhoods," I want to turn the focus to a different discipline and cultural setting, religious studies and Japan, to outline the role children's bodies have played in the ritual and symbolic composition of childrearing confraternities in modern Japan. Before describing the historical and social dimensions of a specific confraternity—one dedicated to the Buddhist monk Donryu (1556-1623)—allow me to make brief, preliminary comments on Japanese religion, religious imagining of children, and the centrality of the body for both religion and childrearing.

First, much of vernacular Japanese religion is expressed in forms of ritual performance marking the life-course and addressing situations that may interrupt the smooth running of that course. In addition to rites of passage, then, ritual attention and other sacred activities such as purchasing amulets is also given over to protecting one's body and status in hopes of promoting health, good grades, finding a spouse, and securing professional success. Second, childrearing is embedded in this vernacular religion. Young childhood is a time when the body is not only biologically vulnerable, but also, religiously speaking, when the person herself, as a being, is

highly liminal. This liminality is expressed in the well-known maxim that until the age of seven one is a child of the gods. This vernacular view of child ontology imagines children as spiritually moving, upon conception, from a divine identity with the kami and buddhas, toward full human personhood as the body passes through gestation, birth, and the opening years of life via ritual mediation. (Iijima, 1987, p. 47) Such mediation has both defined young childhood as a socio-ritual category and promoted the health and personhood of children—from protecting the fetus in the womb to celebrating milestones of bodily and social maturity such as celebratory occasions marking the third, fifth, and seventh years of life.

Third, even a casual visitor to a Buddhist temple can readily note the stress on bodily health in the activities of lay people: purchasing protective amulets, drawing fortunes (much of whose text is given over to health predictions), and rubbing Buddhist statues to transfer the healing power inhering in the deity's body to one's own. Childrearing confraternities are extensions of this religious concern for bodily health. Just as childrearing strategies in the West tend to stress the promotion of a "healthy" personality, in Japan, as with much of East Asia, the stress is on promoting a healthy body that can perform well at home, play, and school. (Lin et al, 1990, p. 429) Although the Japanese term for childrearing, *kosodate* (*ko-child*, *sodate-raising* or *rearing*), is directly translatable into English and both denote raising a child in the sense that one raises plants or animals, the Japanese is idiomatically closer to the connotation of raising vibrant biological life. When reading historical primary literature on *kosodate*, uses of the term can be confusing unless we keep in mind *kosodate* and the raising of healthy, vibrant bodies. Phrases such as a household that does not raise its first child or a household that cannot raise children mean, in the first instance, a household whose first child has died and, in the second, a household in which no child has been able to survive. In Japan's cultural environment, where discourses and practices of "science" and "religion" are not adversarial as they can be in the West, pediatric clinics and childrearing confraternities coexist easily. Parents and their children often move between the two, because both, through different experiential spaces and methodologies—one the clinic and medicine and the other the temple and ritual—seek to help households practice *kosodate* by promoting along unique, non-conflicting methodological lines the health of youngest bodies so that they may perform well.

Most childrearing confraternities and their ritual methodologies center on compassionate Buddhist divinities and persons whose worship centers are distributed widely throughout the country. Here I detail a regional confraternity called *kosodate Donryu* (childrearing Donryu). Concentrated outside and around the Tokyo area, it is centered on the figure of Donryu, a Pure Land Buddhist priest active in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Early modern hagiographical accounts

portray Donryu as a miracle worker controlling dragons—the providers of water—and thus the water itself, which would have been considered of no small importance in a pre-modern, agricultural society. (Tsutsumi, 2007, pp. 187-188) His name means to suppress (don) dragons (ryu), which suggests a reputation for managing these powerful creatures. Later hagiography, created in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, seemingly improvised on this theme of water and its associations with fertility and growth to paint Donryu in his current portraiture as a saint of pregnancy, safe birth, and children's health. (Tsutsumi, 2008, pp. 179-180) Reading these modern legends, one is struck by their body-centricity. Donryu's mother, Mayumi, after long being barren is rewarded for her faith in the dragon god by Donryu's conception and birth. As an infant, he always smiled and wriggled his prone body, as happy babies do, when the name of Amida (the central Buddha of Pure Land faith) was spoken toward him. As a child he loved playing with mud like other children making shapes with the brown ooze—seemingly innocent play, but in fact (or, more accurately, in legend) the shapes his small hands produced were always small statues of Amida Buddha. (Ichiryusai, 2004, p. 7)

This urge to give body to salvific divinities carries over from childhood play to the entirety of his adult career as a Buddhist priest where many of his good works and miracles in saving children are tied to a combination of his statuary skills, his faith, and quotidian knowledge. In one representative tale, Donryu, in his first wandering as a young monk, encounters a village suffering from disease laying waste to its children. (In other words, the village cannot do *kosodate*—it cannot raise children.) Teaching the villagers some basic forms of treating disease, identifying protective plants, and offering healing prayers over the surviving children, he is able to stop the disease and its terrible toll in its tracks. Not wanting to be without him and his healing powers, the villagers plead for him to stay. He refuses in order to continue his wanderings, but before departing he carves a statue of the bodhisattva Jizo (a Buddhist divinity reputed for protecting children), instructing the villagers that he has charged the statue with his own powers and they should direct prayers to it to protect the children. (Ichiryusai, 2004, p. 8)

These legends were crafted not in Donryu's time but much later in an era very different from that which he knew. When Japan began rapid modernization in the late 1800s, vast social changes began to be effected that permanently altered the culture—from religion to childhood. On the religion front was the disestablishment of Buddhism from its feudal position of privilege as a government sanctioned institution. Left adrift in a new world without the backing of secular power and facing fierce criticism from modernists for being woefully out of touch with and thoroughly unneeded in the new age of science, industry, and nation-building, Buddhism sought to reinvent itself as a religion in sync with Japan's modernization. (Ketelaar,

1990) On the childhood front was the creation of a system of universal education whose purpose was in great part to produce, for the first time in Japan's history, nationalized subjects to serve the modernization project as Japan rushed to shed its feudalism in order to compete with, rather than be dominated by, Western powers. (Platt, 2005) These two fronts came together regionally when Buddhist temples with older narrative ties to Donryu began to create new, child-centric legends to secure a purpose and place in the new national order of things. They promoted Donryu as a fitting figure for a nation in need of children with healthy bodies and committed hearts to carry on the task of bodily supporting modernization in the home, in the rice field, the coal mine, the factory floor, and, when called upon at an older age, the battlefield to advance Japan's position as a rising world power. In short, Donryu, once a controller of dragons and water, became, three centuries or so after his death, a protector of modern children's bodily health and bodily maturity.

By bodily maturity I mean physical endowments of strength, vigor, and endurance that are translated performatively via the body (what I call commitment of the body) into displays of qualities such as resolve, determination, and fortitude. This commitment of the body is a central theme among the child heroes inhabiting Japan's best-known children's stories. Kintaro (strong boy of the mountains), Momotaro (the boy born from a peach who subdues demons), and Issunboshi (a boy no bigger than one's thumb but with big courage and loyalty he forges his own fame and fortune) undergo great adventures of daring and secure individual success and communal boons via their bodies. Another take on bodily maturity may be found in a national survey of birth and childrearing practices conducted in the 1920s and 1930s and eventually published post-war as the encyclopedic text, *Nihon saniku shuzoku shiryō shusei* (Collected Data on Birth and Child-Rearing Customs in Japan). The text lists several bodily issues—forms of transgressions such as bedwetting, diarrhea, and coughing—as well as kosodate worship centers, including those of Donryu, where the issues were addressed through ritual and symbolic actions. Interestingly, night crying is the most frequently noted bodily transgression in the text. (Hashiura et al, 1975, pp. 485-495) As many parents can attest, chronic crying at night can exhaust household members, making sleep difficult and, lacking proper rest, limit their bodily efficiency and, consequently, economic effectiveness during working hours. When we consider that in twentieth-century, pre-war Japan, much of the population (including children) was engaged in non-mechanical agricultural labor requiring high demands on the body (and much of the rest of population was involved in bodily taxing heavy and cottage industries—to say nothing of daily household labor), the economics of the rested body and the adverse effects of night crying would, of course, have been of great concern to households. Certainly great enough to seek types of divine assistance.

Less immediately, though with an anxious eye to the future, frequent crying could also be (and still is) interpreted as an early signal of an overly sensitive child—a sensitivity that may perhaps in later years undermine qualities such as resolve, determination, and fortitude that may make full participation—performing well—in mature childhood more complicated.

In childrearing confraternities an assortment of religious repertoires—rituals and sacred purchases—are employed to celebrate, protect, and promote the physical body. As specifically Japanese repertoires, these actions often exhibit a performative and imaginative logic of substitution and mimesis that aims in some manner to sacralize the body. (Yamaguchi, 1991, cited in Schattscheider, 2005, p. 331) This most typically takes the form of purchasing an amulet or charm at a Buddhist temple and attaching it to the child's clothing, or perhaps placing it in the home near the child's vicinity such as where she sleeps. The point is to facilitate transferring the protective power of the deity or figure enshrined at the temple to one's person through the use of a material and portable object. Such protective objects like charms emblazoned with the two characters forming the name Donryu are conspicuous in their availability at his kosodate temples.

