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

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New Beginnings

The start of a new year brings occasion for new beginnings. For some the opportunities might be a new resolve for self care and for others, perhaps, a new outlook on a different and particular challenge.

We know that new beginnings in the lives of families and young people are not restricted to the design and flow of the calendar. More often they occur in the rhythm of the everyday and within the exchanges we share with one another.

Consider the new opportunities or fresh starts you've experienced or witnessed these past days in your own area of practice and relationships. Here are a few of mine.

Evelyn smiled today. A small point of progress for many, but meaningful in her journey. She struggles with finding hope for the future these last few weeks and has had difficulty finding joy to last even through the holiday celebrations. Today she smiled at the opportunity of being accepted into a new art class. A hint of a new beginning for her.

Gabriel's mother showed up for a family visit. It's difficult to recall how many times his mother called off a family visit -

or just decided not to show up when expected. Others were left to help him pick up the pieces in those times of anger and disappointment. Today mom showed up and he is experiencing a connection with her that is long over due. They are finding a new way of being together.

Olivia slept on the couch. She was packed to run away, but decided to stay "just one more night". She's at a high risk of joining up with others who abuse her.

Deciding to stay on the couch at the youth center may be a life saving decision. She's finding a new way to think about her future.

While so many see at this month as a new beginning – and it is for 2016 – we all know that new beginnings can be found in any moment and in

each relational exchange.

Our wish here at CYC-Net is that each issue in 2016 might bring you hope and insight into making your exchanges with families and young people as meaningful as possible to the journey they are sharing with you.

– James



Mentorship, Boundaries, Friendship and Love

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Some years ago, I took the conscious step to shift from working as a child and youth care practitioner to becoming one. What a difference that made! I should say that I quite enjoyed working as a child and youth care practitioner. I loved being with young people, engaging and being engaged by them, figuring out program routines, planning activities, dealing with the various ecologies of the youth, and even managing the bad days when young people needed to lash out at someone. I can't say that I ever regretted doing this work; it was, back then, a phenomenal way of spending my time, gainfully employed, and feeling constantly rewarded by the wonders of the tasks and activities involved. At the same time, I was not particularly engaged with my field of practice. For many years, I worked as a child and youth care practitioners without knowing anyone who had written about our work, without ever attending training or conferences, without even reading any-

thing other than the occasional short article that I came across by happenstance. My reading lists in those days were comprised primarily of Russian and Latin American literature, which I loved then as I do now.

About ten years into working as a child and youth care practitioner I thought I would see what is out there in terms of a field, or a profession. I started attending some learning events, gatherings and initially local conferences that seemed related to what I was doing at the time. And I learned very quickly that there was indeed something out there, and that all that stuff was actually quite interesting. But it wasn't easy to get a handle on all of that stuff; some of it seemed a little fluffy, or lacking in substance, perhaps even self-indulgent. Other things seemed so self-evident that I struggled to see why anyone would want to talk, much less write about it. Who, after all, needs instructions on how to be in relationship?

We should focus on the root causes of behavior rather than the behavior itself; really?? Did anyone think differently? Focus on the Self, maintain boundaries, engage young people, listen actively. These all seemed like very nice concepts, but just hearing about them frankly didn't do much for me. Being who I am, however, I couldn't resist questioning publically the value of these concepts as learning tools, the value of the gatherings as learning forums, and the value of the field itself as a framework for developing social justice initiatives related to edgy youth. I even wrote a couple of short essays and submitted them to newsletters and periodicals in the field. I remember one of my very first pieces was called 'Safety – A Menace to Treatment' in which I raged against the absurd valorization of safety at the expense of allowing young people to do anything lest they get injured, emotionally scarred or otherwise be vulnerable. And then something magical happened.

As I ramped up my sometimes shallow critiques of the field and the profession, the field and the profession engaged me; rather than dismissing me, or simply ignoring me, I started getting emails from people I knew to be well established in the field. They reached out to me! This may not seem like a big deal, but I am quite certain that it does not work out like this in many other fields or professions. In short order, I ended up in conversations with the likes of Gerry Fewster, Thom Garfat, Carol Stuart, Jack Phelan, Hans Skott-Myhre, Mark Krueger and many others. They challenged me, but also listened

to me. We talked, we shared, we argued and debated. They also ensured that I had opportunities to engage others, and to become involved in various contexts of the field and the profession. I was invited to write for CYC Net and Relational Child & Youth Care Practice; I was encouraged to attend conferences and others forms of gatherings. And I was connected to people all over the world that my newfound mentors thought I might enjoy meeting.

Mentorship is not an unusual concept in professional fields; in fact, in many fields, it is a build-in component for the advancement of new people in those fields. But very often it comes with rules and procedures, and a level of formality that can be a little off-putting. It almost always comes with boundaries that are imposed to maintain an effective mentorship relationship. In child and youth care, this is quite different. The boundaries between my mentors and myself disappeared almost immediately; a night on the town usually took care of that. My mentors became my friends, always present in my life in one way or another, always ready to support, or to challenge me, but always in the context of a relationship that clearly prioritized the underlying friendship rather than the professional context of mentorship.

I stopped working as a child and youth care practitioner and instead became one when I realized that my experience of mentorship and its transition into new friendships shaped my life in ways I would have never anticipated. At some point, I learned that the process of becoming connected to individuals and to a field of

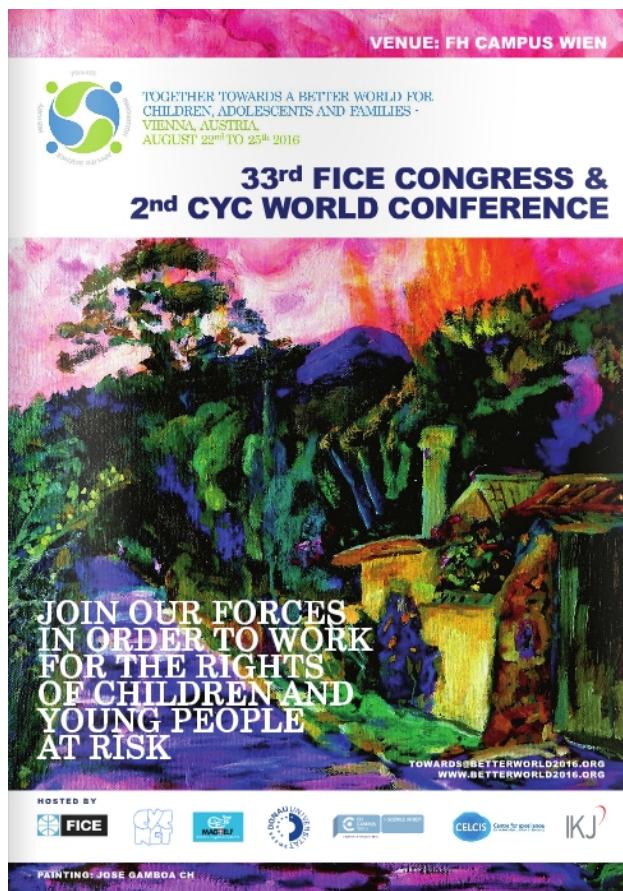


practice, thought and research, is a gift that cannot be taken for granted. It is only in child and youth care that one finds love in this way; a love for relational being, a love of one's friends and a love for the belonging that comes with a network of like-minded people ready to drop all pretense of professional aura for the sake of just being together, and being engaged.

Child and youth care, as a way of being in this world, relies very heavily on the celebration of love, as the outcome of friendship that flows from mentorship without pre-set boundaries. My commit-

ment to the field is that I will do my part, continue the friendships I have been blessed with and offer the same to those seeking to become; much like I did many years ago.

2016 seems like a good year to make a conscious effort to engage the next generation; from what I can see in my role in the School of Child & Youth Care at Ryerson University in Toronto, Canada, the next generation is looking fantastic. I want to be there to make them feel fantastic too. How about you?



Caring

Jack Phelan

Nobody cares for me, I am alone in the world and you get nothing for free. The only times people are nice is when they are getting something back in return. Caring actions create confusion because no one is supposed to care for me. This is a firm belief of children, youth and parents who have suffered abuse and neglect early in their lives. When irritated CYC staff kvetch about having to do something extra (pick up a youth who is stranded, or just late, take someone to an appointment, etc.) they are confirming to the listening child that you don't really care about them, it is just a job. Every time they hear someone say "they don't pay me enough to put up with this...", it just confirms a very negative belief about the lack of good will in the world.

I believe that every CYC practitioner who has at least 6 months of experience or more should be expecting themselves to demonstrate at least one pure act of caring a day for at least one child. This means you do it without getting a "thank you" and there is no underlying motive of creating compliance later in the day. In fact, the best example of useful caring is

immediately following some irritating behavior. Caring is not reinforcing desired behavior, but is free and full of affection, with no strings attached. As a treatment strategy, it increases attachment ability, creates relational energy and supports the child to eventually value both him/herself and become a caring person. Not a bad result, but definitely one that requires you to be truly caring, which can be a challenge.

One factor that I would also add is that CYC supervisors should be encouraging and supporting this caring behavior quite specifically and directly. I want to suggest that every supervisor should be demonstrating caring (see the description above) with her/his staff on a regular basis, so that this dynamic will be mirrored in the interactions that staff have with the children and youth. So I want supervisors to do personally caring things with each of the staff without any motive other than to demonstrate what you want to create in their practice. Hopefully they will feel less challenged by this expectation it can be accepted less suspiciously by their staff than it will be by the children.





Love and Anger: Composting the Garden

Hans Skott-Myhre

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When it comes to the care of young people in our world today there is a great deal to be angry about. Certainly, any quick perusal of the news locally or globally will offer story after story of egregious treatment of young people ranging from simple lapses in care to overt and intentional harm. Some of these stories make the news and some don't, but I think we can be reasonably sure that we, as adults, are failing our children in profound and fundamental ways. As CYC theorists and practitioners who encounter the ways that the young people in our care are abused and neglected, anger is a very reasonable and even predictable aspect of our

work life.

The question of what to do with this anger, I would argue, remains an unsettled and uncomfortable aspect of our work. Anger is, in some respects, the forbidden emotion. It is difficult to talk about and is often considered to be something we just have to "get over". Most of us in CYC don't want to be known as an angry person; as someone who is a bit out of control and can't manage their emotions. Some of us might worry that anger might make our colleagues uneasy and even fearful. This becomes even more complicated if we are people of color, women, or GLBTQ workers. The stereotype of the

angry black person, the hysterical gay person, and the woman as bitch infects our relations in ways that makes the expression of negative emotions, much less outrage and anger, risky, if not prohibited modes of expression.

Of course emotions pervade our working day and we are often quite attentive to the emotional expressions of the young people in our care. In addition to an array of powerful feelings expressed by young people, we find ourselves regularly struggling with their anger and rage. I am not sure, however, that we are entirely comfortable with young people's anger. Too often anger is understood as an issue of safety that requires management and control. It is difficult, when feeling threatened by a young person's emotional or physical outrage, to remain attentive to the genesis of that expression. In spite of our intention to remain in the relationship, there is a tendency to quickly distance ourselves from the attack. It is tempting to project our discomfort in ways that situate the anger entirely in the young person absent any sense of mutual accountability for the escalation.

Of course, this is a natural response to feeling afraid. We know that when we are fearful we resort to tactics of flight or fight. Although physical fighting is prohibited, we do have physical options, such as the use of restraint (which I would argue is a form of physical violence no matter how empathically we frame it as a gesture towards our mutual safety). Flight both emotional and physical is even more ubiquitous in the course of physical restraint,

as we tend to distance ourselves from the angry person, even while restraining them. The ambivalent complexity of our relation to anger in our work with young people begs the question, if we are not clear how to manage their anger relationally, how are we to manage our own? Or perhaps we should ask the question in reverse, if we are uncomfortable with our own anger how are we to engage outrage in our relations with young people?

In my experience as a worker and administrator, much of my anger arose in response to unethical bureaucratic actions that impacted the young people in my care. While there were certainly young people who "pissed me off" it was my fellow adults who really got my dander up. I was reminded of this when a couple of my students, writing about their experiences working in homeless shelters, told stories of truly unjust treatment of young people.

In one instance, a woman who had two teenage boys came home drunk to the shelter. The shelter rules required that the mother be discharged for being inebriated. While this is problematic in its own right, the really troubling aspect was that her sons were to be discharged as well. This meant these young men who had done nothing wrong were to be thrown on to the street. When my student approached the director of the religiously affiliated shelter, she was told there was nothing to be done, because the sins of the parents are passed on to the children.

