

# child & youth care

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A Journal for those who work with troubled children and youth at risk

Guest Editorial

## Child Wise Tourism

The growth of child sex tourism can be paralleled with the growth of tourism itself. Though tourism is not per se responsible for child sex tourism it does provide the infrastructure where sex tourism takes place. Child sex tourism relies on the networks of taxi drivers, tour guides, unofficial guesthouses prostitutes, hotel staff etc to act as the interface and go-betweens for the local community supplying the children and sex and the tourists who sexually exploit them.

A recent conference on Sex Tourism held in Cape Town addressed the above situation by bringing together members of Government, the private sector, Tourism and NGO's to discuss the issue of child sex tourism as it related to South Africa. International speakers presented possibilities for South African intervention in sex tourism and preventing its escalation. The most important being a campaign named Child Wise Tourism.

The concept of Child Wise or child protection is not new for Government, or an issue that they need time to consider. Since 1994 government committed itself to ensuring the protection of children in several international charters and agreements obliging them to actively manage the protection of children.

Several days prior to the opening of the Sex Tourism Conference in Cape Town a systematic withdrawal of several Ministers from the conference commenced without explanation. What was initially a very supportive partnership between the conference organisers and the NPA, the Ministry for Social Development and Poverty Alleviation, The Ministry of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Ministry of Justice, suddenly dissolved without warning or explanation creating a very sinister setting for the conference. It seemed that various Ministries wanted to ensure the protection of the Tourism

Economy over the need of children to be protected.

What was there to be afraid of? Child Wise Tourism is simply the empowerment and education of the Tourism industry to become partners in the protection of children.

The tourist industry addresses child sex tourism by creating awareness amongst those that work in the tourism sector and by promoting more responsible and ethical behaviour amongst tourists through various innovative methodologies. In doing so the travel industry is becoming a strong supporter in the campaign to prevent and eradicate child sex tourism globally. Why not South Africa?

South Africa's report back to the Second World Congress (SWC) Against the Sexual Exploitation of Children takes place in Japan in December. The report back should record the implementation of the Stockholm Agenda for Action against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children signed in 1996. I struggle to imagine how this report will reflect governments attitude towards the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in South Africa. Will it reflect attitudes such as those implicit in the last minute boycott of an International Conference on Sex Tourism? Who will hold government accountable for their lack of implementation of international agreements and charters – a task for civil society? The NGO's will represent us, civil society, at the SWC in Japan. It is my deepest wish that they ensure that the South African report will reflect how desperate the situation for children is in our country, and how critical it is for our Government to become 'Child Wise' in every matter concerning the child, including in relation to the economy of the country.

**Bernadette Van Vuuren**  
*Independent Researcher*

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## DATES TO REMEMBER

### NOVEMBER

- 19 World Day for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect  
20 Universal Children's Day  
25 International Day for the Prevention of Violence Against Women

### DECEMBER

- 01 World AIDS Day  
03 International Day of Disabled Persons  
05 International Volunteers Day  
10 World Human Rights Day

## NACCW

The National Association of Child Care Workers is an independent, non-profit organisation in South Africa which provides the professional training and infrastructure to promote healthy child and youth development and to improve standards of care and treatment for troubled children and youth at risk in family, community and residential group care settings.

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Cover picture: Ricky of Swakopmund, sketching on the beach. See page 9 for one of his sketches.

# An Elder Speaks

*A paper delivered by Jacqui Michael  
at the NACCW Conference in July this year.*

*This is the first of a two part series.*

**W**hen thinking about my personal journey in child and youth care, I decided to liken it to a river. My river has a source, some rapids, a waterfall, some pools, stones, rocks and a very significant tree. I have included some quotes which have particular meaning for me on this journey and describe some of my feelings and experiences.

Development is dynamic – the flow of the river depicts this. Some of the changes have been superficial, like the grey hair and others have been at different depths. A line taken from a poem called Layers by Stanley Kunitz, says; 'Live in the layers, not in the litter.' I have tried to identify and appreciate the layers of my development and discard the litter. Sometimes, the things we think are layers become litter and vice versa. The source of my river and my interest in child care no doubt came from my upbringing and the strong values instilled in me by my parents. I grew up with the philosophy that everyone 'could be Jesus' and therefore everyone needed and deserved compassion and concern.

If one were able, one should help people and animals – I spent many hours rescuing dogs from the sidewalk. Looking back, I am sure many of them were out for a walk and suddenly found themselves hijacked and

taken off to the SPCA! Nowadays, I try to check where the dog lives before I whisk it off to the SPCA!

If ever anyone needed assistance, my siblings and I would always volunteer my parents' assistance. Before they knew it, they were being pulled into all sorts of activities and events because the Michael children had been the first to raise their hands when asked if anyone could help with something! My mom used to drop us off at school and say please don't volunteer me for anything today!

***As Heraclitus said:  
'You cannot step twice  
into the same river, for  
other waters are  
continually flowing in.'***

I come from a Lebanese / South African background where family and extended family are important and communities are expected to care for each other. My family were also very involved in church and voluntary work.

Thus, my source is rich with values about compassion, care, support, generosity, relationships and the importance of



family as well as a strong religious background. This is depicted as the start of my river where the tributaries flow into the pool. These are the strengths and developmental areas with which I started my journey into child and youth care. As Heraclitus said: 'You cannot step twice into the same river, for other waters are continually flowing in.'

My source started with many things flowing in and virtually every day in my journey, I have learnt something and had other waters flowing into my river, making it unique and enriched as it grows.

I began by studying social work. When I left school, the choices open to females were nursing, teaching and social work. None of them particularly jumped out at me, but I investigated nursing and decided physical health was not my forte. I then thought about nursery school teaching, but decided it was rather limiting - so social work was the one option left – not exactly an in-

formed or very conscious decision. I do however believe that my unconscious knew what it was doing!

