PERSONAL ARCHEOLOGY: DISCOVERING YOUR INNER DIVERSITY THROUGH CHILDHOOD ARTIFACTS

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ABSTRACT

This article describes a self-exploration by the primary author through artifacts from his own childhood, in an attempt to "give voice" to the qualities present in the child he was, and in the adult he is today. This personal and intimate account springs from the collaboration of the authors on a personal archeology exercise developed for parents and childhood professionals and based on the work of the Learning for Well-being Foundation, which views individuals as whole systems.   At the heart of this approach is an emphasis on the principles of living systems and the recognition of "inner diversity" -- fundamental ways of capturing and integrating information that we organize individually to create a representation of the external world that is uniquely our own. The article includes guidelines for the reader to engage in their own personal archeology--searching for artifacts (e.g. photographs, objects, drawings, texts) and stories which indicate personal narratives, attitudes and functioning patterns that last over time. We conclude with a reflection on the value of biographical self-exploration exercises and the importance of the issue of inner diversity in the well-being of children and adults.
Keywords: Well-being. Inner diversity. Self-reflection. Artifacts. Autobiography. Inner child.

RESUMO

ARQUEOLOGIA PESSOAL: DESCOBRIR A SUA DIVERSIDADE INTERIOR ATRAVÉS DE ARTEFACTOS DA INFÂNCIA

Este artigo descreve uma autoexploração do principal autor através de artefactos da sua própria infância, na tentativa de "dar voz" a

características estruturantes na criança que foi, e se mantiveram no adulto que hoje é. Este relato pessoal e íntimo surge da colaboração dos autores no desenvolvimento da "Arqueologia Pessoal", um exercício para pais e profissionais da infância baseado no trabalho da Fundação *Learning for Well-being*, que vê os indivíduos como sistemas inteiros. No centro desta abordagem, destacam-se os princípios dos sistemas vivos e o reconhecimento da "diversidade interior" — formas fundamentais de capturar e integrar experiências que organizamos individualmente para criar uma representação do mundo externo que nos é idiossincrática. O artigo inclui diretrizes para que o leitor possa explorar sua própria Arqueologia Pessoal—procurando artefactos (e.g. fotografias, objetos, desenhos, textos) e histórias que indiquem narrativas pessoais, atitudes e padrões de funcionamento que perduram ao longo do tempo. Concluímos com uma reflexão sobre o valor de exercícios de autoexploração biográfica e a importância da questão da diversidade interior no bem-estar e participação de crianças e adultos.

Palavras-chave: Bem-Estar. Diversidade interior. Artefactos. Autobiografia. Criança Interior.

RESUMEN

ARQUEOLOGÍA PERSONAL: DESCUBRIENDO SU DIVERSIDAD INTERIOR A TRAVÉS DE LOS ARTEFACTOS DE LA INFANCIA

Este artículo describe una autoexploración del autor principal a través de artefactos de su propia infancia, en un intento de "dar voz" a las características estructurantes del niño que fue y permaneció en el adulto que es hoy. Este relato personal e íntimo surge de la colaboración de los autores en el desarrollo de "Arqueología Personal", un ejercicio para padres, madres y profesionales de la infancia basado en el trabajo de la Fundación Aprendizaje para el Bienestar (Learning for Well-being), que ve a los individuos como sistemas integrales. En el corazón de este enfoque están los principios de los sistemas vivos y el reconocimiento de la "diversidad interior", formas fundamentales de captar y integrar experiencias que organizamos individualmente para crear una representación del mundo externo que nos e idiosincrásica. El artículo incluye pautas para que el lector explore su propia arqueología personal, buscando artefactos (por ejemplo, fotografías, objetos, dibujos, textos) e historias que indiquen narrativas personales, actitudes y patrones de funcionamiento que perduran en el tiempo. Concluimos con una reflexión sobre el valor de los ejercicios de autoexploración biográfica y la importancia

del tema de la diversidad interior en el bienestar y participación de niños y adultos.

Palabras clave: Bienestar. Diversidad interior. Artefactos. Autobiografía. Niño interior.

