

Of Offords and Steinhauers: Institutional Memory, the Lowest Form of Evidence?

As our subspecialty evolves, identity questions are at the forefront of discussions. What is a child psychiatrist? What does a child psychiatrist do exactly? Do we belong more with adult psychiatry, pediatrics, or even developmental psychology? What is our relationship to other disciplines such as speech pathology, occupational therapy, social work and yes, even teachers and early educators? Do child psychiatrists consult or do treatment as well? The list goes on and on... Also, political pressures to deal with increasing wait lists, with more heavily burdened kids and families are increasing while resources are pared back. "Things must be done differently" is on the lips of everyone. We must change, change is inevitable. In this seismic shake-up, I have sought refuge in the comfort and wisdom of older colleagues, present and past, and the stories buried within "institutional memory."

My first contact with Dr. Paul Steinhauer was as an impressionable sophomore at the University of Toronto. His lectures about children in jeopardy were in stark contrast to other learned professors lecturing about Robbins' Textbook of Pathology and Hamm's Histology. Subsequently I learned through the institutional grapevine that he had become a foster parent (a man who practices what he preaches) until his early demise as a result of a surgical complication. Later in my career when my clinical interests turned to attachment and child protection, I was surprised to see the "Steinhauer protocol" translated in French and adopted by Quebec's child protective services (Quebec is indeed a province to be emulated for their evidence-based approach to child protection).

My other role model at a distance was Dr. Dan Offord. Everyone is familiar with Dan's multiple contributions to establishing child psychiatry on a scientific basis through solid research. His scientific legacy continues through the Offord Centre for Children at Risk and the many

generations of clinical researchers he has influenced. However, fewer people know about his contributions during his life to the summer camps at Christie Lake where he offered economically disadvantaged children, youth and their families a place to learn new skills, a big buzz word with Dan, through sports, arts, camping and youth mentoring. I found out that even later into his busy career, Dan regularly attended the camp to flip hot dogs and interact with families as an ordinary guy, camp attendees referring to him simply as "Dr. Dan." In an interview about his role over 40 years at Christie Lake he was quoted as saying, "On the human front, every generation has to re-establish again the values that are important...I'm thinking of ways to help the next generation."

In western Africa, in traditional oral-based cultures there was a caste of families that were designated as the "Griots." They were the "institutional memory" of that tribe, the repositories of that culture's history and were responsible for keeping alive in memory, previous ancestors and their stories transmitted through the generations. Griots also served as counselors to the chiefs and at times were called upon to resolve conflicts and disputes.

These are a few of the mentors I have encountered that have shaped not only my professional identity but my personal values. Through interactions with colleagues within my institution and at conferences, past and present stories emerge about charismatic figures or mentors that are not written or documented anywhere. Yet they form the "scaffolding" of social values inherent in the type of work we do. As we advance boldly to establish a firm foundation based on evidence and developmental science, who and where are the "Griots" who will record our stories to inspire the next generation?

Normand Carrey, Editor

**Lindley Bassarath****June 20, 1964 – April 4, 2012**

We were saddened to learn of the sudden death of our esteemed colleague, Lindley Bassarath this year. Dr. Bassarath completed his residency training in 1993 at the University of Toronto at which time he joined the staff at the Family Court Clinic at the former Clarke Institute of Psychiatry. He was the Resident Training Coordinator at the Family Court Clinic from 1993 to 1999, and from 1999 to 2009 he continued in that role at the Child, Youth and Family Program at The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), Toronto. He was appointed the Head of the Adolescent Forensic Program at CAMH in 2000 and was promoted to Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychiatry, University of Toronto in 2003.

Dr. Bassarath was widely regarded as the expert in youth forensic issues. Judges and lawyers had enormous respect for Dr. Bassarath and looked to him for direction with complex cases. Lindley had a unique talent to relate to these adolescents. He recognized the need that parents and professionals had in understanding and dealing with them and authored a well-recognized book called “Youth Violence Prevention: A Guide for Concerned Parents and Professionals.”

A consummate professional, colleague, friend and gentleman, Dr. Bassarath will also be remembered as a devoted father who enjoyed his family, food, wine, travel, and trivia. He will be deeply missed.