I went to TUKS and did my degree in Afrikaans – a language that I had barely passed in Matric. I sat in anthropology instead of criminology for three months by mistake, because I did not know what the subjects were called in Afrikaans! When I left university, I was unsure as to which area of social work interested me the most, so I was employed as a waitress until my poor motor co-ordination worked against me and I dropped a tray full of food and was fired.

I then decided perhaps I should return to the source and pursue what I had trained for originally and I became one of those hated 'reconstruction workers!' I worked for two family agencies, doing general family work and adoptions.

I was then offered a job at a

Children's Home and armed with my social work degree, a few years experience and lots of energy, entered the field of child and youth care – never dreaming that this was the beginning of the professional life's journey which would launch me into the field of child and youth care.

*Confucius reminds me  
of a saying:  
'A youth is to be  
regarded with respect.  
How do you know that  
his future will not be  
equal to our present?'*

I had always wanted to work with young people and was particularly interested in school social work, which did not exist in those days. I was thrilled at the

opportunity of being able to work with youth.

Confucius reminds me of a saying: 'A youth is to be regarded with respect. How do you know that his future will not be equal to our present?'

My initial knowledge of child and youth care was very limited and flowed mainly from the sources in which I had been schooled – very much a medical model of working with people. This kept my river fairly narrow at first. It seemed to me that we were the experts working with children who had been removed from their parents and families. We were able to care for them and the families could not.

These parents had failed somewhere – that was the general thinking and we the social workers and the 'houseparent', as they were called then, could do what they could not. We were the ones who had to put up with the child's difficult behaviour. How dare the parents criticise



what we were doing? How dare they get upset if we had the child's hair cut, or changed their schools without discussing this with the family? After all when the children did go home for weekends or holidays, the parents undid all the good work we had done and we had to start over. It really was easier for these children not to go home! Parents who did object to not having a say in their children's lives were often labelled as aggressive, difficult and obnoxious. After a while, I started to feel most uncomfortable about the negative attitudes to parents and the reluctance to involve them in the child's life. This is represented by some of the initial stones which I encountered in my river. Many professionals did not want their thinking challenged and I became involved in many heated discussions because I felt that parents should be given more responsibility and involvement in their children's lives. I also advocated for children to go home every weekend even if the home situation was problematic. We made many mistakes in residential care and I started to wonder if children would be better off with their own families rather than with unrelated and often untrained 'professionals' making some of the same mistakes which had caused them to be removed in the first place. We knew so little about the profession of child and youth care. As we needed support in what we were doing, a group of us working in residential care started to meet together regularly, this was the origin of the NACCW in the Transvaal. The very first BQCC started in the Transvaal and the Western Cape. We all trained different material as there was no national co-ordinated course. I started to work very hard to change attitudes towards fami-

lies and allow them some say in their children's lives. However, I believe, I still had an attitude of us being the professionals and having the answers – very much the medical model. We could tell these families many things, how to run their lives, what to do and why.

***An American Indian proverb says:  
'Don't judge any man until you have walked two moons in his moccasins.'  
I have to keep reminding myself not to label and judge – this has no place in the developmental model.***

It was hard to change. As a Congolese proverb says; 'Wood may remain ten years in the water, but it will never become a crocodile!' We needed too much training to change our wood into crocodiles!

An experience which made me know for sure I was not cut out to be an on-line child care worker, was a holiday to Durban, where a friend and I took 8 adolescents for a week's holiday. I had two of them fighting all week, one walked out and started to hitch a ride back to Johannesburg. I ran after her, trying to find her on the highway, while the others were fighting about whether or not they should help me or let her go! Driving the combi back from Durban in the rain, a guinea fowl flew into the windscreen and shattered it! I took this as a sign that any thought that I could do on-line child care work should be

shattered! Leave it to the experts I kept telling myself! There were to be some large rocks in my river which would change the course of my development drastically. In those days, labeling of children and 'writing them off' was the norm and no one had ever heard of the developmental approach. I remember receiving a report from a psychologist at one of the child and adolescent units saying that a family we had sent for testing, 4 siblings, aged 3, 4, 5 and 6 were all psychopathic and had no hope of recovery. I could not come to terms with this labeling and giving up on children so young – after all, if we didn't believe in them, who would? I often look back and wonder, how many children have I labeled and given up on? Do you ever look back and wonder that? Because of the medical model, we categorised children and their families, as we believed that the label helped us to understand the behaviour and therefore 'treat it'. We needed to learn that effective intervention is about being able to describe the behaviour, not label it! An American Indian proverb says: 'Don't judge any man until you have walked two moons in his moccasins.' I have to keep reminding myself not to label and judge – this has no place in the developmental model. One of the incidents that changed my life in child care was working with an exceptionally difficult child, Natalie. She was admitted to our facility because she could not be placed in a Place of Safety. She had said she was a 'lesbian' and the fear was that she would 'do things' with other children. Our organisation had become known for being able to deal with difficult youth. Her foster care had broken down as the foster mother had died and the biological family could not take her due



to drinking and family violence. I connected with this child and encouraged her to come back to the Home after she had absconded. The management felt that she should not be given a second chance and wanted to send her to a Place of Safety. I refused to sign the report as I felt it was the wrong decision for this child. I was told that I was not objective enough and was not allowed to see the girl once she was moved.

She thought I had abandoned her and was very upset. She stayed at the Place of Safety for many months because she could not be placed in alternate care, as she was a 'lesbian'. In this very 'Place of Safety', meant to keep children safe, she was raped twice by female staff – this girl was a virgin and had never had a sexual encounter – she just believed that emotionally, she was lesbian. It seemed that this label doomed this child to the worst we can offer in care – physical, emotional and sexual abuse! Are things any different now? Are these things still happening to our children and youth? How come, if we have the benefit of 20 + years of knowledge? How would you handle this

situation now? Are our children any safer in care now than they were 20 years ago? I became very disillusioned with the whole concept of building relationships, encouraging children to trust us, telling them we cared and yet, we could not protect them from this type of incident. I could not identify with the values of the organisation. I was quite devastated and wondered about the whole profession. Everything seemed overwhelming. As an old Hindu proverb says: 'When an elephant is in trouble, even a frog will kick him.'