Introduction

There's a thread you follow. It goes among things that change. But it doesn't change.
[...]
You don't ever let go of the thread.
— In "The Way it Is", a poem by William Stafford (1999)

We begin this article by examining how two central ideas shape the Learning for Well-being Foundation's[1] perception of children[2] as full beings: first, the principles of living systems provide a lens through which we can understand children as whole systems and second, recognizing *inner diversity* as a way of respecting each child's unique voice within the frame of how they process gives meaning to their experiences. Building on these basic understandings, we describe an exercise entitled Personal Archeology which was designed to support individual explorations of inner diversity through personal reflection. We include guidelines on how readers can conduct their own Personal Archeology through conducting structured interviews with family members and exploring childhood artifacts. We continue by illustrating the exercise with personal examples from one of the authors showing how the reflection can elicit important information about characteristics that remain constant throughout life; and how this information can be fundamental in framing one's perception of self, and interactions with the world. The article concludes with considering both the potential and limitations of auto-biographic

self-reflection, and how exercises like Personal Archaeology can support the understanding of children's voices, and enrich their relationship with adults in their lives, whether parents, educators or researchers.

Understanding children as whole systems

The Learning for Well-being Foundation started its activities in 2004, with the intention of changing paradigms about children, well-being and learning. It called for a vision of children as agents, rather than objects of care, well-being as wholeness, rather than absence of disease, and learning as differentiated and holistic, rather than cognition-focused and standardized (KICKBUSCH; GORDON; O'TOOLE, 2012).

Inspired by nature, the Learning for Well-being approach applies principles of living systems to the way we see children (or any human being) and their development throughout life. As context for this article, we highlight four of these principles and why they are important in the way we see and treat children. All living systems, from the smallest to the largest, constantly self-organize towards balance, are composed of a fractal structure, are guided by a centralizing impulse, and are unique in their expression.

Self-organization: Living systems are in a constant dynamic movement towards balance and health. They self-organize, through unique patterns of functioning, as a way to respond to, and integrate, their interaction with their environments. Recognizing self-organization in children, implies seeing them as beings with

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1   For more information please consult the foundation's website on https://www.learningforwellbeing.org
2   Children are referred to as any person under the age of 18, as defined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

agency, and assuming that children's choices and behaviors function, to some degree, to create a sense of meaning in their lives. Recognizing self-organization is also an invitation to take a process-oriented, non-judgmental view on children's behavior. In the same way we describe how lions hunt prey, or how a flower releases pollen, without considering how brutal the lion is, or how pollen worsens one's allergies, we can observe and listen to children in a non-judgmental, non-pathological and non-deficit way that seeks to understand *how* the child is uniquely functioning.

Centralizing impulse: There is a centralizing impulse to every living system's existence; an element that defines its meaning and purpose. In cells, it is located in the mitochondria, in humans it might not have a physical locus, but we are characterized as meaning-seeking organisms (GEISEN, 2013; MATURANA; VARELA, 1987), and the constant search for purpose offers direction to our actions, representing a condition for well-being (SELIGMAN, 2002) and sometimes survival (LEACH, 2018). Recognizing a centralizing impulse in children is seeing them as "souls in evolution" (RANADE, 2006), understanding that they have an essential aspect of themselves that seeks meaning and purpose, and that enables them to flourish and realize their unique potential.

Fractal structure: "One of the most striking aspects of fractal structure [in living systems] is that its characteristic patterns are found repeatedly at descending scales, so that their parts, at any scale, are similar in shape to the whole" (IRWIN, 2004). We can identify some essential aspects of a being throughout its life, even as it grows and changes form. Elements of the flower can be seen in its seed and sprout, likewise the adult shape of an animal is essentially represented in its cubs. If we recognize such fractal structure in human beings, then we must consider that some essential traits of

the children, both physical and psychological, keep a certain integrity throughout life.

Uniqueness: The fourth principle applies to all three previously described principles. All beings are individualized expressions of life. Their patterns of self-organization are unique, as is their structure and what guides them in their sense-making journeys. Recognizing uniqueness in children is an invitation to guide intergenerational relationships by inquiry, and refrain from making adultist generalizations (BELL, 1995) about children that are based on one's own experience as a child, of other children or the images of childhood (SORIN; GALLOWAY, 2006) that are diffused in our shared narratives.

