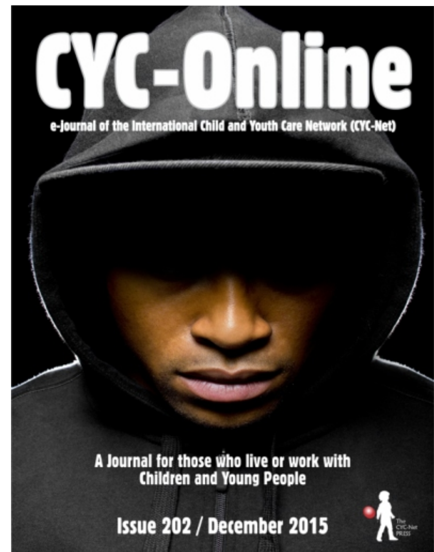
CYC-Online

e-journal of the International Child and Youth Care Network (CYC-Net)

A Journal for those who live or work with Children and Young People

Issue 202 / December 2015



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Memory Triggers

I have a lot of coffee cups – some quite interesting and vibrant. The photo here is a picture of my cupboard. When I go there in the morning for my first cup of coffee, I am struck by a flood of memories – because most of my coffee cups remind me of an experience, somewhere.

You see, I have had the opportunity to be with CYC folks in many places and often they give me a coffee cup as a token of being there, with them. Memories. I love memories – but the cups are not memories – they are, really, memory-triggers. Each morning, as I look into the cupboard, memories are stimulated. Sometimes as I stand in front of the cupboard, deciding what cup to use, I take the time to delve a little deeper into one memory or the other.

Around the house I also have T-shirts, conference programmes, and things like small tokens. They are all also memory-triggers – they remind me of places I have been and the people with whom I have 'hung out' (to use a Child and Youth Care expression).

Now, of course, all my coffee cups, and t-shirts and things are not only about CYC events. Our house is filled with memory-triggers – pictures of places we have been, bits of cutlery, glasses, bowls, all kinds of wonderful things. I have talked to many friends about this and they, too, have many memory triggers. Seems to be a natural thing – collecting things which trigger memories.

As you can see from my coffee cups not all my (or our) memory triggers are grand or expensive things – others are even smaller; like a pebble from a beach in Oregon, a simple Christmas tree ornament picked up in Ireland, a dried seed Sylviane gathered from a friend's garden in South Africa, or a rubber stamp I have had since I was a kid ☺.

These little ones are, for me, perhaps the most precious. You see, with a coffee cup, or a T-shirt, or an advertising pen, some part of the memory is available to the casual observer. But with the little ones, the meaning is invisible to anyone else unless I (we) choose to disclose it. That little pebble sitting in a bowl looks, to the average visitor, like a little rock sitting in a bowl – but for me it is a reminder of a long and important walk I had with a friend when he helped me deal with a personal struggle.

A memory-trigger is just that: something that triggers a memory.

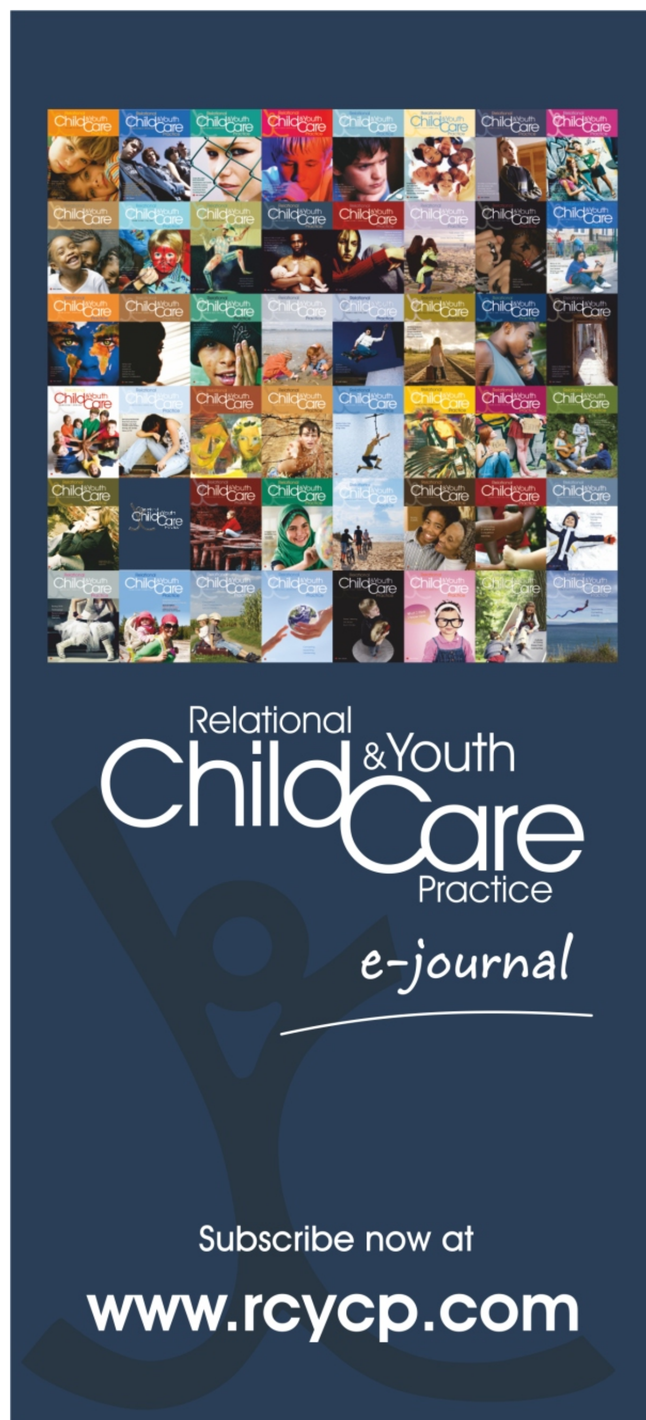
Now, in all honesty, I must say that I do not collect external triggers for bad memories – I have enough of those internally, as we all do. And who wants to reach into a drawer to find a reminder of bad experiences?

My old mentor Henry Maier used to always have a pocket full of little things – a piece of string, a tiny rubber person, an elastic band. And sometimes when he met with a child, or did a training, he would pull one of them from his pocket and give it to the other person, just so they might remember a moment of encounter. I still have one he gave me. And I bet there are some young people out there who have one too.

As we go through life we have millions of experiences. Some worth keeping as a memory, some not. And, unfortunately, as the experiences pile up, some memories, even good ones, slip away. By anchoring an experience in some little object and then keeping the object, we increase the chances the memory will always be available to us.

What about the young people with whom we work. Do we help them to collect memory triggers? The next time you go for a walk in the park with a young person, if it proves to be a positive experience, would you consider finding a pebble or a seed for the young person? And maybe one for yourself so you will remember the young person in that moment?

Thom



A Difficult Year

Kiaras Gharabaghi

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2015 surely will be remembered as a particularly difficult year for humanity, even before the tragic events in Paris. It's been a year of many tragedies, on every continent, and frequently between the continents, on the seas. It's not just that the body count was particularly high; this year, more so than in quite some time, the relationship between poor decisions made by men in comfortable places and the painful loss of peoples chronically living with life threatening adversity was especially obvious. Western weapons were at the centre of the mayhem as usual; these are democratically distributed amongst all parties to conflict in this world of ours, including the shooters in Paris. Many of us hold stocks in the companies that produce these weapons, even if we don't know it; this is the beauty of pension plans, mutual funds, and other types of fairly standard personal investments. As is always the case, children and youth suffer the consequences of our complacencies more so than most. Whether they are abducted into child soldiering in northern Nigeria or Sudan, or whether they are amongst the millions trying to make their way from Syria to Germany, or whether they are patients in the accidentally bombed hospital in Iraq, children and youth live in a world in which it is difficult for them to maintain any meaningful agency. It's hard to have control over your life when the circumstances and social context of your life are dramatically altered overnight by the decisions of men in distant places. Those men can live with the collateral damage, a term they much prefer to child murdering, because that just sounds a little too dark.

Of course, war and political mayhem are not the only barriers to agency for young people. In fact, most young people don't live under conditions of war. Some are fortunate enough to live under the parental protection of the state. Some fortune. Turns out that even those children and youth who have the richest parents in the world, entire countries with billions and sometimes trillions of dollars in their budgets, are at the mercy of decision-making driven by financial consideration, the need to reduce spending, to reign in the comforts of life, and to

find more efficient ways of meeting their needs. They don't even get to define their needs; an expert will do that for them.

There is a lot of talk these days about even darker times coming. The fear of terrorism, international tensions that seem to echo the dynamics of the Cold War, the recognition that no matter how much champagne is provided during the current global environmental talks in Paris we still won't save the planet, and also the increasing hopelessness of managing global population movements spawned by war and conflict, all add up to a global pessimism about the capacity of humanity to respond. The global preoccupation with the brutal murder of a much loved lion in Africa earlier this year serves perhaps as a good example of how much we have given up any pretense that we care; instead we rally around what for Westerners seems entirely reasonable. The beast is dead - the king of the animal kingdom, the main character of a very successful Hollywood movie. Suddenly we are all Sinbad.

Where does this leave young people? For them, the horror of our self-destruction is captured in one-line statements on their mobile phones, pictures on *Snapchat*, a few characters on their twitter feed. In the meantime, they have to trust that the very same adults responsible for the mayhem will fix it in time for their turn at adulthood. Of course that won't happen, and we have no reason to believe that the current generation of young people won't become what the previous generation became – absorbed into a collective complacency, a globalized amnesia, a world wide web of broken relationships.

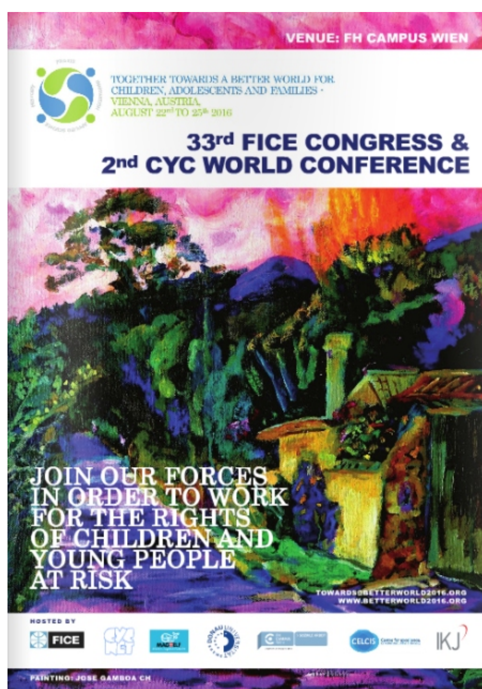
Depressed yet? Well, don't be. All hope lies in those broken relationships. If we can recognize that our current predicament, and perhaps many historical predicaments, really is about the gradual dissolution of relationships, then there is hope. Because in relationship we find radical power. Power to redefine the priorities for 2016 and beyond. The power to re-include the excluded. Power to re-value humanity and de-value material greed and the sanctity of economic growth. Indeed, it is within relationships that we find love, a disease that devours war, oppression and lunacy, and that is extremely contagious. A pandemic of love is just what the doctor ordered. And it is within relationship that we rediscover young people's agency.

I say all of this to make a simple point. The world needs us; the world needs child and youth care practice. I know this may sound ridiculous at a time when so many child and youth care practitioners are wondering whether their minimum wage, limited term contracts will keep them housed for much longer. But the world does need what for us is the foundation of our way of being in this world (credit for this phrase to Garfat). The world needs relationships that honour our humanity, celebrate our diversity, and encourage rather than suppress our voices. The world needs our stories, which very often are stories about overcoming adversity, about collaborating to build community, about creating value outside of economies. Relationships, and in particular relationships with young people, are perhaps the only processes left that have not yet

been monetized. There is power in being the exception.

What does this mean for 2016? Well, I think it means that we push a little harder to ensure that we stand united through our diversity; that we resolve our own relationship problems the way we help young people resolve theirs. That we re-commit to our relationships within and between our open and accessible circles of child and youth care communities, without challenging the geometry of any of these circles. There are some items on the global self-destruct agenda that might benefit from our input. Perhaps we should speak up about the current refugee crisis and demand that young people finding themselves stateless be given not a state but a relationship within a community that is safe and welcoming, no matter where that might be. Perhaps we should speak up and focus on our relationship with the planet, as indigenous peoples have done for millennia. Perhaps we should question how weapons production furthers the development of cross-cultural, globalized and authentic relationships. And perhaps we should engage our young people to ensure they have a voice in shaping this world before it is too late. Perhaps we should teach states how to love, so that they can do better as parents and do less as contributors to mayhem.

So much to do in 2016. But we desperately need a better year, a better future. I can imagine a better future only in the context of replacing material growth with relational cultures. So for 2016, I wish you all a relational reawakening, much love, and peace.



CYC
A False Dichotomy

Hans Skott-Myhre

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Usually, I write with enthusiasm and excitement. I look forward to sharing my thoughts about Child and Youth Care (CYC) practice and theory, and hope that somewhere someone is reading my words and engaging in some degree of critical reflection about what I have written. I enjoy the field of CYC because it has provided me with a home both as practitioner and scholar for over 40 years. I have taken pleasure in the rich and diverse field of ideas and praxis. I have always appreciated the tone of collegiality and inclusion that has greeted my work from even those who disagree with me in substantive ways. My colleagues in their work (and I hope in mine) have made thoughtful responses and proposals about our points of contention that have extended my work and thought. Even when we disagree they have sought to find what we hold in common as a way to incorporate my work into theirs and I hope I have done the same. The very fact that Brian Gannon and Thom Garfat have afforded my rather radical work, which sits out on the edge of our field, a column here has stood as a testament to the inclusory nature of our community of CYC practitioners and scholars. Given my experience of a certain kind of collegial generosity in CYC I was quite taken aback by the strong critique of the activist edge of our field in Heather Modlin's column in Issue 200 of *CYC-Online*.

In her piece, Modlin paints a picture of CYC that is both unrecognizable to me and at the same time quite familiar. The familiar parts are indicated in passages such as:

> *My professional language includes the words and phrases life space, rhythm, presence, hanging out, activity programming, use of self, relational practice ... we (CYC workers) were all kindred spirits who would recognize each other across a crowded room, our shared understanding and experience reflected in a conspiratorial smile and a knowing tilt of the head.*

As I read this I felt a great deal of commonality with her description. I have said for many years that CYC/youthworkers were a very special group of people. I have said that you can always spot a youthworker. I have taken pride in welcoming several generations of CYC and youthworkers into the field as members of a community unlike any other. I resonated with Modlin's articulation of key terms in the field. I have written on almost all of them at one point or another in very sympathetic ways. I have also contested and extended them in what I have hoped to be productive ways.

