Establishing myself as a volunteer: observations and reflections on theory and practice

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What do I bring as a volunteer?

- Child & Family Psychiatry and Psychotherapy
  - Medical Education
  - Clinical & Research Ethics
  - Applied Psychoanalysis
    - a particular form of reflective practice in which experiences in the professional encounter are examined to differentiate those which are evoked by the unconscious elements of the process in the individual, group or organisation from the truly personal.
Scientific & Psychoanalytic Neutrality

• Negative *Capability*: 
  
  “that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts without any irritable reaching after *fact & reason*. ” (Keats, 1821)

• Negative *Culpability*: 
  
  “when man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts without any irritable reaching after *causation and blame*.” (Sutton, 2013)
Managing discomfort, outrage & upset

“What on earth are you doing?!” needs to become

“I wonder why this is happening?”
“Conflict Response” in Psychoanalytic Theory

• Conflict may be:
  – conscious or unconscious
  – interpersonal and/or a personal (intrapsychic).

• Conscious conflict manifest as defensiveness in its various forms.
“Conflict Response” in Psychoanalytic Theory

• Unconscious conflict evokes defences experienced as
  – Thoughts
  – Feelings
  – pressure to act or pressure against action
  – It may also present as the absence of any of these without apparent anxiety but perhaps with symptoms
  – It may be manifest externally as behaviour viewed as characteristic or uncharacteristic for that person.

• Intrapsychic conflict inevitable
  – Health/pathology manifest in managing it…
1. Gulu University: opened 2002
2. Gulu University Medical School: opened 2004
3. Gulu Regional Referral Hospital: General & Teaching Hospital 250 beds
4. Gulu-Man link started 2006
Happy Birthday for tomorrow, Marian!
Building confidence

demonstrating trustworthiness.

• Medical students’ communication skills training
• Volunteers’ Code of Conduct:
Trust and trustworthiness

“Where one depends on another’s good will, one is necessarily vulnerable to the limits of that good will… Reasonable trust will require good grounds for [...] confidence in another’s good will, or at least the absence of good grounds for expecting their ill will or indifference”.

(Baier, 1986)
Trust and trustworthiness also requires…

• trust in one’s own ability to make good judgements about whom to trust or at least being able to bear the uncertainty and anxiety when one dares to trust.
  – See earlier clinical example

• confidence in one’s right to be an active participant in decisions rather than simply subject to the orders/whims of others upon whom one depends.
  – See “Research Safari” later
2 current issues in Northern Uganda

• Trust and land ownership
  – Insurgency and Internal Displacement as a measure to combat insurgency have undermined the pool of knowledge of physical boundaries and the customary structures of kinship and kindness for resolving disputes (Obika, personal communication 2014).

• Peace, reconciliation & forgiveness
  – Dare people trust in the future whilst living with their own memories of what was done to themselves or their family and friends?
  – Dare they trust those who committed atrocities whilst living with the personification of those acts?
  – Can those who committed atrocities feel secure in their own ability to live with what they have done and the ability of others to live with them without breaking down into further violence?
From Armed Forces to Market Forces
Rights and wrongs

Straight talk in Beijing Michelle Obama says internet access is universal right

Michelle Obama speaking at Peking University in Beijing during a week-long visit to China, where she risked upsetting her hosts by telling students that internet access was one of “the universal rights”. (News, page 27)

John Naughton, page 25: Observer Comment, page 34.) Photograph by Feng Li/Getty
Rights and Wrongs

Legal, decent, honest & truthful?

From Armed Forces to Market Forces (2)
Making a well-groomed population

- Seeking to make something that is non-essential, albeit desirable, essential to our sense of value and worth.
- Implication that someone may be withholding it wilfully.
- Human development relies on the emergence of a capacity for healthy discrimination. To conflate aspiration with expectation is corrosive.
- The presentation of “entitlement-denied” in order to control, seduce or provoke desire for personal gain is an abuse of power, a form of ‘grooming’.
From Post-colonial to *Pepsi* and *CocaColonalism*
From Post-colony To CocaColony

Pioneering health education
Good values for money?

- Uganda population
  - 0-14 years: 49.1%
  - 15-24 years: 21.2%
- Northern Uganda
  - 25 years of civil war
  - AIDS.
What am I doing here?

...trying to ensure I behave reasonably!
Primum non nocere:
Research or respect - which is the greatest force for good?

“Research safaris”
Towards intergenerational justice?

Pioneering health education