# The Effective Child and Youth Care Intervention: A Phenomenological Inquiry

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## ABSTRACT

Although the field of child and youth care has in recent years attempted to develop a framework for the child and youth care method of intervention, the effective child and youth care intervention is something about which very little has been written. In essence, we know little about why child and youth care interventions are sometimes effective and are, at other times, of no apparent consequence for the youth who experience them. While creative literature within the field has attempted to describe the experience, no research has been conducted into the phenomenon of the effective child and youth care intervention.

An interpretative phenomenological inquiry was undertaken into the lived experiences of participants to effective child and youth care interventions. Three (3) dyads of subjects (3 child and youth care workers and 3 adolescents) were engaged in focused narrative interviews to elicit their individual descriptions of a common experience of intervention which the youth had described as effective or meaningful for them. The goal of the inquiry was to understand better the experience of the effective child and youth care intervention.

From this inquiry themes relevant to the process and experience of the effective child and youth care intervention emerged. These are presented separately as: 1) themes from the process of intervention identified by the child and youth care workers, 2) themes from the process of intervention identified by the youth and 3) metathemes of effectiveness. The first two are descriptive interpretations of the process and the experience of the participants to the interventions. The third are interpretations by the author of the elements or characteristics of the interventions which may offer some understanding of why the interventions were considered to be effective by the youth.

The themes which emerged from the inquiry are integrated with knowledge from the literature of the field and the author then reflects on possible implications for child and youth care practice, based on how he has made meaning of the experience of the inquiry and his conversations about the interventions with the youth and the child and youth care workers.

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Dr. Frances Ricks was a constant source of creative and intellectual stimulation from the first day I decided to apply to the university. Her knowledge of the helping relationship, her ability to challenge, her joy in learning, and her continual belief in the value of this inquiry were a source of on-going inspiration.

The youth who participated are unnamed due to the need to provide them with confidentiality. Without their participation this inquiry would not have existed. Their willingness to participate and the openness with which they did so, reinforces the belief that youth have as much to offer as any of the more traditional experts in the field.

The child and youth care workers also remain unnamed. Their ability to allow me such a deep and unrestricted access to their stories of experience has earned my eternal respect and gratitude. With them, I learned a great deal about the process and experience of caring for troubled youth.

The numerous colleagues who served as members of my 'invisible committee' helped me to shape my thinking and provided me with support in those moments when the light at the end of the tunnel seemed in danger of burning out. I am grateful especially to Drs. Gale Burford, Grant Charles, Gerry Fewster, Leon Fulcher, Henry Maier, Penny Parry, and Dr. Karen VanderVen who was the external examiner for this dissertation. I also owe a special debt to Dr. Antoinette Oberg whose contextually grounded questions helped me to cultivate my own.

Finally, it was within the circle of Sylviane's caring that I found the courage to undertake this project.

Dedicated

to

**Sylviane Desjardins**

because she did not turn off the power to the light at the end of the tunnel,
although she must have been tempted at times.
Without her support and encouragement this day would not have arrived.

". . . I can address myself only to my experience of the world, to that blending with the world that recommences for me each morning as soon as I open my eyes, to that flux of perpetual life between it and myself which beats unceasingly from morning to night . . ."

- Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 35

# CHAPTER ONE

## An Introduction to This Dissertation

### 1A: Overview

This dissertation evolves from my curiosity, experience, and studies in child and youth care. It includes the writing of a phenomenological inquiry into the experience and process of the effective child and youth care intervention. The inquiry involved narrative interviews with three dyads, each consisting of a youth and a child and youth care worker who had experienced an effective child and youth care intervention. The youth, who at the time of the interventions would have been described as 'troubled' (Whittaker, 1979), had all been all out-of-care for approximately one year at the time of this inquiry. The interventions occurred while they were living in a group home for adolescents. The child and youth care workers who intervened with them were considered to be workers of experience and professional competence.

The questions which guided this process were:

What is the youth's experience of the effective child and youth care intervention?

What is the child and youth care worker's experience of a child and youth care intervention identified as effective by the youth who experienced it?

Are there commonalities in the differing experiences of an effective child and youth care intervention?

What are the elements which seem to be important in an effective child and youth care intervention?

Essentially, the goal is to understand better the experience of the participants in the effective child and youth care intervention.

**Chapter One: An Introduction to this Dissertation** provides an overview and includes a brief story of one of my initial experiences as a child and youth care worker trying to engage with an adolescent in care. It is included because I believe that early experiences of a phenomenon help to shape our future

experiences of them, just as subsequent experiences help us to re-interpret, or re-write, our earlier experiences. This story represents one of the places from which I began this voyage of inquiry into the child and youth care intervention.

**Chapter Two: Preparation for the Inquiry** reflects the preparation I undertook for this dissertation. It includes a history of the child and youth care intervention, an identification of the process through which I turned to phenomenological inquiry, and an introduction to the possible role of meaning making in child and youth care practice. It will serve the reader as a foundation for the inquiry which follows.

**Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods** addresses elements of my approach to inquiring into these child and youth care interventions. It includes an orientation to phenomenological inquiry and lived experience, discusses elements of context which may have impacted on the inquiry, explains the approach taken to the interviews, describes the process of those interviews, and delineates the approach taken to working with the text which came from them.

**Chapter 4: Descriptive Interpretations: Themes from the Process of Intervention** attempts to capture the process and the experience of the interventions which were the focus of this inquiry. It includes descriptive interpretations of the participants and their interventions, the relationships which existed before the interventions, actions of the child and youth care workers, and actions of the youth. It also includes an interpretation of the youths' interpretations of the interventions.

**Chapter 5: Interpretations: Metathemes of Effectiveness** is my attempt to understand, to know more about, why it was that these interventions were, over time, experienced by the youth as having been effective. In this chapter I describe elements of the process and characteristics of the participants which may have allowed for this effectiveness or meaningfulness to emerge for the youth. It also includes, in the words of the youth, the importance and meaning of these interventions to them.

**Chapter 6: Reflections and Implications** speaks to some of the possible implications which arise from this inquiry. Given that the goal of phenomenological inquiry is to make explicit the specific case in an attempt to capture the essence of an experience, and remembering that this inquiry has focused on *these* people and *these* experiences, this chapter reflects the understanding which has evolved for me as a result of this process. In effect, it demonstrates the meaning which I have made of this experience.

In summary, this dissertation reflects an attempt to understand better some of what makes a particular child and youth care intervention effective, through an inquiry into the lived experiences of three youth and child and youth care worker dyads who had such an experience. Through an analysis of the texts of our conversations, I have presented an interpretation of why these interventions might have worked for the youth who experienced them. From this experience, and the integration of this experience with my previous experiences and knowledge, I have developed a different understanding of the effective child and youth care intervention with troubled youth. Finally, I indicate some of the meaning I have made of the understanding which has evolved in me as a result of this process.

In essence, this dissertation is a story; the story of my inquiry into the stories of the participants' experiences. It has been a unique and profound experience for me. It has changed, probably forever, the way that I think about and work with troubled youth and their families. Although one cannot generalize from such an inquiry into a specific phenomenon, I believe that these participants have shared with us information which has the potential to influence our future work and studies. I begin with a description of one of my earliest experiences in child and youth care, for it is back then that this story really began.

## 1B: A Lived Memory of a First Engagement

I remember the first day I walked into a unit of disturbed kids. That's what they were called then, although now we have more sophisticated and politically correct labels but they are still labels which talk more about us than about them; 'us and them' it still remains, in spite of our efforts to join with youth and their families. In those days we called these youth emotionally disturbed, because their emotions were disturbing for us. Sometimes we called them behaviorally disturbed, because their behaviour disturbed us. Now we call them troubled, because they trouble us.

I looked around me that first day. I saw the energy and vibrancy of unrestrained, painful, adolescent exuberance bouncing almost physically from the walls of the old Victorian house on the hill. As most programs were then, the house was isolated from the community 'for the benefit of the children'. No one wanted them to be too distracted or tempted by the glitter and seductiveness of the city and back then no one worried about the inconvenience such a location caused for the parents who might want to visit. So the children were placed in a run down old mansion perched delicately on a hilltop over-looking the city they were forbidden to enter. In later years I would sit together with youth some nights on the balcony watching the city lights flicker like fallen stars and talk about the metaphor of this isolation and the stress inherent in seeing everyday the things you cannot have.

But the real reason the house was on the hill was to protect the community. 'Keep them away and out of sight, for then they won't disturb us,' was the message the children heard. 'Out of sight, out of mind,' as the old adage goes.

That afternoon as I entered that old house for the first time, I bathed in the energy and the action. To tell the truth, I felt like I had walked into a manifestation of me. The turmoil I experienced around me resonated with some inner aspect of myself, one that I had been trying to tame for years. It was like I had opened the door and strolled into the chamber of my self. 'I have come

home' is the only expression which captures my memory of my experience of that moment.

I strolled over to the dining room table where a group of adolescents was sitting, playing cards, smoking, and talking adolescent talk. Although they had that particularly adolescent appearance of doing nothing, they were in fact engaged in the most important of adolescent developmental activities. They were living daily life. Juggling and jostling, navigating and exploring, they were finding their own personal pathway through the turbulent transition to adulthood. I didn't know what to do so, uninvited, I pulled out a chair and sat down to join in their adventure.

They all looked at me. Marty spoke for the group, "Who the fuck are you?"

As I was to realize in later years, I probably should have thought a lot more before I sat down, and I probably should have thought a lot more before I spoke. But I had this framed as home. So where I was coming from, the answer to his question was "I'm me. Who are you?" But, let me do a little aside here.

This was twenty five years ago. There were no rules then. There was no education, training or supervision for child care workers. There were only the stories we told each other about our experiences, our successes, and our failures. This was the way we had of transmitting our understanding and knowledge. It's like what Bruner (1990) was referring to when he talked about 'folk psychology'. In those days you were hired to be a child care worker because you seemed to be able to handle yourself, you liked kids, and you'd had some life experience. That was it. There was no established and correct way of being a child care worker or of intervening with kids. There were only the routine ways of the unit you were working in at the time. You followed the routines, mirrored the habituated patterns of other workers, and hoped that you were doing it right. But back to Marty.

"Who the fuck are you?" he'd asked.

A little laugh jumped from me into the middle of the table. I recall thinking, 'What a greeting! What a wonderful demonstration of adolescent maleness!' The laughter was a release of anxiety too, no question about it. It was the pleasure of relief. This guy was just what he should be: straight, up-front, adolescent, male, leader, defender, hot-shot, face-maker, assertive, aggressive, in charge, protective, open, obvious, caring, arrogant, territorial, macho, cool, unafraid, quick. He was late 1960's male adolescence personified. I liked him right away. He reminded me, of course, of me. That's why I wasn't frightened. In experiencing him, I experienced me. In thinking he was me, I thought I knew how to respond.

"It's nice to meet you, too. I'm Thom. Who're you?"

"Marty!" he snapped back. "What's so funny?"

He was looking me right in the eye and at the same time monitoring the effect of his performance on the group around the table, ready to change as necessary, depending on the feedback he received from the group. Now that's a special skill that successful adolescents have. They can do, and watch, at the same time. As they are doing, and watching the effect of their doing, they can modify their doing so that they have the effect they want on those that are watching.

"Hi, Marty. Nothing's funny. I'm just happy to be here."

From the corner of my eye I saw some of the others around the table relax a little. So did Marty. He saw them relax, he saw me see them relax and I think he guessed, correctly, that I was going to introduce myself to the others. He had a choice to make and he had to make it quick.

He could move to block what he thought I was going to do and try to stay in control that way or he could try to take charge of what I was going to do and *appear* to stay in control. He choose the latter. So he turned to the group and introduced them to me. He told me their names and a little bit about them all. He was in charge. This was his group and he'd made a decision.

When he had finished the round table he turned back to me and without a shift in intonation, he asked, "So, why are you here?"

There we were, engaged and on our way. I had completed a child and youth care intervention. For some reason that was beyond my understanding it had just worked. The problem was, I didn't know why.

I spent the next twenty-five years trying to figure it out. This dissertation is part of that search.

# CHAPTER TWO

## Preparation for the Inquiry

### 2A: History of the Child and Youth Care Intervention

This dissertation inquires into the experience and the process of the effective child and youth care intervention with troubled adolescents. In order to place this writing in an appropriate historical context, this section provides an overview of the literature on this subject and identifies the need for a better understanding of the child and youth care intervention.

Child and youth care work evolved in the old tradition of oral 'folk knowledge' (Bruner, 1990) within which practice information passed by word of mouth and apprenticeship (Peterson, Young & Tillman, 1990) from one generation of workers to the next. Child and youth care workers received no formal training in child and youth care practice, on how to do what it is they were employed to do (Krueger, 1978). The training and/or education the worker did receive about the practice of working with troubled children came through experience on the floor and in interaction with other child and youth care workers who had greater experience. Yet child and youth care practice is not a new form of helping.

It has been argued that the recordings and practice of Itard, working in France in the early 19th century (McDermott, 1994), and the work of other early 20th century European pioneers such as Korzak of Poland (Brendtro & Ness, 1983) represented the beginnings of modern child and youth care practice. However, with some notable exceptions directed towards specific staff populations (e.g., The Ohio Committee on Children's Institutions, 1941), practice literature for the field started to make a significant appearance only in the early 1950's with the publication of books such as Bettelheim's (1950) Love is Not Enough or Redl & Wineman's (1951) Children Who Hate. This literature reflected the beginning of a break with the tradition of child and youth care workers being uneducated and untrained for their work.

Historically, child and youth care was controlled, managed, and informed by those outside of the field, psychiatrists, psychologists, religious groups, social workers, and others who dictated to the field from outside of the field's base of experience (Garfat, 1988a). Child and youth care workers were not positioned to be able to write about or inform their own field for a number of reasons. They were considered to be on the lowest rung of the professional ladder (Eisikovits, 1991) so little respect was paid to their knowledge. Because they were generally under-educated and untrained, their ability to express their knowledge in a way which would be readily acceptable to other professionals was extremely limited and they did not consider their knowledge or knowing to be of worth due to the low opinion which they held of themselves (Krueger, 1978, 1986).

Gradually child and youth care has come to be a field more and more in control of its own development (Garfat, 1992c). As those who have come into the field from other disciplines and those who grew up in the field have come to articulate practice and theory from a child and youth care perspective, the field has begun the process of informing itself. There now exists a wealth of literature written by those who know the field from the inside (Krueger, 1991). Articulated theory has become driven by an experiential practice base (Brendtro & Ness, 1983).

This evolution in the child and youth care paralleled developments within the helping professions and society as a whole. The advent of consumer advocacy and the subsequent development of consumer involvement and consumer empowerment movements in the social services (Whittaker, 1979) found a natural ally in child and youth care. Workers identified easily with the liberation of a group (clients) whom they considered to be as oppressed and de-valued as themselves.

During this period the field began to identify the characteristics which defined it as unique from other approaches to the care and treatment of troubled children. Primary among these was the idea that child and youth care workers

utilize daily life events as the arena for facilitating change (Bath, in press; Fox, in press; Garfat, 1989). What Maier (1987b) has called the 'minutia of everyday life' or what Peterson (1988) has called 'naturally occurring therapeutic opportunities' were seen as central to the child and youth care way of helping. These expressions encompass the notion that child and youth care workers operate within the lifespace of the child (Jones, 1985a; Redl, 1959), facilitating change from within that lifespace position. This developing definition recognizes that the child and youth care worker co-exists in a shared living experience with the child within which daily life events provide the opportunity for therapeutic intervention.

Literature reflecting interest in, or concern with, a child and youth care approach to therapeutic work with troubled children and youth began to appear in the 1950's within the area of residential group care. In 1951 Redl and Wineman, inspired by the work of Aichorn (1935) and Bettelheim (1950), published Children Who Hate, which provided a framework for understanding the aggressive and delinquent youth who were common in group care at the time. This was followed in 1952 by Controls From Within which offered for the first time a framework and set of techniques specifically designed for the treatment of children and youth in "institutions, reformatories and detention homes" (Redl & Wineman, 1952, p. 10). These two books stand as hallmark literature for they began the process of defining the role of the child and youth care worker in the therapeutic milieu. In them, Redl and Wineman laid the foundation of the characteristics of environmental programming considered necessary for effective milieu therapy and the position of the child and youth care worker in supporting and maintaining that environment.

Others, like Maier (1955, 1957, 1960) and Meyer (1958), contributed to the definition of the role and tasks of the child and youth care workers in the residential environment, most specifically in terms of the maintenance of a therapeutic environment and their involvement in the activities of daily living (Maier, 1957). This articulation of the role of the child and youth care worker in maintaining and facilitating the therapeutic milieu continued with the works of

Beker (1972), Burmeister (1960), Trieschman, Whittaker & Brendtro (1969) and others until, by the mid-1970's, the role of the child and youth care worker was established in the literature as a milieu worker who's primary responsibility was to ensure the effectiveness of the therapeutic environment through involvement in the daily life activities of children. At the same time, however, the literature began to recognize a uniqueness to the child and youth care method of helping which reached beyond the role of environmental support.

Living with the children 24 hours a day caused the child and youth care worker to participate in all aspects of the children's lives, to share a 'life space' with them (Jones, 1985a; Redl, 1959). It was the child and youth care worker's involvement in this lifespace of the child that gradually evolved into an approach to intervention which has become identified as one of the most basic characteristics of child and youth care practice - *the utilization of daily life events, as they are occurring, for therapeutic purposes* (Bath, in press; Fox, in press; Fewster, 1990a; Fulcher, 1991; Garfat, 1989, 1994b; Guttmann, 1991).

As the role of the milieu worker continued to develop, theory and practice within the field gradually became more systemic. Writers like Vorrath and Brendtro (1974) and Maier (1979a) focused on the interactive dimension of child and youth care practice. In 1979, Whittaker introduced the notion of 'parents as partners' as the practice of child and youth care expanded to include families as active participants in the treatment of their troubled children. The role of schools, recreation centres, and other community programs began to be considered as a part of the child's system and the 1970's and 1980's saw an expansion of child and youth care practice into the community (see, for example, Anglin, 1988). The need to consider these elements of the child's system as part of the context of treatment, as advocated by Bronfenbrenner (1977, 1979), was firmly established within the field. Child and youth care, as developed in the community of residential care, had expanded beyond the individual and beyond the walls of the institution.

Throughout this development in the field the child and youth care worker's position continued to be seen as primarily external to the child's system working from the "outside-in" (Duhl, 1983). Essentially, the position of the child and youth care worker was one of standing outside of the child's system, manipulating the child, the interactions, or the environment in order to facilitate change in the child's behaviour. The child and youth care worker was essentially an agent of social control directing and manipulating the child's behaviour so that it conformed to a socially-acceptable form (Fewster & Garfat, 1993). There was also, however, a small but constant stream running through the literature which addressed the characteristics and quality of the interaction between the child and youth care worker and the youth. This stream looked at the relationship between worker and child as the essential component of the caring, therapeutic child and youth care intervention (Maier, 1979b). First introduced with the life-space interview (Redl, 1959), through which the worker attempts to understand the child's experience within the child's life space, this focus on the interactive relationship was expanded by Brendtro (1969) who attempted to define the characteristics of an effective child and youth care relationship and especially by Maier (1979b) who, in looking at the core elements of care, argued that an effective therapeutic relationship involves the establishment of rhythmicity in actions between the worker and child. In doing so, Maier invited the child and youth care worker into a shared rhythmic experience with the child.

Following these early introductions, numerous authors focused on the quality of the relationship between worker and child as it affected therapeutic effectiveness (e.g., Fewster, 1990a, 1990b; Krueger, 1988; Maier, 1988). In the 1980's the focus had shifted to include the child and youth care worker not only as a person maintaining or manipulating the environment but also as a person actively engaged in a therapeutically caring relationship (Austin & Halpin, 1989) with the child. The field had begun to redefine the 'care' in child and youth care. The

ground was prepared for the development and articulation of a type of intervention particular to child and youth care work.

As this focus on a therapeutic interventive relationship emerged in the field, there was a concurrent concern expressed for the personal characteristics and experiencing of the child and youth care worker as they impacted on and influenced the quality of that relationship. Values and beliefs of the worker became an important area of focus (Krueger, 1988) as did the worker's clinical lens. This lens, developed through a personal and professional history, influences a workers understanding, interventions, and meaning-making (Durrant, 1993; Goffman, 1959, 1961; Schon, 1983). It was not, however, until Ricks (1989) introduced her self-awareness model for child and youth care workers, that the notion of the child and youth care worker as an experiencing, and aware-of-experience, person became firmly established as an important concern for the field. With her model, Ricks emphasized that the individual characteristics and experiencing of the worker are an essential area for study and development in child and youth care practice. Caring became a professional issue, not just a personal characteristic of the child and youth care worker. At this point in the development of the field the effective child and youth care worker was seen as a self-aware individual operating in a systemic context, utilizing daily life events as they are occurring, in a shared therapeutic experience with the youth.

As this development in the role and practice of the child and youth care worker continued, literature in the field also began to define the specific uniqueness of the child and youth care intervention (see, for example, Fewster & Garfat, 1990). While earlier writings had identified that the child and youth care way involved the utilization of daily life events for therapeutic purposes, a few authors began to attempt descriptions of the specific process of intervention by child and youth care workers. In 1988, Krueger identified the child and youth care intervention as involving entry into, and disruption of, a maladaptive behaviour cycle of the youth. With the publication of Being in Child Care,

Fewster (1990a) placed the experiencing child and youth care worker in an interpersonal caring relationship as central to therapeutic interventions. Eisikovits, Beker, and Guttmann (1991) in articulating a process of knowledge utilization in residential child and youth care work emphasized the relationship between intervention and context and made the first suggestion that it is the role of the child and youth care worker in entering into the child's 'flow of experiencing' which defines the child and youth care relationship as unique from other forms of intervention. Garfat & Newcomen (1992), following up on the model developed by Ricks and Garfat (1989) for child and youth care family interventions, offered a further framework for the child and youth care intervention which placed the characteristics, values and beliefs of the youth and the child and youth care worker, in a shared experience, as central to the process of decision-making, action, and intervention. This approach, labelled interventive care by VanderVen (1992b), led to the development of the concept of the interventive moment (Garfat, 1994b), a term used to define the moment when an intervention is either enacted (Fulcher, 1991) or when the potential for an effective intervention exists.

A major outcome of this development within child and youth care has been the challenge to workers to engage with the experience of the youth as that experience is occurring, and to work with the youth to live differently in the context within which they find themselves (Fewster, 1990a). The challenge is to enter into the 'flow of immediacies' (Guttmann, 1991) rather than to stand outside that flow and intervene from the outside-in; to become, with the child, the co-creator of the contextual therapeutic environment (Maier, 1994; Peterson, 1988) within which the interaction is occurring. All of this presumed that child and youth care workers were concurrently aware of their own experiencing.

There has been considerable progress in describing the child and youth care form of intervention. Yet while the field has placed great emphasis on the

characteristics and experiencing of the child and youth care worker as important in the interventive interaction, little within the field has studied or described the experience of the youth or the child and youth care worker in the interventive process. Although some literature has shown a concern for the youth's experience of the global intervention of being placed in care (e.g., Garfat, Craig & Joseph, 1988; Popp, 1991; Rachyaba, 1993; Rose, 1991), and other literature has attempted through creative writing to expose the experiencing and processing of the child and youth care worker (e.g., Desjardins & Freeman, 1991; Fewster, 1990a; Freeman, 1992, 1993a; Krueger, 1987, 1990) or the youth (Freeman, 1994) there is little written evidence that the field knows directly about the participant's specific experience of, or in, the child and youth care interventive interaction.

While child and youth care has evolved to operate within a systemic, ecological framework (Hare, 1992) within which the characteristics of the worker are now seen as instrumental in determining effective outcome (Garfat 1994b; Ricks, 1993 ), little attention has been paid to the experiencing of either partner in this interaction. Yet the child and youth care literature is full of references to the idea that youth and child and youth care worker share a 'being together' in relationship (Fewster, 1990a), a common 'flow of experiencing' (Fulcher, 1991), a 'joint rhythmic experience' (Maier, 1992), a 'connectedness' (Krueger, 1994),. Indeed, it is this connectedness which is often expressed as being the essence of the child and youth care relationship. Current literature also emphasizes the importance of understanding the participant's process of meaning-making in child and youth care practice (Durrant, 1993; VanderVen, 1992a). Yet, no direct inquiry into these experiences has occurred. This omission represents a serious deficit in the child and youth care literature especially given the field's current emphasis on self-awareness and inclusion. Given that the emphasis in describing

the child and youth care intervention has moved to a consideration of the experiencing of the participants, an inquiry into that experiencing would seem to be necessary for our further development.

## 2B: Turning to Phenomenological Inquiry

Phenomenological research is, as van Manen (1990) stated, "always a project of someone: a real person, who, in the context of particular individual, social and historical life circumstances sets out to make sense of a certain aspect of human existence." (p. 31) It involves, he argues, "*turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world*". (p.31) This dissertation represents just such a "setting out" and "turning to".

The aspect of human experience which is the focus of this dissertation is the child and youth care intervention. It is an aspect of the field which to date has remained relatively unexplored. While the field has begun to show a concern for the meaning of our interventions for troubled youth and their families (Durrant, 1993), there appears to be no literature in the field of child and youth care which has investigated the experience of the participants to this phenomenon. It is the intention of this dissertation to inquire into the intervention experiences of youth and child and youth care workers and to expose those experiences for a greater understanding of the intervention process.

This has been both a professional and a personal journey of exploration which resulted from my career experiences in child and youth care. On a professional level it reflects how this inquiry and dissertation emerge naturally from the development of the field to date. On a personal level it reflects the evolution of my own thinking and focus within an evolving field as a child and youth care professional searching for a way to understand the phenomenon of the child and youth care intervention.

I did not come easily to the questions addressed by this dissertation, nor did I come easily to research in general or the methodology of phenomenology in particular. As the following entry from my personal log of February 13, 1994 demonstrates, this process has required me to confront my own assumptions, biases, and prejudices.

> *The word 'research' has obviously held some important assumptions for me, other than the ones associated with statistics and things mathematical. I have conceived of research as a de-humanizing process; one in which, through dissection, analysis, and codification, the human experience is lost and in loosing the experience the existence of the person is denied. Have I then seen research as a murderous process? One in which the magic and mystery of existence is slaughtered and sacrificed to the Great God of Analysis. Have I seen it as a process of the destruction of self?*
>
> *In saying that I sense my own fear of being denied out of existence and I wonder if my resistance has evolved from my own fear of disappearing; of ceasing to exist as myself, for myself. This has been a subtheme at various points of my life but how could it have ever become associated with research? How could I have assumed that this intellectual, analytical process had anything to do with me?*
>
> *The image of fitting 'unfitting' things in to pre-formed boxes comes to mind. If you take me and shape me to fit in your box, I am no longer who I am. I am form denied and reconstituted to fit your desire. If I am so re-formed will I ever be me again?*
>
> *I notice the play of the words pre-formed and re-formed in my language and am reminded of the attempts of others in my life to reform me and to modify my pre-form-ance.*
>
> *It has been the struggle of my life to be me - formed and shaped by my own desire - to lead myself to wherever I go and to not let others determine how, or who, I will be.*
>
> *So what if I allowed that research has been a metaphor about me. That it is a place/thing onto which I have chosen to project elements of my own fears - like:*
>
> ** if you dissect me I will no longer be me*
> ** if you know me too well you will not like me*
> ** if you can predict me you can control me*

> *But there is another projection here as well which has to do with how I see myself as a learner and how I have given to research/researcher/scientists the highest of positions - comparable only to philosophers. And because I believe(d?) that I was not worthy/capable/competent I shied away from the territory in which my ignorance/incompetence/stupidity would be revealed. For I have lived as an imposter to myself - believing always that someday I would be discovered and when I was discovered, I would loose everything. My god. No wonder I have avoided research.*
>
> *I am not interested any longer in knowing 'why' these things came to be - of searching for understanding and possibly blame. Rather, I am interested in moving on. It is enough for me to know that I have constructed an absurd and irrational fear and I can de-construct it as well.*

This confrontation with self did not come about casually. It came as a result of my desire to articulate a framework for the child and youth care intervention. In reviewing the literature, and immersing myself in the values of the field, I came to realize that while there had been some attempts to articulate such a framework (e.g., Beker, Eisikovits & Guttman, 1991; Garfat & Newcomen, 1992; Krueger, 1988; Ricks & Garfat, 1989), none of these had incorporated the perspective of the child or youth which seemed to be valued by the field (e.g., Garfat, 1990). On further reflection, I also realised that no attempt at defining the process of the child and youth care intervention had incorporated the perspective of the child and youth care worker experiencing the intervention. Thus, although the field was committed to the concept of inclusion, the experience of the participants to the intervention had to date been excluded. I felt that in order to continue with the development of a framework for the child and youth care intervention which was congruent with the values of the field, I had no choice but to include this 'experiencing' of the participants. I determined that I must define the process of the child and youth care intervention from the 'inside-out' rather than from the 'outside-in' as has been the case to date in the literature of the field. Given the lack of information on this within the field, I realised that if I

wanted to understand or know this thing, I would have no choice but to investigate it myself. Yet still I resisted the idea of research because of how I had conceptualized it.

While I knew that I needed to know something that was not revealed in the literature of the field of child and youth care, it was not until I re-read Researching lived experience: Towards an action-sensitive pedagogy by van Manen (1990), that I realised that there was a form of research which fit my own values and orientation and was appropriate for the questions which were forming for me. The following comes from my personal log dated February 15, 1994.

> *Tonight I decided to try reading Researching Lived Experience again. I took that book only and went out for fisherman's soup. I sat alone in the corner of a not-busy restaurant and read - and read. And enjoyed it - what has/had happened that I like this book now? When I came again to the section - Investigating experience as we live it - everything had changed. Now I wanted to do a particular piece of research. The 'meaning' of research has changed for me - I think of it more like investigating - the connotations are different. By the time I had finished my soup I wanted to investigate this thing I am calling the interventive moment. I saw, and wanted to know, how this is experienced/ thought of by others. I have my frame of reference but how does that compare to that of others? Can I find a way to understand and articulate their experience so that I can refine/redo this framework for the interventive process in a way that is congruent (more) with how it is experienced?*

The passion which arose in me that night as I encountered this approach called hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry has guided me throughout the process of this dissertation. Like a child and youth care worker learning to deal effectively with his own business in the process of intervention, I have found an approach, a methodology, and a process which fits for me and is appropriate to the desired intervention. For this dissertation is an intervention. It is an intervention into the field of child and youth care, intentionally conceived in an attempt to alter a system; our system of thinking about the child and youth care intervention.

This dissertation is an attempt to contribute to a re-writing of our understanding of the effective child and youth care intervention. It includes an inquiry into the nature of the lived experience of the intervention of both the youth and the child and youth care worker involved in the process. I have conducted this process of inquiry in a manner that I believe respects the values and beliefs of the field today. It is respectful of the individuals involved, respectful of the current state of knowledge of the field, inclusive rather than exclusive, participant-centred, transparent, developmentally grounded in the field's current state of evolution, process-orientated, personal, and professional. I have participated in this process as much as possible in a self-aware manner seeking feedback on the process from both the participants to the interviews which are a part of the inquiry and also of those who represent the current state of the development and knowledge of the field (i.e., those who would be commonly known as experts).

As van Manen advocates, I have attempted to live this question; the question of "what makes for an effective child and youth care intervention with youth?"

## 2C:Meaning Making in Child and Youth Care

Is meaning made? If so, what does it mean to make meaning? Is meaning inherent, already existent in a person, thing, or event before we identify or articulate our experience of it? If so, how can we say that we make meaning? If meaning exists independent of our construction of it how do we come to know the meaning of something? Are we, as Yalom (1989) suggests, "each of us even responsible for the structure of external reality . . ."? (p. 8)

There are no definitive answers to these questions; ultimately they are questions of philosophy, of basic human beliefs about the world and our position in it. Whether one believes that meaning is made, or that it exists independent of

one's experience, depends on the philosophical position adopted in relation to the world in which one experiences oneself. Why one adopts a particular position may be a reflection of one's culture (Bruner, 1990), one's time (Polanyi, 1962), and/or one's personal history (Gadamer, 1976; Polster, 1987). Ultimately we have no proof that any of these factors are finally responsible for the position one adopts. There are only theoretical speculations and correlative observations.

Until recently (e.g., Durrant, 1993; Garfat, 1994a; Guttman, 1991; Krueger, 1994; VanderVen, 1992a), meaning-making has not been the subject of explicit concern or discussion in the child and youth care literature. It has been raised implicitly however, through the discussion of such subjects as the clinical lens and position through which one perceives a situation (Ricks, 1988, 1993), the interpretations child and youth care workers make regarding the locus of experience in their relationships with youth (Fewster, 1990a), the analysis of relationships from a phenomenological perspective (Austin & Halpin, 1987, 1988), and the context of inter-subjective communications (Baizerman, 1993; Freeman, 1993a, 1993b; Freeman, 1994; Polsky, 1994). While these implicit references have been made, the role and function of meaning-making has not been addressed. In essence, meaning-making has no explicit history in the child and youth care literature. It is only now entering the field through the influence of specific family therapy orientations which involve the use of narrative approaches (e,g., Durrant, 1993; White & Epston, 1990) such as story-telling and autobiographical reconstruction (see, for example, Thomson, 1994).

Within the helping professions there seems to be a substantial belief that reality and meaning are created or construed by the individual experiencing them. To quote Watzlawick (1990), "as far as I know, the belief in 'real' reality has survived only in psychiatry." (p.134) However, it has also been my experience that many child and youth care practitioners act as if meaning is absolute. They

behave as if the meaning of something, as they perceive it to be, is the *real* meaning. They do not question whether or not the meaning which they have adopted was accepted or created by themselves in the course of their experiences. Watzlawick (1990) has stated that, if these people do believe that reality is constructed, they "assume that all other reality constructions are false" (p.137) and they behave in a manner which opposes or attacks those other constructions.

As one might expect in the absence of an absolute truth, there are a variety of approaches to understanding how one makes meaning of a particular person, thing, or event which are reflected in the writings and practice of the helping professions. Ultimately it appears that one takes a position (Ricks, 1993) about what one believes about meaning and reality and through this lens-of-belief acts in a particular fashion, all too frequently closing one's mind to alternative ways of perceiving (Watzlawick, 1990).

How workers understand or make meaning of their experiences with children, youth, and families may well be an essential factor in determining how they think about and act with them (Durrant, 1993; Schon, 1983). Equally important may be the way in which children, youth, and families make meaning of their experiences of care and care-givers (Durrant, 1993). Indeed, meaning making may well permeate all aspects of the care-giving relationship. Before discussing the possible relevance of meaning-making in child and youth care practice, however, it is important to recognize some of the history of why or how this concept entered the helping professions.

**Meaning-making Enters the Helping Field**

While it is not possible to identify exactly how or where the term 'meaning-making' entered the helping literature, Bruner (1990) has argued that the focus on how meaning is construed evolved in North America in the early stages of the cognitive revolution as a reaction to the popularity of behaviourism in the late 1950's. In his words,

> Its [the cognitive revolution] aim was to discover and to describe formally the meanings that human beings created out of their encounters with the world, and then to propose hypotheses about what meaning-making process were implicated. It focused upon the symbolic activities that human beings employed in constructing and in making sense not only of the world, but of themselves. (p.2)

This is about the same time as the philosophy of Husserl, sometimes called the father of phenomenology was being accepted into North America (Lauer, 1965). The popularity of the phenomenological approach, which grew out of a reaction to the scientific psychology of the times in Europe, probably reflects as much as anything else a cultural reaction and readiness in a changing world. As Bruner (1990) has stated, human beings and their actions are the expression of a culture. The cultural shift in North America in the late fifties and early sixties towards a more ego-centric, 'me' orientation in human living and experiencing coincided with this shift in the helping professions to a more 'me' oriented belief in meaning making. Thus, North America was open to the influences of the European phenomenological philosophers. While this phenomenological shift had been occurring in Europe since the beginning of the century, particularity in Germany, translations of the works of philosophers such as Heiddeiger, Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, and others did not start to gain acceptance in North America until this cultural shift began (Lauer, 1965). It is not coincidental, therefore, that the helping professions, frustrated with the search for absolutes as represented in mainstream scientific psychology, adopted a similar phenomenological orientation as represented by the work of the Mental Research Institute staff in Palo Alto (Watzlawick, 1990).

It is also not surprising that child and youth care, operating as it has at a distance from academic, philosophic, and practice literature (Krueger, 1986), has only just begun to consider the implications of meaning-making for work with children and families. Although the field has begun to discuss the concept of meaning-making, no discussions have occurred regarding how meaning might be

made or the possible implications of meaning-making for child and youth care practice. In a recent review of the literature conducted by this author, for example, the only direct references to the concept of meaning-making were found in a one page discussion of its role in framing placement in residential care (Durrant, 1993), brief references by Baizerman (1993) and Freeman (1993a) as it relates to interventive dialogue in child and youth care practice, and a short discussion by Krueger (1994) in which he argues that meaning lies behind all actions in child and youth care.

**Two Orientations to Meaning-making**

Perhaps the greatest discussions regarding how meaning is created have been in the area of semantics, how one uses language, and the interpretation of words and sentences. In this area there exist two main streams of thinking. The first stream could be labelled the 'logio-philosophical camp' (Santambrogio & Violi, 1988) within which truth is seen as objective and "meaning is independent of individual minds" (Santambrogio & Viola, 1988, p. 5). The meaning of something is determined through knowing all its possible references in all possible situations, the possible-worlds approach. The true meaning of a thing can be discovered only through an analysis of all of these references.

It is generally acknowledged that the possible-worlds approach encompasses too much information for a single human mind to fathom, and that the ideas of truth and references "do not take any notice of what the human mind clearly contributes to the world as we see it" (Santambrogio & Viola, 1988, p. 8). Consequently, this thinking was extended through writings in the area of situational semantics, to consider that meaning is located in the relationship between the symbols one uses, the particular content of those symbols, the specific circumstances, and the shared conventions of the language community within which the communication between persons takes place (Barwise, 1988; Barwise & Perry, 1983). Context as a referent for meaning-making plays an important role

through a recognition of the possibility that meaning is located in the interaction between the individual and the environment.

The second stream is the approach as represented by cognitive semantics within which meaning is seen as being located in that which is "converted into speech by a speaker and conveyed to a hearer" (Eco, Santambrogio & Violi, 1988, p. 10). Meaning is thus more subject to interpretation by the participants in a communication. Objective truth references cease to exist and one becomes more concerned with how the individual is acting on experience to create a personal reality of understanding and meaning. The notions of prototypes, frames (Goffman, 1959, 1961, 1974), interpretive systems, and autobiographical narrative (Bruner, 1990) as ways of understanding how individuals are constructing meaning for themselves are therefore of great importance. Context is relevant as it construed by the individual experiencing it (Bateson, 1972; White & Epston, 1990). The individual conceptual structure is what constitutes reality and meaning in any communication context (Jackendoff, 1988). There is no such thing as reality independent of the individual experience.

It is this area of the individual's construction of reality as it relates to making meaning of an experience which is of the greatest interest to me in understanding the relationship between meaning-making and intervention in child and youth care practice. It suggests that how one has constructed their experience of any particular context and the meaning of that context to them may act as an overall frame for how one gives meaning to a particular intervention and thus how one responds to that intervention. We must be concerned, as Jackendoff (1988) has argued, with "the internal representation of what has been grasped" (p. 82) from one's encounter with external stimuli in order for us to understand how the individual is making sense of their experiences. This includes the experience or creation of the context within which, and as part of which, any other experiences might be interpreted.

We must be concerned with what is psychologically real in our work with youth and their families. Even though it may appear that some things do not exist in the world independent of an individual's construction of them, they must be an area of concern for us for "they are psychologically real, for they are in the world as we construe it" (Santambrogio & Viola, 1988, p. 15). Further, we must be concerned with not only how the client frames their experience but also how the practitioner frames problems and roles in their work (Schon, 1983) for any intervention must be constructed of the interaction between these two realities, that of the client and that of the worker. As Durrant (1993) has said, " . . . we have a choice about how we wish to view the people with whom we work" and ". . . the way we view them will have an impact on the way they are." (p.186)

The process of effective intervention involves the creation of a shared context, (Maier, 1994; Peterson, 1988) through the interaction of different constructions of reality, for the benefit of the client. Both the child and youth care worker and the youth bring to the interventive interaction their own way of making sense of that moment and of the context within which that moment occurs (Garfat, 1994a). We, as helpers, are at least partially responsible for the co-created contextual reality within which that intervention occurs and is interpreted by the client (Peterson, 1988). Perhaps the most useful tool for understanding this process of making meaning is the notion of interpretive systems as proposed by Bruner (1990).

**Interpretive Systems**

Bruner (1990) has argued for an acceptance and understanding of what he has called folk psychology, the "system by which people organize their experience in, knowledge about, and transactions with the social world." (p. 35) He argues that in every culture there exists such a folk psychology and that it is this system which forms the particular frame for people to understand and guide their behaviour, and within which meaning is given to actions. Within a particular folk psychology system actions come to be symbols which represent certain meanings

and in essence form an interpretive system. (p.34) In order to understand the meaning of a particular action one must understand the interpretive system which frames it.

Meaning is made in the context of a particular circumstance or culture (Barwise, 1988; Bruner, 1990). While the culture forms the framework for interpretation, the individual, influenced by the values and beliefs of the particular culture, brings to the meaning-making process their own particular idosyncratic orientation (Pharis, 1993). While two people raised in the same culture may have a tendency to give the same meaning to an action, the individual orientation will determine the final meaning which each gives to that action.

One could argue equally for the acceptance of a family folk psychology, an interpretive system of values and beliefs which operate in a family and serve as the frame for meaning making in that particular family. Each family's frame may be different, in ways dramatic or subtle, from the frame which operates in other families. The notion of a family frame may help us to understand why it appears that people tend to recreate in the therapeutic interaction the problems and dynamics which are present in their life outside of therapy (Yalom, 1990). It could also help us to understand why it is that a behaviour which a professional worker finds unacceptable may not be seen as a problem by family members. As Polanyi (1962) has stated ". . . anything that functions effectively in an accredited context has a meaning in that context . . ." (p. 58) Given that a family is for most people a validating context and that behaviours within a family serve an individual function (Garfat, 1988, 1991), the actions of a family member which we as professionals find unacceptable may be valued by the family because of the family's meaning frame. Thus a behaviour which appears meaningless in the context of care may be full of significance in the context of family experience carried in the youth's head.

Any child and youth care program, such as a group home, also has a culture of its own (Fulcher, 1991). This culture will include an interpretive frame

within which actions are given meaning by the staff. This system, which has evolved as the result of process of negotiating common meaning between staff members and the organization within which the program exists, influences how staff understand the actions of both youth and staff (Brendtro & Ness, 1983). This helps to explain why, for example, an unacceptable action in one program may be quite acceptable in another. Because the program meaning frames are different, the behaviour is interpreted differently by those who encounter it.