In another story, one of my students was in a shelter program for homeless families where there was a rule that any



male over the age of sixteen had to be discharged as soon as they reached that age. The rationale was that young men over that age posed a sexual threat to women and girls in the shelter. While my student was there a young man who was in shelter with his family turned sixteen and was to be discharged. He had never broken any rule nor been in any way inappropriate or disruptive, yet he was faced with trying to find an emergency shelter for homeless youth, go to an adult men's shelter, or live on the street. My student lobbied hard for a case manager who would work with him to find an appropriate and safe shelter option, but no one on the paid shelter staff had time or inclination to take the situation on. In the end she took the responsibility herself, as an intern, to find shelter, only to discover wait lists of several months for any age appropriate shelter options. There was no option left but to turn the young man out on the streets to do the best he could.

In hearing of these situations from my students, among others, I was reminded of a situation when I was the clinical director of a large multi-service program for street engaged young people. A young woman who was fourteen years old sought shelter with us after running away from a severely abusive home. She had been beaten and sexually assaulted and we had attempted to meet with the family and had been rebuffed. When our case managers contacted social services they were told there was nothing they could do because of the age of the young woman. Puzzled and outraged, I called the Child Protective

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Services worker for an explanation. I was told that because she was old enough to physically escape the situation she did not require the assistance of Child Protective Services. They told me that this was because they had to give their limited resources to infants and small children who could not leave on their own. They said that if the young woman in our care had the resources to run away, then she was old enough to make it on her own without any intervention to protect her from harm.

As I reflected on these all too common stories of the miscarriage of care, I wondered what do we do with our anger and outrage. Of course, there are all the logical responses about working towards changing the system and so on, but what do we do with our feelings in the moment? As I was struggling with this, I ran across an interview with bell hooks done by George Yancy in the New York Times. In that interview she talks about a meeting she had with the Buddhist monk Thich Nat Hanh,

The first time that I got to be with Thich Nhat Hanh, I had just been longing to meet him. I was like, I'm going to meet this incredibly holy man. On the day that I was going to him, every step of the way I felt that I was encountering some kind of racism or sexism. When I got to him, the first thing out of my mouth was, "I am so angry!" And he, of course, Mr. Calm himself, Mr. Peace, said, "Well, you know, hold on to your anger, and use it as compost for your garden." And I thought, "Yes, yes, I can do that!" I tell that story

to people all the time. I was telling him about the struggles I was having with my male partner at the time and he said, "It is O.K. to say I want to kill you, but then you need to step back from that, and remember what brought you to this person in the first place." And I think that if we think of anger as compost, we think of it as energy that can be recycled in the direction of our good. It is an empowering force. If we don't think about it that way, it becomes a debilitating and destructive force.

I was struck, as I read this, by the possibility that our anger could be accepted in the moment that we feel angry. Too often, because anger is uncomfortable and we feel frightened by it, we want to get rid of it as soon as possible. But here we are told hold on to your anger. This is almost counter-intuitive given the ways we are taught to work to get rid of anger. Thich Nhat Hanh seems to be suggesting that there is value in anger and that it can be useful and informative. He suggests using as "compost for the garden." In her understanding of this, bell hooks proposes that anger is a type of energy. In contemplating this, I began to wonder whether all of the fear we associate with anger is due to the ways in which its potentially transformative force has been corrupted by regimes of domination and control that pervert its force into various forms of violence.

Hardt and Negri describe the way that certain social forms corrupt the things we hold in common. In their discussion of love they discuss the ways that love as a kind of



force that opens the creative capacities between us, is corrupted by social norms of love that are limited and constrained by social conventions such as romantic love, monogamous love, familial love, love of country, love of ethnicity, love of religious affiliation and so on. They suggest that love is a powerful force of affect that both defies and exceeds any social convention that seeks to restrict or restrain it. Indeed, love is rebellious and often breaks with the normative expectations of the family, the state or the community. We might say that love is what we share in common, as that force that opens us to the other in ways nothing else can.

I wonder if anger is also something we hold in common and that the practice of anger as violence or intimidation is in fact a corruption of its force. If love is that force which connects, is anger that force which ruptures and fractures the world as we know it. In their work, Deleuze and Guattari talk about the ways in which creation is composed of a constant process of territorializing and deterritorializing and re-territorializing processes. In other words, we engage chaos just enough to extract the energy and elements necessary to compose a variation of the world. But chaos is always operating at the edges of what we create and seeps in in small and large ways to undo the order we have so carefully created, opening it to new worlds which we re-compose out the fragmented and ruptured elements of what we thought we knew so well before. If love is the process of composition, is anger one of the elements that takes the world

apart? Is this what Thich Nhat Hanh meant by compost.

Compost is made up of rotting matter; matter that is breaking down and coming apart-being deterritorialized. If you add it to your garden when it is too new and still very hot from the energy released through decomposition, it will burn the roots of your plants and wreak havoc with your efforts to grow things. But without it the soil quickly loses its nutritional base and becomes an insufficient medium for new growth. To use compost as an effective part of gardening, you have to wait until it has completed its process of decomposition and cooled down. However, you must be willing to allow chaos to do its work in disassembling the vegetables, leaves, grass clippings and so on you put in your compost. You cannot cling to what they were before. They must be utterly transformed to be useful.

I wonder what would happen if we thought of anger in this way. Anger as an absolutely necessary element in our work; not as something to be avoided or passed over quickly, but as something we share in common. Anger as that force that opens the possibility of utter transformation. A process that requires us to let go of the world as we have known it. The force that, once it has completed its cycle of decomposing our world, can feed it with the rich detritus of what it has taken apart. Perhaps we need anger as well as love in our work to remind us as Thich Nhat Hanh says of "what brought you to this person in the first place."

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-institutionalisation 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, madrasa 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.

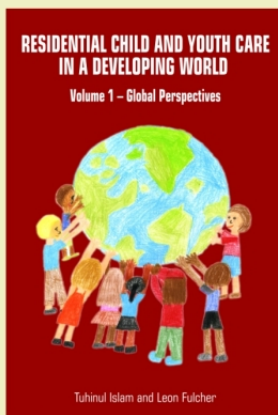
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Volume 2 – Residential Child and Youth Care in a Developing World: Asian and Middle East Perspectives (February 2016)

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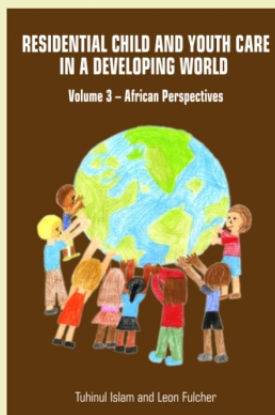
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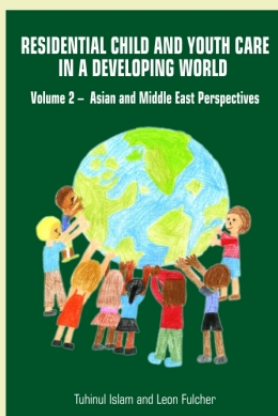
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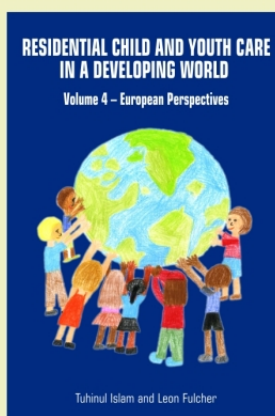
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How Small Samples Mislead Us

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“Without data you’re just another person with an opinion.”

Thanks to Jennifer Davidson for reminding me of this quote, by W. Edwards Deming, via *linkedin.com*. A corollary of this epigram, and the theme of this essay, is that with data from a small sample you’re an opinionated person overconfident about what you know! Sometimes this is better than “just another person with an opinion” and sometimes this is worse.

A simple example illustrates the problem with small samples. In my current research I am studying a dataset from street-involved youth; thirteen percent of this sample were (or would be if they had not left) in permanent foster care, and another 32 percent had temporary foster care experience at some point in their lives. All were asked to rate their satisfaction with their care experience on a typical Likert scale, with 1 being “very satisfied” and 5 being “dissatisfied.” The average score was 3.3 with a standard deviation of 1.5.

Let’s imagine a medium-sized city in which there are many homeless and street-involved youth, and among these there are 200 young people with foster care experience who are occasionally homeless, not going to school, and often earning the bulk of their income from the underground and/or illegal economy. For the sake of the example, I will assume that the mean of their satisfaction scores is 3.3 and the standard deviation is 1.5, just like my real dataset.

I might be interested in interviewing street-involved former foster youth about their experience, and so I track down five of these youth and interview them. Why might this be a problem? (We will ignore for the moment the problem of representation and just focus on the consequences of sample size.)

I used a computer program (any spreadsheet program will work) to draw 10 different samples of five youth from this group of 200 with an average of 3.3 and a standard deviation of 1.5. Table 1 over the page shows the results.

Table 1
Ten samples of 5 drawn from a population of 200, with an average of 3.3 and a standard deviation of 1.5

| Sample | Average | Standard Deviation |
|--------|---------|--------------------|
| 1 | 3.7 | 1.2 |
| 2 | 5 | 1.1 |
| 3 | 1.6 | 1.9 |
| 4 | 3.6 | .58 |
| 5 | 3.6 | 1.29 |
| 6 | 3.1 | 2.5 |
| 7 | 3.9 | 1.5 |
| 8 | 2.7 | 1.4 |
| 9 | 4.0 | 1.6 |
| 10 | 2.7 | 2.0 |

You can see that the range of averages is 1.6 to 5. Some of these are impressively close to the real average, but it is not “impressive”— it is accidental. The same problem can be seen in the standard deviation, with a range of .58 to 2.5. If I am unlucky enough to draw the sample with an average of 5, it appears that they are wildly dissatisfied; if I draw the sample with an average of 3.6 and a standard deviation of .58, it looks like they are impressively ambivalent about whether their care was good or not.

I have drawn these samples of five randomly from a dataset of 200. In most cases, when small samples are used in the human services they are not random; sometimes they are those youth who are easy to find, sometimes they are the youth who are in the most trouble, sometimes it is those who happen to turn up at the shelter that night. In all these cases there is reason to believe it is probably not random. Extreme samples are a problem in qualitative research as well, even where the purpose is to “build theory.” The problem is that usually there is no way to know how extreme the sample is.

This sample of five can lead us into great temptation. We might have trouble resisting the lure of making claims about the satisfaction of all street-involved youth. We might want to make claims about street-work practice. We might want to make claims about characteristics of street-involved youth about whom we did not collect any data that “seem” logical to us. We might critique capitalism or socialism, depending on our ideological bent. On the basis of our small study we might present ourselves as experts and get hired to make recommendations about policy and practice. We might get hired to teach CYC and our little sample becomes the basis for claiming expertise about CYC practice more generally. We may start criticizing practices and policies that we have never seen or studied. We start citing other people who agree with us, and our beliefs get repeated by ourselves and by others as if they were true, with only the thinnest shred of evidence.



Don't do it!


In Table 1 there were 10 samples of five. If we add those 10 average scores and divide by 10 (the average of the average), we get 3.39 — not too far away from the true average. The more samples we include in these calculations the more accurate the sum total of our work, even while any individual study is usually misleading and even wrong, when taken by itself. This is a simple statistical demonstration, but the same principle applies to any practice, evaluation, or research study. There is a lesson here.

That this matters has been demonstrated in recent years in a surprising field. For the last fifteen years we have been told many breathless stories about the implications of neuroscientific studies of the brain. It turns out that neuroscience researchers have been making serious statistical errors caused by small samples. A recent article about this problem has a great title: “Power failure: why small sample size undermines the reliability of neuroscience” (Button, et al, 2013).

We should pay attention to this lesson from neuroscience, hoping to avoid being either “just another person with an opinion” or “an opinionated person overconfident about what we know.”

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LOOKING AT THE PAST AND CREATING OUR FUTURE

Karen VanderVen

As 2016 looms, it's not unusual for a Soapboxer to do some reviewing, summing up, and looking ahead.

Child and youth work had a *big* year. Just a few examples: The 200th Anniversary edition of *CYC On-Line* was published, along with another edition of the *Journal of Child and Youth Care Work* – spotlighting the definition of, applications to, and dynamic vibrancy of the field. The Child and Youth Care Certification Board is thriving with more and more seeking certification. Ever more sophisticated concepts are developed with the field and imported from outside. A symposium on Higher Education was held and the proceedings and recommendations will be published soon. On the international front, many are planning to participate in the upcoming FICE (International Federation of Educative Communities) conference in Vienna this fall.