I ultimately resigned over this case and all the other unacceptable decisions I saw being made for these young people – I was asked to leave immediately and did so without a job to go to! There was no such thing as Labour Laws then, no packages etc.!

Then, I joined an agency and managed their Residential Care programmes. This was a wonderful opportunity to put into practice so many things I wanted to try out. The development of teamwork involving different professions, from domestic workers to psychologists was most enlightening. We started to realise

that children and youth often have the best relationships with the people in their daily lives who are the least included and recognised in the team such as the cooks, gardeners, drivers and domestic staff.

These team members were given the skills to intervene more professionally with these young people and we were able to see remarkable differences in the behaviour of some of the children.

One of my colleagues ran a group for mothers of the youth and we called this group 'the bucket of tears' group – the pain and sadness of these parents really struck me. It made me interested in deprivation and why it repeats itself. A colleague of mine was studying a theory entitled the Cycle of Deprivation and I learned how this had practical application to the families with whom we work.

This theory has influenced me tremendously in my development as a professional and makes so much sense about why people repeat the patterns we so often see in troubled families. ○

## KIND

Hy slaap vannag onder kartondose in Adderleystraat  
 Sy woon in karige omstandighede met nie elke dag n stikkie brood te eet  
 Hy wat met soveel alkohol in sy bloedstroom gebore word dat hy onttrekking kry  
 Sy word by ons gebring om lewenslank tuis te wees in 'n inrigting  
 Ja, ook die onhanteerbare adolessent wat verhoof afgagtend is vra liefde en begrip  
 Hy wat tussen bendes messteek en sodomie moes oorleef kom soek verligting onder my dak ...  
 en word MY kind  
 Ook hy wat niks wil weet omdat hy glo dagga, hashish, kokaïen of heroïen kan  
 hom laat vergeet van die pyn binne  
 Ja ook die uitgeteerde driejarige lyfie wat onbegrypend wag dat die brander van VIGS haar  
 eersdags op die strand van die lewe uitspoel tussen duisende ander  
 Vir hom wat vandag my pad kruis sal ek Jesus wees en hoe klein ookal  
 n vlam aansteek van HOOP.

*Elma Black — Durbanville Kinderhuis*

# Early Brain Development, Later Outcome and the possibilities of Intervention

*Mark Tomlinson, Director of the Thula Sana mother-infant project  
Child Guidance Clinic – University of Cape Town  
Part Two of Mark's article on Infant Research.*

In last month's article I briefly touched on some of the findings from early research into the capacities and abilities of infants. In much the same way that infant research burgeoned in the latter part of the twentieth century, so too did research into the structure and development of the brain. The invention of sophisticated brain imaging techniques permitted, for the first time, a glimpse into the firing of neurons in the brain and gave researchers the tools with which to provide us an intricate picture of early brain development. The brain and its investigation is a vast field and it is not within the scope of this paper to provide more than a cursory description of the field. I will therefore briefly outline aspects of early brain development and tentatively suggest what implications these might hold for developmental outcome. Particularly important here is what are the implications of this research for child and youth care professionals working with youth that more often than not have suffered significant early neglect and trauma.

## **Brain Development**

Early investigations into the brain focused mainly on animal studies or on people with neurological disorders. The development of new technologies such as Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) and particularly Positron Emission Tomography (PET) has permitted for the first time, not only the observation of brain structure but also the measurement

of activity within the brain. Measuring energy levels in the brain has facilitated our understanding of the localization of certain brain functions and how others that were thought to be localized are not. Another mode of brain study is the electroencephalogram (EEG) which can detect brain waves and thus provide us information about how the brain reacts to factors such as environmental stress or the comfort provided by a caregiver (Shore, 1997). The basic building blocks of our brains are the nerve cells that make up the central nervous system (Shore, 1997). Just prior to birth there is a

rapid increase in the development of these neurons, providing the fetus with what Shore (1997) refers to as a safety margin – ensuring the best possible chance of having a healthy brain. Most of these are shed in utero. According to Siegel (1999) the human brain is, at birth, the most undifferentiated organ in the body. While neurons remain relatively stable, the number of synapses increases markedly. Electrical

impulses are sent down the neuron, which in turn creates what is called a "synapse". It is the synapses that link neurons to one another (Siegel, 1999). This 'connectivity' facilitates communication between cells in different parts of the brain. As the infant and child grows connections are formed through experiences with the surrounding world and the development of relationships with people. The process of synapse formation takes place at an enormous pace, to the extent that at



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working models about how the world works and how we should interact with others and how we can expect them to interact with us (Bretherton & Mulholland, 1999). The more evidence in the here and now that the youth has of a world that mirrors his/her early experiences (i.e. people cannot be trusted, aggression and violence are the tools of conflict resolution, and that people do not care for them), the more likely it will be that particular patterns of relating will become entrenched. If however, the child or youth, begins to experience people and the world in a way that disconfirms these working models of the world (people can be trusted, alternative methods of conflict resolution do exist, and that there are others in the world that do care for them) then change can, and does, occur.

The eminent British psychiatrist Sir Michael Rutter has questioned the notion of 'critical periods' in development. His argument is that environments that improve in middle and later childhood (either the home, the community or perhaps in an alternative arrangement such as a youth care facility) do lead to major developmental gains (Mitchell, 1988). Obviously the greater the number of acute stresses and the more chronic the disadvantage (as is often the case with the youth in our care) the more likely it is that intervention becomes more problematic.

### Conclusions and the possibilities of Intervention

I believe that an important lesson to be learned from the research into early brain development is that we must not only carefully plan the interventions we employ but also temper the expectations that we sometimes have of the children and youth in our care. As I have already stated, risk is not destiny, and change remains possible. On the other hand, given the level of deprivation, abuse and neglect that many of the youth in our care have suffered we need to remain cognisant of the fact that despite our best hopes and intentions future possibilities may be limited. This must never be translated into giving up, or to not providing the best possible care. Rather, keeping in mind the possible constraints on (for example) cognitive development may, in many cases, prevent the burn-out that often results from disillusionment when hope fades about our role in affecting change. In addition, I think it may assist in limiting the frustrations of many children and youth in the system who keep failing to meet the standards set by those entrusted to their care (even when these expectations arise from the best of intentions).