Group child and youth care involves the interaction of a variety of interpretive systems: that of the predominate culture within which treatment takes place, that of the youth's culture and family, that of the individual staff, that of the team, and that of the organization itself. All of these frames must be part of any consideration of meaning-making in child and youth care practice. The balance of this chapter, through the elaboration of two particularity relevant examples, attempts to demonstrate the possible importance of meaning-making in child and youth care practice.

**The Meaning of Being in Care**

By the time people encounter the care-system, they have already constructed a way of understanding this experience and its meaning in their lives. As Durrant (1993) has indicated, we go through a process of giving to an experience a definition which creates for each of us our individual way of knowing it. Making or giving meaning to an experience helps each of us to establish order in our experiencing (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), for meaning is the idiosyncratic significance that each of us gives to the connections between the experiences of our lives (Pharis, 1993). People seeking help, therefore, encounter the care system from within the interpretative frame which they are using to organize and give meaning to the experience.

In child and youth care practice we must concern ourselves not only with how people in general might experience the processes which we have created but also with how each individual might make meaning of them. We must also be

concerned with the meaning which we have given to the processes in which we are involved so that we can understand how our interpretation of events and actions within these processes are framed by the overall meaning we have assigned to the event. We need to attend to how we have limited our thinking because of how we have framed our perceptions (Castanada, 1994; Goffman, 1974).

When child and youth care workers first encounter a youth, therefore, it may be important for them to take time to explore the meaning the youth is giving to the need for care so as to understand how they are interpreting the experience. Through understanding how people have constructed their experience of needing care we are more able to connect with them and to help them find different ways to frame their experience (Durrant, 1993).

In the practice of child and youth care it is now common to include clients in the decision-making processes which affect their lives. They might be included, for example, in intake meetings, intervention planning meetings, support groups, unit planning, and evaluation (Garfat, 1990). When we seek to include clients like this we do so because of a field-held belief that such inclusion increases involvement, decreases isolation, creates a sense of personal empowerment, and has positive carry-over effects into the post-care environment (Brentro & Ness, 1983; Garfat, 1990; Whittaker, 1979). The result of this philosophy of inclusion may be less than hoped-for, however, if clients do not give to this inclusion the same meaning as the staff and organizations which advocate for it. Like all experiences, the experience of inclusion may be construed differently by the different participants.

Polanyi (1962) identifies two kinds of meaning - those in which one thing, like a word, means another (representative) and those, like a tune, in which the thing means something only in itself (existential). When an experience is too large, overwhelming, or interconnected for us to break in into its component parts we give meaning to the whole of the experience. When youth first enter care they must make meaning of the experiences they encounter. When this experience is

totally new they will begin by giving a meaning to the whole, or gestalt, of the experience because they will be unable, before knowing it, to break it in to its constituent parts. How youth give such meaning may be determined by previous cultural experiences and the symbolic meanings attached to such an action within the interpretative frame which they normally use. Once a youth has evoked this interpretive frame to give meaning to the initial experience, this may give shape to everything that follows and we enter the territory of 'self-fulfilling prophesies' (Baizerman, 1994). If we can understand how a youth is making sense of an experience, then we can be of assistance in finding ways to "make sense of things differently" (Durrant, 1993, p. 11). If we do not pay attention to what the experience of placement means to a youth we have no way of understanding the behaviour we see except within our own interpretive system.

**The Meaning of Specific Interventions**

As Linge (1976) has stated, the meaning of actions or words "depends on the context into which they are spoken." (p. xxxii) Context, however, is construed by the individual who experiences it. Thus, the context of an intervention is different for the child and youth care worker than it is for the youth and "no two contexts are alike" (Ricks & Garfat, 1989, p. 68). As experiences are encountered certain actions come to be "representative symbols" (Polyani, 1962, p.58) which have a "denotative meaning" (p.92) in and of themselves which remains consistent across contexts until the youth learns to differentiate between contexts.

When a youth encounters a care-giver there is a need for each of them to come to understand the reference symbols which they each use and how these work to give meaning to their immediate context for "it does make a difference whether I interpret your remarks as snide, or an affectionate tease . . ." (Polster, 1987, p. 113) Without this understanding, the child and youth care worker is less able (or even unable) to understand the actions of the youth in the immediate context (Austin & Halpin, 1987; Fewster, 1990a). Understanding a particular

youth's reference symbols and how they operate can help us to understand what this youth does with that experience in order to give it meaning (White & Epson, 1990). When we understand how youth are giving meaning to their experiences through their use of interpretive frames, representative symbols, and the connecting of events we are better positioned to be able to understand their actions.

Other factors also effect the meaning a youth gives to a worker's intervention. For example, the place of an intervention in the "overall sequence of things" (Bruner, 1990, p. 138) will effect the meaning given to an intervention by a youth as it is connected it to previous and subsequent events. Timing, location, tone, gender, relative power, age, roles, personal history; all of these must also be considered as they will impact on the youth's interpretation of the meaning of the worker's intervention. Ultimately we must ask the question "what does this intervention, by this care-giver, in this circumstance, mean to this youth?" It is only through answering this question that we are able to understand why the youth reacts in a particular manner.

Child and youth care workers need to understand that their own actions are also the result of a similar process. A worker sees a youth's action, for example, and gives it meaning. Based on the meaning given, the worker then intervenes in a particular manner. Without understanding the meaning of the action to the youth, the worker is intervening into reality only as it has been personally constructed, not as it actually might be for the youth.

**Comment**

While there is no final answer to the question of whether meaning is pre-existent or whether each of us is ultimately the "author of his or her own life design" (Yalom, 1989, p. 8), it has generally been accepted in the helping professions that meaning is created as we encounter our experiences (Peterson, 1988; White & Epson, 1990; Watzlawick, 1990). How one actually creates meaning is also a question with no definitive answer. However, it appears that

culture (Bruner, 1990; Fulcher, 1991), personal history (Guttmann, 1991), sequencing (Bruner, 1990), and specific circumstance (Barwise, 1988) play an important role in determining how we develop and use our own interpretive frame (Bruner, 1990; Goffman, 1974) to make meaning of our encounters. Such thinking must apply to both the youth and the child and youth care worker.

When the youth and the child and youth care worker encounter one another in the process of intervention, both go through a process of making meaning of the encounter. Both create the specific meaning they experience in that encounter (Schon, 1983). Thus the process of intervention in child and youth care is, to a great extent, the process of making-meaning.

The practice of child and youth care, like all helping professions, involves the encounter of cultures, each with its own folk psychological way of assigning meaning to particular events. The culture of the youth and family, the culture of the dominant society, the culture of the program, the culture of the organization, and the culture of the child and youth care worker all impinge on the interventive process. It is only through attending to how meaning is construed in all of these that we can begin to understand the youth and the youth's behaviour.

This is not to suggest that attending to meaning-making is simply a process of assessment to be conducted at the beginning of a placement, for meaning-making effects all aspects of the child and youth care process. By attending to meaning-making throughout the process of intervention, the child and youth care worker enters an "expanded world of therapeutic opportunity" (Polster, 1987, p. 97) and may encounter the youth according to how the youth has constructed the experience. It is only then that it is possible to "meet the child in direct perception" (Austin & Halpin, 1987, p. 38) and co-create the opportunity to "re-establish in the child's being the possibility of relationship." (p. 37) Perhaps, in child and youth care there is nothing more important than this process of meaning-making for, as Bruner has argued, " . . . the lives and the Selves that we construct are the outcome of this process of meaning construction" (Bruner, 1990, p. 138).

It is my belief that meaning is constructed or construed by the individual under the influence of, and in interaction with, the culture within which the individual lives: that meaning does not exist independent of it being "given" by the individual, even if that given meaning is influenced or partially determined by cultural, personal, or biogenetic factors. It is also my belief that meaning can, therefore, be re-constructed or re-construed by the individual through an experience or an act of will such as that which might occur through the psychotherapeutic technique of reframing (Bateson & Bateson, 1987; Watzlawick, Weakland & Fisch, 1974). I have aligned my perspective with a particular orientation and I interpret everything that I experience in light of that orientation: the "frame" (Goffman, 1974) with which I choose to experience things predisposes me to interpret them in a certain manner (Schon, 1983). I believe that I create meaning through how I interpret the persons, things, or events which I encounter in the specific context within which I encounter them. I am, therefore, attracted to philosophers like Bruner (1990) and Polanyi (1962) who in writing about interpersonal communication stated that "only a speaker or listener can mean something *by* a word, and a word, *in itself* can mean nothing" (p. 252) and to practitioners like Yalom (1989) who argues that "each of us is the author of his or her own life design and we create our own problems through how we structure our experience of the world around us." (p.8)

In the final analysis, whether one believes that meaning is made, or not, depends on how one makes sense of the world. If one believes in freedom and choice, then one accepts that one makes meaning. If one believes that meaning is pre-existent, then all of the foregoing is of no relevance. As Polanyi said, "the learner, like the discoverer, must believe before he can learn." (p. 208)

# CHAPTER THREE

## Method and Methodology

### 3A: An Orientation to Phenomenological Inquiry

In deciding to investigate the experience and process of the child and youth care intervention, it was necessary to choose a philosophy and methodology to guide my inquiry. This section explains the methodology chosen and the rationale for that choice which lies in the compatibility between the methodology, the question of the inquiry, and the practice of child and youth care.

In discussions of research orientations, approaches, or methodologies it is not uncommon to encounter phrases such as quantitative *versus* qualitative as if there were a battle going on between opposing teams for the spoils of research endeavours. While it may be true that there is competition between researchers who advocate one approach over another, it is becoming more common to encounter discussions which indicate that there are clear rationales for deciding when one approach or the other is most appropriate. As Borg & Gall (1989) have stated, the two approaches "have philosophical foundations, characteristics, and techniques that make them ideally suited for the exploration of some questions and inadequate for the investigation of others." (p. 380) Selecting a method should no longer be a question of "the dominant paradigm versus the alternative paradigm" (Patton, 1980, p. 19). This debate, Patton argues, has been replaced with a new paradigm, the paradigm of choices, which recognises that "different methods are appropriate for different situations." (p.20)

The choice between approaches is influenced by the nature of the information sought and the context of that searching, which includes the beliefs, values, and orientation of the researcher towards the question itself (Chambers, 1987). Indeed, it is now common to hear that it is the question that determines the approach and we are "advised to focus first on our problem and its characteristics

before we rush to select the appropriate method" (Shulman, 1988). To do otherwise is to allow the possibility for the method to determine the question itself.

As mentioned previously, in recent years a number of authors have attempted to define the specific nature of the child and youth care intervention (Eisikovits, Beker & Guttman, 1991; Garfat & Newcomen, 1992; Krueger, 1988). With the already noted exception of creative literature, these were primarily articulated from an external position with limited investigation into the experience of the participants. This absence of information amounts to what Wagner (1993), in his analysis of educational research, has called a blind spot, an area which "we don't know well enough to even ask about." (p. 16)

Child and youth care, like all helping professions, is interested in understanding the client's point of view or experience in order to be able to create 'interventions that fit' (Garfat, 1994b); interventions which are the most appropriate for a specific youth in a specific context. Understanding a youth's experience could help the intervener develop empathic responses which would aide in the development of effective therapeutic relationships (Austin & Halpin, 1988, 1989; Fewster, 1987, 1990a). Additionally, we would benefit from understanding the experience of the child and youth care worker, particularly of the effective intervention. In understanding that experience we may begin to understand more about how effectiveness is achieved.

**Why a Qualitative Approach?**

As has been discussed, some questions lend themselves more naturally to a qualitative approach. Patton (1980) has argued that a qualitative approach "seeks to capture what people have to say in their own words" which allows us to understand the world as experienced by the subjects of our investigation. (p. 22) Qualitative approaches are also seen to be appropriate for uncovering initial information about people's experiences, especially when we know little about those experiences. As Strauss & Corbin (1990) have stated:

> Some areas of study naturally lend themselves more to qualitative types of research, for instance, research that attempts to uncover the nature of persons' experiences with a phenomena . . . Qualitative methods can be used to uncover and understand what lies behind any phenomena about which little is yet known. (p. 19)

This statement raises one of the primary reasons for the choice of a qualitative approach; it seeks *to understand* rather than to know. As Chambers has stated, "the goal of human science research is understanding as opposed to the goal of empirical-rational science which is explanation" (1987, p.1).

Given the limited nature of our information about the experiences of either the youth or the child and youth care worker in the child and youth care intervention, a qualitative approach seems best suited to the development of initial understanding.

The child and youth care therapeutic interaction involves a joint process of meaning-making between the intervener and the youth (Garfat, 1994a). In intervening, the intervener must understand how the youth makes meaning out of experience in order to respond in a manner that makes sense to the youth (Durrant, 1993). The more we understand about how we and others make sense of our interventions, the more likely we are to create interventions that are effective. Qualitative research methods which allow for direct input from participants in their own language (e.g., through the process of interviewing) provide the opportunity for us to understand the "meanings and interpretations" of the subjects of our inquiry (Gilgun, 1992, p. 25). A qualitative approach not only allows us to understand the participants' experience but also how they are interpreting and making meaning of that experience. By allowing for direct personal input from participants in their own language, a qualitative approach permits a more direct representation of that experience.

Given that both the youth's and the child and youth care worker's experience in the child and youth care intervention is a subject about which little is known and given that such an experience is a personal experience requiring

personal interpretation, a qualitative approach would appear to be best suited to the development of an initial understanding of that experience.

## A Rationale for a Hermeneutic Phenomenological Orientation

Within a qualitative orientation there are as many approaches available as there are within a quantitative orientation. Choosing among them demands clarity about the purpose of one's research. In the remainder of this chapter I will explain why a hermeneutic phenomenological orientation (van Manen, 1990) is the preferred approach for inquiry into this phenomenon. In doing so, I will explain some of the important characteristics of both a phenomenological and a hermeneutic orientation and the relationship between them. Following this I will show the compatibility between a hermeneutic phenomenological orientation and child and youth care practice in order to demonstrate why this is the preferred methodology for the investigation of the participants' experience of the child and youth care intervention.

To speak of a methodology is to refer to the philosophical framework and basic assumptions which are associated with, or underlay, a particular orientation towards research. It "includes the general orientation to life, the view of knowledge, and the sense of what it means to be human" (van Manen, 1990, p. 25) which are implied by the methods one chooses to utilize in conducting research. Methodology should not be confused with method which involves the way in which one approaches the subject, or procedures and techniques which are the activities of the research. While methods, procedures, and techniques reflect the methodological orientation of the researcher, they are not the methodology itself. It is within the methodology of phenomenology and its emphasis on lived experience that one finds a compatibility with child and youth care practice.

**Phenomenology and Lived Experience**. According to Burch (1990) phenomenology refers to "all those forms of thinking and inquiry which in some way maintain a perspective on the lived human experience." (p. 189) A phenomenological approach can reveal what one personally and immediately

experiences. It describes "those aspects of a situation as experienced by the person in it" (van Manen, 1990, p. 183).

As van Manen (1990, p. 183) pointed out, it was Kant who first used the term to make a distinction between the "study of objects and events (phenomena) as they appear in our experience from objects and events as they are in themselves." (p. 183) Through the writings of Husserl, who Lauer (1965) identified as the 'father of phenomenology', it came to be known as a discipline concerned with "how the world is constituted and experienced" (van Manen, 1990, p. 184). Husserl (1970) developed the idea of Lebenswelt, or lifeworld, as a way of looking at the influence of the everyday world in which we live and Heidegger (1962), in developing existential phenomenology, led us to look at "how phenomena present themselves in lived experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 184). Phenomenology, then, is concerned with lived experience or that which one experiences for oneself (Gadamer, 1982).

For the phenomenologist, lived experience is more than just that which a person experiences in the present. It involves elements of the experience which are "meaningfully singled out and preserved" with the passage of time (Burch 1990, p. 133). It is something whose true meaning "we come to recognize in retrospect" (p. 133) for it "constitutes itself in memory" as a "fixed unity of meaning" (p. 134) which can be recollected as such. Thus, lived experience involves lived meaning and encompasses "the way that a person experiences and understands his or her world as real and meaningful" (van Manen, 1990, p. 183). The meaning which one gives to one's experience, which then gives rise to lived experience, lies in "what is made of what one lives through" (Burch, 1990, p. 134). In order to understand the participants' lived experience of the child and youth care intervention, therefore, one must understand the meaning that they have given to that experience as they have reflected on it with the passage of time, that temporal distancing which affects us all.

Because lived experience depends on the meaning which one has given to one's experiences, it depends on reflection and interpretation (Burch, 1989; van Manen, 1990) in order for it to become meaningful. Such a reflection requires the use of language. Phenomenological inquiry, therefore, utilizes strategies which involve the investigation of language as representations of experience. It is in this area of fundamental linguisticality (Gadamer, 1976, 1986) that we find the connecting bridge between phenomenology and hermeneutics, for if phenomenology requires some form of language representation and it attempts to "describe and interpret" meanings (van Manen, 1990), hermeneutics provides an orientation towards the interpretation of the meaning which is contained in the language we use to structure our experiences.

**Hermeneutics Links to Phenomenology**. Hermeneutics has been defined as the "theory and practice of interpretation" (Van Manen, 1990, p 179). Originally introduced in the 17th century as a discipline concerned with establishing the correct interpretation of biblical texts, it developed over time as a way to understand the author's intended meaning, as well as understanding the author.

Methodological hermeneutics was probably first established by Friedrich Schleiermacher in the late 1700's (Chessick, 1990). It was he who introduced the hermeneutic circle as a method of continuously working with a text in order to arrive at its intended meaning. For Schleiermacher, hermeneutics was "the art of avoiding misunderstanding" (Gadamer, 1976, p. 7). Dilthey (1885), in distinguishing between the natural sciences and the human sciences, utilized hermeneutics for the purpose of "understanding human motivations and behaviour" (Chessick, 1990, p. 256). He reformulated hermeneutics as a method for understanding the lived experience of the author through an understanding of that experience as presented in the author's text. As Chessick pointed out, it was Dilthey who originally argued for the establishment of hermeneutics as a

methodological alternative to the natural sciences, one based on "an empathic identification with the subject under study." ( p. 260)

This is not to suggest that a hermeneutic approach advocates treating 'text' as an object. Chambers (1987) has explained that even Dilthey's original hermeneutic formula required an "interaction between an individual's personal experience . . . the expression of that personal experience . . . and the reflective understanding of that experience." (p.21) As Gadamer (1976) pointed out, the interpretation of a text cannot be separated from the meaning which the interpreter gives to the text and to the experience of interpretation. Together the interpreter and the text create an individualized meaning bound by the history and prejudices of the interpreter. This limitation to understanding can only be overcome when we understand the standpoint and horizon of the other (Gadamer, 1982) and the role that we, as interpreters, play in creating meaning in our research. Thus, hermeneutics involves a personal experience of interpretation just as the child and youth care intervention involves a personal interpretation, by the child and youth care worker, of the meaning of a youth's behaviour.

With the writings of Ricoeur (1976) the notion of text, as referred to in the foregoing has been broadened to include any human action or situation. He saw the hermeneutic approach as being able to interpret any social situation as text (Chambers, 1987). Hermeneutics became a human science methodology which focused on understanding how the individual creates meaning of lived experience, further solidifying the possible connection between phenomenology and hermeneutics as it relates to understanding the experience of the child and youth care intervention.

**Hermeneutic Phenomenology**. Hermeneutic-phenomenology combines the phenomenological focus on the essence of a phenomenon (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. vii) with a hermeneutic concern for how one structures the experience of that phenomena in order to give it meaning. It is the process of giving

interpretation (hermeneutics) to the description of a lived experience (phenomenology). As defined by van Manen (1990) such an approach,

> " . . . tries to be attentive to both terms of its methodology: it is a descriptive (phenomenological) methodology because it wants to be attentive to how things appear, it wants to let things speak for themselves; it is an interpretive (hermeneutic) methodology because it claims that there are no such things as uninterpreted phenomena." (p. 180)

Thus it flows from the traditions of Heidegger (1962) who argued that we cannot re-experience another person's experience, we can only interpret that experience and any attempt to describe an experience involves interpretation.

Hermeneutic phenomenology, argues van Manen,(1990, p. 6), is "a human science which studies persons." He places this emphasis on the word 'persons' to indicate that a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology recognizes that each individual studied may have a different way of valuing or giving meaning to the phenomena in which we are interested. It is

> "a philosophy of the personal, the individual, which we pursue against the background of an understanding of the evasive character of the *logos* of *other*, the *whole*, the *communal*, or the *social.*" (p. 7)

**A Preference for Hermeneutic Phenomenology**

Earlier I stated that one's approach should be determined by the question one wishes to investigate and by the context of that questioning which includes the beliefs, values, and orientation of the researcher. This section will identify the main activities of a hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry and why I prefer this orientation for investigating the participants' experience of the child and youth care intervention.

van Manen (1990, p. 30-34) has identified six research activities which evolve from, and characterize, a hermeneutic phenomenological orientation. They are:

**Turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world**. Every piece of phenomenological inquiry is "always a project of

someone: a real person, who, in the context of particular individual, social and historical life circumstances sets out to make sense of a certain aspect of human existence." (p. 31) It is, he suggests, the result of an individual passion, a quest, which an individual holds as important to their understanding of some aspect of human experience. He appeals to us to "live this question, that we become this question" (p.43) so as to question from the very centre of our being.

On a general level, child and youth care is talked about in terms of a passion, a commitment, a mission for helping troubled children and their families which comes from the centre of the child and youth care worker as a person (Krueger, 1991). Indeed the expression 'fire in the belly' has often been used to describe the commitment of effective child and youth care professionals. The passion which van Manen describes as being central to hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry is the same kind of passion which is seen as being central to child and youth care. Both are defined in terms of a personal investment in the subject of one's work.

I have been involved in child and youth care for more than 25 years. During that time I have been concerned with increasing our knowledge of the youth's experience of being in care (e.g., Garfat, 1988; Garfat, Craig, & Joseph, 1988) and with defining the process of the child and youth care intervention (e.g., Garfat, 1994b; Garfat & Newcomen, 1992; Ricks & Garfat, 1989). I have now come to the point where I believe it is impossible to fully appreciate or adequately describe the process of the child and youth care intervention without understanding more about how the participants experience those interventions and how they make sense, or meaning, of that experience. I have a passion for this subject. I am driven to understand more about this aspect of the child and youth care intervention because I believe that it is only through such understanding that we can continue to enhance the quality of our services. This aspect of the hermeneutic phenomenological approach, then, fits for both the field and for myself as a child and youth care professional.

**Investigating the experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it**. Hermeneutic phenomenology "requires of the researcher that he or she stands in the middle of the fullness of life, in the midst of the world of living relations and shared situations." (p. 32) This quote could easily appear in a description of child and youth care work.

Child and youth care practice exists in a context which includes lived relationships and shared experiences. Workers are immersed, especially in residential care, into the daily lives of youth. Since the earliest literature, engaging in relationship with the youth has been seen as the core of effective child and youth care practice (Bettelheim, 1950; Burmeister, 1960; Redl & Wineman, 1951, 1952; Maier, 1955, 1957, 1960; Meyer, 1958). Recent literature has emphasized the essential role of the shared experience in relationship formation (Durrant, 1993; Guttmann, 1991; Krueger, 1994; Maier, 1994; Peterson, 1988; VanderVen, 1992a). Immersed in the daily life of youth, child and youth care workers are encouraged to enter into the flow of experience with them (Guttmann, 1991; Fulcher, 1991), so as to live the relationship with them (Fewster, 1990a).

A hermeneutic phenomenological orientation is congruent with the practice of child and youth care itself. The researcher who is experienced in child and youth care philosophy and practice may be well situated to adopt the orientation referred to in this activity. Again, on a professional and personal level, a hermeneutic phenomenological orientation seems appropriate.

**Reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon**. "Phenomenological research", says van Manen, "consists of bringing into nearness that which tends to be obscure, that which tends to evade the intelligibility of our natural attitude of everyday life." (p. 32)

The practice of child and youth care involves making clear that which has not been clear or understandable in a child's life. It does this through a focus on themes, re-occurring patterns of action and experiencing which permeate various aspects of a child's or family's life. In a living relationship with troubled youth,

child and youth care workers attempt to elucidate the re-occurring themes of a youth's living so that the patterns therein, which may not have been obvious before, become available for change.

Child and youth care workers are familiar with the process of investigating meaning in experiences through the process of individual and group reflection of their own experiences with the child. Child and youth care work involves reflective practice (Beker & Eisikovits, 1991) and child and youth care workers are familiar with the practice of distinguishing between "the appearance and the essence" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962) of that which they encounter in their shared experiencing with children.

**Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting.** In describing this particular activity, van Manen refers to phenomenological research as a "*bringing to speech of something.*" (p. 32) Child and youth care practice involves the constant process of 'bringing into speech' of the child and youth care worker's experience of the youth or family either verbally through supervision, team discussions (Garner, 1988), conversations with youth and families, or through writing descriptions of those experiences (Krueger, 1988). Indeed, the use of reflective story-telling (Burns, 1990; Peterson & Fontana, 1991; Peterson, 1994) and writing with youth (Ramage, 1992) are familiar techniques for the field which has also begun to incorporate narrative approaches more fully into practice (see, for example, Journal of Child and Youth Care, Vol. 9[2]). Child and youth care also uses descriptive literature to convey the essence of practice (Freeman, 1992, 1993a, 1994; Krueger, 1987, 1990) demonstrating that the 'art' of writing is very much a part of the field.

Personally, I have been involved in writing about child and youth care practices and experiences for a number of years both in a traditional sense and through descriptive writing. I have also studied the art of writing and next to my professional practice, it is perhaps my greatest passion. Again, on both a

professional and personal level, a hermeneutic phenomenological orientation seems appropriate.

**Maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon**. In referring to this activity, van Manen maintains that successful hermeneutic phenomenological research requires that the researcher stay focused on the subject of the research and avoid the temptation to engage in superficial speculation and self-indulgent reflection while continuing to be excited and animated by that subject. (p. 35)

Successful child and youth care requires that practitioners maintain a clear focus on the subject of their investigations and work, the youth and family. In the midst of lived shared experiences with the youth, the worker must not become distracted by the other elements of the youth's system, the program, or her own business (Ricks, 1993). The emphasis in child and youth care practice on 'being there' (Fewster, 1990a), connectedness (Krueger, 1994) and joint rhythmicity (Maier, 1992) highlight the importance of the child and youth care worker maintaining a 'strong and oriented relation' with the child. Thus, child and youth care work shares this orientation.

**Balancing the research context by considering parts and whole**. This balancing of the research context requires that the researcher constantly reflect upon the relationship between the parts which are being investigated and the whole to which they contribute.

As child and youth care practice has moved more and more towards a systemic or ecological framework for practice (Fewster & Garfat, 1993; Hare, 1992), practitioners have become adept at considering how a part (the child's behaviour, for example) is related to the whole (the family's patterns, for example). Equally important, child and youth care workers need always to consider how their current experiencing of the youth, and the youth's experiencing them, are affected by the context within which that experiencing takes place.

My own work in the area of the application of systemic thinking to child and youth care practice (Garfat 1990, 1992b; Garfat & Newcomen, 1992; Ricks & Garfat, 1989) has lead me to believe that this balancing of context, experiencing, and intervention is one of the most essential child and youth care skills.

**Comments**

Hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry provides an orientation towards understanding the experience of the child and youth care intervention, how it is structured and how it is given meaning by the participants. It is a methodology which places the researcher empathically central to the investigation and interpretation of people's experiencing. This orientation, as demonstrated above, shares many characteristics with the practice of child and youth care. There exists a fit between the question, the methodology, and the field within which the investigation will be carried out. On a personal level, a hermeneutic phenomenological orientation also fits with my own beliefs, values, and experience.

It is for these reasons, that a hermeneutic phenomenological approach is the orientation I prefer for investigating the participants' experience of the child and youth care intervention. It is my hope that this inquiry will stimulate new insights to the field for as Burch (1989) has said

> " . . . phenomenology never purely coincides with lived experience itself, but by probing its ultimate horizons and seeking to grasp the englobing sense of what appears within them, [it] renders lived experience anew." (p. 195)

## 3B: Contextual Considerations for the Inquiry

This inquiry focused on listening to and discussing the lived experience of youth and child and youth care workers. This involved conducting narrative interviews (Mishler, 1986) with three dyads of youth/child and youth care workers who had shared in an intervention specific to the dyad. Three child and youth care workers were asked to identify a youth with whom they had intervened and

the author then interviewed the members of each dyad regarding their experience of that intervention in order to capture the essence of their experience and to understand the process of that experiencing.

All interactions and actions occur in some context and the context within which an interaction occurs influences the interaction and the meaning of the interaction. This section identifies some elements of the context of this inquiry which may have been of importance in influencing the interventions or the interviews and the participants' experiencing of those interactions.

**The Organizational Context**

At the time of the interventions described in this dissertation the young people were resident in group homes operated by the Youth Horizons Reception Centre in Montreal, Quebec. Youth Horizons, at that time, was an agency mandated by the provincial government to provide primarily residential services to psycho-socially,maladjusted, anglophone young people between the ages of 2 1/2 and 18. The agency operated two campus-based residential programs, four shelter programs and seven group homes as well as community-based prevention programs for troubled youth and their families. The group home programs provided placement for adolescents only.

Each group home housed either 8 or 9 young people who were referred for placement because of the impossibility for them to live with their families. Identified reasons for placement included such things as parental inability to meet the youth's needs or control their socially-unacceptable behaviours, behaviour problems of either the parent or youth which precluded the youth remaining at home, the need for protection or other problems which necessitated a separation between the family and the young person. The residents of these programs were youth who in past years might have been described as behaviorally or emotionally disturbed. At the present time these youth are referred to as 'troubled' (Whittaker, 1979).

Residents of these co-educational programs ranged between the ages of 13 and 18. While in care the youth might be attending community schools, working (or searching for work), participating in vocational training and in some cases preparing for independent living if the possibility of returning to live with their family was not an option.

All programs are staffed with a team of 4.4 child and youth care workers working 38.75 hours per week on a rotational schedule involving morning, evening, weekday, and weekend shifts of between 8 and 12 hours. At any given time of the day there would be either one or two child and youth care workers present depending on the perceived demands of the program. The typical child and youth care worker has a college special education certificate or a general B.A. in the social sciences. Few workers have specific training in child and youth care except that which has been provided by the agency through training programs or supervision. During the night the group home is monitored by a night residence supervisor who was responsible for the care, safety, and security of the youth.

Each program also provided a .6 cook-housekeeper, a .5 social worker, and a .5 supervisor who was responsible for the supervision and administration of the group home.

The group programs are generally behaviorally focused. Each youth in the program and their family has an individual intervention plan which includes a statement of needs for the youth and family, specific goals, strategies, and outcome indicators. This intervention plan is typically drafted with the youth and family by a child and youth care worker and the social worker. It is then subjected to discussion and revision at a team meeting at which all team members are present. It forms, thereafter, the framework which guides the child and youth care workers daily interactions with the youth and family during the course of their daily activities.

The agency itself was, at the time, committed to a systemic orientation towards the treatment of youth and their families, the empowerment of youth and

the respect of child and youth care workers as professional practitioners possessing unique skills in working with troubled children and their families (Youth Horizons Philosophy of Treatment, 1991). Policies, procedures, and specific training activities supported the child and youth care worker's obligation to assume responsibility for individual daily interventions with youth.

In 1994, due to a reform of the social services in Quebec, the Youth Horizons Reception Centre was merged with other English youth serving agencies in Montreal and ceased to exist as a separate entity.

## Participant Selection

**Identification of participants**. Because I had previously been the Director of Treatment for Youth Horizons I was familiar with a number of child and youth care workers and their level of expertise in working with troubled youth and families. Therefore, in searching for participants in this inquiry I first identified some child and youth care workers who were in my opinion competent and professionally mature. They each had more than ten [10] years of experience in working with troubled children, were considered by their supervisors as competent, were concerned with their own continued professional growth and had received consistently positive evaluations of their professional performance. This judgement was based on feedback and evaluations I had received regarding workers within the agency in my former role as Director of Treatment. Potential participants were then discussed with the agency's Director of Professional Services and three child and youth care workers were identified as being appropriate for this inquiry. These three child and youth care workers were then invited to participate in this inquiry.

It could be argued that this process of selection of child and youth care workers for this inquiry will bias the results of the inquiry. This is true and the process of selection was intentional. As Lindsey (1994) pointed out in her study on experiences of health during illness, the most important concern is that the subjects "be knowledgeable about the topic under study . . . have experiential

knowledge . . . be willing and able to critically examine their experience and their response to that experience." (p.68) As Charles (1995) stated in his study on cult abuse, inquiries involving limited subjects are not unusual in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). He argues that even a single subject who is rich in information is much better than a group of subjects who are lacking in information, experience, or the ability to talk about and reflect upon that experience. Given the intention and nature of this inquiry such an approach to participant selection was considered to be the most promising.

In order to help them decide whether or not to participate the child and youth care workers were given descriptions of the research and the details of the inquiry were discussed with them. Based on this information all three agreed to participate. Their potential participation was then discussed, with their consent, with their immediate supervisor to ensure program support. Eventually one of the child and youth care workers chose to withdraw due to a lack of time and another was invited through the same process.

Once they had agreed to participate, the child and youth care workers were asked to identify a youth with whom they had intervened who might be willing to participate in the inquiry. To qualify the youth must have been out of the agency's care for approximately one year to ensure that their potential participation would not be contaminated by a concern for future services. This criteria also ensured that they had time to reflect on their experiences. As Burch (1990) has pointed out, lived meaning is something "that we come to recognize in retrospect" (p. 133) for it "constitutes itself in memory" as a "fixed unity of meaning." (p. 134) Lived meaning, therefore, depends on this time for reflection (Burch, 1989; van Manen, 1990). By allowing this amount of time to have passed, the youth would have had the opportunity for this reflection to occur outside of the context of their initial experience.

Other criteria used to select youth were: they were adolescents who could speak English, they were capable of understanding the concept of intervention,

they were able to identify an experience of child and youth care intervention in which they had participated and which they considered to be effective or meaningful, they had the ability and willingness to talk about their experience with the author, they did not have a previous relationship with the author which might contaminate the interviews, and they were willing to participate with the understanding that they would be involved in a research project for the author's dissertation. A copy of the description of the inquiry given to youth and child and youth care workers and the consent form are included as Appendix A and B.

Thus, the child and youth care workers were chosen by the author in consultation with the Director of Professional Services for the agency and the youth were chosen by the child and youth care workers in consultation with the author. The final approval of both child and youth care workers and youth was the responsibility of the Director of Professional Services who assured that all participants were involving themselves voluntarily through a process of informed consent. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time during the process.

**Informed Consent and Confidentiality**. This inquiry was conducted in the context of informed consent and openness. The consent form included as Appendix B which was approved by both the University of Victoria's Committee on the Use of Human Subjects and Youth Horizons Director of Professional Services demonstrates the minimum compliance with this characteristic of the inquiry. Additionally, the child and youth care workers were given a copy of the initial research proposal prior to agreeing to participate.

Prior to the youth agreeing to participate they were informed of the conditions of their participation, the requirements, and the intention of the inquiry by the child and youth care workers. Once the youth showed an interest in participating, they were contacted by the agency's Director of Professional Services to ensure that they understood the implications of their agreement and the terms of informed consent. Only after the Director of Professional Services was

convinced that the youth were offering to participate voluntarily was their participation accepted.

The participants in this inquiry were assured that all steps would be taken to ensure their confidentiality. Concretely, the details of this assurance are spelled out in the consent form.

When child and youth care workers were invited to participate in this inquiry, the invitation was known only to the author, the Director of Professional services and themselves. Once they agreed to participate, their immediate supervisor, with their permission, was informed. No one else was informed by the author of the identities of the child and youth care workers but they were free to inform whomever they wished.

When youth were first invited to participate, the invitation was known only to the child and youth care workers and the youth. Once the youth had expressed an interest in participating, the author and the director of Professional Services were informed. The author was informed only so as to insure that he did not have a previous relationship with the youth which might disqualify the youth from participating and the Director of Professional Services was informed so that she might contact the youth to ensure their informed consent. No one else was informed of the identity of the youth by the author but they were free to inform whomever they wished.

Additionally an agreement was reached with the agency that two versions of this dissertation might be prepared. This version which is to be submitted to the university would be complete in details. A copy of this version will be kept on file with the agency Director of Professional Services.

Following the completion of this version, a copy of it will be submitted to the child and youth care workers who have permission to edit from it any parts which they feel may reflect on them in a manner they would rather not reveal to their colleagues, team members, or supervisors, many of whom are aware of the child and youth care workers participation. The edited version is the one that will

be made available for other staff within the agency to read. In this way, the child and youth care workers are assured that they have some control over any elements of their practice which may be revealed to their colleagues. The youth who were interviewed were offered the same opportunity for editing the agency version of this manuscript because they may choose not to reveal certain elements of the interviews to other staff within the agency. In the end, however, participants agreed that there would only be one version of this manuscript as they were comfortable with the content.

This element of having two versions of the manuscript was included so that both youth and child and youth care workers might feel as free as possible during the interviews to discuss anything that might come up while knowing that they could control the final exposure of that information.

Finally, prior to the commencement of the actual interviews the author met with both the youth and the child and youth care worker. At this time the author again reviewed the intention, purpose, conditions, and process of the interviews, and what the author intended to do with the information derived from the interviews. Once assured that the participants understood what was being asked of them and the reason for the interviews the consent form was reviewed again in detail. After this process and the signing of consent forms, the interviews begin.

## The Interview Context

All actions and interactions are influenced by the context within which they occur (Garfat, 1992b). This is as true of the interviews conducted during this inquiry as it is of the interventions discussed. This section identifies some of the important elements of context which were relevant specifically to the interviews.

**Relationships**. The child and youth care workers were known to the author prior to the time of the interviews due to his previous role within the agency. At the time of the interviews the author no longer held that position within the agency and there was no hierarchical relationship of authority between the author and the child and youth care workers although this had existed

previously. The relationship between the author and the child and youth care workers was, at the time of the interviews, one of professional colleagues and mutual respect.

While the youth interviewed for this inquiry had been residents of one of the agency's programs at the time of the interventions, they were personally unacquainted with the author and were unaware of his previous position within the agency. While the author was aware that the youth had been residents in the agency, he was unaware of their previous history, the reason for their placement, or the outcome of their stay within the agency. There was no previous personal or professional relationship between the author and the youth.

Within each dyad the child and youth care worker and the youth were well known to each other. The youth in each dyad had been a resident in the program within which the child and youth care worker was employed. The child and youth care workers were, therefore, intimately familiar with the youth's family, history, profile, and progress. In each case the child and youth care worker had been a member of the professional team which provided care and treatment for the youth and their family. They had an established professional relationship with the youth through their almost daily contacts and interventions.

It seems likely that each youth held a special place in the memory of the child and youth care worker with whom they were interviewed since it was the child and youth care worker who selected and invited the youth to participate. In making the selection the child and youth care worker had numerous youth from whom to choose and for reasons known only to themselves at the time they each chose one specific youth. This suggests that there was some special reason for choosing a particular youth. As will become clear during the review of the analysis of the transcripts of the interviews, that reason was usually related to the sense of 'connectedness' (Krueger, 1994) that the child and youth care worker felt with the child at the time of the intervention.

**Physical Context**. The interviews for this inquiry were conducted in a place and at a time chosen by agreement between the youth and the child and youth care worker for dyadic interviews, or by the individual participant for individual interviews. Each location was chosen for convenience of access and comfort of the participants. As a result, some interviews were conducted in the group home in which the youth had been a resident, some in the agency's central offices, and some in the participants' home. In all cases there was comfortable seating, lighting, and temperature. The interview recording equipment which was continuously in view consisted of a panasonic walkman-size recorder, individual throat microphones for the participants, a small timer, and a set of headphones for checking the recording as the interviews progressed. As will be explained later, these recordings were transcribed and copies were returned to each participant as part of the process of the inquiry.

**Control and Power**. The relationship of power and control between the interviewer and the interviewee must be of concern, especially in qualitative inquiries within which the interviewer hopes to attain as free a flow of dialogue as is possible (Mishler, 1986). In the previous history of the participants in this inquiry overt relationships of power and authority were in effect. The interviewer had previously been the senior manager of the division in which the child and youth care workers were employed and the child and youth care workers were in a formalized hierarchical relationship to the youth. While these formal relationships no longer existed, attention was paid to giving as much power as possible to the participants. All participation was voluntary. All participants were given the right to stop the interview process at any time. They were further assured that they could withdraw from the inquiry at any time without repercussions of any kind. Participants were encouraged throughout the interviews to monitor and control the depth of discussion and the subject matter which arose during the interviews. Additionally, the intervention chosen was agreed to by the two participants to each interview.

In the process of choosing the intervention for discussion, the author facilitated the discussion to ensure that the intervention chosen was one with which the youth was comfortable. In fact, in all three cases the intervention chosen was raised by the youth in the first instance.

As previously mentioned, the participants chose the time and location of the interviews and were given editing control over the final agency version of this document. As well, the participants were given copies of the transcripts and were invited to add to or modify them as they felt appropriate. Summaries and interpretations of the text of the interviews were given to the participants for their input and approval throughout the process of analysis.

While the foregoing procedures could not eliminate the vestiges of previous power relationships, they were intentional steps taken to ensure that the participants felt as empowered as possible throughout the process of the inquiry.

## The Author's Personal Context

**Deciding to return to university**. I, the author of this dissertation, am a forty-eight (48) year old male anglophone living in Montreal, Quebec. This inquiry was completed as part of my requirements for a doctorate in child and youth care from the University of Victoria. The following elements of my personal context were considered to possibly have an impact on the process of this inquiry.

At the age of forty-six (46), I decided that it was time to return to university and pursue a doctorate in child and youth care at the University of Victoria. Neither the decision to return to school, the field of study, nor the university were rash decisions. For a number of years I had been wanting to return to pursue a doctorate. Until my forty-sixth year this had seemed impossible for both personal and financial reasons. Finally, with the encouragement of the woman, Sylviane, with whom I had lived for the past 12 years, I decided to set aside all the rationalizations that kept me from returning and decided to do it.

As part of making a decision I pursued the possibility of seeking a degree in psychology at McGill University in Montreal. In the end I rejected this possibility because I felt that psychology at McGill was too far removed from my area of interest and the field within which I had spent the last twenty-three years. As a second consideration I inquired about the possibility of obtaining a degree in Sociology and Social Work from the Victoria University at Wellington, New Zealand. This option was interesting because of the possibility of studying with a man whom I consider to be among the best educated and informed of child and youth care professionals. I rejected this option because ultimately it too would involve pursuing a degree in something other than child and youth care in a culture different than the one within which I had, and would, practice.

Finally I decided to apply to the University of Victoria in British Columbia because it was the only place in the English-speaking world where I could obtain a doctorate specifically in child and youth care and it was a Canadian university. In essence this option meant I would be able to purse a degree in the specific field of my interest within my own culture. Obtaining acceptance to the University of Victoria was not easy. It was a process that took some 16 months and was facilitated because of the advocacy of my supervisor. In all probability, without her advocacy, I would not have been admitted.