So what are some things we can think about in the year - and years- to come – and hopefully organize ourselves to act upon ? We talk a lot about connections

and making them – something we are good at – so that we can consider some connections that might be initiated or solidified if they are already underway.

I have previously suggested that this work is so fundamental, so valuable to society as a whole, that it should extend its coverage beyond children and youth and focus on the nature of the work so that all human beings may be touched by its unique focus on promoting positive development and well-being, whatever it is called. One suggestion has been “developmental care”. Whatever it is called, it is most central generic human service, with a function to harmonize all aspects of an individual's life from birth to death.

So, let's think for now about making or increasing *connections* with early childhood care and education, adult institutions and groups, and geriatrics. For example, early childhood teachers and caregivers perform the same functions and use the same kinds of skills (adapted to the developmental characteristics of the age range) as do child and youth workers with older



groups. The geriatric care system has a great need for people with the compendium of knowledge and skills of today's child and youth workers. Their focus is on nursing care but quality care includes relationships, positive communication, and providing an overall pleasant and stimulating environment. Increasing longevity and proportion of the population in "senior" age ranges emphasize the needs that our work can meet. We should also embrace "intergenerational" work within our purview as some child and youth workers have already done, so that in our relational work we can indeed relate to a variety of relationships and relational groups.

We are increasingly becoming "global" - reaching out to *connect* with child and youth care workers and child care groups in other continents and countries in an everwidening reach. We should purposefully continue to expand this effort as global connections and networks will be both powerful and empowering. They will help develop awareness that this is a field with common elements wherever it is practiced. They will enhance our ability to understand our universal human needs and ways of being in the world, as well as to how we are different.

Despite all of our advances, we (in my Soapbox opinion) need to turn our efforts outward even more. Oh, my, how we need to tell the world about our field and show we can and could contribute in many areas of human welfare in which we are not involved now. This lack of external promotion is part of the natural modesty endemic in the field, but it is not produc-

tive. While we are making progress in the on-line sector we should also have an organized plan to assure that the nature of our work and our accomplishments are covered in newspapers, television, magazines, and all forms of mass media. Does anybody have a helpful *connection* in these areas?

Many are familiar with Urie Bronfenbrenner's notion of ecology. Another of his concepts, less known, is that of a *superordinate goal* - in essence, a purpose that is so compelling that like a magnet in a mix of iron filings, lines everyone up to play a role in attaining this goal. So, for the New Year, I would like to suggest one for us: *Social justice*. This means essentially that all of humanity is accorded basic human rights equally, without prejudice. We are so far from attaining any modicum of social justice in the world.

Recently I was asked would what my own application to social justice might be. I replied that I would say that *anybody* in a governmentally designed and/or supported programs must be totally protected and kept safe while under their purview. It doesn't matter what the people have or haven't done or whether they 'deserve' such treatment. That is their right and it is profoundly inexcusable for them to receiving less.

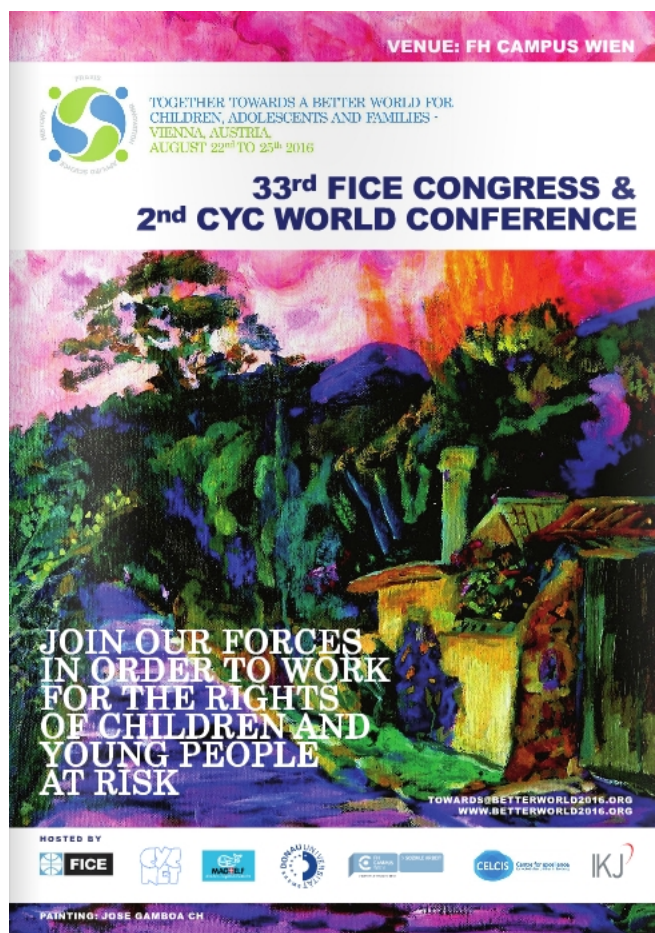
Just one of *many* examples worldwide is prisons. I continue to read about prison systems, in the United States and world-wide. The treatment of prisoners is abominable. Outmoded concepts of prisons' purpose. Corruption at every level. Blatant discrimination. Inhumane and abu-

sive treatment in all aspects of living that have to be provided in some form in any institution where people live. It's one thing to protect society from dangerous people. But that doesn't mean that their removal has to be fraught with cruelty and dehumanization.

Where does 'child and youth work' come in ? Here is where our knowledge and skill in relationships, communication, environmental design, activities – all the ingredients for making a humane and rehabilitative environment could come

into play – IF of course we could somehow penetrate the entrenched values and political systems that allow and perpetuate such abominable conditions in these and other institutions.

So in the year to come, let's unite around a superordinate goal that does not detract from the development of our field within its boundaries, but that enables us to strive more widely through building new connections to give our unique knowledge and skill set to a broad set of societal concerns.





Personal Experiences with Social Justice in Child and Youth Care Practice

Yvonne Bristow

I am a person who considers my field of practice as more than a career; it is a part of my identity. I am a Child and Youth Care Worker (CYC) and no matter what my title is or where I may go in life, I will always be a CYC. My professional approach comes from the foundational practice of CYC which can be described as high-relational life-space interventions that focus on building resilient children and youth (Garfat & Fulcher, 2011). My understanding of social justice stems from a willingness to connect with individuals who live with the experience being “Othered” (Kumashiro, 2002). Children and youth who are “Othered” include those who experience oppression in one or more areas of their life, such as those with disabilities, those who are LGBT,

those with low socio-economic status or those who are racial minorities. My professional goals related to social justice involve wanting to be a more critically reflexive practitioner who “...take[s] responsibility for creating [my] social and organizational realities” (Cunliffe, p.408). Critical reflexivity means to examine the assumptions that influence my actions, and to understand how those actions impact my professional practice as a CYC. In my career I aim to understand how to be a CYC who questions and evaluates my position to social justice in education, specifically in the areas of disability, race and poverty.

My Career Defining Experience

At the beginning of my career, I worked at a youth shelter serving males ages

16-24 in downtown Toronto, a large and diverse city in the province of Ontario, Canada. In this role I become grounded in equitable practices while working with people who were marginalized and stigmatized. The residents I worked with were from varying socio-economic positions and I connected with those from varying cultures, histories and orientations. One of the most influential experiences I had was when my supervisor at the youth shelter brought me to the mental health court at city hall. One resident who had lived his childhood outside of Canada and who had been diagnosed as schizophrenic had been charged with resisting arrest. This young man had run from police because of fear and paranoia. The youth advocates and legal team were able to speak on his behalf so that he was able to connect with appropriate long-term mental health services instead of going to jail. This experience reminds me of Kumashiro's framework of anti-oppressive pedagogy because this young man's newcomer status and mental health concerns created a "harmfulness of stereotypes as being a result of individual prejudice and discrimination" (2002, p. 50). This young man wasn't defined by society as "normal" and this partial understanding of his case lead to misconceptions and unfair treatment (Kumashiro, 2002). This was a career defining experience that motivated me to develop a more intelligent and compassionate view of social justice and equity (Cunliffe, 2004).

Over the years my role has changed from working in youth shelters, group homes, and hospitals to a more keenly de-

veloped interest in educational CYC practice. Through this interest I pursued a career with the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). I have certainly had many moral and ethical challenges arise throughout my role in education as I work exclusively with young people who are considered high-risk. As stated in Mirci et al. (2011), many students labeled as high-risk don't feel successful, have low self-worth, feel excluded and cannot establish a confident understanding of themselves in educational environments. I always find that there is something about the character that these students have. Their stories, intelligence and resilience push me to pursue meaningful relationships with them.

I have also only worked in schools categorized as *Model Schools for Inner Cities*. As Watson (2014) describes, this usually means schools where most of the students are low-income racial minorities. In my first long-term CYC position, I spent my mornings providing one-on-one support to a ten-year-old male who was formally diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Oppositional Defiance Disorder. In my afternoons, I worked within a typically-functioning grade six class serving a community of predominantly Islamic students.

Responding to Dominant Viewpoints

Reflecting on my experiences as a white female who grew up in Catholic school, I felt like I was very naïve about the issues and realities of Muslim people in re-



gards to discrimination and Islamophobia. I didn't know a Muslim person until I started my post-secondary education, which made me feel ignorant about how to approach these students while being respectful towards their beliefs and values. This was the first experience where I became aware of how institutions and our curriculum are designed from a dominant viewpoint (Rezai-Rashti, 1995).

Learning from the lived-experiences of these students helped me to discover the *great* need for CYC and educational practice that calls for all students and staff to focus on education that respects and includes non-dominant cultures. These eleven and twelve-year-old students were able to reflect on many experiences where they felt "Othered" and stigmatized for going to Mosque, wearing a hijab or for having a Muslim-sounding name (Zine, 2003). Many of these students could describe specific incidents where, because of their culture and faith, they and their families were treated as if they were threats to a dominant culture. I realized that schools which have "Othered" populations such as this one shouldn't be the only schools implementing anti-racist educational practices. All students and schools should seek to inform students of the reality that some populations are discriminated against more than others and that knowledge is the key to understanding the silenced, non-dominant voices in society (Miner, 2014).

Applications for CYCs Working with Students with Autism

Child and Youth Care Workers usually work in programs that address the social, emotional and behavioural needs of students (Toronto District School Board, 2014). In these positions I have found that I have an intense interest in working with people who have an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and live in low-income communities. Students with an ASD may stand apart from those who are considered typically-developing and school can seem like a very exclusive and restrictive place for them (Mirici et al., 2011). My current role in an inner city ASD classroom allows me to serve low-income, racial minority students with mental health concerns. I am called to challenge the inequitable patterns in education that 'Other' my students (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2009). There are many barriers to fair and equitable education for those with ASD who are also from low-income families. I am in a position where I am frequently called upon to advocate for students and parents so that their child can access the same treatment and services that typically-developing children are permitted (Silberman, 2015). I stand up towards other educators who sometimes make arguments against these students' rights, and we work on creating social change within our school community by running workshops and activities to inform the school community on ASDs (Rezai-Rashti, 1995).

Addressing Privilege and Position

Over my career, I have felt called upon to understand my position as a critically reflexive practitioner. There have been many experiences and students I've met as a CYC that have helped me develop a more nuanced foundation of social justice. Since I had a less-traditional role in education, I wanted to discover how to implement intelligent social justice practices as a CYC. When reflecting on Kumashiro's (2002) framework and education for the "Othered", I have worked to provide "therapeutic spaces where harmed students can go in order to work through their trauma" (p.35). Education that is critical of privileging and "othering" is an area where I find myself growing as a critically reflexive practitioner because I strive to promote a socially just climate for students. The students work towards having an understanding of their position because most are aware that most are "Othered" in the educational system. I try to teach students that they are in a position to *own* their identities as persons with Autism or as persons living in poverty, and to push them to create change in their own positions. As a CYC, 'education that changes students and society' relates to my role because I have the flexibility of not having to follow a curriculum. I try to ensure that not "only certain ways of thinking possible, only certain kinds of questions askable" (p. 69). These students are different from the "norm" and I don't limit the directions of our conversations. I have used conversations with children to

reflect a pedagogy that welcomes the ideas, topics and struggles of students in my schools (Sensoy and DiAngelo, 2009).