Finally, a simple tale from the bird world will serve to illustrate what I believe to be the role we (as child and youth care professionals) play during the process of intervention and reparation. I also be-

lieve that this serves as an important entreaty to the fact that it is never too late. For many birds, in order to learn to sing they need to hear their species song during a particular critical period. If a white crowned sparrow for instance hears a tape recording of their species song between days twenty and fifty of their life they will learn it. If however, they are not exposed to it during this critical period and are only exposed to the tape recording at a later stage they will not learn the song. But here is the nub. If they hear the song after the critical period from a tutor (a real live bird in front of them) then they will learn the song (Gopnik et al, 1999; my emphasis). Similarly, Zebra finches do not learn well from a tape recording, but will learn from a tutor in a neighboring cage. Interacting with another bird helps the bird learn – even after so-called critical periods. If it is experience and relationships that are so crucial in early development, then so must later relationship be central if we are to stand any chance of assisting in a process of getting a damaged life back on track. ○



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age two synapse levels have reached adult levels. By age three (and to put this rapid growth in perspective), the child has roughly twice as many synapses as his or her doctor might have (Shore, 1997). These levels then remain relatively stable for the first decade of life, after which synapses begin to be discarded. By late adolescence half of the synapses have been discarded, levels that then remain stable for much of our lives (Shore, 1997). It is the early experiences of the infant and child that determine, to a large extent, which synapses are discarded. This is not to say that experience is the only factor determining synapse elimination. Naturally there is a genetic component – genes contain the information for the general organization of the brains' structure (Siegel, 1999). The expression of the genes, the how and the when is, however, a function of experience. If synapses are used repeatedly in the early years of a child's life then they will become reinforced and part of the brains permanent circuitry (Shore, 1997).

Synapses that have been reinforced through repeated use and experience remain, while those that have not are discarded. It has been argued from an evolutionary perspective that this flexibility in humans has allowed us to adapt to environments that may in fact be quite different. Our ancestors growing up on the Savannah grasslands of Africa had to adapt to a context quite different to an urban (for example) environment in the twentieth first century. The 'plasticity' of the brain is crucial in this environmental adaptadness. Another term often used when describing this process is that of 'pruning'. Connections that have been most frequently activated and used more often are preserved (Gopnik et al, 1999), while those that have not been will be pruned. This pruning increases rapidly in the second decade of life.

**Implications of Brain Research**

In 1868 Darwin was laying the foundation for some of what we know now in terms of brain development. In one set of experiments he observed a collection of rabbits – comparing those that had been raised in captivity with others that had spent their lives in the wild. Through simple measurement of brain size and weight he concluded that the smaller and lighter brains of the rabbits raised in

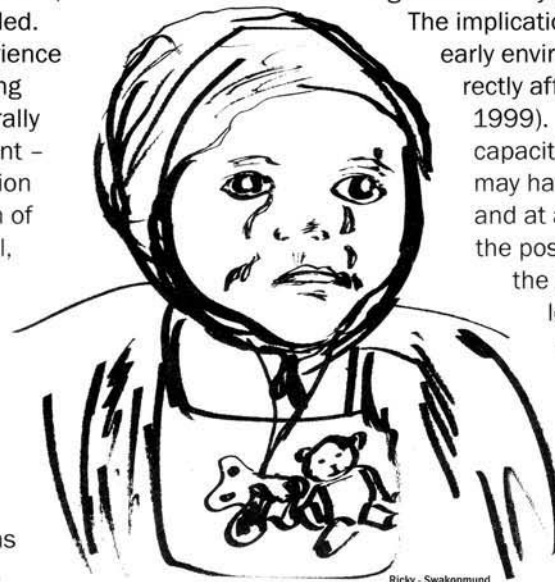
captivity was as a result of the fact that they had not exercised their brains, either in avoiding danger or through the complexities of foraging. He concluded that "their brains will have been feebly exercised, and consequently have suffered in development" (Eliot, 1999, p30). Recent studies have confirmed Darwin's hypothesis and shown that animals raised in enriched environments have increased synaptic density and increased volume in their hippocampus, an area important for learning and memory (Siegel, 1999).

The implications of this are self-evident – early environment permanently and directly affects brain structure (Eliot, 1999). With deprived environments, capacities in the infant and child that may have developed simply do not, and at a structural brain level there is the possibility that they never will. In the light of this, the potential in leaping to disillusionment is not a massive one. If early trauma and neglect are compromising the very structure of the brain, is there a role for professionals who are only able to intervene at a later stage? Or to put it even more simply 'are we too late, has the damage already been done'? There is no

doubt that early environmental deprivation affects brain development and consequently the possibilities of later intervention. Is this however, the end of the story?

**Risk and Destiny**

Crucial to any discussion of the limits and possibilities of later intervention is the statement that "risk is not destiny" (Shore, 1997). History is replete with examples of the most appalling abuse and neglect in the lives of many of the world's greatest artists, writers and leaders. Their successes in overcoming the hardships of their early lives attests to the flexibility of human beings and our ability to overcome early deprivation. Any child and youth care professional would ably testify to their many 'success stories'. Youths, who despite the most appalling abuse and privations have made successes of their lives. Risk was not their destiny. We also know, through many longitudinal research studies, that "later difficulties in living are often not direct causal products of earlier deprivation, but a complex combinations of the impact of early experience and reactions to later stresses and conflicts" (Mitchell, 1988). Borrowing from attachment terminology we all develop what are known as internal





# Reflections and Highlights of the International Foster Care Organisations (IFCO) Conference – July 2001

*Sabitha Samjee*

**T**his was the 12th biennial conference with the theme “Towards a foster caring society” held in the Netherlands.

The opening ceremony was spectacular, with brightly coloured, traditional costumes and music. The drum beats of the local band lifted your soul and spirit and kept you afloat. The most remarkable feature of the band was its combination of different ethnic members. (Morrocan Sirunams – Native Americans – Ghanyans). Fifty-one countries were represented and young people roller bladed across the hall each carrying a country's flag. It was amazing the emotions that one experienced. Time stood still awaiting your country's flag to wizz across the floor. The opening speech focused on acknowledging the rights of young people and coming together as Nations towards a common interest of young people. It was stressed that every nation and country should prioritise continuous development of practice models in foster care.