These temples, however, make available other repertoires for sacralizing the body, most notably, in an act of mimesis, making one's child a bodily disciple of Donryu in order to promote bodily health and maturity. I specify "bodily disciple" because it was through the body—and for the body—that the child was ordained a "priest," through shaving the head to resemble that of a tonsured monk and marking the child as Donryu's newest follower (Tsutsumi, 2007, p. 179). The master-disciple relationship is fundamental throughout East Asian Buddhism in cultivating the novice's practice toward realizing the goal of enlightenment. Bodily discipleship of young children mirrors this relationship through employing the topos of master-disciple and intensifying it by the ritual idiom of tonsuring. In this mirror, the child's body becomes subject to physical strengthening as his or her status, through discipleship, becomes sacralized as subject to a relationship across time and space with the protective and loving Buddhist master.

The act of mimetically disciplining a child to Donryu is not unique to his confraternity, but rather is an iteration of religious mimesis found throughout Japan. One such example, and distant from the region of the Donryu confraternity, is the act of torigo, which was practiced well into the post-war years in the northern area of Japan's main island, Honshu. Meaning "to take a child," torigo, addressed the health of the body by fictionally giving the child up to a Buddhist temple so that his body, although in absentia physically, became the center of prayers in the very center of sacred power—the temple. The torigo child was called a "child of the kami and buddhas." (Oto, 1967, pp. 141-142) This appellation is both a rhetorical riff off the maxim that until seven a child belongs to the gods,

as well as a signifier of the body's intensified sacred status as the object of devotion and intercessory prayers. Discipleship to Donryu also plays prominently in his modern legends, acting as a literal twist on the mimesis of torigo: Donryu took in children from desperately poor families, tonsured them, and made them novitiates serving the temple and Amida Buddha.

Although tonsuring young heads today is not as prominent in the Donryu confraternity as it was in the pre-war and early post-war period, the bodily disciplining of young children is still central. In one of the most active Donryu temples, Renkeiji in Saitama Prefecture, each February a procession of children—itsself a display of healthy, active bodies on the move performing well—dress in historical costume signifying discipleship to Donryu. The children take the lead in commencing the temple's celebration in welcoming the turn to spring. This celebration is marked famously, as it is throughout the country, by throwing dried beans and shouting "demons out, good fortune in," as a way of participating directly in ushering in the new energy of a new year. Children acting as disciples of Donryu and processing through the temple's grounds are embodied, active symbols of this cosmic renewal.

As they look to the future to renew Donryu faith in upcoming generations, promoters of the confraternity face challenges and possibilities. Specifically threatening for an institution so centered on children is Japan's declining birth rate, which hits at the confraternity's *raison d'être*. While directly addressing the demographic decline of children is obviously out of its hands, challenges of contemporary Japanese childhood—bullying, truancy, reclusiveness, and suicide—which contribute to hand-wringing cultural narratives of "what is wrong with Japan?" have recently joined older bodily health rituals as new concerns by which to promote the confraternity. In these current narrative iterations, Donryu is being reinterpreted as a theologian of children, or, as contemporary Donryu faith writers put it, he recognized in young children—in their very weak sense of ego and their relatively marginal social status—an innocence and openness to hear and act on the Pure Land Buddhist message of compassion. This is a message that Donryu's priestly and lay promoters stress too many Japanese, in their struggle to get by in the material world, have ignored. From the confraternity's point of view, the human cost of this falls particularly hard on children as phenomena such as bullying and suicide evidence. The confraternity is further forwarding Donryu as a counter figure role model for children. In an age with little food, nor material or medical comfort for his body to enjoy, he performed well his own life through values of mercy, love, and living for others. (Kumehara et al, 2006, p. 3) This is a new twist on the old idea of body-centric childrearing. Yes, children's bodies need to perform well though securing relative health and strength, but their hearts, too, must also perform just as well for themselves and, most importantly, for others.

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Luisa Magalhães

Luisa Magalhães obtained her PhD in 2009, and holds the position of Full Professor at the Catholic University of Portugal, Braga, lecturing graduate and undergraduate courses in Communication Sciences. Luisa conducts research about media and the effects on children and has been invited to present her research at a number of international scientific conferences. In 2011, Luisa launched a research project focusing on how children view television program content, specifically, toy advertising.

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Children as toy makers and toy users: Television relevance in Moroccan rural child play

Introduction

This paper is part of a wider research project focusing on the relevance of media inspiration within the context of child play. Media contents and structures are seen here as an important source for role-play activities. The fact that media became ubiquitous raised the question of how they can influence the thematic choices and narratives that evolve in play environments. The combination between ethnographic fieldwork and communication sciences easily arose in the abovementioned project. On the one hand, communication sciences theories aim at understanding the processes of communicating within human interaction. They consist in developing research upon conviviality principles and in finding out rules of

communication that explain fundamental issues in social interaction and in social development. On the other hand, observing play activities, under the media literacy perspective allow research to be conducted from a combined socio-cultural anthropology and communication sciences approach.

Child play has powerful functions, among others for human interaction. Yet, it often remains, for no good reasons, outside scholarly research. In trying to describe and understand children's play and toy activities, ethnographic fieldwork has proved to be an adequate method. When observation is supplemented with photographs and questioning the players the gathered information becomes more accurate. The sociocultural context in which the play activities take place being of primordial importance, it is fortuitous that this specific research is part of a broader investigation on Saharan, North African and Amazigh play and toy culture (www.sanatoypplay.org) and that in the Anti-Atlas it is done in direct collaboration with locals.

Playing, with or without toys, is an extremely important activity for children's development. It provides the opportunity to create, choose and exchange roles and situations that often reflect real life contexts (Sutton-Smith, 1986; Götz, Lemish, Aidman & Moon, 2005). In consumption societies these roles are also frequently inspired by media contents and then television viewing is of major relevance. This we call mediated play (Magalhães, 2010). It remains to be proved that television can also become a ubiquitous source for children to develop their play activity using handmade as well as industrial toys, and by choosing play characters from television series, documentaries and news items. In the analyzed example the topic for play comes from the broadcasting of and subsequent commenting on a case of smuggling that involved police investigation and eventual success ¹. Two handmade police cars are used as well as a plastic revolver and a plastic bag. One hour of pretend play resulted in the mapping of 16 play scenes, along which there were two movements of changing roles and one short break. Eight characters were involved, played by four boys aged six to ten.

¹ The interest in the topic of mediated play arose when in the beginning of February 2011 Khalija Jariaa, as research assistant of Authors, reported about the play activity of some boys in Ikenwen, a Moroccan Anti-atlas village. One of them made a toy rescue helicopter representing the rescue helicopters that saved people from the flood in the Casablanca area which started on November 30th, 2010. Remembering older examples of play activities inspired by TV programs, Rossie started to realize that probably a fundamental change in the play world of Moroccan rural children was taking place. Their play is based on TV programs about topics such as European tourists visiting Morocco (observed in November 2007), the police investigation of a gang of Moroccan hashish smugglers (observed in August 2009), the Palestine-Israeli conflict (observed in December 2009), the above mentioned flood in the Casablanca area (observed in January 2011) and the commemoration of airplane pioneers flying from Spain to Dakhla in the 1930s-1940s (observed in January 2011).

Method

The role of the 'receiver' has been taken as a major factor upon which the success of communicative processes depends. Theoretical approaches regarding the receiver's role in such processes have been reinforcing the idea that it is part of his/her responsibility to ensure the dynamics of communication itself (Jakobson, 1963: 213-214; Littlejohn, 2008: 315-345). Processes occur simultaneously between different actors, involving a set of elements that must come together in order to conduct meaning in human communicative interaction. A communicative act requires a process in which the circulation of messages is developed between sender and receiver within a certain context. It also requires a code that must be common to both as well as a channel through which the message will circulate (Jakobson, 1963: 213-214). Without any of these elements researching communication processes becomes extremely difficult.

The roles of sender and receiver are not exclusive. They are played alternatively, one becoming the other, when for example dialogues occur. However, the receiver's role must be taken as an active role. Because it is not just a question of receiving messages but it is also a question of interpreting them and of giving them a meaning. In order to do so receivers must understand the message according to their developmental level and personal skills.

Jakobson's model is here used in different sequential ways to explain the development of the process that is at stake when an adult broadcasted content inspires children's play activity. The elements in this model must be understood within a relationship that involves a permanent exchange of messages. This exchange needs three more or less formal conditions so that it can function. First, it needs to be enacted in a common code, well known to both, sender and receiver. Then, it needs to be transmitted by a physical device that may send the physical signal from one point to the other, for example from the television studios to the households. Such a transmitter is called the contact channel and its function is to ensure that the mechanical devices are working and no signal is lost underway. The third element is the context and it is related to the background or environment that is relevant for a specific process of communication. When a message is uttered by a sender, it will reach a receiver and be granted a meaning, because the receiver has the necessary background to understand it. This background or context is connected with the sociocultural environment of both sender and receiver and this is the case for interpersonal interactions, as well as for broadcasted messages.

Analysis

In the context of this study, fieldwork provided data for analyzing the following dimensions of human communicative interaction:

- The communicative process, in which characters and actions shall be dissected in order to reach the sequential organization of play scenes and their value in space-time. This will allow us to understand the dynamics of role play by identifying the elements that are involved.
- The dimension of mediated play, in which the role of receiver shall be stressed in order to approach the recently acknowledged impact of television viewing in Anti-Atlas villages of Southern Morocco. This dimension shall try to relate television viewing to the represented plot.