Conclusion

When I think of my professional goals for the future, I believe that there need to be long-term systemic changes to the Canadian educational system. Our materials, our curriculum and our customs reflect a white-privileged dominant outlook (Miner, 2014). As CYCs our approaches in education should focus on "not only where you are, but also where you want to go" (Enid Lee in Miner, 2014). Our purpose in serving diverse students should be to encourage curiosity and understanding. I hope to move beyond the superficial approaches to multiculturalism towards teaching honest and accurate information about oppression (Miner, 2014). I work with students who have had silenced voices in education due to social justice issues of disability, poverty and race. I also want to make stronger efforts to encourage the many marginalized students I serve to participate in decisions that affect their lives and their educational experiences (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2009). There are still many topics I know I need to learn more about, and many new ideas that I hope to uncover in my professional practice. My definitive career goal as a CYC is to be confident as a critically reflexive practitioner who makes real changes to approaches, outlooks, policies and services affecting "Othered" students.



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@CYCareworkers



The “Born” Enigma

Maxwell Smart and John Digney

Life isn't about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself.

George Bernard Shaw, Irish Poet

No man can be a failure if he thinks he's a success; If he thinks he is a winner, then he is.

Robert W. Service, Scottish Poet

Karl Menninger firmly believed that stress was at the core of many, if not most, mental health issues. He postulated his belief that the stressors of daily living are kept at bay by such factors as a supportive ecology, sufficient activity and a sense of purpose. Both authors, each with over 25 years of working with troubled and vulnerable children & youth tend to take a similar standpoint and also believe

that these impact on the individual from the time of their birth (or maybe even before). Many of the treatment interventions advocated by the author begin with the belief that we need to create a caring and accepting milieu, which should help to foster a feeling of being valued and loved.

As we look back into the history of each young person, we often can quickly pinpoint some obvious trauma or challeng-

ing relationship or a 'moment' which may have interfered with the young person ability to cope with the stresses of every day. However, on occasion we can struggle when seeking to build this time-line, as we may have to deal with issues such as: poor engagement by family/youth, disguised compliance and/or, outright aggression and non-compliance.

But where do we start when we are working with a caring family, fully compliant and engaged and desperately looking for answers and assistance – but they all cannot get past a belief that the young person in question was 'maybe just born wrong'.

The Born Identity

Recently one of the authors started working with a family, a family of some privilege and well informed. As he sat with the mother (a lady with so much love for her children that it also oozed from her skin) she explained that this kid (let's call him Dave) had always been different, '*it was very apparent by the time he was two, but Dave had always been different ... I just don't know if he came out wrong!*' She went on to speak of a very prolonged and difficult labour and the concerns she had that hypoxia (at the time of birth) may have played a part in his brain development. A discussion with the father confirmed that this was not just a concern that the mother had, '*something happen with the cord and his oxygen was compromised, it wasn't for very long but was enough to make him the way he is*'.

Dave's medical records spoke of an extended and stressful labour, but clearly ruled out any concerns with oxygen deprivation during the birthing process. If there was some issue present at birth, it was unlikely to have been as a result of a lack of oxygen, perhaps it was the actual event of being born that stamped itself on this young man's identity and personality. A stressful entry into the world may be able to 'bite into our resiliency tank' and leave a new born with a reduced ability to cope with minor events. Or does the possibility of some traumatic event go back even further, to the time when Dave was 'in utero'. Many researchers from the epigenetic research field are starting to make this way of thinking more understandable.

The Born Supremacy

Dave was born into a family with two older siblings (they were eight and ten years old when he entered this world). From an early age they were academic high achievers, doing well in school and organised sport and were in the local drama society. They accepted Dave, their little brother, unconditionally and '*loved him from the moment they clapped eyes on him*'.

Is it possible that as Dave watched his sisters do all the things they were capable of, that his experience of self was one of being inferior or unworthy? Perhaps it was because (as he reported) from around two years old, he wanted to do all the girls were doing but was unable (given his physical and cognitive ability). What is the impact on a child self belief, when they see

themselves so far behind in terms of their abilities?

Then we add in the labelling. Within one year of starting school, Dave had been diagnosed with ADHD and prescribed the usual 'psycho-pharm' response. Three years later he got the matching pair ... he was now diagnosed with ODD.

Most recently Dave (speeding through the turbulence of adolescence) has graduated and been accepted into the 'Conduct Disorder' club. 'I asked the psychologist what the treatment was and he said there wasn't one', said his mum. 'I then asked what I am supposed to do when I can't manage his behaviour.' The response from the therapist, 'call the police'.

Aspergers had also been previously been raised as a possible diagnosis to Dave's situation, but his mother was reluctant to look further into this as she did not want yet another label attached to her beloved son. 'How can we as a family continue to allow people tell us that there is something else wrong with our son?'

The Born Ultimatum

So, born into a loving family where everyone seemed to be doing well; mum and dad both successful and accomplished; sisters the same. Is it unreasonable to think that this young man, as a small child looked up to these older folks and wanted to be like them, wanted to achieve and get the approval of those around him, such as family; school and community.

At sixteen years of age, Dave is still attending school but he finds it tough. He is

unable to fully concentrate on the lessons as he is easily distracted. 'I want to do well but can't ... I can't focus on the school stuff, I'm always miles away in my own head', Dave recalls. He spoke of the many occasions in class where he was told that he 'better pull his socks up or you're outta here'. He spoke about being constantly reminded by his dad that if he didn't 'behave' he would have his iPod removed or that he would be sent to his room. 'I mightn't even be doing anything that bad and I was being told by adults that I'd better do this or I better do that', he lamented, 'why can't I just be left alone'.

And within Dave's last plea we start to see a pattern forming. From a very early age, in Dave's mind, every good thing had been contingent on him doing things that he might not have been able to do, or do well. As he later reported 'the girls always seemed smarter than me and they were able to understand what other people wanted from them, so they didn't have to be bribed or threatened'.

Dave mentioned how his teachers were always picking him up wrong, they had some preconceived idea that he was going to be trouble and were hyper sensitive to any sign of disrespect. They would pounce, if his voice was too loud or his eye-contact was intimidating. 'I know what you're doing and you won't intimidate me, get out of this classroom', Dave explained that he mightn't even be aware he was even looking at the teacher – or he might be looking at them because he wasn't understanding what they were saying and was waiting for further explanation. There al-



ways had to be an 'or else'.

The Born Legacy

What is the legacy that one is left with when one's entry into the world was full of stress, people panicking and rushing around? What is the legacy of wanting to do everything that the older kids were doing, but not being able? What is the legacy of not having great social skills and not being able to understand the nuances of relationship and non-verbal communication? What is the legacy of being born into a world with only one way of teaching and with little or no apparent motivation by our systems to try and find alternatives? Dave was consequently left with no better way of being or doing, his hostile world was filled with 'you better do this or something bad is gonna happen'?

The Born Sanction

So what is our observational point here when we talk about Dave or the many kids like Dave that we encounter in Child and Youth Care? Whether it is from a context of talking about labels, or inflicted sanctions, these ways of thinking and being only look at the outside behavioural context of a child's situation and never the inside turmoil and stress. For a child like Dave, who like Kindlon's (1999), description of a marathon runner, pulling off the road too exhausted to complete the race, the day-to-day impact of this level of failure and stress, leaves him running on empty all of the time.

Ironic then is it not that as helping

adults we will often refer more to analysing Dave's behavioural responses to this exhausting stress rather than help to identify and deal with the stressors themselves. And more importantly, provide adequate supports to the youth (and the family) to help them deal with those stressors – some of which have been there from birth. It seems easier for our systems to consider how to pathologies a youth like Dave and attribute causality to his situation based on his personal characteristics rather than look wider at our own system responses to helping and healing.

Dave, as with every other person born onto this planet, should be allowed to feel some implicit approval from society to be able to become all that they can be within it. Surely they should be able to do this in a context of not perpetually feeling judged, labelled or compared ... should they not be given the 'opportunities to try' and to also challenge themselves without having the caveat of, 'you better do this OR ELSE'.

From Born to Redemption

As we build on our literary analogies, although not quite into the plot of Shawshank, we begin to recognise how Dave may seem trapped in his emotional prison and to paraphrase Andy Duphrane, 'hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things'. As many give up on Dave and kids like him; and as they begin to give up on themselves, we as Child and Youth Care workers need to constantly encourage troubled youth and families to retain hope. All that has gone before, in the life of a kid,

will leave a mark – just as a meteorite colliding with a planet leaves a crater, but the planet does not cease to exist – it will recover, so can the kid.

For Dave's sake we must inspire hope and optimism rather than the pessimism of perpetual failure; we must challenge the established paradigms of problematic labeling and be open to difference; we must see hope as a good thing and start each new shift and each new day with a fresh hope for progress and communicate this even when things look bleak.

As we begin to prepare for another New Year, we clear the smudges from our 'optimism spectacles', we focus on the opportunities rather than the road blocks. The boulders appearing to stand in our way become but stepping stones to where we want to go.

As the author spoke with the mother and asked her to reframe his behaviour; to only seek a diagnosis of 'what is right', not what is wrong; to move away from a place of sanction to one of responsibility, her eyes began to light, 'thank you, thank you, I knew there was hope thank you for understanding'.

As she moves ahead, standing up even when all she wants to do at times is lay down and cry, Dave's mum feel empowered to do what she knows is right. She will find time for herself and her other family members to spend quality time with Dave and make him know he is loved; she will look for ways to praise and encourage Dave for each and every positive thing he does; she will allow Dave be more involved in making decisions that affect his life and

his future, and; she will support him to be of service to other. Just as importantly she will make sure he experiences some fun each day.

Dave's life will be different and only because the pessimism lenses have been removed from the eyes of his family and himself. They are not replaced with rose coloured spectacles but with lenses which focus on an achievable world. His cards might have been dealt at his birth, but these do not have to be the only cards he can play.

We can help all the "Dave's" and their families attain some different cards to play, we do this by being open to seeing what they are capable of and by giving opportunities to find this out. We can give hope, we can inspire and we can help other to do the same. Events occur that are outside the control of new born babies, little brothers, awkward schoolboys and anxious teens, but these events impact the development of kids. We begin our helping by asking of our systems that we all look beyond birth to a life that can be fulfilling and fulfilled.

'Happy 2016'.

Digs and Maxie

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What have I been missing?

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Working in Dark Places

James Freeman

I was driving into our residential campus when I heard the news on the radio. A baby was found buried on the side of a bicycle path just about an hour away from where I live. It was cold to the touch but still breathing when a law enforcement officer pulled off chunks of asphalt and reached into the hole just a half yard deep. It was the day after the U.S. thanksgiving holiday.

Within the next week the thirty-three year old mother was found. She reportedly did not want the baby and explained she was fearful because no one even knew she was pregnant. The child is now in the custody of the child protective services. The mother is now detained in the corrections system facing a potential life in prison. Two lives unfold in strain and struggle.

It got me thinking that child and youth care practitioners work on both sides of this equation. We show up for children

and young people when they have been dealt significant troubles in life at no fault of their own. Buried (sometimes literally) under the weight and trials of someone

else. We fight for them when they can't fight for themselves. We speak up when they have no voice of their own. We clear the obstacles so they can begin to see and speak for themselves.

Life can be so unrelenting that some enter into this world needing to recover from trauma at the start. Gerry Fewster described that "...all children experience developmental interruptions in their primary relationships [and that] our task is to be 'good-enough' surrogate parents, ready and able to offer whatever they didn't

get in those early years" (Fewster, 2015, p. 155). This baby is a tangible symbol of the invisible trauma young people with whom we work face every day.

We also work on the side of the



mother. Although she is in her thirties, she was a child and teen once. I wonder what experiences, interactions, and decisions led her to this moment on the bicycle path. What did she need at this point in her life? I suspect it was to be noticed by others, to be connected in meaningful ways, and to have others she could turn to in moments of difficulty. When pain reaches a certain level of intensity it's hard to make sense of our circumstances and reach out for help.