Understanding inner diversity

There are many elements one could consider when talking about inner worlds; certainly, the affective sphere including feelings and relationships is one to which the personal archeology exercise could be usefully applied. However, the one we will emphasize in this article is what is described by the Learning for Well-being approach as inner diversity, and how it relates to the principles of living systems highlighted in the first section.

Briefly, inner diversity asserts that each child has their own unique patterns of self-organization, and these reflect each individual as a whole system (O'TOOLE, 2013). These patterns are fundamental ways of capturing and integrating information that we organize to represent the external world. Many of these patterns reinforce essential qualities throughout life, like a fractal structure. Inner diversity is often experienced in terms of patterns of processing, both inputs and outputs, and these can be observed as individual differences in critical functions such as learning, communication and decision-making. Often, we refer to these as *how*

one functions (the manner in which we behave or express) in contrast to *what* one does (the specific actions or subjects.)

We can generally find a mirror between inner qualities of people and what they create. An example: Alfred Kinsey was an American entomologist who catalogued and studied gall wasps before becoming widely known for shifting our understanding of human sexuality. In the biographic movie "Kinsey" (CONDON, 2004), we see how life events sparked a curiosity that led him to study human sexual behavior. By the time of his death he had conducted 17,000 face-to-face interviews with a diverse group of people about their sexual experiences. He applied the same thirst for understanding, and the same systematic, methodic and non-judgmental stance to human beings as he previously did to insects. So, while *what* he was interested in changed dramatically, *how* he expressed and pursued his interest shared many similarities.

Within inner diversity, such patterns of processing are to a large extent innate. They unfold, adapt and become more supple but keep a certain integrity throughout life. They are impacted, but not fundamentally changed by other aspects of one's sense of self and identity like gender, upbringing and social or cultural environment (Image 1). With consistency over time and an objective focus on functioning, the patterns feel natural acting as a source of vitality and well-being. Discovering and operating from that natural place feels like "coming home".

Understanding, and recognizing unique expressions of inner diversity in children is therefore a critical, and often disregarded, condition for experiencing children as full beings, gifted with unique potential. It is equally important to consider inner diversity when listening to children's accounts of their own lives, because adults - whether education professionals, parents, researchers, etc. - have our own unique "operating system" through which we filter, and often judge, the input we receive from others, including children. Frequently, we misinterpret what we hear or reframe what is said based on our own inner patterns for making sense of the world.

Figure 1 - Iceberg model and representation of inner diversity
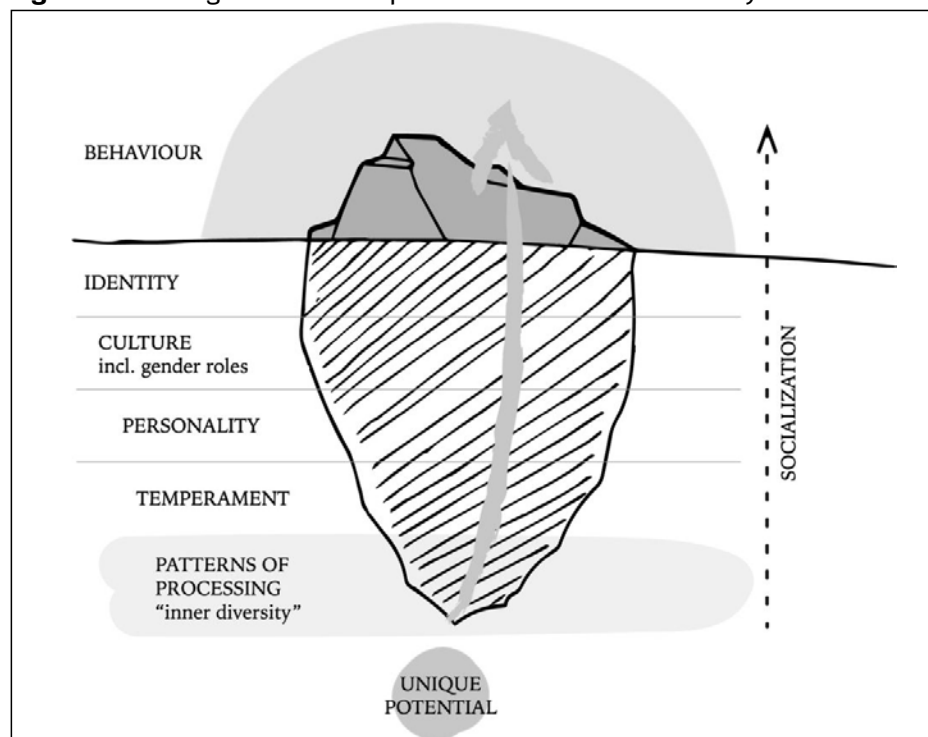
Source: Luís Manuel Pinto / Learning for Well-being Foundation.