The following diagram illustrates Jakobson's model and will be discussed below in relation to the gendarmes and hashish's smugglers boys' play activity.

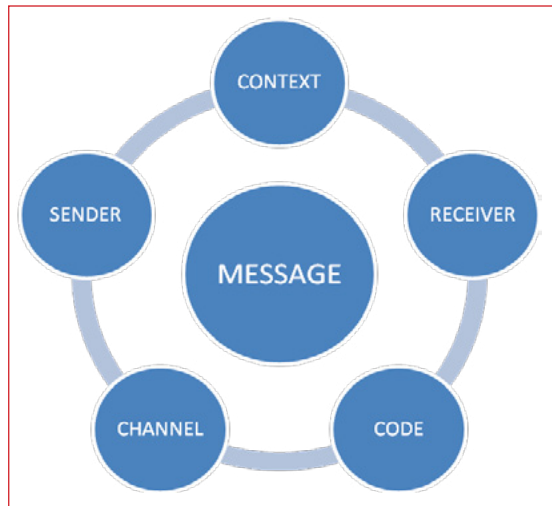


Diagram 1—Jakobson (1963: 214) adapted by the authors

This study develops some concepts of Roman Jakobson's model (Jakobson, 1963) that relate to the corresponding contents regarding the elements of source, reception, code and context. Bridging between two different schools in Communication Studies, Processual (Shannon, 1949) and Semiotics (Peirce, 1938-1958; Saussure, 1978), this has proven to be an operative model for a variety of reasons, one of these being its interest in the internal structure of the exchanged messages.

Findings

The communicative dimension

Our analysis shows the evidence of active reception, and it involves a series of representations that refer to the same event, namely the police investigation on the trafficking of hashish. This series of representations

is hereby presented as if Jakobson's model could be "re-framed" into three different sequential levels of occurrence or of events. In each level there occurs a change in the designation and in the action of each sender / receiver interaction. Therefore, in the first place, there is a macro level, in which there is a police investigation of a Moroccan hashish smuggling gang with international connections as it had previously been broadcasted by a Moroccan television channel. Second, on the medium level, this broadcasted television programme has been viewed by children and adults in the concerned Anti-Atlas villages. Third, on the micro level, a boys' playgroup has creatively worked out the broadcasted programme in a play activity. The boys' creativity clearly evidences an activity that comes out of the mirroring / copying and pasting of the TV program.

1. The macro level of the communicative process



Diagram 2 - Macro level

The diagram above shows the elements that constitute the macro level of the event. These are inserted in circles filled with one concept each that must be understood as the constitutive elements of a communication process as according to Jakobson's model. The macro level results from the television producers having access to information about this police operation dismantling an important gang of smugglers. So, reporters gather the necessary information and edit the message that is broadcasted. The used designations are detached from Roman Jakobson's theoretical model of communication (1963). So, in the centre of this diagram, the 'police investigation' is the message that the Moroccan television channel '2M International' has broadcasted. It performs the role of the sender and it uses a physical channel of the television station. This message is encoded

by means of audiovisual signs that the receiver, in this case the rural community decodes and understands. Eventhough there is no possibility for the community to give any direct 'feedback' to the sender, there are conversations about the message taking place among adults and older children. These conversations, although not directly replying to the sender, constitute a process of 'transmitting the message' to the youngsters who actually use it as an indirect source of information. Hence, instead of a formal "receiver" role, the community acts as if they were in a spiralling row of reactions to TV, by re-telling the whole story / plot over and over again.

2. The medium level of the communicative process

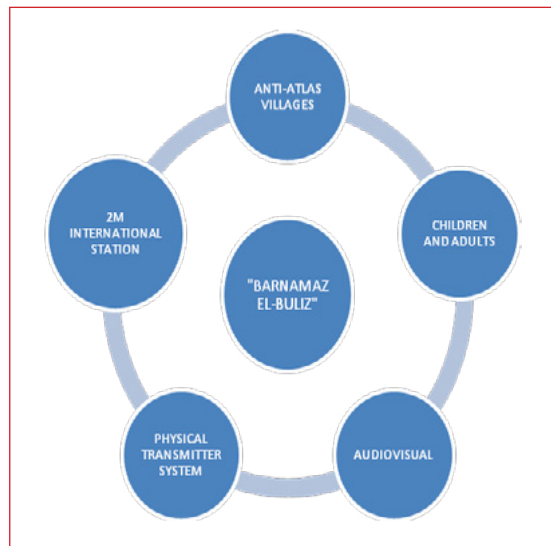


Diagram 3 - Medium level

The medium level refers to the television program Barnamaz el-Buliz that is the message received within the context of the Anti-Atlas villages. It refers to television program as a source for communication in the community, conversation children overhear and possibly integrate in their play. In this context children and adults receive and interpret the audiovisual coded message edited by journalists through the physical transmitter system of the 2M International television station. This is the level at which little information can be provided, less than inferred. The access to the program recording was impossible to get from 2M International so far. However, it is also the more commonly known level of broadcasting when considering westernized TV programs and schedules, so the authors limited their text to the acknowledgement of the series as an intermediate level of communication.

3. The micro level of the communicative process



Diagram 4 - Micro level

The micro level refers to the message enacted in the play activity “Gendarmes and hashish smugglers” taking place in a context of a specific open air playground. The players are the senders as well as the receivers. Their interaction takes place through non-verbal and verbal behaviour encoded by toys, gestures and dialogues that are channelled through different modalities. Therefore, this is the level where it is possible to observe the degree of inspiration for the play activity, that can also be seen as a evidence for TV influence in play among non-westernized patterns and children.

Every abovementioned player is now an active receiver and this is the level in which the three groups of receivers are processors of the initial information. Also, reception becomes transformation through the play action. The journalist and program editors are maybe the first to provide their interpretation of the event and adults and the children in the village are the receivers. All these receivers are directly influencing the players’ reasoning and their interpretation of this event. However children are the ultimate receivers of the broadcasted message, a message that can be commented upon by the adults of the community in which the children grow up. The boys, as players are the more creative receivers because they manage to reformulate both the television producers’ view and the adults’ and older children’s view in order to create their own interpretation of the event under the form of play.

Conclusion

The limits to this paper have led the authors to elect a specific example to work about and to illustrate the communicative dimensions of play. This example is acknowledged to be inspired by media contents, especially by television contents, as explained in the introduction. There are, nevertheless, other dimensions that can be explored, either considering this example of boys at play or considering other examples, regarding girls at play. In this second hypothesis, gender can be a relevant issue that is yet to be studied. Some other examples are to be considered, regarding the types of toys that are used and also the distinct plot / narratives that may be exposed in further work.

Moreover, there is a specific dimension that in spite of having already been approached in previous research (Magalhães, 2009), still needs to be engaged in the present study. Since this is a shared interest, the authors of this paper shall move on to approach the semiotic concept of sign in its triple dimension (Magalhães, 1998) of representamen, object and interpretant that are termed here, for the sake of clarity, as 1) meanings (Rossie, 2005), 2) indexical objects in play and 3) metaphors and values. The dimension of representation in which the functions of play shall be identified will stress the values that children express along this activity.

Children play roles that imitate the adult world, therefore placing themselves "elsewhere", in a pretend play environment that uses the adult premises and enables them to create different uses for the same object. This is what pretend play is all about: mimicry, as Roger Caillois has stated it in the late 60's. When the role played addresses the representation of different characters, like doctors, soldiers, mothers, monsters, fairies, cops and thieves, the child player embodies another 'self' that belongs to a totally different universe separated from daily life.

Such universe includes the possibility of telling different stories, of using different masks and of playing different actions. It is, as such, a narrative plot that is at stake and needs to be documented. Moreover it remains necessary to carry on with the existing research about the impact of television broadcasting in child play.

Since long it became impossible to escape television and it proved quite unlikely that children, as well as adults, would ever wished to do so. Television is nowadays an important element in the lives and culture of people around the world and it provides enjoyment and delight as well as information and it fosters education and social interaction.

As a first conclusion regarding the present paper, we establish the connection between the narrative dimension of the television programs and their possibility of involving the players in non-westernized environments as a somewhat important point of research. The second conclusion will address the communication model that was selected as a model that allows for the integration of the play schemes within a larger social scheme that implies

the players themselves as well as the communities and the broadcasted schedules that are at stake in each case. The third conclusion constitutes a challenge and regards the widening of this research. In fact, several gendered research has been conducted in western countries proving that toys and play artifacts can be used according to several guidelines, most of which are said to be inspired by the television contents. The fact that there are already some other recordings of other play scenes lead by female players leaves the authors the chance to continue this work, providing future research under similar interrogative perspectives. The proposal will address 1) the inclusion of the semiotic perspective and 2) the inclusion of some other episodes of boys and girls play that are now and have already been recorded in the same area of the Anti-Atlas mountain. It will also include a more thorough development of the narrative structures that are little mentioned along this paper but definitely need to be addressed within a larger scope.

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Full report and images at:

<http://www.sanatoypplay.org/articles/2011kenwengendarmeshashishsmugglers.pdf>



Niamh O'Brien

Niamh O'Brien is a research fellow at Anglia Ruskin University and has worked in research since 2004. Since then she has worked on many projects seeking the views of children and young people including a national project exploring the impacts cyber-bullying has on young people's mental health. This project was commissioned by a group of young people and used both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. Findings were presented via a conference organised and run by the young people themselves.