But then there is a shift in tone. Modlin informs us that the world of CYC is changing and not for the better. There are forces afoot who would betray not just the true nature of the field, but the very children themselves. Indeed Modlin has identified some of us as having "differences in ideology, in fundamental beliefs about the role and purpose of Child and Youth Care." Exactly who these people are and precisely what they have proposed is not entirely clear, but apparently they have no use for direct practice or CYC workers who value direct practice. She states:

> *There is sometimes an undertone that direct-care practitioners are less sophisticated and critical in their thinking, that focusing on the needs of the individual child is somehow "less than" focusing on the collective.*

Of course, it is hard to know exactly how one is to identify this "undertone." Indeed, I am not sure that such a characterization leads to any kind of fruitful conversation. Since there is no example given, it is hard to know exactly who is producing this nasty undertone that views front line workers as uncritical and lacking in sophistication.

I have to wonder who among my colleagues has strayed so far from the fold? I thought and thought about who this could be. I have read extensively in our field and have been an editor on several key publications, I have reviewed a number of books that have gone on to be classics in our field, I have had rich and invigorating conversations with many scholars of international note and yet, I couldn't think of a single concrete example of anyone who disparages front line workers in an undertone or otherwise. In fact I just published, in this very journal, three columns dedicated to demonstrating the inextricable relation between front line workers and academic scholars. I couldn't think of anyone whose fundamental beliefs about the role and purpose of CYC was at odds with his or her front line colleagues.

Do we have differences of opinion about emphasis, tactics, theory, applications and so on? I hope so. I can't imagine how a field grows and changes without such edges and differences. But the dichotomy that Modlin proposes between those interested in the direct work with individual children and an orientation towards activism and social justice when working with those children simply doesn't hold up empirically.

Modlin states that there is a tendency in the activist group to privilege radical re-

sistance over individual intervention. For myself I cannot think of a single article, book or conversation I have had over the past forty years in this field where individual intervention was diminished in relation to radical resistance. In fact, it would be hard to find radical resistance among young people without it being rooted in the capacities of a single young person. I have argued many times that this set of relations and its political possibilities is what makes CYC so important. But you can't have one without the other. It is the relationship that is the basis of all revolutionary activism.

Modlin extends this logic when she suggests that those CYC workers interested in activism refuse "to acknowledge the importance and usefulness of direct intervention." This she says puts 'us' in a position where intervention becomes a last resort ..." Again there is no example, but her logic escapes me. What does she mean by individual intervention? The field is built on encounters between young people and adults. This is inescapable. Does Modlin honestly believe that her colleagues could be so callous as to not offer assistance in the moment to young people and families in pain, while also working towards a greater degree of equity for us all?

The next section of her piece is confusing. After asserting that those of us who take an activist or critical stance towards our work have little or no interest in individual intervention, she then states that this lack of interest will somehow lead to less evidence based research in CYC. She also asserts that our field is already known as a field that has a bad reputation for being less than empirically rigorous.

On the basis of her experience alone, Modlin argues that the young people she has worked with don't want to be political activists. While this may be true of the population she has encountered, I am not sure it encompasses the aspirations of millions of young people engaged in political struggles of all types across the planet.

While her assertion that young people want to "be safe, to feel better about themselves, to be invited to birthday parties, to do well in school" is undoubtedly true, it is also true that for most of the children of the world these simple things will not come into their lives in any kind of non-institutional setting without a substantial shift in the current distribution of wealth and resources. Modlin acknowledges that providing young people with these simple things is not easy. If so, then I don't understand why she would not work together with her more politically minded colleagues in pursuit of these goals for more children than just those immediately in front of her. She says that our work should both be both/and instead of either/or but her entire column strikes me as more divisive than unifying.

Modlin says a number of things I agree with however. She states that we can change the world "by remaining open to all sources of information and learning, not just those with which we are most comfortable ... Child and youth care is a challenging job that requires complex thinking." However, she then articulates what I perceive to be a case for anti-intellectualism.

She begins by arguing that practitioners have a difficult time participating in political discussions because “the material is inaccessible ... Academics often make reference to Foucault or Derrida, which the average practitioner is not familiar with.” She then makes an argument that this is because most child and youth care programs are focused on practice not theory. I would argue that the case she is making here would seem to indicate that perhaps we could offer more of the theory as it relates to practice in order to bring academia and the front lines closer together. In fact, as I mentioned above, I make this argument in the three columns I have written here in *CYC-Online* on The Role of The Intellectual in CYC.

Extending her argument, she proposes what I would consider a pseudo-dichotomy between those who study philosophy and those who study brain trauma or the therapeutic use of daily life events. Again I searched my memory for examples of this split in the literature in CYC and instead found multiple examples of a blending of these perspectives in the work of Mark Krueger, Kiaras Gharabaghi, Scott Kouri, Nicole Land, Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw, Marie Hoskins, Jennifer White, and Fikile Nxamalo among others. There is no necessary divergence. Our field is interdisciplinary and as someone who has taught hundreds of CYC/youthworkers, I have never found my students to be lacking in the ability to encompass both philosophy and direct practice. Modlin states that: “Heads in the clouds are just as visually obstructed as heads in the sand.” I would agree, but unlike Modlin I find very few heads in the sand or in the clouds in our field. Most of my colleagues and students are pragmatists who want to think deeply and well about the work they do.

In her closing remarks I find myself once again resonating with Modlin when she calls for the need to talk about,

> *social, economic, and political worlds ... to create systemic change so that generations of young people who come next may not have to endure some of the hardships of our young people ... at the same time we need to help them navigate the world they currently live in*

I agree ... but once again the text turns in another direction. Modlin feels compelled to warn us that young people should have the freedom to decide whether to resist. She tells us it is not the job of CYC to “turn young people into revolutionaries.” She then makes what I read as an implied accusation that “It is wrong to use our children as pawns to further our own political agenda.”

I have to wonder who this addressed to? Is she saying, as she appears to, that there are CYC scholars and practitioners doing this? In reading her writing here, I find our field largely unrecognizable.

Let me be clear, I have no trouble with reasoned and substantiated debate and contestation. As anyone who reads my column knows I can be a bit critical myself at times. But I work hard to substantiate my arguments and to be generous to those with whom I disagree. For Modlin to ad-

monish her colleagues that they should not use children as pawns is outrageous. I am unaware of any scholar or activist in CYC who would use children to their own ends. This kind of accusation sets a dangerous precedent for discourse in the field of CYC.

Perhaps the thing that most makes me a bit despairing is the either/or nature of the piece. Although Modlin attempts to modify this tendency at several points, it seems clear that certain people fit into CYC as she envisions it and others do not. This is dangerous and one has to begin to wonder whether, if this way of thinking gains traction, certain scholars and practitioners might get blackballed from important journals or conferences because they don't use key words or are not recognizable across the room. That would be tragic.

What I love about this work is the openness and ability to disagree and even fight with each other with a certain degree of grudging admiration and, might I even say, love. If we split into camps, much will be lost and absolutely nothing gained. For myself, CYC is a very big room with lots of space for many different CYC's with a myriad of different descriptions, some of which I am sure I won't like, but I will respect and be happy to include.

Of course, I may have misread Modlin entirely. Perhaps I am being unfair. Either way, I welcome a response from Modlin or a public discourse with anyone else about the concerns she raises. Perhaps we can clear the air and find a way forward together.

Practitioners Don't Have An Hour

Jack Phelan

CYC-OnLine is a great resource for me and hopefully many other CYC practitioners around the world. I really like the easy to read pieces which also have complexity embedded in the seeming simplicity. CYC practice, when done well, mirrors this simple/complex paradox. I always try to keep my contributions fairly short, so that they can be read in 10 minutes or so, and hopefully thought about afterwards. My mentor in this type of CYC writing is Brian Gannon, our editor, and chief bottle washer in South Africa, without whom there would be no *CYC-Online*. Brian's "Practice Hints" have been a staple of this e-journal for many years. Brian is taking a well earned rest after this issue, but his spirit will continue to guide many of us. So, in the Gannon methodology, here are my thoughts this month.

Sophisticated CYC practitioners sometimes have to endure living with a new supervisor who is getting in the way because of his/her own developmental journey. The respected colleague who gets promoted to supervisor suddenly has this compulsion to emphasize rules and procedure over creative approaches and even though the newer workers like this, it rankles more experienced staff. The tension and sometimes open confrontations could be very unpleasant. Here is a strategy that I learned from one of my sons that is a successful coping mechanism.

When each of my three sons became 12 years old, he was assigned the job of taking out the garbage. My oldest would suddenly have a pulled muscle or a headache when he wanted to duck this chore. I would get angry with him and accuse him of faking the distress. He often avoided doing what was needed and I was mad at him for quite a while. The second son would argue about the fairness of requiring him to take care of everyone's garbage, and would only willingly take out his own garbage. I was also mad at him fairly regularly. The youngest reached 12 and appeared very happy to take on this responsibility. When the garbage was full, he would be reminded of this and his response was always a cheerful "I'll get right on it dad". He rarely did take the garbage out, but I never got mad at him.

When you get asked to do something as an experienced practitioner by a new supervisor and you feel it is irrelevant or unnecessary, just smile and agree to get right on it, then keep doing what you think is important. Just don't say you heard this from me.

RESIDENTIAL CHILD AND YOUTH CARE IN A DEVELOPING WORLD

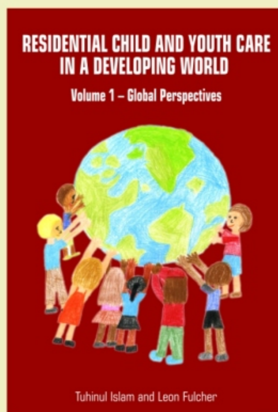
Tuhinul Islam & Leon Fulcher

Residential Child and Youth Care in a Developing World builds from a critique of Courtney, M. E. & Iwaniec, D. (Eds). (2009). *Residential Care of Children: Comparative Perspectives* (Oxford University Press) which evaluated de-instiutionalisation policies in the residential care of children in 11 countries. It also builds on the comparative efforts of Whittaker, del Valle & Holmes (2015) *Therapeutic Residential Care for Children and Youth: Developing Evidence-Based International Practice.* We started from an intellectual claim that residential child and youth care "places" exist everywhere – whether called homes, orphanages, schools, centres or institutions. Unlike Courtney & Iwaniec or Whittaker et al, we include private boarding schools, madrassa and other religious learning centres in our definition of residential child and youth care. Residential establishments involve any building(s) (and sometimes tents) where children or young people are brought together to live in shared community life spaces for given periods of time, whether as refugees of war, poverty, disease, abuse, famine or natural disaster.

Residential Child and Youth Care in a Developing World represents a unique comparative research effort in its time and place with 69 contributors already submitted from 62 countries where care has received limited attention in the literature. FIFA world regions have been used to group contributions for publication purposes. Each contribution builds on an historic legacy of story-telling about child and youth care practices in different places, by different peoples. An overwhelming response has already yielded a diverse and unique range of stories about triumph and turbulence in the provision of residential care and education for children world-wide.

Volume 1 – Residential Child and Youth Care in a Developing World: Global Perspectives (December 2015)
Volume 2 – Residential Child and Youth Care in a Developing World: Asian and Middle East Perspectives (February 2016)
Volume 3 – Residential Child and Youth Care in a Developing World: African Perspectives (April 2016)
Volume 4 – Residential Child and Youth Care in a Developing World: European Perspectives June 2016)

email info@cycnetpress.cyc-net.org to express an interest in these publications and for inclusion on our mailing list.



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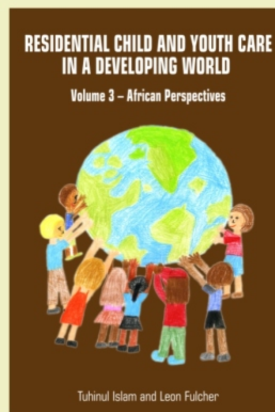

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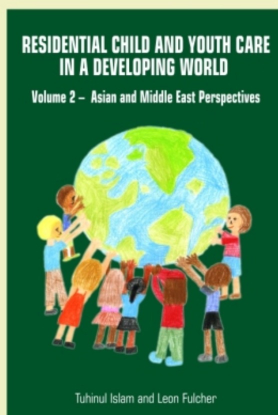

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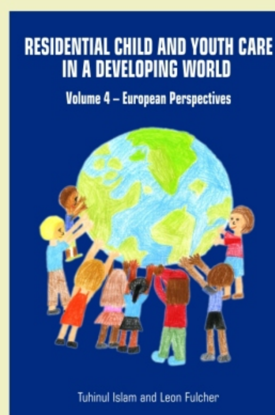

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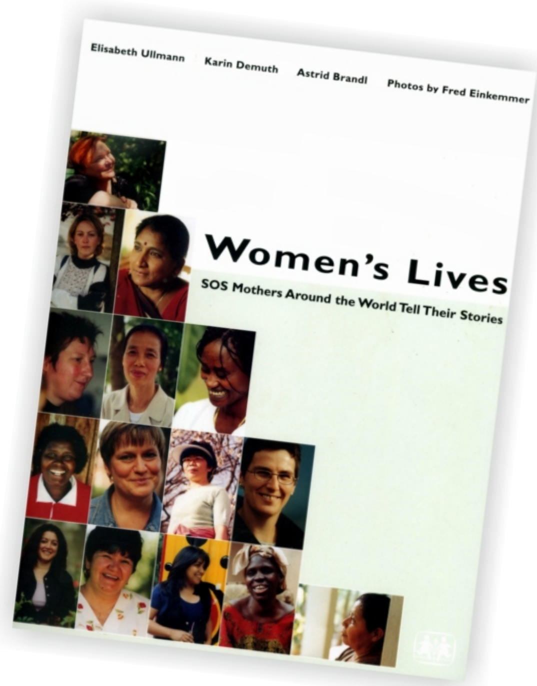
Women's Lives

SOS Mothers tell their stories

Part 3



Marie Théogène Umuteteli

Born 25.10.1961, Rwanda

"I was so sad that I had been widowed without having had any children by my husband. After his death there was nothing of him here anymore. That's why I'm even happier that I'm allowed to look after these children now, who were after all, his children too."

Marie's husband is dead. He used to work for SOS Children's Villages and so she sees her work as an SOS mother as a continuation of his work. Even though she is desperately sad at the loss of her husband, she is also happy that her wish to have children has been fulfilled in this way. When you speak to people in Rwanda you will be confronted with the genocide of 1994. It is ever-present. Everybody lost friends and relatives and some families

were entirely obliterated. Within minutes of talking to Marie the genocide comes up. She not only lost her husband, but many of her relatives also died in the war. She was herself in a refugee camp and all the children in her SOS family experienced appalling sights. One of her girls, Margaret, has a false leg. It is hardly surprising that Marie's message to the world is an emotional appeal for peace.