There are countless patterns that we can consider, some of which will be examined in later sections. In the Learning for Well-being work on inner diversity we often relate several common themes through which one can reflect on individual differences; these can be seen throughout life situations (e.g., early childhood, school, relationships, work), in children and adults, and are especially highlighted when you compare one child (or adult) to another.   Below we identify a few that are relatively easy to observe, and we offer a central question for each:

- *Pacing* – What is the relationship to time and pacing? Rhythm/pacing is more than just speed, but it is often noticed first by how you experience speed … your own and others.
- *Noticing* – Where is attention centered? Is there a concentrated focus on a single point or, does noticing happen broadly so that one sees an overall picture?
- *Inquiring* – What kinds of questions are asked, and when? Does one probe for facts, purpose, connections, or affirming understanding?
- *Starting* – How does one initiate an activity, especially for the first time? What is needed for a process to begin?
- *Expressing* – How does one express thoughts and feelings, and through which modality? Is there an ongoing flow of generalized comments, or a more selective consideration that is shared with some precision?

It is important for us to make a distinction between what we earlier described as a process-oriented perspective on patterns, and one that would seek to establish personality traits or structures. Inner diversity can be a dimension of personality in the sense that it makes an individual unique, holds consistency through time and has a multitude of expressions (i.e.

thought patterns, behavior, relationships). It does not attempt to create identification labels, but rather suggests the use of descriptive language like "needing to interact with people" rather than saying "extrovert", "prefers to work individually" rather than "distant", "requires a frame in order to act" rather than "rigid". We feel that neutral and process-oriented language opens up self-discovery and dialogue, while a trait-oriented language often encloses children in reductive and rather damaging perceptions (O'TOOLE, 2008).

The "personal archeology" exercise

In our research with inner diversity in early childhood, we noticed that patterns of processing could be observed at a very early age in children's relationship to pacing, noticing, inquiring, starting and expressing. The cues can sometimes be subtle but like a seed, they contain essential qualities of more complex patterns that we can witness unfolding as children grow. For instance, we know that parents recognize that their children, in comparison with one another, often vary in the speed and rhythm of their movements, speech, willingness to engage, and so forth. If we place these differences in pacing on a spectrum from sustained to quick, there seems to be a predominance in an individual child, especially noticeable when engaging in new activities. One can ask: how much time does a child need in order to feel ready, to complete a task, to respond? How much warning do I need to give a child that we are ready to leave a particular environment? Children in whom we observed a faster pacing as infants (for example, in their movement or willingness to transition) tended to be the first children in a classroom to respond to questions and might also later be known as "quick-start" adults who began projects with-

out considering all the information. Likewise, infants who exhibit a more steady or sustained[3] pacing are likely to have a consistent trajectory: often responding in a classroom only when they have the full context and carrying that particular pattern into later life. It's important to understand these observations as correlations, not predictions.

We wanted to support parents in noticing such differences, so we gave parents orientation on how to film their own children (aged between 2 and 4 years old) and curated a set of questions to guide parents' observations and reflections. As we received parent's responses, we saw a relationship between parents' ability to notice expressions of inner diversity in their children, and their ability to notice their own patterns. It seemed important to cultivate parents' awareness so they could create well-being by allowing the full expression of their children's inner diversity without imposing their own filters.