A presentation by the Netherlands representative, Ms Marego stressed that Foster Care is gaining more and more attention globally. A generous society ought to make a place for children, and standards in foster care must be maintained. She introduced the concept of Tailored Foster Care – short term/part time/ full time placements with intensive supports noting the necessity of improving the image of foster care globally.

## **Breakaway Sessions**

The workshops were very informative and those attended are as follows:

### **Foster Care for Handicapped Children**

This presentation was very cleverly and creatively presented with the introduction of a card game so that every delegate was required to participate and express his/her view on particular, pertinent

questions around specialised foster care. The questions around the case study challenged peoples value system, knowledge skills, expertise and being human.

### **Sexually exploited youth participate in the creation of solutions in the Middle East**

The presenter was Lebanese who had engaged in sex work as a child in order to support himself. He made some important points on the commercial exploitation of children: “why are there no social workers on the streets at night – street kids and sex workers sleep during the day, so why are the social systems workers with high risk young people not out at night.”

He talked about difficulties he currently has in fitting into society. He has great difficulty in budgeting and has no value for money because he was able to earn very large sums of money.

Our language has to change. Commercial sexual exploitation of children is child abuse. Adults of a sick society must be brought to order.

Speaking from his own experience he noted that the road to recovery is long and hard. It requires skills, vision, flexibility, support, time and resources.

Changing prevalent public attitudes about the sex trade and about sexually exploited children and youth is a great challenge. Recommendations included:

- Promoting awareness, understanding and action
- Debunking stereotypes and myths about the sex trade
- Educating adults and children about child rights and human rights
- Making children a global priority – promoting caring and compassion for **all** children and youth. ○



# Behaviour Management in a Child Rights Culture: The Educator's Challenge

*An extract from a paper presented by Merle Allsopp at the 2nd National Learner Support and Development Conference held in Rustenberg, North West Province.*

**T**en or fifteen years ago the idea of children's rights was fresh and exciting in South Africa, the common language of many in the fields of education, psychology, social work and the newcomer in the stable, child and youth care. In the apartheid years the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was an international set of guidelines aspired to by all who sought freedom in our land. At that time those of us working on the ground were hampered in implementing these precepts by a legislative and policy framework which reflected an altogether different ideology about children. With the liberation of our country and the sickening knowledge of the suffering borne by children in the years before and after 1976, the message of children's rights was spread far and wide. Children across our country have been exposed to the concepts encapsulated in that convention – they

have attended workshops, been given posters and engaged in exciting activities, all designed to alert them to what they rightfully can expect from the adult world around them. To some extent children in rural areas and in cities appear able to articulate the articles of the Convention in one form or another. Perhaps we should be satisfied that children in our country are gaining this knowledge. But an alarming trend is emerging amongst those who interface with children in their work on an everyday basis. Again and again one hears the refrain from teachers, social workers and child and youth care workers – “We know all about children's

rights but what about the rights of adults.” The chorus continues – “You tell us what we cannot do to children, but not what we can do.”

It appears that these cries, made in every province should be taken very seriously indeed as indicators of the sense of powerlessness of many adults in our country whose professional responsibility it is to ensure that young people experience the Rights that they know and talk about. It appears that in our haste to transform our country, our professions and our services to young people we have been in a measure successful in giving children a sense of what they are entitled to, but have not trained adults effectively enough in the implementation of those rights. As children growing up in a South Africa in the 50's, 60's, 70's and 80's the vast majority of us experienced a style of authority from the adults around us that simply demanded obedience. Most of us will recall the odd teacher, or youth worker, who somehow treated us differently, more respectfully and generally rather nicer than the other adults we knew. But most of us internalized a style of exerting authority that relied on dele-



gated power, the threat of exclusion for wrongdoing, potential humiliation for disobedience, coercion, and the threat of harm. It is no wonder that when we in turn as adults are required to intervene in the lives of children that we reach for these punitive techniques embedded in our consciousness. And now being discouraged or prevented from using these techniques we feel abandoned by the authorities and policy makers, at times ourselves humiliated as adults and often utterly powerless in the face of children "who know their rights." Indeed we hear the words echoed across the country "Ons hande is afgekak."

We are asking of ourselves and other professionals a great deal. At this time of transition from one paradigm to another, educators are being required to deal with behaviours in classrooms which would have been unthinkable to most of us in "our day". The world inhabited by children altered irrevocably with the rapidity of technological change, recently leading American educators to consider the most concerning student behaviours as those associated with drug and alcohol abuse, sexual and physical assault, theft, and suicide. This is as against a list including talking out of turn, chewing gum, queue-jumping and littering in the 1940's (quoted in Peters 2001). And the nation has changed for that man, carefully educated by his mother's earn-

ings who has through hard work and endurance slowly gained a sense of power as a mature adult in his position as principal of a school – who is now asked to apparently relinquish power in being restrained from administering corporal punishment. In a situation where the old tools are not working, educators increasingly despair about being able to intervene effectively in disciplinary situations, staff morale drops and challenging students either gain and wield informal negative control or drop out.