The Story of Her Life

"And then came the genocide."

My name is Marie-Thèogène and I am forty-one years old. First I went to primary school and then I did three years of secondary school. Afterwards I went to work as a housekeeper for white people. I got married in 1986. My husband worked here in the SOS Children's Village Kigali. He was a teacher and a youth educator. For the first five years of our marriage we remained childless. And then came the genocide, which was also responsible for my husband's death. I have a photograph of him in my bedroom and I always carry another in my handbag.

I escaped to Byumba after the genocide. The SOS Children's Village co-workers there asked me if I wanted to work for them, as they had lost so many of their SOS mothers in the war. I was overjoyed, because my husband had worked for SOS Children's Villages for more than

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fourteen years. He was godfather to some of the children and was like a second father to them. I was so sad that I had been widowed without having had any children by my husband. After his death there was nothing of him here anymore. That's why I'm even happier that I'm allowed to look after these children now, who were after all, his children too. It was very crowded after the war, because there were so many children who needed care. Then I discovered that my parents were still alive. We'd lost touch with each other in the chaos of the war. I wanted to be near them and so I asked if I could be transferred to Kigali. My parents are almost eighty years old. I only have one sister left. All my other brothers and sisters were killed in the war.

Is there somebody in your family to whom you are particularly close?

Yes, my younger sister. She's a widow too. Her husband died last year. We often visit one another. My children also visit her because she's like an aunt to them. If my sister comes to visit and I'm not here, the children give her something to eat and drink, just as you would normally if your aunt came to visit. My father also comes to visit and is happy that I have got children. He's always asking for photos of "his" grandchildren. When I first started working here I asked my father, "Why don't you come to visit us and meet my children?" So then he came to visit and brought milk for the children. It is our custom to bring milk for a new mother to give to her new-born child.

Is there a person with whom you can share your innermost feelings?

Sometimes friends visit me or I visit them. But I can really only speak about personal things to my aunt in Senegal. We phone each other and write letters. She visits me here in the village and I travel to see her too.

What do you do in your free time?

I usually visit my parents. I cook for them, clean their flat and go shopping for them if they need something. They look forward to my visits because now they only have two children. I have a very small family, because all my uncles became victims of the genocide too.

I enjoy cooking. I did that for years when I worked for the white people. I try to give the children as healthy a diet as possible. I have a lot of cookbooks and I try all sorts of recipes from them.

Is there anything else that you enjoy doing, something that means a lot to you?

Above everything else I love children. I am very proud that I am allowed to look after the twelve children that I have. We're a proper family. I am the head of the household and a mother to the children. When they're ill, I call the doctor. I make sure they do their homework and do everything that is important for them.

What do you think are your strengths and particular qualities?

I find cleanliness very important. Everything has to be spotlessly clean around

here. I like flowers but can't bring myself to pick them. And our family is constantly active. We don't sit around doing nothing. We like to be busy all the time, either in the kitchen or in the garden. Anybody who sits around all day is lazy. I am not like that.

Motivation for Her Choice of Career

> *"... t least I had children, even after having lost my husband."*

I was living in the refugee camp in Byumba with my mother-in-law and both my sisters-in-law at the time. It wasn't easy getting on with my mother-in-law and life in the camp was difficult. There was nothing to eat and I was worried about what sort of a future I would have with no husband. There was an SOS co-worker called Willi in the SOS emergency camp in Ngarama. He had asked the other SOS mothers to keep an eye open for women who might want to look after abandoned children. There were so many of them who had lost their parents. I knew these women, because my husband had worked together with them for years. They helped me to get a job with SOS Children's Villages. We had neither food nor money in the refugee camp and so I was glad of the job. And I was happy that I could continue

Visiting 'grandpa' and 'grandma', Marie's parents

my husband's work. It really did me good to have somebody who called me mummy and at least I had children, even after having lost my husband.

What did your family and friends say when they found out that your were going to be an SOS mother?

My mother-in-law and both my sisters-in-law were very pleased. Previously they'd always had my husband's children to stay in the holidays. My family said, "How lucky for you that you can continue your husband's work!"

Experiences as an SOS Mother

“Now when I go to bed a thousand thoughts rush through my head.”

It wasn’t so easy at the very beginning. The children’s health was bad. They had all sorts of illnesses such as chickenpox. The youngest child weighed less than a kilo when he was a year old. I started off in Ngarama with eight children. More came along and now I have twelve. We didn’t have any SOS aunts at that time. They only started working in 1995. It wasn’t easy looking after a big crowd like that. You need a lot of love and care. We were thankful to God for protecting our lives during the war. To show how thankful we

were, we worked for Him; not for money but for God.

Who supported you in your work, particularly at the beginning?

I didn't have any special support. Even today I'm left on my own with my twelve children when the SOS aunt takes her annual leave. Then I have to take care of the children, do the cooking and everything else that has to be done. But the problems we have here are minimal. Life in the SOS Children's Village is so peaceful in comparison to what's going on outside it. Here we have a family and children and manage everything ourselves. We also have a good administrative department, which takes care of everything. If we have a problem we go to the SOS mother advisor or to the village director and the problems are solved quite quickly. Of course, things aren't always perfect, because sometimes some of the children can be very difficult. It's good that we have one day off a week and our annual leave. Then we can talk about our problems with our natural families.

How would you describe your work as an SOS mother?

The most important thing for an SOS mother is that she loves children. This job needs somebody who is totally dedicated because sometimes you don't get a wink of sleep all night, because one of the children is ill. Can you imagine that with twelve children? They've all got problems and all want to be heard. What is important is that the SOS mother advisor, the village director and everyone in the administration knows what this work is all about and how difficult it is to look after twelve children. They are all responsible for the correct running of the village, whereas I have to make sure that everything in the household runs smoothly. I do the same as any other woman in my role as head of the household, but I need help, support and understanding.

I have a meal plan for the children. It lists what they are supposed to eat in a day. I adjust the food according to the needs of the children. For example, it shows whether a particular child prefers bread to rice. I make sure that all goes according to plan. If the children are ill, I take

them to the doctor. If it's an emergency, I go to the hospital with them. It's possible for me to stay with them there. One of the other SOS mothers brings us food, but I'm the one that stays with the child and helps him on his way to recovery.

What gives you the strength you need for this work?

If times are really difficult, I pray to God to give me more strength, because I believe that God can solve a lot of problems. Then I close my eyes and tell God my troubles. At other times I go to my bedroom and look at the photograph of my husband. That gives me the strength to carry on.

How do you work together with the SOS aunts?

The SOS aunts are mostly responsible for the areas of schooling and training, but when I take my annual leave the SOS aunt is responsible for everything else too. She cooks, does the washing, washes up and cleans. We get on well together. If we have any problems, I remind her that we are here to look after orphans and that it requires special care on our parts. She has been chosen for this job because she has this special quality. We don't talk about personal things very much but, because we both have the same tasks, we do talk. We share the responsibility. If a child is sick and I have to stay up all night, she's by my side and stays up as well.

Could you tell us something about your working relationship with the other co-workers?

Each section has its own person in charge. The SOS mother advisor is responsible for us. The youth leader is in charge of the youths. The headmaster is responsible for school matters and the doctor is there for medical matters. Therefore, depending on what the question is, we work together with all sorts of different people. We usually work in a group, as a team. The village director is a father-figure for the children. We often meet up with him and work together with him, especially when there are children who have to get over traumatic experiences, or if there's a problem at school. The SOS mother advisor works directly together with the village director. She can't make any important decisions, though. She tells us if things have to be changed because they're not working properly. However, the results of the evaluations that she makes are confidential and are not shown to anybody outside.

How do you get on with the other SOS mothers?

We get on well together. For example, if I have to take one of my children to the doctors and know that another SOS mother also has to go, then, of course, I take her child with me too. If I'm out and about and bump into a child who should really be in school, I tell his SOS mother so that she can deal with him. I am particularly close to my next-door-neighbour.

Have you, as a person, changed since you have been working as an SOS mother?

That's a difficult question. Following the death of my husband, I was just happy that the children were there. What did change though was that I was used to sleeping through the night. I didn't have any children. There was just my husband and myself and the servant. Now when I go to bed a thousand thoughts go through my head: "The children have to have breakfast at seven. One of them is ill. I have to start getting ready at five," and so on. I don't sleep as well as I used to. I probably only sleep for about four hours out of every twenty-four.

How did you enjoy your training to be an SOS mother?

Normally you spend three months doing practical training, working as an SOS aunt, before you become an SOS mother. If you complete this successfully, you then have another three months' training. You can usually only become an SOS mother when you have successfully worked as an SOS aunt for five years. It was all different for me, though, because the war meant that they urgently needed people. I didn't get paid straight away either. I received my first salary in 1995. It was all more than a practical for me because it was the real thing and I didn't have the usual training. I stepped in, because they urgently needed women. I showed them my documents

from my previous employers and they employed me straight away. They thought that I would probably make a good SOS mother, perhaps because I had previous experience with children.

Later I started on a course about coping with traumas. I find it very interesting, because you discover that you have been traumatised yourself. You just haven't shown it, because you're there to protect the children. Apart from that, the course also helps us to understand the children's behaviour better. At first you think that they are all right, but after a time you realise that they have problems, because of the traumas they have suffered. This course takes place every Thursday. I take part one week and the SOS aunt takes part the next. It is run by a French woman and two other experts in this field. The course shows us how we should treat the children. We haven't started to deal with our own traumas yet, because we have to finish working on the subject of the children's traumas first.

Have you heard about Hermann Gmeiner?

I have heard a lot about Hermann Gmeiner, because my husband used to work for SOS Children's Villages. We always celebrate his birthday on 23rd of June and commemorate the anniversary of his death. He was a soldier in World War II and he saw how the children were suffering. Then he had the idea that he should look after these children. He didn't build an orphanage as was normal at that time, though. He created a place where the children felt at home and where they could live in a family. He was a very special man, full of compassion and he is a role model for us. We have an arrangement here that all the co-workers, from the assistant gardener up, have to donate part of their salaries for orphans. I'm not quite sure, though, whether the money goes towards our children or whether it's for other orphans. Everybody gives as much as they can spare. We do that so that we don't have to depend entirely on donations from the white population and it means that we are also doing our bit.

How do you get on with the people from the neighbourhood of the SOS Children's Village?

We have a good relationship. You can really see that when our boys are being christened. The Catholic Church demands that the children have a godfather and because there are not enough men in the SOS Children's Village, we have to look outside for them. A godfather doesn't just have to be present at the christening, he also has to have the child to stay during the holidays so that the child has a chance to be together with children who have their natural parents.

What has been the most difficult moment in your life as an SOS mother and what has been the best?

One of the best things happened to me whilst I was in Ngarama and I suddenly saw my father in the street. Neither of us knew whether my mother was still alive until one day we received the news that

she was. Father and I went to her and we were reunited again. I'll never forget those wonderful moments. Another great thing was Willi-Coucou's development. When he was given to me to be taken care of he was hardly alive anymore. It was a great joy for me to see how he slowly improved and regained his strength. He was the first boy that I was entrusted with in Kigali and, because he was so ill, the doctor came at hourly intervals to make sure he was still alive. That's why we are so close and people call me Mama Coucou.

What would you change in the SOS Children's Village if you had the chance?

I like to cook very much and I think it would be great if each house had its own stove. If I had my own stove, I could make special things for the children like a cake. But I know that SOS Children's Villages can't afford it. It's not just the stove but you would need electricity in every house too. As I know that's not possible, I do the best I can.

Have you ever compared your life to that of a single mother outside the SOS Children's Village?

Single mothers have a lot of problems that we don't have. Where can they find the money to send their children to school, for example? Or, who pays the doctor if their child is ill? I don't have to worry about these things. If I need a doctor, I just go. Because of all these problems, some women just marry a man who might give them a bit of money, but otherwise brings nothing but trouble.

What do people think about the profession of an SOS mother?

Different people think different things. Some think that we have an easy life here and get well paid for it. They think that we're rich, egoistic women who do nothing but sit around and eat all day and don't want to get married. The others think we're something special and ask, "Why do you spend sleepless nights about a child that was put on this earth by somebody else? You must have some special gifts, because not everybody could do that."

The Children in Her Care

> *"I told them, 'I have also been through exactly what you are going through now'."*

There were six SOS mothers to begin with and we were all war widows. We shared our joys and sorrows, were happy in one another's company and had times when we cried together. But I was in a different situation to the others. All of them at least had children. When Coucou came to me I asked God, "Why do You give me this child who is in such a state and hardly alive at all, when I'm so unhappy anyway?" He couldn't sit up for two years, because he was physically so weak but then he slowly got better.

Yves, Florance and David saw how their father was murdered near Lake Victoria. They were totally traumatised. I took them to my home and showed them where I had lived with my husband. I said to them, "We lived here. This is a photo of my hus-

band and he's buried over there. I have also been through exactly what you are going through now." I told them that all the children in the village had lost somebody and they should take courage. I wanted them to understand that they weren't alone and that everyone was in the same boat. That helped them to deal with their trauma. I also said to them, "Please learn something from this! Try! Despite everything, you still have your lives ahead of you. You have to learn to live again, otherwise what will become of you?" Yves is very responsible. If the SOS aunt isn't here, I can leave him alone with the children. He looks after them, gives them something to eat and drink and keeps an eye on things. Henri and Françoise are also orphans but they still have relatives who come to visit them, so they're a bit better off than the others.

Florance's mother was shot dead. Florance has a problem with her leg. She was first taken to a hospital in Nairobi and eventually flown to one in Austria where they operated on her. Justin and Jeutin have got an older sister who found refuge with a priest in Ngarama. However, she became pregnant and the priest wouldn't look after her anymore. Nobody knows where she is now. Their parents are dead. First of all they lived with their grandfather, but he was old and had to take them to an orphanage. Then they were brought to a cousin who was a Muslim and they became Muslims too, so that they could stay with him, but they weren't happy there. An aunt heard about their fate and brought the children here. They were seven and three at the time.

Two of my children are at boarding school. They are at secondary school. They might move to the youth facility next year. We are still the SOS mothers of the youths living in the youth facility but we no longer carry all the responsibility, be-

cause there are educators there. The educators can talk to the SOS mothers if there is a problem with one of the children, because we can explain why the child is behaving like that and what is the best way to deal with it. Alternatively, I can also talk to the educators if my daughter's behaviour changes after moving to the youth home and I don't like what's happening. Then we talk about things. The educator is responsible, but I still feel like the children's mother.

Do you think that natural siblings are closer to one another than to the others?