Returning to school was difficult. It required changes in living arrangements that would satisfy both Sylviane and myself, the negotiation of a leave from my employment, and a change in how I saw myself. After a number of years in the field, I was considered by myself and others to be an 'expert' in the field. The return to university required constant re-formulation of my image of myself as a 'student', with all the humility and subservience which that implies. These are important elements because they all contributed to increase my sense of needing to do well which was already a part of my basic orientation to any task which I undertake.

My experience throughout the process of this dissertation and the inquiry which forms a central part of this dissertation, has been driven by this need to do well. My sense of obligation to myself, to Sylviane, to my supervisor, and to my family history in which university attendance was neither especially validated nor encouraged all contribute to this need to do well. This need to do well has undoubtedly impacted on the process of this inquiry.

**Modifications to the author's assumptions and expectations**. I began this inquiry with a set of expectations and assumptions. Throughout it some of these expectations have been met and some of the assumptions proved valid and/or useful. Other expectations were not met, either because they were not realistic or because they were invalid for the process and required modification. The same is true of the assumptions I held. Of special importance were the assumptions and expectations I held about the focus of this dissertation and the child and youth care intervention, and how they became modified throughout the course of the inquiry and this dissertation process.

When I first began this process of study, I had expected that I would complete my degree without the need for research as I had previously defined it and that I would instead focus on the writing of a book on the child and youth care intervention which would, essentially, be a re-working and extension of my previous work and study within the field. Part of this expectation was the result of a genuine desire to extend this previous work and some of it was generated by an expectation or assumption I held that research was an unattractive alternative for me, as previously explained. As was also explained, as I came to understand my fears about research and developed alternative meanings for the word itself, my attitude towards doing research became available for modification.

Once this attitude towards research was available for modification, I was able to allow myself to see that without research into some aspects of the child and youth care intervention, specifically the experiences of the participants to that intervention, I would not be able to extend my previous studies and experience in

a meaningful way. In other words, I would not be able to do well. Thus, when the assumptions I held regarding the meaning or research were modified, I was able to alter my expectations of what I would do, and the focus of my dissertation changed from writing about a phenomenon to inquiring about that phenomenon and writing about it in a way that combined my previous knowledge and understanding with the knowledge and experience of a specific inquiry into a part of that phenomenon.

This shift in assumptions and expectations came before the process of inquiry began. The second major shift in assumptions and expectations occurred during the course of the inquiry as I spoke with the participants, reflected on the process of our discussions, and immersed myself in the text of those discussions.

I began the inquiry with an assumption that the child and youth care interventive moment, the moment when an intervention was enacted, would be the focus of my discussions with the participants and the focus of my analysis on the text of those discussions. This assumption has driven my desire to extend my previous studies and writings. The notion of the interventive moment was a concept which I had developed over the past few years and was one which had received acceptance from other professionals in the field for whom I had considerable respect. In the initial stages of the interviews in this inquiry I attempted to focus discussions on interventive moments.

At the same time as I was attempting to direct the focus of our discussions on the interventive moment, I was also influenced by a basic value: the empowerment of participants. This value drove me to allow participants to choose the intervention we would discuss and to accept that the participants definition of an intervention may be different than my own. Indeed this turned out to be true.

For one dyad, it turned out that focusing on an interventive moment was easy and appropriate because that was the intervention which the youth felt was the most powerful in her experience. For a second dyad the intervention of focus was a discussion which occurred between a child and youth care worker and a youth as

a result of the management of a situation which the worker perceived as out of control. The youth defined this intervention as one of the most significant things which had occurred for her while she was in care. For the third dyad, the intervention chosen for discussion involved the experience of transferring the youth to another group home. The youth chose this intervention for discussion because it was one which had affected her powerfully and was one which she "will never forget."

On the one hand I had a pre-conceived focus for this inquiry which was to look at what made for an effective intervention, meaning 'what made for an effective interventive moment.' On the other hand, I had a desire to understand what, from the participants perspective, made for an effective intervention, meaning 'what made the intervention effective for the youth.'

All of the initial interviews began the same way, with participants being given a definition of the interventive moment and letting them know that this was the thing I would like to discuss. I then told the participants that the choice of intervention was up to them.

Initially I decided that we would discuss whatever intervention they chose and that I, in the subsequent analysis and discussions, would elicit the interventive moment for my own purposes. In fact then, the power I was giving to participants to direct the focus of this inquiry was a false power. It was the illusion of empowered participation.

As I continued with the discussions with participants over time and as I continued with the concurrent analysis, I was faced with a dilemma; either I could continue to focus my analysis on the part of the intervention which fit with my pre-conceived definition because there were interventive moments inside all of our discussions or I could respect each participant's definition of the effective intervention and focus on their choice. In the end, my respect for the participants' definition was greater than my own need to focus on the interventive moment.

Through this process the definition of intervention which was the subject of the inquiry changed from a focus on the interventive moment. It became focused instead on the true question of 'what makes for an effective child and youth care intervention when the focus of the inquiry into this question is the experience of the participants'?

As Mishler, (1986) has stated, a true discussion involves the joint construction of meaning by the interviewer and the participants to the interview. This refocusing of the question and of the definition of intervention used in this inquiry represents such a joint construction and is, therefore, in keeping with the methodology of phenomenological inquiry. This refocusing is evident in the descriptions and interpretations of this inquiry.

## 3C: Approaching the Interviews

The interviews for this inquiry moved quickly from being interviews of questioning by the author and responding by the participants to being conversations. This shift from a structured format to a more conversational dialogue was intentional. Yet it flowed naturally from the subject matter. Perhaps this was because of the personal nature of the conversations. Perhaps it was because of the field within which the inquiry is grounded. Whatever the reason, it soon became apparent that this inquiry, which had originally begun from a questioning stance, was in fact to become a series of conversations.

With the youth, the conversations focused on the nature of their experiences but also moved into the territory of their life and their understanding of themselves in their current context. With the child and youth care workers the conversations focused on the nature of their experience, the process of their decision-making, the nature of child and youth care practice, and helping in general. The author's values, beliefs, and experiences also became the topic of conversation as we moved back and forth between the specific focus of the inquiry and our common and different experiences of care, caring and care-giving.

Such an experience is not uncommon. In fact, it has been suggested that in phenomenological research the interview should be, "a conversational relation between two people, one in which they come to know as much about each other as they learn about whatever is the topic of the conversation" (Weber, 1986, p. 66). In such a conversational relationship trust and commitment evolve, promoting a "new or deepened understanding." (p. 66) Given that the focus of this inquiry was on the experience of the participants, an approach was required which allowed all participants to be comfortable discussing openly their lived experiences. As Weber said,

> "If it is to be more than a game of concealment, the interview must be a conversation between interviewer and participant that evokes the participant's lived experience, seeking shared understanding. (p.68)"

The work which most influenced my interviews is the unstructured, narrative interview approach described by Mishler (1986), which he developed based on his concern that the "standard interview approach is demonstrably inappropriate for and inadequate to the study of the central questions in the social and behavioral sciences, namely, how individuals perceive, organize, give meaning to, and express their understanding of themselves, their experiences, and their worlds." (p. ix) The word 'unstructured' is used here to refer to an approach which Lofland (cited in Mishler, 1986, p. 66) characterised as a "flexible strategy of discovery", the object of which is to facilitate a guided conversation. Such an approach, as the following will show, could equally be said to have a flexible "phenomenological structure" (H. W. Maier, personal communication, August 9, 1995) which is not pre-determined but develops as the conversations progress.

A narrative approach views the interview as "a discourse between speakers" (Mishler, 1986, p. 36) which is constructed jointly by both participants. Mishler argues that with such an approach the meaning of questions and answers are contextually grounded because of the joint construction of meaning which occurs when the participants engage in interactive discourse.

In using such an approach the interviewer may, prior to the interview, develop a series of "questions as text." (p. 37) Such questions are not directly asked of the participants but rather serve as a focus for the interviewer. They are a statement for the interviewer of the intended area of discussion. In a general form appropriate to the particular interview, the questions are reworded by the interviewer so that they might serve as a stimulus for the participant to begin to discuss the matter which is the focus of the interview. So, for example, while I may have wished during the initial interviews of this inquiry to ask a youth 'about the nature of their personal experience at the moment when an intervention was first enacted', it was more appropriate to stimulate their discussion by asking a question in a way such as the following,

> So, if I'm understanding it correctly, you walked into the room, expecting to sit down and have another cigarette and when you asked him if that was okay, he said no. I guess what I'm curious about is, when he said that, when he said no to you, what happened for you?

This was also true of my follow-up conversations where the questions-as-text helped me to re-focus on the specific matter of interest, make a transition between the last conversation and the present one, and open a topic up for deeper exploration. So, for example, when I returned to talk to TC about the degree of intentionality involved in the expression of his anger in a confrontation with a young woman in care, the question-as-text was,

> The last time we spoke you referred to a moment when you made a decision to confront JY about her behaviour. You said that you experienced and expressed your frustration and anger with her. Given that you are both a person, and a child and youth care worker, in this situation, was that expression of anger a personal expression, or was it an intentional strategy you had chosen to use?

The following excerpt from the actual interview transcript shows how the question was actually formulated.

> . . . you talk about how you were, you were like high, uh, anxious, stimulated. You were annoyed, you know, and you talk about your first reaction being anger and everything. When we talked about it, you, ah, you talked about how, how you went in there and you had that anger and you had to, like, set most of it aside. But it was still there and it was like, ah, to use my words, it was driving you at that point. (P) and so you went in and you went with the 'stupid' stuff and, ah, and the anger started - well rather the 'annoyed' because you came down from anger to annoyed you said in the last interview - started to dissipate. But the part about, the part about "you're stupid" or whatever it was, was that you the person-emotion reaction, or was that you the person as child care worker, or the child care worker? Ah, ah . . . do you understand what I'm trying, I'm trying to ask, how intentional was the anger? Or was the anger 'reactive'?

With a narrative approach the interviewer maintains an open and flexible attitude towards the discourse, allowing the participant as much as the interviewer to direct the flow of the conversation. Yet the interviewer maintains a responsibility to bring focus to the interviewer so that, in general, the conversation flows around the intended content. This focused narrative approach Mishler says evolved from the approach advocated by Merton, Fiske and Kendall (1954) which was designed to "study variations in perceptions and responses of individuals who have been exposed to the same event or involved in the same situation" (Mishler, 1986, p. 99). Quoting from their manual, he points out that effective focused interviews require,

> *Depth*. The interview should help the interviewees to describe the affective, cognitive and evaluative meanings of the situation and their involvement in it" and
>
> "*Personal Context*. The interview should bring out the attributes and prior experience of interviewees which endow the situation with these distinctive meanings (, p. 12).

Given that the focus of this current inquiry is on the experiences of youth and child and youth care workers in a common experience of intervention, a focused narrative approach would seem appropriate, as it encourages the participants to tell of their experiences as stories. Through encouragement, close

attending, open questions, allowing the participant to dominate the conversation, and allowing the conversation to progress at a pace and flow which is of the participants choosing, the stories of their experience unfold in the way in which they are recalled. Such a reflective recall is conducive to the exploration and articulation of a lived experience of a situation. As well, an approach of telling stories is congruent with the child and youth care history of sharing understanding as I pointed out in discussing the history of the child and youth care intervention. It is also congruent with the emerging direction in the field towards story-telling as a vehicle for therapeutic communication (Peterson, 1994).

Thus a phenomenologically structured, focused narrative approach to the interviews which encourages the participants to relate their experiences as stories fits with the field and with the intention of this inquiry. It meets, therefore, the condition often expressed in discussions of phenomenological research that there should be a match between the method and the subject of the study (Chambers, 1987). In this inquiry an interactive, contextually-grounded, interpersonal experience - the child and youth care intervention - was investigated through an interactive, contextually-grounded, interpersonal approach - narrative interviews. More specific details of the dyadic and the individual interviews are supplied in the sections which follow.

## 3D: Joint Re-constructions: the Dyadic Interview Process

The process of this inquiry required, before beginning individual interviews or discussions, that the youth and the child and youth care worker agree on an intervention for the focus of their discussions. These joint interviews represent the only time when the two participants to each intervention were together for discussion of the intervention. These interviews were, in fact, facilitated discussions within which the youth and the child and youth care worker' re-constructed' the intervention of their choice through a process of sharing memories.

At the choice of the participants all of the dyadic interviews were conducted either in the group home at which the youth had been a resident or at the agency's central offices. In all cases the interviews were held in a private counselling room which was separated from other activities within the building. Regardless of the location of the interview, I arrived early and set up the room for the interview. This consisted of ensuring that there were a minimum of 4 sitting places, a table available by each sitting place, another table conveniently located in the open for the recording equipment, and sufficient lighting.

I welcomed the participants as they arrived and allowed them to sit in whatever place they chose. They were each asked if they preferred to have the door to the room open or closed and their wishes were respected.

Once the participants were seated comfortably I expressed my appreciation that they would consider helping me with this inquiry. I then explained the purpose and focus of the research and the interviews. I also explained the rationale for the inquiry and expressed my hope that it could be helpful to the field in terms of enhancing child and youth care workers' understanding of 'what worked and why it worked' in their interactions with youth in care. I then checked with each of the participants to ensure that they understood what had been explained and answered any questions which arose. I then asked if they were still willing to proceed.

After ascertaining their willingness to proceed further, I asked each of the participants if they read easily. Once assured that they did I offered each of them a consent form, explained its purpose, and asked them to read it. When they indicated that they were finished reading I reviewed the points on the consent form in detail offering any clarifications or answers which were required. Once certain that the participants understood exactly what was being asked of them, they were asked to sign and date the consent forms. I then witnessed the signatures and the interview began.

The first stage of the interview involved clarification of what was meant in this context by the term intervention. The goal was for the participants to reach an understanding of the concept of a specific 'interventive moment or event' (Garfat, 1994b). This was done through an explanation of the difference between a global intervention, such as being placed in care, and a specific intervention, such as someone asking you to think about something at the time you are in a conversation with them. The following excerpt from the interview by myself (TG) with TC (child and youth care worker) and JY (youth) demonstrates how this was done. The language of the explanation reflects my concern with ensuring that the language of the interview was not too formal for the youth to understand. Thus, whenever possible the professional language of the field was translated in to common language.

*TG* *What I want to do first then, is come to (cough) excuse me, come to an agreement about an intervention that occurred between the two of you. And, what I mean by an intervention, I just want to take a minute to explain a little OK? Like some people would say to you, living at the group home, that's an intervention right? Hm, but that's too big for what I want to talk about.*

*I'm thinking of times like, imagine that I'm sitting at the table with three other people, right? I'm a young person. I'm sitting at the table with three other people and there's a child care worker sitting at the table too. Some of us are getting into some mischief at the table and I'm at the centre of it, right? And it's starting to, like, it's getting a little bit more heated, and the child care worker asks me to go and get some potatoes, right? I leave the room and, of course, things calm down a little bit. That would be an intervention.*

*Imagine that I'm trying to think about something that, Hm, is going on in my life, and I'm just trying to decide what to do. You know, just, and I'm talking to a child care worker about it. And the child care worker says something like: "Well, have you ever thought about, Hm, what would happen if you . . . " And so, they give you another idea, so you think a little bit differently perhaps, right? That would be an intervention. Or, Hm, you're having trouble waking up in the morning and the child care worker comes in and wakes you up, that would be an intervention because you're having trouble getting up and you have to be able to get up.*

Once I believed that the participants understood what was meant by an intervention in this context, I then clarified that it could be something that occurred at any time, in any place, with anyone, but that in this case I was wanting to talk about an intervention which involved the two of them; that I wanted to talk about a specific moment when the child and youth care worker intervened with the youth.

I then explained that interventions were not always positive, or effective, but that for the purpose of this interview, I wanted to focus our discussion on an intervention which the youth would describe as being effective for them; an intervention which, from their perspective, had made a difference or impact on them. Thus, 'effective' in this context was defined from the youth's perspective, not that of the child and youth care worker or myself.

Once I felt sure that they both understood what I was asking, and that the youth was willing and able to focus on searching her lived experience for an intervention by this child and youth care worker which was effective for her (i.e., she could recall memories of their interactions together and could identify specific interventions which the child and youth care worker had effected), I asked them to think about interventions which had occurred between them which they both felt they remembered well enough to talk about in some depth.

This request lead to a discussion between the youth and the child and youth care worker about interventions which had occurred between them. My primary role during this 'remembering session' was to ensure that they stayed on track, to encourage them to remember freely without being unduly influenced by the other (i.e., they both offered memories for consideration which were entertained by the other) and to encourage them to maintain a focus on specific interventive events as opposed to global interventions as previously defined. The following example from the very beginning of the brainstorming between TC, the child and youth care worker, and JY, a female adolescent youth, demonstrates one such intervention:

*TG* *Do you remember some things that happened between, er. . . the two of you?*

*JY* *(P) Most of the problem, like, things that went on, was either, was when I quit school /*

*TG* *Hm, Hm,*

*JY* *when I was living here. When I got pregnant, when I was living here/*

*TG* *Hm, Hm*

*JY* *and my running away.*

*TG* *Hm, Hm, so those are some of the big ones hey?/*

*JY* *Hm, Hm,*

*TG* *Like we had talked about in the very beginning?*

*JY* *Hm, Hm.*

*TG* *Er. . . can you remember a time when, either around running away, or school, or being pregnant, that you and TC had a specific interaction?*

At one point the participants reached an agreement about an intervention which both of them felt capable of talking about and which the youth felt had been effective for her. In all cases this point was marked by an increased activity of both participants, the conversation became more animated. When the two of them seemed to be comfortable with a particular intervention, I checked to make sure that talking about this specific intervention was acceptable to both of them. Sometimes, they reached a very quick agreement as the following excerpt from the first few minutes of the 'remembering session' in the interview with DC, a male child and youth care worker, and TY, a female adolescent, demonstrates:

*TG* *Ok, great. So, hm. . . what we're gonna do, for, like, as long as it takes this, is . . . we need to, first of all, discover an intervention that you both remember, and then describe that. So, do you. . . does any come to mind for you TY, when. . . ?*

*TY* *(P) I guess . . . I guess, the big one was . . . one night when, I got home, from being out and a . . . DC was on shift, and we were talking in the office, and a . . . hm . . . I think everybody else was in bed hey, by this time?*

*DC* *Hm, hm.*

*TY* *And I had asked DC for a cigarette . . . /*

*TG* *(to DC) You remember it?*

*DC* *Yeah, oh yeah.*

*TG* *Gee, you both remember this.*
*TY* *Yeah.*
*DC* *Yes.*
*TG* *Ok. Can you tell me, quickly, what it's about?*
*DC* *It's about TY returning from curfew. /*
*TG* *Ok.*
*DC* *possibly just on the limit a . . . /*
*TY* *Yeah.*
*DC* *around curfew time. /*
*TG* *Just on the limit? Yeah?*
*TY* *Yeah.*
*DC* *And a . . . nice, nice, nice, and chat, chat, chat, /*
*TG* *Yeah, ok.*
*DC* *have a cigarette and . . . then wants another cigarette.*
*TG* *Ok.*
*DC* *That's what the whole key of the intervention is.*
*TG* *Ok. Is that a . . . /*
*TY* *Well a . . . yeah.*
*TG* *Is that it? (to TY) Are you ok with talking about this one then?*
*TY* *Oh, yeah, yeah.*
*TG* *(to DC) And you're ok with it?*
*DC* *Oh, yeah.*

As soon as they agreed on the intervention which was to be the subject of our interview I described to them how I would like to proceed. What I would do is ask them questions in order to clarify exactly what happened and set the specific intervention into its particular context. I told them that during this initial discussion we would not get in to any great depth about how they were feeling, what they were thinking, or what they thought the other person was thinking about at the time the intervention occurred; that would come later when we did our individual interviews. For now, the goal was simply to get a description of the event, from the outside, which both of them could agree on.

We then proceeded to develop a description of their chosen intervention. If they wanted to raise things that an observer could not have seen (e.g., how they felt at a certain moment), they were asked to wait until the individual interviews as the following excerpt from the interview with TC and JY demonstrates. It follows

immediately a description by JY of a transition, from anger to understanding, that she felt in her conversation with TC during the interventive event.

*TG* *An understanding in what sense? What do you mean by that?*
*JY* *Well, the initial reaction is to be angry, /*
*TG* *Ok.*
*JY* *Because . . . /*
*TG* *He was . . . /*
*JY* *He . . . he's working, and he has three kids running out, it's his time to go home, and you know . . . /*
*TG* *Ok.*
*JY* *And . . . but . . . like the moment of that has passed, like, 'Ok, they're all in, they're safe, they're happy'.*
*TG* *Ok.*
*JY* *So it's passed to, like, 'Ok, we can . . . don't get overworked about it, /*
*TG* *Right.*
*JY* *talk about it, figure it out, and that's it', you know. . .*
*TG* *Ok. You know what's going, right now, as you speak? No . . . what's going on, is, you're telling how you understand him. Right? You're telling me about how you got, at that time, how you got him put together. I mean, we're sitting now, and we're thinking back about it /*
*JY* *Yeah.*
*TG* *and you're telling me he's . . . how you got him put together. And then you know how you got you put together, and he's got you put together, and he's got him put together. And that's what we're gonna talk about when you and I are alone together. Ok?*

The purpose of directing the interview within such a narrow focus at this stage was to reduce the amount of possible contamination which might have occurred if they were exposed to each others interpretations of events.

The goal throughout this stage of the inquiry was to develop an agreed-upon re-construction of the sequence of events which occurred during the interventive process. As we went through the re-construction I would constantly check with the participants to ensure that they agreed with the descriptions put forth by the other participant. Sometimes in this process of reconstruction one or

the other of the participants would offer a different description of the events in the sequence. Either of these interventions might result in simple agreement or, other times, it resulted in a joint reconstruction of the specific element of sequence which was being discussed. This is demonstrated in the following excerpt from my conversation with DC, child and youth care worker, and TY, a young woman.

*TY* *. . . it was interesting, and then, I think what happened was . . . I became, I - I began to be very comfortable, so, I was sitting there, and . . . thinking, ok, this is nice, you know, but then I asked DC if I could have another cigarette, [*

*DC* *Yeah, but you got up first. You went to the washroom, then you came back at the door and . . . you asked again.*

*TY* *Yeah. Oh yeah, I had to go, ok.*

*DC* *You went out of the office as if [*

*TG* *OK*

*DC* *it was over, and you went out.*

*TY* *Oh . . . yeah, ok.*

*DC* *Then you came back in, sure of yourself that you would get a yes.*

*TY* *Oh I think, yeah, thinking it would be okay . . .*

Once I felt that we had developed a description of the event which satisfied the two participants and gave me a clear picture of what had occurred, I fed back that description of the sequence to the participants. If they agreed that the description I repeated back to them was satisfactory, this stage of the interviews was terminated. If there were parts of my description with which they disagreed, it was modified until it met with their approval.

Debriefing was contained to their experience of the interview itself and any comments they might choose to make about this recalling of the intervention. Comments during this stage of the debriefing were usually focused on things like their surprise at how well it all came back to them, their interest in the fact that they had chosen this specific intervention, or comments about how the interview was different that how they had imagined it was going to be. Following this debriefing the child and youth care worker was excused from the room and the interview with the individual youth began.

## 3D: Individual Re-constructions: the Individual Interview Process

Following the dyadic interviews the individual participants met with me in order to discuss in greater depth the intervention and their experience of it. The initial individual interviews with the participants were conducted almost immediately following the dyadic interviews, in all cases within a matter of a few hours. The youth was the first of the dyad interviewed. This was done only as a matter of expediency because usually the youth had less flexibility of time than the child and youth care worker. For both the youth and the child and youth care worker, one individual interview followed immediately after the dyadic interview. Subsequent individual interviews and discussions, both in person and by telephone, were conducted with the participants after the transcript from the initial individual interview was completed and reviewed and/or when there was a need to pursue matters further with an individual.

The initial individual interviews did not follow a standardized structured format but were instead conducted as a form of focused conversation regarding the chosen intervention. This focused narrative approach to interviews, as explained previously, has been advocated by Mishler (1986) as appropriate for this type of an inquiry. This section explains the process by which the interviews with individual participants were conducted.

### The Initial Individual Interviews

While there was no formal set of questions to be followed because the intention and focus of the individual interviews was to elicit a deeper description of the individual's experience of the previously described intervention, I had prepared some general guidelines in the form of questions which could be used to stimulate discussion of areas that I initially felt were important to this inquiry. For the youth those questions were:

*What was your internal experience of the intervention?*

*What was it like to be intervened with? What did it mean for you?*

*What were the things that influenced/effected how you responded to the child and youth care worker's actions?*

*What was there about that intervention that made it meaningful for you?*

*Why do you think this intervention was effective?*

*What does this intervention mean to you today?*

The following questions were, when necessary, used to stimulate discussion with the child and youth care workers.

*What was your internal experience of the intervention?*

*What was it like to intervene? What did it mean for you?*

*What were the things that influenced/effected how you responded to the youth's actions?*

*Why did you choose that intervention, at that time?*

*What was there about this intervention that made it meaningful for you?*

*Why do you think this intervention was effective?*

While none of the participants were asked specifically these questions they were, in one form or another, used to stimulate discussion during the individual interviews, as the following exchange from an individual interview when I asked JY what the intervention had meant for her, demonstrates:

JY *I . . . a lot of what people said . . . didn't . . . ok . . . didn't matter.*
TG *Yeah.*
JY *Hm . . . I . . . I don't remember but hm . . . I stopped screwing around a lot after that I think. I wasn't as (P) carefree . . ./*
TG *Yeah?*
JY *Hm . . . I don't know . . . I thought about things more before I did them, and /*
TG *Hm, hm.*
JY *Ah . . .*

TG *Ho - how could that particular incident encourage you to do that? Like, I mean it was just . . . one more time when you were . . ./*

JY *I guess . . ./*

TG *being flippant and . . ./*

JY *I guess, cause, being that he said, he didn't want to write the report . . . cause I was pregnant, made me think . . . 'Ok, I am pregnant, I'm gonna to have a baby, I have to start taking care of myself because it's not just myself /*

TG *Yeah.*

JY *anymore'. Before that I'd . . . I'd run the streets, and I wouldn't care, Ok . . . I get hit by a car, well, I get hit by a car, like, /*

TG *Yeah, yeah.*

JY *it's no big thing to me.*

TG *But I would imagine that before that moment, other people had told you, like, you have to look after yourself now you're pregnant, you . . . got to think about the baby too.*

JY *And . . . no, a lot of /*

TG *You didn't get any of those lectures?*

JY *people before that were telling me that I shouldn't have the baby, so /*

*TG* *Ok.*

*JY* *so . . . it was the first time anybody, actually, like, really said... 'it - it's not just you,/*

*TG* *Ok.*

*JY* *you have - you have somebody else to care for now' /*

TG *Hm, hm.*

JY *so smarten up /*

TG *Hm, hm.*

JY *and I guess after that I started smartening up.*

The initial individual interviews began with a quick review of the intervention which had been discussed in order to re-situate the author and the individual. Following this the discussion began, centring on the very beginning of the process as they had described it. For example, TY was asked to describe why it was that she had come in to the house quietly and what kind of state she was in at the time.

*TG* *And - and . . . can you remember walking into the house, like, and the other kids were asleep, can you remember, like, how you felt?*

*TY* *Hm . . . (P) I guess flabbergasted with . . . being in an independent group home, you know, like, coming in at this hour and, you know, thinking . . . that it was alright, you know /*

*TG* *Yeah.*

*TY* *and a . . . I remember feeling very good, you know, not used to the fact that I could come in at this . . . at that hour /*

*TG* *Ok.*

*TY* *of the night, you know, so, but when I opened the door I didn't hear any of the kids - other kids. I thought they were sleeping so I just wanted to be considerate, you know, just make sure . . .*

Once the individual and the author were again situated at the very beginning of the re-constructed intervention, they proceeded to go through the intervention sequence one step at a time stopping to discuss various points so as to ensure the author's understanding of what was being said. The goal was to develop a description of the experiences and process of the interviewee. The author's role was to facilitate as deep a remembering as possible without leading excessively the process of re-creation.

Throughout the process of the initial individual interview, the interviewee was free and even encouraged to 'wander' in their remembering and reconstruction as they might in a normal situation of discourse. Such wandering was supported because the process of re-remembering and reconstructing our experience may be different for each individual. Usually I brought the conversation back to the focus of the interview only at the request of the interviewee. The following exchange is offered in order to give the reader a fuller flavour of the conversations between the participants and myself.

*DC* *And a . . . so, it's a little bit how do you say . . . intuition, hey . . . because her, she - she - she struck me, she's a girl that struck me, a . . . she has a lot of potential, ok? But I felt like, she's like a . . . been a . . . been tied up, tied up, and hasn't been permitted to be herself.*

*TG* *Ok.*

*DC* *And she was still looking at how - how to please everyone else, without really taking care of herself, you're a people person, /*

*TG* *Hm, hm.*

*DC* *you've got to get away from a . . . some of the experiences, ok a . . . this is speculative, /*

*TG* *Right.*

*DC* *ok? A . . . (P) /*

*TG* *She's a . . . /*

*DC* *any of it make sense? /*

*TG* *yeah, it makes a lot of sense, she's a - a . . . hm . . . the way you're describing her, is - is . . . I'm thinking of, a lot of the times, when I'm thinking of - of kids in care, hm . . . I think about them as being very hm . . . a . . . concerned with themselves, and, you know, 'screw the rest of the world, who cares', right? I mean, that's what they present, right? And you're describing her as a girl who was very concerned with the rest of the world, and less concerned with herself somehow.*

*DC* *Well, it depends how many types of layers you go, ultimately, it's always, ah . . . /*

*TG* *Well, let's go through them /*

*DC* *about herself, hey? /*

*TG* *Yeah.*

*DC* *I mean a . . . I mean all, I mean, you know, it's - it's people pleasing all the time, but it's also, it also 'brings in' /*

*TG* *Hm, hm.*

*DC* *this people pleasing. What does it satisfy in her?*

*TG* *Well, what's your guess?*

*DC* *Yeah, hey?*

*TG* *What's your guess?*

*DC* *My guess is, it's something she gets, it might be 'I am ok.' But she'd never believe it anyway.*

*TG* *Hm, hm.*

*DC* *It needs to be repeated all the time, /*

*TG* *Hm, hm.*

*DC* *when - when I hear about repetition all the time, you have a little quirk here, ok?*

*TG* *Ok.*

*DC* *A . . . so, there's the bad object in there possibly, the - the identity or the lack of it, /*

*TG* *Ok.*

*DC* *or the absences, or /*

*TG* *Ok.*

*DC* *So . . . it's a little bit where I was coming from, with her, ok.*

*TG* *Are we talking about an . . . exploration?*

*DC* *Well a . . . clinically, I was - I remember Erikson, ok? There's the history taking, /*

*TG* *Hm, hm.*

*DC* *there's the objective testing and all that, but primarily it's a . . . intuition experience.*

*TG* *Hm, hm.*

*DC* *To me, ok? And a . . . that was explored, ok, a . . . because, like I said, nothing was coming out, she came in, she a . . . she was perfect, there's no demand, /*

*TG* *Hm, hm.*

*DC* *on her and no demands /*

*TG* *Hm, hm.*

*DC* *on the program /*

*TG* *Hm, hm.*

*DC* *for - for a kid who's perfect, /*

*TG* *Yeah.*

*DC* *But, to go beyond that, what's . . . you also got to watch too, like, you know, I'm all over right now, but I mean, you know, you got to look at the context, that's what the process is about, the context, Youth Protection, Social Services, got to keep it within that context, and that you're not there to do an in-depth therapy.*

*TG* *Ok.*

*DC* *But the program there was autonomy, I mean, it's always comes that - to that, institutionalization, and autonomy, /*

*TG* *Right.*

*DC* *and dependence. So, how - how do we filter back decision making? Ok, how do we get the person to responsiblize themselves? It's a learning process. You can't teach them, /*

*TG* *Hm, hm.*

*DC* *you can only create the opportunity, /*

*TG* *Hm, hm.*

*DC* *but you can't teach these things, ok? The - the dynamics, /*

*TG* *Hm, hm.*

*DC* *that occur to them, and what you've got to do is create the circumstances (laugh). I'm all over hey?*

*TG* *No, you're not all over.*

*DC* *No?*

*TG* *It's like you're creating the circumstances for something to occur.*

*DC* *Yes.*

*TG* *And - and what is that something?*

*DC* *The true dialogue.*

**Follow-up Individual Interviews/Discussions**

A number of follow-up discussions were also held with the participants. Sometimes the purpose was to get feedback from the participants on the write-ups of my analysis of our conversations. For example, after I had written up the description of the intervention it was given to the participants individually to get their evaluation of its accuracy and when changes were required it was modified accordingly. As well, after I had completed various sections of this dissertation I would give them to the participants and ask them to reflect on what was written, how I was interpreting what they had said, and how I was using their words and ideas. From these discussions, changes were made to the written document so that it more correctly reflected their experiences and the process of the intervention.

Sometimes follow-up discussions were held to pursue with the participants in greater depth something they had said, as I did with TC when I needed to understand the process he went through in monitoring himself throughout the intervention, or with JC when I wanted to know if and how she had prepared herself to intervene with LY.

At times follow-ups consisted of brief telephone conversations with one or another of the participants when there was a specific clarification needed such as the meaning of a particular word to them. This was the case, for example, when I needed to understand DC's use of the word 'responsibiliser' which he had translated from the french as 'responsibilize'.

These follow-ups continued until I felt that I had no more questions or until the participant was satisfied with my writing, descriptions, or analysis. There was therefore a continuing 'relationship' between myself, the participants, the analysis, and the writing as recommended in phenomenological inquiry. (Chambers, 1987; van Manen, 1990) This process of constant continuing conversations made the process of the inquiry dynamic and 'transparent' for all the participants.

## 3F: Working with the Data

*On the wall of my home there is an abstract representation of "Makhedama", a traditional female healer of South Africa. At first glance the painting seems to be a blur of colour, shapes and lines, swirling like eddies of mixed colours caught in a whirlwind. As one opens oneself to the painting, sets aside biases and prejudices, looks closely, and then withdraws to encompass the gestalt, forms begins to take shape and are imbued with meaning. With time and patience, one sees connections between the forms. A faint and fragile outline begins to appear. With this first fleeting image one can return to the finer details of the painting and explore how they connect and contribute to the whole which eventually emerges. One moment as if by magic, which seems appropriate of a traditional healer, one sees Makhedama there on the wall, resplendent in her complexity, subtlety and beauty. Eventually one looks on the painting as a picture, a clear representation of the interpretation one has given to the artist's interpretation of the Mahkedama, which is, in turn, her interpretation of the traditional healer within her culture.*

Working with the data of this inquiry constantly reminded me of my early experiences of coming to know this painting. As can be imagined, an approach to interviews as described in this inquiry can generate a tremendous amount of information. At first such an abundance of 'data', the tapes, notes of interviews and transcripts of the interviews, seems almost overwhelming. As hundreds of pages of transcripts, hours of audio tapes and piles of notes accumulate the task of trying to make sense of the information seem impossible. However, as I immersed myself into the data deeper and deeper, living the text of the inquiry, occasionally drawing back to see the single expression in the context of the overall experience, themes and patterns began to emerge. At first there were only the glimmerings of patterns much like the experience one has when a previously abstract visual representation begins to take form.

The data for this inquiry was gathered through a series of audio-taped conversations with the participants. The audio tapes of the dyadic and early individual conversations with all participants were given to a professional typist for transcription using the guidelines articulated by Mishler (1986). Essentially, the typist was instructed to include every word and verbal expression which she encountered on the tapes; to indicate pauses with (P) and interruptions and overlaps between speakers with the left-hand bracket symbol ([). Repetitions of words were retained and any instance of unclear speech was indicated by empty parentheses.

These transcriptions were reviewed by myself while listening to the tapes. While most of the time the transcriptions were accurate, there were times when this review resulted in changes to the transcriptions which affected the words and meaning of what the participants were saying. For example, in a conversation with one of the youth, the typist had written the word 'them' in the sentence "I enjoyed talking to them "referring to the youth's experience of talking. In reviewing the tapes, it turned out that the youth had used the contraction 'im' as in "I enjoyed talking to'im." In reviewing the context within which the expression was used it became obvious that the youth's statement had been "I enjoyed talking to him," very much changing the meaning of the sentence. A number of times in reviewing the transcripts these small errors, potentially full of significance, were corrected.

In the later stages of this inquiry, when the conversations were limited and focused very much on a specific follow-up as when, for example, DC and I had a very specific conversation about the meaning of the word 'responsibilize' as he had used it in referring to the goal of his intervention, the conversations were taped and transcribed by myself. Transcriptions of the tapes were given to the participants throughout the process and they were encouraged to correct or clarify anything they thought was inaccurate, or to use the transcripts as a stimulus for other discussions. This helped to meet one of my commitments to the participants

which was to be as transparent as possible throughout the process. Occasionally this resulted in changes to the content of the transcripts. More frequently, it resulted in the participants identifying areas they wished to discuss in greater detail.

On some occasions, conversations were held on the telephone. This would happen most frequently when I wanted to clarify a point or the meaning of a word or expression, or when I was calling a participant to arrange another meeting and we would fall into a natural conversation. In these cases I would make notes of the conversation and type them myself. If any of the material from these conversations was used in this dissertation, the wording was validated by the participant.

I would listen frequently to the audio tapes. Sometimes I would sit in room and just listen. Other times I would listen to them on a tape player while doing an activity such as gardening or driving.

The initial goal of this immersion was to gain a sense of the whole, an impression of the conversation (Lindsey, 1994), to appreciate the flavour of the conversation as well as listening for things I had not noticed in previous listenings. As the inquiry progressed I would go back and listen again to the earliest conversations. At times these listenings reconfirmed ideas which were taking shape. At other times they stimulated me to reconsider ideas which had formed. These listenings caused me to move back and forth between the transcripts, my ideas, the experience of the conversations and the writing I was doing. This "immersion in the data as a whole" (Tesch, 1987, p. 230) was continual throughout the process of this inquiry. For example, just before making a final copy of this dissertation, I returned to listen to the tapes of all the conversations so as to re-connect with the total process of the inquiry.

As I listened to these tapes of the conversations and reviewed the transcripts, I constantly made notes of the ideas expressed by the participants, of the questions which arose for me and of the themes which were beginning to

emerge. These notes served as a cumulative record of my experiencing of the data and also served as a stimulus for further conversations with the participants.

As is necessary in this type of inquiry, I spent concentrated times with the transcripts, reviewing them in detail, using what van Manen (1984, p. 60) has called the "highlighting approach" or Tesch (1987, p.233) has called the "panning" approach. As Tesch has said, in this process

> *. . . the researcher looks for statements in the text that are particularly revealing about the experience being described . . . the researcher looks for precious elements, which take the form of descriptive expressions that are "at the center" of the experience, those that address "its nature", or "directly pertain" to the phenomena.*

Essentially, I was looking for statements in the transcripts which were representative of the participants' experience.

This immersion in the transcripts also involved the process of line by line review (van Manen, 1984, 1990). Tesch (1987) refers to this as the process of surveying in which the researcher, by reading each sentence and expression in detail, "looks at each square inch of her territory and tries to capture what is there, making sure that nothing important is overlooked." (p. 232)

As I went through this process, meaning units, those particular meanings or segments of experience which seem to express a particular theme of experiencing, began to emerge (Lindsey, 1994; Tesch, 1987; van Manen, 1990).

As Lindsey (1994) has pointed out, during the early stages of this process, the researcher attempts to isolate the units which are of relevance to the research question and set the others aside, thus narrowing the focus to data which implicates the questions. An example of this involved my conversations with LY about her recent experiences with of watching other people with their children, and her reaction to their actions with their children. While this conversation arose during our discussion of how she was experiencing herself now, it was not relevant to her experience of the intervention or to the meaning she had come to

give that intervention over time. These isolated units of meaning were not discarded, rather they were set aside to be revisited from time to time so as to determine their relevance. In fact, very little was permanently set aside. Almost everything which arose had relevance to the questions of this inquiry. From this process a number of potential themes were identified.

Tesch (1987), following her study of the emergence of themes in human science research, has offered two descriptions of themes which are useful to consider. She equates themes to the phenomenological researchers equivalent of results and she concludes that in human science research, themes are used to mean,

> *. . . something akin to the content, or topic, or statement, of fact, in a piece of data; expressed more simply, what the data segment is about.*
> *. . . a major dimension, major aspect, or constituent of the data studied; expressed more simply, a partial description of the phenomena. (p. 230)*

Tesch then took her analysis of the use of the word theme in phenomenological research further and concluded that there are two main dimensions, themes and metathemes. Themes, according to Tesch are, brief statements that describe the content of individual units of data. (p. 231) Metathemes refer to the major dimensions of the phenomenon studied. I have found this distinction useful in the process of this inquiry as I tried to consider the themes which were related to the experience and the process of the effective child and youth care intervention.

Some of the themes which emerged early in the process of this inquiry were maintained throughout the process and eventually emerged as metathemes, for example the theme of special relationship. Other potential themes were identified but not maintained throughout the total process either because the continuing inquiry did not support them, another more appropriate category evolved, or they became incorporated into metathemes themes as the inquiry continued. For example, in the early stages of this inquiry, after a conversation with one of the child and youth care workers, I had identified 'understanding a

youth's history' as a theme. Subsequent conversations and further immersion in the data, however, resulted in this being incorporated into the metatheme of 'knowing the youth', in which other aspects of knowing or understanding were also included.

As these initial themes were evolving, I gave participants copies of my writing about these potential areas using verbatim quotes from the transcripts so that they could see how I was drawing from our conversations to develop these themes. At this stage they received copies only of the writing which included their words, not the words of others. I did this in order to prevent any contamination which might occur at this point. Based on their reading and reaction some themes were confirmed, others were re-framed or revised and other areas for discussion were stimulated. This transparency about how I was using the transcripts of our conversations, and the encouraging of participants to assist me in re-writing what I had said, helped, I believe, to avoid the "possibility of betrayal" (Weber, 1986, p. 71) which is always present when we use transcripts to reflect conversational exchanges between people. The reactions of the child and youth care workers to this transparency was generally one of appreciation and interest.

Once I had completed the analysis of the initial conversations with all participants I began to look actively to see if a there were any "common themes, that are shared among the participants . . . themes that constitute a common thread" (Tesch, 1987, p. 233). I had expected that some might emerge based on my experience in the field and my experience of the initial conversations. Indeed, a number of such themes did appear across interviews.