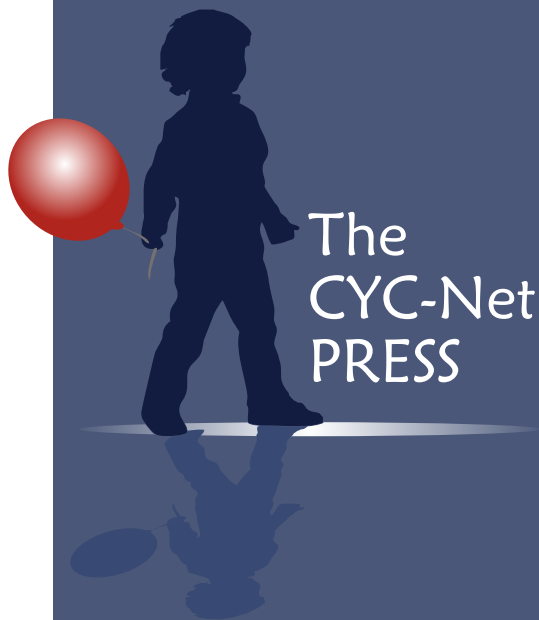
In child and youth care we come alongside people who are in the midst of deep pain. We are “reminded of how frequently [we] operate at an emotional ‘crash site’ where the pain experienced by a young person and family members” (Fulcher & Garfat, 2015, p. 53) can be extreme. These two lives fell through a painful gap. Perhaps their story will encourage us to press on, continue to catch those who do, and to make a difference in their lives.

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As 2016 begins, I like to spend time thinking about of gratitude; gratitude for what I have learned from the people and experiences that have graced my life over the last twelve months. Images of people whom I consider mentors come to mind and I record the teachings, wisdom and moments of connection that we have shared. As I process, new ideas, goals and aspirations become defined and I will inevitably seek out these same people that I am grateful to, and for, to explore these perspectives as they have willingly engaged in a relationship of guidance with me.

In practice, mentorship is significant as it provides leadership as well as a form of informal supervision. In Child and Youth Care practice, practitioners may sometimes feel isolated or alone in their practice settings, bringing forth the need for mentorship to retain passion for practice, and ensure growth and development in our relational approach. Mentors take on a leadership role within our lives and it is significant to note how they use a relational approach to help us. Ward (2014) explains a relational approach to leadership as, “one which emphasizes the quality of the human interactions between leader and others involved, at both an emotional and a practical level” (p.2). I appreciate this definition as it captures the awareness of

both the emotional and practical realities that a wise guide must take into account as they support us in our journeys.

Ward (2010) notes that it is in the supervision relationship where we learn the most about the use of self in practice. Effective use of supervision, in which we share not only about the events of practice, but also about our own feelings and experiences in an unguarded manner, expands not only our own understanding of practice, but also of ourselves and our ca-

pabilities (Ward, 2010). Good mentors do the same and compliment our supervision experience and practice.

When I reflect on my own mentors, I can clearly see these individuals embodying

characteristics of a Child and Youth Care approach (Garfat & Fulcher, 2012), and often the moments of mentorship happen in daily life, not as a scheduled event. This is similar to our use of daily life events with young people and their families.

What I enjoy most as I think back on the past year and gratitude for those who are willing mentors in my life, is that I am continuously learning about myself and practice when I reflect; I am able to re-interpret the teachings or moments shared with mentors, through the lens of added wisdom and skill.

In Gratitude...

Aurora De Monte



So I hope you will join me and ponder for some moments about your own mentors: those genuine, authentic people who challenge yet also support you in your personal and professional development. When those people come to mind, I imagine a smile crosses your lips (or maybe a furrowed brow from all their truth-telling and the difficulty in hearing it at times), but, I suggest we reach out and note our appreciations for their dedication to our practice, and the field, for without them, life and practice would be very different.

I would like to extend deep appreciation to my own mentors; this overture into writing is dedicated to you all. Thank you for your care, dedication, presence, and challenge.

To end, a special note of profound gratitude to Brian Gannon for his passion, perseverance and commitment to the field of Child and Youth Care.

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The roots of all goodness lie in the soil
of appreciation for goodness.

Dalai Lama

A Different Language: Implementing the Total Communication Approach

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The majority of people with a learning disability have a communication impairment; however, difficulties with communication are not limited to children with disabilities. In spite of this the importance of communication is often overlooked. This article explores the implementation of the total communication approach in a residential short breaks unit, as a way towards improving communication. In doing so it aims to provide a clearer understanding of the total communication approach, as a model that values all modes of communication. Through this, the impact of communication on efficacy, participation, meaning making, behaviour, containment, attachment, and relationships will be considered.

Keywords

Total communication; Residential short breaks; Disability

Introduction

The majority of people with a learning disability have a communication impairment (Cameron and Murphy, 2002); however, difficulties with communication are not limited to children with disabilities. McCool (2008) proposes that many neurotypical children in residential care have communication impairments, possibly on a scale similar to children diagnosed with an autistic spectrum disorder.

This article explores the implementation of the total communication approach, a model that values all modes of communication, in a residential short breaks unit for children and young people with learning disabilities where I was employed as a Senior Residential Project Worker. I will provide an analysis of the historical functioning of the communication methods in this unit, examine reasons for the required change, and explore the total communication approach and the implementation of



this. Through this discussion I hope to illustrate some parallels between the use of the total communication approach and best practice in residential child care more generally, based on ideas I developed while completing the MSc in Advanced Residential Child Care.

How it began

In order to start at the beginning it is necessary for me to identify the communication tools that were in place previously; I will provide explanation or analysis of these where appropriate. One of the pre-existing methods was the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) in which children learn to communicate within a social context, by giving a picture of a desired item to their communicative partner in exchange for the item (Bondy and Frost, 1994). This helps young people to develop the ability to initiate communication, and to develop an understanding of the power of communication.

Another tool used was Boardmaker, which is a computer software programme for making Picture Communication Symbols (Mayer-Johnson, 2010) to be used to support the child to understand information (in a visual timetable or by labelling objects, or to allow the child to express communication to others and make choices, for example by using PECS). Photos and objects were also used in place of symbols, as they are less abstract and therefore do not require such an advanced level of understanding.

Staff also used Signalong which is a

sign-supporting system intended to be used alongside speech (The Signalong Group, 2010). It is based on British Sign Language, but is easier to use as there is no grammatical structure. Social stories which describe concepts, skills or situations through the child's perspective in order to explicitly describe social clues, others' views and common responses (Gray and White, 2002) were also used.

Hawthorn (2005) describes the use of pictures on doors around the building (to explain what's inside); individual boxes (for children to keep their own possessions in); and a 'talking wall' (pictures of staff and young people who are in the unit), as some examples of a communicating environment. These were also in place in the unit. In an attempt to provide individualised sensory environments, staff had made limited attempts at using 'on-body signing' for visually impaired children, song signifiers (songs which indicate the beginning or end of activities to develop awareness and anticipation), and eye pointing (where children with limited movement direct their gaze towards desired objects or symbols).

Although all these communication methods were in place in the unit staff appeared to have some confusion between them. For example, they would often wrongly use the term 'Boardmaker' when talking about 'PECS'. Many staff were able to use communication methods at a basic level only, with the young people often being more skilled. This led to them being used inconsistently and sporadically. For example a child would be provided with a visual timetable one day, but not the following day; a staff member

would be unable to produce the sign to inform the child that they were going out to the park; pictures around the unit were not kept updated; and staff forgot the tune to the song signifier for teeth brushing. This created confusion in the children, resulting in increased levels of anxiety and ultimately more 'challenging behaviour.' Frequently the materials young people required were not readily available (for example, the physical symbols with which to make a request). While this may appear to be a resource issue, physical barriers to communication are rooted in the attitudes of staff and the culture of the unit (Hawthorn, 2005).

The unit's Children's Communication Local Procedure listed some of the communication tools described above, but not all of them. What it failed to do is identify the underlying ethos required in order to facilitate communication for all of the young people. The majority of staff in the unit understood that 'behaviour is a form of communication' (Feilberg, 2008); however, they thought more in terms of managing the behaviour than supporting the young person to be understood. 'Because the majority of people use spoken language to communicate those who don't find that their way of communicating is unrecognised and undervalued' (Hawthorn, 2005, p.60). When staff base strategies on their own sensory experiences without due consideration of how service users experience the world, such lack of recognition and value is inevitable. But it is not easy for people to step outside of their own realities (Caldwell and Stevens, 1998).

Three main reasons

The management team's decision to make a change to the communication methods in this project was based on three main reasons, but influenced by the thinking I was doing as part of the MSc. The first reason was that communication is integral to everything we do. The interactional dynamics described by Anglin (2004) as being 'key relational ingredients' of a group home, all require communication to take place for example, 'listening and responding with respect,... establishing structure, routine and expectations,... (and) sharing power and decision making' (Anglin, 2004, p.180). Communication also underpins the achievement of all eight of the Well-being Indicators in the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) model (Scottish Executive, 2008).

The National Care Standards (Scottish Executive, 2005) refer to the importance of communication. For example, Standard 16 states that young people should be supported using aids or equipment if they have any communication needs. Communication is also a human right; Article 13 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) states that children should have the freedom to choose any media through which to seek, obtain and convey information. 'By recognising, implementing and protecting communication rights, we are recognising, implementing and protecting all other human rights' (Thurman, 2009, p.6).

The second reason for making the change was based on the unit's outcomes.



Outcomes can be valuable for evidencing the effectiveness of residential care (McPheat, Milligan and Hunter, 2007); however, they are also useful for identifying areas requiring development. In this unit 'improvement in young people's communication' is one of the outcomes measured, showing an improvement in communication for 64% of young people in the previous year. This was poor compared to the other outcomes (such as improvement in independence, behaviour, or relationships) in which an average of 89 % of young people had shown improvements.

The third reason for identifying the change was based on a self assessment the staff team carried out in preparation for the impending Care Inspectorate visit. When asked to think about the communication methods used with the young people, the staff team scored themselves collectively as a '3'. This was poor in comparison to other areas of the unit, which frequently score '5's and '6's. Worryingly, communication methods were not noted as a recommendation or requirement following the inspection and this illustrates the importance of suitably experienced officers being identified for individual services.

When the team discussed the self assessment, staff identified a lack of time as the main reason for communication methods being so poor, and it is true that preparing materials can be time consuming. However, it is also likely that the team were influenced subconsciously by a dominant discourse about residential child care that supposes staff do not need to be

knowledgeable or skilled (Milligan, 1998). This can provide a subtle deterrent from furthering professional development (in this instance their understanding of communication methods).

The total communication approach

Communication is more than just giving and receiving information. It involves telling each other what we want or do not want, giving or asking for information, making comments, or communicating emotion (Caldwell and Stevens, 1998). A total communication approach allows for a flexible approach in meeting a wide range of speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) and provides access to Augmentative or Alternative forms of Communication (AAC) such as photos or symbols, object signifiers, signing, and Talking Mats (Thurman, 2009). Talking Mats is a resource devised to support people with learning disabilities to share their views through the use of picture symbols, and has been found to increase the quality and quantity of information communicated compared to other methods of communication (Murphy and Cameron, 2008).

Total communication is a multi-sensory approach using tactile, auditory and visual information in which 'all means of communication are valued and promoted as appropriate' (Thurman, 2009, p.9). This may also include profiling such as communication passports, person centred approaches such as Social Stories, or sensory and creative approaches including

Intensive Interaction. Intensive Interaction draws parallels with what Phelan (2001) describes as 'the creation of experience gaps' by being present in the lifespace and communicating through that presence, rather than through words.

In her description of a communicating environment, Hawthorn (2005) describes the use of different smells and textures in order to stimulate all the senses in making differentiations between activities, days, rooms, etc. Aspects of total communication also include facial expressions, body language and voice tone; simplification of language and keyword selection; and the ability to read signs performed by others (The Signalong Group, 2010). Garfat (2003) highlights the importance of monitoring the presentation of self (i.e. how one responds, when one responds, the expression on one's face, the tone of one's response, the attitude one conveys, and the position one is in when responding). If these are important factors to consider when responding to neurotypical children, they are crucial when responding to those with learning disabilities.

Along with physical communication tools an effective communication environment requires suitable attitudes and expectations of staff (Bradshaw, 1998). The responsibility for communication lies with the adult (Hawthorn, 2005) who must provide opportunities for communication for the service users. The attitudes of staff can be seen through the culture of the unit; they both influence the culture and are influenced by it. The culture of residential care settings is well known to be of im-

portance, and has been highlighted in numerous inquiry reports (Davidson, 2007).

To summarise, the total communication approach consists of a wide variety of communication methods including:

- Visual information (timetables, object signifiers, 'talking walls,' pictures on doors, possession boxes)
- Visual choices (PECS, photos, symbols, eye pointing, Talking Mats)
- Signing (Signalong, Makaton, British Sign Language, on-body signing)
- Multi-sensory and creative approaches (smells, textures, song signifiers, Intensive Interaction)
- Profiling (communication passports)
- Person centred approaches (Social Stories)
- Presentation (body language, facial expression, voice tone, positioning, attitude)

In a similar way to which BSL is now recognised as Deaf people's first language (Sutton-Spence and Woll, 2011), I think we need to consider what the first language of each individual young person with learning disabilities is.