***As educators, we must accept that learning to manage the behaviour of challenging children and youth is as critical to success as is effective pedagogical input.***

But this need not be the case. This negative scenario is indicative of our collective responsibility to develop the capacity of educators to manage the behaviour of students. No longer are we able to rely on the power inherent in the adult role to demand obedience and compliance. We are required to teach responsibility to students. We cannot swop children's rights with young people for responsibilities in the new rhetoric

of... "Okay, I'll give you this right but only if you perform the concomitant responsibility." Rather it is our duty and our role to teach young people the responsibilities which are linked to rights. Young people have a right to be taught responsibility. As educators, we must accept that learning to manage the behaviour of challenging children and youth is as critical to success as is effective pedagogical input. Research shows that teachers who teach interesting lessons based on the needs of the learner and are able to maintain effective discipline are successful. Both aspects are necessary in effective education (Brentro, Brokenleg & Van Bockeren: 1990).

Sadly (and this is a personal observation) it appears that when people working with demanding young people make the foray into managing behaviour rather than demanding compliance their repertoire of approaches is limited. Often their only tool is to "talk to" young people. This usually takes on a preaching, lecturing tone with the adult doing much of the talking, telling the young person things that they already know about how they should be behaving. When such interventions fail to achieve desired behavioural compliance, educators are often disappointed and feel slighted at the disregard of their personal wisdom. However, learning to manage the behaviour of challenging



Trace Images/Benny Gool

young people involves the serious attention of every educator on the levels of knowledge, skills and self-awareness. Borrowing from the education and training of child and youth care workers, it is these three levels or aspects which have to be addressed in the development of a repertoire of teacher interventions to effectively manage behaviour.

The knowledge component speaks to the educator developing a workable understanding of the human needs being met by particular behaviours. Many adults who have not made the connection between behaviours they see in the classroom and the need which that particular behaviour meets, are doomed to continue a reactive pattern, treating the symptom rather than understanding and engaging with the causative factors of behaviour. The knowledge component speaks to understanding youth culture, group dynamics, developmental tasks, community influences as well as knowledge of individual young people. (How much do we know of troublesome learners as people as opposed to those we like and find acceptable?) The skill component requires individual educators to learn a range of skills in relation to the myriad situations in which they may find themselves. These range from simple communication skills to conflict resolution skills. Writing on work with troubled young people, Bruno Bettelheim said that "Love is not enough". If we are to manage the kinds of confrontational behaviours which are commonplace in South Africa's classrooms in this millennium, we must bring to the situation more than empathy, more than concern but skills to defuse power struggles, the strength to follow through on consequences and the adroitness necessary to spot a poten-

tial trap ahead of time. A complex range of behavioural responses is called for from us as adults, responses that we have to learn from informal interactions with colleagues and from formal training opportunities. Oftentimes a good educator finds themselves without compassion for learners after being humiliated in front of groups of jeering young people. Such educators frequently turn to the hard-line approach – educating only those students who are already able to be responsible.

***Behaviour  
management is the  
responsibility not only  
of individual teachers,  
but of those in  
management and  
authority.***

And the last component is often the most difficult to master – understanding what we as individuals bring into any potentially conflictual situation. This may require complex introspection on the personal buttons pushed by a particular student – "That kid just gets up my nose – he just walks into the class and my hair stands on end." Or it may require a closer look at more superficial aspects of ourselves – how we stand, how we use our personal space, the non-verbal cues we give out. A good child and youth care worker I worked with had great difficulty managing young people's behaviour once conflict began. A closer observation of her response to escalating conflict revealed that her voice, (already high pitched) squeaked upwards as she became anxious, revealing this emotional reaction to the children who in turn instinctively felt

uncontained so behaved in increasingly negative ways to try to gain personal control, since it was apparent to them that this was not going to be achieved by the adult. Voice training assisted in a very short period of time to help her to use appropriate verbal interventions to defuse conflictual situations.

The personal, community or societal reasons for children and youth challenging discipline within schools are at times not known or accessible to the educator. However, when these reasons are known it is appropriate for the educator to intervene to deal with the cause of the difficulty instead of continuously managing symptomatic behaviour. If it is noticed that a particular young person typically presents with challenges to discipline on a Friday, and that the family drinks heavily at weekends, an intervention designed to lessen anxiety associated with alcohol abuse at home and protect the child would be appropriate. Educators thus need to be alert to patterns of behaviour, as well as to the personal circumstances of students as far as this is possible.

Behaviour management is the responsibility not only of individual teachers, but of those in management and authority. Behaviour management must be undertaken by teachers, heads of departments, deputy principals and principals, school boards, as well as personnel in provincial departments of education. This need for a consistent, wholistic approach to working with the behaviour of young people is what has led to the safer school approaches. Recognizing that children and youth act within a school milieu or community, and that in order to maximize their learning opportunities those environments need to be positive and



productive for both staff and students, the safe schools approach is multi-faceted, long-term, documented and participative. It places responsibility for creating a positive learning environment on all levels of the school hierarchy. It recognizes the critical role of those in ultimate authority for setting the tone within a school through appropriately respectful and participative management styles and interventions. When staff morale is low, the demands on staff are high, when they feel unsupported by management and collegial feelings are non-existent, it is inappropriate to expect that educators will be able to manage behaviour effectively.

Likewise a strengths-based approach is critical to effective management of discipline school-wide.

"Successful schools consist of a cohesive community of shared values, benefits, rituals, and ceremonies that build upon children's strengths and recognize their needs. Each student, regardless of his or her ability level or challenging behaviour, needs to be supported in order to feel good about him- or herself and the school. Likewise, all staff members and students need to be supported and empowered to address challenging behaviours." (Sautner: 2001).

So the effective approach to behaviour management begins with seeing the Children's Rights Culture as a guide to be aspired to, rather than an infringement on adult rights. It requires educators to acknowledge that, as important as their subject teaching are their interactions with students on behaviour. It requires capacity building in the three aspects of knowledge, skill and self, and is most effective when approached wholistically by the school community. And if we scan the literature we will find much information to guide us in enhancing our capacity in this area either as individual educators or as entire schools. ○

## "WALKING THE TALK"

— the National Alliance for Street Children conference

*Jacqui Gallinetti reports*

**F**rom 3 -6 September 2001, the National Alliance for Street Children held its annual conference in Hanover Park, Cape Town. A wide range of speakers made presentations and a diversity of topics was covered over the four days, with a number of pertinent issues being raised. The conference was attended by service providers from six different provinces including Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape, and the participants were from both the NGO and governmental sectors.