The previous discussion may lead the reader to assume that the process of data analysis in phenomenological research proceeds in a logical and sequential fashion and that themes and metathemes emerge clearly or are constructed freely by the researcher. In fact, the process of working with data like this is far from linear. The closest definition to the experience is probably that offered by the concept of the hermeneutic circle (Chambers, 1987; Heidegger, 1962; Lindsey,

1994). In this process the researcher moves into the data, immersing oneself completely, and then moves back to consider the context within which the experience of the individual units is occurring. This process of moving in and out, of experiencing the detail and the context within which the detail is contained, causes one to constantly reflect on the parts and the whole and the relationship between them. Through this process relationships become evident and the meaning of the parts becomes context bound by the frame within which they are experienced. The emergence of themes, as van Manen (1990) has said, could be described,

> *more accurately as a process of insightful invention, discovery or disclosure - grasping and formulating a thematic understanding is not a rule-bound process but a free act of "seeing" meaning. (p. 79)*

Ultimately, van Manen argues, the concept of themes may be irrelevant. They are, after all, simply a way to express our understanding of the data, descriptions or experience we have encountered in the process of investigating someone's experience of a phenomenon which is of interest to us. They are a way of organizing our research and our writing of that research. Throughout the process of this inquiry the notion of themes has been useful, for it gave me an approach to organizing my search for the elements which constitute the experience of the effective child and youth care intervention. The concept has also been limiting. For a time, for example, based on my to need to do well, I was concerned with finding *correct* themes; themes which matched in structure and relevance those which are described in the literature. This desire to 'do it right' at times encouraged me to ignore elements of the process and experience of these interventions which did not correctly fit the textbook definitions. In the end I concluded that themes, or metathemes, are a way of expressing my experience of this inquiry. I was encouraged by the advice of Tesch (1987) who said that it is best "not to become obsessed with doubts and questions, but to jump in there and do it." (p. 240) In chapter four, Descriptive Interpretations: Themes from the

Process of Intervention, I offer an interpretative description of the experience of the participants to these interventions. In chapter five, Interpretations; Metathemes of Effectiveness, I have attempted to identify why these interventions may have been effective. What follows this chapter is my interpretation of the experience of these participants as they have shared with me their experience of the effective child and youth care intervention. It reflects my 'jumping in and doing it.'

# CHAPTER FOUR

## Descriptive Interpretations: Themes from the Process of Intervention

### 4A: The Participants and Their Interventions

This inquiry consisted of a series of narrative interviews with three (3) dyads each consisting of one child and youth care worker and one youth. Each dyad was asked to choose an interventive moment or event to be the subject of the interviews. As was explained earlier these interventions reflect differing definitions of the child and youth care intervention than that which was initially proposed by the author. In the initial dyadic interviews participants were invited to choose an effective or meaningful intervention to discuss. While I was initially interested in discussing only interventive moments or events, the interventions selected by the participants represent a much wider range of the definition of intervention, more congruent, perhaps, with the varied use of the word in the field.

While no system has been formally accepted in the child and youth care literature to classify different types of interventions, the discussions which occurred with the youth and child and youth care workers suggest some ideas for such a classification. It may be possible, for example, to think of interventions in terms of their reactive and proactive characteristics. A re-active intervention would be one in which an existing situation places a demand on the child and youth care worker to intervene (i.e., reacting to a specific incident). A pro-active intervention might be one in which a child and youth care worker creates the conditions for an intervention or responds to a situation which does not necessarily demand a response.

An intervention could also be conceptualized in terms of its scope as suggested by Ricks and Garfat (1989). It may, for example, involve a single brief exchange which occurs in a moment (e.g., a response to a request), a prolonged exchange in which a discussion occurs about a topic related to the youth's

development (e.g. a counselling session or an activity) or a change to a youth's current life situation (e.g., moving into care or changing schools).

Finally, an intervention might be considered in terms of the beneficiary of the intervention. There are times when an intervention is clearly undertaken for the benefit of the child and youth care worker and only indirectly for the benefit of the youth. Such might be the case when someone intervenes in order to obtain more information about a youth or to bring a situation more under control. At other times, an intervention might be more directly for the benefit of the youth as might be the case when an intervention is made to stimulate a youth to think differently about some current behaviour which is jeopardising the youth's health. In all cases, however, an intervention manifests as an intentional act undertaken to facilitate change. An act without the intention to facilitate change is simply a behaviour, not an intervention.

In the interventions described here, a range of definitions is evident. This section describes the participants to the intervention and the intervention they chose to discuss. No depth or interpretation is offered in the following descriptions. With the exception of the participants' descriptions of themselves which they were free to add to at any point during the process, the information comes only from the initial dyadic interviews.

> In the first scenario described, we see a brief proactive exchange between DC, the child and youth care worker, and TY, the youth. In this scenario, DC takes advantage of a situation which he engenders for the benefit of the youth. This seemingly very simple intervention could easily have been just a behaviour if it were not for the intentionality of DC's action.
>
> In the second scenario, TC, the child and youth care worker, reacts to a situation which he feels demands his control and which he must control for his own benefit if any immediate future action is going to be effective. He then enters into a longer, pro-active counselling intervention with JY, a youth in the program.

In the third scenario, JC, a female child and youth care worker, reacting to organizational demands, but proactively motivated by her sense of caring, facilitates the transfer of LY, the youth, to another group home.

This range of interventions reflects well the reality of child and youth care practice. While they are apparently three very different interventions, they share some commonalities.

**Intervention #1: TY and DC**

The Evolution Group home is located on a suburban street of greater Montreal. It is a single family detached dwelling in a neighbourhood of similar houses. Immediately inside the front door one encounters a set of steps. Those leading down go to a basement common room. Leading up are six steps which open in to the hallway of the home. Immediately at the top of the steps, on the right hand side, is a former bedroom, approximately ten by fifteen feet which has been converted to a staff office. Inside, across from the door to this office, is a desk which staff use to do evening logging and other administrative tasks. In front of the desk is a chair. The rest of the office is furnished simply and includes a filing cabinet, computer, extra chairs, plants and books. A large window looks out on to the street. The atmosphere created is casual and relaxed.

The group home is co-educational, providing places, at the time of this intervention, for four adolescent females and four males of the same age. All the youth are between the ages of 16 and 18. The main focus of the program is to help young people moving towards independent living.

The program is staffed by child and youth care workers who each work 38.75 hours per week on a rotational schedule, alternating days and evenings, weekdays and weekends. At any given time there may be one or two workers on duty.

One evening, at approximately 10:30, DC was working alone. This is how DC described his memory of himself generally at that time;

*. . . I was 43, the same person I am now . . . enjoying his work, enjoying it because these are the flowering years (p) things are coming together . . . ah . . . happy at work, ya . . . relatively, uh, you know, you have your ups and downs but . . . the last few years things were okay . . . again, I think I had gotten rid of some old baggage like . . . when you're saving people. Saving people was a big thing. That came out in a big blurb in my own therapy, then, eh? . . . I was reflective . . . thinking . . . there is pleasure in thinking so, ah, I was a thinker then too . . . always looking for new ideas. I'm an idea person. I always explore, ah, try to look for new angles, for, ah, for new ways, for new ways of perceiving things. . . and, ah, reconnecting them. That's me at work then, eh. That's me at work.*

*And - and me, I'm a little bit delinquent with kids, in the sense that I like to ruffle their feathers, that's how you get content . . .*

DC was in the office doing the evening logs and generally finishing the days paperwork. With the exception of TY, who was still out, all the youth were in bed. TY was 17 at the time and she described herself as follows.

*I always felt like an outsider from a lot of the adolescents and . . . I guess because . . . of my background, of the background that I came from, and everything I've acted out on, you know, and where I ended up, you know, being the person I am today, you know, a lot of people put me as a role model to adolescents. So, they expected a lot more from me other then other adolescents.*

*So, I was in a Christian school as well as (the previous group home). And there, my average for school had to be, like, an eighty, to pass. So, I was always studying, you know, whereas before I never went to high school cause I was always skipping, so, I think my highest average was like a twenty-two, something like that.*

*. . . like, I was very hard on myself, like a . . . hm . . . if I was to do, like, something wrong, let's just say like, spilled a glass of milk or something, I would be very hard on myself, like, 'I knew it was there, you know, why did I do it', and, I'd be freaked out about it. . . cause I was a people pleaser, so, I would, like, I don't like to see people unhappy, or disappoint them, so, I would do anything in my power to try and make myself live up to their standards, because, I was so used to being depended upon other people, and getting what I wanted, that I didn't . . . it didn't click to me say: 'Look, TY, do things for yourself and, you know, ta ta ta ta', because I was so used to . . . like I said being happy, not being upset,*

*. . . you know, I never really expressed my emotions, how I was feeling, cause I was having a hard time doing that, and with people saying*

*yes and no to me, no was always mostly out of the question . . .but a, then I was a people pleaser big time.*

Just after 10:30, TY entered the house closing the door quietly, apparently not wishing to make any noise. She walked up the steps, stopped to look in at the office door and, seeing DC sitting at the office desk, she asked if she could sit and have a cigarette and talk. DC, thinking it appropriate for her to have a little time to unwind said yes. TY sat in the chair across the desk from DC.

As he continued to work on his paperwork, TY chatted with him and he, as someone also involved in another task, occasionally responded, staying engaged with her while continuing with his paperwork. TY relaxed and seemed to settle in comfortably. After she finished her cigarette TY got up and went to the bathroom. DC continued with his paperwork.

TY returned to the office and asked if she could stay and have another cigarette. DC, without any apparent change in his attitude or affect, said no in a manner which, consistent with their previous interactions, was somewhat jovial.

As first TY did not believe him. She looked surprised and smiled a little. She thought he was joking and sought clarification.

*So, I asked him, I said: 'DC are you serious?' And he said: 'Yeah.' I said: 'You're saying no?' And he said: 'Yeah, I'm saying no, do you understand?' No. And I'm saying er . . . 'ok', and I . . . I really thought he was joking . . ..*

DC confirmed that he wasn't joking and repeated his no.

TY was confused by DC's response and after checking to make sure he was serious, she said goodnight and went quietly to bed.

*I just didn't get it, but a . . . yes, then I just said goodnight, and I went upstairs, and I got undressed and I went to bed . . . .*

DC saying no to such a simple request confused TY and caused her to think. While she went straight to bed, she did not go immediately to sleep.

*. . . and I'm, like, walking upstairs, feeling like . . . what did I do, you know, like, and I remember laying in bed, I must have lied there for 15 minutes trying to think . . .*

DC, observing her reaction continued with his interrupted paperwork.

Later TY was to reflect that this intervention was a significant event in causing her to think about how she was in relationship with others and the role that people-pleasing played in her life.

**Intervention #2: JY and TC**

The Transitional Moments group home is situated on a average street in a suburb of Montreal. It is a detached single family dwelling. On one side is another single family dwelling and on the other a corner store and a small restaurant. In front runs a busy city street. Along the small back yard, between the group home and the restaurant, is an alley used primarily by garbage trucks which come to collect the waste from the local businesses.

Eight adolescents live in the group home which is staffed by a rotating schedule of child and youth care workers. At any time there may be either one or two workers on duty.

On an early summer night in 1993, TC, an experienced child and youth care worker, was working alone as the other staff had left for the night. This is how TC describes himself as he reflects back on the time of this intervention:

*. . . well, in connection at that time . . . I mean at that time, I'm looking at my own life cycle, going through a change anyway, the 40th, and also my own . . . my own life, my marriage was ending, so I'm looking at that. I'm looking at myself at that time. I started to put a value on . . . a sense of being. Ok. For myself . . . you reach 40 you start examining your life, and your needs. And . . . And I looked at . . . what was my need, and one of the things I needed to be was a healthy . . . a healthier human being, in that I would be in a healthier relationship. Because . . . I - I related that to my children. I would like to be a healthy . . . a healthy parent.*

*Hm . . . and how I was, as a . . . as a - as as . . . as a human being, how was I? Was I happy? Was I sad? I mean, at the time I was a sad human being.*

*And, being respectful, having respect for myself . . . was a big piece.*

Shortly after the other staff left for the night, TC made one of his frequent rounds of the program, checking to make sure all the youths were in bed, safe and well. It was something all the staff did, as part of their regular evening routine. This ensured that all was well for the night staff who came in at 11:30.

On making his rounds, TC noticed that three of the girls beds were empty. He knew that they hadn't been empty long because when he had checked a little earlier all the girls were in their rooms. At first, TC checked the other bedrooms to see if the missing girls were doing some late night visiting. Not finding them in the house he went outside to look around to look for them. He encountered JY, a 17 year old pregnant resident, spotlighted in the driveway from the lights of the porch and street. This is how JY described herself during our first interview:

*I was . . . was a kind of to myself, don't bother me kind of person. Hum . . . I . . . I wanted to be on my own, I didn't want anybody over me, I liked to be myself, doing what I wanted to do . . . I rarely talked to anybody, like staff. In meetings with my social workers, hum . . . they'd ask me questions, and I'd just shrug my shoulders, and say 'stay out of my life' kind of thing.*

*I didn't - I didn't like being asked questions and I didn't like explaining why I did this and why I did that and where I want to go in life and stuff like that. It wasn't . . . what I liked to do I . . .*

*Hum . . . I guess with living at home and having an older brother and an older sister who had, like, their own lives and my mother comparing me to them and saying 'I don't like you doing these things because I don't want you to turn out like them and leave me' . . . I kind of wanted to be, my sister or my brother so she couldn't tell me not to do these things. I'd be living in my own house with my kid and my family and everything else, and I guess . . . it just passed on to everything.*

*I had a lot of fun, hum . . . if things bothered me that . . . it never showed that it bothered me. So I was ha . . . I don't know, to - to everybody I was happy . . . like . . . Yeah. I was happy, to myself . . . sometimes.*

So, TC, the child and youth care worker and JY, a seventeen year old pregnant resident of the group home, encounter one another under the spotlight of a city street.

> *So, I - I moved outside, there's JY standing at the end of the driveway, looking guilty as hell.*

He heard a scuffling in the back alley which reminded him of the rats that were inhabiting the dumpster from the corner store. He thought, however, from the giggling that accompanied the scuffling, that it was not the noise of rats but rather the sound of the other two girls running to hide behind the dumpster. Looking closer he could see their feet which confirmed his suspicion.

The three girls had slipped out of the house and had gone up on the roof of the adjacent store.

> *Hm, it was one night, and, me and two other girls that were living here, went up to bed normally, and went out the back door and went up on the roof and we were screwing around at the time . . .*

They were just on their way back to the house when TC had come outside to look around and encountered JY. Two of the girls had managed to run to hide but JY was caught frozen in the lights. TC's initial reaction was to control the situation and move it into the group home.

> *Okay. In the house, everyone in the house. I want to clean this up. Girls get out of the dumpster.*

If he could get the girls in to their rooms and re-establish the evening routine, he would talk to them individually.

After settling the other two girls in to their room, TC went to JY's room. The door was closed. He knocked and she invited him in. The light was on and JY was sitting on the bed quietly. TC entered the room and remained standing between JY and the doorway which accorded some privacy to their interactions. As they both remember, the conversation started with some remarks from TC about how stupid JY had been to be up on the roof next door.

JY remembers having her typical reaction to the beginning of TC's intervention. As far as she was concerned it was a simple prank and he should just leave her alone.

> *Hm . . . my feeling was that . . . 'Ok, it's over, I'm in, just leave me alone, I want to go to bed now. Like, I've had my fun. You've done your thing, you've got us back in the house now. Go home now. And let me get to sleep.'*

TC did not leave the room immediately and continued to talk to JY. At one point during the conversation both TC and JY sensed a shift, a transition in the conversation from anger to understanding. The following excerpt from our conversation reflects this mutuality of experiencing,

TC *(P) Yeah, it could have lasted . . . I would have thought five minutes. Maybe longer. I know . . . I sensed there was . . . was a transition in the conversation.*
TG *A transition from . . .*
TC *Anger to . . . (P) Anger to . . ./*
JY *Understanding.*
TC (Simultaneously) *Understanding.*

All of a sudden in the middle of this intervention JY began to have an 'understanding' of TC and why he might be acting as he was. At the same time she also felt that TC was on her side in a way that she hadn't experienced before. This sense was identified by JY as a turning point for her.

**Intervention #3: JC and LY**

The Voyages Group Home is situated on a suburban street in Montreal, Quebec. It is a plain, single family dwelling in a neighbourhood of similar houses. The group home is co-educational, providing living space for eight (8) adolescents. The program is staffed by child and youth care workers, working a rotational shift schedule averaging 38.75 hours per week. On a Friday afternoon, JC, a female child and youth care worker was scheduled to drive JY, a seventeen year old female, to another group home to which she was being transferred.

The transfer, as far as LY understood, was caused by her inability to perform according to the program expectations. She had, for example, recently lost her job and rather than look for another one she chose to do nothing and she didn't "have good friends". She had also taken to being away from the group home for extended periods of time, not letting the staff know her whereabouts. They had become concerned about her safety on the streets. They had begun to receive calls from the police regarding her activities and were in agreement at that time that LY needed to be removed from the community for a period of time.

The staff had originally proposed the transfer in January but because of disagreement between the two group homes about LY's suitability for the program and the lack of availability of space, the transfer did not occur at that time. In fact, it was six months later before the decision was finalized to transfer her to the other program. LY had been unaware of the initial proposal for her transfer and so was unaware of the politics involved. The staff had been notified only that week that the transfer was to occur on the Friday and LY herself was only notified on the Wednesday before the move.

By her description, she was, at the time,

> *I was a very sensitive person, but a lot of times I don't act like it . . . I will . . . I won't let - I won't let people knowing, like, who I really am . . . because hm . . . if they do then it will be easier for them to hurt me . . . you know? So, basically, I would - I always put on a big show . . . 'I'm so tough', you know? 'You can't screw around with me', you know? 'Nobody can hurt me', you know?*
>
> *. . . and a . . . I cried a lot. I could cry on a bus. I cried a lot. Normally . . . friends, like, when I lived here, they wouldn't see me cry, it's not often they would see me cry, the staff maybe, the staff they'd . . . hm . . . once in a while they'd see me cry, like, one of the staff here . . . he knew how sensitive I was, but . . . I don't thing he ever really see me cry, cause then . . . even though I knew he knew I was sensitive, I would still put on an act.*
>
> *I figured, if they think I'm strong . . . then . . . they won't think much of it if I'm upset . . . cause they'll think 'Ah, it doesn't bother her' . . . and, if I'm upset and somebody comes and starts talking to me about it,*

*I'll get more upset and I'll cry harder.. . . you know, so, if they just leave it be then . . . it - it's easier for me to get over it, you know?*

*Hm . . . I've been hurt a lot . . . rejected a lot by, ouf, everyone. So I figured, you know, if they knew I was sensitive . . . they'd be like, 'oh, well, let's do this. LY, you know, I'm sure'll get over it, you know. She's not gonna say nothing about it', you know? And, that will make them, I guess it will influence them more to, you know, walk all over me.*

*I don't like to be, you know, out of control, like, lose control, and have somebody more . . . over me, you know, like, more powerful and more in control.*

*I was influenced very easily, like, the friends I had . . . were hm . . . you know, real big bad tough people, and . . . while I was with them, I felt no one could touch me, so, you know, my insides, it was like . . . but you can't see it, you know, they think I'm tough too and they make me feel more stronger.*

*I was . . . I guess I was hiding myself.*

Reflecting back on the time of this intervention, JC, a 32 year old female child and youth care worker, preferred to say little about herself, except that she felt disconnected from the rest of the team.

*I was confused in the program. It's like we were all working, um, independently, not connected like a team. We would, like all make our decisions and then let each other know in the meetings.*

The transfer had been scheduled for a time when JC would be working as she was LY's primary worker. The scheduled time of departure was 12:00 noon. As noon approached they loaded LY's belongings in to the car and they could be seen to fill the back seat. LY took her time loading her things, going through the process as slowly as possible, apparently delaying the inevitable. JC worked more quickly and efficiently. Sometimes they loaded boxes individually, occasionally together. Primarily, they seemed to be working alone, making only infrequent comments to each other. At one point JC stopped the process and commented to LY that it was difficult. At her suggestion they sat on the porch for about five minutes having a cigarette together. Then LY said "Let's get on with it" and they loaded the rest of the car. When everything was loaded, JC returned to the house to lock the door while LY waited for her outside.

While JC was wrestling to get her key from where it had become stuck in the door, one of LY's friends drove up to say good-bye to her. LY acted strong with her friend,

> *So I . . . he - he of course thought I was big and bad, you know, so I wasn't gonna bawl my eyes out with him. And so. . . probably, big tears in my eyes that, you know, that . . . wanted to come out but wouldn't. I don't think he noticed, or maybe he did but just thought, you know, ah, 'the sun's in her eyes'.*

There was an emotional exchange on the street and, after JC told LY it was time to go, LY's friend drove away. LY waved goodbye and got in to the car with JC for the drive to the other group home. The drive was expected to take about 45 minutes. After stopping for gas they were on their way.

As they drove off, LY put a tape of Michael Bolton singing 'How will I ever live without you' in the cassette player and much of the drive was conducted in silence, listening to the tape as LY looked out the window and cried quietly in her seat. Driving together and listening to music was not an uncommon experience for them as they had often done so before when LY was looking for a job or they were going shopping.

Occasionally LY would ask JC to take her back to the Voyages group home. As they took the turn off from the freeway towards the new group home, LY's pleading increased and she began to promise that she would do anything to be back in the old program.

As they approached the new program, which was a "plain and ugly house" on the street, LY fixed her make-up, preparing herself to arrive.

They went to the door where they were greeted by a housekeeper who took them to the office. They introduced themselves to the staff, one of whom immediately pointed to a room across the hall and told LY that was her room. The room was plain and simple. To LY,

> *. . . it was terrible, there was a metal part, like a metal boxspring, but it wasn't a boxspring, it was kind of attached to the wall, with a cheap*

*mattress, like a hospital mattress, a small, skinny pillow, a wooden desk, and a . . . a wooden bureau, and that was it.*

JC and LY unloaded the boxes of belongings from the car and moved them to LY's new room while the unit staff stayed in the office. When they were finished the staff asked LY to stay in her room while JC filled out the paperwork. As JC was filling out the paperwork, LY occasionally walked past the office door or came to the door asking for something.

When JC was finished she went to LY's room to say goodbye. LY walked JC to the door where they hugged. LY asked JC when she was going to come back. JC told her she would be back in a few days. They said goodbye and LY stood outside watching JC drive away. When JC was out of sight, LY went back to her new room where she "threw myself down on the bed and started crying more."

LY was later to describe this experience of moving to this other group home as "something I will never forget".

These are the three interventions which form the foundation of this inquiry.

## 4B: The Pre-Intervention Relationships

Prior to any intervention there exist certain factors which might effect the viability or effectiveness of that intervention. These would include such things as the beliefs and values of the two parties, the theoretical model, skills and skill level of the intervener, and the context within which the intervention occurs (Ricks & Garfat, 1989). Primary among pre-intervention factors, however, would seem to be the relationship between the youth and the child and youth care worker.

Child and youth care has always identified itself as a therapeutic interaction dependant on the quality of the relationship between youth and child and youth care worker. Discussions of relationship are among the most common of subjects in the child and youth care literature (e.g., Fewster, 1990a, 1990b; Trieschman, Whittaker & Brendtro, 1969). During the course of this inquiry two dynamics of

relationship-formation not previously discussed in the literature were identified by the participants. They are include here because they seem to be of significance in determining the effectiveness of the subsequent interventions.

**Some Staff Are Chosen by Youth**

Like all of us, youth do not relate to, or identify with, all other people equally. Like all of us they are drawn more to one person or perhaps a type of person, than to others. In the context of the programs as described previously, all the youth had the opportunity to interact with a number of different child and youth care workers. For example, the youth had the opportunity for frequent interaction with a minimum of 5 different child and youth care staff.

It is common practice knowledge in group care that youth, after a period of settling in to a program, will tend to develop a different relationship with different staff and seem to prefer one staff from the team. JY's description of the process seems common.

> *. . . in all of them I move in, I'm quiet, I don't like being in the house, I'll go out all the time, and then eventually I'll pick a certain person and, Ok . . . they're the one I talk to. They're the one I . . . they're like . . . the main one, and when . . . when they're working, ok, I'm happy like, I'll talk, you know, I'll go into the office and stuff like that, but . . . if they're not working then I, mostly I'm like, talking to the girls.*

Child and youth care workers in group care have historically recognised this phenomenon and indeed sometimes exploit it for the benefit of the youth, as was the case when it was decided that JC would be the one to drive LY to the other group home to which she was transferring.

> *The move was centred around when I worked . . . for the stability or the comfortness . . . I knew she wasn't going to be comfortable, hm . . . I was concerned, I guess I was concerned for her well being, how she was going to be treated at the other end, hm . . . what her reactions were gonna be . . . hm . . . I knew her better then than the other workers. I figured I would probably be the most comfortable person for her to go with even though it would be difficult.*

The youth in this inquiry seem to have chosen a staff. Somehow they had identified in the early stages of care, that this staff was one with whom they could connect in a special relationship. Here is how JY explains it.

> *I. . . it's just. . . I don't know. . . I really don't know what makes me choose a certain person. Hm . . . I guess maybe he listened the most, he didn't voice . . . he voices his opinion, he was also understanding of my view and I found, like, a lot of the other staff were . . . this is the way that they saw it and this is the way that they thought I should see it. So that's the way he was different or at least that, that . . . I saw it that way.*

In choosing the staff with whom they will have this special relationship the youth find a way to identify that relationship which is somehow more especially intimate than their relationships with other staff. As JY indicated the staff is not chosen in isolation from a consideration of the other staff but rather in a process of comparative evaluation, almost as if the youth is searching for a particular 'fit' between how they experience themselves to be and how they experience the staff. In some cases this comparison may start as an intentional process on the part of the youth as it did with JY.

> *Hm . . . (P) Well, being new in a group home, it was . . . it was good to get on, like, a side of the staff . . . the way . . . I don't know . . . the way I was, it was . . . Ok, I'll be friends with this one, I'll talk to this one, if I do something wrong, maybe . . . because I'm so open, then I'll get away with it . . . and eventually it kind of worked out for me. Yeah, it worked out for me actually.*

This choice may be confirmed, as it was for JY, because of how the youth experiences the child and youth care worker to be treating them relative to their experience of other staff.

> *. . . he was - he was, like, he was really understanding and stuff like that. Cause, after I'd ran away a couple of times and . . . and stuff like that, and he knew where I was, he'd call the house and ask if I was there and . . . he would talk to me, and . . . I'd say, 'I'm fine', he goes "when are you coming back? Ho . . . Sunday night. Ok, just take care." And that was it. He wouldn't call the cops on me . . . and he was more, like . . . He was understanding. He was . . . I don't know, 'cause most of the staff their in . . . their in . . . initial response is to write up the report,*

*call the police . . . and if they know where you are, to send the police to pick you up. And he was different.*

The choice is influenced by how the youth experienced themselves to be while in relationship with that staff. For TY, she chose DC because,

*I guess I was feeling more like a . . . more in control, like more of a . . . I was being treated like a . . . young adolescent, you know, I was being treated with, like, you know, 'TY you've got a head, use it', you know, so I wasn't afraid to sit down and joke with him and talk to him and, you know, tell him how I really was feeling, you know, and DC was always very easy for me to talk to, cause he was just . . . the way he comes t . . . about the kids is a . . . amazing, you know, like, he's just . . . he works well with all of us.*

But always this choice is made in relationship to the other staff within a program. Perhaps this is because the youth feel a need to have a special relationship with one particular staff as JY expressed or perhaps it is because these youth are not capable of multiple special relationships, or even because developmentally it is important to have one special relationship as this helps to ground them in the confusing context of placement and situates them in a more stable place.

Once made, this choice takes on a unique quality of intimacy similar for some youth to that of a family, as expressed by LY who experienced JC as a sister.

*She was like, a, like a (P) sister, because . . . we . . . you know, we figured we looked alike and . . . we were really close. She was like family to me.*

TY also identified her relationship with DC as being like family.

*Ah. . . Like, I was like, you know, like, there was no hard feelings between DC and myself, you know, and that a . . . it was nice, you know, like a . . . like family sort of.*

The term family has a particular meaning for the individual who uses it for a reference as LY explained in response to my asking her, specifically, "Can you tell me what it means to you, family, cause you used that word a few times?"

> *Hm . . . well, me I never had much of a family. My parent's were assholes, excuse my language . . . but hm . . . I guess like . . . family is like, belonging to someone, you know? Having someone that's not gonna judge you or hate you because, you know, you didn't clean you're room or . . . you know, you stayed out a little bit too late, someone that's gonna to listen to you and not judge you or give you advice, just listen. . . . and they like, don't hate you. Say you freak out one night and start yelling, and then . . . they're not gonna sit there and say 'don't talk to me' and, um, you know, they're still there, like, 'look I understand how you felt', you know?*

LY's definition was echoed in one form or another by the other youth who participated in this inquiry and seems to be related to a sense of feeling accepted for who you are regardless of your behaviour and a belief that even if there are times of conflict, the relationship will continue to be okay afterwards.

**A Staff Pre-disposition**

The development of this relationship with a special staff does not, however, develop in the absence of the staff having feelings towards the youth. Indeed it may be the staff's predisposition towards a youth and a relationship with that youth which is a primary factor in the youth choosing a particular staff. For the child and youth care workers who participated in this inquiry this pre-disposition would seem to have been present. Such a pre-disposition is evident in a conversation TC reports having had with the team about JY.

> *. . . and I predicted in one of the meetings that she was gonna be . . . she was gonna be our - our . . . hm . . . the child of our hearts before she leaves.*

While TC's feelings towards JY may have been the result of his observations and experience, it is equally possible that it came from his identification with her issues around becoming or being a parent.

TC *. . . but, I - I probably . . . personalized with her, because being pregnant, I guess . . .*

TG *. . . I am . . . curious about . . . how much, the fact that you're a father, made a difference or[*

TC *Oh,(P) quite a difference, I think. I was a father, but I was actually involved in the pregnancy of my own two kids. And I don't mean just pre-natal classes but the birthing room and then some crisis during the birth. I was present in that and then taking time off in rearing the children myself on my . . . so I - I was not . . . my role, as a male wasn't traditional role, what we saw as traditional. So I identified, I bonded with my children in much the way . . . a mother who was home would have the chance to do . . .*

He was a parent concerned about his own health and safety as he was concerned about JY's when she was up on the roof with the other girls.

> *I'm looking at myself at that time, is I started to put a value on . . . a sense of being. Okay. For myself. I did. And I looked at . . . what was my need and one of the things I needed to be was a healthy . . . a healthier human being in that I would be in a healthier relationship. Because . . . I - I related that to my children.*

DC also expressed a strong pre-disposition for developing a close, caring relationship with TY because of his experience of her as a young person in pain.

> *. . . I relate to all the people that suffer and that's one [of my] poor-me entries with people and that's one of the ways I enter relationships a lot, ok, because that's me, in a certain way, you know. I project or whatever. I sensed a lot of suffering in this girl and a . . . I sensed some sadness. I sensed a lot of unresolved situations and I felt that by being at [the group home] she was like in nowhere land. Ok? And for her the future in the . . . what she thought of herself like . . . these are the feelings I had.*

When JC and I discussed her feelings towards LY she demonstrated a strong identification with the youth.

> *Well, I loved her, I mean, I loved her personality, hm . . . she - she and I had a lot of similar interests, we spend a lot of time together, hm . . . a lot - a lot of my time was spend invested with her and I enjoyed it. It wasn't something that I worked out, I mean, the interests were there, our personalities were similar . . . you know, I could identify a lot of . . . her*

*behaviour, you know, I saw a lot of that in myself. I related a lot of what I saw in her to me when I was younger. Like her 'spunkiness' and energy and . . . she always had a story to tell. I guess I identified with her drama and always being into something. I was a lot like that.*

So we have, in essence, a situation in which a young person may want or need to develop a special relationship with a staff member in a group home. The selection of which staff may be as much a result of the staff's pre-disposition towards such a relationship as it is a result of the youth selecting a staff because of any particular characteristic of the staff or staff behaviour.

Regardless of why or how this relationship developed, in each of the three dyads which were part of this inquiry there existed prior to the specific interventions which are of interest a pre-developed relationship which was, at least in the eyes and experiencing of the youth, a special relationship. It was a relationship different from which those the young people experienced themselves as having with other staff in the program. For these youth the notion or idea of family seemed to provide the frame of reference which they used to interpret their experience of this relationship.

## 4C: Actions of the Child and Youth Care Workers

As has been pointed out, little has been written in the field of child and youth care on the process of the child and youth care intervention. That which has been written does not incorporate the experiencing of either the child and youth care worker or the youth. In this section I will attempt to describe interpretively the process and experience of these child and youth care interventions as described by the child and youth care worker participants to those intervention.

Throughout the interviews, as youth and child and youth care workers discussed their experiences, certain themes emerged. Some commonalities of processing also emerged. While all themes did not appear in all discussions and all steps of the process were not necessarily reported in exactly the same order,

there was enough commonality to allow me to attempt to capture a description of the overall experiences of these child and youth care workers.

It is important to remember that each of these child and youth care workers had an individual experience; no two experiences were the same. The emphasis placed on any element was different depending on the intervention, the intervenor, and the youth. For example, each of the child and youth care workers had the experience of utilizing feedback throughout the process of their intervention. When this occurred, how it was used, the emphasis placed on it, and the outcome of experiencing the feedback differed in each intervention.

It was tempting when writing about the steps or elements of process to order them in what might appear to be the most logical and sequential fashion; to assume that regardless of the order in which experiences or events were discussed that they had occurred in a logical order. Such an approach would be congruent with the literature on the child and youth care intervention (e.g., Garfat & Newcomen, 1992; Eisikovits, Beker & Guttman, 1991). In the end, I decided that it was more true to the conversations and to the reconstruction of the experience to describe the elements as they emerged in the conversations.

The interventions as described by the child and youth care workers were not rigidly sequential. Intervention seemed to be a more systemic process within which the child and youth care worker moved non-sequentially between experiences. Feedback, for example, permeates all aspects of the experience. Reflection may occur at any point and cause the worker to think about aspects of theory which had previously been reviewed. It is almost as if the child and youth care intervention is a clustering of experiences around the theme of caring intervention and the child and youth care worker accesses the elements of the intervention process as such accessing is appropriate to the individual intervention, all the while moving towards a point of closure on the intervention process. I would say that the child and youth care worker moves with the youth into the territory-of-intervention and then together they move through that territory to a

point of completion. I have, therefore, chosen to write about this movement as it arose during our conversations.

In this section, I report on the experiences of these child and youth care workers while remembering throughout that this is *their* experience. While it may 'ring true' for others it is the experience of these individuals which I am attempting to capture in a manner that remains faithful to our discussions of their experience. I have selected from their comments those which best illustrate for me the element being described. I have, of course, interpreted what it is they had to say. They have reviewed these interpretations and agree with them. Table 1 identifies the elements of process which will be discussed.

| ***Elements of the Process of Intervention Identified by the Child and Youth Care Workers*** |
|---|
| **An interaction occurs** |
| **An opportunity arises** |
| **Preparation for possible intervention** |
| **Assessing the youth's availability** |
| **Considering alternative interventions** |
| **Referencing theory or knowledge** |
| **Analysis of current behaviour** |
| **Understanding youth's background** |
| **Preparing to take responsibility** |
| **Connecting with the youth** |
| **Attending to feedback** |
| **Intervention** |

**Table 1: Elements identified by child and youth care workers**

**An Interaction Occurs**

While it might seem to go without saying that every intervention necessitates by definition an interaction between the child and youth care worker and the youth, it is also true that not all child and youth care workers interact with all youth all the time. This is especially true in a program such as a group home where at times there might be only one child and youth care worker available for up to eight or nine youth.

In this context the child and youth care worker might at times interact individually with one youth, at times with another, and at times with more than one youth as is the case when the child and youth care worker is helping two youth to resolve a problem. Sometimes a child and youth care worker, because of other responsibilities, withdraws from interaction with all youth in the program. As DC said during out initial individual interview, sometimes it is a question of managing one's energies and the 'economics' of group care. There is only a limited amount of energy which the child and youth care worker has to distribute among all the demands of group care.

> *When you're on the floor hey, you have to look at the specificity of the action of the child care worker in the context. It is. . . he's a team worker, he has to administer his energies and econ-econ . . . do economies, because he's got eight clients . . . he's got two phases to work with, he's got a . . . I would say an aggregate situation because you can't even talk about a group there, but you've got an aggregate situation and a certain minimal norm to keep, so you've got to manage that, those energies, and you've got you're own primary kids which you're trying to focus on, and often you don't link with, and you're more linked to the other kid, person. . . . and the economics always plays on the floor.*

The choice to interact with a youth may be based on the energy-economics of a situation. It may also be based on the decision a child and youth care worker makes about how to administer her time vis a vis different youth in the program or different responsibilities. In the following words from TC, as he describes his activities before discovering that JY and two other girls have left the program, we

have a sense of the pre-occupation which might occur for child and youth care workers which would limit their availability for interaction with the youth. It also indicates the need for them to be constantly alert for demands on their energies.

> *Well, it a. . . you have to hm. . . you have to preset the whole drama of a. . . the real drama started with my room checks. I mean my, I was pre-disposed to be in a certain mode because of what happened to my room checks. So, if you take - you take a . . . hm . . . a noisy group. . . frustration, but trying to quiet the group and get them to their rooms. Ah . . . having completed that, returning back downstairs to the office, to finish off the logging for that shift, the evening shift.. Occasionally go up and . . . going, returning to the top of the stairs, just to listen, returning back. You calming down a bit, then you go upstairs, and you sense everything's alright, but then you have a funny feeling it's too quiet, too fast.*

In these interventions, the opportunities for interaction were created in a variety of different ways which reflects the rich diversity of opportunities available to child and youth care workers and youth in a group care program. Because of the economics of group care many opportunities may present themselves but not be pursued by the child and youth care worker. For an opportunity to progress to an intervention two things must occur; the opportunity for interaction must be available and the child and youth care worker must take advantage of the opportunity to pursue some form of interaction.

TY, for example, returned home from an evening out after the time when the other youth would have gone to bed. Finding DC in the office working on his logging she asked if she can sit down, have a cigarette and talk. DC agreed to her request and the opportunity for interaction was constructed. DC could have said 'no' to her request and thus limited the opportunity for interaction.

JY, after having gone to bed according to the regular group home routine sneaked out of the house while TC was still on duty and making frequent room checks. TC, when he discovered that the girls were not in the house, went outside to look for them and once he found them, moved them back to their rooms. He

followed-up by going upstairs to talk with JY. Once the girls were in their rooms TC could have left them there to settle down and returned to his logging.

The opportunity for interaction between JC and LY was created by the need for LY to be transported to another group home. In considering the need for her to be driven JC chose to be the one to do so. It could also have been that LY would have been driven by formal agency transport, as sometimes happens, or by another staff. JC, however, for reasons of her own chose to drive LY herself.

In each of these situations we see that the opportunity for interaction was promoted by the actions of the youth. The child and youth care worker responded by taking advantage of the opportunity for interaction. Had the child and youth care workers not taken advantage of this opportunity-potential the interventions described in this dissertation could not have occurred.

**The Child and Youth Care Worker Sees an Opportunity**

In the context of this situation of interacting the child and youth care worker may see the opportunity for a specific intervention. Indeed many such opportunities may present themselves. DC, for example, instead of taking the opportunity to intervene with TY by saying no to her request to stay and talk could have chosen to attempt to teach her something about house rules by discussing bedtimes or he could have decided to confront her on the possibility that she was attempting to manipulate him. He could just as easily have said yes to her request thereby creating a different interaction than that which subsequently took place.

TC, instead of choosing to discuss caringly with JY her responsibilities now that she was pregnant, could have chosen to focus on house rules. JC, instead of being with LY on the drive in a manner that LY experienced empathically, could have chosen to focus on how LY had gotten herself into the current situation and the responsibility she needed to take in the future for her behaviours and their outcome.

In the midst of competing priorities and numerous opportunities the child and youth care worker may be presented with opportunities for various interventions. Simple as it may appear, the important thing is that these child and youth care workers recognised that an opportunity existed. It is equally possible that another child and youth care worker may not have seen these interactions as potential opportunities for intervention. The following quote from DC speaks to that recognition.

> *. . . Because she never - rarely this girl would cross a line anywhere, ok. And if she would, it would be done in such a matter that it would be a favour from staff. Why then? Because, I think it was the first time she's stretching the boundaries. . . ok, and in, ultimately, I've got to finish the logs. I've got to do this and I've got to do that and at the same time it's a good opportunity then. The opportunity's there.*

Based on experience and knowledge, the child and youth care worker recognizes that an opportunity is being presented. TC did when he suddenly sensed a change in that moment in the conversation when he felt that JY was open to listening to him about more than just the behaviour of being on the roof with the other girls.

> *. . . I saw her quieting down, I saw her listening. She started to communicate. So, I'm saying, well this - this . . . she's take - she's taking this pregnancy seriously*
>
> *Well, and a . . . dialogue, her dialogue changed, I - I thought she was at first a little more aggressive, but then . . . it's just . . . I don't know if it's her - her dialogue . . . her dialogue changed a bit but it's . . . she was starting to be more receptive too, to the conversation, . . . I think it's her being quiet, listening, hm . . . I felt that and a . . . I felt a change, I - I - I had to be . . . I mean you're on your guards, it - it's you . . . you have a feeling.*

While a statement like "you have a feeling" may appear on the surface to be a support for just 'doing what feels right', it actually reflects an attempt to describe that experience we sometimes call intuition, the outcome of the integration of internal processes and previous experiences (Anglin, 1991) which, as DC said, becomes almost reflexive after enough experience.

*Often you end up thinking of what you did after . . . you know, when you're twenty years on the floor, or fifteen years to twenty. I mean, you look and . . . it's as if those experiences have integrated themselves in a . . . it's a little bit like learning grammar, like, you don't know why you use a pronoun anymore in - in that place, or whatever. Intuition is just, it's a process, a way of engaging something but, uh, not with conscious reasoning . . .*

With regard to his decision to intervene at that moment with TY, he says,

*that wasn't thought out . . . okay, uh, that was almost a spontaneous, uh, feeling there. . . there was a whole history behind her . . . to me, I don't think out my past experiences with her. My gut feeling and my intuition tells me that she's covering up something here, eh? . . . did I know, did I know what I was pursuing with her? Intuitively, yes.*

**Preparing for Possible Intervention**

Once the child and youth care worker sees the opportunity to intervene she must make a decision as to whether or not to do so. This decision seems to be one which requires consideration and thought about the youth, the context, and the interventions possible. Throughout this decision-making the child and youth care worker monitors and if necessary controls and modifies her self, her reactions, and her motivations.

**A consideration of the location**. The choice as to whether or not to intervene is affected by the worker's analysis of the particular physical context in which the child and youth care worker finds herself to be relative to the youth. The result of this analysis may be that the child and youth care worker feels that intervening at this time, in this place, is inappropriate and/or that certain things must change in order to set the stage for intervening.

TC, for example, when he first encounters the girls outside of the group home in the community as they are returning from being on the roof, senses that for him to be in control of the situation and himself in the situation he has to move them all in to the group home.