No, I don't think so. Take Yves and Florance for example: Yves is older and Florance is still a little girl. She is very close to Angélique, because they're almost the same age. Yves gets on better with boys his own age. Sometimes, if his sister has done something wrong, I ask him what we should do. Then he says, "She is your child. You have to punish her." When a group of children live together in one house, the children develop a special kind of relationship. They are closer to one another than to children from the other family houses. There is also a third type of relationship and that is the one between all the children in the village. They feel that something binds them. If, for example, I send one of the children to the market and they meet another child from the village on the way, you can guarantee that they'll come back together.

Do the children already know what they want to do when they're grown up?

They like to talk about that. One of the children wants to be a singer like Bob Marley. Another says, "I'm going to go into the army and become a major and then you'll all have to do what I tell you to." A third one says, "I'm going to be a chauffeur. Then I'll pick my mother up in the car every day and drive her around." Justin saw a programme on television about AIDS and announced, "Right, from now on all I want to be is a priest and then I can't get AIDS. The girls will all just be my sisters and nothing else!"

Do you think that you will still be in touch with your children once they have left the SOS Children's Village?

But of course. Some of the SOS mothers already have children who have left and they bring their children to visit the SOS Children's Village. They are like grandchildren for the SOS mothers. One girl, who grew up here, has a baby of her own that is ill. The baby is in hospital and it's the "SOS grandmother" who sends food to the hospital for the baby.

Most of the children have relatives. How much contact do they have with them?

The relationships are good. Sometimes, to begin with, the relatives weren't too sure. Like Nadege and Nadette's grandmother. She was worried whether I'd be able to look after them properly. She came here every few days to make sure that everything was all right. Now, sometimes she doesn't come for three months at a time. That's partly because it's so difficult for her

to get here, but mainly because she trusts me now to do the right thing for them. One of the girls has an aunt who is a teacher here. She always asks after the girl to make sure that everything is going smoothly. During the holidays the children go to their relatives. Only Coucou stays here, because he doesn't have anyone at all.

Do you take the children with you when you visit your own relatives?

Yes, but my parents also get visits from other orphans too, especially when they find out that they'll get a present there! Children are materialistic. They go to my parents and say, "I would like some fresh milk, because we only get it out of a bottle at home." My parents love having children around. They love having grandchildren.

What would you like to give your children to help them on their way?

I would like to see them become active people. I'm always telling them, "Read your notes through again in the mornings. Make some tea. Make your beds. Divide your time up properly so that you have time to do your work, to learn and to have enough time for school."

To My Colleagues Around the World

I would like to ask the SOS mothers to keep Hermann Gmeiner's message and his love alive. I would like to ask them not to

do the job for the money. They should do it because they want to help people in need, just like Hermann Gmeiner did. We women have to use everything at our disposal, however little that may be, to fight for peace so that no more suffering orphans are made. It is the western countries, the rich countries that make weapons, bombs and grenades and through their actions cause even more orphans. They have to find another way to solve their conflicts. Let these rich people find the wealth in their hearts too!

Marie on the Situation of Women in Rwanda

Recently women have been given more rights, but they are still overworked, because they are responsible for doing the housework, the cooking, bringing up the children, fetching water, doing the gardening and much more. Even so, at least now women can sell what they grow in their gardens and earn a bit of money that way. Previously it was always the husband who decided how the money should be spent. The husband would tell his wife, "Go to the market and sell what you have, but the money belongs to me." That has changed now. If you ask a woman what she is going to do with the money, she might say, "I'm going to buy myself something nice to wear." That really is new. All of a sudden women can decide for themselves what they want to do with the money they have earned.

Men and women do have the same rights, but a wife will always remain a wife. If the wife were not at home, there is no way that the husband would make the

SOS Children's Village Work in Rwanda

Construction started on the first SOS Children's Village in Kigali in 1979. This was followed by the building of an SOS Kindergarten in 1981 and an SOS Youth Facility in 1983. Construction work started on the second SOS Children's Village in Gikongoro in the spring of 1993 and two years later an SOS Kindergarten also went into operation here. After the civil war in Rwanda an agreement was made with the Rwandan government to build another SOS Children's Village in Byumba to cope with the war orphans. This SOS Children's Village, together with a kindergarten, a school and a medical centre, went into operation in 1997.

Existing SOS Children's Village Facilities

3 SOS Children's Villages, 3 SOS Youth Facilities, 3 SOS Kindergartens, 3 SOS Hermann Gmeiner Schools, 2 SOS Medical Centres, 1 SOS Vocational Training Centre

beds or look after the baby. Those are her tasks. What has changed is that a husband respects his wife more these days. We celebrate International Women's Day every year on the 8th of March. If we did not have that day, we would name another day to go out on the streets and demand our rights.

Mothers enjoy a special position in our society. They are much revered. At a wedding, for example, the bride's mother has the pride of place. I am lucky, because my mother is still alive. When she comes to visit us in the village, all the neighbours come to greet her, especially those who do not have a mother anymore. They say, "Our grandmother is here."

From: WOMEN'S LIVES: SOS MOTHERS AROUND THE WORLD TELL THEIR STORIES

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RWANDA	
Area	26,338 km²
Population	8,508,000
Population density	323 per km²
Average number of children per woman	5.9 *
Life expectancy for women	40.4 *
Life expectancy for men	39.5 *
Infant mortality	10%
Illiteracy rate amongst women	39%
Illiteracy rate amongst men	26%
Percentage of population living below the poverty line	35.7%
Religions (the two most common)	Approx. 50% Christians, 50% animists
Languages	Kinyarwanda, French, English
GNP per capita	USD 230

*Sources: Der Fischer Weltalmanach 2003; * WDI Database*

The Ghosts of Christmas: On the Christmas Wobble

Maxwell Smart and John Digney

No man lives without jostling and being jostled; in all ways he has to elbow himself through the world, giving and receiving offence.
Thomas Carlyle, Scottish Philosopher

It's not that the Irish are cynical. It's rather that they have a wonderful lack of respect for everything and everybody.
Brendan Behan, Irish dramatist and 'Borstal Boy'

There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children.
Nelson Mandela, South African Statesman

There were times when we needed to be taught and challenged; there were times when we needed to be encouraged and inspired ... we used the old joke that child care work was 50% perspiration and 50% inspiration.
Brian Gannon, South African CYC leader and mentor to generations of workers and young people.

Introduction

As we stop to reflect at this busy time of year we again have our awareness drawn to the area of transitions. We are currently transitioning from autumn to winter; from Halloween to Christmas. The artificial cobwebs and witch costumes are all packed away and the plastic

Santa's, Christmas trees and tinsel are coming out of their boxes. Even the shops are in on the act, as they are beginning to display glittering gifts, as they ease us into this festive season. Television and newspapers are appealing to our sense of giving – as we seek the essential gift(s) for our nearest and dearest and

from village to town and city, authorities and city fathers are ensuring that community spaces and shopping districts begin to promote this festive period (with lights, gifts, drinks and food).

All this is an attempt to prepare us for the proposed festival of joy ahead as we move out of a grey and wet November into a month of excitement and anticipated pleasure – creating an apparent seamless and natural transition.

As we begin writing this column our thoughts are also fixed on another transition which is occurring before our very eyes. Brian Gannon, one of the co-founding editors of CYC-Net is transitioning from editor-in-chief of CYC-Net, to a 'behind the scenes role'. Brian, who has over 55 years in the field is deserving of putting his feet up for sure, but will be sorely missed from his current role.

Wondering about the Wobble

The title of our article this month does not relate to the transition Brian is making, for Brian's is a pre-planned and considered move. No, and at the risk of being labelled the Celtic Grinches we wish to talk about something else, a phenomenon that often occurs in residential and indeed foster care at this time of year; something we have come to name as the 'Christmas Wobble'.

When we think about the word wobble, we think of something which is wavering or rocking from side to side; something which moves in an unsteady path of motion. This is true of the 'Christmas wobble', a manifestation of a 'crisis of thought' (invisible transition) often seen with youth in out of home care at this time of year; a wobble that can occur even with youth who have been in what is perceived as a stable and secure placement. And as we anticipate 'the Christmas wobble' and seek to take corrective action (many caring staff go the extra mile in their care and caring at this time of year) – yet the wobble still occurs.

The wobble can be a sudden and significant deterioration in the emotions of young people manifesting in problematic troubled or troublesome behaviour and it is not uniform or very predictable, sometimes taking place weeks prior to Christmas and lasting a week or so; other times only occurring as late as Christmas Day itself. But what we do know and realise is that the 'Christmas Wobble' is located within a context of anxiety, loss and stress.

"You will be visited by Three Ghosts"

Anxiety and uncertainty are common currency for out-of-home youth; emotions that visit our kids like the ghosts from Dickens Christmas Carol. We have the anxiety that comes from memories of one or more Christmas long since past (being at home with family – for good or for bad, or a past Christmas away from home); there is the anxiety located in Christmas 'present' (with anticipation of danger, crisis and fear of losing what is current or having the fear that something will happen to spoil their sense of safety); and then there

is the anxiety arising out of the expectation of 'Christmas Future' (where will future Christmas be spent and how they will cope). Lived experiences and histories have shown them that they will be let down (again). So, in essence, the 'Christmas Wobble' is a merging of these three Christmas ghosts – all drawing from experiences and anticipation.

Kids who experience their Christmas wobble close to or on Christmas Day itself can be reluctant (or refusing) to engage in buying, giving or receiving gifts and may even destroy something they have longed for on the day. Rather than experiencing joy they experience what could be considered a re-traumatising; a sense of hurt and pain coming from a place of loss and grief. They are not 'Grinches' either; they are hurting and fearful kids! To example this we wish to consider John's story.

John's Story

John, a bright fifteen year old, has been in placement for two years. He carries the same baggage we see with many kids in care - parental problematic mental health illnesses and issues of problematic substance use (in respect to drink or illicit drugs). Exposure to this family life had led to many disruptions in his life and was the root cause for his admission to residential care. Our shared history with John has shown us that festive periods have always been vulnerable times of for him - peppered with anxiety and stress-fuelled behaviour. In particular, the weeks before Christmas have tended to see a quiet withdrawing (seeking to spend more time in his room and less time with adults), as he tries to avoid going out with his Key-Worker, a person with whom he has developed a positive and healthy relationship.

Of course his Key-Worker had worked away (in John's absence) to buy and wrap gifts for John, to ensure he would not wake on Christmas day without presents. This worker has continually reminded colleagues to be sensitive to John's mood fluctuation and to respond to 'dips' with tact and kindness (rather than focusing on managing the sharpness of John's voice, the criticisms of others or his verbally abusive behaviours).

All the care and attention however did not avert the 'Christmas Day Wobble' – yes, John had another meltdown! He ripped open presents and treated them with indifference as he was apathetic and verbally aggressive to all adults around him. He pulled down Christmas decorations in the dining room and mocked another young person for liking anything about this time of year. Thankfully all the other kids did not react to John's behaviour, which escalated further in his over-turning of the Christmas tree. One member of staff advised the Centre Manager, 'there's just no reasoning with John today'.

Several hours of difficulty followed, during which time staff remained supportive and present, until eventually John's created a conflict with another youth and his physical aggression required that John be brought to a more manageable space. In this more intimate space, John's anger

eventually reduced but only after he had broken down in tears, where he professed his hatred of this time of year - his comments relating to his anticipation of the 'usual disasters that happen to me and my family every time Christmas comes around'.

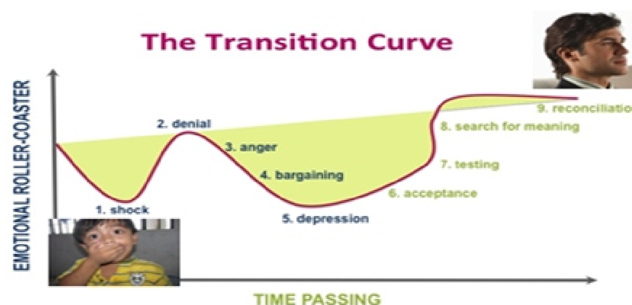
As John regained control and had Christmas dinner with others in the unit, he found that things were not as bad as he had been anticipating. Even though he was able to call his mum and have a pleasant conversation, the day was certainly not festive for him. As he spoke of his ghosts of Christmas past he seemed to find some place to file these memories and as the day drew to a close he was able to acknowledge that nothing bad had happened to him or other people he cared about that that day. He felt a lot better the following morning.

Placing the Wobble in a context of Transition Trauma

In previous *CYC-Online* columns and also recent conference presentations, (SIRCC, 2015, Unity, 2015) the authors have described how transition and anticipation can be felt as loss. They have described how loss often leads to grief and grieving, where something happens that upsets our ecology and we are forced into a different place; leaving behind all that is known and familiar. When this happens we can become 'shocked' and enter a place of denial and soon after anger and depression set in.

In a space filled with uncertainty people slowly approach acceptance – but before they are fully there ... bam, another transition! This can be traditional or invisible. There is another loss, another set-back. This leads to another grief cycle (transition curve) over-laying the first ... and then another and another.

The graph below shows the usual projected cycle of emotion following a loss or transition. This pictorial representation highlights how similar transition can turn to grief and grieving.



However, for kids like John, transitions (of which the 'Christmas Wobble' is another transitional event) are often multiple, messy and complex experiences, and at times these experiences seem ceaseless and unending. For John, and many other young people, the anticipation that something bad is going to happen and the likelihood that sorrow is just being around the corner can be a daily reality. Living life like this, with ones amygdale on 'high-alert', ensures that acceptance and healing seem more to be located at the end of a rainbow – and almost unattainable! But as we know, providing better

experience(s) of being in relationship can move the 'pot of gold' a little bit closer.

A closing note

Unfortunately for John three days after Christmas that year his parents had a violent altercation, resulting in his father being taken into police custody. Lacan (the French psychoanalysis) spoke about a neurosis of destiny – an irrational fear of what might happen in the future because of previous experiences of other. It might be that there is something in Lacan's understanding that brings us back to understanding John's 'Christmas Wobble'.

The anticipated 'bad stuff' had happened and much of the hope that we had had for John changing his mind-set was blown out of the water as the ghost of Christmas Future was reinforced by negative thoughts and feeling about Christmas. His wobble reflected his reality and another set of lines added to his transition curve. Where this will figure in his Christmas Wobble for 2015, the following weeks will tell – but let's hope that the positive experiences we have shared this past 12 months will see him further along the road of healing and acceptance.

As we sign off for another year, we want to wish you all and all our young people a very Merry Christmas. And to Mr Brian Gannon – a massive thank you! Your wisdom has inspired us all.

Digs and Maxie

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Relational Child & Youth Care Practice

Relational Leadership

James Freeman

Last summer on a visit to South Africa I experienced a number of memorable and lifetime highlights. One of them was experiencing Table Mountain as it rises from the Cape Peninsula and overlooks Cape Town. The view is majestic whether looking over from the beach, across from Signal Hill, or up from the base of its slopes. On the plateau from the top I looked out over Robben Island where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned for nearly two decades before the end of the systematic racial segregation of apartheid.