We also assumed that if patterns observed in children held a degree of integrity over time, it would be possible to explore with parents what patterns had remained constant in their lives since childhood. We wanted such biographic self-reflections to be supported by prompts beyond the parents' own memories of childhood, so we adapted the original questions into semi-structured interviews that parents could use with their own parents, or others who had witnessed them grow. This led us on a path that felt very much like digging into one's past, finding treasures in one's own personal narratives that could help reveal parts of ourselves we would otherwise not be aware of. It felt like doing "personal archeology".

Adding to the structured interview, we encouraged parents to inquire into photographs

and artifacts such as texts or drawings from their childhood. We also considered stories told frequently as representing them as children or phrases that were often repeated by adults when they were children.

Conducting your own "personal archeology"

Here are the guidelines we gave parents on how to conduct their own Personal Archeology:

Personal Archeology on Inner Diversity

The aim of the personal archeology exercise is to guide an exploratory self-reflection, based on interviews and childhood artifacts, in order to identify patterns of inner diversity that have been consistent throughout our lives and see how they have unfolded through time and how they have expressed differently at different ages.

Interviews can be done with any person of reference in your life that has watched you grow since birth (or an early age) and can mirror some of your own behaviors back to you.

Childhood artifacts are any objects that give information about your behavior, interests or attitudes in childhood. These could be simply photos or video recordings of you, objects you have created like artwork or texts, or other documents like school reports, letters, etc.

What to look for…
- Look for the natural and internal logic in *how* you approached things since childhood. These moments or artifacts would have been lived or done effortlessly, and brought vitality, rather than depleted you.
- Look for critical patterns that remained somewhat constant in how you related to time and pacing, how and what you paid attention to, how you started an

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3   We prefer not to use the word "slow" because of its pejorative connotations associated with cognitive impairment.

activity - specially a new one, how and what you shared with others, and how you tracked change and progress.

- Describe patterns in a process-oriented language. That means having a non-judgmental, non-pathological and non-deficit stance. Look for what you were actually doing, not what you or someone else thought you should be doing.

- Reflect on whether these patterns find their expression in adulthood, how they might have evolved and expressed themselves at different ages, and to what extent they define or change your sense of self, and your relationship with the world.

Dealing with other people's perceptions of you

- Be prepared for the possibility that answers to these questions might come out as judgments of character, for instance: 'you were very stubborn when you were a baby'. What is important is that you try to extract from that situation what that meant from both you (as a child) and the adult's perspective, and how that may translate into specific patterns of communicating and processing information. In those cases, it is helpful to ask about specific examples of what was labeled as being "stubborn" (or whatever the judgment might have been).

- Equally, when answers to questions came out as praise, like "you were a special child" or "you were very organized", search for specific examples that can help you understand what that meant about how you were functioning, rather than your character traits.

Interview protocol

Before birth: Ask about your mother's experience of your rhythm before you were born. Many mothers talk about different babies having very different rhythms *in utero*. Did your mother notice this?

First 3 months: What were my rhythms of sleeping, eating, crying? How actively did I respond to external stimuli?

Age 1-3:
- What seemed to be my outstanding characteristics?
- What did I seem to be good at?
- What did I seem to be most challenged by?
- If I had a task to do, how did I go about it?

Age 3+:
- What were my preferred ways of playing/spending time? Can you tell me about something I seemed to enjoy doing very much?
- How would I interact with an object – for example: playing with a toy
- How would I interact with one other person – for example: a child of my same age
- How would I behave in a group of people who are focused on a situation – for example: a family watching a puppet show or an animal playing
- How did I move in space? Move a lot, stay in one place; move directly from one point to another, more wandering?
- How did I handle ending one activity and starting another? For example, did I need to be alerted that time was almost up? Did I like to play with/work on many things at the same time or finish one activity before starting another?
- What were the things that seemed important to me, or that I like a lot?
- What were the things people constantly

said about my way of being? i.e. other family and friends, teachers

- What kind of situations would really annoy me?
- What would grab my attention? Under what circumstances?
- What were the circumstances in which I would lose interest in an activity or object or person?