More recently Niamh was part of a project team investigating 'Value for Money' for a volunteer service. She is currently leading a project evaluating the impact as well as the 'Value for Money' element of a family support project.

Niamh is currently carrying out doctoral research investigating bullying in a private day and boarding school using a Participatory Action Research (PAR) framework. She is doing this research alongside students of the school who have received training on all aspects of the research process including ethical issues, confidentiality and empathy. The young students and Niamh form the Research Team. She worked with these students for 36 months and an excellent working relationship was developed.

"I didn't want to be known as a snitch": Using PAR to explore bullying in a private day and boarding school

Abstract

Bullying research in secondary schools is plentiful in the literature but in the context of private day and boarding schools research is limited. This study used a Participatory Action Research (PAR) framework embedded in the philosophy of social constructionism to add to the knowledge in this field.

PAR is quite distinct from traditional research because it includes participants collaboratively in the research process. To this end a group of students in a private day and boarding school were recruited and trained in research methods. We worked together to answer the main research question: *What do young people in this private day and boarding school*

view as the core issue of bullying in the school and how do they want to address this?

This study followed three distinct cycles of PAR through inquiry, action and reflection. Cycle one investigated the bullying definition used by the school in terms of how it is understood from the viewpoint of students, teachers, and parents. Cycle two investigated the concept of the 'snitch' and how safe students feel to report school bullying. Cycle three focussed on dissemination. Through these cycles, a school anti-bullying policy was devised and improvements to how the school deals with bullying implemented.

Key words: bullying, participatory action research, young people, private day and boarding school

Introduction

Research has shown that constant bullying can undermine the health and wellbeing of vulnerable young people (Smith, 1999; Morrison, 2002; Juvonen et al. 2003). Bullying is not a new phenomenon, as can be evidenced from classic literature and modern film (Carter and Spencer, 2006). More recently, bullying has been regarded as an important policy issue (Tarapdar and Kellett, 2011), apparent through anti-bullying initiatives, such as the Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA), the Beatbullying charity and the Kidscape charity (DfE, 2012).

The aim of this paper is to present the process of 3 distinct cycles of Participatory Action Research (PAR) used with a group of students in a private day and boarding school. This PAR approach enabled us to explore the bullying issues in the school and make recommendations for change resulting in a student-led anti-bullying strategy for the school. It illustrates how young people can get involved as co-researchers when exploring issues of importance to them. I begin this paper by exploring bullying definitions and discussing the literature in the context of private day and boarding schools before presenting the PAR process and conclusions.

Literature Review

Academic research into school bullying has developed rapidly since the 1970s with the work of Dan Olweus in Sweden marking the origins (James, 2010; Cuadrado-Gordillo, 2012). Despite this interest there is still no consensus regarding an agreed definition of bullying with debate continuing over where acceptable 'playground behaviour' ends and bullying begins (Carter and Spencer, 2006; Cowie and Jennifer, 2008). In the UK no robust national statistics exist for reported cases of bullying in schools and this, to a large extent, relates to the absence of an agreed definition of bullying (OFSTED, 2003; Cowie and Jennifer, 2008).

Defining bullying

Prevalent writers in the field of bullying research agree that in order for a bullying episode to have occurred the following characteristics need to be observed: aggressive behaviour, power imbalance and repetition (Olweus, 1995; Smith and Morita, 1999; Rigby, 2000).

Carlisle and Rofes (2007) suggest that many researchers regard bullying as a cluster of different behaviours under the theme 'aggression' with 'verbal aggression', 'physical aggression' and 'relational aggression' as subthemes. Writers such as Menesini et al. (2002), Oliver and Candappa, (2003), Naylor et al. (2006), and others concur with Carlisle and Rofes (2007). Despite these concurrences, discrepancies have been noted between the behaviours that young people and adults associate with bullying (O'Brien, 2009). Craig et al. (2000), Menesini et al. (2002) and Sawyer et al. (2011) found that adults tend to react more to cases of physical aggression than to verbal and psychological aggression. Indeed findings from Sawyer et al. (2011) suggest that most parents regard physical bullying as the most serious form of bullying and some parents do not believe their child has been bullied unless a physical attack has occurred. Studies involving young people indicate that verbal abuse can be as serious as physical bullying (Lines, 1999; Oliver and Candappa, 2003; Naylor et al. 2006; Thompson and Gunter, 2008). Lines (1999) proposes that the significance is not in the meaning of the words, but rather the hurt the insult causes.

It has been argued that an imbalance of power is what separates 'bullying' from 'aggression' (Vreeman and Carol, 2007). Findings from Cheng et al. (2011) suggest both adults and young people perceive bullying as involving a power imbalance in terms of physical power and having "powerful parents, being class activity leaders, or using the teacher's authority, to bully the positional inferior" (p.232). Other studies have highlighted pupils' fear of attending school (Morrison, 2002; Juvonen et al. 2003; Ofsted, 2003; NCB, 2004; House of Commons, 2007) and Sullivan et al. (2004) propose that the reason victims of bullying do not report it is due to the power relationship between the bully and the bullied. In contrast, a Spanish study by Cuadrado-Gordillo (2012), found that 70% of participants did not perceive the bully as more powerful physically, psychologically or socially. In a study examining the impact of cyber-bullying on young people's mental health, O'Brien and Moules (2013) found that 87 young people (19.7%) reported that they had experienced cyberbullying and from that number 35 (41.5%) did not worry about it, indicating that they possibly did not perceive a power differential. Or maybe it was because when the bullying is online, some young people perceive the bully as less threatening because they are not face-to-face with the perpetrator.

Recent studies propound that repetition is not considered as a bullying variable by young people (Naylor et al. 2006; Cheng, 2011; Cuadrado-Gordillo, 2012). Adults, on the other hand view repetition as

a characteristic of bullying (Naylor et al. 2006; Cheng, 2011). OFSTED researchers (2003) advise that there is often a difference in how bullying is conducted; it can be one-off or continual, but either way can be damaging. Lee (2006) debates whether or not repetition is a determinant of bullying and the impact this has on policies. He questions whether interjection should happen at the first intended act or once the act is continuously repeated and evidence gathered (Lee, 2006).

None of the research reviewed above considered bullying in private day and/or boarding schools so the study I am presenting set out to help close that gap through actively involving school students in the research process and speaking to current students of the school to ascertain their viewpoint on bullying issues.

Bullying in private day and boarding schools

Bullying research in secondary schools is plentiful in the literature (for example Oliver and Candappa, 2003; Thompson and Gunter, 2007; Thompson and Smith, 2012), but in the context of private day and boarding schools research is limited (Neddham, 2004; Schaverien, 2004; Poynting and Donaldson, 2005). For the most part these studies have focussed on adults who were prior students at boarding school, so it could be argued that the experiences they encountered may have shifted overtime. Only one study by Morgan (2004), who collected data from maintained and independent boarding schools in England through questionnaires, focusses on current students. Morgan (2004 p.14) suggests concerns exist about how bullying in boarding school is different to bullying in day school because it's "...not as easy to escape from, as pupils are constantly enclosed in the school's environment." Indeed there is a need to speak to current students in private day and boarding schools to ascertain the bullying problems pertinent to now. Furthermore the few studies that have been carried out focus on the bullying experiences of boarding school boys but no reference is made to girls.

The methodology

The study I am presenting here used a PAR framework rooted in the philosophy of social constructionism to explore bullying in a private day and boarding school. Social constructionism recognises that knowledge is formed through human relationships rather than individuals on their own (Burr, 1995; Gergen and Gergen, 2008). Social constructionism is historically and culturally located and a similar study carried out in a different location could produce different findings (King and Horrocks, 2010).

PAR is carried out through a series of cycles involving planning, acting, observing and reflecting resulting in a revised plan of action (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988). One of the main functions of PAR is the generation of knowledge through academic and local knowledge in order to

provide oppressed people with the tools they need to make changes in their lives (Veale, 2005). Gergen and Gergen (2008) suggest that PAR expands on the ideas of social constructionism in three ways:

1. Researchers work collaboratively with research participants.
2. There is no separation of 'professional researcher' and the communities under study.
3. Sharing of knowledge is actively encouraged between the 'professional' researcher and the 'co-researchers'.

In keeping with this ethos, 3 cycles of PAR took place throughout the project by the research team comprised of me as the adult researcher and students in the school as co-researchers. Cycle 1 explored the bullying definition used by the school and examined how satisfied or otherwise students, staff and parents were with how bullying is dealt with by the school. Cycle 2 explored the concept of 'the snitch' (or reporting bullying) as identified as an issue by the students themselves. Finally cycle 3 focussed on dissemination of the findings and implementation of the recommendations made. Underpinning this framework was the following research question: What do young people in this private day and boarding school view as the core issue of bullying in the school and how do they want to address this? Ethical approval was sought from the university research ethics committee at each data collection stage.

The Research Design—3 cycles of PAR

Cycle 1

Six self-selecting students (3 boys and 3 girls) from year 8 to year 10 were recruited to the project as co-researchers. They called themselves Research for you (R4U) and had the slogan "Researching for life without fear".