*So, you sort of . . . you don't have enough information to be in charge of the situation. You are off balance, you're off balance, ok. You're talking, not used to being off balance. . .*

*I see them, I'm going, 'come on girls' . . . the idea now is, I'm in the community, it's . . . I want to contain it to the group home. I said, so it's to . . . Well, I want to get it into the group home, I want to get it out of the public . . . well, that's my area of influence, is the group home, within the group home. I didn't want to start any verbal intervention on the street. I didn't start any, the verbal part, I mean, the intervention is, 'Ok, you girls, come on let's go. Ah . . . we gotta get in. It's bed time.' But I didn't want to start, like, 'what are you doing, what's going on?' I don't want that in the street.*

Once the girls were returned to the group home TC felt more in control and experienced a lessening of the anxiety which had arisen while he searched for them. This change in location brought a sense of security for him.

*. . . they're in their rooms, that - that - everything was on track, there's a certain feeling, like, Ok, we're back, we're back, we're back, control, we're back in control, oh they're listening, hm . . . they sense that . . . and a . . . they sense that, I'm still there, and this is what they're suppose to do, no one wants to. . . I don't s-s-sense anyone wanting to escalate it. . . there's control, there's a physical control but there's also that mental control,. . . that you're aware of what's going on in the house. . . there's that control it's - it's a sense of knowing.*

For DC, the location of the intervention was not a variable which needed manipulation. He and TY were already in the ideal location and she had altered the situation by getting up to go to the bathroom. His choice to intervene as she was returning and as he sensed her getting ready to sit down again showed a reading of the physical arrangements which was ideally suited for the intervention he had in mind. In essence, by saying no at that precise moment he was saying no to her physical movement as well as her intention and request. This reading of her probably made it easier for her to comply because she did not have to go through the motions of getting up out of her seat. She only had to turn around.

For JC, the physical location was pre-determined by the decision to transport LY to the other group home in her own car. Even this shows a

sensitivity to the physical context because driving was an activity which she and LY had done many times before. JC's thinking was that this familiarity might make the transfer easier for LY.

> *I thought that she might be more comfortable because . . . um . . . this was something we had done before . . . you know, we would ride around in the car and talk, you know, and drive around and listen to tapes.*

Sometimes the consideration of the physical environment also requires that the child and youth care worker modify or change the physical environment in order to aide in intervening. As TC said, he was constantly

> *. . . monitoring, visually, the way I'm sitting, how I am positioning myself. You, you place yourself in the room. Maybe there's a chair there. Maybe I will change the chair so that the back of it is facing the client . . . I might be doing it to maintain, um, to position myself in a certain way out of safety, out of comfort, to respect the client, to give her space.*

**Knowing, monitoring, and preparation of self**. The child and youth care worker may also consider whether or not she is prepared for an intervention with this youth at this time. This may involve the monitoring and control of herself and her own reactions to the current situation. This implies that the child and youth care worker is aware of having a reaction as TC was when he began to look for the three girls who had left the group home.

> *So as soon as I checked the back fire escape, I didn't see the kids in the back, so then I'm - I'm escalating a bit higher, at that time I'm - I'm anticipating, it's just - it's an AWOL, there's an AWOL, they've skipped out. Ah . . . They've gone. Period. Straight and gone that - the . . . so, then I've sort of . . . I'm - I'm containing myself a bit, I'm angered, because they've left on me (laugh). . . Well, at that point. Hm . . . I'm less alert now, I'm a less fearful that the . . . there's gonna be a major intervention, if they've AWOLed, it's . . . I mean, it's clear cut, they're gone, and that. . . there'll be an intervention for a later date. If they're gone, they're gone. But I'm not gonna to encounter a group of our kids outside. So, am I . . . I'm - my heighten, I'm less heightened.*

JC also showed this awareness as she talked about how she felt at work that morning as she waited for the time to arrive when she would transport LY to the new group home.

> *. . . Hm, well, I was a little apprehensive about her, what her reaction was going to be 'cause I hadn't seen LY since she had been told on the Wednesday, so we had had no contact. I mean, my reaction was, like, I hadn't responded to hers, and then I came in Friday, there was a note on the wall to let her sleep in. I was gonna wake her up, and go. Hm . . . so, I was nervous with . . . in terms of what was going ahead, hm . . . I kind of knew a little bit about LY's personality, so, I was sort of trying to guess what - what she was gonna be like, or what to expect when I woke her, hm . . . I didn't get to wake her up, I think she got up on her own, and a . . . she came upstairs, and she avoided me, hm . . . for the first little while, sort of walked right by the office, made a few phone calls, hm . . . had a cigarette, hm . . . and then she came into the office, she was, hm, I guess the - the - the initial reaction I remember is anger, I think, or disbelief, as - as the minutes were ticking, as we were getting closer to twelve it was sort of like, 'I can't believe this is happening,' But there wasn't a lot of conversation going on between her and I. I was nervous, I was uncomfortable.*
>
> *. . . and I was angry that I was doing something I didn't want to. I was angry at doing something that hm . . . that I had to do, but I was also angry that I was doing something that I wasn't comfortable with and I wasn't as vocal then. I was sort of feeling like I could have said more. I could have expressed it earlier . . . and I had enough confidence to think that it could have made a difference.*
>
> *It was depressing, sad. I felt sorry for her . . . and I was angry with the politics of the whole situation. I didn't feel good about the whole thing .. . I, ah, I didn't think it was right, her moving.*

Knowing one is having a reaction to a situation and exercising control over that reaction may be necessary because of how this reaction may affect the youth's reaction or the interaction with the youth. TC was conscious of this when he was emotionally heightened by the activity of returning the girls to the group home and was preparing himself to talk with JY.

> *. . . it's at bed time, you don't want to re-escalate them. But you don't want to send them to bed that way, like, just yelling at them and slamming doors. I mean, you got to avoid that, you don't want to do that,*

*you know . . . You want to try and put some closure on what exactly took place,and to leave that with them.*

*Initially, initially, you are holding back a lot of anger. There's frustration and, uh, there's anger resulting from the frustration. You have to contain that because I don't want to escalate the situation so I contain it to at least finish moving the kids to the room where they are supposed to be.*

Expressing one's feelings which is always an option, is, as TC said, not always the option of choice.

*. . . to express annoyance . . . you know, I found, expressing annoyance is one thing, 'I'm angry with you, why are you doing this, what's going on,' but to go any further past that, to be angry, or to show anger is pointless.*

JC was flooded with powerful emotions as she transported LY to the other group home. Yet she also felt the need to contain these feelings and not share them with LY.

*Hm . . . I hadn't exited, hm . . . and while all this is going on, and I'm also sort of trying to keep my direction cause I didn't know where I was going, so I'm trying to keep some focus around the driving part. Hm . . . so I'm watching at this point. I'm focusing on the exit and the rest of it is out of my mind and LY starts saying to me, hm . . . 'I don't want to go'. She was crying. She was pleading, hm . . . she was begging. She was having a hard time keeping her voice together. Her voice was cracking, hm . . . and I'm driving. To the left is the service road and whatever, and to the right is the exit. Hm . . . and it's escalating, as I'm getting closer to the es - exit . . . and I got to the exit, I mean I drove right to the middle of the median, thought for a second, you know, 'ok, just take her back and deal with it, or go on,' and I took the exit.*

*I remember, I remember coming to the turn-off. I just wanted to turn around. . . and I almost did. I drove right up to the divider before swerving on to the exit. My ambivalence was so strong and she was begging and I just wanted to take her back home, you know and then, I don't know what. . . . but I never told her. I mean, how would that have helped her.*

This monitoring and control of self and one's own reactions is not just an issue when a situation is out of the ordinary. It is also a professional need which

must be active even when one is considering calmly the intention to intervene with a particular youth. DC, for example, was reflecting on his motivations as he was thinking about his intervention with TY when she asked if she could stay for another cigarette.

> *. . . you got to watch yourself, you got to monitor yourself, about what the true motivations are, to make sure that the - I mean we're all human beings, that they don't overspill . . . I mean, you have to have some monitoring mechanisms . . .*
>
> *The ideal would be that I am totally, and, um (P) detached and aware of myself. You have to have an agency that looks at you, what's playing with you, to make sure that what you want to achieve, you try to achieve.*
>
> *You have to be able to formulate the hypothesis that there's something happening here and it's, uh, it's about me. You could be operating with resistance or denial, okay.*
>
> *Um, like, how do you monitor that you are competing with a co-worker . . . what is it you are monitoring? What am I trying to say, (P) that the actions are done in accordance with what the context is. That you are not cheating that relationship . . . exploiting it for your own resources, ah, be it needs, like I said, the need for competence, or to feel powerful, or glorification or whatever. That you're not acting to, using one client to save another client, um, playing client against client.*

Monitoring one's self and one's reactions may go on throughout the process of intervention as it did when TC realised that he wasn't getting through to JC.

> *. . . At one point, you catch up to yourself. I'm attentive to what I am saying, um, I listen. I'm watching. I'm asking myself 'why am I loosing her? What am I saying?' and, um, she, she's reprocessing back to me (P), the feedback I'm getting is that she's not listening to me.*
>
> *There is a loop going on and, um, you want to see 'am I getting through?' There is this process where you are doing and thinking at the same time.*

This need for attending to one's self extends on a basic level to the understanding of one's motivations for being in a helping position at all as DC commented during one of our follow-up interviews.

> *I don't think anybody can start in this field and say that finally, he is a helper. I think a . . . there's two phases, there's the first reason why*

*you want in, you're gonna save the world, you're gonna . . . the romanticism of helping somebody, the caring. You feel almost like there's a. . . . put a violin behind it and a . . . the mission.*

The control and monitoring of one's reaction to a given youth or situation is, as TC remarked,

*a line the child care workers are always (P) travelling along and try, uh, trying to, sometimes share, (P) um trying to add a human dimension to your interactions. And also separate so that you don't have reactions to your interactions, personal reactions.*

**Attending to the Program Mandate**. The child and youth care workers' mandate is usually dictated by the program. Sometimes that mandate is formalized in the mission statement of an organization, sometimes it is dictated by program philosophy, and sometimes by the social context of care and the mandate given by the state itself through laws and regulations. These things were of significance to DC as he considered his work with young people like TY.

*Well, if you look at a . . . we lose tune, people forget the context, I mean, a helping relationship in this context in Youth Horizons, you got to look at what it is. It's not me consulting a psychologist and asking for help.*

*But, to go beyond that, what's. . . you also got to watch too, like, you know, I'm all over right now, but I mean, you know, you got to look at what the context is, that's what the process is about, the context, Youth Protection, Social Services, got to keep it within that context and remember that I'm not there do an in-depth therapy . . . But the program there was autonomy, I mean it always comes to that - to that, institutionalization, and autonomy, and dependence. So, how - how do we fill back decision making. Ok, how do we get the person to responsibilize themselves, it's a learning process.*

## Assessing the Youth's Availability for Intervention

Once the child and youth care worker has prepared the stage for possible intervention she must still decide whether or not to intervene actively for as Ricks (1989) has stated, not intervening is also an alternative which might be therapeutic.

The decision about whether or not to intervene is affected by a number of considerations including those mentioned above.

Much as one might wish that a chosen intervention is calculated, precise, and almost scientific such is not the case for child and youth care in an imprecise form of helping in which the child and youth care worker regardless of their skill, experience, and preparation is forced to make a choice between imprecise alternatives. When DC was reflecting on why he chose to say no to TY he indicated this uncertainty.

> *Being sure or whether you think you are, like I said, you know, it's so hard in the field to work with this hey? I mean, a lot of it is guess work. A lot of it is very - maybe you're in a bad day, you're projecting a lot, maybe, you know, you don't know what the heck you're playing with.*

On the other hand, choosing an intervention is not as casual as the above quote might make it sound. As well as preparing for intervening the child and youth care worker also evaluates the youth's readiness for, or potential to accept, an intervention at this time. This assessment of a youth's availability is very much related to the notion of timing; an intervention may fit perfectly at one time and not at all at another. This is what JC was experiencing in her reaction to transferring LY to another group home. At the time the decision was first made JC thought it was appropriate because of the circumstances of LY's situation.

> *At the time of the case conference . . . well on the day to day routine, I mean, she was - she was distant, physically distant, she was gone in the morning and she wasn't back until night. Hm . . . she was getting by in the program by doing the - the bare minimum. And our program doesn't . . . provide a whole lot of structure anyways so minus, you know, a phone call and an odd physical check out, you could basically scrape by if that was what you wanted to do. Like, maybe she was leaving at nine o'clock in the morning, touching base maybe once by phone and coming back around eleven o'clock at night. Supposedly looking for work and supposedly hanging out with friends in the evening. And details were sketchy as to what was going on.*
>
> *We knew she wasn't job searching because, I mean, she wasn't looking in the paper. She to our knowledge, she wasn't making any contacts, hm . . . there was no interviews set up. At one point we had her*

*bring back applications but they weren't, they weren't filled out. So we knew it wasn't a priority for her. It wasn't something she was into. She wasn't busy out there doing.*

*Lots of phone calls were coming in. She - she developed quite a network, hm . . . she had quite a few older friends. Some of them were involved with a whole bunch of criminal activity, hm . . . the reason we know about it, is cause the police were often calling looking for her and looking for her male friends. At one point, well, we thought there was some drugs stuff going on, hm . . . there were thoughts of her running, well, not running but participating in an escort service. Hm . . . phone calls were coming in . . . she was taking lots of film, getting - getting film developed, that was something that had us all curious 'cause she was taking loads of pictures . . . and getting all these films developed and - and being very secretive around showing anyone the pictures, even - even to her peers. The kids were wondering, what the pictures were about. So the team decided it would be best to re-orient her . . . and the team felt comfortable with that. I think they wanted to move her out of the city, take her away from the a . . . alleged lucrative stuff that was going on out there and just provide her with more structure which we knew [this group home] wasn't gonna to do, and I think - I think we all agreed that she should be re-oriented. I think everybody felt the same. She needed more safety. She needed more control.*

*At the time the decision was made, it, ah, it was the right thing . . . I think it was the right thing to do. We were loosing her . . . we weren't connecting anymore and she, she needed to be removed from the community for a while. She needed to get away from the friends she was hanging around with and, and, that needed to be broken. So, yes . . . at the time it was the right thing for her. I agreed with it.*

When the time to facilitate the transfer came, however, six months had passed and JC felt that the intervention was no longer appropriate.

*. . . the direction with LY was changing a little bit because she was a little more involved in the program and her and I were connecting more. We were spending more time talking so pieces of information and, and what was going on out there was coming out.*

*I mean, six months had passed. She, she was a different person and I didn't know why we were doing it anymore . . . I didn't know what they [the other group home] could do that we couldn't do right here . . .so no, I don't think it was right. I didn't believe it was right for her then, at that time. I didn't think it was going to do any good.*

Deciding on the appropriateness of the timing may be a global question as suggested in JC's statement about LY but it may also relate to the specific moment as was implied in DC's statement that "the opportunity was there". This may involve reading the cues the youth is giving off in the early stages of the interaction as TC did in talking with JY in her room.

> *I was watching her reaction. . . her quieting down. . . listening. . . she was changing.*

**Considering Alternative Interventions**

Different interventions with different youth under different circumstances may well evoke different responses from the youth. Any chosen intervention must take into consideration these possible alternatives. TC, when he was intervening with JY, did not want to use an intervention which might cause an escalation of the situation. He believes this might have occurred if he had chosen a different intervention or a different way of intervening,

> *Three different girls, three different interventions. Ha . . . the two other girls, you hm . . . the intervention with them because of their profile, has to be very clear cut, black and white. These aren't girls that want to take . . . well they do want to take control but aren't ready to share control. It is the profiles of two other girls. But with the profile of the three girls, two of them being that way, what I, I'd have to be firm, a little aggressive, and very directive. 'You are gonna do this, and this, and this.' And that's the mode you're in. With JY it's a little different, but I was still in that mode, to get them all in their rooms. 'Ok, guys, this is it, we're not having a big discussion here, it's bed time. You're gonna go here, you're gonna go here, you're going here.' "Can I have a drink?" 'no you can't take a glass of water to bed', but decision making was all mine at this point. I wasn't prepared to share any of it, this is what we're gonna to do. And, once you did that, then we'll talk, we'll talk after. And . . . the girls were fine, the girls were - were . . . no one else wanted to challenge that. So, that's how I entered JY's room.*
>
> *JY's feeling was that . . . usually was, like, sheepish . . . sheepish, and . . . one thing I understood with JY is that . . . being critical of her, hm . . . well, like most kids, being critical of her didn't - you couldn't discipline her by raising your voice, you couldn't yell, you couldn't criticize her, you - you definitely couldn't yell at her, you couldn't point out her flaws, you couldn't point out - you had to - you can't - you can't say, well,*

*listen - being straight forward necessarily with her, with a hard tone, would escalate her and a . . . the issue for me, always, and for most of us, with JY, was self esteem.*

At the same time he wanted to be respectful of how he knew her based on his previous experiences with her.

*So, you - you have to approach her with one, you can be angry, I mean, everyone gets angry, and we can see, we get - you get annoyed with someone, you raise your voice, you have to be careful. With JY, I now understand, when you raise your voice it made her feel worse, she became more aggressive.*

**Referencing Theory or Knowledge**

While the child and youth care worker's decision about how to intervene is based on how she knows, or wants to be with, this child in this context, it is also guided by the theoretical frame of reference the child and youth care worker utilizes in understanding and working with youth in general, as it was for DC when he was trying to understand TY.

*so, there is the bad object in there, possibly, the - the identity, or lack of it and . . . well, clinically, I remember Ericson, okay? There's the history taking, there's the objective testing . . . Like I said a. . . if you look from a developmental point of view, I mean, it's a consolidating period. Hey a . . . there's a lot of testings needed. A lot of the behaviours that we found, like, that we treat in the group homes is normal adolescent development.*

**Analysis of the Current Behaviour**

On the evening when TY came in to the office and asked to chat with DC he recognised in her behaviour something which he had seen before. He also recognised in her behaviour that night an opportunity to intervene in relationship to his analysis of her. His decision to say no when she asked to stay for a second cigarette was based on that analysis of her combined with his way of understanding human behaviours.

*Ok. Er. . . it was starting to get clear that, with her history from over there, I mean, she was from [another group home], where there had*

*been some negative reports with her relationship with staff. Er. . . I looked at - maybe she'd been at the group home a month and a half and her way of . . . not showing herself, which, like conforming, she's a conformist, ok? And [saying] 'Oh, I'm sorry', and a lot of it is legitimate, a lot of it is a facade . . . That's how she makes her games.*

*. . . I could see her. I could see it all go so, she came in and then we chatted. I had logs to do and I know she was stretching the time because this was not the first night she's coming in . . . And it's not the first night she's gonna ask for a second cigarette.*

*But. . . I wanted to ruffle her because I know she couldn't take no. She had. . . because her facade is all that, to make herself. . . She'd made herself so perfect, so naive, so polite, so unangr. . . so, how do you say (P), pleasing, so pleasing, . . normally, the return to that is, a person who can't say no, she can't accept the no. She want's to avoid the no.*

*This is how I'm reading it. Ok? I did my whole reading with her.*

On a global level the same principle was operating for JC when she initially supported the intervention of transferring LY to the other group nome. At the time LY was acting out in the community, the staff were concerned about her possible involvement with prostitution, and she was staying out late with people the staff did not think were good for her. JC believed that all of this indicated that at this time the removal of LY from the community was needed.

**Understanding the Youth's Background**

TC, in thinking about his intervention with JY, was conscious of the fact that he was a man and that she had a previous history with men, and in her family there was a history of the other girls leaving home and becoming parents.

*. . . and she was very angry with me. She was aggressive with me at certain times hm. . . I saw her very angry with men, in particular*

*. . . but on the other side a sense . . . a sense, of being, for her hm . . . to be pregnant and I think using her sister, older sister, who had two babies alone that was raising them ah . . . even though, they - they argued at times there's . . . I think she sensed a lot of respect towards her sister, and how . . . And no matter what anyone said about how difficult it was, her sister was . . . succeeding in her own way, getting her education and it didn't matter what anyone said, her sister was the role model.*

From this TC concluded that for JC being a pregnant adolescent was not only an acceptable norm but could also be seen by her as a valued state. Thus his intervention was around her responsibility as a pregnant adolescent rather than her state of being pregnant.

Understanding and being sensitive to the background of the youth, including family and ethnic culture, appears to be essential to an effective intervention with youth. In reflecting on this during the course of our interviews, DC told the following story which I include here even though it comes from his work with another youth because of how it emphasizes his consciousness of this need for sensitivity and cultural awareness.

> *Let me give you an example, this one to, when you talk about meaning and intervention and all that. There's this young girl . . . she was a black-Jamaican girl . . . always stretching the boundaries. And a . . . I came and tagged her. I tell you, this was a bit of a rebellious kid, that doesn't want to conform, who don't want to conform, Ok? A. . . I got it all wrong hey? It took me a year and a half to realize that what she was asking for was a home.*
>
> *In her way of pushing and eating in the living room, she was saying, well this is my home. . . this kid wanted to be in the system, wanted us to take care of her education. It took me a year and a half.*

**Preparing to Take Responsibility**

In evaluating different interventions and considering their possible outcomes the child and youth care worker also recognises that she has the responsibility for following up from that intervention. This may mean dealing with the immediate reaction or outcome, as DC was prepared to do in saying no to TY.

> *Now, I - I'm suppose to be the mature adult and the professional. So I'm suppose to be in control of myself and be able to go out of my way after and pick-up the situation. I'm the adult here . . . the professional.*
>
> *I think what I was doing though, is setting up the next - next a. . . encounters because it's something that I . . . usually, when I do something, I go and pick it up later on.*

TC was also prepared to take responsibility for settling the situation with the girls being outside. He was aware of the need for him to bring closure to the situation once he had engaged with the girls.

> *So. . . there's a - there's responsibility on my part actually, to put some closure on what just took place. And a . . . that was - that was a . . . I think, a need, that right away that had to be done, for me anyway because I'm the one who's sort of involved. So that was the first part. The . . . putting the closure had . . . would be a little bit different because it's at bed time, you don't want to re-escalate them, you don't want to send them to bed that way, like, just yelling at them and slamming doors. I mean, you got to avoid that. You don't want to do that, you know . . . You want to try and put some closure on what exactly took place and to leave that with them and so that's the first piece. You've got to maintain the bedtime routine. So you put those two together. You're working by yourself so, this is so . . . in putting closure the last step would be also putting closure for the evening which you thought you'd already done, because you're moving on to the night's hour and, and there's - there's a night shift.*

**Connecting with the Youth**

Following the child and youth worker's assessment of the situation and her preparation to intervene she must finally feel that she is connected with the youth in such a way that the intervention has the greatest chance of succeeding. If there is no connection between them the intervention may not be meaningful for the youth.

On a global level the child and youth care workers had a strong connection with the youth as was indicated in the section on Pre-Interventive Relationships. But the child and youth care worker must also be connected in the present, at the moment of the intervention (Fewster, 1990b; Krueger, 1994). JC was well aware of this as she and LY were loading the boxes. As they were going through the motions JC sensed a lack of the connectedness which she had previously experienced with LY.

> *I was going out. I was coming up the stairs, so, I was sort of going out the door and LY was coming back in to get a box and I put the box down, in between, and I stopped and I said to her: 'It's hard' and I don't*

*think she responded, hm . . . I think I was looking for a response. I didn't get it. At the same time I wanted to stop it, hm . . . I needed the break, hm, and I felt like we were so distant. So that's when I offered her, I said: 'Let's go have a cigarette' and it seemed comfortable to go sit outside . . . and she didn't say anything but she grabbed her cigarettes, hm, in her pocket or whatever and then we just went outside and I don't think we talked or anything . . . just sat there for about five minutes.*

*And afterwards I felt more connected and we loaded the car together.*

**Attending to Feedback**

All models which address the child and youth care intervention (e.g., Eisikovits,Beker & Guttmann, 1991; Garfat & Newcomen, 1992; Krueger, 1988; Ricks & Garfat, 1989) indicate that feedback and attending to feedback is an important part of the process of intervention. The literature pays particular attention to the feedback which gives the child and youth care worker clues as to how the youth is reacting or responding to the intervention, or parts of the intervention, being enacted at the time (e.g. Freeman, 1993a). For example, if a child and youth care worker speaks in a calming voice in an attempt to reduce the agitation of a youth and the youth continues to escalate this may be interpreted as feedback that the current approach is not working and an alternative is necessary.

This immediate feedback may then be used by the child and youth care worker to confirm or disqualify the effectiveness of the child and youth care worker's actions, indicate the need for modifications of the approach, and/or suggest possible changes or alternatives.

Feedback may also be less than immediate. It may occur over time, following the intervention of interest, and may be used for the same reasons as immediate feedback but in a more global perspective (Garfat, 1990). For example, after a few months of supporting a youth in a certain way to look for employment the feedback of seeing an increased agitation of the youth may suggest that the approach being used is ineffective and indicate the need for an alternative approach to supporting the youth in this task.

The child and youth care worker also provides feedback to herself during the course of any intervention. This may include emotional responses which indicate that she is having a personal reaction to a situation, thoughts she is having about what is occurring, or other personal experiences which reflect upon the current intervention. The focus of the current section is on the feedback available from the youth during the interventions and the child and youth care worker's observation of, and response to, that feedback.

**Observing the feedback**. Each of the young people who participated in this inquiry reacted to the interventions of the child and youth care workers thereby providing the child and youth care worker with feedback. As the foregoing section demonstrated, each youth had their own reactions. Interestingly however, all of them believed that they were not showing their reactions to the child and youth care workers. Yet in each case the child and youth care worker was aware of the signs that the youth was responding to the intervention. TY, for example, said that she didn't show any external signs of her shock.

> *Hm . . . actually, I didn't say anything to DC. I just, after saying, 'are you serious', and he said, 'yes TY, I'm serious. You cannot have a cigarette', I was like, ok . . . you know, like, (laugh) 'I'm going to bed now' and he said, 'ok, goodnight', you know, and everybody's saying goodnight.*

Yet, DC remembers very well her reaction.

> *Oh. She's all embarrassed and . . . I sense she's angry too . . .she - I remember she was blushing, Ok? And I could sense irritation and frustration.*

JY also thought that she was concealing her reaction to TC's intervention. I asked her if she thought he would have known that she was thinking about what he said.

> *I don't think so. I don't show people that I'm thinking. . . sometimes when I think I'll blank out and I'll not listen to the person and the person will ask me a question and I'll be, like, 'Yeah. Ok. What? What*

*did you say? I didn't hear you' . . . I'll just sit there, listen, and he'll leave, 'goodnight, see you tomorrow'.*

Yet TC remembers quite clearly her reacting.

*I was seeing a different person and I think a . . . the pregnancy . . . how she reacted around the pregnancy . . . I felt a change, I - I - I had to be . . . I mean you're on your guard. It - it's you . . . you have a feeling . . . the night we had . . . in the room there talking about the baby. Ah . . . her . . . the baby was a being . . . a viable entity. You know, rather then being something that's gonna be aborted, ok?*

LY also believed that she was hiding her feelings if not her behaviour when JC was driving her to her next group home and she reinforced this by hiding her face.

*. . . (P) Because, I guess I figured . . . she can do this to me, it's obviously, I figured, it's not hurting her any so I didn't let it, you know, it show that I'm hurting about it, you know? So I just kind of stayed quiet and looked out the window, all the while making sure my hair was hiding my face so she couldn't see me crying.*

Yet JC remembers well LY's reaction.

*I remember LY was in the car, clearly anxious and unhappy. . . crying all the time, silent, depressed, scared.*

Interpreting the feedback. When the feedback was experienced the child and youth care workers had to interpret that feedback in order determine what it meant for their actions. DC, for example, in observing the feedback inherent in TY's reaction to his 'no' interpreted this to mean that he had attained his desired goal.

*She's all embarrassed and . . . I sense she's angry too. Ok. And that's what I wanted, ok. She left it and she went up.*

When TC went up to the room to talk to JY about her behaviour of going up on the roof he interpreted the feedback from her to mean that he wasn't getting through to her and he needed to change his approach.

*Well, just watching her reaction back to me. That . . . I was making her feel bad, she was . . . That . . . I saw that being translated with her escalating, her being angry, ah . . . communication was not - wasn't even taking place at that point. I was antagonizing her. I was just talking, she wasn't listening, right?*

*I was angry. You could see it. She was responding or . . . with the anger, almost puzzled with my anger. And then I could feel it . . . switching. My - my - my approach to her was starting to switch.*

**Utilizing the Feedback**. The child and youth care workers after observing and interpreting the feedback from the youth also used this feedback as required. DC used the feedback to confirm his analysis of the situation. TC, after observing the feedback from JY and interpreting that to mean he wasn't getting through, used that feedback to modify his approach.

*So I had to slow down and then I had to . . . my whole process, my - my whole process is analyzing what exactly's taking place, what took place. What are we angry about? Leaving a group home? Fine, that can be made in one statement. Should we leave the group home? Should we be running out at this time of time? This is what we're gonna be doing. This is bedtime. The er . . . running around on the roof, became the primary concern.*

*. . . my voice sort of slowed down, trying to have a discussion, and then I connected the part about that, 'if you intend to be a mother, if you intend to show people that you can raise a baby, that you can be responsible enough to raise a baby'. There's a total change in [my] voice. Hm . . . maybe a more relaxed . . . attitude, leaning on a piece of furniture, sitting back on a piece of furniture.*

When JC watched how she and LY were loading the boxes independent of each other she felt disconnected from LY and so she stopped the process and invited LY to sit on the porch for a few minutes so that they might be more connected in this process.

At times the child and youth care workers used the feedback from their own experiencing to provide them with information about how they were responding to the situation as we saw earlier in the earlier section.

This section should not be taken to imply that the youth responds and then the child and youth care worker uses the feedback in a linear fashion. The process of observing, interpreting, and utilizing feedback permeated the whole process of these interventions as the child and youth care workers went through the process of acting, monitoring, and re-acting in their interactions with the youth.

**Intervention**

The result of the foregoing activity may be that the child and youth care worker decides to withdraw from the current opportunity or it may be that she decides to actively intervene. In the scenarios discussed here the child and youth care workers chose to intervene with the youth. The next section discusses the actions of the youth during these interventions.

## 4D: Actions of the Youth

In any interaction between people they each always respond in one way or another to the actions of the other. Such is the case in the child and youth care intervention. The youth who participated in this inquiry each responded in their own personal way to the interventions enacted by the child and youth care workers. As with the child and youth care workers, no two youth responded in the same manner to the actions they encountered. Yet there was enough commonality to their actions to allow me to attempt to capture an overall description of their responding.

Due to the limitations of the written word the following description talks about the various elements of the youths' responses in an apparently sequential manner, one after the other, just as this section follows the one on the actions of intervening in an apparently sequential manner. This should not be taken to imply that there is a neat sequential linearity to the flow of experiences of the youth. At many points different experiences seemed to be occurring almost, if not completely, simultaneously. The following interpretative descriptions, therefore, present the experiences the youth reported to have, not necessarily the order in

which they were experienced but rather in the order in which they were remembered and reconstructed as we engaged in our discussions Thus for example TY reported experiencing shock and denial. Whether her experience of shock preceded her attempt to deny her experience should not be presumed. As I pursued this matter of sequence in the interviews with her and the other the youth, it became clear that their memory was of shock *and* denial, not of shock *and then* denial.

For the purpose of presentation the experiences of the youth are offered in the order in which I encountered them in the interviews with youth. The fact that they were, in general, recalled by the youth in the order presented here may seem to imply that they occurred in this order. However, it may equally imply that in their memory of their experience they were more powerful and therefore were recalled earlier than the other memories. The following should be read perhaps more as a collection of experiences rather than as a sequence of responding.

The following table indicates the actions which were recalled by the youth which will be discussed in this section.

| ***Elements of the Process of Intervention Identified by the Youth*** |
|---|
| **Experiencing the unreal** |
| **Personalizing the intervention** |
| **Connecting the intervention to expectations** |
| **Experiencing incongruence** |
| **Thinking is stimulated** |
| **Feelings are stimulated** |
| **The youth makes meaning of the intervention** |

**Table 2: Elements of the process of intervention identified by youth**

**Experiencing the Unreal**

Each of the youth who participated in this inquiry were initially stunned by the intervention of the child and youth care workers. They had a sense that it was unreal, that it couldn't be happening, that what they were experiencing was not what was really taking place.

**Denial**. One of the strongest reactions occurred for TY immediately following the moment when DC said no to her request for another cigarette. At first she attempted in her own way to deny it by assuming she had heard wrong.

> *I stood there and I was like . . . 'no, DC, you're joking right?' Hm . . . I couldn't believe that DC, you know, would actually say no to me, you know.*

LY, in the early stages of moving to the new group home, tried to deny the situation as it was happening.

> *This isn't happening, this isn't happening, this is a joke, they can't do this to me, you know? I was thinking, maybe . . . maybe, when I get there, she'll be like, no, no, I can't do this, I can't do this, and take me back.*

JY's statement was perhaps the most clear. Even though the statements and implied action of TC was just what she wanted to hear, when he first said he wasn't going to fill out the report on her behaviour she remembers that,

> *. . . at first, like, ah, I didn't believe it.*

**Shock or Surprise**. Part of the youths' reaction was of shock or surprise. The following quote from TY as she is remembering DC saying no to her captures her surprise.

> *And he said: 'No, TY, I'm not [joking]. No, you cannot have another cigarette'. And I remember staying there thinking: 'Oh my god, you know, he said no,' but. . . I don't know. . . you know, like . . . I was feeling like: 'Oh my' . . . and I didn't take it too too much to heart, but it did - it did do something, like, it did.*

JY's intervention was less of a shock for her. Perhaps it was because the intervention was one which she could interpret immediately as more positive than that of either TY or LY. None-the-less she too was surprised.

> *. . . people before that were telling me that I shouldn't have the baby, so, so . . . it was the first time anybody, actually, like, really said 'it - it's not just you . . . you have - you have somebody else to care for now so smarten up.'*

When LY was told that she would be leaving the group home she was stunned by the news.

> *You know, when they told me two days before and they - they did it in such a cold way, you know, a . . . you know, 'Shawbridge', have a nice day (laugh) you know, and I - I couldn't do nothing about it, I was like, 'what? what? you can't do this to me,' you know.*

**Unreal**. In a sense, TY felt that the situation was unreal, she was so surprised by DC saying no to her.

> *. . . you know, it would have been different if he had said no to someone else. I (mouth noise) you know, but to me. . .*

LY had a similar feeling of things being unreal when she was loading her stuff in the car for the drive to the other group home.

> *This isn't happening. This isn't happening. This is a joke. They can't do this to me, you know? Ok, yeah, I - I screwed up a bit, but, you know, they have to give me a chance. I thought they cared, you know?*

As they left for the drive this experience continued.

> *I was like, (mouth noise) well, put in the tape, and then of course, I got more depressed cause I'm listening (laugh) to the words. And I'm, like, wow everything - it - everything seemed to fit . . . except for the part where I shouldn't have been in the car, or I should have been in the car but we shouldn't have been going towards [the other group home]. And the boxes shouldn't have been there.*

**Personalizing the Intervention**

As the youth discussed their reactions to the interventions it became evident that they had personalized the intervention experience. Sometimes, like TY, they

felt somehow responsible for the actions of the child and youth care worker. Other times they felt it was very much about themselves. While their reactions were as individual as they were, their common reaction was to personalize the intervention in some way. JY's first thoughts when confronted by TC were about her responsibility.

> *So that me . . . got me thinking , Ok, so, maybe I did something else wrong 'cause . . . living in a group home I . . . and being pregnant, and being young. I was getting lectured on hm . . . you have to do everything right . . . it started me thinking, like, 'Ok, what have I done.'*

TY's initial thoughts when DC said no were similar.

> *It was . . . it was very mind boggling, like, I remember standing there and feeling like . . . why, you know, like, what did I do, you know, for him to say no, you know.*

As TY's comment reflects, the youth who were experiencing this sense of this 'happening to them' immediately moved to personalize the action of the child and youth care workers. LY's interpretation was that moving her to another group home meant that the child and youth care worker didn't care about her as she discussed further during an interview.

> *I felt like, you know, oh, they must have been lying when they acted like they cared about me, you know, if they cared about me then they wouldn't be doing this to me.*

**Connecting the Intervention to Expectations**

The surprise and the shock seems in all three interventions to have been related to the expectations which the youth had prior to the moment of intervention. TY, for example, expected to walk back in to the room and have another cigarette with DC. When TC entered JY's room to talk with her about being on the roof she had an expectation based on her previous experiences with staff or other authorities that he would give her a lecture and write up an incident report.

*Hm . . . well, when he first walked in, it was like, 'Ok, I'm gonna get my lecture, and he's gonna leave, and I'm gonna go to bed, and it's over.' It was routine. Hm . . . I don't know . . . he walked in, he said what he had to say. I listened. I didn't say very much, Hm . . . I guess what I was thinking was a . . . pretty much like, 'Ok, the moment's over, you caught us, you brought us in, your job is done, go away.'*

LY also had certain expectations which existed prior to the intervention of driving to the new group home especially in terms of her relationship with JC and these were inconsistent with JC taking her away.

*. . . me and JC really never had anything, like, we never got an argument, or . . . I mean, nothing ever went wrong, or . . . it was always just, like, a steady pace, you know? And that day, it . . . I guess I needed her? And in a way I thought she was there for me, but she wasn't.*

**Experiencing Incongruence**

Equally important it seems was the fact that the youth experienced the intervention as incongruent with previous interventions or experiences. This was, of course, the source of their expectations. For JY, her surprise or shock came from the fact that not only was TC shifting to talk about her responsibility in being a parent but that in talking to her like this, instead of filling out a report and immediately consequencing her, he was violating the rules of what she had come to experience as normal staff behaviour.

*I don't know 'cause most of the staff their in, their in . . . initial response is to write up the report.*

*Oh, they have, like, a little book of rules and the way they're suppose to follow and a . . . I don't know, it's just . . . it's like, he broke the rules, kind of . . . by not being strict about the rules.*

TY remembers experiencing a sense of incongruity between DC saying no to her and how she expected things to be, based on her previous experience.

*Hm . . . (P) I guess because no one's ever really said no to me, you know, at least, not for a long time, I felt like . . . Hm . . . I couldn't believe that DC, you know, would actually say no to me, you know, like, it was . . . it was very mind boggling.*

When LY was being driven to the new group home by JC she had a sense of incongruence. While she and JC had ridden together in the car before, looking for work or going shopping, this time the car was filled with her belongings and they had an unfamiliar destination.

> *Yeah, it was just, like, I was used to being in the car with her listening to music,smoking cigarettes just. . . I wasn't used to all the boxes being in the back, you know, being able to look through the mirror and just seeing my stuff there . . . you know, driving out of NDG, because, normally we just stayed in NDG.*

This sense of incongruence must have contributed to furthering the youths' sense that what they were experiencing was somehow unreal.

**Thinking is Stimulated**

The interventions by the child and youth care workers, perhaps because of the 'stunning' effect, perhaps because of how the youth personalized them or because of the incongruence they experienced, had the effect of causing the youth to start thinking. Throughout the interviews as the youth reflected back on their experiences and what it had meant to them they referred constantly to this effect of the interventions, causing them to think.

For JY, TC's intervention stimulated her to think about the future and the possible impact of her current behaviour on her future as a parent and the implications for the child she was carrying.

> *I guess, 'cause, being that he said, he didn't want to write the report . . . cause I was pregnant, made me think . . . 'Ok, I am pregnant. I'm gonna to have a baby. I have to start taking care of myself because it's not just myself' . . . I didn't want to have a social worker put on my kid and, and I didn't want to have a follow-up on her, and all that stuff, and when, I guess when he said like, the point that he didn't want to fill up the report because I was pregnant, it made me think, like, 'did I do something wrong to cause them to think that I'm not fit enough,' so, it . . . I don't know, it was . . . kinda like, 'Ok, it's over' kind of thing, but then it was, like, I was scared because of what it could do in the future.*

When DC said no to TY, she reports having been caught up in thought for some time afterwards.

> *. . . and I'm, like, walking upstairs, feeling like . . . what did I do, you know, like, and I remember laying in bed. I must have lied there for 15 minutes trying to think, you know, and a . . . like, why DC could have said no, you know, and a . . . hm . . . I guess . . . I don't think I ever really came to a conclusion.*

LY, too, was stimulated to think by the intervention of being driven to a different group home. Many of her thoughts were about how she could un-do the situation.

> *. . . I felt, you know, if she sees I'm upset, if she sees a . . . I regret everything I did, maybe they'll give me another chance.*

She also thought about how she could escape from the situation.

> *[I wanted to] . . . get out of the car and just start running and, like, never stop. Get as far away from it, you know, as I can. Far away from JC, cause she - she rejected me.*

Some of her thoughts were about her life and what this intervention meant about her life, her future, and even whether or not she was worthy to live.

> *. . . obviously, I'm not gonna be the same, you know? [the new group home] is gonna treat me like shit, that's gonna be more strict, you know, I won't be able to do this. I won't be able to go out. (P) I just wanted to run.*
>
> *. . . with my life . . . It's gonna get worse. It can't get better, it can't possibly get better.*
>
> *. . . maybe I don't deserve to live, you know?*

**Feelings are Stimulated**

As the previous quotes have shown, the interventions also provoked powerful feelings in the youth. TY talked about this happening for her.

> *Hm . . . that . . . Oh, how do I explain this hm . . . a . . . (P) that I had to lower myself a bit, that I - that . . . I don't have to be on a ten foot pedestal and think everything is fine and dandy, you know, and pretend that I'm always flying and deny how I'm feeling, where as when DC said*

*no to me it as was like . . . all my feelings just . . . I had to deal with them in order for me to understand.*

*It really made me get in tune with how I was feeling and realized that, Hey, you know, like, a lightbulb went on, and said, 'TY, you know, like, why am I feeling this because DC said 'no', you know, and it really made me think and wonder . . .*

For LY, her thoughts about what were happening to her and the meaning of that provoked feelings about her worth.

*It made me feel really low and unwanted . . . I'm not good enough. They have to put me here, lock me up, you know. I'm trouble, I'm nothing. I want to die.*

And when she finally entered the room she had been given in the new group home she recalled the following experience.

*. . . we finished unpacking my stuff and I went to the office and they kind of said, 'go to your room for a while', you know, 'we want to talk to the other staff' and, basically, like, 'you're not good enough', you know, 'we own you, we run you', you know, 'go to your room' . . . sort of like, hm . . . like, you know, in a circus? Like in a circus, there is the lions, and they have them in cage and this is the ring, or whatever, the . . . not the ring, he carries a ring, hm . . . like a lion master. You know, with the whip. 'Do this. Do that' you know? I felt like . . . anything they want me to do, you know, stay in your room, do this, do that, and I'd have to do it and I couldn't get out of it.*

After JY let herself understand that TC was talking about her 'being a parent' and felt that her being a parent was more real she still had mixed feelings about what that meant.