It was on twelve acres of woodland on the slopes of Table Mountain in 1967 that Brian Gannon was chosen to lead St. Johns Hostel. At 27 years old, Brian brought with him a foundation of leadership experience in relational care as headmaster of St. George's Home in Johannesburg, schoolmaster of St. Barnabas College, and the founding headmaster of St. Nicholas Home for Colored Boys (St. Johns, 1968). He would serve fifteen years before handing off the leadership role to his successor in 1982.

St. Johns Hostel had been established in 1918 as a home for 64 boys – many of whom had been left alone by the impact of World War I and the influenza epidemic. When I reviewed photographs that captured daily life at the home, the days seemed full of typical boyhood experiences: hanging out together, studying, playing soccer, reading, working on chores together, camping, and exploring. An online

St John's Hostel main building with Table Mountain in the background

memorial to St. Johns describes the daily life of the boys who lived there:

> *The daily time-table provided, apart from the routine care of the boys, for adequate free time, supervised prep classes, a varied afternoon program of sports, gardening and hobbies, along with opportunity for maintaining contact with families and with the life of the city.* (Clayton, 2013)

Gannon's leadership at St. Johns is credited for creating smaller living groups for the boys, less regimented routines, more experiences of childhood and adolescence in everyday life, and a focus on developing meaningful relationships with one another. The cover of a 1968 fundraising brochure describes one of the driving values of the home: "It is one of the ideals of humanity that every man should have at least his chance" (St. John's, 1968). In order to provide these boys their "chance" he embedded himself in the daily life of the youth and workers at hostel. In a departing letter to the community, Gannon described that:

> *Child care work is never easy. It means being where the hurts and fears and angers and doubts are, getting your hands dirty, spending yourself emotionally, seeing small gains overwhelmed by new tasks, and often waiting a long time to see results. It means resisting the urge to simplify, to line everyone up against the wall and count them and issue commands.* (Gannon, 1982)

His example of leadership remains relevant to our field today as we struggle with

the demands of systematic changes, challenging behaviors, and finding ways to make group settings meet the needs of the individual in meaningful ways.

As a co-founder of CYC-Net, Gannon launched a long-lasting and vital contribution to the global field of child and youth care. One of his wider-reaching contributions is his collection of nearly 200 practice hints, where we discover a sweet blend of both theory and the how-to. Here, in its entirety, is one of the practice hints that reveals the simplicity and complexity of quality child and youth care.

> *There is a story from one of the First Nations traditions. A man is walking with a group of children from one village to another. When they are about half way, he notices that one of the children is tiring. The man stops and sits down on a rock and says to the group: "I am getting tired. Would you mind if we take a little break?"*
>
> *In child and youth care work, it is not only our relationships and interventions and skills that are crucial, but also our timing [and] our pacing of young people through the work we have to do together. We know that their development has been temporarily interrupted, that they are short on self-confidence, motivation, trust and energy. But also that ultimately they must catch up with their timetables, with their peer groups.*
>
> *Our story is about knowing where kids are headed, being acutely aware of what they can manage right now and what must wait – and of protecting their dignity when the economy of their energy and performance is upset. [Knowing] when they need a break. The breaks which result from our observation and sensitivity will usually prove to be perfectly timed – and they are necessary, strategic breaks. Any breaks we take on a journey have reflection built into them: how far we have travelled, the direction we are taking, what we expect to pass on the way ahead, how much further to go. The breaks we are talking about here are exactly like that.*
>
> *We are often tempted to be impatient. We wish kids would shape up, get their act together, do what's expected of them. But we also remember that we are in a process of rebuilding, regaining balance, restoring hope. These things will take time. Maybe tomorrow, next week, next month, they will be getting back up to speed. Maybe not today.*
>
> (Gannon, 2014a, p. 29-30)

Do you notice the richness here? There is the skill of noticing and knowing where a child is headed. There is the leadership initiative in taking action and doing so in a way that respects and protects the dignity of the other. Allowing time and space for them to catch up – and notice especially that it is "catch up with their [own] timetables" and not the demands of others imposed on them. There is also the idea of "built in" reflection and patience in the pain and process of restoring hope. It

is a description, too, of caring leadership – a role every one of us fills in our various capacities.

Leadership in your role as a child and youth care worker is not a leadership of imposition, but of serving others. Resisting the urge, as Gannon would say, to "line everyone up ... and issue commands". He describes it as being together in the mess and having the privilege of accompanying young people to new ways of being:

> *Any program for troubled kids will be filled with pain and doubt, anger and mistrust. Our work is that from within this mess we accompany kids to new possibilities, new ways of understanding, new ways of being with themselves and with others, new hopes and futures.* (Gannon, 2014b, p. 2)

Leadership is our responsibility in whatever our role may be at a given point in time. You may find yourself the head of a large program for an extended time, the leader of a small group of peers working together, or the leader of a simple activity or walk where you will have the opportunity to notice something about someone and create an opportunity to protect their dignity or allow them space for a new way of thinking or being.

For many of the young people with whom we work, this might be the first time the person is experiencing such a way of being together. In each act you are creating new hopes and new futures – and continuing the legacy of leadership and relational care around our world.

Editor's note

Nearly 200 of Gannon's *Practice Hints* are available in a three volume set from **The CYC-Net Press** (see www.cycnetpress.cyc-net.org/books/hints-set.aspx)

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Sense of place in children's residential care homes: perceptions of home?

Alison Clark, Claire Cameron and Stefan Kleipoedszus

How do young people living in residential care perceive their environment? How do they experience the sights, sounds, smell and feel of living in an institution? How may attachment to place contribute to the wellbeing of young people? This paper explores meanings of home in domestic and regulated (institutional) environments from the perspective of young people and staff living and working in a residential children's home in England. Drawing on a pilot study using visual participatory research methods adapted from the Mosaic approach (Clark 2011), the study identifies what young people and staff considered important about the place where residents lived. Using photographs and commentary, three conceptual themes are discussed: the home as institutional space; the home as 'practices'; and home as idealised space. The paper raises questions as to how ways of 'doing home' can be supported in these liminal spaces that strive to be both domestic and institutional.

Keywords

Space, home, meaning-making, visual participatory methods

Introduction

What meanings do young people in residential care attach to the space where they are living? While there is, over time, an appeal to home and homeliness in English policy and practice, is there in fact a deep ambivalence about the sense of place as home? To what extent is the space not a home but still an institution? Or is it possible to combine both 'home' and 'institution' in the sense of place that is residential care?

The aim of this paper is to explore meanings of home in domestic and regulated (institutional) environments from the

perspective of young people and staff living and working in a residential children's home in England. We start by reviewing conceptualisations of the physical environment of residential children's homes before examining meanings of home more broadly. We raise the issue of tension between the domestic and the institutional place, and what the impact of using the term 'home' to describe residential care places might be on the role and task of the institution.

We then describe a pilot study conducted in England that used an adaptation of the Mosaic approach (Clark & Moss, 2001, Clark 2010; Clark, 2011) using participatory visual methods to identify what young people considered important about the place where they were living. The analysis focuses on findings from three images: the institutional space of home; the home as 'practices'; and home as idealised space. We draw attention to examples given by young people and staff of objects and places that are associated with a sense of home. We raise questions as to how ways of 'doing home' can be supported in these liminal spaces that strive to be both domestic and institutional.

Working with notions of 'space' and 'place' begs the question of definition. There are common, everyday definitions (Tuan, 1977), and distinctions between the terms usually rest on the extent to which 'place' is invested with meaning while 'space' is seen as more abstract (Clark & Gallacher, 2013). Working at the intersection of disciplines, as is the case here, lends a complexity to the definitions. From the perspective of human geography, Massey (2005, p.130), whose work on defining space and place has been widely influential, argues that places are not points or areas on a map, but integrations of space and time, or 'spatio-temporal events'. So the experiences of young people in a residential home represents a *particular integration of space and time*, and one that draws attention to the specifity of place. Clark and Gallacher (2013, p.5) cite, as an example of integrated space and time, a box, in a London underground station, that represented a regular meeting place for schoolgirls on their way home from school to share stories, such that 'the box became a significant landmark in the shared childhoods' of these young people. On the other hand, from a sociology of childhood perspective, Moss and Petrie (2002, p.9) argue that 'the concept of children's spaces understands provisions as environments of many possibilities – cultural and social, but also economic, political, ethical, aesthetic, physical – some predetermined, others not, some initiated by adults, others by children'. In this interpretation, space is *a lived, interpreted arena of 'possibilities and potentials'* ... public places for children to live their childhoods' (ibid).

In this paper, we take our inspiration from both perspectives. We define place as the physical environment that is invested with meaning through the interactions of children and adults within them, meanings that may change through the interactions and understandings of social actors. We are concerned with 'home' as an example

of 'place' that is invested with meaning for children in residential care.

Place and home in residential care

The use of 'place' in residential care theory

Since 1948, English policy for residential care homes for children and young people who live away from their birth parents has had an ambition to be small scale, with trained staff and a focus on individuals. The environment was to be 'as much like [that] other children [experience] as possible' (Kahan 2000, np). In the linking of place (residential home) and quality of experience, the policy effort appeared to be to emulate normative understandings of childhood environment – based on 'home'.

However, little attention has been given in residential care theory to the role of the physical environment in young people's wellbeing; much more has been given to the relational environment (Jack, 2010). Two main lines of thinking about residential care are psychodynamic theory and behaviourist theory (Smith, 2009). Psychodynamic theories informed the development of planned environment therapy, where the material boundaries or milieu forms a physical representation of 'containment' or emotional security (Kornerup, 2009; Steckley, 2012). Behaviourist theories do not discuss the role of the physical environment in children's wellbeing at all. A third, less well known in the UK, line of thinking, is a broadly conceptualised learning approach called 'group care' (Maier, 1987). Maier draws attention to the importance of the person's wellbeing in the whole environment, also known as the 'lifespace', including the group, sustaining bodily comfort, private or personal space, rhythms of life and creating predictability and dependability in everyday life. He argues that physical space is not only divided into public and private spaces, but that spatial alterations have implications for behaviour, and signals of professional practice. For example, using the office to complete paperwork also serves as an opportunity to 'hide' from residents. For both residents and staff, the opportunity to have private space and time is 'a human requirement' (Maier, 1987, p. 62). Moreover, the conception of 'public' space in residential care homes needs to consider which public – the children, the staff, visiting professionals, parents or other visitors?

Overall, Maier concludes that physical space has an important contribution to make to a sense of wellbeing and belonging, in that deprivation of comfort, privacy and sociability in spaces will lead to adverse outcomes for young people.

The place of home in residential care

The majority of young people living in residential care in England are aged 10 -18 years of age with a median age of around 15 years. They are likely to be in a placement for around ten months (Berridge et al., 2012), and to have had one or more placements away from birth parents before arriving in residential care. Most of the young people will have one of three sets of needs: care for a short period and

with straightforward needs; complex or chronic needs for specialist care due to abuse and neglect by birth parents; or extensive and enduring needs due to serious abuse including violence and requiring therapy of some kind (Clough, Bullock & Ward, 2006). The question arises as to whether and how the domestic imagery of 'home' serves a purpose for this group of young people. In the 1960s, the residential care task was defined as threefold: nurturing; dealing with loss; and helping children manage their behaviour (Kahan & Banner, 1969). Around the same time, there was a deliberate appeal to a sense of place as home in the development of 'family group homes' in England, by way of contrast with more prevalent larger and more impersonal institutions. Family group homes were designed to be no larger than that of an ordinary family, usually headed by the wife of a married couple, who lived in an adjacent apartment, staffed by assistants who 'lived in' and often sited where they could blend into ordinary housing, such as council estates (Lane, 2010). These homes consciously followed a normative domestic family ideology, but, by 1980, almost no staff lived in such homes and for adults, the residential home was a place of work. A general move to smaller-scale homes followed, and, arguably, the sense of place as home became less dependent on the domestic, familial imagery of two parents and long(er) term residents living together, and more clearly characterised as a workplace for staff, a temporary home for residents and governed by externally and internally generated institutional rules.

In a Scottish study of the organisation and consumption of food in residential care, Dorrer et al. (2010) found that perceptions of 'homeliness' were highly valued. For staff, a principal representation of homeliness was the practice of eating together; they believed this facilitated or symbolised ideas of togetherness associated with a family home. The young people in the study had rather more complex ideas about whether the home was a home for them. They were much less concerned about food per se and more about using the home as a safe space. Mealtimes and food were used by staff as a means to regulate everyday life through expected sequences of eating, chores, and, last, free time. They were used as a means to establish hierarchies of control, through practices such as locking the kitchens and controlling access to food between meals. For young people, the rules governing the scheduling of the day were emblematic of institutional life, while flexibility and negotiation were signals that the home was 'their place'. Dorrer et al. (2010) identified three spaces within the residential care home they studied: a home, an institution and a workplace. In each, different rules and expectations applied.

The place of home in residential care remains ambivalent. The task of English residential care shifts between (largely) temporary accommodation and treatment or therapy of some kind with escalating severity of needs particularly around attachment difficulties. An appeal to the normative domestic space of home is not to the fore; more important is nurturing

effective relationships. Official guidance (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, 2010, p.11) refers to the importance of a sense of belonging as part of emotional wellbeing but reference to place is only implied: it states that placements should 'encourage warm and caring relationships between child and carer that nurture attachment and create a sense of belonging so that the young person feels safe, valued and protected', and 'support the child or young person to participate in the wider network of peer, school and community activities to help build resilience and a sense of belonging'. National Minimum Standards, against which all registered children's homes are inspected, state that space should be adequate and suitable in order to access facilities that promote development. In particular, the environment should be 'comfortable and homely', 'well-maintained and decorated'; 'avoidable hazards are removed as is consistent with a domestic setting', and 'risk reduction does not lead to an institutional feel' (DFE, 2012, p.22). The sentiment is one of promoting a domestic-type environment with an appeal to 'home' as opposed to 'institution', yet the institutional framework is specified in advance and from outside the home. These regulations are in line with the wishes of young people consulted by the English Children's Rights Director (Morgan, 2009). Survey respondents said they valued spaciousness, privacy, a sense of security and a homely feel, and disliked rules that forbade them to enter certain areas of the building, such as the kitchen, kept certain doors locked or used official notices such as 'fire escape' that signalled 'institution'. The task is thus to better understand the sense of home in order to contribute to the improvement of professional and institutional practices.

We now examine some broader definitions of home in order to understand some of the inherent difficulties in creating a 'sense of home' in an institution.