Making the change

One recommendation for practice has been for staff to receive more training in communication methods (Stalker, 2008), and through discussion at a team meeting the unit staff also recognised this as an area for improvement. After listening to



the staff team a training session was planned, with the opportunity to learn about and implement the use of PECS, Boardmaker, Signalong, Social stories, and Talking Mats. For some of the team this was a refresher, and this was acknowledged in the way the training was delivered. Numerous inquiries have highlighted the need for improved training and qualification levels (Smith, 2009), but Clough, Bullock and Ward (2006) found that staff training and qualifications alone did not make a difference to the success of the unit. They advised that staff required opportunities to put the theory into practice, and there are obvious links between this and the culture of the unit.

To be effective the total communication approach needed to be internalised and to become part of the unit's culture. This was reflected in an update of the local procedure, in order to facilitate a downwards flow of congruence (Anglin, 2002). Congruence in the service of children's best interests was the key ingredient that Anglin (2002) found made a well-functioning residential unit, as congruent values and frameworks mean that young people are treated as individuals rather than consistently (i.e. all the same). Clough, Bullock and Ward (2006) refer to the importance of understanding the individual needs of the children being looked after in the unit, and the importance of knowing individuals was also highlighted in a young people's consultation on communication (The Communication Trust, 2009). For the young people at this unit, this included knowing their individual communication needs.

To provide an individualised approach staff needed an understanding of young people's communication needs. Garfat (1998) found that interventions were more effective when staff had a model for understanding their work experiences with young people. One way of providing such a model was by strengthening links with Speech and Language Therapists (SaLT). Bercow (2008) highlighted the importance of joint working between agencies in order to improve outcomes and GIRFEC (Scottish Executive, 2008) provides a structure for this, helping to promote inter-agency congruence. While the SaLT is able to provide a full assessment of the young person's SLCN, the residential worker is able to provide information which will inform that assessment (Hawthorn, 2005).

The most difficult change to achieve was the cultural shift in thinking required to make the total communication approach successful. Group supervision may have helped to develop the culture by challenging ideas and promoting emotional intelligence and self reflection. The space and time for reflection and sharing 'stories' about what works (Evans, 2001) have been encroached upon by the arrival of a managerialist agenda (for example, the increasing focus on outcomes) with the subsequent decreasing focus on reflection and thought (Moss and Petrie, 2002). And staff reflection on its own is not enough; to be effective staff's reflections need to be congruent with the rest of the team's (which group supervision would help with). In Archer's (2002) paper on 'what

works', staff making time for reflection was one of the key areas which made the home a 'star' as this had an impact on the planning for young people.

Impact on practice

The most obvious impact of implementing the total communication approach is on young people having improved communication, which increases feelings of efficacy and influences their lives in other ways proposed below. Communication is one of the means through which young people's protection and empowerment can be promoted (Watson, 1989) and '...quality of life in residential settings is significantly improved where young people are facilitated to voice their preferences and feelings' (Stalker, 2008, p.114). Improved communication methods influence children's participation by providing means through which they can share their views of the service. Currently children with disabilities' views on what works in residential child care are not reflected much in the literature (Stalker, 2008), reflecting poor levels of participation. Where there is a lack of meaningful communication there will also be a lack of meaningful consultation.

Enhanced communication supports young people with SLCN to make meaning out of situations; for example to make sense of what is happening at that time, or on that day. Garfat (1998) found that being able to make meaning was what made interventions effective. When thinking about this in relation to children with SLCN,

meaning making reduces anxiety about what is happening, and subsequent 'challenging' behaviours arising from this anxiety (Brookner and Murphy, 1975). Routine and structure (which need to be communicated) help young people to feel safe and settled (Paul, 2008) and contained (Hewitt, 2007). Improved communication also helps to build relationships, and therefore promote attachment. Relationships are important for making meaningful connections and therefore compensating for early attachment inadequacies (Mann, 2003). Grant et al (2009) identified communication as one of the areas needed to be developed to promote secure attachment. 'Making friends, (and) sustaining relationships... are dependent on good speech and language skills' (Hartshorne et al, 2009, p.10).

Conclusion

In writing this I have come to the conclusion that the total communication approach is much bigger than I had previously anticipated; it is more about a shift in thinking than the practical application of a method and this will take longer to be absorbed into the culture of the unit. 'Total communication is a communication philosophy – not a communication method and not at all a teaching method' (Hansen, as cited by Thurman, 2009, p.9).

This led me to wonder how models of practice come to be practice, and I have formed the conclusion that the starting point is naming the model, as language is powerful (Saleebey, 2002). Now that the



staff team know they are employing the total communication approach this will begin to influence their communication practice. Clough, Bullock and Ward (2006) refer to the 'Hawthorne effect' i.e. that simply by paying attention to systems a difference may be seen to occur. This may also be true with regards to the communication systems in the unit, which are now regularly discussed at team meetings.

It is important to remember that while I have written this article about a short breaks unit for young people with learning disabilities, total communication is also relevant to residential child care more generally. I have shown here that there is a need to attune to each individual child's communication style and this is also true for neurotypical children; especially when we consider that they too have communication impairments (McCool, 2008). I have also described how communication is essential to every aspect of practice, and it is clear to me that this is not limited to services for children with learning disabilities.

Many of the families of the children accessing this short breaks service may not have the time, commitment, energy, or resources to put these communication systems into place at home. However, in the same way that Anglin (2004) describes the 'abnormal' living environment of a group home providing a 'bridging experience' to engaging with more normative environments, so the artificial communication environment of the short breaks home may serve as a 'bridging experience' to communication in more typical family environments.

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Women's Lives

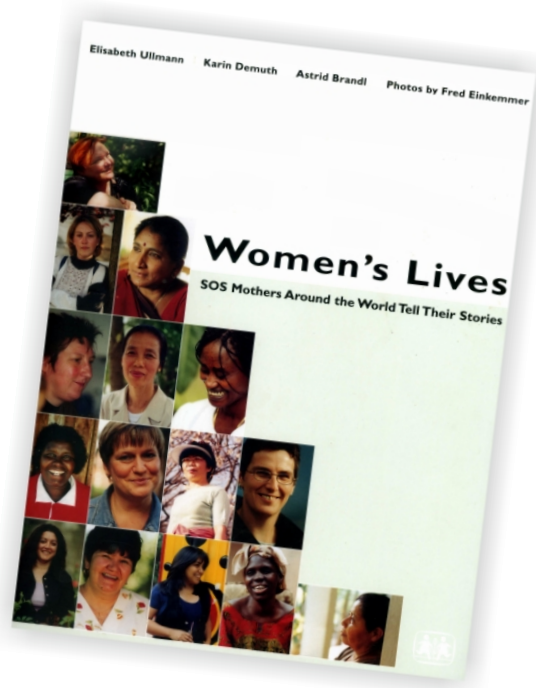
SOS Mothers tell their stories

Part 4



Mildre Solano
Durana

Born 4.11.1977, Bolivia



“One reason was that I wanted to be independent, and the other was that I have known the SOS Children's Village since I was fifteen years old, and I had always wanted to come back.”

Mildre passes her "A" levels and studies law for six months. Then she changes her mind. She really wants to study social work, but that subject is not available in her own town and there is no way she can go elsewhere to study. Mildre is only eighteen when she applies to the SOS Children's Village. She has known it since she was fifteen. She wants to be independent and have her own family. Her parents and friends are shocked. They think Mildre is too young for this job and



that she must be very disappointed in life. She knows though, "That's what I want," and sticks to her decision.

It is difficult for her at the start. The other SOS mothers, especially, find her too young for this task and make her life difficult. Once she even packs her bags. Has she ever thought of starting a family of her own? Yes, one day she would like to know what it is like to have a child herself. She thinks that SOS Children's Villages will open up in that direction and that she will be able to have a child of her own and not have to leave her SOS family.

The Story of Her Life

"And then came the genocide."

I wasn't born in Tarija. My parents come from Potosí, which is up in the north. We moved here when I was one year old. My father is forty-five and my mother forty-four. I have three brothers and sisters. There are two boys and two girls. I am the second oldest and the older of the two girls. My father looks after the gas fittings in the hospital in Tarija and the rest of the time he works as a site engineer. My mother is mostly at home, but occasionally she sells a bit in order to earn some extra cash. My older brother is twenty-five, lives in Villazon and is married. My younger

brother is studying law at university. The youngest is now in her final year at school. That's my family.

How many brothers and sisters do your parents have?

My father's family is interesting, because he has brothers and sisters who are not from the same father. He is one of eight in all. My mother is one of nine. All my mother's brothers and sisters are merchants. They sell everything from clothes to food and are spread out all over Bolivia. I'm only in touch with a few of them, mainly the ones in Cochabamba and La Paz, because I often go there on courses. When I'm there I take the opportunity to visit them. Of course, I see a lot of the aunts and uncles who live here.

If you hear the term "family", who do you consider belongs to that group?

A family is a group of people who like and respect each other, a group of people who have an emotional attachment. My parents, my brothers, sisters, and my children here in the SOS Children's Village belong to my closest family. My grandparents, aunts and uncles also belong in broad terms.

Could you describe your mother for us?

My mother is an exceptional woman. I love and value her very much. She's not like most mothers. She was always there for me. She is a jolly woman, who likes to talk and chat a lot. My mother is the leader of a group of women from the neighbourhood. She's the boss and is al-

ways there when something's going on and is always ready to help. She's very active, has a strong personality, but is also very gentle; and sometimes she can be very stubborn. She likes to argue, but she is what she is.

What sort of an education did you have?

I went to an all-girls school and after twelve years I did my "A" levels. Then I studied law at university for six months. I went on lots of courses and joined youth groups in our neighbourhood and here in the SOS Children's Village I also go on a lot of courses. I have always liked psychology, philosophy, dance and drama a lot. I really wanted to be a social worker, but I couldn't study for that here. I was frightened to leave my family and financially it would also have been very difficult. Law seemed to me to be the most similar but I didn't finish the course.

Is there a woman that you admire?

Here in Bolivia there is Judith Miranda (Note: the director of the SOS Mother Training Centre in Cochabamba). I like her honesty, her openness and her cheerful nature. There is also another SOS mother in the SOS Children's Village Tiquipaya, Carolina, who is very strong.

Do you have a good friend who you can share everything with?

Yes, I have two friends. One of them is my neighbour, the SOS mother from next door. She trained me as an SOS aunt. The other is a friend who I grew up with. She's





at the university here now. They are both like sisters to me. But my mother, my sisters and my eldest daughter, Alexandra, are also like friends to me.

What do you find so special about Alexandra?

Alexandra was the first child who I took in myself. She came from a totally dysfunctional family. She was a bitter and resentful child who was very angry with her mother. A mother is something totally holy for me, and I couldn't believe that a nine-year-old child could hate so much. So I set myself the aim of helping to relieve this resentment. I think I've succeeded, because now she has a relationship with her mother and even likes her. That was pretty

difficult for me, because I had to change myself a lot, in order to be able to help her. Most of all I had to change my concept of "mother on top and daughter below" so that we were on the same level and could talk to each other. She helped me a lot with that and that's why she's so special to me.

Did you work with Alexandra's mother too?

Yes, I worked with her too. I talked to her a lot about recognising her mistakes and learning how to apologise to Alexandra. What helped was that I never spoke against the mother. Rather I tried to bring them together. I also didn't show any signs of jealousy. When Alexandra realised

that we were becoming friends, it helped her to be able to forgive her mother. The previous village director helped me a lot in this task. It became a mission for us both.

What do you do in your free time?

I go to parties and enjoy being with my friends from my neighbourhood. I like going for walks, singing, dancing, gymnastics and I enjoy going to the nearby gym.

What would you consider are your strengths and talents?

I think that could be my cheerful nature. I think I've got a good sense of

humour. My strength lies in my family. I also like acting a lot.

Motivation for Her Choice of Career

"I have known the SOS Children's Village since I was fifteen, and always wanted to come back."

I got to know the SOS Children's Village back when I was fifteen. I came here to help an SOS mother who had a baby. I went to school in the mornings and came here in the afternoons. The child got used to me and slowly began to lose its attachment to the SOS mother. That's why they



told me that I should leave. They told me that I was really too young and didn't belong to the organisation. They said I could come again when I was eighteen. The thought was in my head for all that time and then, when I was eighteen, I really did apply to be an SOS aunt. The people from the SOS Children's Village didn't think I would be able to manage it. They didn't take me seriously. There were a number of candidates and they asked the children, which SOS aunt they would like to have. I was examined closely and eventually they accepted me for a trial period.