*I guess in a way it made me happy because . . . I guess . . . it gave me some - somebody to care for but in a way it scared me because I liked being . . . free.*

**The Youth Makes Meaning of the Intervention**

As is obvious from the foregoing, each youth in their own way needed, and tried, to make meaning of their experiencing of the interventions of the child and youth care workers just as the child and youth care workers had tried to make

meaning of the youth's actions before intervening. For each of them the meaning of the intervention was, of course, different.

As we saw earlier for LY, being transferred to another group home meant that she was worthless and that the staff were rejecting her.

> *Rejection. Rejection. Rejection. I figured, they're kicking me out. They don't want me.*

This meant that they hadn't been honest and didn't really care for her.

> *I felt like, you know, oh, they must have been lying when they acted like they cared about me, you know. If they cared about me, then, they wouldn't be doing this to me.*

She thought this meant that she was losing people from her life, never to see them again. This was one of her reactions to seeing her friend who had come to say goodbye, drive off.

> *I watched him get in his car, and boum! I think that's when it really hit me. I was watching him drive away and I was like, 'Oh no, this is really happening, I'm not gonna see him again'.*

She also thought that this meant that she was losing JC from her life even though JC had told her she would be coming to visit every week.

> *If I need something, JC's there. You know, if I need a big hug, JC will be there and then it's, like, she's not gonna be there anymore.*

For TY, when DC said no it meant that not only had she done something wrong as we saw earlier, but also that she had failed to please and failed to live up to a standard.

> *I was a people pleaser so I would, like, I don't like to see people unhappy, or disappoint them, so I would do anything in my power to try and make myself live up to their standards.*
>
> *. . . because I'm not used to people saying no to me, you know, like, I was . . . I was trying to keep my nose clean, do everything else I'm suppose to do, you know, and people . . . I didn't get in trouble, everybody liked me, I liked them . . .*

For JY it meant that someone was concerned.

*I think it was - it was more a concern . . . 'cause I - 'cause I had talked to him before about what I was gonna do and stuff like that and it was, like, he didn't want . . . it was like, 'I don't want to write the report because I don't want to cause problems for you. You - you were the product of the problem, and the report. . . but I don't want to write it up 'cause I don't want to cause problems for you'.*

Throughout the course of these discussions with the youth it became evident that for each of the youth the process of making meaning of the intervention, their interpretation of what it meant, was related to their previous experience and personal history. As they reflected back on aspects of their life before the intervention I could see linkages which would have influenced how they made meaning of the current intervention. The following section is my interpretation of why they interpreted the interventions as they did.

## 4E: Interpretations of the Youths' Interpretations

Each of the youth interpreted the interventions of the child and youth care worker. In doing so they demonstrated a need to give meaning to their experiences. For each of them the meaning given was probably different than the meaning which might have been given to the same intervention had it been another youth who was involved. TY hinted at this when she said,

*I couldn't believe he'd said no to me, and why did he say no to me, you know, and . . . you know, it would have been different if he had said no to someone else. I (mouth noise) you know, but to me . . .*

For each of the youth the meaning that they gave to the intervention was personal. It was their own, reflective of their own history. In this section I will offer an interpretation based on my discussions, analysis, and experiencing, of how it is that the youth made the meaning they did of their experience of the intervention.

As has been previously discussed, one cannot separate the interpreter from the interpretation for each act of interpretation is a personal act affected by the

prejudices and biases of the interpreter. One cannot, ultimately, be objective in any act of interpretation; one can only represent as accurately as possible the process by which one has made an interpretation and if this exposed interpretation 'rings true' for others some degree of credibility is obtained. What follows then is my interpretation of the youths' interpretation and meaning-making of the actions of the child and youth care workers. Others, having been exposed to the same material and experiences, may feel that other interpretations are also possible.

**An Interpretation of TY's Interpretation**

TY had learned to define herself as a people-pleaser which meant, to her, that she didn't like to see people unhappy and didn't want to disappoint them.

> *I was . . . I was trying to keep my nose clean, do everything else I'm suppose to do, you know, and people . . . I didn't get in trouble. Everybody liked me. I liked them . . . I was a people pleaser so I would, like, I don't like to see people unhappy or disappoint them so, I would do anything in my power to try and make myself live up to their standards.*

She had been this way for a long time. It is possible that this attitude stemmed from early experiences with her mother's boyfriend. When she was asked to describe how it was that she came in to care she offered the following reflection.

> *. . . I was molested by my mom's boyfriend for 7 years, from the age of 5 until I was 11, so . . .*

So for seven years she had been subject to this abuse and one day she took an action which said no.

> *I was - actually I'd just turned 11. It was two days after my 11th birthday . . . hm . . . I had - after the 7 year period, I had decided to tell someone at school. I a . . . I think it was the nurse at school and then she has called in a social worker and . . .*

As a result of her action of saying no to the continuing abuse TY ended up in placement in a foster home where she found herself isolated from the city and feeling totally lost.

*A . . . yeah, well . . . at the beginning of my first two years of placement, I was in foster care, in one foster home, and a . . . from there hm . . . It was in the country, more or less. Like to me it's called country cause there was, like, no buses regularly like Montreal, like Verdun per-per say, or here. And a . . . so, I considered it very quiet and you know . . . here was no sidewalks and that so I considered it country. And then, from there I want to leave and come back to the city to live . . . 'cause I - I just felt totally lost out there.*

Her younger sister who had made no complaint or with whom there was no problem stayed at home with the family.

*. . . and I also had a younger sister there but she had stayed at home with my mother cause nothing had been found to be wrong with my sister.*

When TY was placed in care she had a sense of both loss and being lost. She tried telling workers that she wanted to return to the city.

*. . . so I kept trying to get to them that I wanted to be back in the city . . . I did verbalize to them that I did not want to stay there but they just didn't understand why .*

When this failed to work TY began to let them know in another way, through an acting-out of her desire to leave.

*I was always, like, on AWOL [running away]. I had no self-esteem what so ever, you know, and - and I really didn't care about anybody or what anybody thought. Never went to school and stuff, yeah, and I'd feel, 'acting out a lot' would be very appropriate.*

*. . . so, I returned back to the city. Actually, I'd run away from the foster home cause they wouldn't take me out, so I kept . . . trying to get to them that I wanted to be back in the city. . . running away, you know, and being disobedient and, you know, trying . . .*

By being disobedient, again symbolically saying no to the foster home attempts to control or manage her behaviours, she ended up moving to a group home in the city. There she experienced herself as being controlled and treated like a child again. In the following quote she attempts to express her experience of this group home.

*Hm, it - it's . . . it's totally different from other group homes. It's a Christian group home. It's a Christian organization and a . . . there, we have to go to church every Sunday, hm . . . we all have, for different ages, we all have set curfew, set times and stuff, and a . . . they don't really show you how to be independent, hm . . . besides, like, doing your laundry, making your bed, 'cause we had these charts from 0 to 5 and we're marked on every day, between making our beds or showers or grooming or homework or study, and stuff like that, so, it's very a . . . which - which I found very child like, and a . . . I felt I was 5 years old again, being taught, you know, how to make my bed, being marked on it, how to clean my room and everything else . . .*

In this comment about feeling like she was "5 years old again" TY seems to connect this experience of her first group home with the time of her childhood when she remembers the abuse first beginning. Yet at first she liked her experience in the group home.

*Like, I loved it, at the beginning. Like, I thought this was great, you know. Like, I don't have to do anything, you know, just keep my nose clean, do this, do that. . . everything's fine.*

TY stayed in this program for about three and a half years during which time she was compliant; she behaved and acted according to the expectations and demands placed on her.

*So I was in a Christian school as well as [this group home]. . . and there, my average for school had to be an eighty, to pass. So, I was always studying, you know, where as before I never went to high school 'cause I was always skipping so I think my highest average was like a twenty-two, something like that . . .*

One day, however, she decided that she needed to move. She experienced herself as being out of place and felt that she needed to learn more about living independently which was her future direction. So she "walked out" because she couldn't take it any more and she connected this experiencing of how she felt in the group home to her previous history.

*. . . but as I got older, I thought . . . no way, you know, like, there's more out in that world than making your bed, you know, and being*

*marked on things and . . . I just . . . I just couldn't handle it no more. . . I said no.*

*Actually, I was the one that decided . . . and I was just totally fed up and I just walked out one day and I said, 'I can't handle this no more', you know, because I was just fed up.*

*Yeah. I was just fed up because I always felt like an outsider from a lot of the adolescents and . . . I guess because . . . of my background, of the background that I came from, and everything I've acted out on you know, and where I ended up, you know, being the person I am today.*

As a result of saying no again to how she was being treated as a child TY was moved to another group home, the one in which the intervention of DC saying no to her took place. It seems that in TY's experience being compliant meant that things stayed the same, as it had at home and for three and a half years in the Christian group home. Saying no had three times resulted in her moving from the place where she had been living. Being in control of 'yes' or 'no' then, meant being in control. As long as people were happy with her everything was okay. But 'no' meant that things were not okay.

When TC moved into the group home where DC was working she was pleased with what she found. It seemed to meet her needs at the time and she felt less like a child and more in control.

*I think - I can think of, like I know it was, it was a group home, you know, and stuff, but I felt that everybody was just one big, you know, like, family, you know, more or less, to speak, you know.*

*I guess I was feeling more like a . . . more in control, like more of a . . . I was being treated like a . . . young adolescent, you know, I was being treated with, like, you know, 'TY you've got a head, use it', you know, so I wasn't afraid to sit down and joke with them and talk to them and, you know, tell them how I really was feeling.*

TY behaved as she had before when she was first in the other group home. She tried to live up to the expectations of the program and the staff, pleasing them, she thought, through being compliant and trying to do everything right.

*I was . . . I was trying to keep my nose clean, do everything else I'm suppose to do, you know, and people . . . I didn't get in trouble. Everybody liked me. I liked them. So there was never a problem.*

She felt this way even though, at the same time, she had a sense that the staff were not placing high demands on her.

> *Hm . . . I guess, what really hm . . . touched me was the fact that they, you know, don't have these high expectations of me and if they did, at least they didn't tell me, like 'TY works, you know, we're expecting you to do this, and this, and this', right, and if they - if they did, they kept it to themselves, where as I didn't know . . .*

It did seem to her that they were encouraging her to think about how she was with others and how she presented herself to them. This was particularly evident when she was reflecting on her relationship with DC and how he encouraged her to think for herself through his joking manner with her.

> *. . . there was time where I might have been upset or, you know, or even this . . . where you . . . just the fact of me being independent, you know, it's very difficult for me to adjust to so DC was always, like, I'd knock on the door and say: 'DC, can I come in?' He says, 'Well, can you?' And he - he'd make me think a lot for myself, you know, and not answer for me, you know, or, he'd make me lis . . . I would ask questions but then answer them myself.*

She liked this demand for her to think for herself because she thought it was good for her. When I asked her what there was about this that she thought was good for her she offered the following.

> *'Cause I was sort of taking everything so seriously, you know like, I was very hard on myself, like a . . . hm . . . if I was to do, like, something wrong, let's just say like, spilled a glass of milk or something, I would be very hard on myself, like, 'I knew it was there, you know, why did I do it' and I'd be freaked out about it, where as DC he'd say, 'TY, TY, just take a cloth and wipe it up'. You know, no big deal, you know.*

So, the evening when she came in to the group home and sat down to talk with DC was like a continuation of a situation in which she felt she was doing well. She was in control and because of her 'people-pleasing' behaviours she was also in control of the 'yes' and 'no' in her life. Then after a casual request, DC without changing any of his attitude or behaviours towards her said 'no'. She immediately assumed that because someone she liked, who she considered to be

like family, had said no to her that she had done something wrong and had failed to please him. In the past, when she had said no it had meant that she was not happy with someone else. So when she heard 'no' it meant that someone else was not happy with her. The meaning she made came from the meaning she had given to the action of saying no in a close relationship. She was therefore stunned and confused by DC's action as she said and assumed that it meant she had done something wrong.

> *Hm . . . I couldn't believe that DC, you know, would actually say no to me, you know, like, it was . . . it was very mind boggling, like, I remember standing there and feeling like . . . why, you know, like, what did I do, you know, for him to say no, you know.*

**An Interpretation of JY's Interpretation**

When TC first began the intervention with JY he began, in his words, with comments about her being 'stupid' to be on the roof. For JY, as we have seen, this kind of reaction fit within her expectations of staff. However, when he shifted in the conversation and said that he didn't want to fill out a report because of the possible future implications and began to talk about her being a parent in the future, he seemed to have touched a particular cord with JY. She experienced this as different than what she had experienced before and more in line with her dreams. She interpreted this shift as representing his concern for her, a caring, and a sign that he was on her side. Her reflections suggest some possible reasons why she may have made such an interpretation of his actions.

As JY indicated in the early part of our first conversation, her dream was to be on her own.

> *Hum . . . I . . . I wanted to be on my own. I didn't want anybody over me. I like to be in myself, doing what I wanted to do.*

She wanted to be like her brother and sister with a family of her own. She saw this as a way of escaping from her mother's control and influence,

> *. . . I guess with living at home and having an older brother and an older sister who had, like, their own lives and my mother comparing me*

*to them and saying 'I don't like you doing these things because I don't want you to turn out like them and leave me' . . . I kind of wanted to be my sister or my brother so she couldn't tell me not to do these things. I'd be living in my own house with my kid and my family and everything else and . . . I guess . . . it just passed on to me.*

She was unhappy living with her mother because of the constant conflict between them.

*I got in . . . my mother and me got in a lot of (P) verbal and physical fights.*

For a while she tried living with her sister but that didn't work out because control over her and her life was still an issue.

*I was living with my sister for a while and things didn't go very well with her either 'cause I figured, she wasn't my mother, she couldn't control me, so I was staying out and stuff like that, but she had kids. So I couldn't walk in the house at 4 o'clock in the morning. So I'd stay out all night which pissed her off even more (laugh). So eventually I moved into a group home.*

At the age of fifteen she ended up living in care, living in three different group homes, where she experienced people (staff) as being more in control of her and her life than she wanted, especially once she was pregnant. She experienced them as trying to influence her to be a certain way or to do what they thought was the right thing to do much as her family had before them.

*. . . when I first found out I was pregnant, it was . . . I wasn't sure if I was gonna keep it or not. . . . Hm . . . I was hounded by many people . . . living and working in the house.*

*. . . living in a group home I . . . and being pregnant, and being young, I was getting lectured on hm . . . you have to do everything right, you have to prove that you are perfect.*

With time JY decided that she wanted to have the baby, even though it seemed to her that this was contrary to the advice she was getting from the majority of staff.

*I decided I was gonna keep it and stuff like that and I didn't want any problems from, well . . . a lot of people before that were telling me*

*that I shouldn't have the baby . . . like, a lot of the other staff were . . . this is the way that they saw it and this is the way that they thought I should see it.*

In essence, JY found herself in a situation where she was pregnant, which fitted with her fantasy of living on her own with her own family, being in control of her own life. Yet here too she was in a situation where the adult/authorities in her life were trying to tell her what to do, to control her. This was the situation she was in the night that she and the two other girls went up on the roof next door.

When TC came in to talk with her, even though she felt she had developed a special relationship with him, she was simply expecting another lecture. So at first when she listened to him she interpreted his words according to her previous experience and expectations. As she said,

*It was routine. Hm . . . I don't know . . . he walked in, he said what he had to say. I listened. I didn't say very much. Hm . . . I guess what I was thinking was a . . . pretty much like, 'Ok, the moment's over, you caught us, you brought us in, your job is done, go away'.*

When TC said he didn't want to write up a report it was different than her expectations and caught her attention.

*So, when he said, like, 'I don't want to write up the report 'cause your pregnant and it's . . . it's gonna affect things' and stuff like that, it started me thinking, like, 'Ok, what have I done?'*

Here was a staff who was a member of a group which was constantly telling her to be perfect, suggesting that he was going to break the rules for her because she was pregnant and he was worried about her future as a mother.

*. . . I don't know. it's just . . . it's like, he broke the rules, kind of . . .by not being strict about the rules.*

*I had talked to him before about what I was gonna do and stuff like that and it was, like, he didn't want . . . it was like, 'I don't want to write the report because I don't want to cause problems for you. . . . you - you were the product of the problem, and the report . . . but I don't want to write it up 'cause I don't want to cause problems for you.'*

She interpreted this as showing concern for her.

> *[His action showed] . . . well concern for me and the baby . . .worry because of . . . me doing it again, and the circumstances under which I did it.*

This was contrary to her previous experiences of staff yet in some way consistent with her experience of him.

> *. . . I guess maybe he listened the most, he didn't voice . . . he voices his opinion He was also understanding of my view.*

Perhaps because he was breaking the rules which she interpreted as being out of concern for her and her future with her baby which was congruent with her dreams, she allowed herself to think about what he was saying. Perhaps she had felt alone in her struggle to attain this dream and now, suddenly, she was experiencing someone as being on her side in this struggle. Whatever the reason, the result was that she too began to think about her responsibility in being a parent and her need to be more concerned about her child.

> *I guess 'cause, being that he said, he didn't want to write the report . . . 'cause I was pregnant, made me think . . . Ok, I am pregnant, I'm gonna to have a baby, I have to start taking care of myself because it's not just myself anymore.*
>
> *. . . it was the first time anybody actually, like, really said . . . it - it's not just you . . .*

This seemed to allow her to experience a sense of caring for her baby just as she was experiencing being cared for through TC's actions.

> *Hm . . . (P) I guess in a way it made me happy because . . . I guess . . . it gave me some - somebody to care for.*

It would seem then that in interpreting TC's intervention as reflecting caring and concern JY had reached back in to her previous history and experiences of being a youth with a dream which she experienced as being constantly opposed by others in authority. In this case, however, she found that TC's actions were not congruent with her experiences but congruent with her dream. This allowed

her to see the action as concern and the words to mean that she too had to be concerned about someone else, her baby. Because she heard caring, she was able to listen.

**An Interpretation of LY's Interpretation**

LY had had previous experiences of getting close to someone, of allowing herself to care for them, and this had taught her that it was best to hold people distant to avoid getting hurt as the following reflections reveal.

> *I figured that, if I got close to someone, they'd hurt me . . . or reject me, or . . . if they got to know me they wouldn't like who I was.*
>
> *Hm . . . I've been hurt a lot . . . rejected a lot by . . . oouf, everyone. So I figured, you know, if they knew I was sensitive . . . they'd be like, 'Oh, well, let's do this, LY, you know, I'm sure she'll get over it, you know, she's not gonna say nothing about it, you know?' And that will make them, I guess it will influence them more to, you know, walk all over me. . .*

She protected herself by trying to hide her feelings from others.

> *I was a very sensitive person but a lot of times I don't act like it . . . I will . . . I won't let - I won't let people knowing, like, who I really am . . . because hm . . . if they do then it will be easier for them to hurt me... you know? So basically I would - I always put on a big show . . . 'I'm so tough, you know? You can't screw around with me, you know? Nobody can hurt me, you know?'*
>
> *And a . . . I guess it was around the time where I was just, like, I'm gonna act tough so that they can't, they won't, you know, if they do, or if they think of it they'll know that I'm gonna, you know, I'll do something about it, you know . . .*

She would push people away if she felt them getting close to her or her to them.

> *I always hid what I would, like, who I really was, you know. I didn't let nobody know me. You know. I push everyone . . . if they got too close, I really, 'back off!' you know . . . And, oh god, I used to do things to push them off for no reason, bitch at them and yell at them, you know . . . if they got too close I'd . . . start being really rude and . . . like, just like push . . . hm . . . started arguing with them and I says, like, 'oh, I don't want to be around her,' you know, and I'll leave.*

Afterwards she would regret having pushed them away.

> *Hm . . . I'd think, yeah, I did the right thing and then after I'd be, like, 'what am I doing, am I stupid, I need people.' You know. And then I'd hate myself, cry a lot, freak out, go down to my room, just blast my music and bawl my eyes out.*

Because she always wanted to be close to someone even though her previous experiences had been painful..

> *I - I wanted it. I wanted to - I wanted to find someone, like, a friend, someone that - that's there for me, you know, if . . . if I'm in a real bad mood one day and I yell at them, they're not gonna take it to heart, or . . . if I just need someone to sit in the room with me and just - just sit there and not say anything, you know, just let me cry. And they'd be there, you know?*
>
> *But it seems like every time I thought I found someone they hurt me so I just push them all away. . . It's safer not to let anybody near your heart.*

This description bears similarities to how she described what family meant to her.

> *I guess like . . . family is like, belonging to someone, you know? Having someone that's not gonna judge you or hate you because, you know, you didn't clean you're room or . . . you know, you stayed out a little bit too late, someone that's gonna to listen to you and not judge you or give you advice, just listen. You know . . . And - and is accepting of you and with all your behaviours and they, like, don't hate you, say you freak out one night and start yelling and then . . . they're not gonna sit there and say 'don't talk to me' and you know, they're still there, like, 'look I understand how you felt,' you know?*

As LY told her story of the intervention with JC and the drive to her new group home similar imagery appeared. For example, in the early part of our discussions she described JC as

> *. . . like a sister, because . . .we . . . you know, we figured we looked alike, and . . . really close. She was like family to me.*

In spite of her predisposition towards self-protection through distancing, she had allowed herself to become close with JC.

*I never - I never really thought of JC as my staff. She was more of . . . there. You know, if I'm upset, JC's there. If I need something, JC's there. You know, if I need a big hug, JC will be there . . .*

LY, as was shown earlier, interpreted her transfer to another program as meaning rejection and a lack of caring. So during the transfer she behaved in a way that she had learned to behave when she was afraid of being hurt by people who were close to her. She tried to hide her feelings and not let JC see how important this was or how it was affecting her.

*I figured . . . I guess I felt more, if I'd talked, I'd choke. You know, like, right, I really, I couldn't talk, I wanted to, I want . . . I know I wanted to, you know, beg her, 'turn around, turn around, don't - don't do this to me, you know, I don't deserve this,' but I think if I opened my mouth I would have . . . probably stopped breathing and started choking. . . So I just kind of stayed quiet and looked out the window, all the while making sure my hair was hiding my face so she couldn't see me crying.*

Yet as they got closer to the new group home LY began to be overpowered by the sense of loss and losing that she was experiencing. She tried one last attempt to undo the situation by revealing her feelings to JC.

*Yeah, we came to the exit number, 'whoa, this is really happening, there's no way she's gonna turn around', you know? I felt like, maybe if I beg her, you know, I let her see that I'm upset, that I don't want this to happen, maybe she'll change her mind, and we'll go back home.*

*And I just kind of look at her and it was like, you know, there's this big tears coming down my face, 'don't do this to me, you know, it's not fair. I don't deserve this,' you know, 'take me home.' I felt, you know, if she sees I'm upset, she sees a . . . I regret everything I did, maybe they'll give me another chance.*

I asked LY where she got the idea that revealing her feelings like this would make any difference and again she related this to her experiences within her family.

*Hm . . . with my mom, she'd a . . . freak out, you know, start yelling and I'd just start crying and she would like, oh, 'I'm so sorry', you know.*

LY seems to have related her experience of this intervention of being moved to another group home to her previous experiences of letting others close to her and of being hurt in a caring relationship. When she was faced with the prospect of moving to another group home she reached back in to her previous history and interpreted this intervention as a big rejection. Her use of family imagery may suggest that she was experiencing this loss in reference to her loss, or absence, of the kind of family and relationships she secretly wanted to have.

**Comment**

The effective child and youth care worker is constantly trying to understand why it is that a youth is reacting in a particular manner; to interpret and give meaning to the youth's actions. Part of the process involves the child and youth care worker attempting to understand how a youth has given a particular meaning to an event. It is only through such an understanding of the other that the helper might begin to approach an awareness of the experiencing of the other. Through the investigation of how the other has constructed the meaning of their experiences, we open up the possibility of understanding better the experience and actions of the other.

The foregoing represents my interpretation of why the youth interpreted the interventions as they did. While I have tried to be as true as possible to the intentions of the youth, it is like all interpretations effected by the prejudices of the interpreter.

As Chessick (1990) stated in discussing the value of hermeneutics for psychiatric practice, "the 'knowledge' which arises from such an investigation is not some sort of immutable truth or essence, but is context dependent and a function of the 'prejudices' which the investigator brings to the investigation." ( p. 271) Some readers will find that the foregoing interpretations 'ring true' for them.

Others reading the interpretations based on the material presented to this point may believe that other interpretations are possible.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## Interpretations: Metathemes of Effectiveness

### 5A: Reflections on Why the Interventions Worked

One of my reasons for pursuing this dissertation and inquiry was to attempt to develop a better understanding of the effective child and youth care intervention. In this section, having listened to, discussed, read, reviewed, reflected on, analyzed, and interpreted the stories of these interventions, I will identify some of the characteristics of them or the child and youth care workers who enacted them, which I believe contributed to their being effective or meaningful for the youth who experienced them.

As previously discussed, such an interpretation cannot be separated from the meaning which the interpreter gives to the text and to the experience of interpretation. I cannot, therefore, separate my own knowledge, values, beliefs, history, experience, and meaning making process from my analysis. Nor do I want to separate myself from this interpretation, for ultimately my goal is to integrate my old way of understanding with the new understanding which has developed for me during this process of study and inquiry.

The following are some of my reflections on, or interpretations of, elements which may have been instrumental in making these interventions effective or meaningful. They are the metathemes (Tesch, 1987) which, as discussed in the section on working with the data, emerged during the course of this inquiry. Some of these are similar to the elements of process identified in the sections on the actions of the child and youth care worker and the actions of the youth. Others are different than but inherent in those elements of process. While no brief phrase can capture the essence of the metathemes expressed in this section, Table 3 offers a summary for the reader's reference.

| *Metathemes of Effectiveness from the Child and Youth Care Intervention* |
|---|
| **A caring for and commitment to youth** |
| **Self-confidence and responsibility** |
| **A general and immediate awareness of self** |
| **Awareness of context** |
| **A way of understanding/knowing the individual youth** |
| **Experiences of familiarity in the relationship** |
| **A way of connecting which fits for the youth** |
| **Preparation for the intervention** |
| **An intervention related to the immediate** |
| **An intervention which 'responsibilizes'** |
| **An intervention which challenges** |
| **Continuity in the experience of relationship** |

Table 3: Metathemes of effectiveness

## A Caring for, and Commitment to, Youth

Ultimately, the practice of Child and Youth Care is about caring for, and about, youth and their families (Austin & Halpin, 1989; Fewster, 1990a; Krueger, 1991; Krueger & Powell, 1990; Maier, 1987b; Ricks, 1992; Weiner, 1991). Ideally, it is the child and youth care workers caring for, and about, youth which motivates and guides their interactions with youth.

While, as Ricks (1992) has pointed out, there seems to be a lack of agreement in the field about what constitutes caring, there does seem to be an agreement among the child and youth care workers she surveyed about some elements of caring. In presenting a model for caring relationships within caring professions, she argues that what distinguishes the professional caring relationship

". . . is the presence of three critical factors: (1) the condition of need, (2) an attitude of concern, and (3) intentional involvement in intervention. (p. 52)

Austin and Halpin (1987) have stated that effective child and youth care workers are caring people. The three staff who participated in this inquiry each demonstrated a deep sense of caring for troubled children in general and these youth in particular. They demonstrated throughout our conversations a concern for the youth, their current situations, and their possible futures. As we saw in TC's intervention with JY he was concerned about her health, the health of her child, the danger for the girls who were on the roof and, as he said, he was "scared for them", for what could happen for them by running on the roof. DC was able to express his caring for youth who suffer or feel pain and he described how he experienced TY as being a youth with great sadness. JY demonstrated her caring for LY through making sure that it was she who accompanied LY on her move to the other group home and her conflict about the move.

More important than any individual quote from our conversations, however, is the sense of caring and concern which permeated our conversations about their work with the youth. These staff wanted things to work out for these youth. They seemed to want for these youth to have a better experience of themselves and, in general, to have a better future. As Ricks (1992) pointed out following her survey of child and youth care workers, caring in child and youth care takes "the form of action. . . . it is something that happens in relation to other." (p. 51) These child and youth care workers demonstrated through action in relation to the youth, that they cared about them.

The power of this caring in facilitating the effectiveness of the interventions cannot be determined but, equally, it should not be undervalued. If these staff did not have this sense of caring, would their interventions have shown the same sensitivity for the youth? If this caring was not present would the youth have felt the same sense of relationship with the staff prior to the intervention? The youth in this inquiry did not explicitly say that this caring was important. However, in

defining their relationship with staff they used words frequently associated with caring relationships; listening, not judging, being there, appreciating their point of view and understanding. As JY said in trying to describe what she was feeling from TC in their interaction, "I think it was - it was more a concern." It is this caring and concern, I believe, which provided a foundation for the relationships which developed between the youth and the child and youth care workers. Over time, this caring and concern seemed to show signs of being reciprocal as was evidenced by the youth's use of family terms to define their relationships with staff.

**Self-confidence and a Willingness to Take Responsibility**

There is a 'risk' involved every time a child and youth care worker makes the decision to intervene. There is the risk of rejection, the risk of not helping or even being harmful, the risk of starting something that cannot be finished, and the risk of provoking some reaction in a youth which goes beyond the worker's ability to cope. That this risk exists was evidenced by the statements made by the child and youth care workers that "a lot of this is guess work" and hypothesis testing. The fact that the child and youth care worker's were able or willing to take the risk of intervening as they did (e.g., TC's willingness to 'break the rules'), seems to have been related to the level of confidence and security with their abilities which they expressed throughout the discussions. As JC said,

> *I had enough confidence to think that it could have made a difference.*

These were child and youth care workers who had a considerable amount of experience with a variety of youth in a number of different situations. As DC said when talking about how he knew what to do with TY,

> *When you're twenty years on the floor, or fifteen years to twenty, I mean, you look and . . . it's as if those experiences have integrated themselves.*

Their confidence in themselves was also expressed throughout the discussions in reference to their knowing that they could and would take responsibility for whatever came of the intervention. DC perhaps expressed this most clearly when he talked about his responsibility for following up with his intervention.

> *I'm suppose to be the mature adult and the professional.*

TC talked about his responsibility to follow-up with his interventions so as to not leave the situation hanging for the next staff who would come in. He reflected on the fact that he knew that he would not be at work the next day and therefore had to reach some kind of closure with JY that same evening.

> *. . . if I'm here in the evening, I'm not here the next day. So . . . there's a - there's responsibility on my part actually, to put some closure on what just took place. And a . . . that was - that was a . . . I think, a need, that right away, that had to be done, for me anyway, because I'm the one who's sort of involved.*

JC demonstrated her responsibility by following through with her commitment to visit LY after she had moved to the new group home, something which she felt as an obligation. .

> *I almost felt that - I was gonna say that I owed her that but I didn't look at it that way. Hm . . . that she needed - that it was important for me, that it was important for her.*

Throughout our discussions, they showed a willingness to be reflective, self-critical, and open to discussions of alternative perceptions which also speaks to a confidence in themselves as professionals (Schon, 1983), as the following quote from TC reveals.

> *Although you - you're saying to yourself, 'well you . . . you came and checked. You just didn't walk out of the house on the - on the shift change. You did a check so you caught it' but you get - you . . . your self evaluation becomes smaller as you . . . 'how come I didn't anticipate it?'*

Throughout our discussions, the child and youth care workers interviewed all expressed and demonstrated this element of critical reflectiveness. This was shown through how they considered their interventions both at the time of the intervention and afterwards as we discussed them. As we have seen, DC talked about his discussions with other staff about his interventions, TC talked about team-discussions, and JC talked about the ethics of the transfer of LY. In all of these discussions, I experienced a sense that they, as child and youth care workers, were reflecting on their work as a way of understanding it and their role in it. They were prepared to accept challenges from me and use these challenges to think about their work. In fact, throughout this inquiry the child and youth care workers frequently expressed an appreciation of the opportunity to look so intensely at what they had done.

This willingness to be critical, to take responsibility, to consider alternatives, and even to discuss their work in the depth represented by this inquiry speak well, I believe, to the confidence these child and youth care workers had in their abilities. In reading this section, TC commented.

> *That's it. For sure. Without the confidence, nothing is going to happen. You're not going to take the risks. That's, ah, a difference, you know, between new workers and those, ah, those with more experience.*

**A General and Immediate Awareness of Self**

The literature in child and youth care suggests more and more that an active self-awareness is a necessary characteristic of effective child and youth care workers (Fewster, 1990b; Ricks, 1989, 1993). This is not always an easy task. Caught up in the action of the moment, "even the act of being in touch with personal experience may demand a supreme effort" (Fewster, 1990b, p. 28). Each of these child and youth care workers showed a highly developed awareness of their own self and their self-reactions throughout the process of intervening. They also showed an ability to monitor, control, and use self in their relationship-of-intervention with youth.

TC, for example, talked about his 'personalizing' reaction to JY and was able to connect that to his own issues as a parent and his values around parenting and life in general.

> *I was scared for her. I was scared for all of them but I - I probably . . . personalised at her because being pregnant, I guess.*
>
> *I tried to relate to her, or I was relating to her, I'm not sure, as a parent. I was a parent, now she was a parent or a future parent.*

When he talked about the danger involved in JY being on the roof and what might happen if she should fall, he referred to the fact that for him there could be nothing more tragic than the death of a child. It was this, he suggested in one of our discussions, that propelled his initial anger-reaction towards her.

At the same time he was able to relate his immediate frustration and anger reaction to the fact that it was the end of his shift and he had believed that things had settled down for the night. He was annoyed at the disruption to the normal routine. When he went outside to look for the girls, he was aware of feeling heightened anxiety because of not knowing what he would encounter. He remembers being cautious because of the possibility that the girls might have arranged to meet some other youth outside the group home and he might encounter a larger situation than he was expecting. When he didn't encounter such a situation, he was aware of the lessening of this anxiety.

JC, in discussing her ride with LY, talked about her discomfort with the process and her anxiety around going to a place that neither of them knew. She was also aware of her sympathy for LY's circumstances. Once they arrived in the new group home and the staff there asked to talk to her without LY, she was aware of her feelings of anger towards them for excluding LY from this process. She realized how this was connected to her feelings for LY's current situation and her beliefs about good child and youth care practice. She was especially aware of the feelings she had about moving LY.

> *I mean, I felt guilty. I felt guilty that, that she was there and that a . . . I didn't think she should have been there. I felt guilty around the timing.*
>
> *I was angry at doing something that hm . . . that I had to do, but I was also angry that I was doing something that I wasn't comfortable with and I wasn't as vocal then. I was sort of feeling like I could have said more. I could have expressed it earlier.*

The importance of such an active awareness of self would seem to be illustrated by the shift to understanding which both TC and JY felt during the process of intervention. Afterwards, when reflecting on the intervention, TC associated this shift with his awareness that he was dealing with his own frustrations and that as a result "communication wasn't happening" with JY. As he became aware of his own business and was able to set it aside, both he and JY experienced the shift to understanding. This would suggest that had he not been so aware this shift may not have occurred and the intervention would not have continued down its eventually successful path. As DC was to say when reflecting on the importance of monitoring one's self throughout the process of intervention, a child and youth care worker needs to be,

> *. . . always re-questioning yourself . . . what are you doing? . . . and who are you doing it for? Who's needs are you responding to? . . . . What are you looking for here? . . . Asking yourself what are you doing and who are you doing it for?*
>
> *One indicator is you get very emotional . . . You get frustrated or irritated and this suggests that something is being played out here that is not related to the kid . . . The intensity will give you a clue.*

In this last sentence we see also the importance of the child and youth care worker knowing self well enough to be able to know when a reaction is more extreme than the norm of one's experiencing. As Ricks (1989, p. 35) said,

> "To know about the client requires being aware of self since the client only exists out of one's self-experience of the other person. Therefore when one is not "being" aware of one's self one is not there for the client."

If one is not there for the youth, then one can only be there for oneself and thus cannot be meeting the needs of the youth (Garfat, 1994c). An actively self-aware child and youth care worker, one who is able to separate her own issues from those of the child and able to monitor her own reactivity, is one who will be able to set aside her own issues in order to be with the youth as the youth's needs dictate. These workers were clearly able to make that distinction.

**Awareness of the Importance and Relevance of Context**

Context and the worker's awareness of context was an important consideration in the interventions described here as we saw in section 4C: The actions of the child and youth care workers. DC, in reflecting on his intervention, made constant reference to the context of his work and the context of his particular intervention with TY. He referred frequently to the mandate of the program in terms of social policy, the differences in the role of child and youth care worker and therapist, the influence of his own personal history, the dynamic of his relationship with TY, his own values and beliefs, his previous experiences, TY's personal history, his understanding of both her and youth in care in general, his relationship with the rest of the team, and other elements of context which might have had an influence on his intervention. The following shows some of his concern.

> *The helping relationship is always defined by the context. I work within the Youth Protection Act and I work within social services. And I work with adolescents. That defines my helping relationship . . . I'm also working with a clientele that hasn't necessarily chosen to be helped. Your actions must be done according to what the context is.*
>
> *. . . you got to look at the context is. That's what the process is about, the context, Youth Protection, social services, got to keep it within that context and [remember] that you're not there to do an in-depth therapy. But the program there was autonomy. I mean, it always comes that - to that, institutionalization, and autonomy, and dependence.*
>
> *We lose tune. People forget the context. I mean, a helping relationship in this context in [group home], you got to look what it is. It's not me consulting a psychologist and asking for help. You've got kids*

*becoming stigmatized. What the hell you want with my help? I don't want it. And, it's how do you work with that in respecting these people.*

*When you're on the floor hey, you have to look at the - the specificity of the action of the child care worker in the context. It is, he's a team worker. He has to administer his energies and econ-econ . . . do economies because he's got eight clients, he's got two phases to work with. He's got a . . . I would say an aggregate situation, because you can't even talk about a group there, but you've got an aggregate situation and a certain minimal norm to keep. So you've got to manage that, those energies.*

TC also referred frequently to elements of context such as JY's previous history with men, the way she used her sister as a role model, his previous experiences with her, the other youth in the program, the time of the intervention, his previous discussions with the team, the relationship of his intervention to the general orientation of the team towards JY, his values about parents and parenting, and the current issues in his personal life among others.

JC was conscious of the meaning LY would give to the intervention, the politics of the transfer of LY which had been controversial, the impact of LY's history on how she was interpreting the transfer, her own feelings about the move, and the importance of their relationship in facilitating the transfer.

The child and youth care worker intervenes both in, and into, a specific context. When all the possible variables of context which might have an influence are considered, it seems that each specific intervention is an intervention in and into a different context than the one which proceeded it. The context of TC discussing being a parent with JY would have been different if he were not wrestling with similar issues in his own life or if his values around team consistency had been different and he was not willing to 'break the rules' of the unit around report writing.

The awareness of context would seem to be an important consideration for all child and youth care workers in their interventions with youth in care and it would seem that that awareness would need to be both general (e.g., the social

mandate) as well as specific (e.g., a male child and youth care worker saying no to a young woman who had been abused by trusted males in her early life). The interventions described here fit the context into which they were enacted. Equally so, it could be said that context was created by the intervention.

Each youth, as we have seen, experienced the intervention as unreal, incongruent with their expectations. In a sense the intervention created a new context into which the youth and the child and youth care worker were drawn. In this differing context the youth may have experienced herself as different in relation to her current way of structuring her experience of herself in relation to others. Thus, the child and youth care workers were co-creators of the therapeutic context (Maier, 1994; Peterson, 1988). The child and youth care worker not only intervenes in a context but also facilitates a new context by intervening.

**A Way of Understanding/Knowing the Individual Youth**

In order to be effective, staff need to have a way of organizing so that their experiences make sense (Durrant, 1993; Garfat & Newcomen, 1992; Guttmann, 1991; Jones, 1985a, 1985b; Peters & Mandle, 1991; Ricks & Garfat, 1989). This is true of their experiences in general and their experiences of the individual youth in particular.

As the previous chapters have shown, the staff involved in this inquiry had a way of understanding the youth with whom they were intervening. Sometimes, as we have seen, this showed up as a general understanding of the youth as it did when DC talked about how he understood TY, her history of relationships, and her dynamic of acting within the group home. This way of understanding her allowed him to develop an approach to working with her.

> *You have to understand my whole - my whole approach with TY, was attitudes. Offer an attitude that will get her away from where she's coming from. She was coming from (the previous group home). She had been there four years, bible reading and into their own education system a . . . and it seems, and I'm going back to what she was describing as her experience. Like, she's coming into a group home and I - there's one thing about the girl, is that, she is not that innocent, or that naive . . . she isn't.*

*She's got her own little character structure in there. Ok? And that's how - that's the facade of it. Ggetting to the bottom of things with her is a very difficult thing; was a difficult thing at the beginning. She came in as- asking. And the attitude I wanted to adopt, anyway, was . . . first stop saying sorry. I always made jokes with her on that: 'Oh you're sorry? Are you really? Oh, you're not crying are you? You don't seem very sorry.' Ok? I wanted to break down . . . well, first of all a . . . she has to come - come across some - somehow, somewhere else, ok? I had her sex - I -maybe I had her sexually abused scenario, the background, from her? A . . . in some ways, her self-esteem, her evaluation of herself, that what always seem to come across: 'I'm really not that good. I'm not really this. I'm not really that'. That's how it's played out. I want to break that, or - I'm - not break it but to swing it a little, 'hey, you can relate differently,' you know. And don't forget, [this group home] is a . . . for, 'get away from conformity, get away from the institutionalization, which is dependence' ok? Get away from all of this.' So the only intervention, in a sense, with her was, change attitudes. Present an attitude, which is different.*

Whether or not his way of understanding her was accurate or 'correct' we will never know. What is important to note is that, because he had a way of understanding her and his knowing of her, he was able to construct an intervention which fit with that understanding.

TY's conversations suggest that his way of knowing her also fit for her understanding of herself and how she was enacting her own dynamic in the group home.

*. . . just the fact of me being independent, you know, it's very difficult for me to adjust to. So DC was always, like, I'd knock on the door and say, 'DC, can I come in? He says: 'Well, can you?' And he - he'd make me think a lot for myself, you know, and not answer for me, you know, or he'd make me lis . . . I would ask questions but then answer them myself.*

Thus there seems to have been a fit between his understanding and hers.

TC showed that he had a way of understanding JY when he went in to talk to her about being on the roof.