An example of personal archeology

The reasons why we decided to share selected results from one of the authors' Personal Archeology is twofold. First, we wanted to concretely illustrate the nature of the material one can uncover through the exercise and show by example how such information can be supportive of one's well-being. Second, we wanted to model an attitude towards research in which the subjective view of the researcher is considered an asset, rather than an obstacle in the production of knowledge (MIZZI, 2010).

The following examples belong to the author Luís Pinto, from his own auto-biographic exploration using the "Personal Archeology" exercise. The referred childhood artifacts include an interview of his mother about his childhood before the age of 10, using the questions before mentioned; two photos of the author in a similar group setting in different moments, one at 5 and one at 24 years old; a poem written by the author to his godfather at an age between 8 and 10. The author continues this section in his singular voice to emphasize the personal nature of the examples shown.

I will describe the patterns I could find and illustrate them through the selected stories and artifacts. I will also point out where my reflection has confirmed, nuanced or contradicted ways in which I saw myself.

Pattern #1: Seeking to complete and improve human systems

I remember this impulse to understand how things functioned, especially how people functioned, as systems, and being driven to reflect and often express how systems could become more effective.

> I can remember your 2nd grade [Age 7-8] teacher saying that you used to ask a lot of questions and that one day you asked how "babies got into bellies". I think she answered something that did not satisfy you because she was surprised to see that the following day you brought to school a book about the human body and ended up explaining to her (the teacher) how babies were made and born. (Author's Mother, 2012)

This story told by my mother illustrates this pattern which I feel is foundational to how I learn and relate to people and the world. Image 2 shows a poem written during primary school age and is addressed to my godfather. The central motive of the poem is a request that he stop drinking. The arguments I give are "the harm it is doing to him", that he should listen to me because I am younger, that he can "at least try" because "there is still a way to turn back", all while expressing affection by calling him "dear" and dedicated "with all my love". The form used for the poem is a quatrain with an ABCB scheme, which is traditional in vernacular culture.

The poem artifact demonstrates both the pattern of how I pay attention to human systems in light of making them more complete, but also another pattern related to how my creativity gets stimulated, which is starting from or responding to a frame or existing structure.

Another example of this pattern, this time from the age of 12, but applied to a group or social setting rather than a person.

Figure 2 - Poem at 8-10 years old
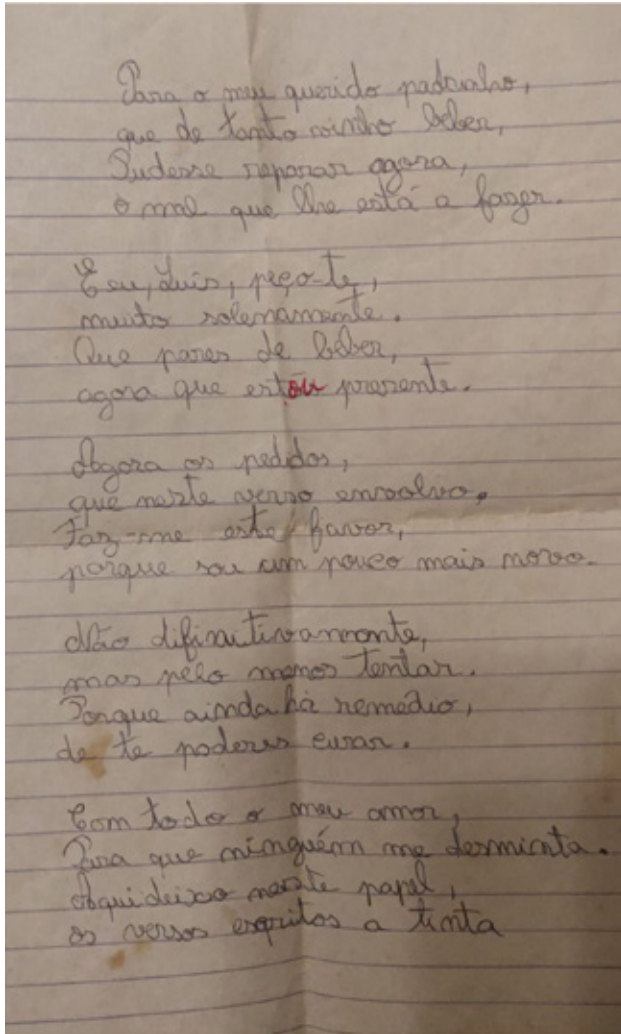
Source: Luís Manuel Pinto.