Jones (2004) asserts that the child who is a researcher is engaged in real work and conditions of this work should be considered. It is consequently the responsibility of the adult researcher to ensure that the young people have the skills necessary to undertake the required work and are not exploited in any way so appropriate training for them is crucial (Jones, 2004; McLaughlin, 2006). To that end a training programme was delivered throughout the life of this project on a cyclical basis. Topics included data collection methods and tools, ethics, dissemination, report writing and others as the need arose. We used the research data generated at meetings, in training and in data collection activities to inform each stage of the process. This mirrored the planning, acting, observing and reflecting elements of PAR.

Questionnaires and a focus group were used to gather data for this first cycle which investigated how bullying is defined in the school. The bullying definition explored in this study is printed in the homeschool diaries of all students attending the school; this was used as a starting point:

“Bullying is when a student is repeatedly, and over a period of time, targeted by one or more students. Bullies intend to frighten, hurt, or threaten their victims. Bullying can take many forms, such as:

- *Teasing or name calling*
- *Malicious gossip*
- *Racial or sexual harassment*
- *Isolating a student from a friendship group*
- *Damaging or stealing property*
- *Hitting, punching and other physical abuse*

Bullies can use a range of methods and these include face-to-face, mobile phones, email, instant messaging or Internet message boards.”
(Case study school, 2010).

Darbyshire et al. (2005) argue that researching children’s experiences using multiple methods is valuable as it does not duplicate or replace already found data but offers further insights and understandings that might not always be possible through the use of a single data collection method. Pilot studies were carried out in cycles 1 and 2 prior to launching the methods and we used role play to rehearse interview questions.

In cycle 1 separate online questionnaires aimed at students, staff and parents were used. We encountered difficulties encouraging completion and the resulting numbers were 93 responses from students, 2 from staff and 2 from parents/carers. A focus group was carried out with students to explore further the responses provided on the student questionnaire and to provide students with the opportunity to speak to us as a research team about their own views and opinions on this topic.

A broad thematic analysis took place which enabled the team to work together and ‘pull out’ the core issues raised by the research participants. It also allowed us to determine the focus of the study for cycle two. Kidd and Kral (2005) consider this to be the ‘action’ in PAR projects, where the focus is more on how the inquiry and process will inform the action, rather than focussing specifically on research questions. In this respect the questions are not leading the study but the area of inquiry and the process is explored in order to ascertain whether the inquiry will inform action (Kidd and Kral, 2005). Therefore the project can begin with a number of research questions and as the project evolves these questions become less central being replaced by newer ones (Kidd and Kral, 2005). Exploring these questions is considered to be the research component of PAR (Kidd and Kral, 2005). Through using this approach, cycle 1 was exploratory in order to determine what it was that the young researchers wanted to investigate.

Cycle 2

The data from cycle 1 showed that, for the most part, students agreed with the bullying definition set by the school and were satisfied with how

incidents of bullying are dealt with. However students exposed their fears about the consequences associated with reporting bullying or 'snitching':

"I lost friends because of it" (year 10 girl, boarder)

"Teachers acted without telling us what they were going to do, ended up being excluded more" (year 13 girl, day student).

"I didn't want to be known as a snitch" (year 8 boy, day student)

In addition, students were unclear about what 'serious' and 'not serious' bullying signifies for them:

"Because it wasn't really serious one and if someone reports it then this person becomes the new for bullying" (year 11 girl, boarder)

"wasn't severe enough" (year 10 boy, day student)

"because it was not a big deal ..." (year 10 boy, boarder).

These emerging findings were explored further in cycle 2.

Like cycle 1, questions for cycle 2 were decided by the team together. We opted for a paper questionnaire for the students and staff members to complete and we sent emails directly to parents from the school mail base. We received 61 responses from students, 10 from staff and 177 from parents.

In order to explore the questionnaire data further with students, R4U opted for a 'gonzo approach'. This is an ethnographic approach which encourages a merge of participation and observation (Tedlock, 2007), the idea being to "tell it like it is" (Tedlock, 2007: 120). The approach used was one where R4U organised some focus groups and interviews and invited their peers to join. Nobody elected to attend a focus group but we had 9 student volunteers for interview. Students were given the choice to be interviewed by me as the adult researcher or by an R4U member. Although it has been argued that some young people will want to speak to their peers rather than adults in an interview situation, this is not always the case so the option of an adult researcher should be made available (McLaughlin, 2006).

Once cycle 1 and 2 data had been analysed, a pattern began to emerge from the data. It was clear what the student body, parents/carers and school staff viewed as the bullying problems in the school. Students identified repetition, name calling and physical assault as characteristics of 'serious bullying' whereas parents and staff members regarded all bullying as serious but suggested that it is more about perspective:

"Some students would consider even the most light-hearted teasing as bullying whereas others can be on the receiving end of a torrent of abuse and not be phased by it. The seriousness of a bullying incident depends entirely on the viewpoint of the victim and bully" (Teacher).

Students and parents revealed that they were unclear about what to do when a bullying situation arose and suggested that this information be

more readily available in the school. Students suggested that bullying happens at their school due to financial issues where students on scholarships are particularly vulnerable. Some students saw the bully as 'having nothing better to do' and some considered bullying being about popularity and fitting in. Finally, students considered 'difference' with regard to accent and tone for example, while others thought bullying happens to students who are considered 'weaker' than others.

Cycle 3

The research team devised a strategy based on the emerging data. This strategy was presented to the vice principal, who agreed to take this forward with regards to the action we had suggested. I returned to the school a year later and much of the action had taken place:

1. Year 7 induction:

We proposed involvement of the senior prefect team (sixth form) in the induction of the year 7 students which has been implemented by the school. This enables younger students to recognise older students in school and if the need arises approach them with concerns rather than relying solely on adult support.

2. 'Blossom'¹ rep for each year group

'Blossom' is the school student support group and representation is from the sixth form and pastoral care staff. We recommended that all year groups should have a representative on Blossom. This was rejected by the school due to the belief that younger students should not be exposed to potential child protection concerns and other sensitive issues. Blossom representation now includes students from years 10 to 13 with some visiting years 7 to 9 tutor groups so younger students can voice concerns and raise issues. Previously younger students needed to make contact with Blossom which was reported as a deterrent by some students in this study.

3. Encourage students to use email to report bullying incidents

Students, parents/carers and teachers recommended that the option to report bullying anonymously and confidentially should be provided in school. To that end the home page on all school computers display the Blossom email address and a 'post box' is displayed in the reception area where students can report concerns anonymously.

R4U made various presentations to the school highlighting the work we had done and promoting the services now available to students should they require help and/or advice on bullying issues.

¹ Name of student support group has been changed

Conclusion

This paper has focussed on how a group of students at a private day and boarding school worked with an adult researcher to attempt to fill a gap in knowledge. This knowledge gap was both local, with regards to investigating the bullying issues within their school, but also to add to the limited academic debate regarding bullying in private day and boarding schools. More importantly this paper has focussed on the process followed in order to ensure these students had the opportunities to participate in research into an area of importance to them. In a report to the school R4U stated: "We hope that researchers in the future will take Niamh's example and provide students with their own opportunity to carry out their own research". This highlights the importance of involving young people in research that is of particular interest to them; it provides them with a sense of ownership over the process and as a result they feel particularly compelled to ensure the recommendations are implemented in the school. In this respect the work of the project continues although the research has ended.

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Children and childhood: A study among the Meendharas (prawn seed collectors) of Sunderbans, West Bengal, India

Introduction

Biologically, childhood is considered as the time from birth till one attains puberty. However, the term is non-specific and can imply a varying range of years in human development. One of the important aspects of human evolution is the prolonged period of dependence of a child upon the adult. This is the time of learning. Human beings are capable of handing down knowledge from one generation to the other. In the early stages of human evolution, a child learned the simplest form of art of living. With the vast knowledge accumulated during the past two million years of human history, the concept of childhood has taken a new dimension.

The world started recognizing the importance of childhood from 1919 onwards with the formation of 'Save the Children International Union' by Eglantyne Jebb of England (Mulley, 2009). In the year 1989, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the convention on the rights of the children. Further to it, a new international convention, A World Fit for Children, was taken up in 2002.

In India, the definition of child is not very clear. There are varying specifications for defining the age limit for childhood. Following are the constitutional recommendations for childhood and child labour in India. It is mandatory for the State to provide early childhood care, free and compulsory education to all children between the ages of six to fourteen. The parents are to provide them with opportunities for education. The Labour Act defines the child as a person who has not completed fifteen years of age. A similar statement is found in the Factories Act. It may be said that these two Acts more or less consider fourteen years as the limit for childhood in India. Similarly, Census of India considers a person as child if it is within the age limit of fourteen. Anomalies exist in defining the age limit for children in various other laws and enactments. Recently twelve years is considered as the age limit for a person for taking responsibility for criminal activities (Section 83 IPC). In 2013, the Parliament in India has passed a regulation that a girl must be of at least sixteen years of age in order to give consent for sex, unless she is married. The prescribed age of marriage is fifteen. The above discussion points to the difficult situation with respect to defining a child on the basis of age limit.

In the present paper, the authors made an attempt to point out a unique situation where neither the universal definition nor the Indian legal and constitutional Acts are valid in the background of a very specific environmental zone, the mangrove forest region of coastal Bengal, the Gangetic delta in Eastern India. In this connection, it may be mentioned that The International Labour Organization (ILO) and Organization Spreading Smile through Education (OSSE) suggest that poverty is the greatest single force driving children into the workplace. Income from a child's work appears to be crucial for its own survival or for that of the household (www.savethechildren.in/Child_Labour). For some families, income from their children's labour is between 25 to 40% of the household income. Present research highlights the issue.