*That's it . . . well, that's the only . . . that was the first time . . . that . . . wh - where it was brought in . . . was about . . . that was the first time, I think, I connected with her around . . . because . . . when I was talking about falling and hurting herself and everything else like that . . . was no big deal and her . . . and her own self respect at that point, hm . . . was very low, her self esteem was low but her self respect, the way she dressed, the baggies, the dirtiest clothes, the way she ate, hm . . . was . . . she had no respect for herself, hygiene was down, everything. Hm . . . but soon as she got pregnant, it started to change. So it was something more important to her.*

*I saw her very angry, with men in particular, hm . . . She was more concerned around me being a father, my children and things like that. That was her. She wanted to validate me as . . . not as a single man but as a - as a parent.*

*I think when I connected with her, I was always respecting her pregnancy. Her as a pregnant . . . as a mother, rather then as a... non-functioning child.*

*Well I felt there, two things that were happening, First of all, I think ah . . . the part that played out that she lost quickly was that, 'you had a relationship with somebody else' and, I mean, she quickly tried to connect with this person and she would just shut off. So a sense of connecting with somebody else. It was lost very quickly and ah . . . she was really - she felt very alone at that point, so she wasn't going to connect, she wasn't going to be loved by someone who had . . . So that was . . . a loss, I saw there. But on the other side a sense . . . a sense, of being, for her hm . . . to be pregnant and I think using her sister, older sister who had two babies alone that was raising them ah . . . even though, they - they argued at times there's . . . I think she sensed a lot of respect towards her sister and how . . . And no matter what anyone said about how difficult it was, her sister was . . . succeeding in her own way, getting her education. It didn't matter what anyone said her sister was the role model.*

This respect for how he understood her seems to be what guided his interactions with her around her being pregnant. This way of understanding seemed to fit for JY because, as she said,

*I guess with living at home and having an older brother and an older sister who had, like, their own lives and my mother comparing me to them and saying 'I don't like you doing these things because I don't want you to turn out like them and leave me' . . . I kind of wanted to be my sister or my brother so she couldn't tell me not to do these things. I'd be living in my own house with my kid and my family and everything else.*

*He [TC] was also understanding of my view. Well, he was - he was, like, he was really understanding and stuff like that.*

At other times the child and youth care worker's way of understanding was directed to the more specific. It was JC's understanding of how LY might experience the transfer, for example, which prompted her to decide to drive LY herself.

*I thought a lot about her dad 'cause her dad was really the only key player, in Montreal at the time. A . . . and I think I expected him to kick in at that time and sort of offer her, you know, this ideal support that he hadn't offered her in the past. So, I mean, it wasn't going to happen. I think LY expected that too, cause I know in the end she got hurt. But a . . . so I thought about that. I thought about how her dad was going to react to the move a . . . I knew how he was gonna to react actually, but I had thought how he was going to support her, or would he support her. And he didn't. And that was really hard for her and I - I . . . you know, I sort of felt for her loneliness 'cause I knew it was going to be a difficult moment for her, moving, you know, but she wasn't gonna to have her family and she certainly wasn't gonna have her friends because as close as LY thought these friends were to her, hm . . . my feeling was, they're not gonna be there, you know, because of the distance and, sort of, life goes on.*

*I felt it - I felt for her. I felt she was going to be very lonely, that every thing had been taken away. She didn't have anyone. I mean, the unit wasn't going to be there anymore, her friends weren't there, hm . . . they were her family.*

And JY's assessment of how LY would react seemed to be accurate as we saw in LY's statement about how she felt at the time of the transfer. First she described her reaction to watching her friend leave after he had come to say good-bye.

*. . . it killed me. Just ripped at me, like, you know. Ahhh, look, I'm not gonna see him ever again. . . It just killed me, you know? So, I gave him a big hug and whatever and he said: 'Yeah, I'm gonna call you,' and I was like, 'maybe you shouldn't.' And, you know, 'I'll call you.' I watched him get in his car and boum! I think that's when it really hit me (laugh). I was watching him drive away and I was like, 'Oh no, this is really happening, I'm not gonna see him again'.*

She had similar feelings about ending her relationship with JC.

> *Yeah. I never - I never really thought of JC as my staff. She was more of . . . there. You know, if I'm upset, JC's there. If I need something, JC's there. You know, if I need a big hug JC will be there and then, it's like, she's not gonna be there anymore.*

Finally, LY even confirmed JC's understanding that she would be the best person to accompany LY on this move.

> *. . . it was good that it was her that did it and not B or L or, you know, or someone else, because I wasn't close to them like I was to JC.*

It does seem that each of the child and youth care workers had a way of understanding the youth which allowed them to act in a manner consistent with that understanding. The interventions enacted, therefore, were situated in the child and youth care workers way of knowing the youth, inside their assessment and experience. As TC said, "it's - it's a sense of knowing". It may have been this understanding which allowed the child and youth care workers to be confident enough to take the risk of intervening in the manner which they did.

**Experiences of Intimate Familiarity in the Relationship**

Fewster (1990b) has suggested that, "the personalized relationship continues to be the greatest challenge in professional child and youth care." (p. 26) He refers to the difficulty that child and youth care workers sometimes seem to have in developing a relationship with a youth in which the experience of intimacy and connectedness can be present, while appropriate boundaries of self and other are maintained. Yet the establishment and maintenance of a caring relationship with youth is seen as central to child and youth care practice (Hare, 1992; Krueger, 1988). It is through the establishment of relationships that the child and youth care worker is able to influence youths behaviour (Brendtro, 1969). In the absence of relationship, the child and youth care workers ability to affect a youth's values, beliefs, attitudes, or behaviours is seen as extremely limited. It has been suggested that effective child and youth care relationships develop because of the

openness and respect which the helper displays in relation to the youth (Fewster, 1990b), attentive interpersonal communication (Brendtro, 1969), commitment and compassion (Krueger, 1988), being present with the youth (Fewster, 1990a; Ricks, 1989), and through doing things together. I also suggested earlier that the relationship between the youth and the child and youth care workers in this inquiry may have developed because of the youth's need or because of a staff pre-disposition. Why or how these relationships developed may be of less importance than the fact that the relationships were possessed of a particular characteristic. I have come to think of that characteristic as 'intimate familiarity'

For most of us, the most intimate or familiar relationships we have are within the context of our families. Frequently, when we want to describe a relationship with someone as possessing special characteristics of closeness or intimacy, we use the reference of family. As an adult, for example, we might say that someone is like a daughter or son to us. The youth who participated in this inquiry all discussed their relationship with the child and youth care worker as being special to them, as we saw in the section on pre-interventive relationships. In describing this special feeling they too reached for the reference of family. As TY said, " . . . from a child's perspective . . . the people who are trying to help you are like your family in a sense." In general, then, the youth saw the team of child and youth care workers as family-like. As LY suggested this sense of intimate familiarity helps to generate a sense of belonging, "she's a . . . w - we joked around a lot. We, you know, talked a lot. . . . She - she was like family . . . family is like belonging to someone, you know?" That the relationship was intimately familiar was also shown through their constant references, as we have seen, to the ease with which they felt they could talk with these staff. They were comfortable in a way one normally only finds in relationships of intimate familiarity.

For the staff the reference of family to define their relationship with the youth did not arise. Nor did the issue of this relationship being somehow more

special than their relationships with other youth in the program. Yet all three staff expressed a deep connection and understanding of the issues or life situation with which the youth were dealing. In effect, the staff were able to identify intimately with the issues because they had an intimate familiarity with those issues.

> ***DC about TY:*** *I sensed the . . . I don't know why because there's a process. In process I mean, my own projection, my own identification and I couldn't make it out a little too much, a . . . I relate to all the people that suffer. . . I project or whatever. I sensed a lot of suffering in this girl and a . . . I sensed some sadness. I sensed a lot of unresolved situations and I felt that by being at [the group home] she was like in nowhere land. Ok? And for her the future in the . . . what she thought of herself like . . . these are the feelings I had.*

> ***TC about JY:*** *And I looked at . . . what was my need and one of the things I needed to be was a healthy . . . a healthier human being, in that I would be in a healthier relationship. Because . . . I - I related that to my children. I would like to be a healthy . . . a healthy parent . . . And being respectful, having respect for myself . . . was a big piece. That I was . . . I would be in a relationship that would be respectful of me. And that ties in you see . . . if you look at what I was with JY. I was probably relating to her. . . more with advise from one parent to another, rather then as a child care worker chasing a little kid around the house.*

> ***JC about LY:*** *Well I never really thought about it. I mean, it just, it came so natural, you know, the . . . it wasn't something that I worked out, I mean, the interests were there, a . . . personalities were similar . . . you know, I could identify a lot of . . . her behaviour, you know, I saw a lot of that in myself. I was . . . pretty connected with her, hm . . . I don't know, there's - there's a definite bond there.*

Perhaps in this sense of being able to relate to the youth and especially to the issues or life situations of the youth, there is a clue as to why the youth felt a sense of intimate familiarity with the staff - because the staff experienced an intimate familiarity with the issue. Perhaps because of the staff's intimate familiarity with the issue or situation, the youth experienced this as intimacy with the staff and were pre-disposed to allow this intervention to be meaningful for them.

In child and youth care we read frequent references to the need to develop relationships with the youth in order to create the context for an effective intervention (Austin & Halpin, 1989; Brendtro, 1969; Fewster, 1990a; Krueger, 1988; Maier, 1979b, 1988). The experiences of these youth and these staff suggest that the staff's ability to relate intimately with the issues or situation of the youth may be an important variable in creating for the youth an experience of being comfortable in relationship.

**A Way of Connecting Which Fits for the Youth**

As mentioned previously, the child and youth care literature is full of references to the need for child and youth care workers be connected with the youth at the time of intervention in order for the intervention to be effective (Fewster, 1990a, 1990b; Guttmann, 1991; Krueger, 1991; 1994; Parry, 1985). It was obvious to me as we discussed the interventions that a connection did exist at the time these interventions were enacted.

It has been suggested (Oles, 1991) that one way to enhance the development of connectedness is through a matching of the therapeutic style of the worker to the youth. Ole's recommendations regarding the matching of the worker's actions to the cognitive development of the youth,and Maier's (1987b) recommendations regarding matching acts of intervention to general developmental levels suggest that part of the answer to how this connectedness develops may lay in how the worker is with the youth; specifically, how the worker acts in relationship with the youth.

While trying to understand this connectedness between the youth and the child and youth care worker I was reminded of the works of Bandler and Grindler (Bandler & Grindler, 1975; Grindler & Bandler, 1976) in which they advocate that each of us has a preferred modality for processing our experience of our lives. Some of us they argue, are primarily auditory, others are primarily visual, and others kinesthetic. Effective therapy, they argued further, began when the preferred modality of the therapist was matched with the preferred modality of the

client (Bandler, Grindler & Satir, 1976). I did notice in reviewing the transcripts of our discussions a possible matching which existed between the youth and the child and youth care workers, which is evidenced in what they say and in the language they use to say it. In a detailed, line by line review of the transcripts, however, I was struck not by how these dyads related to each other through the modalities advocated by Bandler and Grindler but rather in a way that was reminiscent of earlier thoughts about how people relate to, or connect with, each other. Essentially, DC and TY tended to be very cognitive, JC and LY tended to be action-oriented, and TC and JY seem to have connected around the experience of 'being'. Thus, while each dyad was distinctly different, there were similarities between the members of each dyad. This is not to suggest that any of the participants was limited to relating in the way that I have indicated. As we saw earlier in the sections on the actions of the youth and the actions of the child and youth care workers, thinking, doing, and issues of being were a focus for each of them at one point or another. Rather, in reviewing the transcripts and audio tapes, I noticed that these seemed to be their primary, not their only, ways of relating to each other. This section explores some of those characteristics.

**DC and TY**. DC, when asked in the early stages of our interviews to tell me about himself, described himself very much as a thinker.

> *I was reflective . . . thinking . . . There is pleasure in thinking so ah, I was a thinker then too . . . always looking for new ideas. I'm an idea person. I always explore, ah, try to look for new angles, for, ah, for new ways, for new ways of perceiving things . . . and ah, of reconnecting them.*

He demonstrated in our conversations that he was analytical, a person who was always considering how things fit together, as we see in his early analysis of the situation with TY.

> *Ok, so . . . I could see her. I could see it all go. So, she came in and then we chatted. I had logs to do and I know she was stretching the time because this was not the first night she's coming in. And it's not the first night she's gonna ask for a second cigarette. It was a - it was - it was*

*the only opportunity to talk in the group home a lot. She had a program where, basically, she was with her boyfriend all the time. If I remember correctly, she'd come in at ten, ten fifteen, ten thirty. Necessarily, she wanted a one to one chat, too. And I didn't mind that. I could give the opportunity and sometimes you re-formalize it, that's how normally you start. But . . . I wanted to ruffle her because I know she couldn't take no. She had . . . because her facade is all that, to make herself, so, she'd made herself so perfect, so naive, so polite, so unangr . . . so, how do you say (P), pleasing, so pleasing, Ok? That, normally, the return to that is, a person can't say no. And that the first thing is she can't accept the no. She want's to avoid the no. This is how I'm reading it.*

*She was a little bit like that. It was a way of keeping us away from her. To me, my feeling is she is covering up something here.*

He also thinks about the world he lives in as it relates to his work and the situation of youth in today's society.

*I believe that in the adult relationship with the youth . . . is in the giving. . . and I do a lot of that at work, okay? because the relationship between the adult and the youth in our society was almost corrupt, almost, well, uh . . . there's been a radical change in the last twenty years. We came up with the pill, emancipation, fragmentation of the family, the institutionalization of the state assuming more and more, uh, responsibility for mono-parental families .*

*Institutions are not there to help kids, okay? They are there to perpetuate themselves and to self serve themselves and to maintain peace within the establishment.*

TY was also always thinking, especially about how to manage the situations so that she would not hear the 'no's' she wanted to avoid. In what she said and how she said it, this characteristic of being analytical, thinking, was present. We see this in the following passage where she shares some of how she thought about herself in relation to others, especially adults.

*I was just fed up, because, I always felt like an outsider from a lot of the adolescents and . . . Hm . . . I guess because . . . of my background, of the background that I came from and everything I've acted out on, you know, and where I ended up, you know, being the person I am today, you know, a lot of people put me as a role model to adolescents. So they expected a lot more from me other then other adolescents.*

It showed up as well when she described her reaction to DC saying no to her.

> *I thought DC, like, I had to think twice. I asked him: 'DC are you serious?' And he said: 'Yes.' But he has this smile on his face, you know, like he was joking, that, I stood there and I was like . . . 'no, DC, you're joking right?' And he said: 'No, TY, I'm not. No, you cannot have another cigarette.' And I remember staying there thinking: Oh my god, you know, he said no, but . . . I don't know . . . you know, like . . . I was feeling like: Oh my . . . and I didn't take it too too much to heart but it did - it did do something, like, it did. Hm . . . I couldn't believe that DC, you know, would actually say no to me, you know. It was . . . it was very mind boggling, like, I remember standing there and feeling like . . . why? you know, like, what did I do, you know, for him to say no, you know? and hm . . . I didn't even think, you know, that a . . . he was nice to give me one. I didn't even think of that at the time, you know, but if I look back I could realize, but at the time I didn't think, you know. Like, there was a time when I just thought, why is he saying no to me, you know. Like, what did I do, you know?*
>
> *Hm . . . actually, I didn't say anything to DC, I just, after saying, 'are you serious?' and he said, 'yes TY, I'm serious, you cannot have a cigarette', I was like, ok . . . you know, like, (laugh) I'm going to bed now, and he said, 'ok, goodnight,' you know, and everybody's saying goodnight, and I'm, like, walking upstairs, feeling like . . . what did I do? you know, like, and I remember laying in bed. I must have lied there for 15 minutes trying to think, you know, and a . . . like, why DC could have said no, you know, and a . . . hm . . . I guess . . . I don't think I ever really came to a conclusion. I must have thought about it a . . . I guess after time, you know, like, if I look back now, I probably would think, you know, 'cause of the time or something or . . . just because he was gracious to give me one, you know.*

**JC and LY**. JC and TY were both 'do-ers', individuals for whom it was easier to do, to take action, than it was to talk, for example, about what was going on or their feelings about it. JC talked about this when I commented on the fact that she seemed to be action-oriented and asked her to talk about this part of her work. She referenced her current work and some discussions she had had with other staff members.

> *I think, sometimes I ask myself, hm . . . I wonder why, cause my relationships with the kids, and it - it came up last night at work - are - are*

*very different hm . . . with each kid. Hm . . . and there's - there's a particular boy on the unit and - and he and I are quite connected and it seems to be coming out that BY is always going to JC and that a . . . so I think - so, it sort of stopped me. The staff sort of said, you know, it's very different. The relationship with him is very different than it was a few months ago or than it is with the other kids. So sometimes I think I ask myself why . . . why is it different with some as opposed to others? . . . not too much why do I do what I do 'cause I know why, I mean, I do it because I'm comfortable.*

*. . . like, one of the questions was, you know, 'why do you drive kids? Why do you help this kid with this chore?' That was the question being asked by the staff and my response was, 'I don't see it as help. For me it's - it's - it's a relaxing thing, for me to clean up a kitchen. I do it with my eyes closed, hm . . . and it's relaxing. It's not work for me. So for me it's a time to stand there, putting away dishes together and I have fun with him, doing it. That's been a nice moment. . . '*

*. . . why I do it? I mean, it feels good and - and the kid's enjoying it, so why not? The kid is putting away a food order . . . he gets paid for it but I don't see it as him not earning his money It has nothing to do with it. For me it's . . . spending time with him. Doing some- something together which is very comfortable . . .*

*And that's why - BY and I don't sit and talk. I mean, we sit in front of the computer together 'cause he's teaching me stuff on the computer but we're always doing and that seems to be our relationship. It's very comfortable and that's when he, you know, I mean, there's a conversation going on but we're not sitting looking at each other, talking. We can - or we can talk together but only when we do together. But to sit down and have, like a . . . quote, unquote, counselling session, isn't something that's likely to happen. It's not as effective. We - I've tried, but a . . . BY's not as comfortable and I guess I'm not as comfortable. So it - it just works, when we're doing something.*

*. . . but I - but I am a doer. My comfort level around that is a lot higher.*

This kinesthetic orientation also showed up in the language she used when she talked about her intervention with LY when they were loading LY's boxes into the car and JC felt the need for a break.

*. . . we were moving them [the boxes] from her room to the car outside and her room is downstairs and there's, like, a very narrow hallway, hm . . . barely enough room for the two of us to pass each other.*

*There was no dialogue through the whole move, hm . . . or through moving the boxes.*

*I remember it was hot. We were both exhausted, I mean, those boxes were bigger then both of us, hm . . . it was interesting, we laughed at the end but at the time that we were moving them, we didn't move them together. We moved them on our own. Yeah, one at a time and on our own. And we passed each other in the hallway every time, loading the car, but didn't talk.*

*And then I stopped her. Hm . . . she was coming down and I was exhausted, both physically and emotionally, so, I stopped her and I said, 'Just as hard,' and she didn't say anything. And we went outside and had a cigarette. Hm . . . we didn't talk and a . . . we sort of put the cigarette out. I think at that point she was asking me, 'do we have to go?' and we finished off packing the boxes and then she went out to the - we both went out to the car where she bumped into her friends.*

I asked JC why she had stopped the process.

*(P) Well, I think we both needed a break. It was hard, hm . . . I don't think I was - making to have any - any dialogue with her I don't think. I was making to, like, sort of re-connect and . . . I guess it was just, it was a little overwhelming, you know. She was going one way, I was going another way. She had her thoughts, I had mine. Hm . . . so it was probably the best thing to do and it was just so strange because . . . so, I guess, based on my own uncomfortableness, it was like, 'stop it.'*

*Hm . . . and it changed it. The perspective is a bit different, a little bit. I mean, we were finished in terms of the moving, the actual moving, but there's a little bit of calmness after that 'cause I think we were both pretty charged, but not saying much.. . . it's just kind of taking . . . I think, taking time out, hm . . . from the situation and probably just sitting together, you know, made a difference, as opposed to walking back and forth, the passing each other in the hallway, so, just sitting there, we sort of had our head down and a . . . we were both having a cigarette and a . . . looking across the street watching the people. No one really said anything, but I could feel in me and I could feel it in her, that we were both sort of like settling down.*

When she was talking about her ambivalence about taking LY to the new group home and thinking about the possibility of taking her back, she also used the language of action.

*Yes, yes. I'd definitely committed myself. I think I also had a little bit of a sense that . . . if it was wrong, I would - I would change it.*

*'Cause I was starting to panic and - and then I - I - I started to think about decisions that I'd made in my life and, and that I am a pretty solid decision maker. They're not always the right ones but I am pretty comfortable making them. So I started to take the exit and then I said, 'no, the other way', and then I said,'what I'm gonna do I can change it. I mean, it - it - it's not a dead end. I'm not gonna fall off the cliff.' And then I started to calm down. If this is really not ok, cause I knew I was going to be connected with her day program and I knew it was all sort of nebulous and on trial anyway, because of their criteria. So then I thought, if it's really crazy, hm . . . it's not over. It's not like I've fallen off the face of the world. And - and that helped me to say, 'ok well, we'll go from here.'*

LY also was not a talker but more of a do-er, action-oriented in her way of operating in the world.

*I've been hurt a lot . . . rejected a lot by . . . ouf, everyone. So I figured, you know, if they knew I was sensitive . . . they'd be like, 'oh, well, let's do this, LY, you know, I'll sure get over it, you know. She's not gonna say nothing about it, you know?' And, that will make them, I guess it will influence them more to, you know, walk all over me. And a . . . I guess it was around the time where I was just, like, I'm gonna act tough so that they can't, they won't, you know, if they do or if they think of it they'll know that I'm gonna, you know, I'll do something about it, you know . . .*

*I don't like to be, you know, out of control, like, lose control, and have somebody more . . . over me, you know, like, more powerful and more in control. I was influenced very easily. Like, the friends I had . . . were hm . . . you know, real big, bad, tough people and . . . while I was with them, I felt no one could touch me, so, you know, my insides. It was like . . . but you can't see it, you know, they think I'm tough too and they make me feel more stronger you know.*

*I guess I was hiding myself. I always hid what I would, like, who I really was, you know. I didn't let nobody know me, you know. I pushed everyone . . . if they got too close, I really 'back off!' you know. And, oh god, I use to do things to push them off for no reason, bitch at them and yell at them, you know. Hm . . . if they get too close I'd . . . start being really rude and . . . like, just like push . . . hm . . . started arguing with them, and I says, like, 'oh, I don't want to be around her', you know, and I'll leave.*

This kinesthetic language and orientation also showed up in her use of physical language in the metaphor she used to describe her experience of the new group home.

> *Hm . . . sort of like, hm . . . like, you know, in a circus? Like in a circus, there is the lions and they have them in cages and this is the ring guy, or whatever, the . . . not the ring guy, carries a ring. Hm . . . like a lion's master. You know, with the whip (mouth noise). 'Do this,' (mouth noise) you know? I felt like . . . anything they want me to do, you know, 'stay in your room, do this, do that', and I'd have to do it and I couldn't get out of it.*

**TC and JY**. The similarities in how TC and JY related to the world around them are not so obvious at first. Yet as I re-read the transcripts I got the sense that these were two people who moved freely between the various aspects of their experiences. TC, for example, would at one moment be talking about his feelings experience and with the next breath he would be describing his experience in more physical, analytical, or visual terms.

> *And by this point you've sort of made a semi conclusion, maybe they've just left. If it's an AWOL, it's clear cut and there's gonna be . . . there's no chance of an encounter or physical confrontation. So then a . . . to limit myself I wanted to check around the outside, mostly look at the bus stop. The bus stop is right in front of the group home. Maybe they're at the bus stop. And on occasion I caught . . . them sitting at the bus stop, they're just sitting there at the bus stop and I've talked them back. So just upon going to the front house, there is JY, right there in the front. Looking just totally helpless (laugh) the word 'dead to right' is right you know, there she was . . . (laugh) She's there, right . . . and she's got this grin on her face. Course I'm not grinning. I'm not grinning but I'm not yelling and screaming but I'm angry. I'm a . . . showing displeasure. They're there. Well now I'm heightened. I'm back up again because I see one, but I don't see the other two. So now I'm preparing myself for another intervention, what is going to actually happen with them, well, her. I see her but not them. So I'm semi-heightened. I'm n-n . . . but I'm - I'm saying, 'Ok, where are they? Is she on her way back?' So in a way I'm relieved because she separated herself from the other two. She could be returning. I don't know where the other two are. So I'm preparing myself and I guess you always look in relationship to who are they communicating in the - in the . . . who are they communicating with in the community? So*

*I know the girls but I don't know who they're with. Ok? And I know, I think one . . . in fact one of the girls was associating with some dangerous people in the community. So . . . I'm - I'm sort of . . . I'm watching - I'm watching that situation. Er . . . so as I get to JY, I notice the other two girls scrambling in the - in the - in the back alley. Now I'm - I'm . . . now I'm relaxed. I'm annoyed. I'm annoyed. I'm at annoyed. I know what's going on and that I know where they are, they're running around the outside of the house. I can see all the pieces.*

JY also moved freely between the aspects of her experiencing. While she, like TC, focused a lot on what she was feeling, she would also move quickly to talking about her thinking or doing.

*I guess, 'cause being that he said he didn't want to write the report . . . cause I was pregnant, made me think . . . 'Ok, I am pregnant, I'm gonna to have a baby. I have to start taking care of myself because it's not just myself anymore.' Before that I'd . . . I'd run the streets, and I wouldn't care. Ok . . . I get hit by a car, well, I get hit by a car. Like, it's no big thing to me. And . . . no, a lot of people before that were telling me that I shouldn't have the baby. So, so . . . it was the first time anybody actually, like, really said . . . 'it - it's not just you . . .you have - you have somebody else to care for now so smarten up.' Hm . . .(P) I guess in a way it made me happy because . . . I guess . . . it gave me some - somebody to care for but in a way it scared me because I liked being . . . free.*

TC and JY both, while focusing heavily on their emotional experiences, moved freely in describing their experiences between the affective, the cognitive, the analytical, and the visual. More important, however, may be the focus on being which seemed to be important to both of them at the time. I remember TC talking about himself.

*I'm looking at myself at that time, is I started to put a value on . . . a sense of being. Ok? For myself. You reach 40 you start examining your life and your needs. And I looked at . . . what was my need and one of the things I needed to be was a healthy . . . a healthier human being.*

He also talked about his thoughts about her being a parent, being responsible, and being healthy. He also spoke of the struggle which was going on in the group home when youth were pregnant.

*A lot of discussion is always going around. When is a child a baby yet? Abortion or no abortion versus being able to keep it or not being able to keep it. This is - it's, I mean, anytime you have that . . . a pregnant child, that's what it is, it's abortion or no abortion. If it's no abortion, can you keep it or you can't keep it.*

It was when he spoke directly of the encounter with JY that night that his concern with being became most evident.

*Me . . . the night we had . . . in the room there talking about the baby. Ah, her . . . the baby was a being . . . a viable entity. You know, rather then being something that's gonna be aborted, ok?*

*To be is . . .the . . . a sense of being. That's what took place, a sense of being. I didn't see that before . . . There is a sense of being. Hm . . . and, I guess there's the sense of validation but the sense of being. And the abortion issue for her is not the issue of a . . . of taking an unwanted child or not being ready to raise a child, not the difficulty but . . . her sense of being.*

As we have seen, JY was concerned with being; being on her own, being responsible for herself, being a parent in spite of the opposition she felt.

*I . . . I wanted to be on my own. I didn't want anybody over me. I like to be in myself, doing what I wanted to do hum . . .*

*I guess with living at home and having an older brother and an older sister who had, like, their own lives and my mother comparing me to them and saying 'I don't like you doing these things because I don't want you to turn out like them and leave me' . . . I kind of wanted to be my sister or my brother so she couldn't tell me not to do these things. I'd be living in my own house with my kid and my family and everything else.*

That night two people who were each concerned with 'being' encountered one another and in that encounter the presence of another 'being' was felt, the human being which JY was carrying. In that encounter it seemed to take life, to be. As JY said,

*. . . it was the first time anybody, actually, like, really said . . .' it - it's not just you . . .you have - you have somebody else to care for now.'*

I notice how she used the expression "really said it" as if she had heard it before but it had never been real. That night in that encounter, being and caring came together for her.

Thinking, doing, being. Around these the youth and the child and youth care workers connected. There were, I know, other factors involved and some of them will be discussed in the next section. But this question of style, or focus, cannot be ignored in this work. How we are with youth, as Durrant (1993) has said, can make a difference in how they are with us. Perhaps because of this matching the youth were more available for the interventions to be effective. For each of them this was a basic characteristic. These were not strategies adopted for the moment. In these encounters, the child and youth care workers were present as themselves, as who they are. It reflects, perhaps, their basic orientation to life and living. As JC said when discussing differences between team members.

> *We all offer something different, you know, as workers. I mean, we - we - we - none of us work the same. We don't all have, you know, the same styles.*

**Preparation for the Intervention**

Earlier, in section 4A: The participants and their interventions, I suggested that interventions could be classified in terms of being either reactive or proactive. The interventions described in this inquiry could, for the most part, be described as proactive. In them, each child and youth care worker had some opportunity, albeit very different in each case, to prepare for the enactment of the intervention.

DC had perhaps the greatest time to prepare, to "create the situation" as he said; preparing his analysis, checking his hypothesis, and waiting for the opportunity to occur where he could "shake her up a little." In essence this 'preparation' had been going on since TY had entered the group home as he thought about her, her dynamic, her history, and her future goal of independent living. Thus, when the moment arrived when TY asked for another cigarette and

she was sufficiently off-guard, he was prepared to proactively intervene into her interpersonal dynamic.

In one sense, JC also had a great deal of time to prepare to move LY to her new group home. However, so much time had passed (six months) that she had stopped thinking about it as she did not think it was actually going to happen.

> *Well, I hadn't forgotten about it but I didn't think it was happening. So I was sort of, and the direction with LY was changing a little bit because she was a little more involved in the program, and her and I were connecting more. We were spending more time talking. So pieces of information about her and what was going on out there was coming out. Hm . . . so I - I . . . I mean, I knew it was in the background but I almost took for granted that it wasn't gonna happen, given the amount of time.*

On the one hand, then, she had what appears to be a lot of time to prepare. Even though she had set the idea aside, she was still given four days notice. On the other hand, four days is not a lot of time to prepare for such a major life situation intervention. None-the-less she did have time to think about how she would transport LY, when she would do it, and how LY was going to react. She also had time to prepare herself for the intervention after she had been notified that LY was to move.

> *Well, he phoned me on the Monday and told me, the Monday or the Tuesday, 'cause I don't work Monday, and told everyone else in the team meeting on Wednesday and LY was informed that night, on Wednesday, that she'd be moving on Friday.*
>
> *Well . . . a couple of decisions had to be made, hm . . . she had to leave on the weekend, so Friday, Saturday or Sunday hm . . . I played around with the idea of having her moved on a Sunday. Like let her have the weekend and move on the Sunday but I guess what took priority was I wanted to move her on my schedule and I didn't work on the weekend. I worked on Friday.*
>
> *. . . Hm, well, I was a little apprehensive about her, what her reaction was going to be 'cause I hadn't seen LY since she had been told on the Wednesday, so we had had no contact. I mean, my reaction was, like, I hadn't responded to hers and then I came in Friday. There was a note on the wall to let her sleep in. I was gonna wake her up and go. Hm . . . so, I was nervous with . . . in terms of what was going ahead, hm . . . I kind of knew a little bit about LY's personality so I was sort of trying to*

*guess what - what she was gonna be like or what to expect when I woke her.*

Perhaps the least time for preparation was afforded to TC who, after getting the girls into the house, moved quickly to have a discussion with JY. Even he, however, used his time to prepare. He talked, for example, about thinking about how to approach her which was different than how he had approached the other two girls, thinking about what he had learned from his previous experiences with her and how that learning would be applied in this situation, and about dealing with his own feelings as he went up the stairs to talk with her.

*. . . well, you've expressed them, you've already expressed them. It's not like . . . they're not gone. They've been expressed but I would imagine that I wasn't as annoyed as when I first . . . don't forget the process of moving upstairs, ok, 'no you get over here!' I mean, I'm venting at this time.*

This preparation time allowed the child and youth care workers to reflect about how they might intervene, what the possible outcomes of differing approaches might be, and how they might deal with different outcomes. This preparation may have helped to feed their sense of security and their willingness to take the necessary risk of intervening.

When we compare this preparation time to the time when TC first encountered JY and the other girls outside, we have a sense of the difference. When he first encountered the girls outside his immediate concern was in being able to control the situation, gain the knowledge necessary to take that control and move the interaction between himself and the girls in to the group home where he would be more in control.

*. . . if there's three kids outside, and you, you don't anticipate it, there's a . . . usually we anticipate, ok? Missing that, you are off balance, you're off balance, ok. You're talking, not used to being off balance so you're off balance in that, you didn't anticipate.*

*So,you try to be very calm about it. 'Ho no, come on, you girls get in the house. I want you . . . ' but not anger in my voice 'till . . . like I was terse . . . to show . . . to - to establish some control over it.*

His interventions in moving the youths in to the group home and establishing control over the situation were effective in terms of his goal, controlling the situation and getting the evening routine back on track. It was different from the other interventions described here in terms of the focus of the intervention which was for the benefit of the child and youth care worker as opposed to the benefit of the youth and in terms of the opportunity available for preparation.

Both proactive and reactive interventions can obviously be effective and both could be for the benefit of the youth or the child and youth care worker, but it is possible that effectiveness for the youth is greater when the child and youth care worker has time to reflect on, and prepare for, possible interventions. While the proactivity-reactivity dimension does not relate only to the amount of time involved for preparation, it is one of the important factors. A worker could be in a position of having to react, for example, when two youth are having an argument and yet still take adequate time to prepare. I would suggest that the more a worker is able to take the time to prepare, the less reactive and more proactive her intervention might be. The time for preparation allows a child and youth care worker the time to consider immediate interventions in terms of long term goals, check-in with self, consider possible intervention outcomes, reference the necessary theory, position herself appropriately, and undertake other activities which might increase the likelihood of a successful intervention. When a worker only has the time to react, the danger is that she might be reacting to her own business rather than the business of the youth. The more proactive the intervention, the more likely it is to fit with the current dynamics of the youth and their relationship to the youth's life situation.

Had the child and youth care workers not taken the opportunities available to them to prepare themselves, the outcome could conceivably been quite different.

**Intervention is Related to the Immediate Circumstances**

None of the child and youth care workers expected their intervention to make a dramatic difference in the future life of the youth. They all approached the intervention as an opportunity to stimulate thinking in the present or to plant a little seed which may over time be useful to the youth. DC in reflecting on the perceived importance of his intervention summed it up like this.

> *. . . this is - this is a fragment of her life, ok? It's an élan. It's an élan'. I don't know how you say it, it's a . . . a push? And a . . . It's a little kick start, it's very - and a little later on in her life it's gonna be a small opportunity in her life, and a . . . so, I always try to bring it back to that.*

In all three cases the goal of the intervention was simple. There was no child and youth care worker who expressed any thought that their intervention would result in a profound impact on the youth. For DC, the goal with TY was to "shake her up a bit." For JC, the goal with LY was to "make her a little more comfortable." For TC, the goal was equally simple, "to connect with her." While in all three cases the immediate intervention was related to a long term objective, the goal of the immediate intervention was straight forward.

These interventions, which were defined by all the youth as being effective and meaningful were all related to 'now', to the present action or way of being in the world which was occurring. In TY's case, the saying of no was related to an immediate request. In JY's case, her actions in the present were the focus of the discussion - her going on the roof and what that meant in terms of immediate responsibility as a young woman wanting to gain support in her desire to have her baby. For LY, the intervention of transfer was related to how she was acting in her life at the present time.

What was happening now, in the immediate, in the present, was the focus of the intervention. The interventions were not related to distant past behaviours.

In essence, these interventions were congruent with the child and youth care goal of utilizing daily life events for therapeutic purposes as discussed in the section on the history of child and youth care intervention.

**An Intervention which 'Responsibilizes'**

In all three cases the intervention was related to the issue of personal responsibility. For TY, it was responsibility for how she positioned herself in her relationships. For JY it was responsibility for her health and safety and that of the child she was carrying. For LY it was responsibility for the outcome of her actions in how she was choosing to life her life at the present time.

In French child and youth care, there exists the concept of *responsibiliser*. Frequently, English child and youth care workers translate this to mean *to responsibilize* the youth by which is meant to *make a child take responsible for* their actions. The verb responsibiliser, however, reaches beyond that and refers to an awareness that each of us is an active participant in creating the context within which we find ourselves and our experiencing of, and actions in, that context. It refers to the process of bringing to awareness this understanding.

In each of the interventions described here the youth began to reflect on their current situation and their role in it's creation. TY, for example, began to think about how she had put herself on a pedestal.

> *I don't have to be on a ten foot pedestal and think everything is fine and dandy, you know, and pretend that I'm always flying and deny how I'm feeling. Whereas when DC said no to me, it was like . . . all my feelings just . . . I had to deal with them. And I was . . . (laugh) I - I felt, Oh, my goodness, it was so - so clear, you know.*

JY had structured her experience to believe that all the staff were opposed to her plan, her dream. She was, by her own description, a 'leave-me-alone' kind of person who thought that she should be able to do whatever she wanted.

> *Just because I'm . . . I'm screwing around doesn't mean that it should affect me, you know . . . Nothing much meant . . . nothing meant much to me back then. I . . . a lot of what people said . . . didn't . . . ok . . . didn't matter.*

Prior to the intervention JY had seen adults as opposed to her because of their rules and expectations. After the intervention she began to wonder if maybe they thought this way not just because of who they were, but also because of how she was acting.

> *I guess when he said, like, the point that he didn't want to fill up the report because I was pregnant, it made me think, like, 'did I do something wrong to cause them to think that I'm not fit enough?'*

Before the experience of being transferred, JY believed that it was important to protect yourself by hiding your feelings. While she wanted to have people close to her, they just seemed to hurt her.

> *. . . it seems like every time I thought I found someone, they hurt me. So I just pushed them all away. It's safer not to let anybody near your heart.*

After the intervention she began to realize that if she was different, people might be different with her.

> *I find now, it's . . . I guess you can't - you can't always, you know, have your guard up. You gotta let it down sometime because . . . if you don't, you're not gonna ever get loved.*

These interventions, with these youth, helped them each to see the role they were playing in how people were with them and they began to accept that they had a role to play in creating the situations within which they found themselves. They began to be aware that they were active participants in the creation of their own experiences.

**An Intervention Which Challenges**

As the section 4D: The actions of the youth has shown, each of the youth experienced a sense of shock and/or surprise at the time of the intervention. For TC it was shock because no one had ever said no to her "at least not for a long time" and especially not in the program where everything was going well. The following quote shows that shock as much in how she speaks as in what she says.

*Oh my god, you know, he said no, but . . . I don't know . . . you know, like . . . I was feeling like: Oh my . . . and I didn't take it too too much to heart but it did - it did do something, like, it did.*

She worked hard to be in control of the yes and no in her life and this sudden no, coming as it did with no apparent provocation, upset how she had things organized in her head. It was incongruent with how she understood her relationship with DC. As we have seen, she could have understood it if he was saying no to someone else but not to her.

For JY there was the sense of surprise that this intervention, TC's words about being a parent and not writing up a report, were different than what she was experiencing from the other staff. As she said,

*Oh, they have, like, a little book of rules and the way they're suppose to respond . . . and a . . . I don't know, it's just . . . it's like he broke the rules, kind of . . .*

As we have seen, she was surprised because instead of responding within her expectations of staff, his response fit within her dreams and fantasies. She felt he was seeing things from her point of view.

For LY there was a sense of disbelief that the transfer to another group home was actually happening and that it was JC who was doing it.

*This isn't happening. This isn't happening. This is a joke. They can't do this to me, you know? . . . Rejection. Rejection. Rejection..*

For each youth this surprise seemed to represent a challenge to how they had their expectations and experience organized. It created a sense of disequilibrium in their normal experiencing in the context of their relationships with staff. It seems to have been this 'differentness' which stimulated them to start thinking about themselves and themselves in relationship with others. This stimulation to start thinking about themselves in relationship to other, specifically the particular staff, allowed them to make linkages to thinking about themselves in relationship to others in general. As TY said, it helped her to realize that, "I

don't have to always please people to - to get what I want." The child and youth care intervention-relationship seems to have acted as a microcosm of their relationships in general.

There is a practice belief in child and youth care that youth tend to re-enact in the care situation the dynamics and issues that face them in their out-of-care lives, especially those with their family. This is a logical extension of the belief that people act out in therapy the dynamics and problems that face them in life outside therapy (Yalom, 1989). We saw a hint of this in LY's comment about why she finally chose to reveal her feelings to JC as they were driving to the new group home. I asked her why she thought that telling JC how she was feeling might make a difference.

> *Hm . . . with my mom, she'd a . . . freak out, you know, start yelling and I'd just start crying and she would like, 'oh, I'm so sorry, you know.'*

While it may, or may not, be true that youth act out in care the issues from their pre-care environments, it does seem to be the case that there may be a generalization from the in-care situation to the out-of-care context. This would validate the thinking that what occurs in the group home, for example, can have an impact on life out-of-care, even if life within the family out-of-care does not change. Each of these youth expressed that the intervention had made a difference in how they experienced themselves and how they were in out-of-care situations. Near the end of our conversations when I asked LY what difference this whole intervention had made for her, she offered the following.

> *I have a best friend now and I . . . I've had good friends before but I've never had someone that I could trust. And like, completely, you know, and she won't stab me in the back. So, I have her now and for a long time, she'd never seen the sensitive side of me. I was still that big, bad girl, you know. Only recently, actually, I freaked out one night, not too long ago, maybe three weeks ago, and she was there for me. I cried on the phone and . . . bawled my eyes out on my birthday. I freaked out too and she was there, you know.*

Is it necessary to create this challenge, this sense of shock or disequilibrium, in order for an intervention to be effective? Perhaps not. However, As TC was to say during one of our conversations,

> *The disequilibrium caused by an effective intervention is a challenge to the child's dysfunctional posturing.*

In the cases discussed here this challenge was seemingly of importance in stimulating for the youth the thinking which resulted in the meaning they gave to their experience of intervention over time. It would appear that the entry into the youth's construction of themselves in the immediate context in a way that was incongruent with their expectations, challenged their patterns of thinking sufficiently to allow other ways of thinking to begin to emerge. The shock of this challenge would appear to have been instrumental in causing a disruption which opened the opportunity for them to connect this immediate, in-care, experience to their ways of relating to others in their out of care living.

**Continuity in the Experience of Relationship After the Intervention**

After the interventions were completed the youth continued to have an experience of the child and youth care worker which was congruent with their experience of the worker prior to the intervention. LY was most eloquent when she spoke of JC continuing to visit her after she had transferred to the new group home. What was interesting to note was that in describing JC when she came to visit, she not only referred to the fact that she kept her promise, which speaks perhaps to the need for congruence between what the worker promises to do and actually does, but she also spoke of how JC knew her and how she was with her. This speaks, I think, to her experiencing of JC and herself with JC as congruent after the intervention. They continued to do things together just as they had before the transfer occurred.

> *And a . . . we used to, you know, screw around. Go through the mall. Do things. Go sit down by the water and just talk, you know, and I was like, I could tell her 'it's not going good here' or 'it's going good.' She'd listen. She'd listen.*

> *She said she'd come back and she did. She came back and . . . it was like, 'oh she came back. Maybe she does care about me'. And she came back and I could be my real self. And, you know, it was. like, she came back. Someone that knows me, you know?*

TY expressed the importance of this continuity in discussing why it was that she had learned from this intervention that it is okay to say no, or to hear no, in her relations with others.