At school, I did what I called a 'sociological analysis' of my class. I gave each person a nickname, ranked them in terms of power and popularity and drew a diagram of the relationships between each one. I gave this plan to my English teacher so that she could rearrange the seating in a way that the people that would be less familiar with each other would sit together so that they would feel less encouraged to chat in class. (PINTO, 2012)[4]

Pattern #2: Taking a peripheral or inner focused standpoint in social settings

Photos 3 and 4 show me in a group setting at

the age of 5 (Image 3) and 25 years old (Image 4). What is similar about the two situations is that I am standing in a group that had to follow a certain form in space (aligned, facing the same direction). In both groups I am a few rows from the back. In both contexts there is a facilitator or teacher guiding the group.

What gets repeated, 20 years across, is the way I hold my arms - same arm over the other, the inclination and angle of my head, and the qualities of my gaze looking somewhere beyond the group and the limits of the space. I have noticed myself naturally falling into this position in many more moments than the ones captured in these two photographs.

Figure 3 - Group context at 5 years old
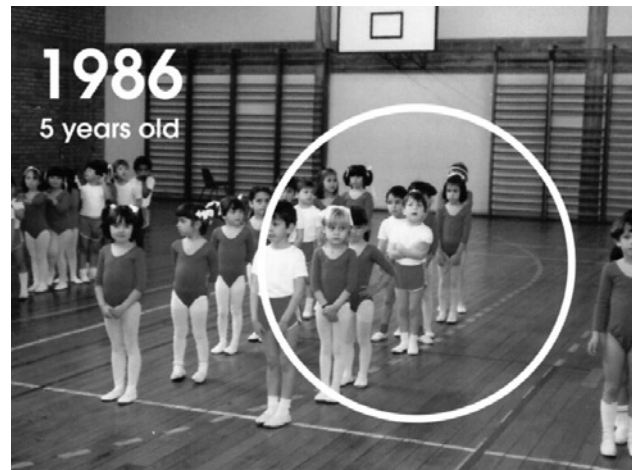
Source: Luís Manuel Pinto.

Figure 4 - Group context at 25 years old

Source: Luís Manuel Pinto.

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4   Primary author's notes made to support his Personal Archeology exercise

Pattern #3: Organizing internally before expressing/acting with high competency

The pattern brought to my awareness through the following stories is related to the amount of time and reflection a thought or intention is kept inside before it gets expressed or manifested with a certain degree of detail.

I could identify this pattern in the way my mother described how I started talking:

> You started walking at 13 months old, before you started talking. When you started saying the first words, they were very clearly understandable. (Author's Mother, 2012)

It created an image of myself as if I was carefully carving words in my mind and would hold on to them until I was sure they were ready. The same pattern was also expressed in the way I organized my personal spaces.

> You were organized and disorganized. You would ask me not to touch your things - even if they were messy - and one day you would organize everything in one go. You found your way in your own mess, and you were early responsible for your own things... You would go beyond what was asked of you at school. (Author's Mother, 2012)

I recognize in this anecdote both the pattern of accumulating complexity in space - which felt comfortable enough to live in - and taking time until I felt I could bring detailed order to the space. The story also demonstrates aspects of the previous pattern of wanting complete systems in the fact that I always "added" to tasks handed to me at school.

The main outcome of my personal reflection is not the possibility of making an inventory of characteristics that held through time and upbringing, but rather the impact this reflection might have on my self-perception, and in consequence, how I perceive other children - especially the ones I relate to or work with currently.

Understanding that as early as 7 years I was seeking information that would help my teacher answer the question of how babies are born, or that a few years later I was writing a poem to my godfather about how he would benefit from quitting alcohol, nuances how I perceive these actions. If I take away from myself, the label of these as expressions of arrogance or "knowing best", I can begin to recognize how those remembered incidents were pointing to an underlying pattern which is core to how I relate to life. I can find examples from other ages, including last week, and find a sense of acceptance and an excitement of options offered by being able to describe this pattern to myself and others.