I wanted to be an SOS mother right from the start. Even when I was an SOS aunt, I said that I wanted to take on my own house. When I went into a house as

an SOS aunt I dreamed of having "my" children and my own family who called me "mother". I hadn't even been an SOS aunt for a year when they made me an SOS mother. That was quicker than normal but at that time there was nobody else.

What were your main motives for becoming an SOS mother?

One reason was that I wanted to be independent and the other was that I have known the SOS Children's Village since I was fifteen, and always wanted to come back.

Would you like to have children of your own?

I don't think that it would be any differ-





ent than it is now with my children in the village. However, I am curious to know what it feels like to have your own child. There's the option now for SOS mothers to have their own children. I would really like to have a child of my own, but not to have to leave my SOS family. I would like to bring them both together. I would be interested to see what it would mean to have a child of my own; but not a man, no husband.

What did your family and friends say when you said that you wanted to be an SOS mother?

They said, "Why are you so disappointed with life? That's no job for a young girl. It's for older, bored women!" They were thinking about the earlier type of SOS mother and they weren't happy at all. They changed their minds once they saw that the work wasn't changing me.

What made your decision easier and what made it more difficult?

My parents made it more difficult for me. They were totally against it in the beginning and wanted me to study. They thought that something had disappointed me and that I wanted to come here to escape. My boyfriend at the time also influenced me and was against my coming here. Despite all of that, I decided to do what I really wanted to do. And here I am.

Experiences as an SOS Mother

"If I'm not happy then my children aren't happy either."

It was difficult in the early days. My age was a stumbling block and still is. The SOS Children's Village community thought that because I was so young, I would get too friendly with the youths. However, the group of SOS aunts was very nice and that

made it a good time too. When I was given my own house... that was a challenge. I had such problems at the start that I even packed my bags once. The biggest challenge in my house was the children who came from Santa Cruz. They were aggressive, inconsiderate and full of hatred. That was hard and caused a lot of tears. That was my baptism of fire. But that passed. The children integrated themselves into the family and things quietened down. I had lots of happy moments during these years, as well as some sad ones too. I think, though, that there were more happy moments. The love between us as a family extends far beyond the concept of love and family in the SOS Children's Village. It is something greater and more beautiful than the traditional SOS Children's Village concept.

Why was your life in the SOS Children's Village so difficult in the beginning?

When you work as an SOS mother it increases your worth, but only as a mother. In the SOS Children's Village I am valued as a mother; but not as a woman, and the same applies to all the other SOS mothers. As soon as you become a "mother" in the SOS Children's Village, there is a change. This is because we feel under great pressure to bring about results and to be successful. Then we start to function as mothers and forget the woman we were before we started to work in the SOS Children's Village. Generally we believe that we're only valuable to the organisation as long as we are "mothers". And some of the SOS mothers who want to experience



more, as a woman, are seen to be bad SOS mothers. Because we think of ourselves, it is immediately assumed that we are not thinking about our children. It's hard for me to achieve a position where I am accepted and loved for who I am: even though I love my children and they love me, I do think of myself. Because of the pressure I was under, I spent a long time living as if it were bad to think about myself. But now I think that we have got over that and I don't feel guilty anymore.

Which parts of your life have you reactivated?

I think that since I gave up worrying about what the others thought about me and started thinking more about how I

was feeling, I have been able to live as a woman. That's why I was so surprised that I was chosen for this interview. Up till then I'd always seen myself as the sort of SOS Children's Village "wart", as something that didn't fit the picture, that was an annoyance and an irritation. I don't fit into the concept. An SOS mother must sacrifice herself, be serious and an authority in the house. The criteria on which we are judged are having a clean house, the children's exam results and how good the food is. The only criteria that are measured are the external requirements. I am well aware that it's important for the organisation that I can sew well, be a good housewife and a good cook. These external things are important. But nobody worries how the woman is feeling, whether she's tired or ill. If we only exist here as sacrificial mothers, then we don't feel at ease. That leads to frustration and indirectly that affects the children. For example, when I wanted to go dancing and wasn't able to go, my frustration affected the children because they can sense it. If I were only to exist here as a "mother" I wouldn't be happy. And if I'm not happy then my children aren't happy either.

I was very young when I came here and there was a big age gap to the other SOS mothers. That's probably why I felt so different. Today there are more and more younger women in the village and a change is happening. Now more women are asking themselves whether or not they just want to be "mothers". I think from now on there will be more "warts"!

Did the pressure come from the other SOS mothers?

The old school says that you really have to control the young girls. However, I believe the girls have to learn to control themselves. I had an argument with the community, because they didn't approve of my way of bringing up the children. That's when I felt the pressure the most. But now that's all in the past.

How would you describe your job to our readers?

It's the best job in the world for a woman to do. Of course, it can be difficult sometimes, but as long as there's love, everything can be achieved and everything solved. There is so much, there are so many happy moments, so many sad moments that it's difficult to explain. Personally for me, it was the best and the greatest thing that could ever happen to me in my life. I can't imagine living without the children. Nor can I imagine the children living without me. They are more important to me than my own family. They are everything to me.

Have you changed since you came to the SOS Children's Village?

I have changed a lot inside. I was a very quiet and obedient person. I often knew the answers to questions, but couldn't express myself. I saw a lot of unfair things, but I didn't do anything about them. When I was given my family I had to learn to deal with confrontation. I couldn't allow my children to be hurt. Now, even though it causes me problems, I can't stay silent any-



more. If anything unfair happens in the village, it doesn't leave me cold anymore. In that respect, I'm a totally different person to the one who came here at the start.

How did you experience your SOS mother training in Cochabamba?

The courses helped me to understand that I had the ability to be an SOS mother. They helped me to realise my strengths and my weaknesses and they gave me orientation as to what SOS Children's Villages expected from us for the children. I learned something very important there: to dream for my children and to dream with my children about what they expect for themselves. That's why I admire Judith Miranda: she had faith in me, even though many others didn't.

Could you tell us a bit about your working relationship with the village director?

There was one village director when I was an SOS aunt and another when I became an SOS mother. A new one has started quite recently. I had the best working relationship with Don Gonzalo. He was a father to my family. I don't think that a village director is as important as a father is. I always consulted him before I made a decision concerning the children. He had respect for me as an SOS mother. Of course, we had our differences, but if he were in the wrong he would admit it and the same went for me. The reason I let him into my house was because he truly liked my children. That was the best stretch with a village director for me. The



new village director has only just started. He's using a lot of energy to adapt and me too. I have let him into my house as a friend, but not as a father and nor as a village director. I hope he will learn to love us and that we will learn to love him.

Do you think that a village director can be a father to all the children in the SOS Children's Village?

No, I don't think so. A lot of the children look for a father figure in the driver, a friend or a member of the family. Of course, it's difficult to be a father to them all. To me it's important that he likes the children a little bit, so as to be a "director-father". Anybody can be a village director, even somebody who just sits in the office all day. Everybody who works here, though, should at least have feelings for the children.

With which other co-workers do you work together?

I work together with the educator a lot. He understands the meaning of this project. If I'm having difficulties, I go to him and he helps me to orientate myself and to be able to see the situation more clearly. I trust him. I trust the driver too. He has come to be a sort of uncle to my family and a good friend too. I also trust Donna Susanna, (Note: director of the SOS Social Centre) because I believe that she feels herself to be a part of our family. The other people are all new and I don't really know them, nor do they know me.



What is your contact to the surroundings, to the SOS Children's Village's neighbourhood like?

It's good. I am a member of the board for the community so the contact between the neighbourhood and the SOS Children's Village mostly goes through me. For example, I organise football and basketball tournaments, as well as various cultural activities. These events sometimes take place in the SOS Children's Village and sometimes outside.

Do your children have any contact with your family and your friends?

But of course! My mother is their grandmother! We see a lot of them, of

people from the neighbourhood and my friends. The children often spend the night with my parents, and my sister sometimes spends the night here. They love them, as if they were their real grandchildren. Sometimes they spoil them terribly. My friends help us, for example if there's a funfair, or my family helps me with the cooking when we have a party in the village. Sometimes they come here at weekends to watch a film.

Could you tell us about your best experience in the SOS Children's Village and your worst?

The best experience I had was once on Mothers' Day: My children and the village director hired an ensemble, the Mariachis, who sang for me. Then I had to run a marathon! I cried more than I could run. I was so moved because the children ran with me. They were encouraging me, "Mum, you can do it!" They pushed me and pulled me to make me carry on running. Later on they cooked dinner and had invited my friends too. I wasn't allowed to help at all. And finally they sent me off dancing. That was the most beautiful and important day for me.

The worst day was when my daughter ran away. She had a problem with one of the co-workers and I hadn't defended her as I should. She blew up, ran away and was gone for a whole day. I didn't know where she was and imagined the worst. I couldn't sleep. She phoned the next day, because she was very upset too. That's how I found her again. That was the moment when I decided I had to defend her and to see

myself as her mother. I felt so bad, because I'd given in to the village director's pressure and hadn't supported her. He'd said that I was being over-protective of her and shouldn't identify with her so strongly, because she wasn't my daughter. When she came home, we both apologised and I took it on myself to defend her properly for the first time. I put myself in her shoes and decided I would have done the same if I had been her. That was the saddest day for my family and me. We all cried.

If you had three wishes what would you change in the SOS Children's Village?

I would open some doors for the SOS mothers. I have a dream: I would like to go to university. It would be nice if we had the opportunity. Another wish would be for us not to control our daughters, the teenagers, so much and to let them live more freely. And I'd like to be accepted by the village community for who I am. Those would be my three wishes.

How is the profession of an SOS mother viewed in Bolivia or in Tarija?

Before, because they didn't know the profession, people had prejudices against it and questioned the vocation. However, the previous village director was well able to explain the meaning of being an SOS mother to the people, and now they accept it. Generally in Bolivia people admire the SOS mothers a lot. I often get asked, "How can you manage with nine children?" I can tell that they admire me for that, even though it's such a simple thing.

What do you do when you're on holiday or have a day off?

I visit my family and my friends. I relax, watch films and try to study. I'm always late getting back to the village.

What is your working relationship with your SOS aunt like?

Normally the SOS aunts have to address the mothers as "Donna". But I tell them that I don't want to be treated as a "Donna" and that they should call me by my name. I see the SOS aunt as my sister in the house, because that is her role. Unlike other SOS mothers I don't expect her to do my washing and ironing and to clean the house. When I get back from my holidays, the first thing I want to know is how my children are and I don't care what my house looks like. It annoys me if an SOS aunt just spends all her time doing housework. I let this woman into my house to get on with my children. Some of the other SOS mothers ask me, "Why don't you make the SOS aunts call you Donna, it shows more respect? After all, you're an SOS mother and she's only an SOS aunt!" But I don't like that. She is a friend, an aunt to the children and she's the person who's here when I'm not.

Mildre, how do you see your future? What will you be doing in ten years time?

I'll be old! No, seriously, I can imagine that my children have achieved their goals. I imagine being together with them. I imagine we will be living like we are today. I imagine that I will be studying psychology

or training to be a social worker and working with new children. I can imagine my daughters getting married. I can see myself with grandchildren.

The Children in Her Care

"Just to be with them and there for them, in bad times as well as in good."

Giovanita is my baby and she's five years old. She's the third best pupil at her school. She's sweet, delicate, and quiet. She only had one surname; her second one is now mine and that means that officially she's my daughter. I would like her to achieve a lot and know that she'll manage it. Juan Daniel is the most difficult in this house. He says exactly what he thinks and feels and is very active. He has only been here for a year, but already belongs to the family. And he's very affectionate. Carlita is the quarrelsome one of the family. She's talented and intelligent but very shy. She often doesn't participate, not because she doesn't have the ability, but rather because she's so shy. And Carola is the shiest of them all. She will soon be a young woman. She's petite and flirtatious. Physically she's changing already, but she's still a child. Manuel is sometimes too direct. Everyone tells him off, because he's the one in our house who likes to fight. But he's honest and loving and is always falling in love with girls. Richard is the same age as Manuel and the two of them are good friends. He's still a bit disorientated. He's funny but shy. He doesn't trust many people and if he doesn't trust a person, he can't express



himself properly. If you talk to him, you can't really pin him down. He just slips away. Anita is very mature for her age and is aware of her responsibilities. She's very tall and intelligent. The most remarkable thing about her is that she doesn't laugh very often. Alexandra is a young girl with very clear ideas. I like her human qualities. She is tender, lovable, attentive and impulsive. She's also still a bit angry. She likes to dance, is flirtatious and likes to talk a lot. She has a lot of friends. Zaida is the eldest and she is still a bit disorientated. She hasn't got her ideas straight yet, is indecisive and impulsive but on the other hand she's loving and attentive too. In addition there are five young adults, three girls and two boys who already live on their own. I'm still in touch with them all.