> *Well, how I got that was, because DC and I, today, are still friends, even though he said no to me, you know. So, it's like, I could say no to you, you know, and we could still be friends, you know. It doesn't mean I'm gonna hate you or you gonna hate me, you know, there's still can be, like, a friendship thing there, you know?*

Child and youth care expresses a concern that there is congruence in how the youth experiences different staff and the program over time. Given that the actions of TC were incongruent with those of the other staff and that TC's action in choosing not to fill out a report was inconsistent with program expectations, it may be that continuity in the experience of relationship with individual staff may be at least as important as congruence between the youth's varying experiencing of different staff. It also hints at the possibility that staff being congruent with other staff and with program expectations may not always be desirable, especially when one considers that all three youth described their relationship with these child and youth care workers as different from their experience of relationship with the other staff in the program. For these youth their experience of congruence in their relationship with staff before and after a shocking intervention was important.

**Comment**

Often behind the study of any effective phenomenon lays the unspoken question of why it was effective. As the foregoing has demonstrated, there are many possible answers to the question. Part of the reason may also lay in the meaning that the youth makes of the intervention both as it is occurring and as she comes to reflect on it with the passage of time. Immediate meaning and the

meaning an experience comes to have through the passage of time, lived meaning, may differ significantly. As we reflect back upon our experiences we filter, forget, and distort to meet our own personal needs. We also re-frame our experiences in light of the values we come to attach to them over time as we acquire new knowledge, understandings, and experiences and use these to reflect back upon our history. As Busch (1990, p. 134) has said, lived experience lies in "what is made of what one lives through." It is something whose true meaning "we come to recognize in retrospect" as it "constitutes itself in memory."

The child who has been in care may, for example, interpret all in-care experiences as being controlling, de-personalizing, and distant. With the passage of time, the individuals may come to re-frame or give new meaning for some of these experiences as they develop a need to think of themselves as having had a positive history. As TY was to report during an exchange I had with her about the meaning of DC saying no to her, at the time of the intervention she did not see it in such a positive light as she does today. It is equally true that an individual who, at the time of being in care, interpreted their experiences as meaning that staff care for them, may with time come to interpret those same actions of the same staff as being abusive or disrespectful. The following section reports on what these interventions meant to the youth time.

## 5B: Lived Meaning: The Interventions Over Time

For each of the youth who participated in this inquiry, the intervention which they chose to discuss was considered by them to be meaningful, effective, important. As was previously shown, this was the criteria used for the selection of the intervention for discussion. As the literature on lived experience would suggest (Burch, 1990; van Manen, 1990) these interventions became meaningful for the youth with the passage of time as they had the opportunity to reflect upon them, retain that which was important and assign meaning to their memories of those experiences. Thus, the interventions acquired lived meaning. For each

youth the meaning which was made was particular to their own life. For anyone else, the same intervention would have come to have a different meaning.

As the interview discussions with these youth came to an end, I asked each of them what these interventions had come to mean to them and why they had chosen the intervention which they did when I had asked them to discuss with me an intervention which they would consider to have been effective or meaningful. This section intends to summarize, with no interpretation other than that inherent in selecting the words and phrases, their responses to these questions. It is offered here to give the reader the opportunity to reflect back on the preceding writing and interpretation before reading the implications expressed in the final chapter.

**The Meaning for TY**

When I asked TY what DC saying no meant to her, she offered the following comments.

> *What I would get from it today? Ok. Hm . . . I'm very happy with DC saying no. It made me think and realize, like I said before, that a . . . I don't have to put myself on a ten foot pedestal, you know, and a . . . it's ok, and it's good when people say no to you, you know? I mean, not with every little thing but hm . . . it also made me realize that, hey, you know, like . . . you can't have everything you want, you know. It really made me realize that I don't have to always please people to - to get what I want. I don't have to please people to say 'hey, can I have this', you know, or . . . or for them to say no to me, you know. Whereas then, too, when I was upset with DC at saying no to me, I didn't say anything, where as, if he was saying no to me now I would say: 'DC, you know, like, I really don't understand. Can you explain it to me?' And if I didn't really like what he was saying, that I would say something, you know, but . . . I think that incident really stuck out, you know, with DC, and he was the first person that really, 'cause all the other staff, haven't really said anything to me. Well, how I got that was because DC and I, today, are still friends, even though he said no to me, you know. So, it's like, I could say no to you, you know, and we could still be friends, you know. It doesn't mean I'm gonna hate you or you're gonna hate me, you know. There still can be, like, a friendship thing there.*
>
> *It - it's funny, because hm . . . I remember talking with DC about it and it's funny because sitting here today, too, makes me think and get more in tune with how he really was feeling and what I perceive of it today.*

*Whereas before, I would have thought of it and laughed and said, 'oh yeah, DC', you know. But sitting here today really made me think. I realize that, yeah, this is what I got from it and - and just putting everything together, you know.*

**The Meaning for JY**

The following are the comments made by JY when she was asked what it all meant to her now.

*I use to never think about consequences and I didn't care. I . . . a lot of what people said . . . didn't . . . ok . . . didn't matter. Hm . . . I . . . I don't remember but hm . . . I stopped screwing around a lot after that I think. I wasn't as carefree . . .Hm . . . I don't know . . . I thought about things more before I did them.*

*. . . it was the first time anybody, actually, like, really said . . . 'it - it's not just you . . . You have - you have somebody else to care for now so smarten up' and I guess after that I started smartening up.*

*I guess . . . I don't know, in a way I'm like, it's . . . if a person were to say it from another point of view, it was like . . . I'm a dreamer, and I like thinking about things and then I'll think about the way things were and if I knew they were gonna be the way they were and I could go back, then I'd change them to be the way that I want them to be. So I don't know . . . I think about a lot of things, like, that have happened in the past and that are gonna happen and . . . I find . . . because I'd never . . . thought before and . . . it . . . got me in a lot of trouble. So I figured, maybe now if I think ahead . . . then I'll be better off.*

Immediately following these comments she shifted to talk about being a parent today and some of how she is thinking about the raising of her child.

*I think, what parent . . . like . . . 'cause I know my sister is doing it right now but anyways . . . hm . . . is that when kids are younger, to a certain age, parents are more . . . not as restricted, to let the kids do this, do that, do this, do that. But then when it gets time when the kids old enough to get into drugs and alcohol and sex and everything else, then they become more refined and then the kid is used to be, the kid is used to being free and all of a sudden, one day they wake up and they're not allowed doing anything,that they were allowed to do before. So it makes thing worse and so, if you're gonna to be . . . free from the time you're born 'till, like, ten and then be restricted from ten on, you - you're screwing yourself over.*

*My brother has a son and my sister has two kids and I watch them and the things that they do. And I swear on my life, half the things they do, I - I'll never do. I know I'll probably end up doing most of them. But because I have . . . others to watch, I think about the way I'm gonna do my things.*

**The Meaning for LY**

In discussing what it all meant to her now looking back on it, LY offered the following comments.

*I don't know, I think it's . . . me and JC really never had anything, like, we never got an argument, or . . . I mean, nothing ever went wrong, or . . . it was always just, like, a steady pace, you know? And that day it . . . I guess I needed her? And, in a way, I thought she was there for me, but she wasn't..*

*She was, you know, it was her. She was taking me away, you know, and I guess that - that's something I don't think I'll ever forget 'cause I felt rejected really, by her, and hurt.*

*. . . She had to do it. She had to . . . and . . . it was good that it was her that did it, and not B or L or, you know, or someone else because I wasn't close to them like I was to JC. She was like a sister to me, you know, like a big sister, you know? It's because she knew me. She knew, like, almost everything about me. She knew what kind of books I like, who my favourite author was, what I like to do with my time.*

*She used to come up there to visit me. And a . . . we used to, you know, screw around, go through the mall, and things. Go sit down by the water and just talk, you know . . . She'd listen.*

*I know, for a . . . almost a fact, that if I ever needed to talk to someone, JC. and JC was, you know, around, I could talk to her . . . because she said she'd come back and she did. She came back, and . . . it was like, 'oh she came back. Maybe she does care about me.' And she came back and I could be my real self. And, you know, it was like, she came back, someone that knows me, you know?*

This was her final comment about having learned about the importance of expressing her feelings.

*I'll be sitting somewhere. I'll be upset about something and . . . I guess, in order for me to let go and move on, I'd have to . . . like, if it's with a guy and we break up, I have to hear it.*

*You have to say it, you know, 'it's over.' And I have to, you know, give myself that time to actually cry or punch a wall or be upset about it*

*and then, I'm like, (sigh) you know, (sigh) relax, and then I can let it go. It's good to let it out. It's good to talk.*

For each youth, just as their lived experience was individual, so was the meaning they derived over time from that experience. Perhaps in this expression of the meaning that they have given to their experiences over time, we find a part of the reason why they chose to talk about these interventions; because, over time, they came to see these interventions as important in influencing how they lived their lives in relationship to others and how they experience themselves today. These interventions made a difference in their lives.

# CHAPTER SIX

## Reflections and Implications

It is impossible to make global generalizations from a phenomenological inquiry into the experiences of such a limited number of participants. The goal of phenomenological research is not, however, to seek generalizations, but to expose the individual case. As van Manen (1990) has indicated, however, it is sometimes possible to seek the common among various participants to an experience, to search for that which might 'ring true' for others. Such statements are only an invitation to consider the possible validity of the inquiry, not an invitation to seek truth in the writing. Phenomenology does not seek truth, rather its goal is to "understand the essential nature of the experience" (Chambers. 1987, p. 5).

It is not my intention in this chapter to seek truths from this experience or to concretely generalize from the experience of this inquiry to the practice of child and youth care for all child and youth care workers with all youth in all situations. It is, however, impossible to undergo an experience such as this inquiry and not be affected by that experience. This chapter will demonstrate some of the ways in which I have been impacted and influenced by this experience. It is essentially a reflection on some the possible implications for my practice of child and youth care. It reflects how I have made meaning of this experience.

Austin and Halpin (1987, p. 37) suggested that child and youth care "has followed the precepts of a natural science model of man, with an emphasis on objectivity, causality, and documentation." They argued that the best model for understanding the nature of the interaction between youth and child and youth care worker is that offered by phenomenology. In adopting a phenomenological orientation, they go on to say, one is best positioned to meet the child in "direct perception." (p. 38) VanderVen (1994, p. 5) has said that "for years we have indicated that our field is best approached through qualitative research methods." She makes this statement because in her perception, "there is probably no field on

earth whose mission is to *tie as closely as possible to the lived experience of our client group: children, youth and families."* (p. 6) Yet the limited research that does exist in the field of child and youth care has until recently been situated primarily within the natural science model. Perhaps because of our drive to become professional or because of our history of seeing ourselves as less than other professions, we have attempted to mimic the research behaviours of other groups and so have focused on the concrete, the measurable, the quantitatively verifiable.

Child and youth care, however, while not producing a vast array of qualitative research, has attempted to expose the experience of child and youth care practice through descriptive and creative literature, through what are essentially individual case studies of the lived experience (e.g., Desjardins & Freeman, 1991; Fewster, 1990a; Freeman, 1992, 1993a, 1994; Krueger, 1987, 1990). More recently, we have begun to see the appearance of examples of qualitative research in publications dedicated to the field, such as Crockwell and Burford's (in press) study of the experiences of adolescent females' suicide attempts, Harrison's (1991) study of the youth as 'form' in institutional settings, or Eisikovits' (1991) analysis of the child and youth care worker as ethnographer. It seems that the field has begun to follow the advice of VanderVen (1994) in expressing its understanding of interactions with youth and their families through qualitative methodologies. This inquiry is situated in that emerging orientation.

In 1991, Krueger, after an extensive review, identified a number of themes which he found arose from the literature of child and youth care. Specifically, he identified "coming from your center, being there, teaming up, meeting them where they're at, interacting together, counselling on the go, creating circles of care, discovering and using self and caring for one another" as central themes of child and youth care practice as reflected in the literature to that point. (p. 77)

The interventions described in this inquiry reflect many of these themes, although not all of them. The themes of creating circles of care, or teaming up,

did not, for example, appear. The non-appearance of some of these themes may well be more a reflection of the focus of this inquiry than of the practice of child and youth care, for this inquiry was focused on a singular aspect of practice, the child and youth care intervention. Other themes similar to those identified by Krueger did appear, although in a form different than that which he chose to describe them.

The themes of being there and coming from your centre, perhaps best demonstrated through Fewster's (1990a) book, Being in Child Care, or Ricks (1989, 1993) advocacy of the need for the child and youth care worker to 'be present' in their encounters with clients, were demonstrated by the 'realness' of the child and youth care workers who were a part of this inquiry. The fact that they were themselves, that the self which was present in their encounters with the youth were the same as their everyday selves, was demonstrated in the exploration of their styles of relating with the youth they encountered.

These child and youth care workers were there; they were present as real people during their encounters with the youth. The description of the encounter between TC and JY, when her yet unborn child became a viable entity, was a very human, present experience. At this moment two persons, one a helper and the other a youth-in-care, experienced together as people, the magic of future life. People encountering people and the magnificence of human creation.

When we looked at the interventions of the child and youth care workers and the theme of 'an intervention related to the immediate circumstances' we saw that these child and youth care workers met the youth 'where they were at'. Their interventions were structured in such a manner as to be congruent with the positions (Ricks, 1989) which the youth had taken with regard their present life functioning.

In 'interacting together', the child and youth care workers took advantage of the "naturally occurring therapeutic opportunities" (Peterson, 1988) and engaged in 'counselling on the go', utilizing the opportunities offered by daily life activities

for therapeutic purposes (Bath, in press; Fox, in press; Fulcher, 1991; Guttman, 1991; Maier, 1987). When the opportunity arose, these child and youth care workers were there, ready and available to intervene in order to try to help these youth live differently in their daily lives.

The appearance of the theme of 'a general and immediate awareness of self' which also appears in the literature through the writings of Fewster (1990a, 1990b), Freeman (1992, 1993a), and Ricks (1989, 1993), is congruent with Krueger's theme of 'discovery and use of self'. While, as Fewster (1990b) has said, being aware of self can be a difficult task during the activity of intervening, these workers demonstrated that the knowing, understanding, and utilization of self in the encounter with youth is an important consideration.

The themes which arose through this inquiry were not, however, limited to those identified by Krueger. The theme of 'an intervention which challenges' for example, does not fit within those he identified although it seems, in this inquiry, to have been of exceptional importance. The same is true of the themes related to having a way of understanding the youth, the immediacy of the focus of the intervention, 'responsibilizing', the awareness of context, experiences of intimate familiarity, ways of connecting, preparation, and the experience of continuity in experience of relationship after intervention.

The purpose of this chapter is not, however, to validate the themes which have emerged from this inquiry. To do so could evoke a model of reflection on the experiences much more in keeping with a natural science methodology of knowing rather than a human science orientation of understanding (Chambers, 1987). If there are implications to be drawn from this inquiry, they are probably personal ones. For me, I know that the notion of 'responsibilizing', as it relates to helping a youth to become aware of how they are participating in the creation of their own current circumstances and experiencing, had been less important than it is now.

The question is not whether or not the 'findings' of this inquiry can be validated by the works of previous authors but whether or not they 'ring true' for others who know the experience of the child and youth care intervention. In a limited sense, I am able to say that the presentation of this inquiry does ring true for others. Before finalizing this version of this dissertation, I have given it to others who are experienced in the child and youth care intervention. Their responses suggest that this writing has captured the experience in a way that makes sense within the boundaries of their experience with youth and child and youth care. The validation by the participants as we progressed through this experience also helps to assure me that this writing captures the experience as they knew it. From my own experience in the field, what I have encountered in this inquiry fits with what I have encountered in my work. But, then, the purpose of this inquiry was not to prove, but to expose.

While recognizing that generalizations from the specific phenomenological inquiry are probably inappropriate, the following statements reflect some of the implications for my own practice of child and youth care. They are, essentially, statements of current beliefs which emerge from the meaning I have made of this experience.

**Child and youth care workers' relationships with youth could benefit if workers had exposure to a phenomenological orientation to the extent to which they are exposed to models from a natural sciences orientation**

Phenomenology offers a way of encountering the lived experience of the individual (Austin & Halpin, 1987, 1988, 1989; Burch, 1989, 1990; van Manen, 1984, 1990). Through a position of questioning inquiry, phenomenology encourages one to encounter another person as other, rather than as other created through the projection of one's current baggage (Fewster, 1990b; Garfat, 1994c) onto the experiencing of other. Phenomenology, argue Austin & Halpin (1987), allows for the "direct perception of another" (p. 38) and encourages a search for understanding of, rather than knowledge about, other. It encourages the

experience of other as subject, not as object. In essence, a phenomenological orientation offers the opportunity to humanize the experience of child and youth care practice. By encouraging child and youth care workers to have a direct experience of other, to encounter other in an "I to I" relationship (Austin & Halpin, 1987), a phenomenological orientation allows workers to be better positioned to understand and appreciate the individual stories (White & Epston, 1991; Peterson, 1994) which form the foundation of youths' experiences of themselves. In this appreciation of other as subject, we may find a clue to how we might resist the temptation to objectify, codify, and institutionalize the youth who come into care.

Many of the youth who come into care come from environments in which they are objectified and treated as something other than a person. A phenomenological orientation offers the opportunity for them to be encountered as individuals humans and to experience themselves as being appreciated in the fullness of that condition.

A phenomenological orientation fits for child and youth care. As VanderVen (1994) has indicated, the goal of this field is to encounter the lived experience of the children, youth, and families and through that encounter to appreciate the stories of their lives (Bruner, 1990; Henley, 1994; Peterson, 1994; Thomson, 1994; White & Epston, 1990; Yalom, 1992). Phenomenology, with an emphasis on lived experience, offers a methodology congruent with that goal. Child and youth care workers, therefore, would benefit from training in a phenomenological orientation with at least the same degree of rigor with which they are trained in methodologies more closely associated with the natural science model of man. The youth would also benefit from this encounter of them as individual human beings, for in this encounter they might experience caring.

**Child and youth care practice could benefit if workers received training and education about the process and experience of meaning making**

This inquiry did not answer the questions put forth at the opening of section 2C: Meaning-making in child and youth care. But, then, it was not intended to do so. What this inquiry did do for me, however, is emphasize the importance of the process of meaning-making in child and youth care practice. Each of the youth in this inquiry and each of the child and youth care workers engaged in a process of making meaning which was reflective of their own values, beliefs, and ways of perceiving. For each, it was a personal experience based on their own history. In understanding some of how each youth made meaning, I was better able to appreciate how the interventions came to have the impact they did. In understanding more about how the child and youth care workers made meaning of their experiences of the youth, I was more able to appreciate why they intervened as they did.

Some of the greatest difficulties we meet in our relationships with people are based on instances of misunderstanding. Often this misunderstanding comes to light when we talk about the difficulty. If we misunderstand with youth in care the implications can be great. It has been my experience that child and youth care training and education does not focus on the process of meaning making. As I indicated when quoting Watzlawick (1990), without such training or knowledge, we are then left, each of us, to assume that the meaning which we are creating in our encounters with youth is the real meaning, the objective truth.

How we are with people is based on how we understand them to be, how we make meaning of our experiences with them. How we are with people can influence how they are with us (Durrant 1993; Schon ,1983). Perhaps some of the experiences we have with youth in care, then, are based on how we are with them. If how we are with them is based on how we make meaning of their actions, our being-with-them could be enhanced through understanding how we, and they, make meaning of ourselves, each other, and our actions. The act of professional

helping is, after all, an intersection where meanings meet (Saleebey, 1994). In understanding, misunderstanding might be avoided.

**Child and youth care interventions have a greater chance of being effective when workers have a way of understanding, a model for organizing their work experiences with youth**

It has been argued elsewhere that child and youth care workers could benefit from having a model for organizing their work with children, youth and families (Eisikovits, Beker & Guttmann 1991; Garfat & Newcomen, 1992; Ricks & Garfat, 1989; VanderVen, 1992b).

The experiences of the child and youth care workers who participated in this inquiry showed that they each had their own way of organizing their understanding of the youth with whom they intervened. It was this way of understanding which allowed them to structure their actions-of-intervention in a manner which proved to be effective. Yet they, like most child and youth care workers whom one encounters, varied in their knowledge, understanding, and application of articulated theories about, or about working with, youth. Like most child and youth care workers, they relied on their experience and their collective folk knowledge (Bruner, 1990). Recently it has been advocated that developmental care offers a model for effective child and youth are practice (e.g. Maier, 1987; VanderVen, 1992b). Others have suggested that a model of contextual care is most appropriate for group living situations (e.g., Durrant, 1993; Kwantes, 1992; Menses & Durrant, 1987).

Child and youth care workers need a model which incorporates a way of understanding the overall process of helping, the context within which that helping occurs, individual youth as developing persons, and how to intervene into the specific incident. The model of caring articulated by VanderVen (1992b) in describing developmental lifespan caregiving comes closest to this within the field to date. In it she defines four levels of care:

> * *caretaking:* providing for physical well-being without specific attention to the emotional implications;
>
> * *caregiving:* physical care with special attention to the psychosocial aspects (e.g., how activities of daily living are handled with reference to their educative, social, and emotional aspects;
>
> * *care interactions:* with a focus on the use of self in communication to build relationships, to role model, and to use the relationship as a means to promote interest, engagement, growth, and positive behaviour in clients;
>
> * *interventive care*: which involves the ability *in situ* to take in both past and immediate information, to configure it meaningfully, and make decisions quickly in context. (p. 21-22)

VanderVen's model is worth exploration as an overall framework for guiding the work of child and youth care workers. Regardless of the model adopted, however, what is clear is that child and youth care workers need a model to guide their care and treatment of troubled youth.

**Youth benefit when the people employed as child and youth care workers evidence a caring for youth**

Earlier I quoted Austin & Halpin (1987) in saying that child and youth care workers are caring people. To rephrase their thinking, I would suggest that child and youth care workers need to be caring people. In a later article, in which they discuss the "caring response" (Austin & Halpin, 1989), they list the conditions under which a caring response might be elicited. From this, we can extract some of the characteristics associated with a caring child and youth care worker. A caring person, they suggest, values other, views other as subject not object, sees other as needing care, has the energy to care, respects the authenticity of other, sees the caring act as an end in itself, is non-judgemental, assumes that the other can be helped, is available to the other, is not fearful of caring, and is prepared to adapt to the needs of the person being cared for when that is necessary. Finally, they say that "the caring response is part of the person and fills out the way the person interacts with the world . . . It is a basic mode of being, a basic component

of the person". (p. 3) Further, they comment that we need to consider how we might hire only caring persons for the field.

Some methods for the selection of appropriate child and youth care workers have been proposed of which the most promising seems to be that of Ross and Hoeltke (1985, 1987). Based on the concept that "outstanding caring individuals in every endeavour have configurations of strengths and talents, that, once known, can be used to provide a valid basis for predicting the success of others choosing to enter that endeavour" (1985, p. 47), they have identified 10 Life Themes which they believe are associated with effective child and youth care staff.

* *Mission:* a strong commitment to making a contribution to young people;

* *Relationship:* the ability to develop an approving and mutually favourable relationship with each young person;

* *Empathy*: spontaneously listening to others with responsiveness and acceptance;

* *Responsibility:* a clear psychological ownership of one's work and behaviour, a good model for others, with strong ethics and loyalty;

* *Kinesthetic Work Orientation:* a tendency to be physically active and consider work and physical activity as positive and personally satisfying;

* *Gestalt:* a drive towards completeness and closure;

* *Activation:* an ability to stimulate young people to think, respond, and learn and an active affirmation of the strengths of others;

* *Courage*: an ability to express emotionality in a positive, genuine way and a willingness to risk rejection;.

* *Objectivity:* an ability to deal with issues openly and fairly and;

* *Developer:* the capacity to receive satisfaction from the growth of others in a vicarious manner.

While this framework for selection is reported to have validity for the prediction of job performance for child and youth care staff (Ross & Hoeltke, 1987), the underlying assumption that these themes co-related with the experience of caring, or being cared for, has not been validated. The model, however, does offer direction.

If we accept that we should hire only caring persons, we would need to develop specific methods for identifying caring people. These methods would need to be part of both our hiring procedures (see, for example, Youth Horizons, 1990) and our criteria for selecting and graduating people from education and training programs for child and youth care workers.

It is clear to me from the experience of this inquiry, that the youth experienced caring and being cared for in their relationships with the child and youth care workers. Even though people are fond of quoting Bettelheim's (1950) statement that 'love is not enough', the power of this experience of caring cannot be underestimated in influencing the effectiveness of the child and youth care intervention.

**Child and youth care workers need to have an active self awareness which will be present during their encounters with youth**

Throughout this writing I have made frequent reference to Rick's (1989) model of self- awareness training for child and youth care workers. She developed this model based on her experiences with child and youth care workers, students, and her own experience as a helper. It is designed to be used in the training and education of child and youth care professionals. Through the use of the model, child and youth care workers become aware of their values, beliefs, ethics, position, style, thoughts, feelings, actions, and the relationship between them. Through the application of the model, she argues, child and youth care workers are more able to be present in their interactions with youth. They are also, I would suggest, more able to distinguish self from other (Garfat, 1994c) and to

monitor the degree of their reaction to a situation such that they are able to evaluate when their own baggage (Fewster, 1990b) is being activated.

The actions of the child and youth care workers in this inquiry speak to this need for awareness of self in the process of intervention. Most specifically, we have to wonder if TC had not been so in touch with his own experiencing during the encounter with JY whether or not she would have been able to connect with him around the issue of being a parent.

The effective utilization of self is seen as essential for effective child and youth care practice (Fewster, 1990a; Krueger, 1991; Ricks, 1989, 1993). Education and training for child and youth care workers needs to include self-awareness training for it is only an individual who is aware of self who will be able to use self effectively in working with troubled youth. Without such training the risk for abuse within the relationship is increased (McGrath, 1986).

**Interventions which are structured and enacted in a way which fits for the particular youth, their current circumstances, and their way of being-in-relationship are more likely to be accepted by the youth**

There is a risk in the field that we can become habituated in our actions with, and responses to, children and youth. As years of experience build up and hundreds of children pass through our programs, it is easy to fall into the habit of saying "Oh, yes. I've met kids like her before" and respond to new youth the same way we responded to the youth who just left. The interventions described in this inquiry fit specifically for the youth with whom they were enacted. The style of the child and youth care worker in intervention fit with that of the youth. It seems that this fit may have been instrumental in allowing the youth to experience the possible value of the intervention.

These interventions also offered to each youth a challenge to how they had organized their experience of self in relation to others. For each of them, this challenge stimulated a confusion or disequilibrium in the organization of their experiencing such that new thinking was able to emerge. Maier (1981) in

discussion the essential components in care and treatment environments, advocated that children "require life experiences . . . which challenge and stimulate them." (p. 50) More recently, writers in the field have suggested that such challenges might also include challenges to how youth have structured their experiences of themselves. Durrant (1993), for example, suggests that frequently people are "stuck" in their ways of seeing themselves and "a process of change will aim at allowing them to experience themselves differently." (p. 16) In finding new ways of experiencing themselves, they are able to consider new ways of living their lives. Carefully structured to fit the individual youth, such a challenge may be interpreted more as an invitation to a new way of experiencing rather than as a threat to a current way.

It goes without saying that in order to structure interventions which fit (Garfat, 1994b) child and youth care workers need to have a model, a way of understanding youth, and an awareness of self. They also need support in motivating themselves and each other to stay fresh in each new encounter, and to look at their work critically so that they can maintain the awareness which will allow them to individualize their interactions and interventions with youth. A number of proposals have been made within the field to help with this including the total team model suggested by Garner (1988), frameworks for supervision (e.g. Garfat, 1992b) and reflective team meetings (Krueger, 1986).

Throughout the course of this inquiry, the child and youth care workers have expressed a constant appreciation for being able to explore their interventions to the depth offered by the inquiry. One of them has even suggested that this orientation offers a wonderful model for growth oriented supervision. His vision is that through the exploration of successful interventions in a non-judgemental environment of genuine curiosity, involving when possible the youth, the child and youth care workers can be re-energized and validated.

Regardless of how we do it, child and youth care workers need to be supported in staying fresh so that their every interaction with a youth is considered

in terms of how that interaction fits for the youth. Part of the answer may lay in the notion of rhythmicity (Maier, 1992) which advocates that child and youth care workers enter into the flow of a youth's experiencing (Fulcher, 1991; Guttmann, 1991) and within that flow find a place of "mutual inclusion" (Maier, 1992, p. 9). Given that each persons flow is a unique experience, freshness is inherent in such an entering.

A final comment regarding the structure of interventions comes from the evidence that these interventions were directed at the youths' current way of functioning, their presentation of self in the immediate relationship. I have argued elsewhere (Garfat, 1994b) that there is a direct relationship between the presentation and functioning of self in the current interaction and how one functions in other situations. As Yalom (1989, 1992) has said, people manifest in their relations with the therapist the very problems of relationship which torment them in their daily lives. Perhaps child and youth care interventions would benefit from more of an emphasis on the relationship between the immediate experiencing of the youth in relationship to the child and youth care worker. Such a focus would necessitate a belief in the possibility of generalization to the out-of-care environment which the experiences of the youth who participated in this inquiry would seem to support.

**Youth benefit from being able to choose the staff with whom they will develop a special relationship, rather than having the staff assigned in a way which does not take into consideration the youth's preferences**

Each of the youth in this inquiry talked about how they had chosen a particular staff in relation to the other staff who were available to them in the program. Frequently, in child and youth care programs, staff are assigned to youth based on the date of intake or the availability of staff. It is not all programs, as DC pointed out, which allow for the choosing of staff by youth. I realize that there are always considerations which mitigate against such a recommendation, such as staffing patterns and our fear that all the youth might

chose a particular staff. In all probability, however, different youth would be attracted to relationships with different staff based on their own history, values, beliefs, and preferences.

We are all attracted to different types of people. This is part of the reason why some of our best friend's friends are unattractive to us. Each of us in our own way search out people with whom, for one reason or another, we are most comfortable. Perhaps we should be allowing youth-in-care to do the same.

It is easy enough to think of doing so when we consider certain issues such as gender, for example. None of us would insist that a female youth must discuss the experiences of her own sexuality with a male staff. In those situations the idea of allowing the youth to chose the gender of the staff with whom they will discuss issues of intimacy is easy to accept. What I am suggesting is that issues of intimacy are individual and the youth may, almost instinctively, be drawn to a particular staff. It is true that in attempting to re-enact in care the very issues that brought them into care, the youth may choose staff with whom to enact their current patterns of dysfunction. But is this so bad? Or does it simply present the opportunity to deal with these issues in the course of care?

In this age when we are concerned with empowerment, consumer involvement, and the right of individuals to be active participants in choosing their own course of treatment (see, for example, the Province of Quebec, 1985) it may make sense to allow youth to choose the staff with whom they will develop a special relationship as the youth in this inquiry did.

If those youth choose to define their relationship with staff through references to family perhaps we should not be as frightened as we seem to be today. In my experience, child and youth care workers across the country are being urged to remember that these youth are not members of their own family. The result of a drive towards professionalism has demanded that we develop an appropriate professional distance with youth. As we have moved from a family model of caring for youth to a more professional and formalized form of helping

the notion of family type relationships has become taboo. Probably this is good, for it helps us to avoid the counter-transference issues sometimes involved in these relationships (Richmond, 1992). However, in my experience, child and youth care workers are also encouraging youth not to think of the staff as family. But, perhaps youth need to do this. Perhaps this is the only model for appropriate adult interactions which exist for them. If we discourage them from using family type references we are, in effect, encouraging them to deny their experiencing and that would be contrary to our goal of helping. If youth choose to define their relationships with staff in terms of their projections of previous relationships, this offers the opportunity for further therapeutic work which should be encouraged rather than avoided.

**Child and youth care interventions may be enhanced when workers have a way of understanding context, such that they can situate their experiences and actions inside that understanding**

Bateson (1980) has suggested that the meaning of an action is determined by the context within which it is situated. Each context is itself unique from any other context as it is known by those who experience it. In the context of the interaction which is the child and youth care intervention each of the participants bring to the interaction their own values, beliefs, history, and ways of perceiving and experiencing (Garfat & Newcomen, 1992). Phenomenologically, if one accepts that context is created through the process of experience, one accepts that each context is unique to the person who is experiencing it.

There are, however, elements of context which exist regardless of how we create our experience of them. The fact that there were other girls in the house when TC intervened with JY, the fact that TY was removed from her home when she reported the abuse which was occurring, the fact that JC and LY were in the car together, the fact that the interactions between these youth and child and youth care workers was mandated by the Youth Protection Act of Quebec, these elements of context existed independent of anyone's construction of experience. How they

were experienced and therefore the way in which they impacted on the interactions was individual.

Regardless of the beliefs one holds about context and the creation of individual experience, the reality is that child and youth care workers need to have a way of understanding and incorporating the elements of context into their work with youth.

**Intervention effectiveness may be greater when youth experience continuity in the relationship with staff after the intervention is enacted**

I will forever remember the experience of LY saying, about JC, that "she came back. She said she would and she did" and the experience of TY describing how she and DC were "still friends" after the encounter in which he said no to her. These expressions, what was said and how it was said, speak as loudly as anything I have ever heard about the need for continuity in the experience of relationship after intervention. Young people need to know that they are accepted for who they are, for in this acceptance they find caring and respect. Because of their tendency to personalize their experiences, they may be quick to interpret a lack of such continuity as a rejection of themselves. LY, for example, described her experience during the transfer, as one of "Rejection. Rejection. Rejection." It was only later, when she continued to have a familiar experience with JC, that this interpretation was modified.

This experience of continuity also raises the question of consistency which always seems to go hand in hand with discussions of continuity in child and youth care practice. A common concern which I have heard expressed throughout experience in the field, is the need for staff to be consistent with youth in care. Frequently what is meant is that youth should not experience differences in how individual staff treat them. This rises, I think, from a concern about youth manipulating staff, playing them one against the other in the process of trying to have their needs met. While I appreciate this concern, TC's willingness to take the risk of being with JY differently and not following program expectations

suggests a possible benefit to staff having the freedom to be with youth differently when the situation demands it.

For staff to be willing and able to take such a risk, of course, requires a high level of confidence in oneself and in one's colleagues and team members. It is probably only in a treatment environment of caring and support for one another, an environment where care for the caregivers is a regular feature, that child and youth care workers might feel the freedom to take risks of this nature.

**Conclusion: Some Reflections of a More Personal Nature**

At the beginning of this dissertation, I exposed some of my own anxieties, doubts, prejudices, and fears about this project. As I near the end, it is interesting and informative to reflect back on the process. When I began this inquiry, I liked the idea of phenomenological inquiry; it was attractive because it fit with some of my own values, beliefs, and orientations. Now, I believe in a phenomenological orientation. The passion which I feel for the field is paralleled by the passion I feel for this orientation. There is a match between them which offers the opportunity for a better way of 'being in child care' (Fewster, 1990a), better for the youth and better for those who would work with them.

I have been in this field for some 25 years and this is the most exciting and powerful project of learning which I have ever experienced. It will forever affect my thinking, my practice, my writing, my teaching, and my training. It has also affected my experience of being-in-relationship with others. Through the experience of this inquiry, I have come to understanding more about the process of effective intervention and about myself. As I attended to how my biases crept up, how I resolved the conflicts between what was appearing and what I wanted to appear, and how I resolved my need to control the experience, I learned about me about how I function in relationship to others. Thus the experience of conducting this inquiry very much parallelled the focus of the inquiry. It has been a study of intervention. It has also been a study of self. The implications and reflections of this chapter, therefore, are not only based on the 'outcome' of this inquiry in the

traditional sense, but also on the impact of the inquiry experience on myself as a person and as a child and youth care professional. Let me offer a simple example.

I notice, in the next to last sentence, that I have written the word outcome inside of single quotations which to me indicates something like 'this isn't the right word but it is the closest I could find so please don't take it only in the sense it is normally used and try to understand what I mean.' Throughout the course of my career I have been concerned with the use of language in the helping relationship. This dissertation and the inquiry which is central to it has helped me to understand not only how limited the human vocabulary is for conveying messages of experiencing, but also how much my own language is the language of the natural science paradigm. I have also become aware through the conversations of this inquiry how much child and youth care workers struggle with language to express their experience and experiencing of their encounters with youth. It showed in their hesitations, their rephrasings, and the way in which they used examples to clarify what it was they were trying to say.

I know that it is not possible to re-invent language. It is possible, however, to be more selective and careful about the language we use. Language can and does shape our experiences. If we are not careful in the language we use in describing our experiences of the youth we encounter, it has the potential to shape our perceptions of them. Once our perceptions are so shaped, our actions follow along. When we label youth as aggressive, for example, we treat them as if they were aggression itself, not as a people who are sometimes aggressive. But it is not just the language of labelling that concerns me. It is the language of everyday conversation and the assumptions we make that we know what the other means when he or she uses certain words or phrases. Let me use two final examples from this inquiry to make this point.

Before I entered into this experience of inquiry, I reminded myself that I needed to be careful that I did not assume that I knew what the participants meant when they used words with which I was familiar. When I encountered the word

'family' as used by the youth to describe their experiences of the child and youth care workers, I assumed it meant what family meant to me; comfort, ease, caring, and reliability. When I asked the youth what they meant by the word family, other descriptors came forward; belonging, not being judged, accepted. Had I stayed with my own assumptions, I may never have understood that for some youth family means "that you belong to someone." I may never have understood that in being moved to another group home, LY felt that she was loosing her place of belonging.

The other example involves the meaning of the word 'intervention'. I began with one definition which was modified as I encountered the meaning of the word to the participants. In the end, I arrive at the following personal definition of the child and youth care intervention as it relates to working with troubled young people: *an intervention is an intentional caring action, taken into one of the daily life systems of which the youth is a part, which facilitates a change in that system such that a context is created for the youth to have a different experiencing of herself and/or the meaning which she gives to her experiencing.*

As the experience of closing this inquiry comes to an end, I am struck with how much I have come to enjoy and appreciate the participants and our experiences together. Phenomenology offers us this, the opportunity to encounter others in a way that is intimate, close, human, real. If phenomenology were to offer nothing more than this, it would be an addition to the helping process. For, when we are able to encounter children, youth, and families as living, breathing, experiential beings, we offer them the opportunity of new hope for how they experience themselves in relationship to others.

October, 1995
Rosemere, Quebec

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## Appendix A

## Connected Through Intervention

(Brief Proposal Summary)

The field of child and youth care has historically aligned itself with the empowerment of clients (Krueger & Powell, 1990) and has shown an abiding concern with the experiences of the child and youth care worker as it relates to the effectiveness of the child and youth care intervention (Garfat & Newcomen, 1992; Ricks, 1989). Yet little within the literature has attempted to describe the experiences of child and youth care workers or youth. What does exist speaks only to the global experiences of youth within the system (eg. Raychaba, 1993) or the general experiences of child and youth care workers (eg. Freeman, 1992).

Additionally, recent literature in the field of child and youth care has called for an understanding and awareness of the individual's process of meaning-making in child and youth care practice (Durrant, 1993). There is, however, no research in the field which addresses this issue.

This qualitative, exploratory research consists of a phenomenological inquiry into the lived experiences (Burch, 1990) of child and youth care workers and adolescents involved in a child and youth care interventive moment (Garfat, 1994). Three (3) dyads of subjects (3 Child and youth care workers and 3 adolescents) will be engaged in narrative interviews as advocated by Mishler (1986) to elicit from each their individual description of a common experience of intervention. Each dyad will agree on one such common experience which will be the focus of their interviews.

Each member of each dyad will be engaged in an individual hermeneutic-phenomenological interviews (van Manen, 1990) which will explore the individual's experience of this common event with a view towards describing the experience and the processes the individual went through in order to make meaning (Bruner, 1990) of that experience. Re-interviewing (Weber, 1986) will

occur until the subjects agree that the investigator has described, in writing, the individual's experience and their process of meaning-making.

Once a satisfactory description has been written, the interviewer will analyze the descriptions in order to discover themes (Tesch, 1987) which characterize the experience and the process the individual went during the intervention. A comparison across interview subjects data will then be conducted to discover if common themes, processes, or elements of context appear. This analysis will follow the guidelines established by van Manen (1990) for phenomenological research. This consists essentially of immersing oneself in the transcripts of the interviews in search of meta-themes (Tesch, 1987) and conducting a line-by-line analysis (Tesch, 1987; van Manen, 1990).

Once completed, a collaborative description of the experiences and the role of meaning-making in the process of intervention will be constructed.

The child and youth care workers will be employees of the former Youth Horizons. They will participate in this research project on their own time. The youth will be former clients of the child and youth care workers who are no longer in care. Each participant will participate in:

- one joint dyad interview of approximately 2 hours.
- one individual interview of approximately 90 minutes.
- one follow-up interview of approximately 60 minutes.

Participants will be assured confidentiality according to a letter of consent approved by the Department of Professional Services.

Thom Garfat
October, 1994

## Appendix B

## Consent Form for Participation in the Study "Connected Through Intervention"

You are agreeing to participate in a study of the experiences and meaning-making processes of persons involved in an effective child and youth care intervention. This study is part of my dissertation for a Ph.D. The purpose of this study is to try and understand better the experiences of youth and child and youth care workers in order to improve the quality of the therapeutic relationship between them.

During interviews you will be asked to describe your experience of a child and youth care intervention. During subsequent interviews you will be asked to explain how you made meaning (made sense) of that experience. These interviews will be audiotaped to ensure that I can make an accurate transcript of the interviews. You will be provided with transcripts of those tapes and then be asked to confirm or correct the information therein. This may involve a number of interviews in order to ensure that the transcripts accurately reflect your experiences. The final confirmed transcripts will be used as data for my Ph.D. Quotes from the transcripts will be used in my dissertation and may be used in subsequent professional publications. As a participant in this study it is important that you know and understand the following.

1. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any stage. If you choose to withdraw all audiotapes and transcripts of your interviews will be given to you.

2. Your confidentiality will be protected. No written document will include information which might be used to identify you. The transcripts and recordings will be labelled only with codes known only to the interviewer. The audio tapes will be stored in a safe and secure location. Any information in the transcripts of your interviews which may be used to identify you will be deleted and replaced with fictitious information instead.

3. Once this research is completed the audiotapes will either be destroyed or given to you as you prefer. If you elect to have the tapes destroyed, they will be burned.

4. If you are an employee of this agency, the content of your participation will be kept confidential from your employer. In no way will your participation, non-participation or withdrawal from this study reflect on your employment.

5. If you are a youth receiving services from this agency, the content of your interviews will be kept confidential from the agency as permitted by law. In no way will your participation, non-participation or withdrawal from this study be reflected in the services you are receiving, or may receive, from the agency.

6. If there is any part of this Letter of Consent which you do not understand or which is unclear to you, it must be explained to your satisfaction before you are asked to sign it.

I _____, understand and accept the terms as outlined above and agree voluntarily to participate in the study "Connected Through Intervention".

I agree that the interviews with me may be audiotaped.

Yes ___ No ___

At the completion of the study I would:

- like the audio tapes destroyed _____
- like the audiotapes given to me _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Interviewer: _____