The international speaker who gave the keynote address at the opening of the conference was **James Lees**, who has undertaken pioneer work in the United States in relation to street children and HIV /AIDS. He has also worked extensively with street children in India and took the opportunity to share some of his experiences with the conference participants. He stressed the need for adults working in this field to be able to listen to children and identify their hopes, fears and needs. In this way a better understanding of their situation can be reached, which in turn enables better service provision.

**Headman Sirala-rala** and **Jac Jacobs** of the Homestead in Cape Town addressed the participants on their experiences as street workers. They stressed the need to interact with children on their level and in a

way that encouraged trust and inclusion. However, they warned against inappropriate ways of trying to win the children's (trust such as sharing alcohol or cigarettes with them. They also (provided useful tips on how to help the children identify persons who abuse them on the streets.

**Julia Zingu** of the KwaZulu-Natal Street Children's Forum gave an informative talk on twin cities. Although she focused on the efforts undertaken by Durban in twinning with Rotterdam and Chicago on street children's issues, she underlined the general principle of twinning. This is the a building of linkages between cities (international and within South Africa), NGOs and street children's shelters to share information and best practices. Although city twinning necessarily involves local government, and child justice does not fall within their scope of responsibilities, there is potential of NGOs twinning between cities on issues of child justice. ○

*Reprinted from*

### **ARTICLE 40**

*(See Jim Lees's article in the September edition of Child & Youth Care)*

# Now is the Time...

*Jackie Winfield challenges our accountability to our colleagues  
and young people whom we serve*

**A** child and youth care student recently asked the question, "Why am I marked 'late' when I'm only 5 or 10 minutes late?" Perhaps, this student didn't realise that the answer was contained in her very own question!

The Oxford Dictionary defines "late" as "after the due time; done after proper time". Anybody who has ever arrived to catch an aeroplane "after the due time" will understand the consequences of being late: the aeroplane will have left without you! Being late may have various consequences, one being that you might be, literally or figuratively, "left behind".

## **Lateness as Class Disturbance**

Arriving late in class affects others. Fellow learners are distracted by the door opening, chairs scraping on the floor, bags being opened and papers being shuffled noisily. They are disturbed when they are asked, "What are we doing? What page are we on? Can I see your notes?" Their progress is delayed when you arrive in the middle of a discussion or other activity. They become resentful when you get the same credit for attendance as they do for arriving on time. The tutor becomes irritated when she/he has to repeat instructions or information already given. All of this is unfair on those who have arrived punctually. Arriving late has a negative impact on class relationships and class functioning.

## **Child and Youth Care Training as Personal Development**

Studying a course in child and youth care involves

far more than filling one's head with theoretical knowledge. One cannot become a skillful child and youth care worker by "reading the notes"! An essential aspect of training is the holistic development of self. Who you are and how you are is often a great deal more important than what you know. Your ability to function as an effective member of your class team is likely to be a far better indicator of your professional functioning than is your ability to recite the practice principles of child and youth care!



## **Training for Employment as Professionals**

The majority of child and youth care students are studying for one of two reasons: 1) To prepare to be employed as a professional child and youth care worker in the future; 2) To increase their knowledge and skills so as to make themselves more valuable to their present employers. How many employers will want a worker who arrives late? Does lateness indicate professionalism and commitment?

Many child and youth care workers are frustrated about NOT being treated like professionals. Is it really surprising when a basic skill such as arriving on time is lacking in so many of our students and col-

leagues? Every time a child and youth care worker is late, it reflects on the whole field. Challenge your colleagues and classmates to behave like professionals so that we can all be given the professional status we want.

## **Punctuality and Teamwork**

Child and youth care workers rarely work in isola-

tion. Teamwork is essential for effective work with young people and families. A team member who arrives late, or doesn't arrive at all, is not playing their role in the team properly. Perhaps, your colleague is waiting to go of duty and you're late. Or think about it differently ... you've been working a twelve-hour night shift and your colleague arrives late to take over from you. How do you feel? Do you trust your colleague? What if it happens again and again? How does this affect your relationship with this colleague?

### **Punctuality and Care**

It is often said that we give time to the things which we value. What does it say to young people when we don't arrive on time? Do they feel valued? Isn't our profession about helping young people experience care? Does Sipho feel cared for when you collect him late from school? Does Mary feel cared for when you miss the appointment you made with her? Does Kuben feel cared for when you arrive at 8.15am when your working day starts at 8am? No, no and no again! Arriving late gives young people the impression that there are other people or activities that are more important and valuable than they are. This is not the message which child and youth care workers should be giving to children and youth who already experience themselves as worthless and uncared for.

### **Time is money**

Imagine that a worker earns R2000 per month by working 160 hours. This translates into earnings of R12.50 per hour. If the worker arrives 5 minutes late every day for 20 days, she/he will have missed 100 minutes of work which is worth R20.84. Over the course of 12 months, this worker will have missed 1200 minutes or 20 hours of work worth R250! Does this worker deserve to earn her/his full salary?

### **Conclusion**

The issue of punctuality is controversial because, of course, there are occasionally genuine reasons for being late ... the bus broke down, I overslept because I was up all night with a sick child, I got lost. These situations are often unavoidable. However, it is consistent lateness that is cause for concern. The learner who is consistently late has a problem to solve and should be challenged to do so. A truly professional child and youth care worker manages her/his time effectively and recognises that every minute holds the potential for hundreds of moments which may make a difference in the life of a child or youth. ○

## **HIGHER QUALIFICATION IN CHILD AND YOUTH CARE — HQCYC**

The NACCW is very pleased to announce that a new course called the **HIGHER QUALIFICATION IN CHILD & YOUTH CARE** is being piloted in 5 provinces.