Likewise, realizing that I take time dwelling in complexity, and that I need to have deep understanding of the whole system before an output or action starts to take form, helped me understand that it was not a matter of "taking forever to do anything", or being a "procrastinator", but that it was a way my system responded to my environment, and in fact allows me to bring a natural way of functioning as a gift to every situation -- I can create situations and self-acceptance to do my best work with sufficient time and context.

While these reflections create a sense of empowerment and reconciliation with aspects of who I am, they do not signify the end of a journey, or claim a certain territory as "the way I am" and build barricades around. It is rather the beginning of a journey, or continuous self-discovery of forever adapting to environments and relationships.

Implications for relationships, practice and research

One of the greatest challenges related to fulfilling children's right to be heard and taken seriously (UNITED NATIONS, 1989) is the adults abil-

ity to attribute meaning and legitimacy to what children express. This often means an adultist prejudice in responding to the question of "when is a child capable of formulating their own opinions" (LLOYD; EMERSON, 2017), but we believe another less discussed obstacle might be prejudice on the modality used by different children that might be deemed as irrelevant or unusable. The younger children are, the higher the prejudice is about their capabilities and the form in which they express themselves. Considering inner diversity means expanding the universe of what we consider worthy of meaning. Using a process-orientation in understanding not only what the child is expressing, but *how* the child is expressing, is an attitude of respect for the child as a whole person.

Recognizing inner diversity also has important implications in children's subjective well-being and participation. As we grow and develop, so do patterns. In a positive lifelong development, patterns become more supple, integrated and our portfolio of possible responses increases, but there is a sense of "homecoming" when we have the space to engage through the patterns that feel natural to us (O'TOOLE; GORDON, 2015). Each child's experience of well-being is therefore unique. One child might need more structure, while another more flexibility. One child might need interaction while another needs time alone. Research on children's well-being must take in consideration children's subjective views of how they experience well-being (BEN-ARIEH, 2019). As a social group, children experience and describe well-being in a different way than adults, but an in-depth grasp of each child's well-being requires extending the field of inquiry into understanding the patterns of inner diversity that constitute a source of vitality and motivation for the child.

Seeing children's participation and engagement through the lenses of inner diversi-ty, invites parents, childcare professionals and researchers to relax their 'templates' of how a child *should* be expressing their views (O'TOOLE, 2019). Expectations and adult projected images of children's responses can lead to considering content or the form of expressing their views as insufficient or inadequate. Often adults will wait only a few seconds before offering words or prompts to help guide the child's response, sometimes not even noticing how they are interfering by seeking to "help" or speed up the process. This can result in the child's perspectives being disrupted, disregarded or distorted. Recalling the principle of self-organization helps us to be guided by inquiry, and the use of neutral language to describe *how* the child participates, rather than *whether* they are participating. This is a strengths-based approach (LOPEZ; LOUIS, 2009) for creating a space that enables children to share and voice their views, whether that is in a family, educational, or research context.

Finally, we suggest that recognizing lifelong patterns of inner diversity as natural strengths can be significant in personal and professional development. Revisiting one's childhood memories through the lenses of inner diversity, can help adults "reclaim the territory of their childhood" by inquiring, observing and empathizing with ways of processing that have been a constant in their personal narratives, thus uncovering the assets embedded within it. This can transform a personal narrative of misunderstanding or challenge, into one of resilience and value (INGAMELLS; EPSTON, 2012; WHITE, 1988). Educational research has demonstrated that the practice of biographic self-reflection can contribute to teachers' professional development (KOSTER; VAN DEN BERG, 2014). What we support with this article is that eliciting patterns of inner diversity through exercises like personal archeology might be integrated not only in teacher's self-study but in the

self-reflective practice of any adult relating to children.

The path we have described is not necessarily an easy one to follow, but we hope we have demonstrated that it is an interesting, fruitful and useful exploration on many levels. It holds the promise of addressing and being addressed in all our endeavors as the unique beings that each of us is.

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