Situation in the mangrove forest region of Gangeticdelta

The area of field work is in 'Patharpratima' block in the Sunderbans delta, situated between 21°51'N latitude and 88°2'E longitude in the district of 24 Parganas (South), West Bengal (Map-1). The area is criss-crossed by an intricate network of canals, creeks, and covered with thick mangrove foliage. The region has a very unique ecosystem in terms of estuarine biology. The soil is saline. Agricultural fields are on reclaimed lands. Earthen dykes are built to protect the agricultural lands from submersion. Fresh water on land is obtained from stored rainwater. Royal Bengal tigers roam in the forest and crocodiles lurk in the water (Mandal and Ghosh, 1989).

Inhabitants of the area depend on nature for their livelihood.

Fishing in the river and honey collection in the forest are the main sources of livelihood. Brackish water in the mangrove forest area is the breeding ground for tiger prawns (*Penaeusmonodon*). Tiger prawns come to spawn in the creeks and estuaries along the delta. Prawn seeds are naturally available in the Sunderbans (Bhaumick, 1993; Chakraborty, Subramanyan and Pakrasi, 1977). Since the beginning of foreign trade in prawns, farming of them started in India. Fishery owners engage local people for collection of tiger prawn seeds. They are paid in cash. Tiger prawn seeds are locally called meen. The catchers are known as meendharas. In Bengali, dhara means catcher. Three villages namely, Uttar Gopalnagar, Kamdevnagar and Harekrishnapur have been selected for the study. Two of the villages are situated on the river banks, whereas the village Harekrishnapur is situated at the confluence of river Saptamukhi and Bay of Bengal. Standard anthropological methodology, such as literature survey, interview, direct observation and case study has been followed for the study. For information on health and nutritional status, visits have been made to health centres, pharmacies and individual homes (Ray, Chakraborty and Bhattacharya, 2002).

Process of tiger prawn seed catching

Prawn seed catching is taken up mainly by landless people. They live in shacks on the river banks. Ebb tide is the best time for catching prawn seeds. With the onset of the low tide they get into the water with their nets. It may be any time of the day or night.

Women and children spend hours in the water, fishing for prawn seeds with hand or drag nets. They usually cover about half a kilometre to one kilometre in every attempt. Children play an important role in identification and segregation of tiger prawn seeds (meen) from the haul of mixed aquatic fauna in the catch. Usually children from the age of 5 are employed for this work. They are not paid but help as assistants to their mothers, sisters or other relations. They follow the catchers (meendharas) along the river bank, often in thick deposit of mud.

The collection in the net consisting of muddy river water, many zooplanktons and phytoplankton, is poured in an aluminium vessel. With the help of a bivalve shell, the tiger prawn seeds are segregated from other catch and kept in a white enamel dish. The tiny black coloured seed is visible against the white mother of pearl background of the bivalve shell and the enamel dish. The task of segregating the minute prawn seed from the murky water needs powerful eye sight. Therefore, children waiting on the river bank are called in. After segregation, the prawn seeds are preserved in pitchers containing river water and carried and sold to the local prawn farmers for a paltry sum, mostly through a middle man. After aquaculture, the full grown tiger prawns are exported to foreign markets for very high price. Several tiers of middle men are involved in procuring the seeds from the meendharas to the exporters of fully grown prawns. Meendharas are the lowest paid and are lying at the base of these tiers (Bhattacharya and Ray, 2005).

As there is uncertainty in fishing, the amount of catch varies from time to time and season to season. The price of meen is calculated per 1000 seeds. The price varies seasonally (Table-2). It is highest during the winter season. In spite of the supply being very low, the meendharas earn a maximum of Rs. 250 (approximately US \$ 4) a day. During the summer and the rainy seasons the price of meen decreases to a very low level. Although the influx of tiger prawn is much more during rainy season, the number of collectors is more and risk involved is much higher. This results in less catch for each meendhara. Meen catching is a hazardous job. Sunderbans is the abode of the Royal Bengal tiger. They are a menace on land as well as water, since they are good swimmers. The backwaters are full of crocodiles and riverine sharks. Constant immersion in the brackish water for long periods of time results in skin diseases (Bhattacharya and Ray, 2005).

People under study

The population in the selected villages was 5118 out of which total number

of meendhara families was 194, amounting to 1010 people, 535 males and 475 females (Table-1). It may be seen from the table that there are as many as 369 (36.53%) persons, belonging to the age group of 0-15. Graph-1 is an overall reflection of literacy among the meendharas. It appears that out of children between age group of 5 to 15, 78 boys (7.72%) and 56 girls (5.54%) have attended primary school. There is a definite gender difference in terms of attending school. Case studies have shown that though some of the girls had been sent to school at the age of 5 but had to leave school eventually to assist in meen segregation to help the family income.

Graph-2 shows the age-wise distribution of population, whose main occupation is meen catching. From this table it may be seen that meen catching practically begins from the tender age of 6. However, the bulk of the meen catchers belong to the age group of 11 to 45. In this profession females outnumber the males.

As far as the children are concerned, there is a division of work among the meendharachildren. They are either directly involved in dragging the net or are there to help segregating the prawn seeds. Graph-3 shows the percentage wise distribution of children who are directly involved in meencatching. Children, both male and female from the age of 5 are associated with this job from beginning to the end. Both boys and girls within the age group of 5-14 years accompany their parents to the river bank, from dawn to midnight whenever necessary.

Further division is made of the children meendharas as those assisting in prawn seed catching and those who are actually dragging the nets standing in the water (Graph-4). There is a clear age-wise distinction between assisting and catching. Children, both male and female who are fourteen years of age or above haul the nets in the water.

Those children assistants not only identify the prawn seeds, but sometimes drag nets with their parents from the embankments, which needs much physical labour. When they are not dragging nets, they take care of the catch, utensils and other fishing gears on the river bank.

Prawn seed catching as an occupation has given rise to interesting social phenomena. Bride preference for a meendhara is from another meendhara family. Each meendhara family works as an economic group. It is also a basic production unit. Everyone, whether male or female, child, adolescent or adult works for the family as a whole. The socio-economic condition of the tiger prawn seed collectors thus reflects the picture of hardship, social instability, social insecurity and a sense of frustration which makes their life quite difficult, particularly at times of natural disaster, such as thunder storm, tidal wave and riverine hazards which have become a part of their daily life.

As far as health and nutritional status goes it is found that a diet consisting of rice, vegetable, fish, oil and fat is more or less common in all the families. Intake of rice and vegetables are more than fat and animal

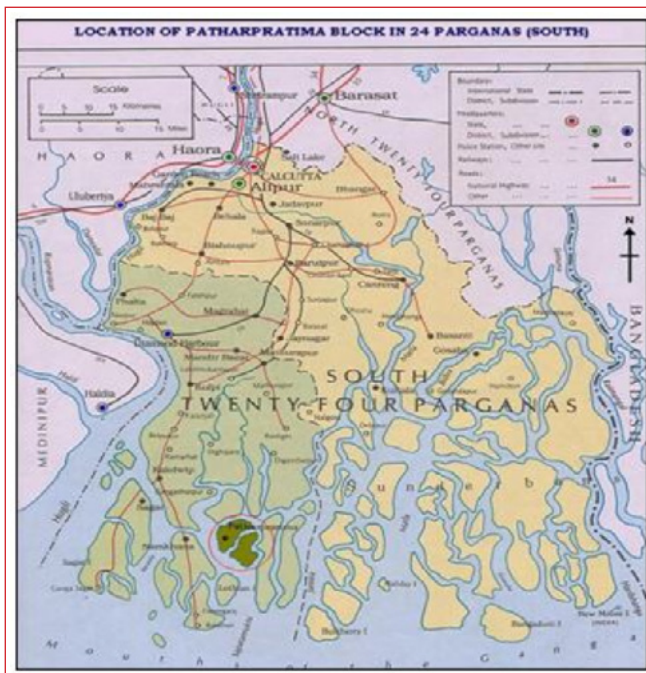
protein. Children get far less average K. Cal than the standard requirement. Gender bias against the girl child is present in food distribution. It is a dismal situation as far as meendharas are concerned.

Childhood for Meendhara children

The above findings show how meendhara children are negatively affected because of the environment in which they live and the abject poverty they face for the lack of other opportunities than fishing. The adverse effect on childhood may be summarised as follows:

1. Children associated with tiger prawn seed catching are not getting enough nutrition or rest for their physical and mental development.
2. Neither are they getting formal education for taking up any other livelihood. They drop-out of school to be engaged with the profession round the clock.
3. Dragging nets are exerting too much physical labour beyond their capability.
4. During dragging of net they are often attacked by crocodiles and small river sharks which either kill them or make them physically impaired for the rest of their life.
5. In most of the cases the nets are dragged on when the intensity of daylight is less i.e., dusk, dawn or midnight. This causes severe pressure on their eyesight and often damages their vision severely and permanently.

In conclusion, once again it may be stated that in adverse circumstances universal law becomes helpless and children suffer the most.