A Sense of Home

Home is an ambiguous concept that is open to a range of disciplinary and personal meanings. It may be understood as a physical location, or locations rooted to a particular environment or be more associated with feelings and practices (Mallett, 2008). Here we explore three aspects of home with particular relevance to residential care: the links between home and identity, home as itinerant domesticity and home and homeliness.

Home and identity

Milligan (2003, 2005) emphasises that home is as much a social and emotional concept as a physical one. These social and emotional connections strengthen the link between home and identity. Varley (2008) draws on the work of the political philosopher Iris Marion Young to examine the ways in which these connections may be forged. Young indicates how 'home materialises identity' (Young, 1997, pp.150-151) in two important ways: through the body and through narrative.

Firstly, the link between home and identity is forged through the physical engagement with the spaces, places and

objects within a home. Young describes these actions as 'pathways of habit' (Young, 1997, p.150)

> *Habit memories ... memories formed by slow sedimentation and realised by the reenactment of bodily motions ... [from which] ... we get our bearings.*

Secondly, Young proposes that home 'materialises identity' through the stories that are associated with or contained within the objects in a home: 'without such anchoring of ourselves in things we are literally lost' (Young, 1997, p.151).

If home and identity are understood to be closely linked, then the way rooms are arranged and objects displayed may be one route to understanding how individuals feel about themselves. Hurdley (2006) explored this relationship between domestic display and identity in her study of personal accounts of home interiors. She used the mantelpiece, the shelf above a fireplace, as a framing device for asking individuals what objects they chose to display there and why. Hurdley found that an individual's sense of self and the self-representation of others revealed through the narratives they attached to objects displayed on mantelpieces. Hurdley (2006, p.723) comments: 'The meaning of things in the home is what gives home its meaning'. This would suggest that to be 'homelike', residential care needs to pay attention to the selection of objects for display and the ways in which they are displayed.

Home as itinerant domesticity

The discussion so far about a sense of home suggests a stable relationship between home and self, slowly accrued over time and embedded in the rooms, objects and displays that exist. However, for many groups of individuals, including young people living in a residential care home, their personal circumstances do not support this continuous relationship. They may have experienced a rapid succession of residences and have had limited opportunity to establish a deep-rooted connection with a space. These young people may have established 'pathways of habit' associated with a particular location and objects that act as 'retainers of narratives' but these feelings are likely to be separated from the institutional environment. Das, Ellen and Leonard (2008) explored the sense of home experienced by vulnerable groups and proposed a definition of home as 'modalities' or forms of doing or practices rather than a fixed domestic location. These connections may be spread across a range of sites:

> *There is a duality of intimacy and alienation as constant moves from and to the home engender an itinerant domesticity and life is lived in the interstices of the house, the prison, the street and various foster homes in which children grow up.* (Das et al., 2008, p.352)

This suggests that young people in residential care may experience the residential home as an in-between space dependent

on establishing temporary routines of 'doing home'.

Home and homeliness

A sense of home in an institutional context can be associated with understandings of homeliness, and homemaking. Peace and Holland (2001, p.407) explored the concept of 'homely' within small-scale residential care for older people. They identified three interrelated issues of scale, informality and physical appearance: 'but, as a result of the demands of professional caring and public accountability, it is constantly under pressure to move towards more formality and organised living.' In an earlier paper, Peace and Holland (1998) identified a number of influences or dimensions when discussing the balance between domestic (or homely) and institutional in the residential care homes they investigated. These dimensions are shown in Table 1.

The dimensions Peace and Holland (2001) draw out in relation to homely care for older people in residential care have distinct commonalities with those raised in relation to residential care for young people. For example, informality was identified as one feature of homeliness that was balanced against regulation. In both settings, there may be practices within the home that may be seen to be constrained by the regulatory framework within which they operate. In the Peace and Holland study, homeliness was also related to the physical appearance of the interiors, including the type of furnishings used, the décor and the objects chosen. They state:

> *On the whole the furniture and objects such as pictures and ornaments in the day and dining areas belonged to the proprietors, with residents' belongings generally confined to their own rooms. They looked homely - but the question remains, 'whose home?' Shared areas were clearly dominated by the proprietors, subject to the proprietor's notions of acceptable behaviour, and marked by the proprietor's taste in furnishings and décor: even in homes with a separate lounge for residents.*
> (Peace and Holland, 2001, p.401-402)

TABLE 1
The balance between domestic and institutional influences in small home care settings
Source: Holland and Peace (1998) *Homely Residential Care*

Domesticity	Institutionalisation
Privacy	Surveillance
Informality	Regulation
Risk	Security
Normalisation	Specialisation
Personal	Professional

The pilot project discussed below picks up on and explores further some of the tensions that Peace and Holland raise, particularly the tensions between informality and regulation and the physical appearance of personal and shared areas.

The Pilot Project

The *Taking Place Seriously* pilot project took place in England and Scotland in 2011. The aim was to examine the use and perception of place held by those living and working in one residential care home in each country and to draw some comparative conclusions that would assist in the design of a substantive study. This paper focuses on the data collection in the home in England. The home selected for this pilot study had been involved in an earlier practice development programme with some members of the research team (Cameron et al., 2011) and was known to be interested in research. There was also some familiarity with using photography due to a recent appointment of a learning mentor, who was using photography in her work with young people. The children's home, run by a national charity, had capacity for five residents aged 12 – 17. The building was a large freestanding house in a quiet neighbourhood on the edge of a small market town, converted for use as a residential children's home in 2008. Each resident had their own bedroom and bathroom, and downstairs there was a living room, play room, kitchen-dining room and staff offices. To the rear there was a very large garden. There was a staff team of 15, supervised by the home's manager, the organisation's area manager, and the training and support services of the charity.

Methods

Identifying methods

This pilot study set out to identify methods that would enable young people and staff to explore their views and feelings about the physical and social environment of a residential care home. There has been an increasing number of studies that have included photography in participatory research with children and young people to explore place- feelings (for example, Thomson, 2008; Dennis, Gaulocher, Carpiano & Brown, 2009; Pyyry, 2013) Taking photographs as a mode of communication can offer young people who may be marginalised an alternative visual language and offer the possibility of making their perspectives more 'visible'. According to Back (2009, p.474) a photograph taken is a representation of thought processes that can only with great difficulties be described through language. Through this representation, a link between the researcher and the world of the subject of research can be established and provide further avenues for discussion.

The pilot focused on adapting visual, participatory methods developed by Alison Clark and Peter Moss in relation to gathering place-meanings from children and staff in early childhood care and education environments (Clark & Moss 2001, 2011; Clark 2010; Clark, 2011). This approach is designed to be multi-method and polyvocal. Following a period of observa-

tion, participants are offered a range of different modes of communication, including photography, to explore what it is like to be in a particular environment. The perspectives of different members of a community, whether children or adults, can be then set alongside each other and discussed and analysed. The main methods chosen for meaning-making in this pilot study were group discussion, photography and map-making.

Preparing for fieldwork

Consent was gained from the individual young people involved based on several initial visits and discussion. In developing this pilot study ethical consideration needed to be given to the specific characteristics of residential children's homes and to the lives of young people living there[i]. An important factor here was the recognition that most residents are not in residential child care by choice. It had to be assumed that the young people living in the pilot home did not necessarily see this home as their 'home' or that their perception of what 'home' means may be very fragile. Under these circumstances it was important to adopt a sensitive approach, respectful of young people's wishes to be engaged or not in the pilot and to the potential negative impact of another intrusion on their privacy and time.

During the first visit, which took place after school, the researcher introduced the project and himself to the four young people who were resident at the time of fieldwork. Through informal question and answer over dinner, a two-way process of observation took place between the researcher and the young people in the context of the residential care home. Young people, for example, asked the researcher questions about his experience of employment in a residential care home in another country. Through this initial observation young people could make first assumptions about the researcher which could lead to the build-up of a necessary level of trust. The researcher was also able to identify the least obtrusive periods of the day in which to invite the young people to take part in the study.

Although all four residents expressed enthusiasm for the project, in the event only two, Adam and Sylvia[ii], took their own photographs. Staff members were supportive of the study but only one member of staff chose to take her own photographs.

Fieldwork

There were five fieldwork visits during which the researcher took field notes during and immediately after fieldwork sessions, and recorded some details about the young people who elected to take photographs. Adam, age 11, had been resident for three months on an interim basis, and was hoping to go to a boarding school. He was very positive about the residential home and the staff. Adam was very knowledgeable about institutional rules, especially about the reward system which included awarding money for attending school and for good behaviour. He explained these rules to other residents. On one occasion he made staff aware of a mistake they made when they gave education

money to one of the girls even though this money should only be spent together with a member of staff. Sylvia, age 13, came across as being very open and communicative about living in the home, but quickly lost interest in concentrating on the project or was busy doing other things. She had a wide range of interests and a lively social life. She also told the researcher that she really liked the staff team, enjoyed going to school and had friends there. She had been living in the home for approximately six months.

Both Adam and Sylvia were invited to take photographs of anything that they thought represented what it meant to live in the home. A printer was available so the young people could print out their images immediately. The next stage of the activity was for the young people to choose ten of their photographs to create a map or poster. Whilst they were taking the images and creating the maps, the researcher asked questions and took notes about the young peoples' explanations for taking the images and the selections they made in composing the maps.

Taking the pictures became part of building rapport between the researcher and the young people. The camera and the creative process of taking photos became the 'common third' (Thempra, 2012) that linked the young person and the researcher through activities like explaining the camera, looking at pictures, printing them out or transferring them into the computer. This rapport was essential to building the trust needed to enable the young people to share their perspectives.

Staff members were also asked to imagine what it would be like to live in the home as a young person, through discussion with the researcher, taking photographs and making a map. In principle, all team members were supportive of the project but in the event only one member of staff, Pat, took photographs. She also agreed to make a map but was interrupted by a group of young people making a noise and did not have an opportunity to resume the task. [We have included her photographs and discussion in this analysis].

In summary, the data sources for the project were: i) fieldnotes recording initial discussions with young people and staff to introduce the project and find out about each other; ii) 28 photographic images from two young people and one member of staff; iii) recorded comments on each image; iv) two maps or posters created by arranging ten selected photographs to represent their view of the space and place.

The data was assembled in stages. First, a report of the research process was compiled, combining the researchers' impressions of each visit and each interaction with a detailed account of the photographic images and the recorded commentary on each photograph. Table 2 is an extract from the table recording Adam's comments [iii].

The second stage was to prepare for analysis. Researchers compiled a second table (see Table 3), documenting the participants' comments, the researcher's description of the image, and the concepts and themes at work in each participant's

TABLE 2
Data extract recording Adam's comments on photographs taken.

Picture	Comments
1	Shows Mxxx (Staff member). Without staff there would be no [name of home]. The people here are important they are what makes this a home. They are really nice and they help us to do what we like. Sometimes they don't and they can be annoying. I like most of them.
2	This is the kitchen. Staff cook our food here. We spend a lot of time here and it is really nice that we can have something to eat when we ask. We have a menu that we can choose from and there is a list with stuff on it which we can tick when someone goes shopping.
3	My helicopter. I bought it from my education money. I can do a lot of tricks with it.
4	These lights are everywhere. The green light on the side is on all the time even the one in my room at night. I would really like the light in my room to be off at night as it is really bright when it is dark in the room. I do not know why this has to be on all the time.

TABLE 3
Data extract with participant's description of photographs and research team interpretation of concepts and themes

Photographs taken by Adam	Adam's comments about the images	Concepts and themes identified in the text
5	I have drawn this. I can do really good gratifies. This picture is hanging on door to my room.	Gateway to the private area of bedroom, asserting the personal within the institution. A sign of self/individual existing Sense of achievement and self- worth/skills
6	C [name of resident]. She is not here right now. I really like her.	Appreciation of the relational possibilities within the institution
7	A poster of cars. I do not know who did put it up, but I like cars so I took a picture of this poster.	Décor Lack of knowledge about history of décor. Is it knowledge of history of décor that provides meaning? Institutional framing of décor?
8	The dinner table. Here we sit and have meals together. Sometimes we also just sit and talk.	Relational context of food and time ('we sit' is a very social pedagogic phrase conveying 'being together with authenticity and meaning invested' – much more than just sharing space)
9	The neighbours' geese. They are not really important and we sometimes try to feed them. They can be quite nasty.	Boundaries of space – within which defines our and your space
10	A poster of some gangsta rappers. I like hip hop and I like skating. Listen to a lot of rap music.	Asserting the personal within the institution Enjoyment

text. These tables, which effectively coded the data, were the subject of extensive research team discussion, bringing together the team's expertise in residential care, the particular home and the data collection there, visual participatory methods and the Mosaic approach methodology.

Findings from the research material

The first step in data analysis was to conduct a thematic enquiry into the images recorded in the photographs (Table 4). Leading from the literature on residential care, we divided the images into three categories i) images about the home as *people and relationships*; ii) images about the home as material space as represented through images of *objects*; and iii) images of both *objects and people*.

Although there were images of people (n = 5), the majority of the images were of objects (21). Two were of both objects and people. What is notable in the commentary is how often the images of objects provoked discussion that was about the relational dimension of living in the home. Here we discuss our interpretation, based on the literature on home and institutional spaces, of three images of objects. We propose that these images can be seen as representing the residential home in three ways: institutionalised home, home as practices; and idealised home.

a) Institutionalised home

The image shows a dark space with an oval light in the centre of the lower third of the image. No other details are visible in the room. This image was taken by Adam and chosen as one of the ten images he selected to include on his poster of what it was like to live in the residential

Figure 1 – Bedroom light

TABLE 4
Total images divided into three categories: people, objects, both people and objects.

Person	Images of people	Images of objects	Images of people and objects
Adam	3	8	0
Sylvia	2	8	2
Pat (Staff member)	0	5	0
Total	5	21	2

home. He gave the following account of this image:

> *These lights are everywhere. The green light on the side is on all the time even the one in my room at night. I would really like the light in my room to be off at night as it is really bright when it is dark in the room. I do not know why this has to be on all the time.*

Adam's comment reveals one of the *discomforts* of living in a building that is designed as an institutional rather than a domestic place. Overhead lights are fitted to comply with health and safety requirements in order to maintain a light source at all times. This could be interpreted as necessary for a sense of protection but could equally be regarded as a form of surveillance. This results in bedrooms that cannot be completely dark at night and where residents are not in control of the level of light. This lack of control is an important distinguishing feature of home as institution.