What do you hope for your children's futures?

They have a lot of dreams, and I like that. The youngest ones have the biggest dreams. They say that they're going to find jobs and then buy me a car and a house. The children say that they want to be important and famous, each in their own way. I always take part in their dreams and that makes me happy.

What do you hope for your girls and boys?

I hope that my sons become good people who are stable and responsible adults. I hope they will start their own families and respect their wives. I hope that my daughters will be able to make their own ways in life. I would like them to be valued for

their abilities and, the same as for the boys, I hope that they will be secure and responsible adults who are able to choose a good partner.

What special thing can you give your children to help them on their way in life?

Just to be with them and there for them, in bad times as well as in good and still to support them, even if they do something silly at any time. Just to be there for them and to love them, so that they realise that they have a mother and will always have her. That's the only thing I can give them.

Are the children in touch with their real families?

Yes. When I came to this house, they were slowly losing touch with their families. I supported them in getting in touch with them again. I travelled around and visited the families. I do everything I can to help them stay in touch with their real families. And I searched for family members for those children who hadn't had any contact before. The only one where I've been unsuccessful so far is Carlita. Presumably she comes from an Indian tribe near Cochabamba. We will save up and then take a trip to look for them. I think it does them good to be in touch with their families and to know where they come from.

To My Colleagues Around The World

I believe that our children are the greatest gift God could have given us. I also think that as SOS mothers we take nothing from our children by thinking about ourselves occasionally. Quite the opposite. If our children see that we are happy then they are happy too. We mustn't take out our frustration and depression on them. Just let them live their lives. The children should just live.

Mildre on the situation of women in Bolivia

There is much inequality here. Women are put down, but many of them see that as the norm. From when we are small, we are brought up to work for the men. First of all we function as daughters for our fathers, then as wives for our husbands and, when we are mothers, we live for our sons. These are mistakes that have been

going on for generations. That is the everyday story. We obliterate ourselves as women, in as much as we do not realise our own worth.

If I hear a woman moaning that her husband does not respect her, then I think that she has to respect herself first. The women themselves have to change their way of behaving and thinking first. How can we be on the same level as men if we act more like servants than women? I think we need to be very strong to reach a level where men and women are equal, without polarisation.

It is difficult for women to gain access to education or jobs. Men have far more privileges. The family will always try to have the son educated rather than the daughter, especially amongst the working classes. They think that the woman will go off and get married anyway and that her husband will support her, so why should she need an education? When it comes to

SOS Children's Village Work in Bolivia

SOS-Kinderdorf International started its work in Bolivia in 1968. The first SOS Children's Village to be built there was SOS Children's Village Jordán. This was followed by SOS Children's Villages Mallasa in 1983, Oruro in 1988, Tarija in 1992, Santa Cruz and Tiquipaya in 1995, Sucre in 1996 and the newest so far, SOS Children's Village Potosí.

Existing SOS Children's Village Facilities

8 SOS Children's Villages, SOS Youth Facilities in 6 locations, 6 SOS Kindergartens, 2 SOS Hermann Gmeiner Schools, 5 SOS Vocational Training Centres as well as various SOS Social Centres.



getting a job, the first criteria for a woman is what she looks like. Her abilities are not important. On the other hand, qualifications are paramount for men.

I would like to say the following about “women’s solidarity”: I believe that a woman’s biggest enemy is other women. There are probably groups who stick up for one another, but we are very hard on each other. We have been programmed to gossip about others. We are not naturally like that, but we have been brought up to be like that. Society has made us what we are.

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

**Elisabeth Ullmann, Karin Demuth and Astrid Brandl. ISBN 3-9500984-3-7
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| BOLIVIA | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Area | 1,098,581 km ² |
| Population | 8,329,000 |
| Population density | 7.6 per km ² |
| Average number of children per woman | 3.9 * |
| Life expectancy for women | 64.3 * |
| Life expectancy for men | 60.9 * |
| Infant mortality | 6.2% |
| Illiteracy rate amongst women | 21% |
| Illiteracy rate amongst men | 8% |
| Percentage of population living below the poverty line | 29.4% |
| Religions (the two most common) | 92.5% Catholics, 0.6% Protestants |
| Languages | Spanish, Quechua, Aymara |
| GNP per capita | USD 990 |

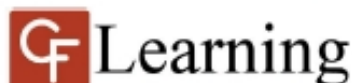
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There may or may not be a hornet's nest in my tool shed. Or maybe it's a wasp's nest that is or isn't there. I'm pretty sure it isn't bees. They live in hives. And I don't have hives. Unless I start to think about what may or may not be in my shed.

Let me explain. Last week, my wife opened the tool shed to get something out – some sort of tool, I'm guessing. Then she started screaming and bouncing up and down and pointing and going "a-bbi ... a-bbi ... a-bbi ..." just the way Porky Pig does at the end of the cartoons. Except this was only the beginning of the farce.

Being the big, tough guy around the house, I forced out this big sigh and walked over to the shed. She pointed up. I saw it.

So now we're both going "a-bbi ... a-bbi ... a-bbi...". Showing remarkable presence of mind, I took swift, decisive action. I slammed the door.

There was a hornet's nest on the ceiling of our shed. Or maybe it was a wasp's nest. Same thing. And please, if you happen to be a junior high school science teacher, don't send me a long letter explaining the difference. I honestly don't care. They both sting. That's all we need to know about insects. Junior high school teachers waste an awful lot of time talking about thoraxes and abdomens and stuff, when really all

anybody needs to know about an insect is: does it sting or not?

My neighbour, who's a moron, said we shouldn't worry. "They'll only bother you if you bother them," he says. Like I'm supposed to know what bothers an insect. Maybe insects really hate guys in glasses.

Or Beach Boys music. Or the colour blue. Or European films. The list of things insects might be bothered by is endless.

An insect's brain is almost as small as a dog's, for God's sake. Who can tell what it might be thinking? Maybe it looks at me and thinks "At last. Food for the Queen. She will feast tonight."

For all I know, I have the first wave of the dreaded African Killer Wasp living in my stupid tool shed. Then where would I be? Dead, that's where.

Once we composed ourselves, we reviewed our options. There were basically two. Option A was to get rid of the nest. Option B was to say the heck with it and turn over ownership of the shed to whatever it was now called it home. Ever the coward, I voted for Option B. But, as always in these matters, my wife explained that giving me the vote was just a courtesy, and we were going with Option A – eviction.

I read in a book somewhere that all you have to do is take a bucket of gas,

The Sting of It All Is ...

Nils Ling



scrape the wasps' nest into it, and everything in it will die. Sounded good to me, although I did briefly consider simply dumping the bucket of gas in the shed and torching the whole works.

I snuck up on the nest with my bucket and scraper, even though I don't even know if insects have ears - thank you, junior high school science teachers - and took a wild swing at the nest. It hit the rim of the bucket and fell onto the floor.

Well, that's when everything hit the fan. The wasps or hornets or whatever came flying out, obviously deeply concerned about this turn of events. We had inadvertently stumbled on one thing that, we can say now with a fair degree of surety, bothers them.

My wife started yelling and pointing and going "a-bbi ... a-bbi ... a-bbi". My kids started screaming and the dog, sensing something was amiss, began barking at a tomato plant. I slammed the shed door and slid the lock shut.

And that's pretty much where we are today. Every now and then I go and listen at the door, and I can't hear anything. So maybe it worked. Or maybe there's a whole herd of angry African Killer Wasps in my shed, just waiting for the door to open a crack so they can wreak their terrible revenge.

I don't know. And I won't find out till ... say, next January.



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Postcard from
Leon Fulcher

JANUARY 2016

Kia Ora Everyone! Warm greetings for the New Year from Cholmondeley Children's Centre (Chum-lee) at Governor's Bay, situated at the top of Christchurch's Lyttleton Harbour on New Zealand's South Island. On 7 March 1925, in memory of his beloved Margaret – Mary she was called –the Cholmondeley Children's Home was opened in Governor's Bay. Hugh Cholmondeley and Mary had been unable to have children of their own but both were extremely fond of children. When Mary died, Hugh purchased Governor's Bay land previously owned by nuns and built a Children's Home.

90 years later, Cholmondeley provides short-term emergency as well as planned respite care and education for children (aged 3-12 years) whose families are experiencing crisis, genuine stress or recovery from trauma. Cholmondeley provides opportunities for children to experience short (2 to 5 day) breaks where they can experience resilience-building activities



Governor's Bay at the end of Lyttleton Harbour near Christchurch, South Island

whilst giving families a break to address issues at home and briefly re-charge. Social pedagogy practices are embraced with Danish and German students on placement supporting activity-oriented child and youth care social workers!



Cholmondeley Children's Home was established in Governors Bay in 1925

Cholmondeley Children's Centre is the only community-based short-term and emergency respite care provider for at-risk children in New Zealand. It offers a unique international example of how re-

spite care and education can be provided on a short-term basis for young children and their families using activity-based learning strategies and methods (check out www.cholmondeley.org.nz).



A 2011 Earthquake left a big crack through the middle of Cholmondeley Children's Home

The 2011 Christchurch Earthquake left historic Cholmondeley Children's Home a ruin which had to be demolished. The post-earthquake re-build created a new child and family-friendly facility, architecturally-designed to be welcoming for children. Cholmondeley now provides emergency and planned short-term respite care and education for up to 20 children whose families are experiencing personal and relationship challenges. Cholmondeley services are guided by a family preservation philosophy providing early respite care intervention within the continuum of services available for children and families in the Greater Christchurch Region.

Cholmondeley goals in their new facility are to *provide services that are*



Creative Play Opportunities are at the heart of the Cholmondeley Child-Friendly Re-build

immediately accessible to children and families whilst being flexible to individual needs. Cholmondeley also seeks to increase collaboration and partnerships with other health, education and child welfare service providers in the region, as well as nationally and internationally through student placements.



Respite in an Adventure Playground with Carers Making Purposeful Use of Activities

Key outcomes sought by Cholmondeley include: (i) increased resilience for each child; (ii) improved capacity of each child to continue achieving in

home and school settings through enhanced wellbeing; (iii) strengthening families and family networks through shared parenting that reduces family stress and tension while offering solution-focused opportunities with their children; (iv) decreased risk of family disintegration and child placement in statutory care; (v) restoration of family after disintegration has occurred; and (vi) long-term maintenance of resilience for each child as she/he transitions through secondary school into adulthood.



Self-Portraits hang as art work throughout the rebuilt Cholmondeley Children's Centre

What a great idea to decorate Cholmondeley Centre walls with different arrangements of self-portrait art work – all created by the children! Children have a sense of Belonging at Cholmondeley.

I feel certain that Cholmondeley will make greater and greater use of their new purpose-built Respite Care facilities in coming months, – a Centre with a proud tradition and with a new purpose built in to a new purpose-built facility, 90 years later! This is respite care with a differ-



Self-portraits bring personality and character into a welcoming, friendly environment

ence! Kia Kaha! Stand Tall! Let's hear it for the purposeful use of activity in the respite care and education of children!



Reflective Moments gazing out over Lyttelton Harbour, mindful of the 2011 Earthquake



THE INTERNATIONAL CHILD AND YOUTH CARE NETWORK

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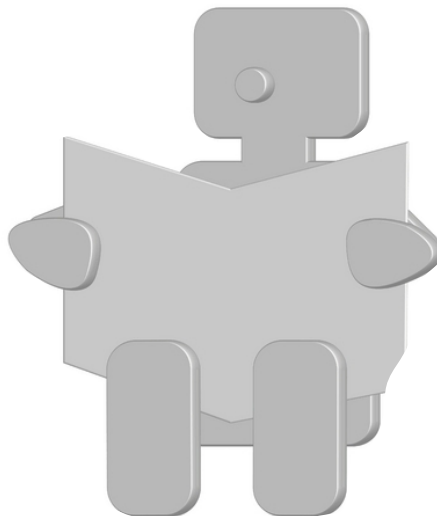
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