Map 1

Table 1—Age and sex wise distribution of population of meendhara families in the villages Kamdevnagar, Uttar Gopalnagar & Harekrishnapur

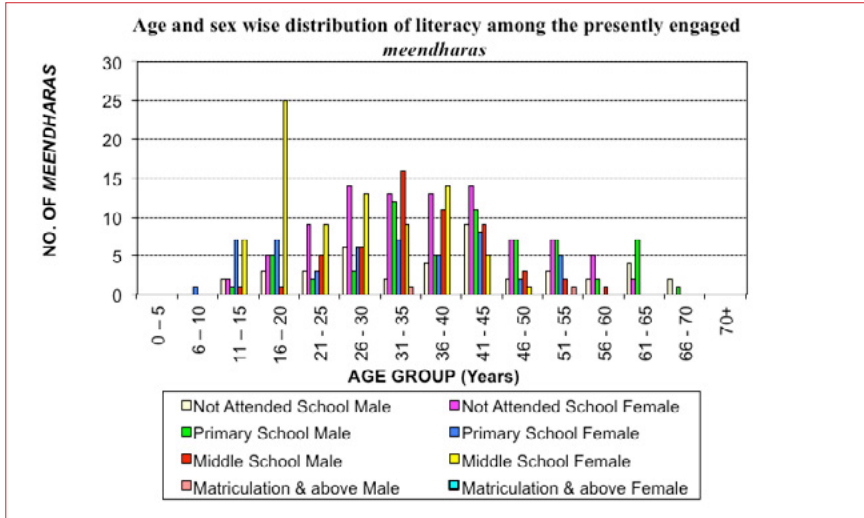
Age Group (Years)	Male		Female		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
0 – 5	58	5.74	46	4.55	104	10.3
6 – 10	69	6.83	54	5.35	123	12.2
11 – 15	69	6.83	73	7.23	142	14.1
16 – 20	48	4.75	60	5.94	108	10.7
21 – 25	47	4.65	47	4.65	94	9.3
26 – 30	38	3.76	41	4.06	79	7.8
31 – 35	46	4.55	47	4.65	93	9.2
36 – 40	31	3.07	34	3.37	65	6.4
41 – 45	39	3.86	23	2.28	62	6.1
46 – 50	22	2.18	12	1.19	34	3.4
51 – 55	23	2.28	18	1.78	41	4.1
56 – 60	09	0.89	09	0.89	18	1.8
61 – 65	15	1.49	06	0.59	21	2.1
66 – 70	16	1.58	03	0.30	19	1.9
70+	05	0.50	02	0.20	07	0.7
TOTAL	535	52.97	475	47.03	1010	100

Table 2—Variation in the price of meen in Indian Rupees (US \$1 @ Rs. 60)

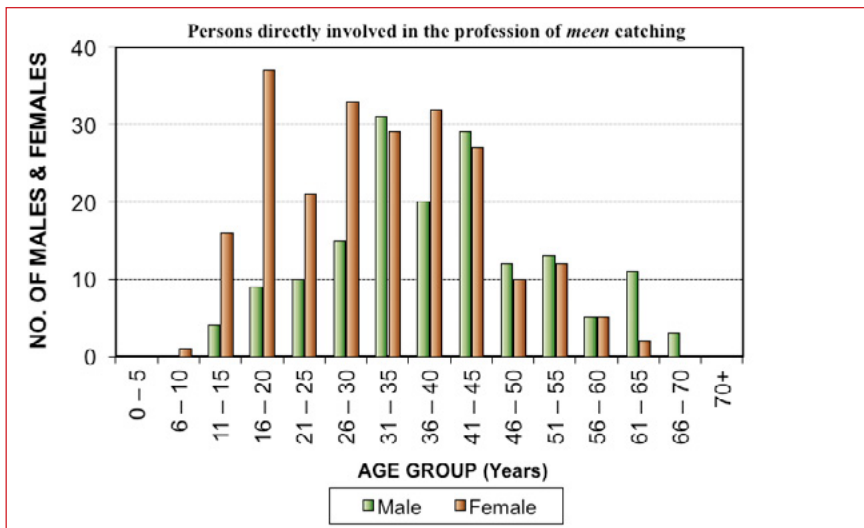
Seasons	Minimum price per thousand meen	Maximum price per thousand meen
Summer	Rs. 20	Rs. 100
Rainy	Rs. 20	Rs. 80
Winter	Rs. 100	Rs. 1000

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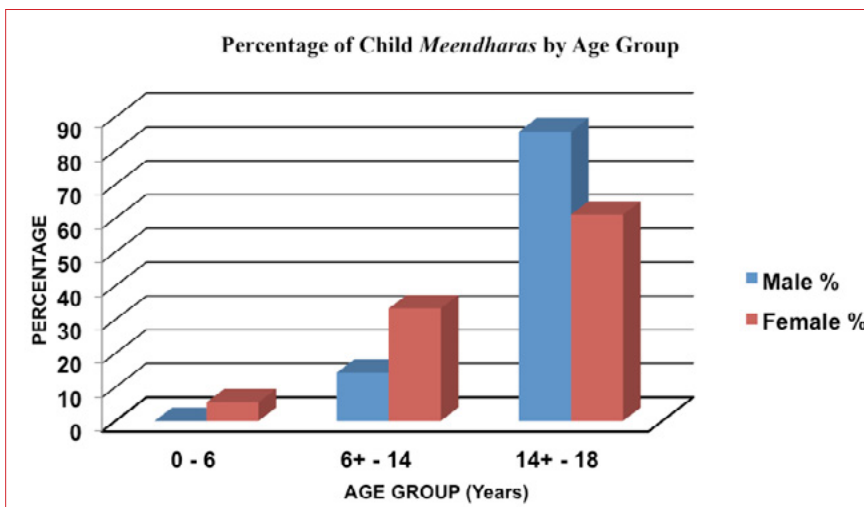
Graph 1



Graph 2

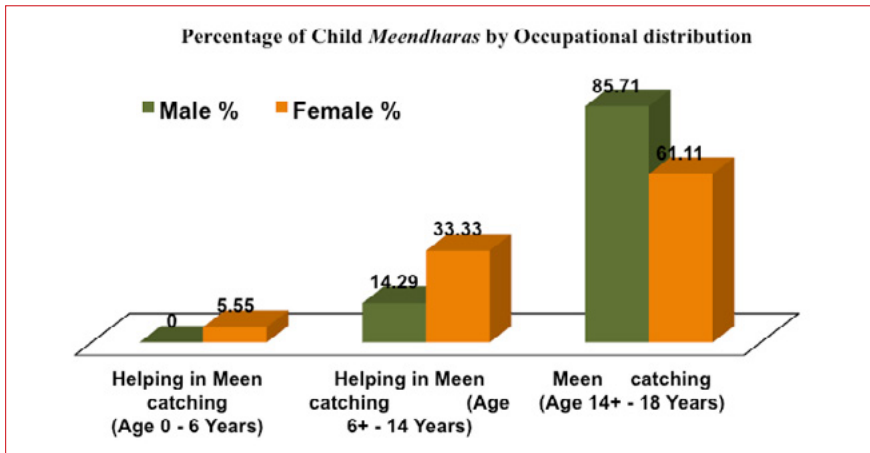


Graph 3



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Graph 4



Women and children dragging nets



Process of segregation of prawn seeds



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Mother and sons selling tiger prawn seeds to the middle man



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Alice Stringer

I am in my third and final year as an English student and wrote 'Eve' last year as part of the Short Story module. We had very few guidelines, the main one being that the story had to be between 2,500 and 3,000 words which mine only just falls into! We could choose any topic that we felt we could approach which ensured that each individual story was completely unique and original. The main story line of 'Eve' comes from personal family experience; however, the content and the characters in the story are fictional. I knew that I wanted to write a story about the difficulties of cancer but I was very aware that the topic needed to be approached with both care and caution.

I am interested in pursuing fictional writing as a career after completion of my English degree in the summer.

Eve

I can hear her breathing. Not the slow, deep breathing of sleep, but the shallow interrupted breathing of restlessness. I can hear her heart vibrating the bed springs, rattling up through my pillow. I can feel the slight static that is pulling up the hairs on her arms; I know that she is awake. And yet I do not move to comfort her. I do not part my lips to speak.

At six weeks, the embryo is officially a foetus. In Uganda, if a pregnant woman saw a lunar eclipse; they believe the baby will have a harelip. I can feel his heat radiating into my bubble of ice; I want to be cold. I like how he pretends to sleep for me; I could not bear him being obviously awake. I want him here, but I need to be separate. I want to feel anger boil up inside me, I want to feel hate shooting from my eyes, I want to feel hurt tearing at my insides. But then I would have to wake up.

I can see her body sitting across the table from me, but I can not focus on the features that shape her face. I used to see her hazel eyes when I looked at her, but now all there seems to be is darkness. She lives as a shadow. When I look at her, I can see the group of cells bursting through her silhouette, pulsing as they grow, moulding her. And us. And I would not let this happen. But she would not stop it.

"Is there anything on that you want to watch?"

"Is there anything on?"

At week eight, the foetus is looking more human. The eyes are forming under the skin on its face, and the limbs are looking more like little arms and legs. Turkish women are discouraged from looking at monkeys for fear the child will look like one. My eyes glance over him, but they can not find a resting place. I steady them on the calendar that sits just above his left shoulder. It is the 29th today. The month is almost over. I want to go and comfort him, to take his hands and tell him there will be other chances; I want to hold his head against my neck. But I do not know if there will be other chances. When I took the test, his cheeks were wet with joy. But in the consultation his eyes were sealed, no rush of emotion came forth. He held my hand as the doctor went through what would have to happen. He spoke with the doctor of "Osteosarcoma," "chemotherapy," "statistics." I hear each fibre on the arm of the chair bend as he replaces the remote.