Adam does not appear to be aware of why this continuous light source is necessary as his comment indicates: 'I do not know why this has to be on all the time'. This comment reveals a sense of an *unknown history* that refers to objects, practices and places. The unknown history in this case refers to the object, the light source, and to the practice, the need to keep all rooms illuminated, including places such as bedrooms. Other images and comments revealed further examples of this unknown history. Adam chose, for example, to include a photograph of a poster of cars to discuss what it is like to live in the residential home. He commented: 'A poster of cars. I do not know who did put it up, but I like cars so I took a picture of this poster.' This unknown history of objects can be seen as a distinguishing feature of the 'institutional home'. The provenance of these objects are unknown and unnamed by residents in contrast with objects in a domestic setting where the provenance of objects may well be more readily familiar and known to inhabitants.

b) Home as practices

This image, taken by Adam, is a close-up photograph of the dining room table. The bottom edge of the rectangular table fills the lower edge of the photograph and shows the full length of the table surrounded by eight chairs stretching into the top third of the image. Patio doors are shown behind the top edge of the table. The table is clean and the surface is empty of objects. Adam's comment about the image is:

Figure 2 – Close up of the dining table

The dinner table. Here we sit and have meals together. Sometimes we also just sit and talk.

Here Adam has chosen a piece of furniture that appears to play a key role in the practices associated with the residential care home. It is where communal meals take place but it also has a role beyond food routines as a gathering point in the home where people communicate with each other. These conversations took place between residents and between residents and staff. This was indicated through observations and reinforced by an image taken by a member of staff with the following caption:

The kitchen and the lounge were purposely built to be the centre of the house. This is where almost everything happens. It is our meeting place. The large table is great when we sit here together with the young people.

The table was the meeting place and symbolised 'doing home', by drawing attention to the practices that happen there. This conveys a close association between home and functionality. This home is about routines that are of the moment, rooted in the present. This may be linked to the notion of institutionalised home as a place of unknown histories, as discussed above. Devoid of past memories associated with objects and place, life in a residential care home is a form of 'itinerant domesticity' focusing on constructing a sense of place in the present. This functionality can be expressed through drawing attention to what happens where. Two of the young people, for example, described the practices associated with choosing food. Sylvia took a photograph of the inside of the fridge and explained:

Our fridge with all the food in there. Very important because we have to eat. If we do not eat we die. I like that the fridge is full most of the time. There is a ticklist of all the things that should be in the fridge and when these are not there anymore we just tick the thing on the list and someone will buy it on their next shopping trip.

c) Idealised home

Figure 3 is an image taken by Pat when asked to imagine what it would be like to live in the residential home. The dominant object is a sideboard that takes up the lower half of the image. The sideboard is covered in different objects including two tall plants, a couple of large sweet tins and a fruit bowl. On the wall is a notice board

Figure 3 – The sideboard

and the edges of two pictures. Pat drew attention to the plants and the fruit bowl in her comment on the image:

> *Having plants in the house is what you would have at your own home. We always have fruits and vegetables available for the young people.*

There is an assumption in this explanation of what a 'normal' or idealised home should contain. A parallel is drawn between the décor of the residential care home and the member of staff's own home. Natural living objects are seen as part of this idealised home. The fruit bowl becomes another icon of home. This is a 'still life' of home, the subject of many paintings of domestic scenes. Pat's comment also implies another meaning. There appears to be an educational element to drawing attention to this object. It is seen as part of a discourse on healthy living, improving the diets of the young people living in care. One question this theme raises is whose 'idealised home' is represented within these shared institutional spaces?

A sideboard and fruit bowl might be component parts of a member of staff's home but not necessarily recognised as features of home by the young residents.

The one image of the fruit bowl can draw attention to each of the three themes identified here. It could be part of a narrative of 'institutionalised home', part of the responsibility of providing for the needs of the young people; it demonstrates the practices of 'doing home' and also highlights an underlying narrative of 'idealised home'. This overlapping of themes expresses the ambiguities of establishing a 'sense of home' in these environments that straddle domestic and institutional boundaries.

Conclusion

This pilot project aimed to explore what 'place' meant to young people and staff in a children's home through adapting the Mosaic approach, a method widely known in the field of early childhood care and education, to older age groups and in a residential setting. The methodological task here merits a moment of critical reflection. Although superficially similar (care in early childhood and in children's residential care are both institutional settings), the environment of the care home produced some rather different considerations. The techniques used in the Mosaic approach of tours, photography and map or poster making required periods of concentration within the residential home that was not a space associated with such activities – activities perhaps more associated with educational or school-like spaces. This may be a reason why two of the residents did not take photographs although they expressed interest in the project. The project was most successful with the youngest resident, who had been there for a short while and was still coming to terms with his situation. He gave his mother a copy of his map 'so she knows where I am' and enjoyed learning the computer and printing skills required to make

the map. The reasons why more staff members did not take part in the project may also be to do with the association of particular activities with particular spaces; visual and/or creative methods are not part of the usual repertoire of self-expression in residential care work while the verbal discussion required for interviews is. Overall, the pilot project showed that the use of photography and annotated images opens up unanticipated areas for analysis that may be particularly important for understanding the range of perspectives held by young people and staff.

In relation to a sense of residential care place as home, the paper has discussed the ambiguities and ambivalences of home within institutional spaces both over time in residential child care and across different settings such as domestic homes and residential care for older people. Understandings of 'home' suggest that the physical environment is only one dimension of creating 'home'; dimensions of time and continuity, choice of objects on display and the meanings attached to objects are also important. The profiles of residents in children's homes and the analysis of images taken by pilot project participants showed that creating a space that was homelike, to which they might sense they belong, although desirable in policy, is highly complex. Young people are likely to have had fractured senses of home before arriving in a residential placement. They enter a space that is predefined by external institutional requirements and with little or no provenance in the objects on display that might reinforce their identification of the space as 'theirs'. The images and objects discussed highlighted the institutional – the constant light, a poster belonging to an unknown person, a fridge filled via a ticklist – but also demonstrated the ways in which objects facilitate discursive and educational opportunities – the table as focal point for talking, house plants to emulate 'home', and the fruit bowl for promoting a healthy diet.

In many ways the 'home' practices reported in this paper support and extend the previous findings regarding the ambivalent sense of place in residential care. First, there is the question of 'whose home'? Is it for the young people, or organised with the staff's needs in mind? Our analysis supports that of Dorrer et al. (2010) in drawing attention to three spaces in residential care: home, workplace and institution, but extends notions of 'home' and relates this to more general understandings of home, and by doing so ownership of the space is revealed to be uncertain.

The second question we highlight is 'How do we do home?' What practices are employed to generate a sense of home in children's residential care? We have seen different ways of 'doing home' identified by young people and staff, including practices that relate to food and eating together. The practices identified were focused in the present, were functional and closely tied in with supporting relationships. This present orientation highlighted the lack of history associated with the particular environment. The

young people were involved in constructing a sense of home and a sense of place rapidly without deep connections to the physical appearance or established rules. This appears to require an intense or concertinaed building up of ways of doing home. Members of staff are also engaged in a parallel process of how to construct such a place. This can be unscripted and requires further research to understand as regulations imply but do not make explicit how to 'do' home.

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i. Permission to conduct the study was given via the Anglia Ruskin University Research Ethics Sub-Committee before fieldwork began.

ii. All names are pseudonyms

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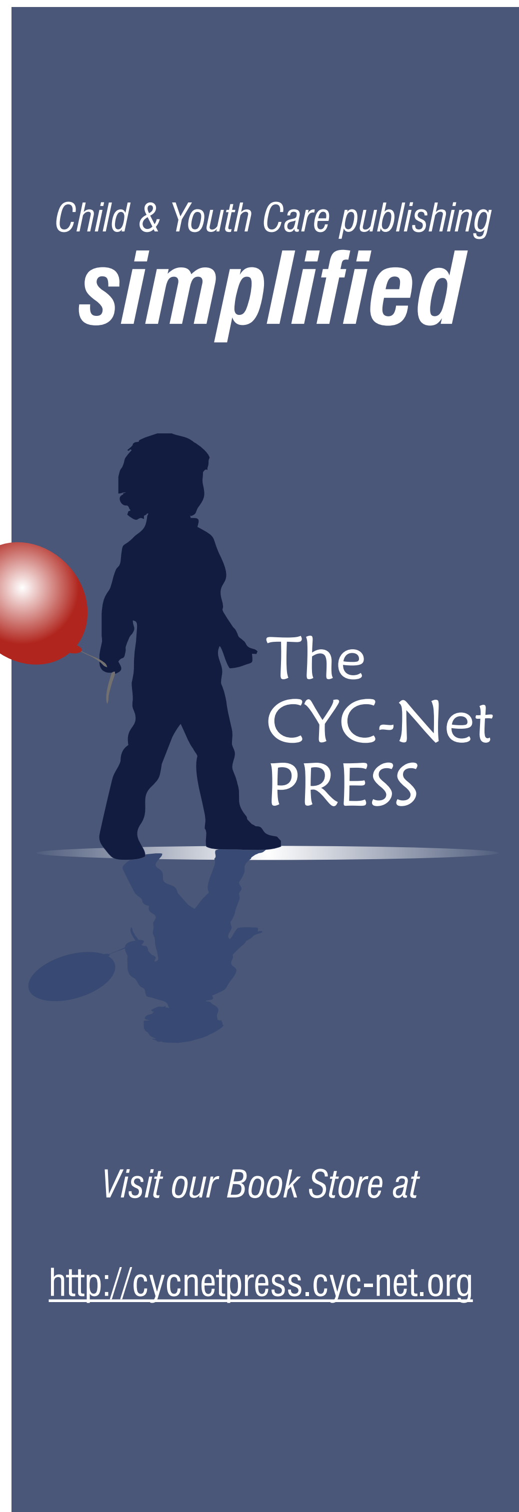

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It's Important to Know

Laura Steckley

Our beloved Brian Gannon, founding Joint Editor of CYC-Net, is retiring from his editorship at the end of this month. I have such warm feelings for Brian and his profound contribution to our field that I get a bit of a flutter in my chest as I write my introduction to this month's column.

I also understand that Brian didn't want something 'special' done to recognise this change, though some of us have decided that some form of acknowledgement is indeed necessary. It is necessary because it serves us as well as him to give testimony to the impact of his efforts on our individual and collective development. It's important to step back, consider and put this into words.

Moreover, being told how we have influenced another's development is usually the exception rather than the norm in our field. We have had to learn to draw sustenance from our commitment to creating conditions conducive to growth, even if we don't get to see (or even know about) the fruits of this labour. Yet those exceptional occasions when we do get to see and know a little of what we have done are like a sunny day in November in Scotland – not something that can be relied upon, but one that you grab with both hands when it does come along.

More than once I have written about the nourishment I have received from CYC-Net, so rather than re-tread that ground, I invited comment from students and colleagues instead. I asked that, in recognition of Brian's retirement, people let him know about the impact of CYC-Net on themselves, their practice and/or the sector. Their responses are below.

While there are many references to access to information, the more dominant message is about connection – to each other, to those we serve, to who we are and to what we can achieve.

Brian, we thought it's important for you to know ...

> *I have only recently begun to use CYC-Online and I have found it to be a tremendous source of information and a wonderful networking tool. I feel I shall benefit greatly from its support, in my endeavour to learn and become a better practitioner. Thank you.*
>
> **Dermot**, MSc student, Advanced Residential Child Care, Strathclyde University

I've never spoken to Brian, yet every day I meet him. I meet him in the young people I care about, the teams that I lead and the friends that I've made across the world, because he helps me understand them, and myself just that little bit more. Brian has shared so much of himself, without limitation, for generations but there are two things I am particularly humbled by and grateful for:

1. CYC-Net; not just the knowledge within the website, but the family, the community, that has connected because of the vision of what it could become.

2. Martin and Thom; I'm pretty sure that they would not be the men they are today had they not had the love and support of Brian throughout the years, and for what they bring to my life in friendship and wisdom ... well that's irreplaceable.

I have a great image of Brian's garage being this eclectic and vast mix of so many writings, journals and collections from his entire career. I hope he continues to have many more inspiring moments within that hub of knowledge, and knows that for every word that surrounds him there are 1000 kids and adults around the world who had moments inspired by Brian Gannon.

With Love,
Kathleen Mulvey, Scotland.

Although I have often found inspiration from CYC-Online, it is easy to pick my favourite article – 'A daily life approach to foster care' Issue 130, December 2009, by Fulcher and Garfat.

This chapter focuses on foster carers' daily life spaces where young people are nurtured and can develop and learn through 'the planned use of daily life events'.

Whenever I feel frustrated by the many bureaucratic processes of the care system I revisit this chapter to remind myself why I became a foster carer and re-focus on the daily opportunities I have to make a real difference in a young person's journey through the care system.

I did go on to buy this book and it remains my favourite book specifically on foster care.

Foster carer, Student
MSc Advanced Residential Child Care

CYC online is a valuable source of knowledge and is a fantastic point of reference. It is talked about widely in the Residential Child Care sector [here in Scotland].

Lorna Snaddon, Student, MSc Advanced Residential Child Care

As a professional and a student, I use CYC-Net on a daily basis. When my staff ask questions about everyday practice, rather than suggesting to randomly look on the internet, I suggest CYC-Net and feel at ease knowing whatever is on the website is thought provoking and trustworthy information. As a result of having such a platform, I feel this site adds an element of professionalism to Child and Youth Care. CYC-Net is a way for social pedagogues worldwide to feel connected. Anything we need to know, CYC-Net has the answers for us or can point us in the right direction.

Elizabeth Clarke, CYC-P
Program Supervisor Key Assets, NL
Student from the MSc in CYC Studies

I have been a CYC Practitioner since 2010 and my interest in the profession encouraged me to register for the MSc in CYC Studies. I wish to confirm that articles from the constellation of professionals in the CYC site have been of immense assistance since I started on the program. Therefore, generations to come will remember the legacy bequeathed to it through the founding of CYC-Net by Brian Gannon and his team.

Dada Ayeni
MSc in CYC Studies Student

The first article I read by Brian Gannon was titled The Improbable Relationship. *I was inspired by his writing and honesty. It was through his writing and those who have shared openly on CYC-Net that I began to truly understand the impact of a relational approach in child and youth practice, "... it offers a prototype for special and personal relationships the youngster will establish and live through with other people in the future"* (Gannon, 2003). *I reflected upon the aspects of relationships, and what was important and needed from myself as a practitioner to support young people and their families.*
Thank You for your insight, sharing your experience and wisdom.

Kathleen Quinn
MSc in Advanced Residential Child Care

CYC-Net has had a huge influence on my learning as I use this site constantly to research various topics I'm learning about. It's such an important site to pull together our worldwide CYC community!! Thank you to all who make it what it is.

Caroline Moore

Open access to the wealth of research and discussions on CYC-Net nurtured my interest in child care and guided me in my decision to study CYC after graduating with a BSc in Psychology.

J. Bnimoussa
Student, MSc in CYC Studies

My studies on the MSc course at Strathclyde University have directed me to visit CYC-Net. With regret, I need to admit I hadn't heard of this until I began the course. I have been encouraged and challenged by many of the articles I have read, none more so than Brian Gannon's contribution. One of the pieces I came across by him, entitled "Not where you work but what you do", has assisted me to see a bit more clearly that having good intentions or even just wanting the best for troubled children, while commendable will only take me so far. I want to be like the person Brian mentions, while not having the best of everything, I also long to give the children in our care something extra.