The NACCW has developed a continuum of training opportunities to meet the needs of people of all educational backgrounds caring for children and youth. The above course will be aimed at those who have completed the BQCC. For a number of years membership from across the country have identified a 'training gap' for those child and youth care workers who have completed BQCC and are either not ready or do not wish to undertake tertiary study. The HQCYC has been introduced to provide further opportunities for such child and youth care workers to engage in lifelong learning. Graduates of the BQCC will be provided with the possibility of further professionalisation with this two year 4 module HQCYC.

The course will focus on advanced concepts in child and youth care and develop the writing skills of trainees. A focus on indigenous practices will also be maintained and material sourced for inclusion in further training as per the generative curriculum model. The HQCYC will thus enable child and youth care workers who wish to develop their capacity for tertiary training to do so in the context of furthering their practice skills. It also provides an opportunity for BQCC graduates to gain exposure to more complex child and youth care theory and practise as well as develop their writing skills.

As we are piloting this course it will involve *no cost to the student* thanks to the support of the **Royal Netherlands Embassy**.

The pilot will start in January 2002. Those interested in applying in the following regions, please contact the person indicated:

#### **WESTERN CAPE**

*Jeanny Karth 021-762 6076*

#### **EASTERN CAPE**

*Mpho Ntshokoma 043-642 5595*

#### **BORDER**

*Pat Heyman 043-642 5595*

**NACCW**





## NAMIBIA CHILDLINE SCHOOLS PROJECT

**C**hildline has now been operating in schools for over three years. Over 20,000 children have seen our show, which aims to educate them on how to protect themselves from child abuse and HIV/AIDS. We also emphasise that people who are HIV positive should not be rejected and also discuss domestic violence.

The programme was initially based on a Canadian video also called 'Feeling Yes, Feeling No'. Starting with the premise that every individual has unique things that they like and dislike, we tell the children that they can say, 'NO!' if anyone gives them a 'no feeling'. Using playful interaction with the children, song and drama (including getting the children to act themselves), we cover stranger danger, good/bad secrets and the importance of telling someone you trust who then helps you if any dangerous situations arise.

In Windhoek the focus is on Grade 3 children as they are the oldest grade that does not change classrooms for different periods and their English comprehension is generally adequate. When necessary the show is performed in Afrikaans and the actors are also able to translate into Damara/Nama and Oshiwambo. We have recently appointed an Oshihero actress. This year the coordinator has been visiting classes who saw the show in previous years and it is heartening to see how much they remember, including the song and details of character's names. On request we have visited pre-schools and have developed a show for older primary school and secondary school learners. The secondary school show incorporates discussion on drugs and sugar daddies.

We also perform a play for adults on domestic violence and child abuse entitled 'A Moment in Our Lives', by Laurinda Olivier-Sampson. We have performed for the VSO National Conference and received the following feedback: 'Childline actors were fab', 'very impressive', 'excellent use of role-play and drama to impart such crucial information'.

This year we visited Schools for the Visually, Mentally and Hearing Impaired. Based on discussions with the teachers, we saw that it was very important that we visit their children. We also visited Osire Refugee Camp.

The team have all completed the LifeLine counselling course. We can now counsel troubled children when they approach us in schools. Other training courses run by the Legal Assistance Centre have been in drama, dance and art therapy. We have just returned from a study tour to Cape Town sponsored by the VSO-RAISA Regional Linkages Programme. We visited LifeLine/Childline offices, other therapists and a number of theatre in education companies.

**Karen Berger – Childline Coordinator**



*A letter received from Quinton Platt*

## **Global Movement for Children**

**8 September 2001**



### **NAMIBIAN CHILD DAY – “INVEST IN THE CHILD”**

**A**s a child of Africa it is my honour to be an Agent of Change for my country Namibia, my organisation (COLS) & also for our precious children that face fear in their daily lives. I'm standing in the gap for those that are crying for love, crying for education, crying for shelter, crying for security and crying for food to fill their stomachs. As an African child, everyday I had to face my brothers from the streets, fighting and robbing people to survive, because they lost their parents to HIV/AIDS.

My African brothers face poverty and starvation, because nobody invests in their lives. Everyday we carry weapons (guns) to fight against our own brothers, Why? Nobody teaches us to love but to hate. They believe that children are future leaders, but I want to ask them in a respectful way, to put children first. Let us be the leaders of today, tomorrow or the future is uncertain to us. Give us the opportunity to make decisions, accept challenges and make choices that will set us free, and not

to become slaves of those choices. We want you to give your very best to us this very moment. No one knows what tomorrow or the future will bring for us. As children of the world and especially Africa, don't leave this child out, don't give up hope on this child and especially those that face fear and a dark future.

Let us care for every child and let us carry every child through the storms. Let us become a torch for them during their dark times. ○

The story of a family – a mother, father, a child of four and grandfather.

The grandfather was getting old, his hands were shaky and at the meal table he spilled his tea and some food on the table and on the floor. The parents were getting tired of cleaning up after him and seeing the food fall from his mouth, so they sat him at a small table at the other end of the dining room. They also gave him a wooden bowl since he had broken a few plates. One day the four-year-old child was playing on the floor with some pieces of wood. The father asked him what he was doing. The son replied excitedly “Daddy, I'm making you and mommy a wooden bowl for when I grow up.” The father wept and knew his mistake by the actions of his son. The family brought grandfather back to the table, didn't mind when he spilled things, and also gave him proper plates. This family still had time to change their ways. What about us?



# WHO IS DISABLED?

If you fail to see the person  
but only the disability  
Then who is blind?

If you cannot hear your  
brother's cry for justice  
Who is deaf?

If you do not communicate  
with your sister  
but separate her from you  
Who is disabled?

If your heart or mind does  
not reach out to your neighbour  
Who has the mental handicap?

If you do not stand up for the  
rights of all persons  
Who is the cripple?

Our attitude towards  
people with disabilities  
may be our biggest barrier  
and yours too



© Malo Songololo

*(Dept. of Education)*

*3 December 2001  
International Day of Disabled Persons*