I can hear her steps on the stairs. The light padding of her little size five feet turns into tacking when she reaches the kitchen lino. The harshness of the kitchen lights cutting through the darkness of ten to midnight make my eyes blink back stinging moisture.

"Do you remember what the doctor said?"

"What?"

"Do you remember what the doctor said?"

"He said a lot."

"He said that there would be other chances."

"And there will be."

As she sat down, I saw a glimpse of her face, silver under the cold kitchen light. Silver, almost transparent, but not a shadow. Just for a moment, she had stepped back into the light. I watched as her illuminated face clouded once more, as it had done in the consultation. Her face had been glowing pink after the test, but when the doctor gave his diagnoses, it flushed through to white. She did not speak for as long as the doctor was explaining her treatment. She just looked ahead, eyes unfocused, stiffened back. She only spoke to tell the doctor of the pregnancy. His short reply sent her reeling. She held her eyes loosely shut and shifted in her seat, not opening them again until she rose from her chair. "I will consider it." On the journey home, glittering tears lined her darkening cheeks as she retreated from the light.

Eleven weeks and the umbilical cord is fully formed. We are tied. In Bolivia, knitting while pregnant is believed to cause the umbilical cord to wrap around the baby's neck. My due date is in June; the middle of the year when all the flowers are in bloom and the sun is at its hottest. The scan picture is blurred but somewhere in the mist, you can see a very tiny baby; 4.7cm in length yet completely and perfectly human.

Continued on next page...

"Can I see the picture?"

"You want to see the picture?"

"Yes. Can I?"

"You don't have to ask."

Looking at him now, I can see that lines have started to scar his face with sleepless nights. He is engulfed by the picture as if it is the first time he has seen it. He had stayed behind to talk to the sonographer while I was outside waiting for him. I was waiting by the wrong car. He did not show me the photograph until we were home, leaving it on the table for me to find.

Her fingers lingered a moment, caught on the tackiness of the photograph. At first, it is as if you will never see anything, but then the pixels suddenly jump into line and it all becomes clear. I can see the curve of our baby's head, and I trace the spine. I sketch out the little legs, a tiny bump at the bend of the knee ready to kick out. And the arms, from the elbow's point to the very tip of every single finger, I outline. The profile is faultless; smoothed chin; the rise and fall of millimetre lips. And the nose that reminds me of hers.

At fourteen weeks, the heartbeat is strong. Twice as fast as an adult's. In the U.S., dangling your wedding ring over your belly will show if it is a boy or a girl. I watch him talking to the neighbours, shifting on his feet. Twice his eyes role towards the house, but he can not see me. The room is spotless. The surfaces are clear and the carpet holds no dust. Each book is in its place on the shelves; he has had time. As I sit, I can hear the white noise swimming around my head. A small robin jumps post to post on the fence before he flaps up and is carried off by the wind. The scrape of the lock sliding into its cradle cracks the air. I hear his intake of breath as he tries to form my name with his tongue, and then its release as he moves into the kitchen.

The kettle reaches its peak and clicks off, leaving a trail of steam on the window. It matches the glittering hoarfrost that remains in the shadows of the trees. I know she is upstairs. I can hear the pages of her book turning, cutting through the silence. I leave the plates on the table and hover at the bottom of the stairs, my foot unsure that it can take the step.

"I've made you some lunch."

"Thank you."

"Are you coming down?"

Seventeen weeks, and the eyes are framed by lashes. Chinese women make a conscious effort to steer clear of evil spirits, funerals and sex while pregnant. The stairs creak under the weight of both of us; it can not support two. The phone sits on its own table in the hall way. The weakened sun only reaches as far as the window sill, gently warming the frost that still clings there. I can feel his gaze on my cheek, waiting for me to eat. The corners of the sandwich are already curling. I feel the thin skin that the bread had started to form on the cheese brush over my lips. I can not do it. Our eyes follow a crumb as it tumbles off the plate and onto the table. The triangle of bread once again nestling against its twin.

At eighteen weeks, lines on the skin on the fingers are visible. The unique fingerprint has been formed. Malaysian parents are discouraged from sitting at the top of a staircase; a blocked passage will prolong the baby's delivery. The grate as he slides the contents of our plates into the bin rings around the kitchen, the silver kettle exaggerating it. The dead thud of the food hitting the sides fills my mouth with bile. The reflection in the bathroom mirror shows the focus of his attention.

I want to place my hand between her should blades. Hold her hair out of her face. But the door is shut. My limbs are stilled in their uncertainty. My eyes do not rest until they find a mark on the floor between my slipped feet. The oak twists and dips where feet have fallen a hundred times over. The scar in the wood is covered by a blackened scab, covering the damage made by a thin heel. The bolt snaps across, and my eyes find hers.

"Oh!"

"Sorry, I was just ..."

The lanugo has grown by week twenty two; it will be gone before birth. Chinese women also keep a knife under the bed to protect the unborn from evil spirits. His face is pearlescent; statuesque. Under the light, red patches encircle his eyes. My hand reaches out to stroke his cheek, after he has gone. I hear the ping of sparks as they bounce of the bronzed guard. The heat is already roaring into the hall, stifling the air. The clock tells me it is 4pm. Tomorrow, I will be waking up.

I close the curtains against the membrane of cold that had suctioned itself against the glass. Her near silent steps stop in the bedroom. I see my fingers reach for the paper. The crossword stares blankly up at me. The drawer scrapes as she pulls it slowly from its home. It will take just twenty minutes. The chocking sound of the first sob was almost drowned by the crackling fire. But the second was stronger, reaffirming devastation. This time my foot did not hesitate.

She hid her dampened cheeks as I stepped over the threshold. Her silhouette was streaked with colour as her cheeks reddened from her stinging tears. I wanted to reach for her. But still I could not bring my hand to touch her arm; to hold her to my chest. I wanted to tell her of the chances we still have. My lips crack with the force of the words that do not leave my throat. So I stop. And I stand helpless.

Twenty six weeks, the eyelids part for the first time, revealing baby blue eyes. Native Americans believe eating berries during pregnancy causes birthmarks. The rain is beating on the window, but I do not touch the blind. The water runs down the pane, unsure of its path until it hit my line of vision at ninety degrees. His heat is pulsing towards me as he sits next to me, stiffened back. I want to embrace his warmth, but find my body has already recoiled from it; my eyes can not leave the darkening window. His restless fingers happen upon my forearm, just before the crease of my elbow. I feel each vein crack free from their ice and send hot blood steaming to my shoulder, thawing each cell as it races up. I feel the dull gnawing on my bones once more.

Her back faces me, almost touching my bent legs. If I lent them to my left, I would be touching the small of her back. I see her coolness freezing her to the bed, eyes mesmerised by the rain drops. The gradient of her waist is highlighted by her oversized jumper, exaggerating it rather than masking it. Each hair on her arm is raised, pulling a tiny bump of skin up with it; her legs shake to generate some heat. But she will not sit under the blanket. She refuses to be warm.

“Do you want a cup of tea?”

The skin is smoother at thirty weeks. In Bali, pregnant women stop eating octopus to reduce the risk of a difficult delivery. Steam billows and separates and twists together as it dances towards the ceiling next to me. The lapping as he blows on his tea is the only sound. The clock downstairs is silent. I move myself up the bed with one arm, counting each spring as I press them down. The phone will ring at six o'clock. My eyes find the scan picture, propped up on the chest of drawers lying opposite the bed. I see the curve of the baby's head. The curl of its spine. The little legs are angled at the knee. The arms reach out from the elbows, fingers unfurling to grasp something out of reach. And the mouth that I would kiss every night. I watch my fingers as they grasp the handle of my mug, quivering slightly as I draw it to my lips.

Her breathing is slow, as in sleep, but she sits awake. Her eyes do not blink, but stare blindly ahead, waiting for something to cross their path. A brown

dribble is slowly advancing towards her finger, dividing the birds painted on the china. He said he would ring at six o'clock to hear our decision. He has a slot reserved for tomorrow. My fingers search for hers across the bed, hunting them. When they find them, they lock in, seeking reassurance. Her fingers curl around to the back of my hand. The sharp ring of the phone jolts my skin, making it shrink and relax in a second. A bead of sweat bubbles under my arm, burning the tender skin as it breaks through. Her hazel eyes look up into mine. I answer the phone on the third ring.

"Ten o'clock."

Thirty three weeks, the brain is fully developed. Egyptian parents throw a sebou to celebrate the child's birth, during which the baby will be named. I can feel his heat breaking through my bubble of ice; I want to be warm. I like how he pretends to sleep for me; I could not bear him being obviously awake. I want him here, but I need to be separate. I want to feel anger boil up inside me, I want to feel hate shooting from my eyes, I want to feel hurt tearing at my insides. But not until I wake up.

I can hear her breathing. Not the slow, deep breathing of sleep, but the shallow interrupted breathing of restlessness. I can hear her heart vibrating the bed springs, rattling up through my pillow. I can feel the slight static that is pulling up the hairs on her arms; I know that she is awake. I reach out with my hand to comfort her. Tomorrow, she will wake up.