This is a valuable resource that we need to be utilising in my work place. I have therefore directed the team to the site but also particular pieces that are specific at the time.

Paul Williamson
1st year student, MSc Advanced Residential Child Care Practitioner in Residential Care home, Lerwick, Shetland Islands

I have only recently discovered CYC Net – and wish I had come across it when I previously worked in a residential setting! I find the discussion thread is a great resource, and something that I know I will use regularly in my future career. It's also a great comfort to have experienced practitioners willing to impart their knowledge, experiences and insight.

I recently told my partner about this website (he currently works in a residential home) and he found the bedtime difficulties thread extremely useful, as it offered practical advice along with insight into the best way to help a young person he works with. The thread also helped to validate his perspective on how workers should help the situation, as some colleagues of his felt other approaches may have been more useful. Essentially, a forum for idea sharing can help to promote good practice, confidence and an eagerness to continue learning.

Lauren Findlay
4th Year Student, BA in Social Work

The use and application of CYC practice has literally breathed life into and created the start of the heart of my team. Today the staff did finger painting to express their feelings about being in the residential life-space. We connected our feelings of entering the life-space for the first time for work to those of our young people coming to stay in the house.

Thom's article on meaning making provided a lens to think about relational practice.

Sheila Erskine
Children's Services Manager,
Action for Children
Student, MSc Advanced Residential Child Care

I have followed CYC-Net almost since its inception. It has been an amazing hub of information and knowledge for practitioners in residential child care and has allowed me to understand no matter how far apart we are geographically our challenges and celebrations are similar in many ways. It has served as a unique forum to bring together practitioners and academics globally and allowed the cross fertilisation of concepts and practice. For me it has sometimes been that sounding board you need to let rip on those frustrations that unspoken can eat you up. There have been some amazing articles published on the site over the years. I remember first seeing the article, Four Parts Magic, The Anatomy of a Child and Youth Care Intervention *by Thom Garfat published on CYC-Net almost 12 years ago. The article is as relevant now as it was back then and as a Social Work Practice Teacher in residential child care I have always used it with students as I feel it really speaks to what the core task is about. In fact I used the article only a week ago as an interpretation exercise as part of a recruitment assessment centre for residential child care staff. Thanks Brian for all of your hard work on CYC-Net as it has done so much in bringing the profession together.*

Neil McMillan
Service Manager
Nether Johnstone House

I can honestly say CYC-Net provided me with a wealth of information from across the world from leading professionals in my area of practice. I have also introduced numerous colleagues to the site who have also found some great and interesting topics. CYC-Net is usually my first stop when I want to research a subject. Please pass on a warm-hearted thank you from me in Scotland for providing such a brilliant hub of knowledge accessible to all. The site and it's contributors deserve a knighthood in my opinion :-)

Paul Smith

Life is an exciting business, and most exciting when it is lived for others.

Helen Keller

CYCs and ASDs: a Child and Youth Care Approach to Autism Spectrum Disorders

Yvonne Bristow

Child and Youth Care Workers (CYC) work in a variety of contexts that serve children and youth who have an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). These CYCs support ASD classrooms, work in ASD residential care facilities, provide respite services and programming, and run social skills groups that specifically address the needs and concerns of young people who have an ASD. Many CYCs early into their careers find themselves working at summer camps or field placements in order to specifically build their skill set as a CYC who works in the field of Autism. The Centre for Disease Control now estimates that 1 in 68 children is being identified with an ASD which only increases the current and future opportunities CYCs will have to work with those who are Autistic (Centre for Disease Control, 2015). Noting the prevalence of Autism and the diverse services CYCs provide to this population, I believe it is important to discuss the relational, behavioural and holistic approaches CYCs provide for children and youth with an ASD.

Relationships and ASDs

Children with autism are known to have difficulties building social relationships with others. Relationships are a foundational approach to CYC practice, but it can be challenging to effectively implement relational approaches with children and youth who have ASD. Some people with an ASD may have limited verbal skills or may be completely non-verbal. We may also work with those who have echolalia and repeat phrases or words without a complete understanding of what is being said. In these moments, it is important to recognize the significance of non-verbal cues, humour and connecting with this

young person in a way that is beyond words. We co-create spaces between an individual and ourselves that is unique in that moment and with that person (Garfat & Fulcher, 2011). Our relationships with people who have an ASD should be personalized and should involve creative thinking and approaches. The belief that people with an ASD are not social or capable of relationships is false. These young people simply require a practitioner who can hang-in (Garfat, 1999). Staying committed to a relationship when a person has limited social, emotional and verbal skills can be difficult but as CYCs we are skilled at staying committed when presented with challenges.

Relational Work in Rigid Environments

Programs such as Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) and Intensive Behavioural Intervention (IBI) provide structured environments to build specific goals and skills with people. ABA and IBI both can seek to extinguish negative behaviours while offering positive replacement behaviours (Rudy, 2015). CYCs in these roles may be delivering programs that call for quick reinforcing reactions based on the skill that is being targeted. I believe many of these programs are much more rigid than the traditional settings CYCs find themselves in, and these strict behavioural programs can make it difficult for a CYC practitioner to build a rapport with a young person. While these behavioural interventions derive from evidence-based research on ASDs, I believe CYCs who find themselves working in these contexts may feel that ABA/IBI approaches contradict the approaches of CYC.

Autism and CYC Approaches to Working with Families

The support CYCs provide is specific for the individual child with autism, but it is clear that many of our supports also extend to the family. At times, when we are the first point of contact for a parent or family member affected by autism we have opportunities to support the emotional needs of the larger family, help connect them to appropriate services and help them understand the programs and services that may be available. Navigating ASD supports, respite care, schedules and home treatments can be very stressful for the parents, caregivers and siblings of a child with ASD (Paltrow, 2015). CYC approaches to family work may involve consolation, empowerment and moving towards a sense of connection with those family members (Garfat, 2003). It is clear that when we care about a child, we care about the whole family. I think more often than not when we work with a child or youth with an ASD, we are also involved in family-based interventions and supports.

Holistic CYC Approaches to ASD

As Child and Youth Workers who are on the front-lines with children and youth who have ASDs, we are in a position to educate and inform others on the strengths and challenges faced by these populations. I would argue that a relational

CYC approach is one that accepts neurodiversity in children and youth, instead of pushing these young people to be "normal" (Silbeman, 2015). We can support these children and youth to be advocates for neurodiversity and support them in becoming role models for new generations of people with an ASD.

I often tell colleagues or friends that autism is more comparable to a finger print than a disease. I don't entertain the idea of a cure. Biased thinking leads many people to believe those with autism are not capable, social or skilled when I would argue the opposite. As Sarahan and Copas (2013) highlight, "Individuals with neurological differences are taking in all sorts of learning. It's how they give back – what their output is – that becomes the learning challenge" (p. 24). Many challenges people with an ASD face come from the assumptions that just because they don't conform to neurotypical behaviours and means of communication, they are not intelligent or capable.

Our role as CYCs is not to control, but to empower the diverse young people we serve (Armstrong, 2009). When some people may label a student as "just autistic", CYCs see the whole child while identifying that child's talents, strengths, and abilities. When we work with a person with an ASD, we don't dictate how they should be, rather we encourage them to be the most successful versions of themselves.

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Male Pattern Stupidity

Nils Ling

A friend of mine looked out her window the other evening and was somewhat surprised to see a boat right spang in the middle of her

driveway. She lives far enough away from the ocean that she could be fairly sure it hadn't just washed up on the tide. She hadn't heard of any tornadoes or other natural events that might have deposited a boat on her property. So try as she might, she could only come up with one possible solution for her sudden nautical windfall.

And sure enough, a few minutes later, her husband came in, a mixture of pride and sheepishness on his face, announcing he had a surprise for her. "Gee, honey ... let me guess".

My friend admits that this was not the first she had heard of her husband wanting a boat. When pressed, she recalls that sometime back in the early seventies he may once have mentioned that one of his dreams had always been to own his own boat. But she points out that around the same time he also fantasized about sleeping with at least two thirds of Charlie's Angels, and try as she might she's never found a trace of Farrah Fawcett in her driveway.

But now here's her husband, a guy who has lived his entire life on land, a guy who couldn't tell you port from starboard if you held a gun to his head, a guy who couldn't tell you what a head is - and all of a sudden he's Captain Highliner."Ever been to sea, Billy? Arghhhhhh."

When she talks about her husband, sitting out in his boat in the driveway, pretending to steer it through the shoals, my friend kinda chuckles and rolls her eyes. She feels sorry for him. He's afflicted with what she calls "male pat- tern stupidity".

Male pattern stupidity strikes all men at one time or another.The symptoms are easy to see - usually they come in the form of huge, completely impracti- cal, and totally unexpected purchases, like a sports car, or a neighbourhood pub, or, say, Guam. Or, as happened in this case, a boat. Many non-seagoing type men buy boats when stricken by male pattern stupidity.

There is a reason for this, of course. It's because many men have, at one time or another, been invited to go on board a boat owned by a friend or associate.

They never question this social acceptance, of course. Men in the throes of male pattern stupidity always assume that everyone finds them to be wonderfully amusing company, especially twenty-two-year-old barmaids and acquaintances who own boats. So they cheerfully accept any invitations to go on a boat as their due, and spend lovely evenings drinking beer on the back decks of

boats that never actually technically leave the marina. They've come away thinking "You know, it would be cool to own a boat and spend my time surrounded by friends drinking beer." And the seeds are sown for yet another senseless boat-related acquisition.

Well, my friend is humouring her husband for the time being. She says they'll spend the summer having lots of friends on board to drink beer. She knows that sooner or later, one of them will get drunk enough to offer to take the boat off their hands, and they'll be able to put this whole sordid mess behind them.

But until that day, she says, this is the last time she wants to deal with the by-products of male pattern stupidity. If she wakes up one morning and finds a helicopter in her driveway ... her hub's on his own.

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Postcard from

Leon Fulcher

DECEMBER 2015

The Joy of Foster Care

Port Hope, Ontario, Canada

Gid'aye Brian – and warm greetings to all my other Postcard readers! I'm writing this Postcard particularly with you in mind, Brian, since you plan to relinquish your role as Editor with *CYC-Online* after this issue. Whilst preparing my December 2015 Postcard, I was reminded of how you were responsible for me starting to write these Postcards – way back in May, 1999 – from Beijing I think it was. Thanks for your guidance and leadership over the years, Brian. I am pleased to learn that you will be lingering around CYC-Net Mission Control as Editor Emeritus for awhile yet!

During my recent Northern Hemisphere travels, Brian, I had occasion to spend a week in Northern Ireland, at Camphill Glencraig, the Rudolph Steiner School and Community for young people and young adults with high and complex needs. I was welcomed on arrival by Vincent Reynolds, the Director there, and a

Conor all packed for his Summer Holiday at the Beach – with Teddy – and ready to go!

new resident – 15 year old Conor – who explained that I would be sleeping in the room next to his. He said it was important to remember to hold the door because when released, it slammed loudly and woke everyone up – including him!

Camphill Glencraig Farm – Belfast, Northern Ireland

Conor had been to the Beach Chalets during his school holidays and had taken many photos that he wanted to show me on his iPad. Later, I asked the Glencraig staff members on duty if they knew the

wifi Security Key but they weren't sure where to locate it. Conor got it for me in less than 3 minutes! ☺ After the weekend, Conor was returning to the Beach Chalets for a second week of the School Holidays. I couldn't resist a photo of 'my next-door neighbour's' bags packed and ready for the van. The big blue bag held all his clothes. Then there were his OCD organised shopping bags, including one with Teddy very carefully and personally packed! What a lovely image of transitional object!

Broken Arrow Residential Treatment Services Annual Foster Carers Appreciation

From Glencraig it was a race after lunchtime on Friday to Belfast City Airport for my flight to Heathrow and my connecting flight to Toronto where I was greeted at the airport by Thom Garfat and Andy Leggett with the Broken Arrow Residential Treatment Services. We were there for the BARTS Annual Foster Carer Appreciation Weekend – this year celebrating *The Joy of Foster Care!*

Building on their pioneering workshops themed around *The Joy of Child and Youth Care* that Thom and Andy have been offering across Central and Eastern Canada, *The Joy of Foster Care* gave foster carers opportunities to pause and remember stories of joy and laughter in their work with children, young people and family members. It is this joy of relationships with young people that needs celebrating – by all of us – and propose a toast to ordinary people who become dedicated and inspired foster carers who do extraordinary things with children and young people!

The Joy of Foster Care – Creating Artwork that Speaks of Foster Care in Practice

After lunch, the BARTS foster carers were provided with a plethora of arts and crafts materials and given the task of creating a piece of 'Group Art' which captured something of '*the essence of what it means to be a Foster Carer*'. Instructions were given by Thom and Andy, and away the groups went!

She giggled while transforming into a vivacious little number in multi-coloured balloons!

Sometimes after the weekend as a Foster Carer, there are moments when ya gotta laugh!

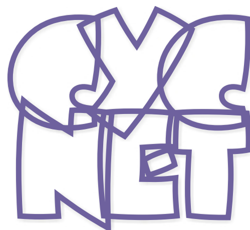
After preparing their Work of Art, each group explained to the others what their creation represented in the joyful world of foster care. Balloon Girl with a wobbly tail highlighted sensitivities that require careful attention when fostering young people with the capacity to explode without much warning.

Every Foster Carer role plays multiple images in a young person's daily life space

Other groups worked out role play as well as dance routines to communicate their *Joy of Foster Care* themes. A great afternoon filled with laughter and story-telling thanks to Thom and Andy!

I couldn't resist ending with this classic image of man and dog in a Toronto Park with Autumn colours starting to descend into Winter. Thanks for staying interested in child and youth care, Brian!

Man and Dog pausing on their walk in a Toronto Park to enjoy the Autumnal Colours



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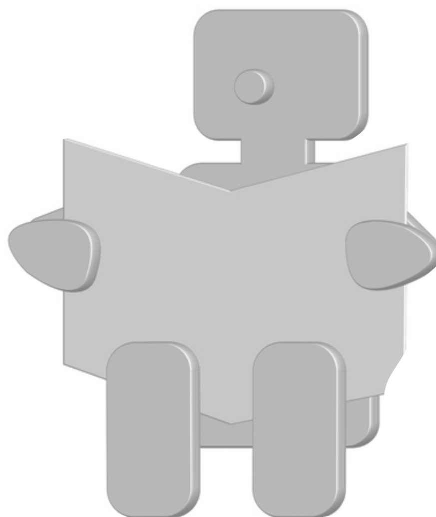

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